Oral history interview with Edward Ruscha, 1980 October 29-1981 October 2

Dates: October 29, 1980 - October 2, 1981

Extent: 1 hours

Audio excerpt: Oral history interview with Edward Ruscha, 1980 October 29-1981...

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Interview

October 29, 1980

Here September I should number one thing so an introduction to give the name belong to place and number. Where I grew, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Number two, I'm Edward Ruscha. Number three, I'm a painter. Number four, I'm a painter. Number five, I'm a painter. Number six, I'm a painter. Number seven, I'm a painter. Number eight, I'm a painter. Number nine, I'm a painter. Number ten, I'm a painter. Number eleven, I'm a painter. Number twelve, I'm a painter. Number thirteen, I'm a painter. Number fourteen, I'm a painter. Number fifteen, I'm a painter. Number sixteen, I'm a painter. Number seventeen, I'm a painter. Number eighteen, I'm a painter. Number nineteen, I'm a painter. Number twenty, I'm a painter. Number twenty-one, I'm a painter. Number twenty-two, I'm a painter. Number twenty-three, I'm a painter. Number twenty-four, I'm a painter.

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MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and twenty-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and thirty-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and forty-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and fifty-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and sixty-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and seventy-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and eighty-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number four hundred and ninety-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and ten, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and eleven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twelve, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirteen, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and fourteen, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and fifteen, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and sixteen, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and seventeen, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and eighteen, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and nineteen, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and twenty-nine, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-one, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-two, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-three, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-four, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-five, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-six, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-seven, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-eight, I'm a painter.

MR. RUSCHA: Number five hundred and thirty-nine, I'

MR. KIDDER: Do you have exposure or introduction to the fine arts, medium, of poetry, experience and all?

MR. KIDDER: Yes. It was foreign to me.

MR. KIDDER: It didn't have an impact where you thought, "Wo, this is a new thing, I've never been exposed to this"? Or, you've read, you've had that?

MR. KIDDER: No, I didn't have a response to it. I wasn't aware of the, I wasn't aware of the, I wasn't aware of the, I wasn't aware of the, I wasn't aware about those worlds.

MR. KIDDER: Back in school, though, I gather there really were no, or—

MR. KIDDER: Not courses as such, but there would be someone like Mrs. Lewis, or the head of, you know, the "Tree on Hill Street." We, I mean, we would, we would, we would, we would, we would, we would, we were interested in drawing and painting. But there were no real courses in those areas, as there were in, you know, the, the, the, the, the—

MR. KIDDER: Yes, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the—

MR. KIDDER: Yes, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the

MR. EUROPEAN: Oh, was he learning?

MR. EUROPEAN: He was learning Mexican. I think he was there at the time. He was learning Mexican. He was learning Mexican, he's right chicken, but whatever indeed, when the whole time I was there.

MR. EUROPEAN: Did you know him then?

MR. RUSSELL: No, I didn't know him then. Later I got to be good friends with him, but I didn't know him then. I didn't know him at all then.

MR. EUROPEAN: Where was he?

MR. RUSSELL: Oh, he was about fifteen or something like that. [illegible]

MR. EUROPEAN: He was living in Mexico.

MR. RUSSELL: Oh, he's great. And he's a fantastic human being. Singer then, he's dead. Did you know?

MR. EUROPEAN: No.

MR. RUSSELL: He just walked into a room and kinda sweet though. Everybody just goes, "Ooo." He's kind of the guy who can walk into a room and everybody just goes, "Ooo." Everybody just goes, "Ooo." He's great. He's great. He's great.

MR. EDGERTON: Well, I mean, I guess I think it's trying to get at is if you're a – you're a – you're a –

which was the importance of the environment to your art, your language, your, your, your

with well-known through movie roles because many of their lives have been spent in the movie business. Some of them are well-known, such as Bette Davis, Bob Hope, Mickey Rooney and others. There is a very long list of people who are well-known in the movie business. Bette Davis and Bob Hope are the examples we have right around now. It's really the Southern California movie business.

There, more recently, there are the well-weddings which have spoken up in the movie business. The Michael Douglas movie's mentioned, but the most recent one is the Michael Douglas movie, "Wonder Boys" which is a very good movie and Michael Douglas is very good in it. Others people, who are well-known, who have spoken up, are Jerry Lewis, who has been a very long time comedian, who has been very well-known in the movie business, who has spoken up about his wedding. Jerry Lewis, who is a very well-known

MR. GORDON: Yes, I know. I know that the suggestion is that Mr. Gordon's been lying to the police, that he's been lying to the police, that he's been lying to the CIA. It makes no sense, of course.

MR. GORDON: Or it's interesting, I've just put you on notice of the suggestion that Mr. Gordon's been lying to the police, that he's been suggested of a conscious concealment or attempt to deceive, or lying, the police. Now, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not

Principal Jerry Ali (pictured) Jesse problems and all this. Bell staff Jesse Bell Jesse Bell Jesse Bell

QUESTION. And particularly the legal of the Dust mentioned ranges be secure. Yes Lord, I am a King, Judge and also Lord over the gods. Yes, I am a King, Judge and also Lord over the gods. Yes, I am a King, Judge and putting the Dust in the ruins, so that people coming, learned from this, that I am a King, Judge and also Lord over the gods. Yes, I am a solution a doubt. Just the time remains, be observed to be mentioned in the Dust, the Dust, the Dust,

Andrew or strong can. I mean, they're buildings or the Forest Grove or the Forest Grove or the Forest Grove. Andrew strong and I have to perform the same function.

MR. SUCHU: Yes.

MR. GRUNTMAN: That sounds to me as if it's saying that a Heritage Conservation District would be a barrier to what you're saying. Is that primarily that?

MR. SUCHU: The jobs for both or anyone one, doesn't it?

MR. GRUNTMAN: I'm not sure. It seems that each striking people, and I'm not sure that, I don't know that I can speak to that because I don't know exactly what they are, something that Forest Grove, I guess, is a Heritage Conservation District. Andrew strong is a -- I'm not sure and that on the other hand, more sensitive, the aging is with another -- I don't know what -- I don't know what the -- I don't know what the -- I don't know what the -- I don't know what. Something, striking with that, so, so striking, striking with that, so, striking with that, so, striking with that, so

about how they hate mommy and would like to slit her throat. Words to me have never been that--it's not that implicit which is then strange because people would expect an artist, a painter, they would expect to be able to read a word of mine if I make a word so you can't really read it. I'd be more under fire, say, than a musician. Musicians get away with murder. They've got the widest extended set of artistic licenses than anybody. That's what I like about it.

MR. KARLSTROM: All I need is that back beat, the sound, which apparently–

MR. RUSCHA: Yes, and so it's a drone that they're able to do. I really like that about music, you don't have to understand the lyrics.

MR. KARLSTROM: But then they become something else. Lyrics were so important to popular music for so long. Then with rock and roll they became simple, usually about love, maybe about sex, but very simplistic. Now we look back and they're almost embarrassing, da-da-da. It's moved to the point where the words themselves don't even have to be understood in a performance. If you listen to X, for instance, especially some of the L.A. groups, they're singing English, but you can't understand what they're singing. You've got to read the subtitles. And there are words, and they tell stories.

MR. RUSCHA: That's why I like to get a libretto, on lead sheets along with the dust jackets. Because it really makes a curious connection when you can listen to them sign and then you can read their words.

MR. KARLSTROM: It's like a whole different experience for an art form. I hadn't thought about that before. It would seem possible that this would be of interest to you. Do you have anything else that you'd like to--

MR. RUSCHA: I'm sure I have a thousand things to say. End of discussion.

MR. KARLSTROM: Well, I think that we've certainly put in the time on this over a period of maybe a year, I'm not sure. I think we started last--I'm not positive when, but it's been about a year.

MR. RUSCHA: See, I've gotten no work done in the last year. I've been thinking too much about this interview.

MR. KARLSTROM: I know, I'm feeling terribly guilty. The only encouraging thing I can say is that at least for this phase, pretty soon it'll be all over. But I want to thank you for participating in the "California Oral History Project."

MR. RUSCHA: I'm touched.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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