



**Artists Documentation Program
Video Interview Transcript**

EDWARD RUSCHA

October 21, 2013

Interviewed by:

**Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founding Director, Artists Documentation Program
Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard Art Museums**

Video: D. Carlton Bright | Total Run Time: 01:14:01

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This interview is part of the Artists Documentation Program, a collaboration of the Menil Collection, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums.

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About the Artists Documentation Program

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, artists have experimented with an unprecedented range of new materials and technologies. The conceptual concerns underlying much of contemporary art render its conservation more complex than simply arresting physical change. As such, the artist's voice is essential to future conservation and presentation of his or her work.

In 1990, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a grant to the Menil Collection for Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, then Chief Conservator, to establish the Artists Documentation Program (ADP). Since that time, the ADP has recorded artists speaking candidly with conservators in front of their works. These engaging and informative interviews capture artists' attitudes toward the aging of their art and those aspects of its preservation that are of paramount importance to them.

The ADP has recorded interviews with such important artists as Frank Stella, Jasper Johns, and Cy Twombly. Originally designed for use by conservators and scholars at the Menil, the ADP has begun to appeal to a broader audience outside the Menil, and the collection has grown to include interviews from two partner institutions: the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums. In 2009, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a grant to the Menil Collection to establish the ADP Archive, formalizing the multi-institutional partnership and making ADP interviews more widely available to researchers.

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[Speakers (in order of appearance): Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Associate Director for Conservation and Research, Whitney Museum of American Art; Ed Ruscha Artist]

[BEGIN INTERVIEW]

[00:00:40]

Ed Ruscha: Charles Cowles owned this painting one time and he --

Bob: He did?

Ed Ruscha: -- in order to get it into his apartment, as I understood it --

Bob: They squeeze it?

Ed Ruscha: -- he had to take it off the stretcher bar and twist it, you know --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Fold it --

Ed Ruscha: -- and so fold it --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So he had to undo it?

Ed Ruscha: -- but I don't know how, you know --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's probably on the folding.

Ed Ruscha: -- the care they took with it to fold it --

Bob: (inaudible) that they didn't --

Ed Ruscha: -- to get it through the door.

Bob: -- I bet they didn't.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, so that explains -- you see how this kind of dips --

Bob: Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- in here? Because when you fold it, you undo it, like, there.

Ed Ruscha Interview Transcript, Artists Documentation Program, Whitney Museum of American Art, 10/21/2013

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Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And then they fold it.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So my guess -- it's a folding stretcher --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, it's --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- and they just did that.

Ed Ruscha: I think so, yeah.

Bob: Yeah, because anyone whoever folded, too, also must have said -- they had enough common sense, they will let us fold it where there's the least amount of pigment.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, they just do that around --

Bob: Yeah, around those tubes, right?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Bob: Yeah.

[00:01:28]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, let's start. Are you OK? You ready to start --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- talking now? OK.

Ed Ruscha: And he may not have taken it off the entire stretcher bar, but --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, I don't think -- like, that --

Ed Ruscha: -- maybe loosened it in the middle, you know?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Exactly.

Ed Ruscha: And folded it, like, in half.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's what I think, that's probably --

Ed Ruscha: That could be it, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Because the edges -- to tell you the truth, the edges look really sharp.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Like it hasn't been restretched, you know?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Unstretched and restretched. OK.

Ed Ruscha: OK.

[00:01:44]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, today's October 21, 2013. Ed Ruscha, and let's start talking about this one.

Ed Ruscha: Good, OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: This would be a great one to talk about.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I'm real interested in the idea of it not being kind of one emotional statement, but lots of stages and build-up as you made it. So can we just kind of start with the beginning?

Ed Ruscha: Sure.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And was it kind of a pre-primed canvas?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. Yeah, it was a canvas -- probably Sears Roebuck.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah?

Ed Ruscha: Cotton duck.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and then I think I used some kind of acrylic -- probably a cheaper variety of gesso. You know, some kind of acrylic, white acrylic, just to put over the --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But you applied it yourself, probably.

Ed Ruscha: Washed over the -- yeah, yeah. And now I'm seeing two different colors here. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Two different whites.

Ed Ruscha: There's two different whites, right here, so --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, so, what --

Ed Ruscha: -- I don't know what this is all about, and --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, on our media description, we have both oil and house paint. And, when -- if, like, I'm going to go get a -- you can see how the whites -- look at how they differ, like --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- that's one and that's a different white.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. And, you know, I swear I can't tell whether that would be -- whether these lines would be ink -- they could be black ink, India ink.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Our media description says ink.

Ed Ruscha: Is that right?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So would've it been a pencil line? Because I see what might have been pencil lines first, or -- these are scoring lines of some sort.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, they're sort of plot lines, you know, where everything was set up into squares and -- mechanically or whatever you say. Enlarged to fit these things, and then I tweaked that and --

[00:03:39]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So there would have been a drawing for this one?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: A preliminary drawing that you would have then scored out --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- gridded out.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, which I may still have, I don't know.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, that would be interesting to see, because normally you didn't do that, right? You tended not to do drawings for paintings.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, well, on -- sometimes I would do little -- you could call them studies, but maybe not. Sometimes I would just go right into working on a painting without a study.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And this is a big painting.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, so this one had preliminaries.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And they were these drawing -- or you mean smaller drawings?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, they were smaller, probably about so big, I imagine, and that -- they would be about that big. And I didn't use a projector on -- I mean, I've used projectors before, but I didn't use one on this painting here. This was done sort of mechanically and -- by hand. This was enlarged, using a grid system, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I see a lot of the hand in it. I mean, the brush, the life of the brush. I mean, you see a lot of -- you're in this.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. Backgrounds -- mostly, well, I'm seeing up and down brushstrokes here, so I did all kinds of things. I had a tendency of being robotic about paint

strokes in that I would go back and forth. That's always been a -- kind of a working technique of mine is to -- when I fill in something -- is to go back and forth with it. And I see here, now, I've gone up and down. Maybe the back and forth --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- forth was the first coat.

Ed Ruscha: Maybe the first attack on this was to go back and forth and then come back later to go up and down to get a full, dark color.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And so rich. I mean, look at --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- incredibly rich it is. And, I mean, the lines, I -- were they taped? Did you tape?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, see, I might've taped right here, but not here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: And I think I used straight edge here, used a straight edge with this. And I can't explain this right here, the difference between that and that. Maybe someone had restored this at one time.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's possible.

Ed Ruscha: And I can't say that it was me or not me, but I don't think it was. But this must have matched that at one time and then gone its own way.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know, I was looking at that and because I don't see it anywhere else, I agree with you. I think some -- it's possible somebody went back into here for some reason.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know? Because I don't see it anywhere else. It doesn't make --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- this doesn't have an -- it's not an aesthetic choice, you know?

Ed Ruscha: No, and it doesn't go the whole length here, so --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Exactly.

Ed Ruscha: -- so I wonder if it could have had anything to do with the middle part of this canvas being moved and disturbed in some way --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Interesting, interesting.

Ed Ruscha: -- to make -- yeah.

[00:07:10]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But then we see areas over here that I think are -- I mean, so these would have been drawn freehand --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- pretty much, OK?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And then we see areas in here, like with the yellow, where it looks like someone --

Ed Ruscha: Oh, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- or may be a touch-up of another yellow that's changed differently over time.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You see?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, that I don't -- I can't explain that. But that doesn't look like something that I did.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I know.

Ed Ruscha: But I see the stroking --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, pretty --

Ed Ruscha: -- comes all the way down here like this, too, and --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Maybe it was a change. Maybe the O was further out in there.

Ed Ruscha: Well, see that's possible because, you know, an oval like this has got its own life and it begins to look funny in some ways. And so it's something that you could always be correcting. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, I can sort of feel it, to tell you the truth, standing here. I mean, I can almost see why you might have made that a narrower --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- you know, this may -- you may have had it out here --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- you know, to kind of --

Ed Ruscha: That's right.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- do what it does. Is that right?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I see that, too, so that could very well be. And then, you know, the yellow was -- it's yellow over blue, so it -- or it came, over time, maybe came out --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- and showing a little more.

[00:08:30]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Is that something that you would like us to inpaint out? Would you like that to be a yellow that just kind of went straight to the red?

Ed Ruscha: It would be suitable. I mean, it would -- it might help that, to keep from -- you know, you would avoid that change in color there or that sort of messiness right there, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: We could do that.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: We could match it better than you can.

Ed Ruscha: Probably.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Because that's all we do --

Ed Ruscha: Undoubtedly could.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- is match these colors.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:09:04]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: How about the rest of it? How does it look to you overall?

Ed Ruscha: And it looks pretty good, and I noticed that the -- this kind of base platform right here, this baseline is a different color. And it's because I used a -- either a different white or more white on top of the bottom one. And so maybe the bottom line is a -- is the original vinyl -- latex vinyl, whatever white that the entire canvas was painted with.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: And, I mean, that bottom line there doesn't match that at all.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: And besides, this has been painted over because, you know --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You can see it.

Ed Ruscha: You can see that this is that, but that's not that. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's so strange. It's like someone's gone in and -- maybe even with a coating of some kind that's discolored.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, it's --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, it'd be almost like somebody going in and trying to make one of your teeth a little whiter. (laughter)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Make them all white except for one, right?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, yeah, OK, well, I think that that's something we ought to address, see what we can do.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:10:28]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But the distinction of the whites is very clear. I mean, some of the diagonals are that cooler white and then there's the warmer white --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- and I guess that's the two, between the house paint and the oil paint.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah it is. Yeah, like this is even a brighter -- that's brighter than that, isn't it? And so I can't immediately explain that, but -- because this is -- that's been a long time ago, but I'm --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Let me get the light.

Ed Ruscha: -- looking at it that way and -- oh, tell me what that is.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, it helps you --

Ed Ruscha: Oh!

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- it's just a light, it just helps us look --

Ed Ruscha: OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You really see the differences in the white.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: On the angle.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, you can. (laughs) Yeah, and this white is almost that white, isn't it, yeah?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, I agree. Agree. But I think it might -- I think you're right, I think it's different from the very bottom --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- platform.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, it is.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's very sophisticated. Very sophisticated use of whites.

[00:11:40]

So you were -- with oil painting, I mean, it's so much an application of a material on kind of a non-absorbent surface and it kind of sits off of it in a way, which seems to have been something that was engaging you at this point, that was pretty early.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and I'm trying to remember what -- I imagine that's oil paint and that's oil paint, that's oil paint, and this being ink, probably.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I mean, it looks terrific. It's in perfect plane.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Which -- and they're on the attacking edges, I can see the white -- either priming or that first layer that you put around, so I think that's contributed to its planar stability.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. The more I look at this, the more I see different whites there. Or maybe my mind is making --

[00:12:39]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: What do you see?

Ed Ruscha: (laughs) Let's see. Why am I seeing -- let's see, is that and that the same? Maybe. Maybe so.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well --

Ed Ruscha: I just came out of some bright light, I -- maybe that's --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: The reason it makes --

Ed Ruscha: My eyes are playing tricks on me, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Our eyes are always playing tricks on us. I mean, I'm still seeing the weave of the canvas, so I'm seeing the white, you know, with the other white. But I don't know if that's fair to say. I was going to say it seemed more dense, I didn't see as much of the -- there's a real sense of the canvas here as opposed to there, where I'm more aware --

Ed Ruscha: Well, this is --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- of your brushstroke, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, this is over-painted and --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right, right.

Ed Ruscha: -- blocked out that, so these two are just the same and then I must have come back here and painted that out.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And it looks like you could've used tape, because I feel like I see a little --

Ed Ruscha: I could've used tape there, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You see that little kind of ridge of tape?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah, I think so. Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, it's beautiful. So, over there I'm seeing kind of the same fabrics, so I'm not sure it -- that you went back in there.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Not sure. And here we see the grid. But look at this, that's interesting.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. Oh, yeah, that's -- could that be more of this?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I'm wondering.

Ed Ruscha: I don't know. No, it doesn't look as yellow as that.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, it doesn't. And it also doesn't look as opaque.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: As thick.

Ed Ruscha: Right.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: As viscous.

Ed Ruscha: Right.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, no. Anyway, 1965 -- we should look as good, you know? It looks quite well. I mean, it looks really, really good and --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. You -- '65? I thought it was maybe --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Sixty-two?

Ed Ruscha: -- '62.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Sixty-two, sorry. Sorry, sorry.

Ed Ruscha: Sixty-two, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Sixty-two.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right, and 133 inches wide, so it's a --

[00:14:27]

Ed Ruscha: Do you remember one time that you sent me a pair of goggles?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know what? I was just going to give you another pair.
(laughter) Do you still have them?

Ed Ruscha: I do, I do.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, you know what? You --

Ed Ruscha: I use them all the time. I should've brought them.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- you're getting a new pair.

Ed Ruscha: I do --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, we did bring you one.

Ed Ruscha: Oh, you did?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, because I said --

Ed Ruscha: Oh, good.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- I want to go over here and look at --

Ed Ruscha: Oh, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- look at prints, and I thought -- and drawings. So, yeah, he needs it. Let's bring it.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I need mine, too.

[00:14:46]

Is there anything else you want to say about this one?

Ed Ruscha: No. Maybe we should leave that rest. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, agreed. We'll just leave that. I mean, I think we'll --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- we'll try to work on the yellow. I think that we should --

Ed Ruscha: Oh, thanks, yeah.

F: You're welcome. I'll grab you some.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: On those little yellows, maybe. But that's it. Is that good?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Does that make sense to you?

Ed Ruscha: OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Is that right?

Ed Ruscha: Sure.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Or should we just --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and this -- well, this up in here, is that the yellow you're speaking of --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: -- right up in there, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, do you want that or should we just leave it as is?

Ed Ruscha: That and that, I think that's a -- that's something that could be repaired.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, I think so, too.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Because it seems to me that the sharp edge is important and it's kind of -- you know, because of that -- it's like a pentimento in a way.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But it's entirely up to you.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I think it's OK to do that.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK. We're honored to have this one, absolutely.

Ed Ruscha: Good.

[00:15:54]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, let's look at these. Shall we start with this one? I know --

Ed Ruscha: All right.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- we're going to look at that.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Nineteen sixty, earlier even.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and I can't recall what kind of adhesive I used on this, but I was using a lot of rubber skin glue. Rabbit --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That rabbit --

Ed Ruscha: -- that -- no --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Rabbit skin glue? Or --

Ed Ruscha: No, no, no.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- rubber cement?

Ed Ruscha: Rubber cement. I was using a lot of rubber cement then.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But I don't see it, I don't see any dark and --

Ed Ruscha: But I don't see any.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No.

Ed Ruscha: And that stuff is really fugitive isn't it?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, maybe -- where's my one?

F: Here we go.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Maybe right along there, where is that --

Ed Ruscha: I mean, it's very fugitive, isn't it?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, look at, maybe --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- maybe there -- maybe you were using it there.

Ed Ruscha: I mean, you can almost take an X-Acto --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But, you know, the paper's so thick that I don't think -- it didn't come through.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, whereas I've done some other things that -- using paper -- using rubber cement that -- you know, with really thin paper.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Like, what do they call it?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Onion skin, like? Or not that thin?

Ed Ruscha: Well, almost like onion skin, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, and it comes through.

Ed Ruscha: And it's -- eventually migrates through the paper.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, and it's dark brown.

Ed Ruscha: And darkens, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right, I know.

[00:17:07]

Now, you're standing over there. Is that the bottom or is --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It goes this way, so this is -- OK.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Because there was a question about the orientation. I would -- so you signed it on the side --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. Yeah, I did that -- yeah, this is the way it goes, just like this.

[00:17:20]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, so how -- do you want to talk about process a little bit?

Ed Ruscha: And that little thing right there is cut out of a science magazine or a book or something, and that was pasted down. And the rest of this -- just scratched away.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You just scratched it away with a tool?

Ed Ruscha: Want to take my coat off, it's --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, take your coat off.

Ed Ruscha: And this color paper's probably a little greener, maybe, in the beginning and maybe has faded a little bit, but hasn't faded greatly, I don't think.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's my feeling, too. I mean, it looks really good. It looks very fresh, so --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:18:18]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So obviously, there were two different papers to begin with. So this was already a different color.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And then you -- did you -- what kind of tool did you use to get into that? Do you remember?

Ed Ruscha: X-Acto blade, yeah, I'm sure. Let's see, how does that work?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Is it stuck? My -- yeah, that's a --

Ed Ruscha: Does that go like that?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's just because you got a new one.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. It's a little tight. Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know, they make new ones, but these are my favorites still.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, well, these -- looks very much like the ones you've sent me several years ago.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, I know, I keep the same -- I know. I like the old ones.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:19:00]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So it's just kind of eating -- you know, you use the blade to kind of go through there.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Put down the paper and then put the -- or, no, put down this --

Ed Ruscha: And sort of mutilate the paper.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, and put down -- what kind of insect is that?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, that was -- I probably used an X-Acto blade, yeah. I'm not sure what kind of paper this was right here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, no, that looks great.

Ed Ruscha: But there was a Strathmore paper that I used a lot, which was called -- not kid -- kid finish. Called kid finish, but I don't know whether they even make it anymore.

[00:19:44]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So this is 1960, this is pretty early on, is it?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah. (laughter) OK.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, thank you for clarifying the orientation. We got that.

[00:19:57]

OK, I put these two together, '65 and '70, mainly for us to talk about graphite, which we have as our -- as the sole medium on this graphite paper and powdered --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- graphite, and to talk again about process and what it was like working with graphite in this way.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, see, there's a Strathmore chop right there.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, yeah. Watermark, you're right.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. So that's what -- it was a real hard finish paper and fairly flat. So I used a lot of tapes to block out this and then just rub this graphite in, in place, and powdered graphite.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: With what?

Ed Ruscha: Cotton balls.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK.

Ed Ruscha: And Q-tips. And then pencil lines right here, like this. And I think, as I recall, I didn't even have -- I didn't even buy powdered graphite. I didn't know that there was such a thing. But I was -- so I would just take pencils and sandpaper and make my own.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, so you're making your own.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, 'cause -- well, that made sense, so then after -- well, how do you do that, then? You kind of shave it and then you mash it with some --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and it becomes --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Work it with a --

Ed Ruscha: -- real fine powder and almost oily, you know, the way it is. And it's unlike charcoal. And charcoal is more grainy, I would say, and graphite is more powdery, finer.

[00:21:53]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And their working properties were different then?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, they're different in that these -- this graphite would have to be carefully done or it would make streaks and scratches and all that. So this was prone to what I might call mistakes or things intruding that I didn't want. Unwanted intrusions.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And they're probably difficult to correct, is that right? The graphite?

Ed Ruscha: And sometimes difficult to correct, yeah. But not impossible.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You got good at it? (laughs)

Ed Ruscha: What's that? Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Did you get good at it?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah, I got good at it. (laughs) And then I used fixatives on these.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, so the --

Ed Ruscha: And I might put a fixative on here and then put another stencil on that and do that little ball, because to put a stencil on there with unfixed graphite would pull the material up.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So, you put the tape down first and then you started applying the graphite --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- and then you might put a fixative with -- still with the tape down as you added another form with the stencil.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Is that right?

Ed Ruscha: Kind of a -- like a working fixative.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Do you remember what it was?

Ed Ruscha: Maybe called Blair's, if that still exists. I don't know. I think it does, yeah. And they may have called it workable fixative, where -- I don't -- I mean, that means you can do what I did here. But regular fixative might've worked, too. I mean, all it is is varnish, isn't it? Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But, I mean, it's really beautiful. It hasn't discolored in any way. I mean, it's really beautiful.

Ed Ruscha: Doesn't appear to.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It -- quick drying, so you can work, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: And quick drying, yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I mean, this drawing is in -- beautiful state.

[00:24:08]

And so the last step was lifting off the tapes?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, taking off -- I wish I could have -- I wish you could -- if you come to California, you've got to come and see this thing that I've just recently got where I did a painting in 1963, a little painting on paper with oil paint on kind of thin-ish paper. Well, paper like this. And it was of the word "room" and it was -- I had it framed and I separated the glass from the surface of the paper. And I saw it just recently, borrowed it to make a photograph of it. And we took the glass off of it so we could photograph it.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: The image was on the glass?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and the image was on the glass. I couldn't believe it.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: There was, like, a perfect ghost.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, it is.

Ed Ruscha: And so -- but it wasn't touching the glass.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, it's from -- I've seen it. It's from the oil --

Ed Ruscha: It's sort of off-gassing or something.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It is, and in enclosed environment, the oil does that.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And it's a perfect -- then when you put it up against black, it's like --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, you put --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- the exact -- right?

Ed Ruscha: You put glass behind it --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: I mean, if you take black away, you can't see it.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right, right.

Ed Ruscha: Put black behind it and there it is. It's a -- ghost-like.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's just --

Ed Ruscha: So I had a little container made for it, so -- (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Working on glass?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You didn't know.

Ed Ruscha: And I gave the owner of the work a brand new piece of glass. (laughter)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And you kept the old one.

Ed Ruscha: I kept the old one, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I would've kept it, too. (laughter) I completely -- I've seen that.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's just -- yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Well, we've all seen works that were once framed touching the glass and then removed, even after a year's time, you know, seeing an image offset onto a piece of glass. But never have I seen where it's been separated from the glass with an air space between.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, that is unusual.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, really, because usually I --

Ed Ruscha: It is.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- I was thinking of what you described where it's very close in contact with it.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, so --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Interesting.

Ed Ruscha: -- the mystery goes on, huh?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I love that.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:26:22]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Working -- you work flat on these?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Or slightly angled or --

Ed Ruscha: Mostly flat, but I may have tilted it a little bit like this, but not like this. Don't ask me why. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You don't need to tell me why, that's good.

[00:26:41]

OK, I put it alongside *Motor*, which, of course, is 1970, much later, because this is gunpowder and pastel we have as mediums.

Ed Ruscha: OK, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So I thought it would be interesting for us to talk about the graphite versus the gunpowder. How did gunpowder work its way into your arsenal of materials?

Ed Ruscha: Well, I had some little pellets of gunpowder and I thought that maybe I could try to use them. And they acted almost like little broken tips of pencils. And so they were too large, actually. They were not powdery enough. And then I got some other granular kind of gunpowder, and I don't know why I had this stuff. It wasn't to make art with and I wasn't loading shotgun shells or anything like that. So I just had this stuff and I looked at it for a long time and then I, for some reason, soaked some in water and just let it dry out on the floor on pieces of paper. And it began to -- right away, I could see salt was building up in it, because it's got salt in it, and charcoal and sulfur. And then - - so I just pushed away the salt and started --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Just brush away?

Ed Ruscha: -- playing it, like this.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I mean, was it granular at that point?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So you just brush it away, OK.

Ed Ruscha: But it was a lot like powdered charcoal and it was different than this material because it was easy to correct a mistake if -- easier -- and also, it had a little shade of yellowness to it. Not that yellow.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: That's more like a -- that's a pastel.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's the pastel.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, that I added to it. And so it became an easier method and I could work faster and -- without tragedies. (laughter)

[00:28:49]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So it -- there was an ease of working with the gunpowder that the graphite didn't have, is that right?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and it had sort of a work friendly feeling to it. And, like I say, it had a different kind of -- it had a different color to it, slightly -- a warmish --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I see that.

Ed Ruscha: -- sort of warmish tone to it.

[00:29:15]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So what would be the process with a work like this? I mean, what -- how would you start? And how --

Ed Ruscha: Have some notion in mind and then make a little -- not necessarily -- I may not have made a study of this. I think I just started right out on this thing and just sort of drew this out in hand on the paper and then cut out a mask for this. And I don't think I was using any commercial masking material. I think I just -- I think I used, like, Scotch tape.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And you'd use the Scotch tape to do what?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, to put down a positive --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: To put down --

Ed Ruscha: And all over this -- like here, like this, like this, down like this, and it would all kind of hang in together like this, go over here like this. This would all be blocked out in one single piece almost that would be continuous. Except for that. That's a little separation there. And so that would be another piece right there.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, I see what you're saying. These are all conjoined.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah. And then I would work this background. Work the background and then peel everything off and then I would block little parts of this off and - making a secondary kind of stencil and block that off. And somehow I was able to do -- work on these things without messing the background up. But, I mean --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Did you use a fixative on the gunpowder, too?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah. You can almost see a stroke in here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I can.

Ed Ruscha: See here, like this?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, I can.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So that would've been your cotton?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah, and then this in here was probably done with a -- oh, well, see -- no, see I might have just cut this away, taken this piece away right here -- or left this on, actually, and taken this piece off and worked that so that this is all clean, and then leaving this piece on here and then pulling this one off, this piece right here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I see.

Ed Ruscha: Pull that whole thing off, work that, and then it doesn't jump into this, and then pull that off.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: The last -- so the whitest would be the last that you're pulling off.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. So shortcuts, tricks and devices, all of that stuff I would use.

[00:32:09]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: The workings of an artist. (laughter) Yeah, and then the pastel would probably be the last? Or not -- maybe not necessarily?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It would be.

Ed Ruscha: It would be probably later on.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: What do you mean later on?

Ed Ruscha: After I sort of work -- mostly work this whole thing. And then also, I would have tape across -- or all the way around, like that.

[00:32:34]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Somewhere in one of your statements, one of your interviews, you said something about you couldn't do a ribbon word in paint or something else. I mean, it --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- that this -- what did you mean by that?

Ed Ruscha: That it was somehow not a friendly way to make -- for me, at the time, I didn't like the idea of making these into paintings where brushstrokes would replace rubbing.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I get it.

Ed Ruscha: But there's exceptions, because I did maybe five, six, seven, something like that paintings.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: With the same sorts of --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I would've --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- maybe the same paper kind of technique?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, like folded paper -- done with oil paint. But I never really got going on that.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, I see that, I feel that. I mean, the paper with the paper, it kind of --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- makes sense, the drawing. Well, it's just, again, beautiful and perfect state.

[00:33:40]

Ed Ruscha: It's in pretty good condition, but now is there a gap in there or -- between the -

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and it's probably -- is that --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's UV plex.

Ed Ruscha: UV plex, huh?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Is my assumption. It sounds like it is, to me, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: How does it look?

Ed Ruscha: What about that material? Is that stable over the years? UV plex?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, it has the ultraviolet absorbing material in it and we think it is, but you know -- and it is a protection, but it's not a total protection.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I mean, it's not. And if it were, it would have to be yellow. The Declaration of Independence is in UV plex that's completely yellow so it's protected --

Ed Ruscha: Is that right?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- and it's keeping all the UV out, but you're looking at a yellow piece of paper or whatever the --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- yellow piece of parchment. So for art, we can't block it all out.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Because you would have a color distortion, so --

Ed Ruscha: What about just the age of the Declaration?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, that's why we have it in that -- it's also in a gas, I think.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I've forgotten what gas it's in, but it's also -- yeah, the Declaration of Independence is there forever.

Ed Ruscha: That's at the Library of Congress isn't it?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yes.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and -- but in very low light condition, too, right?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yes, it's all of that.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And what we do -- and really, this is very bold to have your work out like this in this light right now for our interview, because normally everything's covered all the time.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know? It's always in storage and covered.

[00:35:03]

In fact, that leads into our next one, which is our portfolio, *News, Mews, Pews*.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, that reminded me, I curated an exhibit at Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, and so I borrowed this work from -- that was done in -- it was, like, a Leporello -- sort of like an artist's portfolio on paper, and it folded up into a leather case and it was done somewhere in Europe, Eastern Europe or somewhere about 1500. And all of these images --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Wow.

Ed Ruscha: -- were, like, of animals and it's, like, an artist saying, "Well, here's what I do." And then there'd be animals here and plants and various subjects. And I was able to show two of those, and they had to block the others out with black. And then those two being on display for one month, the rule with them was that it had to go back into total darkness for another five years. They couldn't show it to anybody. They can't even bring it out of the drawer to show it to someone.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, no, I know that.

Ed Ruscha: So they're serious. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I know -- very -- I know print rooms where you have to sign --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- that you've gone to see something and then you don't get to do it again in your life.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You had that one time, that's it.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I do understand it and that's why manuscripts are so -- are our best indication of what original ultraviolet blue looked like or original, you know, realgar or whatever -- stains and dyes, because they were in books.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And kept from light. So I do -- you know, I do understand the notion. On the other hand, the whole nature of art is to see it.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, to see it.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:36:56]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Let's go over and look at that, because we've been really careful in taking care of this. This is our version -- this is Erica, by the way --

Ed Ruscha: Hi, Erica, how are you?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- who's going to help us in handling this and taking care of it.

Ed Ruscha: OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: This has never been shown, ever. Our edition has never been on exhibition. So as far as we know --

Ed Ruscha: Wow. This is virgin.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, it is. (laughter) So the colors -- so, of course, my questions are going to have to do with -- well, I'd like you to talk a little bit about process, but also sort of how everything -- how the colors look to you, as you remember.

Ed Ruscha: I think over time that this yellow here -- this was white-ish.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, really?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, that's interesting.

Ed Ruscha: It was creamy.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: What is this? This is black currant pie filling over salmon roe.

Ed Ruscha: Well, are you sure? Let's see.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: (laughs) Let's look on the -- yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, let's see. Used media --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Used black currant pie filling over salmon roe.

Ed Ruscha: (inaudible) filling over unmixed raw egg, OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, but that's *Mews*. OK, let's look at *Mews*.

Ed Ruscha: Oh.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: See, *News* is black currant.

Ed Ruscha: Oh, let me see *Mews* with -- background. OK, so that's the background. And then over unmixed raw egg. Yeah, so these were just, like, chicken eggs. And --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Now --

Ed Ruscha: -- the yolk and the white --

[00:38:20]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Can we look at the next one, please?

Ed Ruscha: Next --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Because the *News* -- it's the *Mews* that has the background of Bolognese sauce and this --

Ed Ruscha: Oh! Oh, OK, sorry.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- and the black currant --

Ed Ruscha: OK, no --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- it'd be --

Ed Ruscha: But what about --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- let's look at both of them. Let's -- because they both -- got that black currant pie filling.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Let's look at them.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, so this one says the background's Bolognese sauce and the split font --

Ed Ruscha: OK, that's this.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: I mean, if you rubbed your fingers over that, it would be a faintly grainy feeling.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, really?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, because it's -- it would, like, finely turn to powder.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Wow.

Ed Ruscha: I think. I mean, it's kept its color, but -- and this, right here, that would be smooth, almost like touching a new car.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I can feel it, I can see it that way.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, you can almost see it that way.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, you can.

Ed Ruscha: See --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Where's that light?

Ed Ruscha: -- you can see a -- well, there's just a -- kind of a shine -- slight shine --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: There's total shine. Yeah, no, you real-- if you come over here --

Ed Ruscha: -- that that happens.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- and look at this.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, yeah, here we go.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Look at -- oh, look at the shine.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, you see a shine on that --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And you don't --

Ed Ruscha: -- but not on this. This is more --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's so interesting.

Ed Ruscha: This has gone inert and that just has a different -- well, it has an egg finish to it, which has always been stable in -- throughout time.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I think we've got these wrong, Ed. I really do, because that obviously has the egg in it, because you can feel it and you can see the sheen on it --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- even though that's supposed to be on *Mews* as opposed to *News*. I think we --

Ed Ruscha: Or whatever (inaudible)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- I think this is -- even though we took this off your frontispiece --

Ed Ruscha: Oh, that -- salmon roe. Oh, salmon roe, OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Or on this --

Ed Ruscha: OK, maybe -- no, maybe that is correct. Maybe that is correct. So you said --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's the pie filling over some --

Ed Ruscha: Salmon roe is eggs.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's true, that's true.

Ed Ruscha: I don't -- I --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's right, you're right.

Ed Ruscha: -- you know, I think that's what we did. And then, you know, this technique here was just like a --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, what did -- how did you do it?

Ed Ruscha: Well, it's like a very simple stencil here --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: -- on the silkscreen, and then this was, like, a split fountain where we mixed this -- what --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Black currant pie filling.

Ed Ruscha: -- pie filling. It's just a -- like, a commercial --

[00:40:30]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Like, you just took it out of the can --

Ed Ruscha: -- pie filling, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- you mixed it up.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And then how'd you put it on?

Ed Ruscha: Then put it out like this, like this, like this, and then put the salmon roe right here. Salmon roe might have had -- the little skins may have popped up and stopped the --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That makes sense.

Ed Ruscha: See little shreds of skin --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, yeah, I see that. I wondered what those were.

Ed Ruscha: That's -- I think that's what that is, those little shreds of skin that would stop the --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: -- the image from printing completely, and then --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know --

Ed Ruscha: -- these would mix together with three or four passes and then they would begin to blend and then from there make the addition.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Fantastic. I've seen that with egg, where the skins leave an absence.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Your know, or a -- the --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, so I'm wrong about that, I mean --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, so then this --

Ed Ruscha: -- salmon eggs, see? And that's just, like --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That makes perfect sense.

Ed Ruscha: -- right out of the jar.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: And they're these golden sort of eggs, rather large, not like caviar but bigger.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Wow.

Ed Ruscha: You know, and then probably mashed it up, made some kind of paste out of it and then used it that way.

[00:41:40]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And how did you choose these materials? You would just go in a store and look at things?

Ed Ruscha: Went into a market in London and just started picking out things and some of the materials were -- bled terribly. I mean, like, tried to use cream, you know?

Regular dairy cream and it didn't -- I couldn't make any image from it. And so I like the idea of it stopping and making an image where it would hold edges. So I just stayed with those kind of materials.

[00:42:19]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, let's look at (inaudible)

Ed Ruscha: There's another one in here of --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: We're going to look at them all, OK?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: We're going --

Ed Ruscha: There's another one in here of caviar.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yes, yes, that's coming up. *Stews*.

[00:42:35]

The color looks good to you, though? How does the color look?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, the color looks --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Is it sort of the way you remember?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, with the exception of that first one, you know, that -- where I -- it was creamier as it was first printed.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Now, wait, you even -- you remember *News* being --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- even creamier?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, creamier color. This actually -- yeah, and I've got examples of this that's never seen light.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, really?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, I'd love to see that.

Ed Ruscha: And so time, maybe -- over time, with drying out and all that, would --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Sure.

Ed Ruscha: -- would create that.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I'd love to see that.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:43:09]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, so here the background is Hershey's chocolate flavor syrup.

Ed Ruscha: Let's see if you can smell it without touching your nose to it. No, I can't, really.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I can't.

Ed Ruscha: I can't smell it.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Hershey's chocolate flavor syrup and Camp coffee and chicory essence mixed six to four. And the lettering is squid in ink.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's beautiful.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and the squid in ink -- now these are just, like -- again, they're like little pieces of skin that would slide across the -- so all these prints are different from one another. The next one that came off the press would be slightly different --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Sure.

Ed Ruscha: -- than this. They're not all consistent.

[00:43:50]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Did you have to reject any of them?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I did.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: I mean, if they -- if it didn't -- I mean, I was after some kind of middle -- sensible middle ground with these things. And so if one just exploded or something, I would reject it and tear it up. But these printed fairly stable.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That squid ink is so beautiful and it's exactly the way it looks, too, that black ink.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:44:20]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, let's look at another one. It almost has a pewter feel to it, you know? It has almost a metallic feeling.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK.

Ed Ruscha: OK, now this one has no background.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No.

Ed Ruscha: And --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, this is that one that --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- axle grease over caviar --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, so --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- on raw paper.

Ed Ruscha: -- that was just from an auto shop, we got axle grease. And I don't know about the stability of that or anything. I don't know -- I don't want to touch it, but this is, again, where egg skins --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That is so interesting.

Ed Ruscha: -- from caviar would stop up the image and make its own sort of image.

[00:45:11]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Did it move -- I mean, on some of the editions, is -- it's obviously different --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- like some of them are more caviar and some are more axle grease?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, they'd be slightly -- but they were mostly in between this area, right in here, like this.

[00:45:26]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, so now the obvious question, I mean, how do you put these two together? I mean, was it just a pure visual thing? I mean, were you entertained by the idea of axle grease and caviar? I mean, what --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, well, I let the rhyming words be the spring-off point for the whole idea. And then just putting these things together became sort of trial and error. And when I would see -- I might mix this up and make a test of those two things mixing together and then figure, well, maybe it wouldn't work as well on this as it would on this and let that be my guiding light. (laughs)

[00:46:15]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Was it harder to do when you didn't have a background color, when you were right on the paper?

Ed Ruscha: Not so much, no. No, it actually -- it was simpler.

[00:46:26]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, let's look at the next one. That's a beauty. It's just a beautiful one. OK, *Stews*. Crushed baked beans, caviar, fresh strawberries, cherry pie filling, mango chutney, tomato paste, daffodils, tulips and leaves.

Ed Ruscha: So now --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Wow.

Ed Ruscha: -- all the other prints here are with the squeegee moving left to right and this was one where --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Wait, you're going right to left.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, but here, this one, I moved top to bottom.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So that's why we have it --

Ed Ruscha: Top to bottom --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- looking like that.

Ed Ruscha: -- why you have streaks here like this, and this is probably flowers right here. I got just, like, fresh flowers. And they've actually -- they've kept their color here, too. And what do we have here? Let's see, *Stews*, split fill, crushed baked beans, which would be like this over in here. Then caviar, oh, somewhere in here. Maybe caviar in here. Strawberries, cherry pie filling somehow works in here. Mango chutney, tomato paste, daffodils, tulips and leaves on raw paper. Yeah, so this would be a combination of those things right in here. Mostly, this was the -- heavy in the baked beans. (laughs)

[00:48:00]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So it would be sequential? These materials, you would apply --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, but it was consistent.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- I mean, you never mixed them together.

Ed Ruscha: No, no, I wouldn't mix them all together, no. They were -- like, baked beans here and a little bit of this. You know, there's actually a -- there's a photograph that goes with this that has --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, really?

Ed Ruscha: -- shows the -- oh, I'll send you one if you want.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I don't think I've seen the photograph.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No.

Ed Ruscha: There's a color photograph --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, I'd love one.

Ed Ruscha: -- of the making of this particular image here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, I would love to have that.

Ed Ruscha: I'll see if I can find one and send it to you.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I would love that.

Ed Ruscha: OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, I really would.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Really love to have that.

Ed Ruscha: So it just has -- shows --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Shows the material.

Ed Ruscha: -- actual baked beans up in here, without -- they're not even crushed up. I mean, they were just crushed by sweeping them across the screen. And then these various other mixtures across like this.

[00:48:56]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Did you -- was this -- I mean, this obviously was over time that you -- I mean, you'd go different days and buy materials or was it kind of just one big --

Ed Ruscha: I did a couple of -- maybe three shopping trips to get these materials. And I did -- when I first went there, I had no notion of doing anything like this. But I made a print or two -- I made, at this same workshop here, Alecto workshop, where I made an etching and then I made a silkscreen print using conventional inks. And then I didn't know where to take that, so I worked into this conspiracy. (laughs)

[00:49:45]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Were you -- you know, there's such a tradition of artists making stains and dyes from natural materials. Cennino Cennini talks, you know, about that. So that certainly was one route you could have gone. But you were much more, obviously, intrigued in using your contemporary materials.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I just felt like the palette is out there in the public somewhere, that -- why not let it be the grocery store? And then I just -- I like the idea of leaving the paints behind, you know, the inks and not messing with inks. Just doing something beyond that. And also, at the same time, I didn't have -- I had no theories about longevity on these or even wanted to. And so I just felt like these things will have to stand by themselves, and they have pretty much done so, you know? Like, they're fairly stable and I think -- I mean, you've left one of these out in plain sight, you know, it wouldn't last that long, I don't think. Maybe 10, 15 years.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It'd be interesting -- you know, it would be interesting to see if it faded or --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- darkened, you know? It'd be interesting which way the material would go.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But that idea of not knowing that was something that was appealing to you --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- as opposed to using, you know, an artist's traditional material that you know.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and then it was -- it sort of had an urgency to it, too, where I didn't -- I wasn't going to -- I liked the idea that it was not planned for the future. (laughs)

[00:51:39]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But you're very particular about the materials you use and the way you use them, so --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- the idea of permanence must be somewhere -- or at least stability must be somewhere in your mind.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I didn't know -- I thought, well, maybe varnishing these things may be an answer to preserving them. But I never did that and I didn't, I -- it turns out I didn't really have to do that.

[00:52:00]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Let's look at the next.

Ed Ruscha: Now, this one is -- the imagery here is due to a double printing. In other words, this was done with pickles that we -- maybe mortar and pestle or something, ground them up, these pickles that were already sliced and everything, right out of a jar. And then they became kind of -- and they probably had extenders and preservatives and everything else, then, because they were commercial products, you know, that you would buy off the -- right off of the rack. And so I just made one print, one pass through the press of this material that was just -- it made a solid image with no letters or anything on here. And then we -- I think we let that dry for a couple of days and it was pretty strong. You know, like, the studio that it was in, boy, it smelled like pickles.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah. (laughter) I'll bet.

Ed Ruscha: And then it sat for a couple of days and I think we maybe worked on something else and felt like -- that this was -- and it took some trial and error, but then the second pass on this was the same material. So that's the only -- in

this whole portfolio -- the only example of imagery being made by just printing it twice, one over the top of the other so there was no white under this.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: You know, it was just like this printed right over the top of that. So, actually that color is that times two.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's hard to believe that it's only times two, frankly.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It -- there's such a distinction.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I would have thought even more than that.

Ed Ruscha: I know. So that's what happened.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's so interesting.

Ed Ruscha: And surprising at the same time.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah. Well, that's where the beauty of the whole thing is, the surprises that come out of it.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:54:13]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, let me think if I have any other questions I had with regard to that. You also talked somewhere about painting paintings with egg yolks and egg whites. I guess they were paintings that you were doing. Did you -- I mean, you've used all kinds of -- you continue to use materials and other --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I don't really do that today, I --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: -- but I probably have from time to time mixed egg yolk in with maybe acrylics. And -- but I didn't do that extensively.

[00:54:51]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And did -- the staining you also tried with different kinds of supports, right? Different fabrics?

Ed Ruscha: I use mostly paper.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, OK.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I don't think I did anything with fabrics that I --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK. Taffeta or something like -- I don't think I've --

Ed Ruscha: No.

[00:55:05]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, all right. Can we turn our attention to these, unless -- is there anything else you want to say about that?

Ed Ruscha: I think we've covered -- let's put that to sleep. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, let's do it. Let's talk about these.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. Well, I did a series of paintings in the '70s using rayon --

F: We have about 20 more minutes.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK.

Ed Ruscha: -- rayons and taffetas --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right.

Ed Ruscha: -- and using varnishes and these kind of materials, you know, like cherry juice and jellies and blood and things like that. So I did put things on -- but not cotton canvas. I would use mostly this slick material that was, like, you know, rayons and taffetas and silks.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So they weren't absorbent materials. And so the material would kind of sit on them.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, they sat on the --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Makes sense.

Ed Ruscha: -- and sometimes they'd leak through. But they were stretched on a -- on stretcher bars, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I'd like to see that, know that I have.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:56:20]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: We're just looking here at an early -- your *Standard Study #2*. We have as a media pencil, tempera and ink, so I guess, -- I'm wondering about the tempera.

Ed Ruscha: Tempera being that and that and then there's pencil lines in here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And what was it? Was it just -- do you remember what it was?

Ed Ruscha: I want to say pen -- tempera -- no, I can't recall that. Yeah, so this -- I think they were just tubed -- either called designer colors or -- you know, it wasn't Liquitex that I started using later on. But, yeah, I think these were just tube colors that mixed with water, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, that makes sense. And they're in, you know, really beautiful. Again, beautiful condition.

Ed Ruscha: They kind of hold their -- they're stable, aren't they?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: They are, and they hold their color really well.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:57:24]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, let's look at this one. So now we're jumping from '62 to '73, *Two Sheets Stained With Blood*, gunpowder and blood.

Ed Ruscha: OK, yeah, so now this was -- these are stencils, cut --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK.

Ed Ruscha: -- and then this was also a stencil cut and reworked -- probably a piece of paper that I worked on. Yeah, it looks like a piece of paper because it has a --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Sharp edge.

Ed Ruscha: -- less of a sharp edge than that.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: True.

Ed Ruscha: And so this is probably a piece of paper that covered the whole area, but it had this open and this open and then I just worked in on top of this original background and then applied the blood later. Poked my finger.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: With your finger?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I was wondering if it was your blood.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:58:25]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And then you just -- did you drip it out in a bowl and then do it --

Ed Ruscha: Mm-hmm.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: -- or just go right on it?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and I may have put it on there with a --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Q-tip or something?

Ed Ruscha: Q-tip. Or a brush. And I think I may have -- well, I did work into this, right there and there and there.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I see that.

Ed Ruscha: And then I probably put fixative on the whole background -- maybe not even fixative on this, right here, because I didn't want to have fixative and then put blood on the top that.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right, right.

Ed Ruscha: So --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, you probably did in order -- fixative to then put these on top, right? Or not?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I think so -- reworked it and came back into it.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's such a beauty. How does it look to you?

Ed Ruscha: Looks pristine. Looks pretty good.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[00:59:50]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Now here we get into -- when we get -- you know, to -- well, actually, we could look at *Despair and Disgust*. Or this one, I want to talk about acrylic and airbrush and sort of -- technique on this looks very complicated.

Ed Ruscha: Not so much. I think that this was not rubbed on here. This was done with an air gun. And these lines right here were also stencils. These little spots here were stencils. They're not painted on there. There's a -- these black things are. All this is, like -- all this sort of chatter here and that line and all that is done with ink, probably, afterward. But that little white right there would be a block out. You know, a piece of tape or something like that. And then the background is all done -- and then these -- we can even see -- a guide, pencil guide right there. A little faint line --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: -- which was like a guideline to me and then I just use an air gun on this, on these letters. And then after that, pulled all these away, pulled all these

stencils away, these lines, and then came back with a -- this yellow, because the yellow goes over the top of some of these lines there.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Right, I see that, wow. So, I mean that was --

Ed Ruscha: So it's fairly simple. (laughter) Not too complicated.

[01:01:47]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I mean, that was a jump to go from using your gunpowder and your dabbing and your cotton to then go to an air gun.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah. I always hated air gun art, airbrush art.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah?

Ed Ruscha: Never liked it. And, oh, well, I find myself using it. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Well, for different purposes.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

[01:02:13]

So this is done vertically or -- again, I -- we didn't see holes to necessarily suggest you had --

Ed Ruscha: This is -- yeah, this is done vertically, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But we didn't see any indication that you tacked it up on anything, so you had a clip?

Ed Ruscha: No, but I must have had a ledge or something that I put it on and it could have been at a slight angle, you know, where I could work on a -- something like that, but it would be tilted a little bit, just so it would be -- sit straight.

[01:02:40]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So the lines, you said, were a stencil.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, they're blocked out with pieces of tape.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So thin pieces of tape were put right on the paper.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, and some of them are irregular like this and -- well, most of them you'll find are irregular. Like this one is thin at the bottom, thick at the top. Each one is slightly different and this one's wavy here, so --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So you probably cut these with a scalpel or some sort of fine --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, I would cut these, make them however I wanted to make them and then just sort of put them down and let them act up.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: This was just masking tape you were using?

Ed Ruscha: This is likely Scotch tape.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Really?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

[01:03:32]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So tape has been a material in your arsenal, really, from back when we were looking at 1962 painting.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah. Yeah, I've always used it as a block out and never really thought that much about it. It's just -- aids me in moving forward.

[01:03:59]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: We are running a little bit out of time. Can we look at *Ghost Ship*? Would you like to look at *Ghost Ship*?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah, OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Well, this is in pretty good condition, and this would be just black acrylic. Ivory black acrylic. And I think having -- I mean, there's probably a -- maybe evidence of guidelines, but I don't see them.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I didn't see any looking either.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, so maybe I did this in a way that wouldn't show them. But it's all done with the airbrush, with one color.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Pretty amazing, really.

[01:05:00]

When you use your airbrush, do you use the variety of heads and distance and speeds and pressure and all of that?

Ed Ruscha: Not so much. I -- there's -- yeah, I mean, you can open the thing up, and if I wanted to make a big dark black area and I want the paint to come out real fast and thick, then I can -- I adjust it a little bit. That -- and there's just a tiny adjustment to it. And then if I wanted something finer, something it would take a little more time but have more control over, stop it down a little bit and then do the more detailed stuff.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Do you have a favorite brand of airbrush?

Ed Ruscha: I have one that's called Iwata, which is a Japanese airbrush and that sort of works fine. I've -- I use it and it doesn't -- I don't have to really even think about it. (laughs)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's the best tool to have.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: The best tool to have, yeah.

[01:06:12]

So this would have been several passes, I take it, I mean --

Ed Ruscha: I think so, yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, building -- I mean, that's what I'm feeling, different buildup of it.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, it's all -- I mean, it's all fairly consistent and in pretty good shape. I'm careful not to -- you know, after I do something like this and I want it to stay this way, I don't go, like, putting my fingers on it and -- or setting things down on it necessarily. Like, I'm pretty cautious about that. And so it's -- it maintains an overall blackness.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, it does. And then with black sometimes, it's so hard to maintain that evenness that you have on this.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know, it's -- so often either ages differently or absorbs differently and you somehow managed to really --

[01:07:08]

-- do you prepare the paper in any way before --

Ed Ruscha: No.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, just right on it, wow.

Ed Ruscha: Maybe dust it off. (laughter)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: That's a good thing. Yeah, well, it's just a beauty. And, again, we keep it covered and we keep it just like this.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Flat and protected.

[01:07:28]

Well, I think we have one more if we have time. Do we have time for one more?

Ed Ruscha: OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: No, we sort of don't.

F: We do.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: We do. I just wanted to talk about *Despair and Disgust* and then we'll just end there.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK?

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You've been very patient, this is great.

Ed Ruscha: OK, so this -- yeah. Well, materials-wise here, there's just three things that happened and one is that I made a blue background, consistently blue background, and then made this oval on that. And then, with brush and paint -
-

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Airbrush, this is all airbrush.

Ed Ruscha: Oh, yeah, that's airbrush, yeah. And the background, too.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, right.

Ed Ruscha: And the letters -- just painted on by hand. So they even have -- see the brush -
-

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I can see it, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Brushstrokes even have --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Kind of a water color, water based -- yeah.

Ed Ruscha: Water color, yeah. And, like, that's a little brighter than that and that's a little brighter than that. But that's all done with -- just by hand and --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Do you pencil it in first?

Ed Ruscha: -- brush and paint. Would use some kind of -- yeah. I would do a -- some kind of very faint guideline and then paint within that.

[01:09:00]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: And what's the time sequence? Do you have to wait for this to dry and absorb in? I mean, do you do the background and then go do something else and come back or do -- can you continue --

Ed Ruscha: I might let it -- let this thing dry for a day, but not much more.

[01:09:10]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, yeah. And so, again, well, I'm assuming this is something that's done more or less upright.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, this is upright. And I don't think I -- I think that -- well, this is maybe four-ply museum board and I probably worked on this almost at the angle that it's -- it is here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: You know, in my days -- when we were working on Old Master paintings and we would varnish to get a really soft coat, we would put it flat and varnish across it and let the solute fall out and it made this really soft surface. Have you ever explored that?

Ed Ruscha: No, I haven't done that, haven't done that.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: That's an idea. Thanks for the tip.

[01:10:13]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh. (laughter) Well, thank you for your time in talking to me. It's always a pleasure.

Ed Ruscha: OK.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I appreciate it.

Ed Ruscha: All right.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Thanks. (laughter) OK.

[01:10:22]

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: This says acrylic and fabricated chalk --

Ed Ruscha: Fabricated chalk?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Exactly, let me go get some -- (laughter)

Bob: See? Even he (inaudible)

Ed Ruscha: I never made my own chalk.

F2: Really? (laughter) Maybe -- well --

Bob: You fabricated it. It was, like --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, it says acrylic and fabricated chalk on canvas.

Ed Ruscha: Fabricated chalk. I wonder what I'm saying?

Heather: That's a good (inaudible)

Ed Ruscha: I wonder what I'm thinking.

Bob: Do you think it could be the letters of the old (inaudible)

Ed Ruscha: No. All right, I don't --

Bob: Do you think it could be the windows?

Ed Ruscha: You know, this is just paint.

Bob: Could it be the windows?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah, looks like paint to me.

Bob: How about the windows, to give that matte quality? No? (inaudible)

Ed Ruscha: I don't know --

Bob: Fabricated chalk.

Ed Ruscha: -- what I'm saying.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: I don't think it's right, because I don't see it. I --

F: Carol, fabricated chalk is the new conservation term for --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: What?

F: -- a Conte crayon.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: For what?

F: Conte. Did you say Conte crayon?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: But where is it?

Bob: Why can't they call it (inaudible)

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: OK, but where's the Conte crayon?

Ed Ruscha: So -- Conte crayon.

Bob: Is there Conte crayon on those smears of the -- on the lake?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, in here?

Bob: No?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Kind of echo of the --

Bob: Maybe he drew in the --

Ed Ruscha: OK, no, right here.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Where?

Ed Ruscha: See this right here? There's a little --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Right there.

Bob: It's a different -- it's a matte quality.

Ed Ruscha: There's a shadow, kind of, like, there.

Crew: Move your light.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: That's -- that must be what we're talking about --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: -- with chalk. I don't know -- I would say almost like it could be charcoal, because that's what I would likely use in something like that.

Bob: So maybe didn't use Conte crayon.

Ed Ruscha: I didn't even -- so --

Bob: Do you ever use Conte crayon?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: So charcoal. That's a good thing to know.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, yeah.

Bob: And then, you know what's funny? It doesn't say -- isn't that pencil where the window's inverted? But -- that the pencil's not noted?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Where's pencil?

Bob: Is that pencil on the windows? That's all paint?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's paint.

Bob: Even those little thin lines?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: It's paint, yeah.

Ed Ruscha: I think those thin lines are paint.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Bob: Wow, that's a --

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro: Yeah.

Bob: How'd you do that, Ed? With, like, a one-hair brush?

Ed Ruscha: Well, (inaudible) or it could be -- you know, it could be part of this faint charcoal, like that.

Bob: Oh, maybe. And you had --

Ed Ruscha: And so --

Bob: -- and it was just so thin.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Bob: Right.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Bob: (inaudible)

Ed Ruscha: I mean, every so often, I'll -- you know, if I use a pencil and it's almost -- you have to search to find it --

Bob: Yeah.

Ed Ruscha: -- I'll use the term in the medium --

Bob: And say that --

Ed Ruscha: -- if I think it's part of the picture, you know?

Bob: Right.

Ed Ruscha: Otherwise it's not.

Bob: No, but it's just sort of like a -- under --

Ed Ruscha: Yeah.

Bob: -- structure of the thing.

Ed Ruscha: Yeah, under the thing, yeah.

Bob: Yeah, yeah. I love this painting.

[END OF RECORDING]