

Janice Mason Art Museum
LESSON PLANS FOR WIER EXHIBIT
Background Information

ARTIST NAME : Ed Ruscha

ART PIECE(S) ON DISPLAY: “Untitled”

About the Artist

Ed Ruscha was born on December 16, 1937, in Omaha, Nebraska. Born and raised a Catholic, he readily admits to the influence of religion in his art. He was also influenced by [cartoons](#), [cinema](#), and [graphic design](#). He lived in Oklahoma City for 15 years before moving permanently to Los Angeles, where he studied at the Chouinard Art Institute from 1956 through 1960. At first he had aspirations to be a [commercial artist](#). Ruscha pursued [commercial art](#) at Chouinard, but he also worked in [fine art](#) and was exposed to [Abstract Expressionism](#), a movement with methods he found flawed. A breakthrough for the artist came with the realization that an artwork could be preconceived, as seen during the late 50's in the works of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Blending his love for [typography](#) and the popular images of the early 60's, Ruscha used this new premeditative approach to challenge the parameters of traditional painting. Ruscha said, “I wanted to make pictures, but I didn't want to paint. Some painters love to paint – they get up in the morning and grab a brush, not knowing what they're going to do, but they just have to have that hot brush moving through those colors. But I was more interested in the end result than I was in the means to an end.” By the early 60's he was well known for his [paintings](#), [collages](#), and [printmaking](#). Ruscha was also a filmmaker, producing two films, *Premium*(1971) and *Miracle* (1975). He has also published sixteen [photo-documentary](#) books.

Throughout his career, Ruscha has been a teacher as well as an artist. He taught at the University of Arizona, the University of North Dakota, the University of California in Los Angeles, Vancouver School of Art and San Francisco Art Institute. Some of his commissioned art work include a [mural](#) commissioned for the Miami-Dade Public Library and for the Great Hall of the Denver Central Library. Ruscha's work has been internationally exhibited for more than three decades and is represented in major museums collections.

About the Art

Ruscha was considered a member of the West Coast [Pop movement](#). His work was constantly changing and blurring traditional boundaries. He also experimented with a wide variety of [media](#). He achieved recognition for [text paintings](#). In “Adios” (1967) and “City” (1968), he used oil paint to produce words that appear as if they were dripped on the canvas with liquid, while the use of gunpowder in “Optics” (1967) and “Sin” (1967) create words that look like flowing ribbons of text. In “Stains” (1969) the artist produced seventy-five sheets of paper [screen-printed](#) with materials ranging from lipstick, salad dressing, castor oil, spinach, and bacon grease. In the 80's a more subtle [motif](#) began to appear. His work began to portray a sense of memory and nostalgia in his perception of Hollywood and the great Western front. By the 90's Ruscha was creating larger paintings of light projected into empty rooms. Much of Ruscha's work has centered around investigations of [depth perception](#), and his works attempt to show depth in a different way.

The art piece “Untitled” by Ruscha in this exhibit is a [lithograph](#) that depicts the night sky with streaks of light. The dark foreground gives [depth perception](#). This piece was completed in 1983 and measures framed h 22 ¼” X w 60”.

Related Terms

Abstract Expressionism
cartoons
cinema
collage
commercial art
commercial artist
depth perception
fine art
graphic design
lithograph
media
motif
mural
painting
photo-documentary
Pop movement
printmaking
screen printed
text painting
typography

Specific Lesson Plans

Grades K-5

Kentucky Core Content

AH-E-4.1.32 Art elements-line, shape, form, texture, and color (primary and secondary hues) and color groups (warm, cool, neutral).

AH-E-4.1.33 Principles of design- organization of visual compositions: emphasis (focal point), pattern, balance (symmetry), contrast (light/dark).

AH-E-4.1.34 Describe a variety of media and processes used to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.35 Recognize that artists choose to express themselves in different styles and subject matters.

AH-E-4.1.42 Use a variety of media and art processes to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.31 Identify various purposes for creating works of art.

AH-E-4.2.32 Purposes of Art- expressive (express emotions and ideas), narrative (describe and illustrate experiences), functional (decorate objects).

Objectives

- To learn that Ed Ruscha has been influenced by his Catholicism, [cartoons](#), [cinema](#), [commercial art](#) and [graphic design experiences](#).
- To know that Ed Ruscha was more interested in the end result of his art, than the method he used to produce it.
- To understand that Ruscha is well known for his [paintings](#), [collages](#), [printmaking](#), filmmaking, and publishing of [photo-documentary](#) books.
- To learn that Ed Ruscha has been a teacher, as well as an artist during his career.
- To realize that Ruscha has experimented with a wide variety of [media](#) such as oil paint dripped on the canvas, gunpowder, and screen-printed materials such as lipstick, salad dressing, castor oil, spinach, and bacon grease.
- To learn that by the 90's Ruscha was creating larger paintings of light projected into empty rooms.
- To understand that much of Ruscha's work has centered around investigations of [depth perception](#). Each of his works attempts to show depth in a different way.

Suggested Questions

1. Where and when was Ed Ruscha born?
2. What are some of the factors which have influenced the creation of his art?
3. Which was the most important to Ruscha the end result or the process of doing the art? Explain your answer.
4. What are some of the types of art that Ruscha has created?
5. Tell about Ruscha's career as a teacher.
6. What are some of the many different kinds of [media](#) with which Ruscha has experimented?
7. What kind of [paintings](#) was Ruscha completing in the 90's.
8. What is one factor in Ruscha's art that he has always tried to emphasize in different ways.

9. Describe Ruscha's work "Untitled" which is currently housed in the Janice Mason Art Museum.

Related Activities

1. Have students create a picture that portrays depth. What techniques help to give the appearance of depth?
2. Give the students a picture similar to one that Ruscha has created. Let them attempt to replicate his picture? If the end product is more important than the process, show the students a picture, but give no explanation of how to create it. See what different approaches students try.
3. Let students experiment with some of the different [media](#) Ruscha has used. Try a screen print using salad dressing.
4. Have students research the life and works of Ed Ruscha and have them produce a movie portraying the information found. Students may use other methods of reporting such as making a written or oral report, developing a poster, developing a time line of important information about Ruscha and his art, or making a booklet showing pictures of Ruscha's art and discussing how depth perception plays a part in the art.

Grades 6-8

Kentucky Core Content

AH-M-4.1.34 Identify and describe a variety of art media, art processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and stories.

AH-M-4.1.35 Media: two dimensional-crayon, pencil, fabric, yarn, paint (tempera, watercolor), ink and pastels.

AH-M-4.1.36 Media: three-dimensional-clay, paper-mache', found objects (used to produce artwork), wood, glass, metal, and stone (Properties of media need to be known in order to respond to artworks).

AH-M-4.1.39 Subject Matter: landscape, portrait, still life, abstract, and non-objective.

AH-M-4.1.42 Effectively use a variety of art media, processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, and experiences.

AH-M-4.1.37 Art Processes: two-dimensional-painting, fabric design, printmaking, and mosaics.

AH-M-4.2.31 Describe and compare the characteristics and purposes of works of art representing various cultures, historical periods, artists, and/or styles.

Objectives

- To learn that Ed Ruscha has been influenced by his Catholicism, cartoons, [cinema](#), [commercial art](#) and [graphic design experiences](#).
- To realize that Ed Ruscha experienced a breakthrough when he realized that an artwork can be preconceived as shown in the works of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.
- To know that Ed Ruscha was more interested in the end result of his art, than the method he used to produce it.
- To understand that Ruscha is well known for his [paintings](#), [collages](#), [printmaking](#), filmmaking, and publishing of [photo-documentary](#) books.
- To realize that Ruscha has experimented with a wide variety of [media](#) such as oil paint dripped on the canvas, gunpowder, screen-printed materials such as lipstick, salad dressing, castor oil, spinach, and bacon grease.
- To know that during the 80's he portrayed a sense of memory and nostalgia in his perception of Hollywood and the great Western front.
- To learn that by the 90's Ruscha was creating larger [paintings](#) of light projected into empty rooms.
- To understand that much of Ruscha's work has centered around investigations of [depth perception](#). Each of his works attempts to show depth in a different way.
- To be able to describe Ruscha's art piece "Untitled" as a [lithograph](#) that shows the night sky with streaks of light. The dark foreground gives a feeling of depth. This work was completed in 1983.

Suggested Questions

1. Explain how different factors have influenced Ed Ruscha's art?
2. How did Ed Ruscha experience a breakthrough when he realized that an artwork can be preconceived as shown in the works of Jasper Johns and Robert Ruschenberg?
3. Which was Ruscha more interested in, the method of creating art or the end result of the art?
4. Explain your answer.

5. Explain the different types of art Ruscha creates.
6. What are the different **media** with which Ruscha has experimented?
7. What type of art did Ruscha predominantly do in the 90's?
8. Ruscha has a great interest in one particular facet of his art. Explain what it is.
9. What must you do to create a feeling of depth in a painting?

Related Activities

1. Have students try to create a picture that shows depth. What do they have to do to make it appear to have depth? Have them try different techniques?
2. Give the students a picture similar to one that Ruscha has created. Let them attempt to replicate his picture? If the end product is more important than the process, show the students a picture, but give no explanation as how to create it. See what different approaches students try.
3. Let students experiment with some of the different **media** Ruscha has used. Try a silkscreen utilizing spinach.
4. Have students research the life and works of Ed Ruscha and have them produce a movie portraying the information found. Students may use other methods of reporting such as making a written or oral report, developing a poster, developing a time line of important information about Ruscha and his art, or making a booklet showing pictures of Ruscha's art and discussing how depth perception plays a part in the art.
5. Have students look at some **photo documentary** books. Help them to understand what the books are by showing them some samples and discussing them. Have students bring their cameras and make some pictures that can be developed and used in a documentary. Have the students produce a **photo documentary** booklet about a topic of their choosing. Help them to write their book and place their pictures at strategic places throughout.

Grades 9-12

Kentucky Core Content

AH-H-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate terminology.

AH-H-4.1.32 Art Elements: color and color theory: primary and secondary hues, values (tints and shades), intensity (brightness and dullness); color relationship: triadic, complementary, and analogous.

AH-H-4.1.33 Principles of Design: Balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal pattern), pattern, repetition, contrast, variety, movement, rhythm, proportion, transition/gradation, and unity.

AH-H-4.1.34 Defend personal interpretations of works of art and architecture by using arguments.

AH-H-4.2.39 Purposes of Art: persuasive (advertising, marketing, propaganda); formalist (abstract, non-objective, arrangement of elements and principles as subject matter).

Objectives

- To learn that Ed Ruscha has been influenced by his Catholicism, [cartoons](#), [cinema](#), [commercial art](#) and [graphic design experiences](#).
- To realize that Ed Ruscha experienced a breakthrough when he realized that an artwork can be preconceived as shown in the works of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.
- To know that Ed Ruscha was more interested in the end result of his art, than the method he used to produce it.
- To understand that Ruscha is well known for his [paintings](#), [collages](#), [printmaking](#), filmmaking, and publishing of [photo-documentary](#) books.
- To learn that Ed Ruscha has been a teacher, as well as an artist during his career.
- To know that Ed Ruscha was a member of the West Coast [Pop movement](#).
- To realize that Ruscha has experimented with a wide variety of [media](#) such as oil paint dripped on the canvas, gunpowder, screen-printed materials such as lipstick, salad dressing, castor oil, spinach, and bacon grease.
- To know that during the 80's he portrayed a sense of memory and nostalgia in his perception of Hollywood and the great Western front.
- To learn that by the 90's Ruscha was creating larger paintings of light projected into empty rooms.
- To understand that much of Ruscha's work has centered around investigations of [depth perception](#). Each of his works attempts to show depth in a different way.
- To be able to describe Ruscha's art piece "Untitled" as a [lithograph](#) that shows the night sky with streaks of light. The dark foreground gives [a feeling of depth](#). This work was completed in 1983.

Suggested Questions

1. Explain how Ruscha shows depth in his piece "Untitled".
2. What are some techniques you can use to show depth in a picture?
3. What type of art was Ruscha producing in the 80's and then the 90's?
4. List the different [media](#) that Ruscha experimented with and explain how they could be used?
5. How are [collages](#) made?

6. What are the different kinds of **printmaking** that Ruscha used in his art? Explain the process used.
7. How has Ruscha's art been influenced by his religion? **Cinema?** **Cartoons?** **Graphic design experiences?**
8. What was so important about Ruscha's discovery that artwork can be preconceived as shown by the work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg? Explain what this means.
9. Explain the different educational institutions in which Ruscha taught?
10. What characteristics of Ruscha's art help to classify him as a **Pop artist?**

Related Activities

1. Have students create a picture that shows depth. What do they have to do to make it appear to have depth? Have them try different techniques?
2. Let students experiment with some of the different **media** Ruscha has used. Have them make a silkscreen utilizing spinach.
3. Have students look at some **photo documentary** books. Help them to understand what the books are by showing them some samples and discussing them. Have students bring their cameras and make some pictures that can be developed and used in a documentary. Have the students produce a **photo documentary** booklet about a topic of their choosing. Help them to write their book and place their pictures at strategic places throughout.
4. Have students research the life and works of Ed Ruscha and have them produce a movie portraying the information found. Students may use other methods of reporting such as making a written or oral report, developing a poster, developing a time line of important information about Ruscha and his art, or making a booklet showing pictures of Ruscha's art and discussing how depth perception plays a part in the art.
5. Have a debate in class. One side will defend the position that Ed Ruscha needs to be considered among the most influential artists of his day. The opposing side will take the position that Ruscha should not be considered among the most influential artists of his day. Students should do extensive research to gather information to support their position. A group of students will serve as judges to determine which side has defended their position with the most pertinent facts and arguments.