

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation

TITLE: *Jumbo*

MUSEUM No.: 233.1991

ARTIST: Ed Ruscha

DATE: 1986

MEDIUM: Acrylic paint on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 6' 10 1/8" x 8' 2 1/8"

SIGNATURE: Signed and dated on verso, UL corner: "Ed Ruscha/1986," as well as "EDWARD RUSCHA UNTITLED 1986" on the stretcher

CONSERVATORS: Laura Richter Le and Michael Duffy

DATE OF TREATMENT: February 2024

ART HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ed Ruscha began producing a series of shadow paintings, in the mid-1980s, inspired by Franz Kline's black and white palette. He reflected, "I remember this notion I had in school about Franz Kline, thinking how great it was that this man only worked with black and white. In thought at some point in my life I would also work with black and white, and here it is."¹

The series was stylistically inspired, and sometimes directly based off of, photographs. Ruscha commented, "The dark paintings came mostly from photography, although they are not photographically done or anything. I feel that they are related to the subject of photography." He continued to note that he used an airbrush to achieve the smooth, hazy appearance of the surface: "They are dark and strokeless, they're painted with an airbrush."²

DESCRIPTION

The painting is executed on a cotton duct canvas (est.). The paint is acrylic applied with an airbrush (as are his other grayscale works from the latter half of the 80s).³ It has a speckled pattern of light and dark shades of grey and black in the upper background and uniform, glossy black for the elephant silhouette and hill below. In raking light, there are horizontal streaks of varied gloss, presumably from the way in which the paint was applied with the airbrush, since Ruscha said he never used varnishes/surface coatings (Image 2).⁴

It has a foam core backing board (3 pieces). The tacking edges are covered with a glossy, black tape that extends around 1/2 inch onto the back. There are four Oz clips and D-rings on the verso.

CONDITION

There is a layer of dust across the surface. The dust fibers easily wrap around the teeth of paint surface, and do not easily lift when brushed or blown with an air puffer.

The top left corner on the tacking edge has a half inch circle of abrasion that has rubbed away the paper tape and, at the front edge, torn the canvas. The top right has a puncture in the center of the corner, tearing the black tape and canvas. The corner of the tape on the back, right edge has fallen off. Additionally, along the

¹ As cited in F.Fehlau, "Ed Ruscha," *Flash Art*, January/February 1988, 70-72.

² E. Ruscha, quoted in T. Beller, "Ed Ruscha," *Splash*, February 1989.

³ See artist's comment in the art historical information above.

⁴ See artist's questionnaire.

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edges of the recto, especially on the left side, the tape is lifting. The adhesive below the black tape appears yellow and crumbly.

TREATMENT

- 1) The tape around the edges was cleaned with a brush and soot sponges.
- 2) The surface was dusted with a soft nylon brush, an air puffer, and a plastic-tipped swab (Huby SA-001).
- 3) The accretions on the tape were cleaned with swabs dampened with water and benzyl alcohol.
- 4) The losses in the paper tape and canvas were filled with Evolon⁵ that had been toned with Golden Acrylics, adhered with methylcellulose 5%.
- 5) Lifting tape around the edges was set down with Lascaux medium for consolidation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Edward Ruscha: Words Without Thoughts Never to Heaven Go, exh. cat., Lake Worth and New York, 1988, p. 33 (illustrated in color).

D. Ehrenfeld, "Who Will Be Left in the Earth's Community?" *Orion Nature Quarterly*, 1989, p. 4 (illustrated).

J.A. Lewis, "Ed Ruscha, Getting Beyond Words: At the Hirshhorn, the Painter Who No Longer Spells Out His Affinity for Conceptual Art," *Washington Post*, July 2 2000, p. G6 (illustrated in color).

J. Wainwright, "Ed Ruscha," *Contemporary*, 2002, p. 95.

New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, *Ed Ruscha and Photography*, exh. cat., 2004, p. 207 (illustrated in color). <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-ed-ruscha-untitled-4986275/?>

⁵ Evolon CR is a non-woven micro-filament textile is made from 70% Polyester and 30% Polyamide

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IMAGES



Image 1: Condition Image, 2022

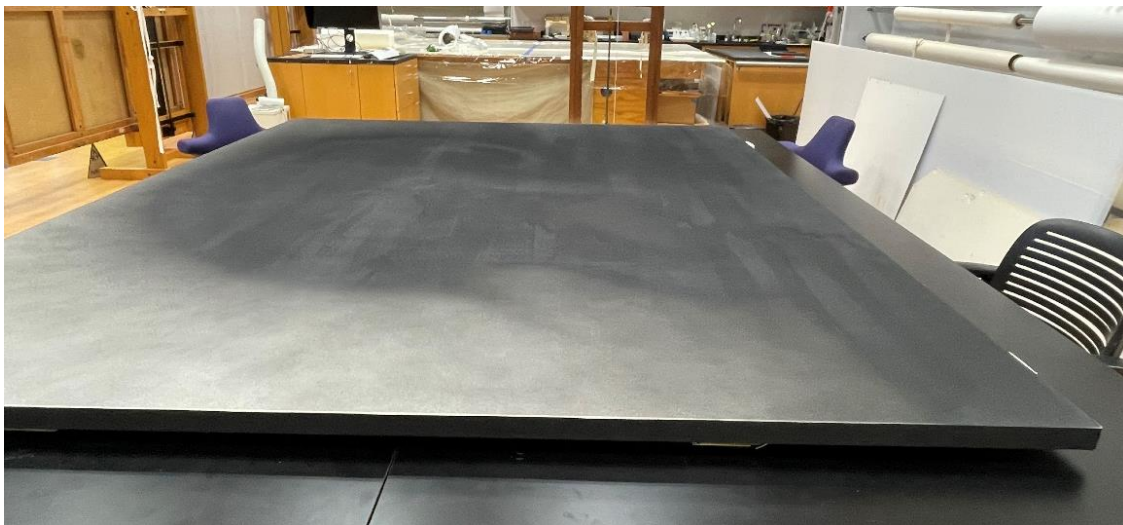


Image 2: Streaks across the surface with varied gloss, visible in raking light

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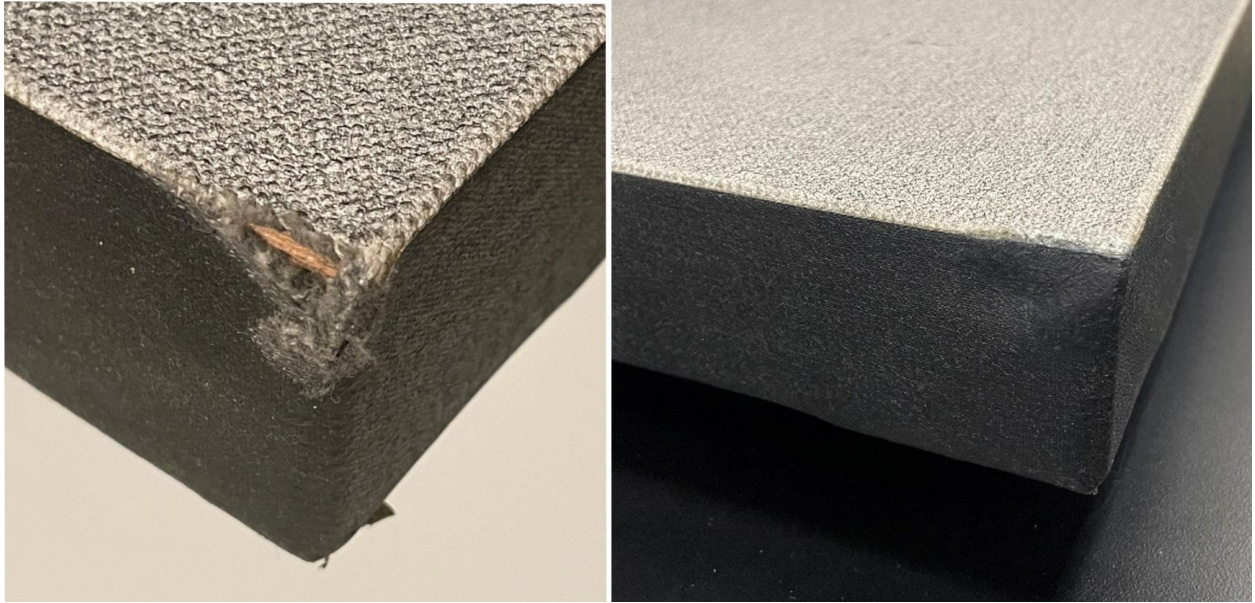


Image 3: Abrasion and loss in the upper, left corner; before treatment (left) and after treatment (right)

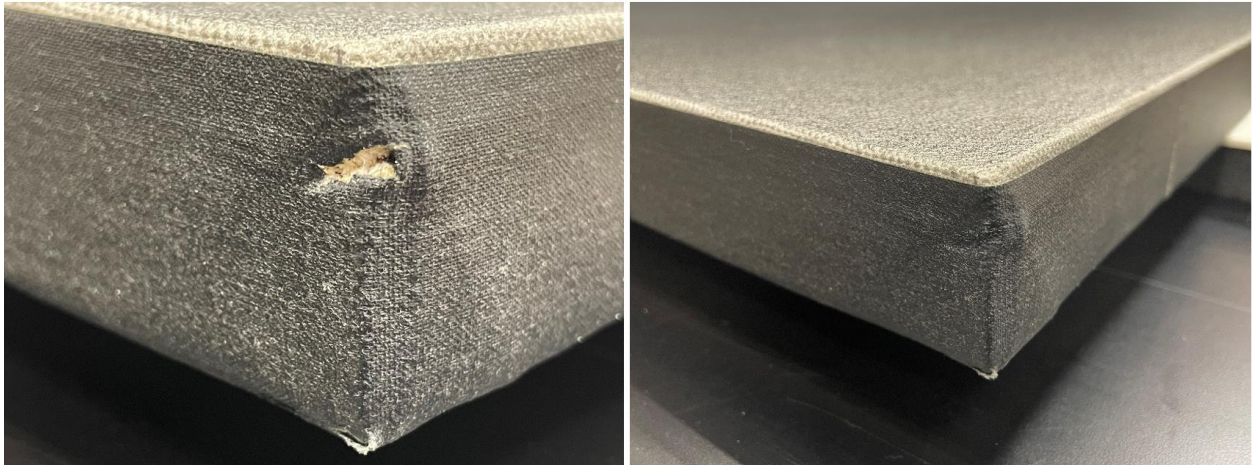


Image 4: Tear in the upper, right corner; before treatment (left) and after treatment (right)

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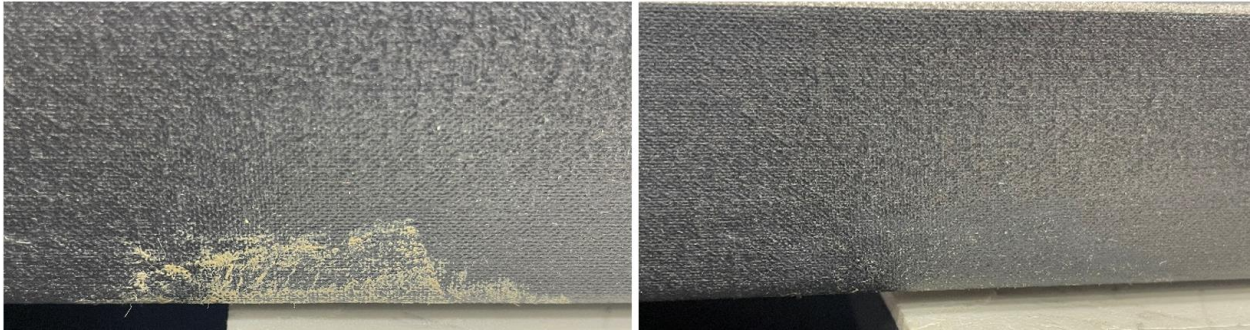


Image 5: Accretion on the top, center tacking edge; before treatment (left) and after treatment (right)



Image 6: Fill on the bottom, left corner (lower right as seen from back), where the tape has fallen away