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David Lynch: The Art Life

By Unknown

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I think every time you do something
like a painting or whatever,
you...
you go with ideas.
And sometimes the past
can conjure those ideas and color them.
Even if they're new ideas,
the past colors them.
I was born in Missoula, Montana.
Then my parents got a house
in Sandpoint, Idaho,
and I lived there for two years.
So, I remember Sandpoint, Idaho.
Little Dickie Smith, my friend,
he and I
sat in a mud puddle under this tree.
My mother dug a hole, or my dad did,
that we could sit in in the hot weather,
and they'd fill it with, you know,
water from the hose,
and we'd sit in this mud puddle.
It was so beautiful.
And you get to squeeze mud
and sit with your friend
under the shade of this tree?
Forget it.
And then they moved
to Spokane, Washington.
In those days,
my world was very, very small.
It extended up to this grocery store
in one direction
and down to a friend's house,
which was, like, two houses down.
And then the other direction
down to my friend Bobby's house.
Mostly, we played outdoors all day
and we made our own guns
and we would play war.
And I would draw rifles and pistols
and airplanes and knives
and things like that
'cause the war

was still kind of freshly over
and, you know, somehow we all got into it.
Because I was always drawing,
my mother did...
This is the greatest thing she did.
One of the greatest things.
She refused
to ever have me have coloring books.
She did not do that
for my brother or my sister.
Somehow,
a really beautiful thing came to her
that those would be restrictive...
and kill some kind of creativity.
And she did not...
ever tell any off-color jokes.
She was totally against any racism.
She was religious,
but not preachy about it.
She was a, what you call,
a very warm and good person.
But she wasn't demonstrative.
She wouldn't grab your cheeks
and kiss you.
Not in a million years.
But you knew that she loved you
and wanted the best for you
and expected you
to, uh, live in a certain proper way.
I never heard my parents argue ever
about anything.
They got along like Ike and Mike.
Super happy household.
You know, as I look back,
I didn't think anything of it,
but I had tremendous freedom.
Nobody was overbearing.
It was as if there was
just a foundation of love,
and off we went, you know,
each in our own direction.
One night,
I kind of have the feeling
it was in the fall and it was pretty late.

Usually, my father would go outside
and yell,
"John?
David?"
And that would bring us home.
But this night, it must've been,
I don't know, close to that time.
It seemed to be pretty late.
I don't know what we were doing,
but from across Shoshoni Avenue...
out of the darkness
comes this...
like, uh, kind of like a strangest dream.
Because I've never seen
an adult woman naked.
And she had beautiful, pale, white skin...
and she was completely naked.
And I think her mouth was bloodied.
And she kind of came strangely...
walking strangely across Shoshoni
and came into Park Circle Drive.
And it seemed like
she was sort of like a giant.
And she came closer and closer,
and my brother started to cry.
Something was bad wrong with her.
And I don't know what happened,
but I think she sat down on a curb, crying.
But it was very mysterious,
like we were seeing
something otherworldly.
And I wanted to do something for her,
but I was little.
I didn't know what to do.
And I don't remember any more than that.
Like I said, maybe, you know,
my world was no bigger
than a couple of blocks...
up until high school.
Really no bigger than a few blocks.
And that's why I say huge worlds
are in, you know, those two blocks.
Huge.
Everything's there.

Everything.
And you could live in one place
and have everything.
The night before we left Boise...
it was a summer night,
but it wasn't, uh,
a joyful summer night.
There's a triangle of grass
between our house and the Smiths' house.
And at the base of the triangle,
there's a tree.
And... I must have said good-bye
to everybody.
The whole family was out there.
My dad was out there.
I think my brother and sister
were out there.
I don't know if my mom was there.
She might've been just inside the house.
And the Smiths were all out.
We were just out there.
And Mr. Smith came out.
And...
I can't tell the story.
I just... I never talk to Mr. Smith...
hardly ever...
but, boy...
Then we went to Virginia,
and the day I started school,
there was a huge hurricane.
And the rain was coming down.
You couldn't hardly see the school.
It was, like, dark almost.
It was so thick, this storm.
There were two other guys
starting school...
and those two guys became my friends,
but...
they were not the friends I should've had.
See, Boise, Idaho...
seemed like sunshine...
green grass, mowed lawns.
Such a cheerful place.
Such a great place.

Virginia seemed like always night.
And...
I developed spasms of the intestines.
I was... It was total turmoil.
I was smoking cigarettes...
uh, going into DC and drinking...
and sneaking out of the house at night.
It was, um...
It was like... It was almost like...
I couldn't...
control it, you know?
It just... It just
was what was happening.
My mother's
main saying to me a lot
was, "I'm very disappointed in you."
I was real busy...
not doing what she wanted,
especially when I was in the ninth grade.
I got in with a bad bunch
and got into a lot of trouble,
but I... I was really
living in hell.
I had to live two different lives,
and I always felt
that she thought...
And I don't know why she thought this,
and I don't know where this thing came in,
but I had the feeling
she thought
I had something really good in me,
you know, like a high potential.
So the reason that she would say
she was disappointed in me
is when she didn't see that thing.
Not as an artist,
but like just some kind of thing.
I don't know where she latched onto that,
but I kept kind of letting her down.
I never studied.
I never did anything.
I hated it so much.
I hated it, like, with powerful hate.
The only thing that was important

is what happened outside of school,
and that had huge impact on me.
People and relationships,
slow-dancing parties,
big, big love
and dreams.
Dark, fantastic dreams.
Incredible time.
I had a girlfriend named Linda Styles.
And one night...
And it was about 9:30 or 10:00.
Somehow I was on the front lawn
of Linda Styles' house
and I'm meeting this kid, Toby Keeler,
who didn't go to Hammond High School.
He went to private school.
And Toby told me his father was a painter,
and that, you know, kind of realization
that you could be a painter
popped... You know...
blew all the wiring.
And that's what I wanted to do
from that second.
So I begged him to take me
to his father's studio.
And at that time, Bushnell Keeler
had a studio in Georgetown.
And I only actually saw it once,
that next weekend.
I went... Toby took me,
introduced me to his father.
And I saw his studio.
And it was the classic studio.
I mean, it was so beautiful.
Bushnell could really set up a studio.
Um, many areas set up
for, like, drawing and for painting
and for different kind of experiments.
And, uh, it was just
what you would call, you know,
the art life,
you know, right before your eyes.
I don't know when I started
using the term 'The art life',

but one of the things Bushnell did besides, uh, just being a painter and living it...
Living life as a painter.
He gave me the Robert Henri book, The Art Spirit.
And I loved that book.
I can't remember much of it now, but I... we used to carry it around and The Art Spirit sort of became the art life and I had this idea that you drink coffee, you smoke cigarettes and you paint.
And that's it.
Maybe girls come into a little bit but basically, it's the incredible happiness of working and living that life.
The reason we moved to Virginia in the first place is my dad got, uh, promoted, um, basically to a desk job in Washington, DC.
So we lived in Alexandria, Virginia, and my father... instead of taking a bus or driving to work, would, many days, wear his forest service uniform and a ten-gallon cowboy hat... and walk out the front door and walk into DC.
It was so uncool to me... uh, to see him going off in this, uh, cowboy hat and this uniform.
But then later, as it always happens with kids, uh, now it seems, uh, supercool.
And he was his own guy, you know.
He didn't give a shit about what was going on.
This was what he was.
Since my father grew up on a ranch, and you had to...

if something's broke, you have to fix it.
And we were always building things.
Always projects.
Always, you know, working
on one thing or another on the weekends.
So this kind of goes into your brain
that you can do these things,
and they're fun.
It made all this work really fun.
And he was, uh, a research scientist.
Meaning, he was, uh, looking into things.
There's a lot of... things,
like when you punch a pin into a bug,
there's incredible textures
just to a little bug.
Incredible legs on insects,
and wings
and innards.
It's unbelievable.
I wanted to get a studio
in Bushnell's studio,
a room he was renting me.
I think it was 40 bucks a month.
And my father, bless his heart,
said he would pay half if I paid half.
So I got a job at Hurley's Drugstore
delivering prescriptions at night.
One time I came in during the daytime,
and I went to the soda fountain
to get a Coke.
And Jack Fisk was the soda jerk.
And so he said,
'I hear you have a studio.'
And I said, "Yeah."
He said, "Uh, you want somebody else
to share the rent with that?"
Then pretty soon, Jack was painting
all the time down there with me,
and it was too small.
So then Jack and I got
three more different studios.
And I knew, uh, my stuff sucked.
But I needed to burn through...
I needed to find what was mine.

And the only way to find it
is just to keep painting and keep painting
and keep painting
and see if you catch something.
My father wanted me home

at 11:

I didn't wanna come home at 11:00.
All I wanted to do was paint.
So we had a big fight.
And we never had fights.
But this particular time,
it was really bad.
And I remember, like, you know,
it was terrible.
And I said I wanted
to stay out later than 11:00,
and I might have said something like,
'well, I'm going to stay out later than 11:00."
And my father said, "fine,
you are no longer a member
of this family."
And he just left the room.
And this hit me like
a, you know, sucker punch.
You know, just really.
And I went up to my room.
And I remember I just was,
like, you know, devastated.
But then Bushnell called my father.
'Cause I explained to him,
you know, what it was.
And he said to my father...
He said, "I don't wanna interfere
with any of your business,
but I would like to let you know
that every day,
David comes down here and is painting.
He's not goofing around.
And I wish my son
had something that he loved to do
and, you know, was working like this.
I just think it's important that you know
he's real serious about this

and he's really working."
And so this went a long way with my dad.
And I think after that,
I could come home any time I wanted,
and it was totally cool.
You really couldn't ask
for a better father.
He didn't have
any kind of deviousness in him.
He was really pure
and he was super fair,
just naturally honest and fair.
Whenever I wanted anything,
his first thing was,
"meet me halfway."
I'd have to do something,
and he would do something.
And I just, um, saw that
as a super good, you know, thing.
I would be able to get
what I wanted with his help,
but I had to do something too.
Are you ready?
Oh, shit.
Oh, fuck.
Oh, you motherfucker.
In the tenth grade,
the sunshine starts coming back.
Then I made a whole bunch
of different friends,
and that started a good turn.
Now, all those new friends,
we would go into DC all the time,
but it wasn't the same dark vibe,
so I still was living,
like, maybe three lives now
because I had those friends
and I would do stuff with them,
I had my home life
and would do stuff there,
and then I had the, uh, studio.
So you act and speak and think one way
in this environment,
then you act and speak and think

in this other environment totally different.
And then another way of acting
and speaking and thinking in the other one.
For instance, my girlfriend,
who was a beautiful, wholesome,
wonderful person,
I never brought her home.
I never brought any friends home,
if I could help it.
And I kept things very separate.
And I did not want my parents
to go to my graduation,
but they went anyway.
I just, um, was afraid
of what would come out
if everybody got together.
For some reason,
I always liked the idea
of going to Boston.
And it just sounded
like, uh, a good place.
And my father helped me
move everything in,
and then he took me to the supermarket,
and we stocked up on a lot of stuff
and brought it back to the apartment.
And then I walked out with my dad
and said good-bye to him on the street
and watched him drive off.
Then I went back in my apartment.
And I never left.
It was two weeks before school.
I had a transistor radio,
so I sometimes listened to music,
but I ended up sitting in a chair.
And the only time I got out of the chair
was to, uh, pee or eat.
And the batteries
went down and down on the radio,
so I had to hold it to my ear to hear it,
and then it went dead.
And so I was just basically
really unable to do anything
and definitely unable

to leave the apartment.
And I say it took all my strength
to go to school the first day.
So, it was something
I needed to go through, I guess.
But I still, um, would
much rather stay at home.
And there is, uh, always, um,
nervousness of going out.
See you, Mary.
I don't get out much.
Come on.
Come on.
My father, uh, told me, you know,
I could get this place,
but I had to take a roommate,
and my roommate later turned out
to be Peter Wolf
of the J. Geils Band.
He's a great musician.
And he knows the blues.
But he didn't ever lift a brush.
And the first night, there was, um,
another guy named Peter
who had a pickup truck.
And the three of us, uh,
got in his pickup truck
and drove back down
to, uh, New York City, in Brooklyn.
And it was on that trip
that I smoked, um, marijuana
for the first time.
And then it was my turn to drive.
So I was driving on a freeway
and pretty soon I hear, "David?"
And I said, "what?"
And they said, "David."
I said, "what?"
"David!"
"You stopped on the freeway, man."
And I had stopped right in the...
Not the right lane, but in the middle.
'Cause I was watching these white lines
and then it got slower and slower,

it was such a dream.
And the next time I smoked dope...
uh, Bob Dylan was playing, you know,
at this big place right down the street.
And so, lo and behold,
out of thousands of people
in this, you know,
auditorium kind of thing
which was real steep.
I was way in the back.
Out of all those seats, when I sat down,
there was this girl sitting next to me
that I'd just broken up with.
Then Bob Dylan came out on the stage
and I couldn't believe how little he was.
And I measured him
with my fingers on my knee,
and I said to her,
'his jeans are only this big."
And then I measured his guitar
and I says, "his guitar is only this big."
And I wasn't even digging the music,
it was so far away.
So I wanted to get out of there
really bad.
Then when the concert was over,
Peter came back with a bunch of his friends.
He said, "nobody walks out on Dylan."
I said, "I walk out on Dylan.
Get the fuck out of here."
And, um, so that was the end
of Peter as my roomie.
I just didn't wanna be,
you know, anywhere in this world.
It was, you know, now my world.
I hated Boston.
Boston Museum School was kind of like...
to me like going back to high school.
I didn't like anything inside that building
except the sculpture department.
They don't do anything
except make you do these exercises.
And it's just drudgery.
And they want the exercises

to be a certain way,
and if your way isn't that way,
you're just gonna, you know...
You're gonna flunk out of art school.
It's a joke.
And then no kids
were serious about painting.
So, it was just, uh,
a kind of a waste of a year,
and I quit going to school.
And then I heard from Jack.
He was fed up with Cooper Union.
I was more than fed up
with Boston Museum School.
And we decided we're gonna go to Europe.
So, we started making plans,
and we found out this guy,
Oskar Kokoschka,
had this class in Salzburg, Austria.
So we decided we were gonna go do that.
But it was, like, not even half-baked,
these ideas.
So we were gonna go for three years.
And...
But we came back in 15 days.
So Jack was, really, my best friend.
But when Jack and I came back from Europe,
we had a pretty big falling out.
Next thing I hear is he's up at
the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,
which made me really happy for him.
But... Bushnell
and some of the painters in that area...
I would go to Bushnell's and have
coffee with him, you know, every day.
And so he got this idea that he said,
"Let's all snub David.
Let's make life miserable for him.
And then maybe
he'll wanna go back to school."
And that's what they did.
I'd go over there, they'd hardly talk to me.
And I just, I'd get this strange feeling,
and Jack telling me how good it was.

One day, I said, "Bush, I think
I'm gonna go to... back to school."
And he said, "well, bully for you."
He wrote a letter, secretly, to the school,
a really powerful
letter on my...
I did never know about it till way later.
When I went up there to school,
they not only accepted me,
but they put me in advanced classes.
And it wasn't anything to do with my work.
It was Bushnell doing it.
It was great.
First of all,
yeah, I wanted to go up there
'cause Jack said it was good.
But Philadelphia was one of the last places
in the world I ever wanted to go.
There's something about Philadelphia
that I didn't like,
and so when I got...
I forget the way the bus goes,
but you're not in Philadelphia,
and then you go across a bridge
and that bridge takes you.
So, on the bridge, I was saying,
"I'm not in Philadelphia, I'm not
in Philadelphia, I'm not in Philadelphia."
Then I got halfway over the bridge
and I said,
"I'm in Philadelphia, I'm in Philadelphia."
And I just couldn't believe it.
Philadelphia...
was kind of a poor man's New York City.
So it was a weird town.
It was a kind of a mean town.
One woman, who was my neighbor,
reeked of urine.
And she was a complete racist.
There was another woman
who was totally crazy.
She was a neighbor,
lived down the street with her parents.
And she would go around the backyard

on her hands and knees
and squawk like a chicken
and say, "I'm a chicken, I'm a chicken"
and squawk and squawk
and go around and around
in this tall white grass in her backyard.
She came up to me one day on the street...
and she said, "Oh, my nipples hurt!"
And she was squeezing her breast and
standing in front of me,
squeezing 'em and shaking 'em...
"my nipples hurt!"
Then there is, uh, that person
I walked by, you know,
going to the store
to get some smokes or something.
I'm walking down the street.
There's a very nice lady
with her little boy...
her little baby on her lap
out on the stoop.
I'm walking by.
I say, "how you doing?"
"how you doing? How you doing?"
She turned to her baby and said,
"You grow up like that
and I'll fucking kill you."
There was a thick,
thick fear
in the air.
There was a feeling
of sickness, corruption...
of racial hatred.
But Philadelphia
was just perfect to spark things.
And the students were great,
and they were workers.
And we had a kind of camaraderie,
and it was like the art life,
uh, the art spirit was alive and well.
Philadelphia was what started...
started, uh...
It was so good for me.
Really, really good.

Even though I lived in fear,
I've kind of, um, uh...
It was...
thrilling...
to live the art life
in Philadelphia at that time.
I...
had some kind of a cubicle set up
in this painting studio at the academy.
And when I went into my little cubicle,
it was very private.
And there were other cubicles
like that around.
But people could work in privacy.
And I was painting a painting
about four-foot square.
And it was mostly black,
but it had some green plant and leaves
coming out of the black.
And I was sitting back,
probably taking a smoke and looking at it.
And from the painting
I heard a wind.
And the green started moving.
And I thought, "Oh!
A moving painting, but with sound."
And that idea stuck in my head.
A moving painting.
One night...
I met the man
who was the night man at the morgue
at Pop's Diner,
and I said, "I sure would like
to come over there and...
and, uh, see...
And he said, "Let me know."
Uh, you know, "Let me know."
And so I went across over there,
midnight, rang the bell.
This guy lets me in.
In the front was a kind of like, uh...
had, like, those square tiles,
green and kinda white,
and it had a cigarette machine,

a Coke machine,
some couches and a desk.
So it was kind of like
a lobby room in the front.
Then there was this big door
with a glass pane in it and wire in the glass,
and a doorknob, a brass doorknob or something.
You open up that, go down this corridor,
and now you're in, you know,
the back room where they do everything.
But nobody was working
'cause it's night.
And I went into the cold room
and, you know
He closed the door behind me.
And, um, so I'm in there sitting,
uh, kind of on the floor
and there's these, like, bunk beds.
All these people dead
you know, bodies all around me,
and, um, I just sort of sat there
and, uh, felt it.
It was...
It was strange.
And then I went home.
The thing that gets you is that
you wonder the story of each one.
You wonder the story.
Who they were, what they did,
how they got there.
Just makes you think.
And...
it makes you think of stories.
This was 1967...
and I was living
at 2429 Aspen Street.
Peggy had, at that time,
sort of started moving in to 2429.
And I get a call
that my father had to make a trip
from California
out to, say, DC or something,
and he would like to come up
and visit, uh, in Philadelphia.

So I said, "Oh, my God."
I had to make arrangements.
Peggy had to move out.
Uh, not move out, but not be there.
And...
I picked up my dad and brought him
back to 2429 Aspen Street
and we had a visit.
And just near the end of the visit I said,
"Oh, I gotta show you some stuff."
And, uh, I took him down to the basement,
which was, like,
earthen floor, really old.
Cobwebs and stuff
all around the ceiling level.
And dirty basement windows.
But I'd set up these little tables,
little, like, platforms
out of wood and stuff,
and I had all these experiments going.
Like, I wanted to see what fruit
would do after a long period
different stages of fruit
and how it would decay.
And I had some dead birds
and I had my mouse in plastic
and I had, you know,
a bunch of stuff I'd collected.
So I wanted to share this with my father.
So I took him down to the basement.
And it's pretty dim light.
And looking at these things
I'm sharing with him, right?
And he's looking at them.
So then we went back up,
and we were on the stairway,
and I was ahead of him,
and I was smiling, uh, to myself.
It was great that he got to see this.
And I kind of turned with a smile.
As we were going up the stairs
I turned back toward him,
and I see this pained expression
on my father's face,

which he was hiding from me.
Then I got back in the truck
and we were driving back
to the, uh, railroad station,
and it was in that truck
driving back, uh, to the station
that he said to me, "Dave?"
I said, "Yeah?"
"I don't think you should
ever have children."
He was worried about me.
But inside me
I felt there was nothing to worry about.
But I still understood why he said it.
He misunderstood, um, my experiments
for, um...
some kind of, uh...
like, diabolical, you know,
man who needs serious help,
mentally and probably emotionally.
The ironic part of this is,
unbeknownst to me and my father,
Peggy, at that very moment, was pregnant.
So, uh, that...
that's... uh, interesting.
I started doing a...
kind of a split-screen...
thing,
and it was gonna be Mary Fisk
dancing on one-third of the screen
and...
on the other two-thirds an animated thing.
So I animated that thing for two months.
And I had a hundred feet of film
in the camera.
And I didn't know technically
what I was doing really,
but I took the hundred-foot roll
out of the camera,
took it to the lab,
and a couple of days later I got it back.
And I was standing in the doorway
'cause I opened the door
so I could get sunlight and just

I just wanted to check the first part,
make sure everything was okay.
So I unspool, there's a lot of liter on it.
You know, and I unspool some more.
And I can't find anything.
I unspool some more.
And it dawns on me
that this entire roll of negative is a blur.
And Peggy...
Her recollection is that I was really upset.
But... in a strange way...
I wasn't that upset because...
I must have been getting an idea
for something more.
And I wanted to do
live action and animation both.
That's when I made The Alphabet.
So, accidents or destroying something
can lead to something good.
It can lead to something good.
Very controlled things,
not being open to...
You know, just like being...
like these boundaries,
they just screw you.
And you have to sometimes make a huge mess
and make big mistakes
to find that thing
that you're looking for.
Right after The Alphabet was finished,
right after it was finished,
we must have moved up
to 2416 Poplar Street.
It must have been right around then...
that we needed money.
And...
I was sawing wood in the dining room.
And it was like...
You know, the sweetness of freedom
was just going.
But I loved sawing that wood.
It was my last free night.
And then I started this job.
And I'd go there, you know,

five days a week.
When I was printing for Rodger LaPelle,
Jennifer was, like,
two or three or four months old.
I had applied for a grant
to the American Film Institute,
an independent filmmakers grant.
The winners of the first group
were announced.
And when I read the names of the winners,
I knew I wouldn't win,
'cause they were all really
well-established underground filmmakers.
So, and they had their bios
and all the stuff with them,
so I just gave up.
I mean, I didn't really give up.
I just said, "There's no fucking way."
So I would go to work printing,
and Philadelphia, you know,
was, like, already...
just suck your happiness away
and, um, fill you with
a sadness and a fear.
So, you know, I didn't have
any time, really, to paint.
But Rodger would give me \$25
to come out on Saturday and paint,
and then paid me for printing.
And that's what kept us afloat.
One day, a few months later,
I said to Peggy,
"call me if anything exciting happens.
I'll call you
if anything exciting happens."
And I headed out to print.
That day...
First I think Peggy received a phone call.
Because the phone rang and Rodger
came downstairs from upstairs
sort of smiling
and said, "The phone is for you."
And it was George Stevens Jr.
and Tony Vellani on the line,

and they said, "David, we're..."
Something like,
"we're very happy to tell you
that you have won a grant
from the American Film Institute."
And, you know...
It just...
Total life-changing phone call.
In the house,
I kind of had started to have a setup.
And when I made the film,
I had all these rooms
to shoot the film right there.
I only had a couple of scenes outside.
It was just...
It was just perfect.
Tony Vellani came up to Philadelphia
on the train
and we filmed *The Grandmother*.
Tony flipped out.
I drove him back to the train station,
and on the way he said,
"David, I think you should go
to the Center for Advanced
Film Studies in Los Angeles."
Well...
I almost died and went to heaven,
just him telling me that.
I'd seen this booklet of the mansion
and all the stuff going on there,
and I would just look at this booklet
and dream about this place,
and here is somebody telling me, you know,
basically he's gonna help me get there.
You want a round cake?
- A round cake.
- Okay.
Can you make a dot?
A cake with a candle.
Cake with a candle.
Hot dog!
Here are the babies here.
There are the babies.
And there's the cookies for the babies.

Little tiny cookies.
Little tiny. Yum.
I thought...
When I got married I said,
okay, that's it.
That's it.
In some way, your life is over.
But...
it was actually the best thing
that could've happened to me.
Because, you know,
there are certain things that come along
that get you off the dime.
You know what I mean?
And...
I didn't think of where I would go
if I wasn't in Philly,
but it seemed like I was gonna be there.
'Cause to get up and move...
I had that huge house.
It was such a setup.
But I didn't know.. It wasn't
that I was miserable at all
It's just, um...
It seemed... like...
No, I wasn't miserable...
It just...
I don't know what would've happened
if I hadn't gotten that grant.
I really don't.
So when we drove out, we went, um, to...
down Sunset
and turned left on San Vicente,
parked the big truck,
and the next morning
was that first morning
I experienced California sunshine.
Unreal.
I just stood in the street
and looked up at the sun.
It was unbelievable.
And it was a kind of a thing where...
it was pulling, uh,
fear out of me.

You know, imagine coming
from Philadelphia and that world
out to LA
and being shown
where you're gonna go to school
a 55-room mansion on the top of a hill
in the best part of Beverly Hills.
And the stables were given to me.
And it wasn't like anybody else
even wanted them, you know.
It was just they were sitting there,
and I was able to get them.
It's just unbelievable.
What a gift that was.
Unbelievable.
For four years I had those stables.
And able to build down there,
live down there, eat down there.
It was incredible.
Go.
Play it, Fred.
Go.
I just love being in that mood.
Sometimes I would sit
on the sets at night.
I'd be working or something,
and I could imagine a whole world outside
that doesn't exist.
But it really would be such a world.
Around me was the factory neighborhood,
and I would imagine it,
and it was so real.
And sometimes it would rain,
and I'd hear this rain,
and I'd be in this room,
and I knew what the streets
were like out there, and the diners.
It was really dark
and filled with smoke
and big factories,
huge smokestacks,
fire and smoke and steel.
And these homes with little doilies
and stuffed chairs.

And hot inside,
and pipes kind of leaking,
and all these things.
I was divorced from Peggy
and living at the stables,
and my brother was visiting
out in Riverside.
And my brother and my father
wanted to talk to me.
I sit down.
I remember it was dark in the living room.
Then the whole thing was,
"Give up this film
and get a job,
because your...
you got a child, and
this film isn't getting made,
and you're wasting your time."
This kind of thing.
And it got me...
It got me really in a deep, deep way.
'Cause they didn't understand
and I just couldn't believe it,
what they were saying to me.
And they were totally serious.
And so I left there and I went back,
and my sister was in the back bedroom,
and I started crying.
But, um, it was...
it was just one of those things...
where, um,
there was no way I was gonna do that.
See, what I wanna do is have the...
mainly the look on Henry's face...
You know...
It's so real. I feel like he's here.
But anyway, um, uh...
The look on Henry's face just when he's
getting ready to cut. You know, the big cut.
Eraserhead,
to me, was one of my greatest,
happiest experiences in cinema.
And what I loved about it was the world
and having it be my own little place

where I could build everything
and get it exactly the way I wanted it
for hardly any money.

It just took time.

It just, uh, was so beautiful.

Everything about it.

Everything about it.