

Urs Fischer







GEORG HEROLD Hey hey!

URS FISCHER Hey there!

How's it going?

Pretty good, just ran upstairs... was eating some Tuna Helper and watching *Enter the Dragon*, woo hoo!

So basically what I had in mind was a free-form wild mod freaky interview.

Okay! Sweet!

Who would you say has influenced you the most?

My mother. She has always encouraged me to follow my dream. She has shown through example that if you persevere, despite physical obstacles, you can overcome. Be it a physical problem, financial or spiritual. Perseverance and faith are powerful life tools.

What do you think is the primary ingredient in an artist?

Genetics.

Do you believe in artistic aristocracy?

Ah, well, is le only real aristocracy, le artistic. And le other is le blood. Le blood and le artistic are almost le same—everything is based in blood. Blood is le most important.

Was your mother an artistic aristocrat?

No, no, le contrary, very plain—

Georg's phone rings. He picks up his phone for five minutes. He hangs up and Urs continues.

Hmm, probably because I can draw and write, but can't sing or play an instrument other than a bit on the fiddle...

It was the only logical way to go. Although I am trying to learn the guitar after years of avoiding it... I come from a very musical family, believe it or not.

We believe it.

I have a '52 Telecaster Reissue! I wanna be jes' like Graham! All I wanna do is rock! Sorry, getting too excited here. In music, it is not possible to say, "My hat is here."

So you played with words from an early age?

Yes.

Please tell us about your latest book.

A good psychic always avoids the supernatural at all costs...

Hmm, what can I say?

I dunno... If it's too top secret you don't have to say anything.

I love Ataru, named a catfish after him. I don't know why you need to expose that, but now you do!

Exposed, you say... as in, *au natura*?

Cool!

You're not anti-Bush.

I don't want to spend time being anti-anyone.

What do you think of hybrid cars?

They're fine, but I don't want one.

Why not?

I'm just not interested.

How is the world market for energy changing?

There's going to be a greater demand. China is very aggressive in the market right now. The Chinese are buying oil reserves around the world. I first thought they were nothing more than tire kickers, but they're much bigger than that.

You have said you suffered from depression. Do you still?

No, but in the 1990s I couldn't get anything to work.

Was it difficult to admit?

I didn't think my being depressed was something my grandmother and mother would go for. We're not complainers. If you were sick—"I can't go to school today"—the first thing my mother would do was stick a thermometer up your ass.

"Do you have a fever? If you do, you can stay home." "No, I'll go." So I wasn't admitting anything was wrong. My lawyer said, "You need to go see somebody." I read in *The Wall Street Journal* that four things can cause depression.

One is the death of a family member. Well, I lost my best friend; he was killed in a car accident. Second is your business not doing well. I admit that. The third one is moving from your home. And I did that. The list may have had divorce, too. I had every one of them.

Before your lawyer told you, did you sense something was wrong?

I knew something was peculiar. I didn't know what it was. I thought it would clear up.

What happened when you went to the doctor?

He asked a lot of questions, and I was fitting the pattern.

What helped?

I did antidepressants for about 30 days, and everything started clearing up in my life. The things I felt I couldn't change were starting to change. I think one thing that kept it less severe was the fact that I exercised.

Do you have any health problems?

I took this physical, and my doctor called and said, "I've got some good news and bad news." He said, "You're going to live to be 114, but you won't be able to hear or see."

Would you want to keep going if you couldn't hear or see?

No, probably not.

How do you shoot quail with poor vision?

I see double, but I've adjusted. I don't think about it.

Let's head a little further south. Do you prefer to give or receive?

Give. I love eating pussy. It's my favorite thing, besides rock and roll. The taste is really soft, and it's really amazing to see a woman getting pleasure from me.

Didn't you have any moral qualms about ripping off the cafeterias?

The present is always invisible because it's environmental and saturates the whole field of attention so overwhelmingly; thus everyone but the artist, the man of integral awareness, is alive in an earlier day.



Do you think murder is a crime?

I like it, le murder, because this is courage. It is anti-bourgeois. Le murder is closer to heaven, because after becoming rrrrrrrremords de conscience [having a guilty conscience], one prays, one opens le sky, and le angels say, "Good morning!"

Do you think money is the root of all evil?

No. It is angelic! Saint Geronimus says so. Many saints say money is angelic.

What is the relationship between classicism and originality in art?

Ah, there is more possibility for originality in classicism because it is one tradition, you know? For instance, Andy Warhol created pop art, and his pop art is very good for le possibility of hyper-realism because it is one tradition. In this time of blocking tradition, such as abstract expressionism, le tradition is blocked and almost everyone commits suicide. You know, Rothko committed suicide... but in le classicism it is le contrary. Originality is one product of tradition.

And what about beauty?

I have a horror of people who speak about the beautiful. What is the beautiful?

In 2001 it was reported that you had suffered an emotional breakdown. What really happened?

What happened was that people made a big deal of my old dealer canceling my scheduled show because I was venting about Howard. [laughs] No one knew it, actually. Howard had said a lot of mean stuff about me that morning, as he does about everybody almost every day, and I think it really got to me. I handle him pretty well, but that particular day it was about how I looked fat. Calm down. So I gained five pounds? It's not the end of the freakin' world. Maybe what he was talking about was relevant; maybe it was time to lose a few pounds. But I was ex-

hausted, and I did collapse later. Then everybody blew it out of proportion.

What made you feel so bad?

It was many things, but essentially, it was my work and my relationship with Carrie. She and I were breaking up, which we were always doing. Faced with a problem that made us uncomfortable, we were inclined to say, "Hey, I don't need this." We were spoiled, because we were both used to being the center of attention.

Did you tell all that to your psychiatrist?

What did he say?

When I finished, he said, "I find what you say very interesting and I'd like you to come back and talk some more." Then he asked if I'd noticed the guitar in the corner of his living room. I said I had and he said, "Would you like to borrow it and take it with you to your hotel?" So I said, "Yes, sure." And he said, "Maybe you'd like to write about what you've said today." I thought, "That's an interesting ploy psychologically," so I said, "All right." Do you think people are slaves?

Ah, no, no. You know le worst thing is le freedom. Freedom of any kind is le worst for creativity. You know, Dali spent two months in jail in Spain, and these two months were le most enjoyable and happy in his life.

Have you seen the French silent *Vampyr*?

I own it, but I still haven't watched it... because I suck.

We have *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* taped off of Turner Classic Movies on cable, but we haven't gotten around to watching it yet, so don't feel too bad.

Oh, that's a great one. I always end up watching it at two in the morning and falling asleep only to have really crazy dreams.

What're your fave rock and roll-related movies?

Oh man... Well, I bet you can guess one of them...

Indeed.

I do love *Rocky Horror* too... What else... Good God I'm drawing a blank... *Tommy*... *That Thing You Do* busts me up... I recently saw *Absolute Beginners* for the first time, funny enough... I actually liked it, but God is it campy... *A Hard Day's Night* is a fave, it's just so clever...

How do you feel about the Italian directors?

Fellini is wonderful. He is everything I'm not. I should like to be him. He is so baroque. His work is so generous, so warm, so easy, so unneurotic. I liked *La Dolce Vita* very much, particularly the scene with the father. That was good. And the end, with the giant fish. Visconti—I liked his first film, *La Terra Trema*; his best, I think. I liked Antonioni's *La Notte* a great deal, too.

What do you read?

I don't see as well as I used to, so my reading is not as fast. It takes me longer. But I read *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Dallas Morning News*.

Do you have a favorite author and/or a favorite book?

There are so many wonderful stories out there, written by great authors. Right now, though I just finished *Lean Mean Thirteen* by Janet Evanovich and I laughed so hard I cried. I'd have to say that my oldest favorite is *Shield of Three Lions* by Pamela Kaufman. I bought the original when it was released in 1984 and still reread it every few years.

Have you read *Artbabe*?

Yes. I also recently read *Good-bye, Chunky Rice*, and *Pastil*, as well as any *Dance Till Tomorrow* I find.

What'd you think of it? I admit I must seek out *Breakfast After Noon*, but I couldn't get into *Good-bye, Chunky Rice*...

I really, really enjoyed it... but the puppies gave me nightmares.

Do you use the Internet?

Can't do it. I enrolled in a class five years ago, and then something happened and I never even made the first meeting. Fine. I'm very well satisfied with what I do, what my production is. I'm never stressed, and I have a low heart rate. I feel I've been lucky enough to be given all these things, so it'd be a shame if I didn't make use of them.

Do you ever play with eBay?

I do occasionally play on eBay.

How was your birthday? How was your summer?

Great, we were in Biarritz. Everybody came there, and we had lots of fun... but it seems so far away already. So much has happened since then.

I hate that.

It's very difficult doing an interview with somebody I consider a friend, because I'm not used to asking the questions, I'm usually asked them. So, my dear, what would you like me to ask you?

Anything you want.

Anything? No private questions.

Private questions are good, they're much more interesting.

But you don't want to see them printed.

Sure I do, I don't mind. Since everyone is gonna read it, go ahead.

But it's not like our little dinners at Caviar Kaspia.

Not quite.

Are you happy?

I'm very happy.

I know you are afraid of flying, so why are you out here?

How did you get out here?

Well, I got out here on a United Airlines flight. And, ah, flew first class because I feel like if there is going to be an accident I want to be first to the crash sight. And ah...

Stake out your position.

Well, you don't have to linger in a burn ward, you know, if you're in the last row, that can happen. You know, so...

You know that gremlin was looking in the window going "I'm so scared, it's Shatner's toupee."

Right. No, about 10 years ago, American Airlines used to have a monitor in first class so you could watch the plane take off...

Have you ever seen a therapist about it or discussed it with a support group or anything?

I went to a therapist and the therapist said, "You have to imagine your fear as a ball that you can close up in your fist," and the first thing I'm thinking is this lady doesn't know how much fear I've got. I can maybe get it down to the size of like a soccer ball, but fear is my living—I can only get it so small. But it actually worked for a while and I would take off, you know, and this is a physiological thing, I'm terrified of flying

and I get up there and, ah, but for a while I was able to hold that thing in there. And then I was descending into Farmingdale airport in a Lear 35 and we hit clear air turbulence and it was like hitting a rock wall in the sky. I thought that we were dead. I thought it was over. The oxygen mask came out. You never want to see an oxygen mask...

Ah.

...except in that film at the beginning. The seats flew out. I had on my seat belt but it would have broken my neck. The catering everywhere... I had grapes in my underwear when this thing was over.

Fruit of the Loom.

Yeah, Fruit of the Loom, that's right.

But—

And the fear just kinda squirted out of my hand like snot—it was everywhere. That was the end of my fear ball. I've never been able to get it back.

Now, ah, what do you think is the psychology behind the fears, are you afraid of dying? Is that it or what?

Ah, I think that it's the the period between... you know, the pilots all have this Southern voice like Wally Schirra, they sound like an astronaut, you know and it's kinda like ah, "You know folks, we got a little problem here... we're gonna fucking die." You know. But it seems to me—

Like Chuck.

It seems to me that—yeah right, like Chuck—at 40,000 feet, you might have 72 or 73 seconds between the start of the descent and the actual "Pow." That's the part I'm afraid of. Yeah, trying to get it all together in that period of time... It's a mathematical thing. But basically you know, you've got all these pilots up there in the peak of physical condition, ah, they're sober.

Ah, some of them are peaked.

You're full of shit... Back to you! What are you tempted by? **I always felt temptations were dangerous. I just didn't go where I would be tempted to do anything.**

So you're scared of fame?

It's so pathetic to get that far away from the fact that your shit stinks. It's almost paranoia, not to venture too far from what I think is normal. I'd rather not be too different when I get to the end of this strange ride than I was in the middle of it—which will probably fail miserably. I'll probably say, "Why didn't I wear a pink tuxedo and take it up the crapper from that guy, just to see what it was like?"

Surely you've gone in for some rock star indulgences.

The bathtub in my house is made from three old cast-iron tubs, the ones with the feet. I had the middle of one and the ends of the two others glued together. I always said that if I had the money, I'd get a long bathtub here in America. In

England they like to lounge in the bath. In France they don't take baths often, but when they do, they like to lounge. But here everyone takes showers because they're so busy. I want a bathtub that, if I ask my wife to climb in, she can get in there with me. It's a hell of a tub.

Where is your wedding ring now?

It somehow miraculously became earrings. Then I lost them. I lost them in Amsterdam, no less.

Oh yeah! One thing I always wanted to ask you: How did you come to discover the *I Ching* so far ahead of most people in this country?

Well, I was interested in Jung. I guess I came across it in a list of Jung's writings, and sent away for the *I Ching* in order to read Jung's introduction. And after reading Jung's introduction, I became interested in the *I Ching*. And I really had no intention of getting involved with the *I Ching*. I wasn't interested in Sinology at all, and I just got hooked right away, after reading Jung's introduction, and began to use it immediately. Jung also wrote an introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and I got involved in that for the same reason.

Do you think science fiction has a purpose beyond entertainment?

Well, it all depends on what entertains you. Some people are entertained by a Beethoven quartet, and if another person walks in who likes Jimi Hendrix, he hardly regards what he hears coming out of the phonograph as entertainment. It's gonna be difficult for him to believe that you're being entertained when you're listening to a Beethoven quartet. Here we have to go into semantics—what do you mean by "entertained?" Something that you find interesting and fascinating certainly is entertainment. I think aesthetics must be separated from morality here, and, well, you look at the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and you can say, "Well, does this make you a better person, or do you just enjoy looking at it?" and the bourgeois person will always say it makes you a better person, because he is always thinking in terms of self-improvement. And the artist is always thinking of aesthetics. And it all depends on whether you're a member of the bourgeois, they will always say, "A good book is one

which makes you a better person," while the aesthetic or artistic type will always say, "The aesthetic values are end values in themselves." I can prove my point. Listening to one of Beethoven's quartets of the third period, how does it make you a better person? I don't think anybody could ever show that listening to, say, the 13th, 14th, 15th or 16th quartet made you a better person. There's certainly no message, because they're abstract, so you're forced finally to admit that you listen to them either because you're compelled to, out of some sense of duty—that you ought to listen to good music—or you enjoy them, in which case you are back to entertainment. And I think that what we have to do is redefine entertainment to include enjoyment of very fine aesthetic works, in which case, I don't think science fiction need have any other purpose.

A couple friends of mine wanted to ask you some questions. Yes!!

Recently Hillary Clinton refused to be in *Vogue* magazine, fearing she would appear too feminine. What do you think that says about women's roles in society?

—Emily Nielsen, Poway, California

Showing your femininity should help your career and not go against your career. Dressing like a man, using the suit to look powerful—that was the '80s, and that didn't help women. Helping women is [using] your brain and not the way you dress.

What's the most influential thing in your life and work?

—Soyeun Yang, Superior, Colorado

The basic thing that motivates me is that I have met people in my life, who I knew deserved to be immortalized, and the best I could do—I couldn't guarantee them immortality—but I could guarantee them an audience of maybe, like, 100,000 girls that I've met, or drinking buddies I've had, turn them from just somebody that I knew, and two or three other people knew, that I could capture their idiosyncratic speech mannerisms, their gentleness, their kindness, their humility, and make them available to a large number of people. I remember that I read in *Rolling Stone* one time that the Brahmin goes through two cycles: during one part

of its cycle, it sleeps, and during one part of its cycle, it dances. We all think we're in the part of the cycle where the Brahmin is awake and dancing. In actuality, we're in the part of the cycle where the Brahmin is asleep, *but*, the Brahmin is waking up. And when the Brahmin wakes up, this world that the Brahmin is dreaming, will disappear. Also, music.

Which music?

Kinks, Hollies, Yardbirds, Byrds... The Kinks... God I love them. Ooh, and L & R, and Dead Milkmen!

Gang of Four, Siouxsie, Church, Style Council...

Yes yes!!

This Mortal Coil...

Altered Images, Icicle Works...

Primitives, Psych Furs... Runaways...

Bananarama, Fun Boy Three...

XTC!

Yes! Tones On Tail! OMD! Listening to T. Rex right now...

Any and all girl groups but especially Shangri-Las, Darlene Love...

Shangri-Las are cool, I don't know Darlene Love...

Darlene Love's in the Crystals, explains Barb.

OK.

Julian Cope, Robyn Hitchcock, Billy Bragg...

Yes...Thompson Twins, Sugarcubes, too...

Kate Bush...

Motorcrash! Can't forget Soft Cell...

Birthday!

Yes... oh yes!

What can we expect from you in the future?

I plan to continue on with the *Blue-Collar Werewolf Series*.

I know I want to find out what happens next!

Where do you see yourself in five years?

My can of orange soda just levitated.

Do you have a target audience, and if so, who are they?

I love this question. I do have a target audience. And a story about it, too.

Tell me after the interview. I have a few more questions I want to ask you and we're running out of time... Do you

think the future of sex is kaput?

No, it is only good for making children at the moment. But it is not erotica at all, it is not exciting.

What will happen to all the people who make money from sex? Will the whole sexual industry collapse?

No, no, no, no, because after sex will come le leg, and people will make money.

So they'll make money off the leg?

No, no, no, no. New legs. It is necessary for virginal legs because people are only interested in virgins.

So, Mr. Fischer, do you believe in love?

Yes, but completely spiritual love, you know?

What do you think it's dependent on? How does it come about?

There is one question of people becoming tired of pornography and acting against it. Also, some people will start to make love while dressed, you know? In Spain, in the Renaissance period, people wore full brocade dresses with only one little hole for le penis. You know?

What do you love most in life?

Money. Le idea of money.

If the money stopped arriving what would you do?

Ahhhhh... become very sad.

Shit, really?

Yeah... no big deal, I did get paid in art, so I'm super happy.

What do you think will be the art of the future?

We live in the first age when change occurs sufficiently rapidly to make such pattern recognition possible for society at large. Until the present era, this awareness has always been reflected first by the artist, who has had the power—and courage—of the seer to read the language of the outer world and relate it to the inner world.

Why should it be the artist rather than the scientist who perceives these relationships and foresees these trends?

Because inherent in the artist's creative inspiration is the process of subliminally sniffing out environmental change. It's always been the artist who perceives the alterations in man caused by a new medium, who recognizes that the future is the present, and uses his work to prepare the ground for it.







