

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Ed Ruscha's Favorite Things

The American pop artist shares a few of his favorite things, including a piece of railroad track and collection of steel pennies

Ed Ruscha



Ed Ruscha's favorite things Photography by Spencer Lowell for WSJ. Magazine

“THE FRAMED PIECE of paper is a chart of tiny parcels of land in New York City that were purchased by the late artist Gordon Matta-Clark. Below that is a Texas Native inertia nutcracker. It’s totally functional and especially good with pecans. To the left is a beautifully shaped transmission-gear ring to an old Rolls-Royce. Next to it is a trailer hitch, which I like for its dumbness. It’s just an honest piece of clunk. The pipe is a section of cast-off plumbing—I like the feel of corroded copper. The wristwatch is a handleless Benrus from the ‘40s or ‘50s; it’s goofy but very dependable. The artist KAWS gave me the tiny green head with the baseball cap. The little scrap is half of a tortoiseshell bookmark. I can’t toss it because it’s so delicate and so very razor thin. The block of walnut is just a noble little piece of wood that stands proud. I have a collection of about 800 steel pennies from 1943, which were made during the war because of the rarity of copper. I hoarded them during my paper route as a boy. My daughter-in-law did the very meticulous paper collage depicting a building site. To the right is a sculpture of twisted plastic by the artist George Herms; it weighs half an ounce. I keep that James McNeill Whistler etching of a wineglass so I don’t forget what art history is all about. When I was 10, in Oklahoma City, I got the photo of pitcher Bob Feller of the Cleveland Indians autographed in

person. That's my hand holding the stopwatch—I use it to time the duration of traffic lights. Above is a piece of railroad track from southern Missouri from the 1880s that my grandpappy employed as an anvil. I've often wondered if the Jesse James gang ever used it.”

—*As told to Christopher Ross*