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Renowned American artist Eric Fischl was in Ottawa September 8-11, 2015,

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as the third speaker in the Contemporary Conversations speaker series.

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The series, hosted by Ambassador Bruce Heyman and Mrs. Vicky Heyman,

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connects Canadians to American artists through public, moderated discussions,

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and is made possible through partnerships with the

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U.S. Department of State's Art in Embassies Program, the National Gallery of Canada,

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and the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa.

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Welcome. Glad to have you.

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Thank you Bruce, good to be here.

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Good to see you. So how did art ever begin in your life? What was it?

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Did your parents have an influence, or, what was it, at the very beginning?

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I actually came to art late.

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It was not a part of our lives, it was something that I didn't do as a kid,

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I wasn't sort of, off drawing all of the time

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or anything like that I was more doing sports in high school,

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girls and sports and other things.

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I flunked out of college, took some time off, and then I went back to school

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at a junior college in Phoenix, Phoenix Community College,

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and I took art classes because I figured nobody fails art right?

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So, if you are bad you get a C and so I took art classes,

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very naïvely and found immediately a connection to it and what,

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part of that was two things I hadn't expected.

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One, was that it was the first time in my life I could concentrate,

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and the second was it was the first time in my life I wasn't afraid of being alone.

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And those two things made me feel like even if I am lousy I am going to do this the rest of my life.

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And so here you are in Canada.

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How was that transformative for you in your world and how did it impact your art?

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I can't say enough about how important Canada, the experience there was for me.

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I was a young artist struggling to find my voice which took me three years here

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to kind of go through a lot of changes and exposures

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and things like that to begin to see who I am as an artist.

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So it was very important from that point of view.

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So tell me a little bit about your approach and how you think about the art

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that you are creating and that you created throughout this cycle.

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I think about it in terms of creating experience which is meaningful, and, I,

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as a painter and a sculptor I use those because I am so connected to it, as ways of organizing stimulation.

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It is how I can tell myself what I have experienced in either the moment or in the course of my life

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and I don't predetermine what the work is, it is more like each work is a kind of a journey

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that I move through to get to a kind of clarity.

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And it comes from the process of association, this image, this person, this situation,

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**moving it around until it forms a kind of cohesive moment**

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that is full of meaning, pregnant with meaning, I think.