

# BUREAU FOR OPEN CULTURE

*Is this Columbus, Ohio?*

So, where am I now?

Is this Columbus, Ohio?

...how can you tell?

Only losers walk. Why walk when you can roll? Roll on wheels. That's the real American Revolution. Forget Jefferson. It's the car that makes revolutions. I love cars. They're democracy. They're the market. Look at them Gooooo

The car...it's the relationship between revolution and asphalt. Look at those wheels. Like Jefferson said, we need a "periodic renovation of the revolution". Soviet revolutionaries replaced the market with a state bureaucracy. But, look *here*. Columbus 'renovates the revolution' with cars. *It's the American revolutionary bureaucracy*. It orders the city. Marks its spaces. Directs its behaviour. That's the *bureaucracy of the market*...over there, sitting at the lights.

Argh... I love cars. Just think of it. We're burning dinosaurs! All that gas. That's what it is. Dead life. Long dead, plants. Long dead dinosaurs. Sticky black ooze. Right there at the junction...

The asphalt too. Dead life. All the parking lots downtown. The one beneath my feet. We get around on the bones and tree trunks of a million years ago. That's how you can sit at the lights, with your foot on the gas. Commuting to your next parking lot.

I hate the earth. It's dirt. I prefer asphalt. Give me asphalt: that's the landscape of freedom, the landscape of *culture*. Just like the dust-bowl of the 30s, it may be a catastrophe, but... at least someone *tried* to farm the land, to turn a *profit*. Sure, they created a dust-bowl... but how can you succeed if you're afraid to fail? So, roll on— That's *Progress*.

Can you *imagine* what Columbus would look like with no highway heading west? If you had to hitch a ride on the next prairie wagon? *Progress*. I love cars.

Where would we be without climate controlled boxes? Wet? Cold? Burning hot? We'd be in the weather! Don't you just hate the weather? I do. Climate sucks.

Do you realise it's the fall? Hey. The fall is for losers who walk. That's what's great about *auto-cities*. Climate is something that just happens to other people. That's why I love cars. They're the real architecture...Buildings suck, they never go *anywhere*.

At least they're climate controlled though.

You don't need to worry about the ice caps. We've already got climate control. Its 72 in your office, the mall and your car. Who needs carbon caps? Climate change is nothing to worry about..... Just don't open your windows.

You know... air-conditioning revolutionised America.

How could you be *one culture, one country*, across an *entire continent*? But, with climate control, an apartment in New York and another in Dallas, Texas could be the same temperature all year round. Air conditioning brought all the climates of a continent into one, *eternal springtime*. That's America. And workers could be like currency. You could swap one for another. They used to be *sticky*. Stuck together in lumps by cultural...*goo*. They didn't want to *move*. But climate control conquered all of that ... culture...geography. We're *all* slippery now. Oiled up. That's revolution.

There's no need to adapt to geography when the office and the mall all look the same, and the temperature is *always* perfect. That's what's great about the auto-city. Buildings are sealed boxes. Metal and glass. With *air conditioning*. Makes it so much easier for markets to work. Move here, move there. It's pretty much the same.

That's why I love *malls*. Who needs climate, when you've got the mall? ...They should make Northland Center in Detroit into a national monument. That's where the future started. The first mall!.... Pity about Gruen though. He built Northland, and then went to Europe and started yakking about alienation and cars destroying everything. He understood one thing though. Malls are *culture*. In the old days, culture was all geography and climate. It was all *cultivation*. But that's ugly. Who wants to be a farmer, grubbing in the *dirt*?

That's why we've got malls. That why we've got *museums*. Made out of metal and glass, with *air conditioning*. Who needs a climate when you can have a white cube art gallery?

All those palaces in old Europe, with room,

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after room, after room to walk through. They put art inside. And that made art history: a room for this school of painters, or that country, or that era...Architecture makes thought. That's why I love cars.

We've got buildings like cars. That keeps all the thinking inside the box. It's beautiful. Look what it's given us. Everything from the New York School... all those paintings that exist because air conditioned boxes exist to exhibit them...to the Chicago School...economic science that talks to itself... ..You know, purity just disdains mess. And life *is* a mess. You don't want *that* in your 'box'. That's as stupid as designing a building that lets *rain* in! That's as stupid as walking! It's for losers.

I like architecture that's transparent. That's regular and predictable. The same wherever you go. It's got to be logical. Forget all that decoration. I like clear buildings, that create facts. Facts you can add together and subtract. That's reality. Stuff I can see. Things I can count. Things that have a purpose. That do the job. Things that aren't *pretending* to be something else.

Look over there. You see those skyscrapers downtown? That's the spirit of *empiricism*, *utilitarianism* and *positivism*!

Hey! You in the tower of *logic*!

(The sound of clapping. Not many hands, enthusiastically applauding the architecture downtown.)

You know what's really important? I've asked people. 74% of Americans think good parking is more important than healthcare. 61% of that 74% rate parking as an "essential element in the American way of life".

You can't *argue*. Those stats are statistically significant, seasonally adjusted, and the sample has been weighted to discount bias based on:

- age,
- gender,
- occupation,
- ethnic identity
- and sexual orientation.

These are *facts*. And we've all gotta to live with the *facts*...

Lets face the facts... There'd be a lot more

*slums* downtown if it wasn't for the parking... There'd be a lot more people, sat in one place. Tenants have rights. And, that makes it hard for business. You've gotta keep 'em moving. Move on. Don't get *stuck*... Don't renovate the houses for God's sake!: '*Renovate the Revolution*'!! Like Jefferson said, *keep the wheels moving*.

You know... in Europe and India they use *plants* to clear people out of town. Yeah, they move people out and build *green zones*. Plant trees downtown. Make parks. They say they'll make CO2 neutral cities! Ha! We don't need that. We've got climate control. What have trees got to do with it? We need parks for cars, not parks for trees.

You ask any proper economist. *We don't need to worry about the climate*. There's no *crisis*. Sure, all the parking lots make heat islands. So what? There's always a *market-based solution*. All that extra heat is a *business opportunity*...You could just put heat pumps in the asphalt, and make turbines for electricity...We'd just need a *lot more* parking lots! Don't want believe all that stuff about parking lots polluting the water with metal, and oil, and rubber, and grease, and salt..... Its only socialists who wanna try and stop the market that believe that...a stable climate is just a way all those inefficient economies try to stop the free market... That's a *fact*.

You know what a parking lot is? It's a commons. Anyone can use it... Providing they *pay* the guy who *owns* it.

I heard they were tearing down the City Center mall. You know what they're gonna do? They're gonna build a park: for trees! - 'Columbus Commons'. Stupid. The country is *full* of trees!

Parking lots. It's what we are. We should *preserve* them. They're cultural property. The government should protect them. You can't tear down a cathedral. It's not private property. Or, if it is, it's too important for its future to be decided by one person. The government should *intervene* to protect it. Like they do with historic buildings. Like they did with the TARP.

*Heeey*, if banks can't make a living, if General Motors can't make a living, why the hell should parking lots? We're *heritage*! We need *protecting* from the market. Parking lots are... are...are *culture*... We're so important to you. We should be everyone's property. Culture

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is more important than private *property*. Without parking lots you'll all be *walking to work*! That's *socialism*!

Hey, did you hear China is celebrating 60 years of communism this year! Except they really aren't communists anymore... but, hey, that hasn't stopped them fearing the future. They're *so* scared. They save their wages.... I think that's *great*! Their government uses their savings to buy US government debt. That's great for you guys in the cars, standing at the lights. Yeah, you. It makes it really easy to buy stuff.

Why? Well, the dollar... outside of America, governments around the world use the dollar as the currency to trade with. That means you guys can borrow money really easily. It's cheap. Then you can buy lots of stuff. Stuff that's made *all over the world*...in places like... *China*. Those Chinese workers save all that money they make from making stuff. Then China lends it to you, so you can buy the stuff they make. That's capitalism. That's the *free market*. They *make*. You *consume*.

What's great is that you can buy a car. You can get from home to work, from work to the mall, and from the mall to home. That's the *freedom* commuting gives you. *Freedom of Choice* makes the landscape of your life. Look at *your* city. It's beautiful. Look at the cars. They're beautiful.

Isn't it funny? All that *fear* of communism. We used to call it the Cold War. And, all the time, the Chinese were *more* afraid than you were! ...Wow, that makes you think. When they get money, they don't spend it. They lend it to you. And that allows you to sit for one minute and thirty seconds at this intersection, listening to *me*, in a car that you pay the finance company to own, with money *they borrow from the Chinese*.

Your economists are still fighting the Cold War. They're fighting communism. But it's *gone*. You know like when you're drunk on whiskey, and you're sick, and all the stuff that's gonna come up *has* come up, and you're there still retching, and your ribs hurt and your body is convulsing, but there's none of the poison left inside? Well, that's the University of Chicago! Economics to fight communism. When all the communism is gone. That's why all of *this* hurts so much. We're ruled by 20<sup>th</sup> century ideology instead of 21<sup>st</sup> century economic science.

Hey, take me to Chicago... Can anyone take me to Chicago?...I just wanna meet Eugene Fama. Hey Eugene, maybe you can hear me from Columbus.

The efficient market hypothesis... I guess your assets are smaller than you were letting on. Or maybe you just didn't *price* them properly.

Hey Eugene? Do you *still feel competitive*...?

Tell you what, why don't we have a *laughing* competition?

No, no, no. I can assure you, I **am** *beeeing perfect-ly rational*!  
So, let me start. How's this...

(Laughter like rolling thunder; like God laughing at some pathetic creature he is casting into hell. Loud, mad, dangerous, and stuttering between the speakers as it peters out).

I can't *hear* you Eugene...

(>>> Hysterical laughing, stuttering between the speakers

...Eugene...?

...Eugene...

(>>> Screaming, demented, insane

...Eugene....

??? Eugene....

... where *is* this?

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*Is this Columbus, Ohio?* is a speech by Learning Site. It is written by Jaime Stapleton, produced in collaboration with sound specialists Tony Peluso and Joshua Penrose and performed by artist Cassandra Troyan. *Is this Columbus, Ohio?* is made especially for *Audible Dwelling*, which is currently located in Columbus, Ohio. *Audible Dwelling* is conceived by Learning Site, comprised of Rikke Luther of Copenhagen and Cecilia Wendt of Malmö for the exhibition *Descent to Revolution*, curated by James Voorhies and organized by Bureau for Open Culture at Columbus College of Art & Design.

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