



MUNICH · BERLIN · LONDON · NEW YORK

# ***DIRTY BABY***

**By Ed Ruscha, Nels Cline, and David Breskin**

*A collaboration between an artist, a guitarist, and a poet, this multimedia work is at once spirited, sensuous, and acutely intelligent.*

*DIRTY BABY* is a provocative “trialogue” between the paintings of Ed Ruscha, the music of Nels Cline, and the ghazals of David Breskin. The title derives from the notion that when different art forms come together and *mate*, their offspring is no purebred, but rather muttish and raunchy: gloriously dirty.

The 66 Ruscha pictures in the book are drawn from two rarely-seen bodies of work, the *Silhouettes* and the *Cityscapes*, in which Ruscha uses censor strips (what he calls “dumb blocks”) in place of the words which normally occupy a prominent place in his pictures. With no words visible, *DIRTY BABY* is a most unusual Ruscha book. However, the very fact of their obfuscation gives the missing words a powerfully subversive presence: language is emphasized even as it is obscured. The book itself is divided into two “sides” in the manner of a vinyl record: Side A offers a time-lapse history of the Western world (from primeval flora through postmodern suburb) and Side B returns to the very “cradle of civilization” to chart the American misadventure in Iraq.

For his poetic form, Breskin uses the ancient Arabic ghazal. Tightly structured—with rhyme, refrain, and meter—the ghazal proves a perfect foil and fencing partner for Ruscha's language-sensitive pictorial strategies, and the poems serve as powerful companions to Ruscha's gorgeously reproduced paintings. To this mix Cline adds more than an hour-and-a-half of new music, by turns lyrical and heartfelt, edgy and raucous, for two large ensembles. For Side A, he offers one extended composition for a nonet, which evolves from acoustic impressionism to a deep, dense electronic groove. For Side B, he pairs each image with its own epigrammatic, evocative accomplice, using a ten-piece ensemble complete with strings and horns.

In all, *DIRTY BABY* creates a complete synaesthetic experience: a radical recontextualization of Ruscha's work, in vibrant conversation with Cline's music and Breskin's verses. Housed in a luscious, multilayered slipcase and including four CDs (two of music and two of spoken-voice poetry), this polyphonic book is a wild surprise produced by three of the most exciting artists working today.

## About the Authors:

**Ed Ruscha** is an artist living in Los Angeles. A member of the American avant-garde for the last fifty years, his work has been the subject of myriad museum shows, including retrospectives organized as far back as 1982 by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and as recently as 2009 by the Hayward Gallery in London (which finishes at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in September 2010). He is the author of a seminal series of artist's books of the 1960s and 1970s, and more recently, *Leave Any Information At The Signal*, a collection of his writings, interviews, bits and pages.

**Nels Cline** is a Los Angeles-born and bred guitarist and composer. He travels the world collaborating with improvisers and songwriters, addressing matters of sound in jazz, rock, and/or avant-garde styles. Among other ventures, currently Nels plays lead guitar with the band Wilco, and leads his own trio, The Nels Cline Singers. He has appeared on well over one hundred recordings, including the recent Singers' release, *Initiate*.

**David Breskin** is a writer and record producer. His books include works of poetry (*Fresh Kills*, *Escape Velocity*, and *SUPERMODEL*), journalism (*Inner Views: Filmmakers in Conversation*), fiction (*The Real Life Diary of a Boomtown Girl*) and collaborations with artists (*RICHTER 858*). In music, he has worked with leading-edge musicians such as Bill Frisell, John Zorn, Ronald Shannon Jackson, Joey Baron, Tim Berne and Bobby Previte. He lives in San Francisco.

## About the Book:

Format: Hardcover in slipcase with 4 compact discs and 1 thin dime

Pages: 160

Illustrations: 66 color and 66 thumbnail illustrations

Trim size: 12 in. x 12 in.

Price: \$125

ISBN: 978-3-7913-5083-7

Publication Date: September 2010

*DelMonico Books*

***\*\*The CDs in this book are the property of Prestel, and are licensed to the intended recipient for personal use only. Acceptance of this material constitutes an agreement to comply with the terms of the license. Resale or transfer of possession by any means, including digital copying/distribution, is not allowed and may be punishable under federal and state laws. Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires.\*\****