



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: Dan Flavin (interview with Steve Morse, Artist's Assistant to Dan Flavin, 1991-96)

Date: November 19, 1998

Location: Dan Flavin Installation, Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection

Interviewer: Carol Mancusi-Ungaro

Video/Edit: Laurie McDonald

Total Run Time: 01:08:10

Abstract:

Steve Morse, Artist's Assistant to Dan Flavin, discusses Flavin's work with Artists Documentation Program Founding Director and Menil Chief Conservator Carol Mancusi-Ungaro on the occasion of the inauguration of the Dan Flavin Installation at Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection. The discussion focuses on the materials and methods Flavin used to create the Richmond Hall installation and other fluorescent light works, as well as Morse's ideas for how to conserve them.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):

Corporate Name(s)

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Artists Documentation Program
Harvard University. Art Museums
Menil Collection (Houston, Tex.)
Whitney Museum of American Art

Genre(s)

Interviews
Oral histories

Personal Name(s)

Flavin, Dan, 1933-1996
Mancusi-Ungaro, Carol
McDonald, Laurie
Morse, Steve (local)

Subject(s)

Art--Conservation and restoration
Artists' materials
Art--Technique
Installations (Art)
Light art
Minimal art

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Indexed by: Heather Nodler, March 2011

Video: adp1998b_flavin_edmast_a.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.1998b / Interview date: 11/19/1998

Exhibitions/Works:

Names of exhibitions and works referenced during this interview appear below in gray cells.

Controlled Vocabulary:

Except where indicated, all keywords employ Getty vocabularies (AAT/ULAN/TGN). Those marked with (*) employ Library of Congress Authorities. Those marked with (**) employ local terms.

| Time | Contents | Subject Keywords |
|----------|--|---|
| 00:00:02 | Opening Credits | |
| 00:00:44 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (exterior view) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:00:49 | Introduction Carol Mancusi-Ungaro Steve Morse | |
| 00:02:39 | (Exhibition Reference) “Dan Flavin: Tatlin Monuments” Mary Boone Gallery, New York March 2-30, 1991 | exhibitions (events) installations (visual works) Mary Boone |
| 00:02:39 | Historical Anecdote Morse describes the experience of working with Flavin while mounting an exhibition of the artist’s works at the Mary Boone Gallery in 1991. | exhibitions (events) installations (visual works) Mary Boone |
| 00:04:13 | (Images) Dan Flavin “monuments” for V. Tatlin Mary Boone Gallery, New York March 2-30, 1991 (installation views) Courtesy Mary Boone Gallery, New York | exhibitions (events) installations (visual works) Mary Boone |
| 00:04:39 | Technical Specifications Morse discusses an installation that Flavin created at Galerie Karsten Greve in Paris, and the unique technical challenges presented by the installation of Flavin’s works in international venues. | American contractors electric fixtures (light fixtures) electricians European fluorescent lighting light bulbs standards (concepts) transformers voltage |
| 00:04:44 | (Exhibition Reference) Dan Flavin, Solo Exhibition Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris | exhibitions (events) Galerie Karsten Greve installations (visual |

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| | <p>April 25-May 21, 1991</p> <p>Dan Flavin, Solo Exhibition Oldenburger Kunstverein Oldenburg, Germany November 8, 1998-January 3, 1999</p> | <p>works) New York Oldenburg</p> |
| 00:08:41 | <p>Concept/Nature of Work Morse continues to discuss the Galerie Karsten Greve exhibition within the context of how Flavin’s works responded to the architecture of their sites. He mentions a building designed by Gustav Peichl in Frankfurt. He also briefly discusses the artist’s choice of colors and his use of ultraviolet light, as well as the Flavin studio’s procedures for maintaining long-term installations.</p> | <p>architecture (object genre) fluorescent lighting Galerie Städel light bulbs maintenance Peichl, Gustav site-specific works ultraviolet lamps</p> |
| 00:08:49 | <p>(Images) Dan Flavin, Solo Exhibition Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris April 25-May 21, 1991 (installation view)</p> <p>Dan Flavin <i>Untitled (For Lafayette, we remember) 2, 1991</i> Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Paris</p> <p>Dan Flavin <i>Untitled (To Claire) 1-2-3, 1991</i> Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Paris</p> | <p>exhibitions (events) Galerie Karsten Greve installations (visual works)</p> |
| 00:09:17 | <p>(Exhibition Reference) “Dan Flavin: Lichträume” Städtische Galerie im Städel, Frankfurt am Main February 25-August 22, 1993</p> | <p>exhibitions (events) Frankfurt Galerie Städel installations (visual works)</p> |
| 00:11:56 | <p>Process of Creation Morse describes Flavin’s planning and design process for commissioned works, using the Richmond Hall Installation as an example.</p> | <p>architectural drawings (visual works) installations (visual works) Menil Collection preliminary drawings (drawings) site-specific works space planning video recordings</p> |
| 00:12:22 | <p>(Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (interior view)</p> | <p>installations (visual works) Menil Collection</p> |
| 00:14:08 | <p>Concept/Nature of Work Morse describes how Flavin conceived of the exterior of the</p> | <p>architectural elements ornaments</p> |

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| | Richmond Hall building, both as a component of the installation, and in relation to the surrounding neighborhood. | parapets site-specific works space planning |
| 00:14:09 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (exterior view at night) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:15:51 | Conservation Issues and Technical Specification Morse discusses Flavin’s strategies for preventing vandalism and breakage of outdoor light elements, describing in great detail the light enclosures on the exterior of Richmond Hall. | breaking clips (fasteners) covers (closures) custom-made electric fixtures (light fixtures) fiberglass fluorescent lamps (lighting device components) fluorescent lighting Lexan** polycarbonate rubber (material) transparency (optical property) vandalism weather |
| 00:19:21 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (detail of exterior light fixtures with gaskets) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:19:31 | Process of creation Morse describes Flavin’s method for plotting precise lines of light along the building exterior of Richmond Hall. | electricians lasers line (geometric concept) measurements (dimensions) |
| 00:21:08 | Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Morse discusses the fluorescent light bulbs that Flavin used at Richmond Hall, including their unique color traits and their manufacturing specifications. | color (perceived attribute) fluorescent lighting intensity (strength) light bulbs |
| 00:22:21 | Conservation Issues Morse discusses the manner in which fluorescent light bulbs degrade over time. He also describes instances of unusual or erratic behavior from light bulbs in Flavin works. | age coating (material) degradation electric wiring European explosions filament |

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| | | fluorescent lighting frosting light bulbs luminophor voltage |
| 00:24:03 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (detail of fluorescent bulb with darkened end) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:26:45 | Process of Creation Morse continues with his description of Flavin’s planning process, including his preliminary drawings and his attitude toward secondary light sources, e.g., the recessed, windowed ceiling in Richmond Hall. He also discusses the involvement of Heiner Friedrich in the early planning for Richmond Hall. | architectural drawings (visual works) de Menil, Philippa** Friedrich, Heiner** installations (visual works) light (energy) Menil Collection planning preliminary drawings (drawings) site-specific works skylights space planning windows |
| 00:27:12 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (preliminary drawings) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:27:41 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (detail of ceiling with skylight) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:27:46 | (Exhibition Reference) Dan Flavin Installation “The Guggenheim Museum and the Art of This Century” Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York June 28-August 27, 1992 | exhibitions (events) installations (visual works) Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum |
| 00:29:30 | Process of Creation Morse continues with his description of Flavin’s planning process, focusing on his preliminary drawings. | colored pencils narrative cycles planning preliminary drawings (drawings) video recordings |
| 00:30:01 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |

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| | November 19, 1998-ongoing (preliminary drawings) | |
| 00:32:01 | Process of Creation Morse discusses how Flavin worked with the architecture of the Richmond Hall building. | architectural elements Bridgehampton concrete floors (surface elements) height reflectance site-specific works space planning |
| 00:32:48 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (detail of ceiling with air vents) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:33:48 | (Images) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (details of concrete floor) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:34:10 | Process of Creation Morse contrasts the Richmond Hall plan with Flavin’s design for an installation at Chase Manhattan Bank’s Metrotech Center in Brooklyn. He also reflects on Flavin’s creative process. | architectural elements concrete custom-made electric fixtures (light fixtures) floors (surface elements) height light sockets reflectance security systems site-specific works space planning stainless steel terrazzo |
| 00:34:35 | (Image) Dan Flavin <i>untitled (to Tracy Harris), 1992</i> Metrotech Center, Brooklyn, NY Collection of Chase Manhattan Bank | installations (visual works) New York site-specific works |
| 00:37:54 | (Work Reference) Dan Flavin <i>untitled (Marfa project), 1996</i> Chinati Foundation Marfa, TX | Chinati Foundation installations (visual works) Marfa site-specific works |
| 00:39:23 | Conservation Issues and Concept/Nature of Work Morse discusses various “trouble spots” in the Richmond Hall installation and compares Flavin’s serial use of color in Richmond Hall to that of an installation that Flavin created in Munich. He | color (perceived attribute) fluorescent lighting planning |

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| | contrasts the serial installations with installations where Flavin employed large blocks of color. | Munich skylights visible spectrum |
| 00:40:54 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (detail of ceiling with skylight) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:41:12 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (interior panoramic view) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:41:31 | (Image) Dan Flavin <i>untitled (to Janet Chamberlain), 1995 (Installed 1998)</i> Hypovereinsbank Munich Photo by Jens Weber, Munich Courtesy David Zwirner, New York | installations (visual works) Munich site-specific works |
| 00:41:53 | (Image) “Dan Flavin/Donald Judd: Aspects of Color” The Menil Collection, Houston November 19, 1998-January 24, 1999 (installation view) | exhibitions (events) installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:42:45 | Concept/Nature of Work and Technical Specifications Morse discusses in great detail Flavin’s use of ultraviolet light and the works in which he incorporated ultraviolet light. | ballasts (lighting devices) blending fluorescent lamps (lighting device components) intensity (strength) light bulbs multicolored Panza di Biumo, Giuseppe Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum ultraviolet lamps ultraviolet radiation |
| 00:43:10 | (Images) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (details of ultraviolet light) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:43:35 | (Image) Dan Flavin <i>untitled, 1996 (installed 1997)</i> Santa Maria Annunciata Chiesa Rossa, Milan Photo by Paola Bobba Courtesy Fondazione Prada, Milan, and David Zwirner, New York | installations (visual works) Milan site-specific works |

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| 00:46:31 | <p>(Work Reference) Dan Flavin <i>Ursula's one and two picture, 1964</i> First installed at Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne</p> | light art |
| 00:47:13 | <p>Conservation Issues Morse discusses what the restoration of a Flavin work entails, including how he locates replacement components or has them custom-fabricated by specific vendors. Morse clarifies his directives for future conservation of Flavin's work and discusses the future and obsolescence risk of fluorescent lighting.</p> | components (objects) damage electric fixtures (light fixtures) electric wiring fluorescent lamps (lighting device components) fluorescent lighting fragility glass (material) light bulbs restoration (process) rigid frames light sockets standards (concepts) |
| 00:52:49 | <p>Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Morse describes the qualities that are important to the fluorescent bulbs in Flavin installations and reflects on the nature of that technology.</p> | fluorescent lamps (lighting device components) |
| 00:54:06 | <p>Technical Specifications Morse describes and gives an inventory of the specific light bulbs that Flavin used in Richmond Hall and discusses specifications regarding color and guidelines for restoration.</p> | artist's intent colorimetry color (perceived attribute) fluorescent lamps (lighting device components) light bulbs manufacturers restoration (process) |
| 00:58:45 | <p>Concept/Nature of Work Morse discusses Flavin's concept of the building's overall light treatment, interior and exterior, as a single work.</p> | artist's intent unity viewers (observers) |
| 01:00:42 | <p>Technical Specifications Morse discusses the white light bulbs that Flavin employed at Richmond Hall, including their fabrication and specifications.</p> | color (perceived attribute) cool (color attribute) custom-made fluorescent lamps (lighting device components) fluorescent lighting hue light bulbs manufacturers specifications |

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| | | spectrum suppliers warm (color attribute) white (color) |
| 01:00:47 | (Image) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (detail of white light bulbs) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 01:01:22 | (Work Reference) Dan Flavin <i>Untitled (to the 'innovator' of Wheeling Peachblow), 1966-68</i> | light art |
| 01:04:47 | (Images) Dan Flavin Installation Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection November 19, 1998-ongoing (montage of interior) | installations (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 01:07:01 | Closing Credits | |