



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: Brice Marden
Date: October 1, 1992
Location: The Menil Collection
Interviewer: Carol Mancusi-Ungaro
Video: Laurie McDonald
Total Run Time: 01:23:35

Abstract:

Artist Brice Marden speaks with Artists Documentation Program Founding Director and Menil Chief Conservator, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro. The conversation focuses primarily on *The Seasons*, 1974-75, a painting cycle owned by the Menil Collection. Throughout the interview, Marden discusses his choice of materials and techniques and outlines his intent for the future conservation and exhibition of his work.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):

Corporate Name(s)

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

Genre(s)

Interviews
Oral histories

Personal Name(s)

Mancusi-Ungaro, Carol
McDonald, Laurie
Marden, Brice, 1938-

Subject(s)

Art--Conservation and restoration
Art--Technique
Artists--Interviews
Color-field painting--United States
Painting, American--20th century

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Indexed by: Heather Nodler, June 2011

Video: adp1992b_marden_edmast_a.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.1992b / Interview date: 10/01/1992

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
00:00:01	Opening Credits	
00:00:43	Introduction Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Brice Marden	
00:00:55	(Image) Brice Marden <i>The Seasons, 1974-75</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:01:44	Process of Creation Marden describes the circumstances that led him to create <i>The Seasons</i> . He also discusses the relationships among the larger and smaller versions of <i>The Seasons</i> and the process by which he worked on both versions simultaneously.	monochrome mural paintings (visual works) Novros, David preparatory studies Rice University Institute for the Arts, Rice Museum Rothko, Mark
00:01:44	(Exhibition Reference) “Marden, Novros, Rothko: Painting in the Age of Actuality” April 18-May 31, 1975 Rice Museum, Rice University	exhibitions (events) Rice University Institute for the Arts, Rice Museum
00:05:04	(Images) Brice Marden <i>The Seasons – Small Version, 1974-75</i> The Menil Collection, Houston Brice Marden <i>The Seasons, 1974-75</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:07:02	Process of Creation and Concept/Nature of Work Marden continues to discuss the relationships among the various versions of <i>The Seasons</i> , including a series of related graphite drawings. He explains his decisions regarding proportion and sequence.	drawings (visual works) graphite (mineral) oil paint (paint) proportion sequences wax
00:07:11	(Image) Installation view: “Marden, Novros, Rothko: Painting in the Age of Actuality” April 18-May 31, 1975	exhibitions (events) Rice University Institute for the Arts, Rice Museum

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	Rice Museum, Rice University	
00:07:31	<p>(Images) Brice Marden <i>Study for The Seasons, 1975</i> The Menil Collection, Houston</p> <p>Brice Marden <i>The Seasons, 1974-75</i> The Menil Collection, Houston</p> <p>Brice Marden <i>Study for The Seasons (Small Version), 1975</i> The Menil Collection, Houston</p> <p>Brice Marden <i>The Seasons – Small Version, 1974-75</i> The Menil Collection, Houston</p>	<p>drawings (visual works) Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</p>
00:09:22	<p>Concept/Nature of Work Marden discusses his choice of proportion and shape in <i>The Seasons</i>, as well as in other works. He also discusses his use of Soji/Shoji screens.</p>	<p>Finnegan, Ed** panels (surface components) proportion shape (form attribute) shoji</p>
00:09:30	<p>(Work Reference) Brice Marden <i>Shape Book, 1973-75</i> Graphische Sammlung, Albertina Vienna</p>	<p>books Graphische Sammlung Albertina</p>
00:10:50	<p>(Work Reference) Brice Marden <i>Thira, 1979-80</i> Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou</p>	<p>Centre Georges Pompidou paintings (visual works)</p>
00:11:18	<p>Exhibition and Concept/Nature of Work Marden discusses his use of interval between panels in <i>The Seasons</i>. He and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss the notion of each set of four panels existing as a single painting.</p>	<p>distance exhibiting Nodelman, Sheldon, 1935- proportion</p>
00:11:46	<p>(Image) Installation view: "Marden, Novros, Rothko: Painting in the Age of Actuality" April 18-May 31, 1975 (detail of <i>The Seasons</i>) Rice Museum, Rice University</p>	<p>exhibitions (events) Rice University Institute for the Arts, Rice Museum</p>
00:12:03	<p>(Image) Installation view: "Marden, Novros, Rothko: Painting in the Age of Actuality"</p>	<p>exhibitions (events) Rice University Institute for the Arts, Rice</p>

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	April 18-May 31, 1975 (detail of <i>The Seasons (Small Version)</i>) Rice Museum, Rice University	Museum
00:12:16	(Image) Brice Marden <i>Study for The Seasons (Small Version), 1975</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	drawings (visual works) Menil Collection
00:14:02	Technical Specifications Marden describes the materials and techniques that he used to create <i>The Seasons</i> . Specifically, he discusses his choice of stretcher depth, his attempts to prevent creasing in the work during paint application, and the importance of sizing and priming. He reflects on the significance of the artist's hand in a work.	depth (size/dimension) duck (textile) Kay, Reed** painting techniques Paul, David** priming (coating process) sizing (process) stretchers (framing and mounting equipment)
00:18:36	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Marden describes how he created and applied a wax/oil mixture to <i>The Seasons</i> . He contrasts his materials and processes with those of encaustic painting and also describes his methods for securing layers on the work's surface.	beeswax mixtures (materials) oil (substance) paint layers turpentine vehicle (binder)
00:20:40	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Marden describes in greater detail the process by which he applied a wax/oil mixture to <i>The Seasons</i> .	brushwork matte (optical property) paintbrushes spatulas (artists' tools)
00:21:05	(Image) Brice Marden <i>The Seasons, 1974-75 (detail of brushstrokes)</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:21:53	(Image) Brice Marden <i>The Seasons, 1974-75 (detail of spatula marks at bottom)</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:23:25	Technical Specifications Marden describes the lighting conditions under which he painted <i>The Seasons</i> , as well as his rationale for adding wax to the paint.	artificial light beeswax layering monochrome Quaytman, Harvey reflectance surface properties
00:25:53	Technical Specifications Marden demonstrates the physical techniques that he used to apply paint to <i>The Seasons</i> .	Action painting flat (form attributes) painting techniques spatulas (artists' tools) surface properties
00:26:08	(Image) Brice Marden	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)

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	<i>The Seasons, 1974-75 (detail of surface)</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	
00:29:19	Concept/Nature of Work Marden discusses his edge treatments and the relationship between front and edge in <i>The Seasons</i> . Additionally, he describes in greater detail his paint application techniques and how they help to define that relationship and to support a painting's surface during application.	color (perceived attribute) edges (object portions) Fome-Cor (TM) fronts (object components) painting techniques scraping
00:29:22	(Image) Brice Marden <i>The Seasons, 1974-75 (detail of edges)</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:29:44	(Images) Brice Marden <i>The Seasons – Small Version, 1974-75 (detail of edges)</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:30:39	(Image) Brice Marden <i>The Seasons, 1974-75 (detail of straight edges)</i> The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:33:07	Conservation Issues Mancusi-Ungaro describes a conservation technique that she uses – adding a fiberglass interface between a painting and its stretcher – to provide additional support for a painting's surface. She assesses Marden's degree of interest in applying that technique to <i>The Seasons</i> . She describes a treatment that she applied to the stretchers of <i>The Seasons</i> .	fiberglass stretchers (framing and mounting equipment)
00:35:14	Concept/Nature of Work and Conservation Issues Marden discusses the conceptual significance of stretcher depth and the role of intuition in his work. He also describes his attitudes toward canvas relining and stretcher replacement.	intuition lining (process) objects Stella, Frank stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) thickness
00:37:52	Conservation Issues Marden discusses the evidentiary and conceptual value of a painting's original stretcher. He also expresses his opinions regarding natural aging and restoration of paintings.	artist's intent handmade natural aging restoration (process) stretchers (framing and mounting equipment)
00:42:45	Exhibition and Conservation Issues Marden reflects on various measures taken by artists and museums to protect works.	artist's intent fragility glazing (glass) natural aging

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		Reinhardt, Ad Ryman, Robert Schnabel, Julian wax
00:46:16	Conservation Issues Marden expresses his preferences regarding the future conservation of his works. He also discusses his tendency to rework paintings after they have left his studio and his process for resolving works.	damage reworking
00:50:26	Process of Creation and Historical Anecdote Marden describes the circumstances that led him to create <i>The Seasons</i> .	Hunter, Fredericka* Novros, David
00:52:25	Conservation Issues and Process of Creation Marden and Mancusi-Ungaro assess the current condition of <i>The Seasons</i> . He reflects on his works' fragility, particularly due to his use of wax, and his awareness of their fragility during the creation process. He also discusses the importance of his technical training.	artists' materials beeswax delamination fragility Kay, Reed** visual inspection wax
00:55:25	Concept/Nature of Work Marden discusses the symbolism of the colors that he chose to employ in <i>The Seasons</i> . He also discusses how the individual colors function within the larger context of the work.	color (perceived attribute) Graves, Robert, 1895-1985 seasons symbolism (artistic concept)
00:58:50	Concept/Nature of Work and Technical Specifications Marden describes the relationship among various panels and versions of <i>The Seasons</i> . He and Mancusi-Ungaro inspect a panel from <i>The Seasons – Small Version</i> to reconstruct the work's provenance and materials.	canvas Goldreyer, Daniel** lining (process) shoji studies (visual works) supports (artists' materials) tape (materials)
01:03:47	Conservation Issues Marden discusses those works of his that were damaged in the past and offers his opinions on how conservators should treat major damage to his work. He and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss the special problems inherent in restoring monochromatic works, as well as the possibility of creating replicas.	artist's intent damage fragility Goldreyer, Daniel** monochrome Newman, Barnett Reinhardt, Ad Riley, Orrin replicas restoration (process) Rothko, Mark Walker Art Center
01:05:25	(Work Reference) Brice Marden <i>Passing, 1970</i>	paintings (visual works)
01:07:16	Conservation Issues	age cracks canvas

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	Marden expresses his opinion of other people restoring his works. He discusses how his choice of materials is influenced by his desire to ensure that works resist cracking.	damage restoration (process) shipping
01:09:28	Conservation Issues and Historical Anecdote Marden reflects on the importance of the artist's hand in a work of art. He uses the Rothko Chapel to illustrate his point. Mancusi-Ungaro shares some of her own personal experiences with restoration of the Rothko Chapel paintings.	age artist's intent natural aging pentimenti Rice, Dan Rothko, Mark
01:07:45	(Work Reference) Brice Marden <i>Back Series, 1967-68</i>	paintings (visual works)
01:13:19	Conservation Issues Marden discusses his wishes for restoration of his work when he is no longer able to undertake it himself. He also reflects on whether a restored work is an original work.	artist's intent authenticity restoration (process)
01:16:08	Conservation Issues and Historical Anecdote Marden outlines his priorities for conservation of his work. He and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss strategies for cleaning his works without disrupting their surfaces. He offers some specific examples of his works that were treated in the past.	cleaning stability
01:18:40	Conservation Issues Marden discusses institutions' hesitation to lend his works for exhibition, due to their fragility. He then discusses the relatively good condition of <i>The Seasons</i> , in spite of its many international voyages. Mancusi-Ungaro explains the shipping and handling protocols that the Menil Collection follows to ensure the safety of works.	Albright-Knox Art Gallery barriers cleaning exhibiting fragility Kelly, Ellsworth Malevich, Kazimir Pace Gallery of New York, Inc. Reinhardt, Ad shipping
01:22:48	Closing Credits	