Abstract:
Jasper Johns speaks with Artists Documentation Program Founding Director and Menil Chief Conservator, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro. The conversation focuses on several of the artist's paintings, including *Gray Alphabets*, 1963; *Untitled (Green Painting)*, 1954; *Star*, 1954; and *Voice*, 1964-1967, all owned by the Menil Collection. Johns traces each work's provenance and describes the materials and techniques that he employed to create them. Throughout the interview, Johns discusses his intent for the future conservation and exhibition of his works. The interview includes occasional comments from art historian Roberta Bernstein, Menil Paper Conservator Elizabeth Lunning, and collector David Whitney, during a segment in which questions arise about the provenance and repainting of *Voice*.

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)
- Johns, Jasper, 1930-
- Mancusi-Ungaro, Carol
- McDonald, Laurie

Subject(s)
- Art--Conservation and restoration
- Art—Technique
- Artists—Interviews
- Artists’ materials
- Artists--United States--Biography
- Painting, American--20th century
**Exhibitions/Works:**
Names of exhibitions and works referenced during this interview appear below in gray cells.

**Controlled Vocabulary:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Subject Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00:01</td>
<td>Opening Credits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:00:50</td>
<td>Introduction  Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Jasper Johns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:01:13</td>
<td>(Image)  Jasper Johns  <em>Gray Alphabets, 1956</em>  The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:01:49</td>
<td>(Images)  Jasper Johns  <em>Gray Alphabets, 1956 (details of paper letters and encaustic)</em>  The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:02:58</td>
<td>Technical Specifications  Johns discusses the canvas onto which he painted <em>Gray Alphabets.</em></td>
<td>canvas cloth cotton (textile)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:03:42</td>
<td>(Images)  Jasper Johns  <em>Gray Alphabets, 1956 (details of problems with canvas)</em>  The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:04:09</td>
<td>Conservation Issues  Johns assesses the current condition of <em>Gray Alphabets.</em></td>
<td>beeswax canvas cloth color shift encaustic paint newsprint visual inspection yellowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 00:04:24 | (Images) Jasper Johns  
*Gray Alphabets*, 1956 (details of darkened newsprint letters)  
The Menil Collection, Houston | Menil Collection paintings (visual works) |
| 00:05:02 | Conservation Issues  
Mancusi-Ungaro continues to describe the treatment that she undertook in 1985 on *Gray Alphabets*. | adhesive tape  
aluminum (metal)  
canvas  
cleavage  
edges (object portions)  
frames (furnishings)  
honeycomb mounts (secondary support)  
restoration (process)  
stretchers (framing and mounting equipment)  
wood (plant material) |
| 00:05:49 | (Image) Conservation notes showing areas of treatment in 1985 on *Gray Alphabets*, 1956 | documents  
Menil Collection paintings (visual works)  
restoration (process) |
| 00:06:39 | (Images) Jasper Johns  
*Gray Alphabets*, 1956 (details of original frame)  
The Menil Collection, Houston | Menil Collection paintings (visual works) |
| 00:07:34 | Conservation Issues  
Mancusi-Ungaro continues to describe the treatment that she undertook in 1985 on *Gray Alphabets*. She focuses specifically on the honeycomb aluminum support that she created. | aluminum (metal)  
edges (object portions)  
honeycomb mounts (secondary support)  
museum board putty (sealing compound)  
stable |
| 00:09:16 | Conservation Issues and Exhibition  
Johns assesses Mancusi-Ungaro’s treatment of *Gray Alphabets* and discusses the possibility of mounting his other encaustic paintings onto solid supports. Mancusi-Ungaro describes her efforts to minimize damage to the painting during its travel and exhibition. | aluminum (metal)  
cracks  
encaustic paint  
honeycomb shipping  
stable |
| 00:10:44 | Conservation Issues and Exhibition  
Johns and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss various strategies for exhibiting *Gray Alphabets*, including the Menil Collection’s choice not to cover it with glass and how it might be framed. | exhibiting  
glazing |
| 00:13:04 | Historical Anecdote  
Johns and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss the provenance of *Untitled (Green Painting)*, 1954. Mancusi-Ungaro outlines the painting’s treatment history at the Menil Collection. | Blum, Irving, 1930-*  
Ferus Gallery frames (furnishings)  
Janss, Edwin Jr.**  
Menil, Dominique de |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:13:05</td>
<td>(Image) Jasper Johns Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td>Menil, François de provenance Rosenthal, Rachel</td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:14:13</td>
<td>(Image) Jasper Johns Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 (painting in white shadowbox) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:14:28</td>
<td>Technical Specifications Johns describes the materials and techniques that he employed in the creation of Untitled (Green Painting). Mancusi-Ungaro tells him about an unexplained crystalline substance that appeared on the painting’s surface.</td>
<td></td>
<td>crystal (material by form) enamel paint folding (process) glaze glue oil paint (paint) paper (fiber product) viridian (color) wax white pigment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:14:38</td>
<td>(Images) Jasper Johns Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 (details of folded paper) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:14:59</td>
<td>(Image) Jasper Johns Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 (detail of painting verso) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:16:07</td>
<td>(Images) Jasper Johns Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 (details of white crystals on surface of painting) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:17:29</td>
<td>Exhibition Johns expresses his preferences regarding the exhibition of Untitled (Green Painting). He comments on the painting’s taped edges and its orientation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>adhesive tape edges (object portions) orientation visual inspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:18:27</td>
<td>(Image) Jasper Johns Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 (image of painting showing former orientation) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:20:00</td>
<td>Technical Specifications</td>
<td></td>
<td>age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Segment</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:22:11</td>
<td>(Image)</td>
<td>Jasper Johns, Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 (detail showing print on paper in transmitted light) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:22:53</td>
<td>Conservation Issues and Exhibition</td>
<td>Johns and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss her proposed treatment for Untitled (Green Painting), as well as her plans for it to be framed and mounted during travel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:22:52</td>
<td>(Image)</td>
<td>Jasper Johns, Untitled (Green Painting), 1954 (detail of verso showing support treatment) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:24:06</td>
<td>Technical Specifications</td>
<td>Johns and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss the text that they observed during their inspection of Untitled (Green Painting) in transmitted light.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:25:23</td>
<td>Technical Specifications</td>
<td>Mancusi-Ungaro and Johns discuss the orientation of printed text within the newsprint letters of Gray Alphabets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:25:59</td>
<td>(Images)</td>
<td>Jasper Johns, Gray Alphabets, 1956 (details of paper letters and encaustic) The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:26:31</td>
<td>Conservation Issues</td>
<td>Mancusi-Ungaro describes and solicits feedback from Johns on a treatment that she undertook to consolidate the encaustic material and secure the paper letters on Gray Alphabets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:28:55</td>
<td>Exhibition</td>
<td>Johns and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss his preferences regarding stretcher depth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:31:51</td>
<td>Process of Creation and Conservation Issues</td>
<td>Johns traces the provenance of Star, which the artist Rachel Rosenthal commissioned him to paint. He and Mancusi-Ungaro</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Media Reference</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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</table>
|       | inspect the painting and discuss its construction. Johns offers his opinions regarding how to clean the work. |  | Rosenthal, Rachel  
Staples  
Stars of David  
visual inspection  
wood (plant material) |
| 00:31:53 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Star*, 1954  
The Menil Collection, Houston |  | Menil Collection  
paintings (visual works) |
| 00:33:59 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Star*, 1954 (detail of glass, nails, and surface)  
The Menil Collection, Houston |  | Menil Collection  
paintings (visual works) |
| 00:35:46 | Conservation Issues  
Johns expresses his opinions regarding Mancusi-Ungaro’s plans to prevent damage to *Star* during its shipment and exhibition. |  | damage  
frames (furnishings)  
mounts (secondary support)  
shipping  
stability |
| 00:38:05 | Conservation Issues  
Johns expresses his opinions regarding the natural aging of works and their cleaning. |  | age  
cleaning  
restoration (process) |
| 00:41:03 | Conservation Issues  
Johns describes occasions when his works suffered damages. |  | damage  
restoration (process)  
Solomon, Alan R.* |
| 00:41:31 | (Work Reference)  
Jasper Johns  
*Painting with Two Balls*, 1960  
Collection of the artist |  | paintings (visual works) |
| 00:42:11 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Voice*, 1964-1967  
The Menil Collection, Houston |  | Menil Collection  
paintings (visual works) |
| 00:42:11 | Historical Anecdote  
Johns traces the provenance of *Voice*. |  | Castelli, Leo  
Leo Castelli Gallery  
Menil, Dominique de  
Menil, John de*  
provenance |
| 00:42:34 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Voice*, 1964-1967 (First State)  
The Menil Collection, Houston |  | Menil Collection  
paintings (visual works) |
| 00:43:05 | (Exhibition Reference)  
“Gray is the Color: An Exhibition of Grisaille Painting XIIIth-XXth Centuries”  
Institute for the Arts, Rice University, Houston |  | exhibitions (events)  
Rice University Institute for the Arts, Rice Museum |
### Technical Specifications
Johns describes the processes and materials that he employed in the creation of *Voice*. He and Mancusi-Ungaro inspect the painting to reveal that it is backed with an additional canvas.

| Image | Jasper Johns  
| Voice, 1964-1967 (detail)  
| The Menil Collection, Houston |

### Historical Anecdote and Conservation Issues
Johns and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss possible explanations for an additional backing canvas that was applied to *Voice*. Johns describes an occasion when the painting was damaged, and he subsequently restored it.

| Image | Menil Collection paintings (visual works) |

### Historical Anecdote
Johns and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss the provenance of *Voice* and try to clarify some confusion regarding the painting's history of being reworked, as indicated by photographs and correspondence.

| Image | Burckhardt, Rudy documents  
| Lebron, James**  
| Leo Castelli Gallery  
| Menil, Dominique de Menil, John de*  
| Pollitzer, Eric*  
| Sidney Janis Gallery |

### Conservation Issues
Mancusi-Ungaro offers possible explanations for the additional canvas on *Voice*. She and Johns discuss various conservation treatments that both Johns and the Menil Collection undertook on *Voice*. These include creating replicas of the fork and spoon, which were stolen from the work and later replaced, and securing the wire on the painting.

| Image | canvas damage  
| forks (flatware)  
| framing (processes)  
| Katz, Bill  
| restoration (process)  
| spoons |

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October 19, 1963-January 19, 1974
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 00:57:47 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Voice*, 1964-1967 (detail of fork and spoon)  
The Menil Collection, Houston | stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) vandalism wire              |
| 00:59:36 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Voice*, 1964-1967 (detail of security wire)  
The Menil Collection, Houston | Menil Collection paintings (visual works)                                |
| 00:59:57 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Voice*, 1964-1967 (detail of screw eye)  
The Menil Collection, Houston | Menil Collection paintings (visual works)                                |
| 01:00:17 |  
Historical Anecdote  
Johs and Mancusi-Ungaro enlist the help of David Whitney to clarify the mystery surrounding *Voice’s* second canvas and its provenance. | Edisto Beach  
Kulicke, Robert M.  
Lebron, James**  
New York stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) |
| 01:02:29 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Voice*, 1964-1967 (verso stretcher)  
The Menil Collection, Houston | Menil Collection paintings (visual works)                                |
| 01:04:54 |  
Historical Anecdote  
The group attempts to reconstruct *Voice’s* provenance using the gallery labels on the painting’s verso. They also discuss early confusion, on the part of the Menil Collection, regarding different versions of the painting. | Menil, Dominique de Winkler, Paul** |
| 01:05:16 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
The Menil Collection, Houston | Menil Collection paintings (visual works)                                |
| 01:05:45 |  
Conservation Issues  
Johs gives his opinions regarding the possibility of replacing the fork and spoon on *Voice*, in the event of theft. | forks (flatware) replicas restoration (process) spoons vandalism |
| 01:06:34 | (Image)  
Jasper Johns  
*Voice*, 1964-1967 (detail of fork and spoon)  
The Menil Collection, Houston | Menil Collection paintings (visual works)                                |
<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01:06:44</td>
<td><strong>Historical Anecdote</strong>&lt;br&gt;Johns, Mancusi-Ungaro, David Whitney, and Roberta Bernstein continue to discuss the mystery surrounding <em>Voice</em>. Using information from labels on the painting’s verso, they reconstruct the painting’s provenance. Included in this segment is detailed provenance information from the painting’s Leo Castelli Gallery card.</td>
<td>Leo Castelli Gallery provenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:07:38</td>
<td><em>(Image)</em>&lt;br&gt;Jasper Johns&lt;br&gt;<em>Voice</em>, 1964-1967 (detail of Leo Castelli Gallery label on verso)&lt;br&gt;The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:08:57</td>
<td><em>(Image)</em>&lt;br&gt;Jasper Johns&lt;br&gt;<em>Voice</em>, 1964-1967 (detail of Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles label on verso)&lt;br&gt;The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
<td>Menil Collection paintings (visual works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:11:53</td>
<td><strong>Closing Credits</strong></td>
<td></td>
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