



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: John Currin
Date: February 21, 2004
Location: Whitney Museum of American Art
Interviewer: Pia Gottschaller
Video: Ronald Bronstein / **Edit:** Laurie McDonald
Total Run Time: 01:28:45

Abstract:

Artist John Currin speaks with Associate Conservator Pia Gottschaller at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Their conversation focuses on the paintings in Currin's eponymous retrospective exhibition at the Whitney, November 20, 2003-February 22, 2004. Currin describes the materials and techniques that he used to create those works, as well as his wishes for their future conservation. Of particular emphasis are the artist's painting techniques and his choice of pigments and ground materials. Rachel Feinstein, an artist and Currin's wife and model, appears briefly toward the end of the interview.

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)

Currin, John, 1962-
Gottschaller, Pia (local name)

Subject(s)

Art--Conservation and restoration
Art--Technique
Artists--Interviews
Artists' materials
Artists--United States--Biography

Painting, American--20th century
Pigments

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	
00:00:50	Introduction Pia Gottschaller, John Currin	
00:01:10	Process of Creation and Concept/Nature of Work Currin describes how he came to make <i>The Moved Over Lady</i> , as well as some of the painting's unique characteristics.	canvas Gogh, Vincent van inspiration preparatory drawings retouching sanding (abrasion)
00:01:06	(Image) John Currin <i>The Moved Over Lady, 1991</i> Collection of Andrea Rosen	paintings (visual works)
00:01:28	(Image) Vincent van Gogh <i>Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin, 1889</i>	paintings (visual works)
00:04:28	Technical Specifications Currin details the materials he used to create several of his works, in particular his paint formulas. Currin and Gottschaller discuss the pros and cons of using cross braces to secure stretchers.	binder (material) braces (supporting elements) dammar lead white oil paint (pigmented coating) Old Holland Classic Colours** palette knives (painting equipment) pigment stand oil stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) turpentine Utrecht Art Supplies** umber (pigment) Winsor & Newton*
00:07:25	Technical Specifications Currin details the materials and techniques that he uses to	canvas drying lead-based paint

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	prepare his canvases.	primer (material) priming (coating process) rabbitskin glue stapling stretching Utrecht Art Supplies**
00:09:46	Technical Specifications Currin describes the materials and techniques that he applies to canvases after he has primed them. In particular, he discusses his choice of pigments.	Old Holland Classic Colours** turpentine umber (pigment) underpainting Winsor & Newton*
00:10:11	(Image) Detail of canvas tacking edge with umber wash	paintings (visual works)
00:10:50	(Image) John Currin <i>The Moved Over Lady, 1991 (detail of face and skin tone)</i> Collection of Andrea Rosen	paintings (visual works)
00:11:28	Technical Specifications Currin continues to describe the materials and processes that he applies to canvases after he has primed them. In particular, he discusses his choice of pigments, his use of varnish, and his method of canvas preparation.	background burnt sienna (pigment) burnt umber (pigment) Fassbinder, Rainer Werner, 1945-1982 figure-ground perception ivory black Marden, Brice matte (optical property) pigment sketching varnish vehicle (binder) yellow ocher (pigment)
00:13:24	Technical Specifications Currin describes his choices with regard to the edge treatment of his paintings. He also describes the process by which he primes his canvases and his preferences regarding framing.	canvas edges (object portions) frames (furnishings) Marden, Brice palette knives (painting equipment) primer (material) priming (coating process) scraping
00:14:49	(Image) John Currin <i>Skinny Woman, 1992</i> Whitney Museum of American Art Purchase, with funds from The List Purchase Fund and the Painting and Sculpture Committee	paintings (visual works) Whitney Museum of American Art

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00:15:50	(Image) John Currin <i>Brown Lady, 1991</i> Private Collection	paintings (visual works)
00:16:57	Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Currin discusses his appreciation of gilded or decorative frames, as well as his ideas regarding the relationship between a painting and its frame.	frames (furnishings) gilding silver leaf
00:18:57	(Image) John Currin <i>Girl in Bed, 1993</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
00:19:28	(Image) John Currin <i>Girl in Bed, 1993</i> Collection of Dianne Wallace, New York	paintings (visual works)
00:19:51	(Image) John Currin <i>Bea Arthur Naked, 1991</i> Collection of Ranbir Singh	paintings (visual works)
00:19:51	Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Currin discusses his habit of painting over older works. He also explains his choice of subject matter in <i>Bea Arthur Naked</i> .	overpainting (technique) scraping
00:20:29	(Images) John Currin <i>Bea Arthur Naked, 1991 (details of image visible through paint and gouges in paint)</i> Collection of Ranbir Singh	paintings (visual works)
00:21:26	(Image) John Currin <i>Bea Arthur Naked, 1991 (detail of breasts)</i> Collection of Ranbir Singh	paintings (visual works)
00:22:08	Technical Specifications and Exhibition Currin details his use of pigments to create flesh tones.	additive (material) alizarin (colorant) burnt umber (pigment) cadmium yellow (pigment) De Kooning, Willem ivory black lead white modeling (shading) raw umber (pigment)

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00:22:29	(Images) John Currin <i>Bea Arthur Naked, 1991 (details of face and skin tone)</i> Collection of Ranbir Singh	titanium dioxide white paintings (visual works)
00:25:12	Conservation Issues Currin discusses the changes that he perceives in his works over time as well as the materials and techniques that he prefers to use to minimize the effects of aging in his works.	age alizarin (colorant) fugitive (pigment attribute) ivory black light (energy) lightfastness overpainting traction crackle visual inspection yellowing
00:26:53	(Image) John Currin <i>Girl in Bed, 1993 (detail of drying cracks)</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
00:27:24	(Image) John Currin <i>Girl in Bed, 1993 (detail of lines from original painting)</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
00:28:25	Conservation Issues Currin and Gottschaller discuss potential treatments for drying cracks on his paintings. Gottschaller describes what her treatment methods would entail. Currin offers his opinions and preferences regarding treatment, particularly inpainting certain areas of a painting.	Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique inpainting Malevich, Kazimir resin (organic material) restoration (process) traction crackle
00:29:32	(Image) Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres <i>Luigi Cherubini and the Muse of Lyric Poetry, 1842</i> Louvre, Paris	paintings (visual works)
00:31:03	Technical Specifications Currin details the materials that he used to create <i>Girl in Bed, 1993</i> . He discusses his interest in and knowledge of pigments.	burnt umber (pigment) cadmium yellow (pigment) Naples yellow (pigment) phthalocyanine blue pigment Prussian blue (pigment) Schminke* Thalo blue (color) yellow ocher (pigment) zinc white
00:31:06	(Image) John Currin	paintings (visual works)

	<i>Girl in Bed, 1993 (detail of face)</i> Collection of David Teiger	
00:33:45	Conservation Issues Currin and Gottschaller discuss an unevenness in the absorption of medium in the background of <i>Girl in Bed</i> . Currin also describes some unusual behavior that he observed when he varnished the same painting. He expresses his general opinions regarding the use of varnish on paintings and also describes the techniques that he employs to accelerate the drying of paint.	absorption (physicochemical processes) Abstract Expressionist chromium oxide green (pigment) dammar drying gloss (optical property) lead white raw umber (pigment) surface active agent surface properties turpentine varnish wetting agent Winsor & Newton*
00:38:04	(Image) John Currin <i>Girl in Bed, 1993 (detail of background)</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
00:38:30	Technical Specifications, Exhibition, and Conservation Issues Currin describes the materials and techniques he used to create <i>The Neverending Story</i> , as well as his preferences regarding the painting's framing and exhibition. He and Gottschaller conduct a visual inspection of the painting and discuss an area of bloom. Currin also describes the pigments he used on <i>The Neverending Story</i> .	alizarin (colorant) Blockx** bloom (cloudy condition) canvas edges (object portions) frames (furnishings) oil paint (paint) priming (coating process) staples stapling stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) stretching Venetian red (pigment) vermilion (pigment) visual inspection
00:38:32	(Image) John Currin <i>The Neverending Story, 1994</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
00:38:43	(Image) John Currin <i>The Neverending Story, 1994 (detail of staples on edge)</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)

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00:39:41	(Image) John Currin <i>The Neverending Story, 1994 (detail of bloom)</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
00:40:26	(Images) John Currin <i>The Neverending Story, 1994 (details of red paints)</i> Collection of David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
00:41:08	Technical Specifications Currin expresses his frustration with the regulation of paint manufacturing.	cadmium (metal) Canaletto Kremer Pigmente (Firm)* lead-based paint lead white mercury oil paint (paint) opacity regulating titanium dioxide white toxicity vermilion (pigment)
00:45:19	(Image) John Currin <i>Ann-Charlotte, 1996</i> Collection of Mandy and Cliff Einstein, Los Angeles	paintings (visual works)
00:45:19	Technical Specifications Currin describes the materials and techniques he used to create <i>Ann-Charlotte</i> . In particular, he describes his use of transparent layers to achieve brightness.	brightness (optical property) burnt umber (pigment) cadmium red (pigment) cool (color attribute) figures (representations) ground (material) layering opacity outline drawings priming (coating process) stain (coating) surfaces (object portions) transparency (optical property) value (color property) Venetian red (pigment) warm (color attribute)
00:45:31	(Image) John Currin <i>Ann-Charlotte, 1996 (detail of background color)</i> Collection of Mandy and Cliff Einstein, Los Angeles	paintings (visual works)

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00:46:33	(Image) John Currin <i>Ann-Charlotte, 1996 (detail of hair)</i> Collection of Mandy and Cliff Einstein, Los Angeles	paintings (visual works)
00:47:48	(Images) John Currin <i>Ann-Charlotte, 1996 (details of dress)</i> Collection of Mandy and Cliff Einstein, Los Angeles	paintings (visual works)
00:48:03	Technical Specifications Currin discusses his choice of canvas in <i>Ann-Charlotte</i> , as well as his general preferences regarding art supply stores. He also discusses his preferred artist's reference book.	artists' materials canvas Doerner, Max, 1870-1939* manuals (instructional materials) Mayer, Ralph New York Central Art Supply** Palermo, Blinky Pearl Paint** rabbitskin glue texture Utrecht Art Supplies**
00:50:53	Technical Specifications and Historical Anecdote Currin discusses the technical virtuosity of Rubens and his contemporaries and how their techniques have influenced his own work, particularly his use of resin to speed drying.	copal dammar drying resin (organic material) retouching Rubens, Peter Paul
00:54:13	(Image) John Currin <i>The Cripple, 1997</i> Collection of Susan and Michael Hort	paintings (visual works)
00:54:13	Technical Specifications Currin describes the materials and techniques that he used to create <i>The Cripple</i> . Specifically, he describes his experiments with making his own emulsion ground and painting faces using a palette knife.	absorption (physicochemical processes) calcium carbonate cobalt blue (pigment) dammar emulsion ground gesso ground (material) hydrated lime isolating varnish layering linseed oil oil paint (paint) palette knives (painting equipment) rabbitskin glue sanding (abrasion) slaked plaster of Paris

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		Venetian red (pigment) paintings (visual works)
00:56:59	(Image) John Currin <i>The Cripple, 1997 (detail of background)</i> Collection of Susan and Michael Hort	
00:57:09	(Image) John Currin <i>The Bra Shop, 1997</i> Collection of Delfina, London	paintings (visual works)
00:57:09	Concept/Nature of Work and Technical Specifications Currin describes his thinking and the techniques that he employed to create <i>The Bra Shop</i> , particularly his use of a palette knife to paint the faces.	palette knives (painting equipment)
00:57:23	(Images) John Currin <i>The Bra Shop, 1997 (details of faces and breasts)</i> Collection of Delfina, London	paintings (visual works)
00:59:36	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Currin describes the materials and techniques that he used to create <i>The Bra Shop</i> , including his choice of pigments and his methods of paint application. He assesses the painting's current condition and discusses his practice of painting over old works.	alizarin (colorant) layering repainting vehicle (binder) Venetian red (pigment) visual inspection
00:59:40	(Image) John Currin <i>The Bra Shop, 1997 (detail of red sweater)</i> Collection of Delfina, London	paintings (visual works)
01:01:06	(Image) John Currin <i>The Invalids, 1997</i> Stefan T. Edlis and H. Gael Neeson Collection	paintings (visual works)
01:02:25	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Currin describes the materials and techniques that he used to create <i>The Pink Tree</i> , including his choice of stretcher depth, which led to an anomaly in his priming, and his choice of pigments.	braces (supporting elements) green earth (pigment) priming (coating process) raw umber (pigment) stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) underpainting white pigment
01:02:31	(Image) John Currin <i>The Pink Tree, 1999</i> Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian	paintings (visual works)

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	Institution, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2000	
01:02:51	(Image) John Currin <i>The Pink Tree, 1999 (detail of bumps in painting from priming)</i> Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2000	paintings (visual works)
01:03:45	(Images) John Currin <i>The Pink Tree, 1999 (details of skin tones)</i> Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2000	paintings (visual works)
01:04:58	(Images) John Currin <i>The Pink Tree, 1999 (details of background)</i> Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2000	paintings (visual works)
01:04:58	Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Currin describes his intent in rendering the background of <i>The Pink Tree</i> .	background black (color) drawing (image-making) green (color) Holbein Artist Materials** linseed oil Naples yellow (pigment) sun-thickened oil transparency (optical property) underpainting varnish Venetian red (pigment) white pigment yellow ocher (pigment)
01:06:18	(Image) John Currin <i>The Pink Tree, 1999 (details of drawing in kneecap)</i> Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2000	paintings (visual works)
01:08:36	Technical Specifications Currin describes the materials and techniques that he used to create <i>Stamford After-Brunch, 2000</i> , specifically his choice of pigments. He also discusses his use of yellow pigments in other works.	lead tin yellow (lead compound) lead white raw umber (pigment) titanium dioxide white Venetian red (pigment) white pigment yellow ocher (pigment)
01:08:36	(Images) John Currin	paintings (visual works)

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	Stamford After-Brunch, 2000 (overview and detail of yellow shirt) Collection of Andrea Rosen	
01:09:33	(Image) John Currin <i>Two Guys, 2002</i> Collection of Alan Hergott and Curt Shepard, Beverly Hills	paintings (visual works)
01:10:01	Technical Specifications Currin expresses his preferences with regard to stretchers, especially their depth. He also discusses his use of underpainting.	dammar depth (size/dimension) egg yolk emulsion Fredrix** iron oxide red (pigment) lead white stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) Tintoretto, Jacopo titanium dioxide white underpainting white pigment
01:10:09	(Image) John Currin <i>Minerva, 2000</i> Collection David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
01:11:43	(Image) John Currin <i>Minerva, 2000 (detail of blouse)</i> Collection David Teiger	paintings (visual works)
01:11:50	(Image) John Currin <i>Park City Grill, 2000</i> Collection of Walker Art Center, Minneapolis Justin Smith Purchase Fund, 2000	paintings (visual works)
01:13:18	(Image) John Currin <i>The Old Fence, 1999</i> Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; A. W. Mellon Acquisition Endowment Fund (2000.4.1)	paintings (visual works)
01:13:24	Concept/Nature of Work Rachel Feinstein, wife and model of the artist, joins the conversation, and Currin describes the significance for him of underpainting flesh.	models (people) underpainting
01:14:58	(Image) John Currin	paintings (visual works)

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	<i>Bent Lady, 2003</i> Private Collection, London; courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London	
01:14:58	Technical Specifications Currin describes the materials and techniques he used to create <i>Bent Lady</i> , in particular his choice of pigments and his paint application.	burnt umber (pigment) drying gray (color) grisaille ground (material) marble dust palette knives (painting equipment) priming (coating process) Prussian blue (pigment) raw umber (pigment) scraping ultramarine blue (pigment)
01:16:02	(Images) John Currin <i>Bent Lady, 2003</i> (details of blue dress) Private Collection, London; courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:16:56	(Image) John Currin <i>Bent Lady, 2003</i> (detail of leaves) Private Collection, London; courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:18:21	(Images) John Currin <i>Bent Lady, 2003</i> (details of face and hair) Private Collection, London; courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:18:27	Technical Specifications Currin continues to describe the materials and techniques he used to create <i>Bent Lady</i> , in particular his paint application and his figuration.	glazing (coating) paintbrushes palette knives (painting equipment)
01:18:51	(Images) John Currin <i>Bent Lady, 2003</i> (details of glazed knuckles) Private Collection, London; courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:19:30	(Image) John Currin <i>The Lobster, 2001</i> Collection of Dianne Wallace, New York	paintings (visual works)
01:19:32	(Image) John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)

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01:19:32	Technical Specifications Currin describes the materials and techniques that he used to create <i>Thanksgiving</i> , and assesses the painting's current condition.	alizarin (colorant) cobalt blue (pigment) ivory black lead white paintbrushes raw umber (pigment) ultramarine blue (pigment) underpainting white pigment yellow ocher (pigment)
01:19:34	(Image) John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003 (detail of black dress in center)</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:20:18	(Image) John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003 (detail of grapes)</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:20:55	(Image) John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003 (detail of neck on left-hand figure)</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:21:54	(Image) John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003 (detail of turkey)</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:22:20	(Image) John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003 (detail of yellow shirt)</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:22:50	Technical Specifications Currin discusses his preferences and techniques regarding varnishing of <i>Thanksgiving</i> .	dammar glazing (coating) gloss (optical property) ivory black paintbrushes Prussian blue (pigment) turpentine varnish Winsor & Newton*
01:23:53	(Image) John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003 (detail of mirror)</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London	paintings (visual works)
01:24:27	(Images)	paintings (visual works)

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	<p>John Currin <i>Thanksgiving, 2003 (details of wood and highlight areas)</i> Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ, London</p>	
01:26:25	<p>Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Currin describes the materials and techniques he used to create <i>The Producer</i> and <i>Nude on a Table</i>. He also discusses some of his preferences regarding restoration.</p>	<p>burnt umber (pigment) restoration (process) stain (coating) titanium dioxide white</p>
01:26:28	<p>(Image) John Currin <i>The Producer, 2002</i> Collection of Beth Swofford, Los Angeles</p>	<p>paintings (visual works)</p>
01:27:28	<p>(Image) John Currin <i>Nude on a Table, 2001</i> The Art Institute of Chicago</p>	<p>paintings (visual works)</p>
01:27:54	<p>Closing Credits</p>	