



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: Lucas Samaras
Date: January 26, 2004
Location: Whitney Museum of American Art
Interviewer: Carol Mancusi-Ungaro
Video: Ronald Bronstein / **Edit:** Laurie McDonald
Total Run Time: 01:38:43

Abstract:

Artist Lucas Samaras discusses his work with Artists Documentation Program Founding Director and Whitney Associate Director for Conservation and Research, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, on the occasion of the exhibition "Unrepentant Ego: The Self-Portraits of Lucas Samaras," Whitney Museum of American Art, November 13, 2003-February 8, 2004. The discussion focuses primarily on the materials and methods that Samaras uses to create his mixed-media self-portraits and his wishes for their future conservation and exhibition.

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)

Mancusi-Ungaro, Carol
Samaras, Lucas, 1936-

Subject(s)

Art--Conservation and restoration
Artists' materials
Art--Technique
Assemblage (Art)
Photography
Sculpture
Self-portraits

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 | |
| 00:00:48 | Introduction Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Lucas Samaras | |
| 00:01:25 | Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Samaras describes the processes and materials that he used to create his <i>Large Drawing</i> series. He also discusses various conservation issues inherent in the works and expresses his preferences regarding their future treatment. | colored pencils drawings (visual works) fading felt-tip pens fugitive (pigment attribute) glue graphite pencils hardness ink paper (fiber product) staining |
| 00:01:37 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Large Drawing #33, June 20, 1966</i> The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; gift of Arnold and Milly Glimcher, 1986 | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:03:04 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Large Drawing #11, May 25, 1966</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:03:10 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Large Drawing #4, May 9, 1966</i> Private collection | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:04:10 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, October 2, 1962</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:04:16 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, January 15, 1963</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |

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Indexed by: Heather Nodler, April 2011

Video: adp2004a_samaras_edmast_a.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.2004a / Interview date: 01/26/2004

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| 00:05:17 | Process of Creation and Technical Specifications Samaras describes the processes and materials that he used to create other drawings, including a series of crumpled works on paper. | crumpling fixative nibs (pen points) |
| 00:05:22 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Lucas is Crying, 1962</i> Collection of Milly Glimcher | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:07:00 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, September 11, 1962</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:07:50 | (Images) Lucas Samaras <i>Large Drawing #44, October 30, 1966</i> The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; gift of Arnold and Milly Glimcher, 1986 Lucas Samaras <i>Large Drawing #39, June 24, 1966</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 80.37.2 | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:08:00 | Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Samaras describes the processes and materials that he used to create a series of x-ray works . He also discusses in great detail his use of metal, usually steel or brass, pins and expresses his preferences regarding conservation and restoration of his works that employ pins. | brass (alloy) glue moisture paper (fiber product) pins (fasteners) radiographs restoration (process) rust steel (alloy) |
| 00:08:06 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Skull and Milky Way, 1966</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 91.34.6 | radiographs |
| 00:11:13 | Concept/Nature of Work Samaras describes the conceptual appeal of using metal pins in his work, linking his work to Surrealist traditions. | brass (alloy) fur Oppenheim, Meret pins (fasteners) steel (alloy) Surrealist |
| 00:13:19 | (Images) Lucas Samaras | assemblages (sculpture) |

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|----------|---|--|
| | Box #10, May 1963 (overview and details of pins) Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | |
| 00:13:20 | Concept/Nature of Work and Technical Specifications Samaras describes the processes and materials that he used, as well as his intent, in creating a series of assemblage boxes. | assemblages (sculpture) boxes (containers) pins (fasteners) wool (textile) yarn |
| 00:14:27 | (Images) Lucas Samaras Box #10, May 1963 (details of wool) Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:15:15 | Concept/Nature of Work and Technical Specifications Samaras describes the appeal of using brightly colored wool yarn in his assemblage boxes. | assemblages (sculpture) Hofmann, Hans Pollock, Jackson wool (textile) yarn |
| 00:15:20 | (Images) Lucas Samaras Box #10, May 1963 (details of wool) Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:17:08 | (Images) Lucas Samaras Box #12, 1963 (overview and details of wool) The Lipman Family Foundation, Inc. | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:19:50 | Technical Specifications, Conservation Issues, and Exhibition Samaras describes some of the techniques and materials that he used to create his assemblage boxes, as well as the boxes' unique conservation-related characteristics and needs. He also offers his opinions regarding general conservation of his works. | adhesive age assemblages (sculpture) boxes (containers) cases (containers) coating (material) collectors dust exhibiting humidity Pace Gallery of New York, Inc. preservation (function) Walker Art Center wool (textile) yarn |
| 00:24:08 | Technical Specifications, Conservation Issues, and Exhibition Samaras continues to describe some of the techniques and materials that he used to create his assemblage boxes, including metal pins and gemstones. He expresses his wishes for the works' conservation. | adhesive boxes (containers) gems (object genres) glue pins (fasteners) preservation (function) |
| 00:24:16 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Box #42, December 26, 1965 | assemblages (sculpture) |

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| | Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 74.97 a-b | |
| 00:24:56 | (Images) Lucas Samaras <i>Box #38, October-November 1965 (overview and details of interior)</i> Collection of Milly and Arne Glimcher | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:26:00 | Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Samaras describes some of the techniques and materials that he used to create his jeweled works. He also discusses the appeal and significance of using faux jewels and his opinions regarding their future restoration. | adhesive Albright, Ivan cleaning foil (metal) gems (object genres) reflectance restoration (process) |
| 00:26:04 | (Images) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, 1965 (overview and details of gems)</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:28:11 | (Images) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, March 2, 1965 (overview and details of gems)</i> The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; gift of Mrs. Andrew P. Fuller, 1976 | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:29:57 | Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Samaras describes the materials that he used to create an assemblage mask. He also offers an assessment of its current condition and his opinions regarding its future restoration. | cardboard cleaning dust masks (costume) plastic (organic material) visual inspection |
| 00:30:02 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, Spring 1965</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:30:49 | Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Samaras describes the materials he used to create an assemblage work employing metal nails and offers an assessment of its current condition and his opinions regarding its restoration. He discusses the conceptual difference between shiny and rusted metal surfaces. | earth (color) humidity metallic (color attribute) pins (fasteners) rust surface properties visual inspection |
| 00:30:54 | (Images) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, 1963 (overview and details of pins)</i> Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Michael and Dorothy Blankford Bequest | assemblages (sculpture) |

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| 00:32:33 | Technical Specifications and Historical Anecdote Samaras again discusses the materials, particularly pins and found boxes, that he used to construct various assemblage works. He also describes how he would acquire his materials. | assemblages (sculpture) boxes pins (fasteners) |
| 00:32:42 | (Images) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, 1963 (details of pin heads)</i> Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Michael and Dorothy Blankford Bequest | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:33:06 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Box #27, 1965</i> The Menil Collection, Houston; gift of Lucas Samaras | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 00:37:07 | Conservation Issues Samaras discusses his preferences regarding restoration of his paintings and three-dimensional works, including when he thinks intervention is appropriate and whether conservators might rely on his store of spare parts. | gems (object genres) inpainting paint pins (fasteners) restoration (process) |
| 00:37:14 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Self-Portrait, c. 1958</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | paintings (visual works) |
| 00:38:36 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Self-Portrait, c. 1958 (detail of area of loss)</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | paintings (visual works) |
| 00:42:12 | Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Samaras discusses his use of colored construction paper as a ground and pastel as a medium and their effect on both the aesthetic and conceptual aspects of his drawings, particularly with regard to color. | color (perceived attribute) construction paper paper (fiber product) pastels texture |
| 00:44:28 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, July 4, 1965</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:44:37 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, July 16, 1961</i> Collection of Janet and Peter Boris | drawings (visual works) |

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| 00:45:22 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled, May 7, 1962</i> Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:47:05 | Process of Creation and Conservation Issues Samaras discusses the process by which he created his pastel drawings, as well as the measures that he took to preserve the works. He also discusses his opinions regarding the use of fixative spray on pastels. | dust fixative pastels preservation (function) waxed paper |
| 00:51:57 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Cut Paper Drawing #17, December 20, 1967</i> Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:51:52 | Exhibition Samaras expresses his preferences regarding the framing and exhibition of his cut paper drawings. | paper (fiber product) cutting (dividing) exhibiting shadows mounting |
| 00:52:06 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Cut Paper Drawing #20, 1967</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 00:53:38 | Conservation Issues Samaras discusses the unique conservation needs of his <i>AutoPolaroids</i> works. He elaborates on his preferences regarding future conservation of the works. | diffusion transfer prints fading fugitive (pigment attribute) photographs restoration |
| 00:53:44 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>AutoPolaroid, January 1971</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Postwar Committee | photographs |
| 00:53:53 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>AutoPolaroid, June 14, 1970</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Postwar Committee | photographs |
| 00:54:10 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>AutoPolaroids, 1969-71</i> Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 00:54:18 | (Images) | photographs |

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| | <p>Lucas Samaras <i>AutoPolaroids</i>, 1969-71 (overview and detail) Denver Art Museum; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Greenhill</p> | |
| 00:54:30 | <p>(Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Something</i>, 1969-71 (details of book cover) Collection of Beverly and Peter Lipman</p> | <p>photograph albums</p> |
| 00:55:14 | <p>Technical Specifications Samaras discusses the processes that he used to create his <i>AutoPolaroids</i> series.</p> | <p>diffusion transfer prints exposure ink pens (drawing and writing) photographs stippling</p> |
| 00:57:30 | <p>(Image) Lucas Samaras Photographs from <i>Something</i>, 1969-71 Collection of Beverly and Peter Lipman</p> | <p>photographs</p> |
| 00:57:40 | <p>Conservation Issues and Exhibition Samaras offers his advice on the conservation and exhibition of his <i>AutoPolaroids</i>, particularly in relation to their photosensitivity.</p> | <p>fading photosensitivity tone (color effect)</p> |
| 00:57:42 | <p>(Image) Lucas Samaras <i>AutoPolaroids</i>, 1969-71 The Art Institute of Chicago; gift of Robert and Gayle Greenhill</p> | <p>photographs</p> |
| 00:58:31 | <p>(Image) Lucas Samaras Photographs from <i>Something</i>, 1969-71 Collection of Beverly and Peter Lipman</p> | <p>photographs</p> |
| 00:59:39 | <p>Conservation Issues and Process of Creation Samaras makes observations and offers his advice on the conservation of his SX-70 works, particularly in relation to their photosensitivity and a crackle that he witnessed in specific batches. He also describes the methods that he used to manipulate his materials and the ways in which Polaroid changed its manufacturing processes over time.</p> | <p>crackle fading internal dye diffusion transfer process photographic processes photosensitivity pressure shipping</p> |
| 01:00:54 | <p>(Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Photo-Transformation</i>, November 3, 1973 The Museum of Modern Art, New York; gift of Robert and Gayle Greenhill</p> | <p>photographs</p> |
| 01:01:13 | <p>(Image) Lucas Samaras</p> | <p>photographs</p> |

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| | Photo-Transformation, November 6, 1973 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | |
| 01:01:32 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Photo-Transformation, November 29, 1973 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Lilyan S. and Toby Miller | photographs |
| 01:06:04 | Historical Anecdote Samaras describes his history of using Polaroid cameras. | cameras (photographic equipment) Polaroid Corporation* Wolf, Eelco* |
| 01:08:51 | Process of Creation and Technical Specifications Samaras describes the materials and techniques that he used to create his series of <i>Matrix Drawings</i> . He also discusses the relationship of reflectance to those works. | drawings (visual works) drawing techniques graphite pencils incandescent lamps (lighting devices) reflectance silver (metal) |
| 01:09:18 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Matrix Drawing #2, March 18, 1975 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:09:34 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Matrix Drawing #1, April 10, 1975 Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:10:34 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Matrix Drawing #36, April 27, 1975 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:10:42 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Matrix Drawing #50, May 5, 1975 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:10:49 | Concept/Nature of Work and Technical Specifications Samaras discusses some of the key components and found materials that he employed in his assemblage boxes during the 1980s. | assemblages (sculpture) boxes found objects pins (fasteners) plastic (organic material) |
| 01:10:51 | (Image) Lucas Samaras | assemblages (sculpture) |

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| | Box #123, 1988 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | |
| 01:11:01 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Box #124, 1988 Collection of Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:11:16 | (Images) Lucas Samaras Box #125, 1988 (overview and details) Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:13:08 | Concept/Nature of Work and Technical Specifications Samaras discusses the similarities between his materials and methods and those of Jackson Pollock. | allover patterns beauty Pollock, Jackson |
| 01:13:10 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Box #100, 1977 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:13:10 | (Images) Lucas Samaras Box #103, 1977 (overview and details of dripped plastic on cloth) Collection of Stanley and Adrienne Green | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:17:18 | Technical Specifications Samaras discusses the materials and techniques that he used to create his <i>Panoramas</i> series, a series of photomontages that he creating using Polaroid prints, tape, and X-acto knives. | adhesive tape assembling (additive and joining process) cutting (dividing) diffusion transfer prints perspective (technique) photographs utility knives |
| 01:17:31 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Panorama, March 16, 1983 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; gift of Arnold and Milly Glimcher, transferred from the Department of 20 th Century Art, 1986 | photomontages |
| 01:18:08 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Panorama, 1983-86 Denver Art Museum; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Greenhill | photomontages |
| 01:18:29 | (Image) Lucas Samaras | photomontages |

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| | Panorama, March 6, 1983 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 84.9 | |
| 01:20:54 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Panorama, February 27, 1983 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photomontages |
| 01:21:01 | Process of Creation Samaras describes his use of a room-sized camera to create <i>Ultra-Large Lucas</i> , 1983, a life-sized self-portrait. | cameras (photographic equipment) photographs Polaroid Corporation* Wolf, Eelco* |
| 01:21:07 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Ultra-Large Lucas, 1983 The Museum of Modern Art, New York; gift of Robert and Gayle Greenhill | photographs |
| 01:22:15 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Untitled, July 6, 1990 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 01:22:23 | Process of Creation and Technical Specifications Samaras describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of ink drawings. | ink letters (signs) paper (fiber product) |
| 01:22:33 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Untitled #13, May 2, 1980 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:22:45 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Untitled (Ego), September 7, 1983 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:23:19 | Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Samaras describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of gold jewelry based on chicken-wire forms. He also discusses the target audiences for that work. | audiences casting (process) chicken wire gold (metal) jewelry necklaces |
| 01:23:24 | (Image) Lucas Samaras | necklaces |

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| | Necklace #7, 1996-98 Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | |
| 01:26:26 | Conservation Issues Samaras discusses his use of pins on his box works and their tendency to rust. He also discusses switching from using Duco cement to using acrylic gel medium to coat gems. He then offers his preferences regarding the conservation of his boxes and discusses the phenomenon of people stealing components of his works. | adhesive boxes (containers) brass (alloy) gems (object genres) pins (fasteners) rust theft |
| 01:26:28 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Untitled, October 28, 1985 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:26:33 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Untitled, November 8, 1995 Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | drawings (visual works) |
| 01:26:40 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Box #79, 1972 Collection of Morton and Linda Janklow | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:26:47 | (Images) Lucas Samaras Box #81, August 1973 (various details) Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:27:27 | (Images) Lucas Samaras Box #108, 1982 (overview and details of jewels) Collection of Martin Z. Margulies | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:28:29 | (Image) Lucas Samaras Box #109, 1982 Denver Art Museum; acquisition challenge grant, the American Art Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Robbins | assemblages (sculpture) |
| 01:30:23 | Technical Specifications and Process of Creation Samaras discusses a series of self-portraits that he created using <i>Polaroid TPX</i> film. | Polaroid Corporation* |
| 01:30:35 | (Image) Lucas Samaras | photographs |

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| | Self-Portrait, August 21, 1998 Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | |
| 01:30:44 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Self-Portrait, June 6, 1996</i> Collection of David P. Mixer | photographs |
| 01:30:49 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Self-Portrait, June 13, 1996</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 01:31:16 | Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Samaras describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of digitally manipulated self-portraits. He also discusses the relationship of technology and beauty to his work. | digital cameras digital images digital prints Macintosh (Computer)* |
| 01:31:35 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled (Conflict #15), April 20, 2003</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 01:31:46 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled (Factid #63), May 23, 2003</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 01:31:54 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled (Observations #44), February 10, 2003</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 01:32:01 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled (Orchid #44), July 30, 2002</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 01:32:14 | (Image) Lucas Samaras <i>Untitled (Conflict #23), April 21, 2003</i> Collection of the artist; courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York | photographs |
| 01:33:24 | (Images) | sculpture (visual work) |

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| | <p>Lucas Samaras <i>Mirror Corner, 1990 (overview and details of “knobs”)</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of The American Contemporary Art Foundation, Inc., Leonard A. Lauder, President P.2003.90</p> | |
| 01:33:24 | <p>Conservation Issues and Concept/Nature of Work Samaras discusses past incidents of damage to his large-scale mirror works, as well as his preferences and advice regarding their restoration. He also discusses the visual significance of the “knobs” on his mirrored works.</p> | <p>damage glass (material) mirrors restoration (process)</p> |
| 01:36:20 | <p>(Images) Lucas Samaras <i>Model for Mirrored Room-Trigonaon, 1995 (overview and detail of damage)</i> Courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York</p> | <p>sculpture (visual work)</p> |
| 01:37:37 | <p>(Image) Exhibition wall graphics</p> | |
| 01:37:54 | <p>Closing Credits</p> | |