



**Artists Documentation Program
Video Interview Transcript**

**JOSEPH GLASCO
NOVEMBER 17, 1995**

Interviewed by:

**Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founder, Artists Documentation Program,
and Chief Conservator, The Menil Collection
with Marti Mayo, Director, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston**

Video: Laurie McDonald | Total Run Time: 01:02:10

Location: Joseph Glasco Studio, Galveston, Texas

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This interview is part of the Artists Documentation Program, a collaboration of the Menil Collection, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums.

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About the Artists Documentation Program

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, artists have experimented with an unprecedented range of new materials and technologies. The conceptual concerns underlying much of contemporary art render its conservation more complex than simply arresting physical change. As such, the artist's voice is essential to future conservation and presentation of his or her work.

In 1990, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a grant to the Menil Collection for Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, then Chief Conservator, to establish the Artists Documentation Program (ADP). Since that time, the ADP has recorded artists speaking candidly with conservators in front of their works. These engaging and informative interviews capture artists' attitudes toward the aging of their art and those aspects of its preservation that are of paramount importance to them.

The ADP has recorded interviews with such important artists as Frank Stella, Jasper Johns, and Cy Twombly. Originally designed for use by conservators and scholars at the Menil, the ADP has begun to appeal to a broader audience outside the Menil, and the collection has grown to include interviews from two partner institutions: the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums. In 2009, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a grant to the Menil Collection to establish the ADP Archive, formalizing the multi-institutional partnership and making ADP interviews more widely available to researchers.

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[Speakers (in order of appearance): Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founding Director, Artists Documentation Program and Chief Conservator, The Menil Collection; Joseph Glasco, Artist; Marti Mayo, Director, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Laurie McDonald, Filmmaker.]

[BEGIN RECORDING]

[00:00:50]

CM-U: Today is November 17, 1995.

Joseph Glasco: You look better now than you did.

CM-U: Thank you. I'm more relaxed now.

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. Now we're ready. We needed a little limbering up.

(laughter)

CM-U: Yeah. And we are in Galveston, Texas, at the studio of Joseph Glasco. And I am honored and delighted to be here today with him. And with us is Marti Mayo, Director of the Contemporary Arts Museum.

[00:01:10]

CM-U: I first worked on one of your paintings when Marti mounted an exhibition in '85, and it was one of your earlier...

Marti Mayo: Eighty-six. ["Joseph Glasco 1948–1986: A Sesquicentennial Exhibition" Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, April 19-June 29, 1986]

CM-U: ...'86. Okay. And it was one of your earlier works, [*Screen*, 1983, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston], I remember, that I was working on.

Joseph Glasco: Um-hum.

CM-U: So I think it was akin to the '51 painting that we were just discussing.

Joseph Glasco: Um-hum. I know the one you mean.

CM-U: Um-hum. And as I remember, it was very minor. I mean, there really weren't major problems.

Joseph Glasco: No.

CM-U: The paintings were in very good condition.

[00:01:32]

Joseph Glasco: I was trained, actually. I went to school – shall we go back...

CM-U: Yeah. Sure.

Joseph Glasco: I'll just tell you. When I got out of the Army, I didn't know what the hell to be.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: So I got a job as – at Dreyfus Department Store, which few will remember, but it was just under Neiman's in men's clothes, and it was across the corner from old Neiman-Marcus, downtown Dallas. And I'd been in the Army, and I had taken painting lessons when I was very young, and had always liked to paint [phrase inaudible]. And I got a job as a layout artist for newspaper ads for that store. (gestures as if drawing)

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: [phrase inaudible] clothes. And it was so easy to do. You just put some things down. And then they like them. And I was – anyone could do it. Your earring's caught here. (reaches over)

CM-U: Oh, thank you.

CM-U: You're still doing it. (laughs)

Joseph Glasco: Still doing what?

CM-U: Getting things just right.

Joseph Glasco: Well, don't you want that...

CM-U: I do, indeed.

Joseph Glasco: Wouldn't you be sorry later if one earring's caught in here?

(laughter)

CM-U: So you were doing this layout kind of work? Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. It worked, and I was having a ball. And I said, "Listen, I've got to get out of this town, and my family, and everything. And on my own." So I wanted to go to California.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And I said, "Oh, I'll try to be a commercial artist. That's what I'll be. I'm a commercial artist." I didn't know what a fine artist was. I was raised in East Texas. I mean, I knew there were probably – you know, there was a [Sandro] Botticelli 'cause Mother had one in a print in the room. And I knew that there was this world out there. But I didn't know anything about it.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: There are no paintings in East Texas, and – there are calendars!

(laughter)

Joseph Glasco: And, in any case, I said – my father had said, "We didn't give you any money to send you to college, but we sent your sister through; so we'll give you so much a month."

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: "I will give you so much a month. *She* has nothing to do with it."

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: "And loan you a car." Which was three hundred and fifty a month in those days. It'd be about a thousand now.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: “And you go out there, and you try to be a commercial artist. For two years. If you don’t make it, then that’s the end of the...”

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: “That’s – the bread ticket’s over.” I said, “Okay, I’ll take it up.” And went out there. And I was immediately the worst in the class. Always. And stayed that way for two years. I mean, they would hold up works, literally, and say, “This is the way you *don’t* do this.” You know what I’m saying?

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: About lettering. You sell products. Maxwell House. The letters were just – it was absurd. But I did have one good class. It was called “The Floating Color Class.”

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: It was the envy of the whole school, Joe’s floated color pieces. They turned them into fashion pictures. You draw a lady over this pretty little colored thing. And so you get a very chic, uh, French-looking thing. And Hoyningen-Huene, the famous Hoyningen-Huene, you may or may not know...

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: ...was a photographer who was teaching out there, and he was my teacher. He said, “You’d be the best fashion designer in the world if you could learn how to draw feet and hands.”

(laughter)

Joseph Glasco: I said, “Oh, I can’t. I just can’t. They’re just impossible.” And so I forgot about trying to draw, to be that. And someone said, “There’s something called fine arts, and you really ought to get out of here ’cause you’re getting a terrible inferiority complex.”

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: And I said, “I think you’re right.” So I went to the fine arts place, enrolled, and went to head of the class, and been happy ever since.

Marti Mayo: And that’s Otis, Joe. Is that right? Was that Otis? [College of Art and Design]

Joseph Glasco: Otis.

Marti Mayo: Or Chouinard? [Art Institute, later CalArts, Los Angeles]

Joseph Glasco: It was not Otis, and it was not Chouinard. It was Rico Lebrun.

Marti Mayo: Oh, that’s right. That’s right.

Joseph Glasco: The famous figure drawer who did – he told you things like, “Don’t – remember, this woman’s legs got to have a baby come out between them.” You know, he was very – you know, he’d say things like that to get your attention.

CM-U: Right. Definitely.

Joseph Glasco: And he was wonderful, and a very interesting man. And I studied just long enough to get what I needed, and then I said, “Now teach me about Impressionism.”

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: “How did Van Gogh do that wonderful thing?”

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Then I’d go to an Impressionist teacher. Had a great one there. And then I stayed about six months...

[00:05:52]

Joseph Glasco: And then I said, “Now I want to go to Mexico and have a vacation.” Because I had called my father and extended the three hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty and made it last a year longer.

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: 'Cause it was real cheap in Mexico.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Went down there and stayed a year. Had a ball. Painted a little. Met a lot of artists.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: [Rufino] Tamayo and his wife. And Roberto Montenegro was a wonderful old man. He was good to me. And then Rufino took my apartment that I had there, my studio out in _____ [phrase inaudible]. There was a bull ring there. It was a triangle. A glass thing.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: I don't know if they lived in there for long, but in any case, they are very sweet people, and I learned a lot from them. I didn't learn much, but I mean, I enjoyed them. And I'd loved his early work very much.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Those first things that you can only see now at the Museum of Modern Art. Those very rough, crude paintings that were dynamite.

CM-U: We had one recently that – I don't know; it's on loan, I think, at the Museum.

Joseph Glasco: Yeah.

CM-U: It was very bright. Not bright colors, but stark colors.

Joseph Glasco: Stark. Wonderful colors.

CM-U: And a lot of texture. Beautiful colors. A lot of texture in the paint layer and a lot of energy. And it was an easel size painting, but it was really, really strong.

[00:07:06]

Joseph Glasco: He worked – that was an easel period, so it was like, there are a lot of artists – not the Abstract Expressionists, but some very good painters who just were plain easel painters doing beautiful work.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: I can't think of the name right now. Karl Knaths was one of them.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Marti Mayo: Oh, I know his work, Joe, from the collection.

Joseph Glasco: Beautiful painter.

Marti Mayo: Yes. Wonderful paintings. From Provincetown.

Joseph Glasco: Uh-huh. And they will – one day they'll be, I think, re-seen...

CM-U: Um-hum.

Marti Mayo: Oh, I think very much so.

Joseph Glasco: ...when technology has gotten boring.

CM-U: Exactly. When we're tired of it.

Joseph Glasco: When we're tired of it. Now it's new and wonderful, and from what I know – things change.

CM-U: That's true.

Joseph Glasco: And I'm in a profession that's hardly even thought about anymore, much less done. Called easel painting.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: I mean, they may not be big. They may be big, but they're not – but as I was telling you, I painted twenty years in oil paints.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Starting with that fine arts school. And then later. Then I switched to acrylic for twenty years.

CM-U: About when did you switch?

Joseph Glasco: And I occasionally go back and forth and do oil on top of acrylic.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Of course you can't do the reverse.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Marti Mayo: When did you change, Joe? When the abstract painting started, do you think? Or...

[00:08:18]

Joseph Glasco: When I got to New York, I was fortunate enough to fall in with a company, and we were – they enjoyed me, and I enjoyed them. I'm saying that, not that I was – I wasn't just hanging on like a groupie. I was accepted as a painter and as a human being. I mean, a thoughtful person, at a young age. And I don't know why, because I can't believe there was much there. But apparently there was something.

Joseph Glasco: And so Jackson Pollock and his wife [Lee Krasner], and an interesting man named Alfonso Ossorio, who ran a clique of – he was the only person paying money for Abstract Expressionist painting.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: So that, to my definite knowledge at that time, he bought *Lavender Mist* [1950] for a thousand dollars.

CM-U: Yes. I know. And I worked on *Lavender Mist*. I restored it for the National Gallery [of Art, Washington, DC]...

Joseph Glasco: Good for you. It's a gorgeous painting...

CM-U: ...and they said – and it went right from him to the National Gallery.

- Joseph Glasco: Right.
- CM-U: It was really wonderful. It was only in one collector's hands.
- Joseph Glasco: Every summer, which I spent maybe six or seven out at the – what's the name of that house...
- CM-U: Springs? Or Easthampton?
- Joseph Glasco: No, it was in Easthampton at Alfonso's house. It was called The Creeks [Georgica Pond, East Hampton]. And we used to call it "The Creeps," (laughter) because he found it [sounds like] painted pink and black.
- CM-U: Oh, Accabonac Creek? Is that what you...
- Joseph Glasco: No, it's on Georgica Pond.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Joseph Glasco: And so we had some helluva summers out there. And Jackson was sober for two years, and that was the best, marvelous thing that – having an articulate, brilliant man telling you something, who is out of East Texas and doesn't know anything. But I had quickly picked up a few things by going to the Museum of Modern Art.
- Marti Mayo: (laughs) Very quickly, right Joe?
- Joseph Glasco: Didn't miss too much.
- Marti Mayo: A quick study.
- Joseph Glasco: Quick study.
- CM-U: Now did you have a studio there, too? Were you painting on Long Island?
- Joseph Glasco: I was living at the Chelsea Hotel...
- CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: ...with an old maid and two wrestlers, (laughter) and sharing a kitchen. They had – we had rooms together. The Chelsea said it had a kitchen. Well, I thought a kitchen might have a refrigerator and a stove and water. It didn't have the water.

CM-U: Oh.

Joseph Glasco: So you can't do much with...

(laughter)

CM-U: A hot plate.

Marti Mayo: And no water.

Joseph Glasco: And an icebox that doesn't work. So we were all washing our dishes in a little sink. This is for Stanley [Bard]'s benefit, who owns the place. And we all had our dishes in there all the time, always. So it was marvelous. I stayed there six months, painted a picture at night. I was an office boy in the daytime, and then I would come home and paint at night. And I met someone. They said, "I know someone who'd like to buy that picture." And I said, "Bring 'em on!" And he brought Alfonso Ossorio, the man who had that circle. He bought the painting for three hundred bucks. I quit my job that day.

(laughter)

Joseph Glasco: And had enrolled in the Art Students League [New York], which paid seventy-five bucks a month and tuition. And he gave me a hundred a month. I thought it was real cheap of him. He was a billionaire.

(laughter)

Joseph Glasco: But he was right. I would have spent it that night, you know, if I had gotten it. And he fed me every night for that summer.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: And Jackson was always there, Clyfford Still – all those – not all of those, some of those Abstract Expressionist painters. And I would hear conversations that blew my mind.

CM-U: I'll bet.

Joseph Glasco: And then I saw a Pollock for the first time.

CM-U: In New York?

Joseph Glasco: A rather small one – at Alfonso's studio.

CM-U: At Alfonso's studio? Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Because this was all an intimate thing. He was not a famous man. Not more than twenty people in New York knew him.

Marti Mayo: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And maybe ten liked him. And maybe two could stand him. You know, would put up with him. So it was a narrow – and Clement Greenberg was usually at the head of it when there were parties.

Marti Mayo: Right. Right.

Joseph Glasco: And it was solid packed tuna of talent. You got no gray tuna in there. And how I got in there, I don't know.

CM-U: And were conversations about materials?

Joseph Glasco: Oh, the conversations were about – name it. Sex, art, the way things *are*.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: There were no – you didn't have time to be – you had to be something. And when you're something, you say something.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: You know what I mean?

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: There's no rehearsal time.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: Your earring is back in the...

CM-U: Oh, dear. Thank you.

Joseph Glasco: And you may like it in there.

CM-U: I think I better hold my head this way.

Joseph Glasco: _____ [phrase inaudible]. So, where were we?

CM-U: So they had – Alfonso had a studio in Manhattan, then? And that's where...

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. Yeah, he had a house.

CM-U: He had a house.

Joseph Glasco: ...MacDougal Alley. [9 MacDougal Alley, New York]

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: So that's where we had all those dinners and those interesting evenings.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Then he bought a huge house out on Long Island...

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ...moved the whole camp out there. So the art world sort of migrated out there. Jackson had already lived in The Springs [on Accabonac Creek near East Hampton, New York]...

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: ...which he had his house.

Marti Mayo: Right.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

[00:12:51]

Joseph Glasco: And so it was all – it was really a lot of fun. Jackson wasn't drinking, and so there was a – I learned an awful lot, and awful quickly, from this brilliant man who spoke very, very simply...

Marti Mayo: But you never painted that way. [sounds like]

Joseph Glasco: ...and his wife, who did the opposite, who was very intellectual.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: But nevertheless – Lee is okay. We never did like each other, and there's no reason why we should. But I rarely like him and her both, anyway. It's one that you take what you get.

CM-U: Right. It comes in a package.

Joseph Glasco: Yeah.

CM-U: He was – I guess he was using a lot of industrial materials, and enamels, paint, Duco [Cement]...

Joseph Glasco: He was using...

Joseph Glasco: ...but he wasn't – he was going down to the hardware store on the corner and buying DE-VO-LAC. [Devoe Paint lacquer]

CM-U: Uh-huh. Right. I've seen that label. [sounds like] What was that? It was just...

Joseph Glasco: It's the cheapest possible paint in the world.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: And you drip with it. And it's glossy. And it's the brightest colors.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And he mixed it, I think, with salts [sounds like]. And he got it to where he was getting off on it, and you know he did them beautiful – and now when you see one in a huge thing in Paris or someplace, it's dynamite.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Because it's so free. But he was simply getting off on them. Not selling them. Just – and then the smaller ones, he'd have a little trouble with. This size, you know, that size [holds arms out into air]. It's harder when you're painting big sizes – those little sizes. And Clement Greenberg would come out there. I remember him being there with his wife. Not with Lee Krasner. And sitting outside, lining up these little ones... (points finger) "Yes," "No." "No." "No."

CM-U: Oh, really?

Joseph Glasco: Clement Greenberg saying, you know...pssh. (raises eyebrows) It was pretty audacious.

CM-U: Right. Very.

Joseph Glasco: But it's definitely true. And that's of no interest to anybody, probably, but – I'm saying, really, what a vulnerable person Jackson was.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And delicate.

Marti Mayo: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: And not arrogant. And pushy.

CM-U: Well, the work shows that.

Joseph Glasco: The work...

CM-U: The work reflects that kind of person.

Joseph Glasco: ...reflects, yeah.

Marti Mayo: That's right.

CM-U: Yeah. But you were never tempted – oh, sorry, Marti.

Marti Mayo: I was going to say the same thing. You never worked that way. You were tempted to work that way?

Joseph Glasco: I, I – the one way I would not work was the way that interested me most, which was bending over and throwing the paint. I said, "It's not real for me."

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Marti Mayo: It's real for Jackson, not for you...

Joseph Glasco: It's real for him...

Marti Mayo: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: ...and there's nothing else he can do. And thank God he did it because no one else has. I mean, I saw, in [Arshile] Gorky, I saw [Willem] de Kooning, I saw Gorky, I saw all sorts of influences from everybody...

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: ...and occasionally in Jackson I would see French Surrealism [word inaudible]. That's perfectly fine. Art comes out of art. That's why it's kind of fun. I mean, chess comes out of chess. Moves, or, you know, and things. Those art forms. They don't just appear out of an immaculate conception, you know, kind of thing.

Marti Mayo: That's right.

[00:15:41]

Marti Mayo: But your work has always looked so much more kind of European to me, Joe. I mean, first of all, you were working very figuratively all this time?

Joseph Glasco: All the time. They were doing – what the point that you asked me was – I refused to allow myself the freedom of doing – I had to paint like an idiot. I mean, I would use one brush on a big painting for – I’d work a year on them. Or six months. Doing little insect-like, anal-reten – what – I’m sure Freud has a name for it.

CM-U: He has a name for everything, doesn’t he?

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. Well, I’ll fit in there somewhere.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: I have never worried about which category. But for a long time I did this miniscule, tight – I asked Clement Greenberg once, “Clem, do you like my work? I mean, do you know my work?” He said, “Yes.” Jackson was sitting there, Lee. It was over at the house at night. And you do not ask these questions. This 20-year-old, 30-year-old kids [sounds like]...

(laughter)

CM-U: No.

Joseph Glasco: ...to the leading critic of the day.

Marti Mayo: If somebody asked me that, I’d be outraged. [sounds like]

Joseph Glasco: Well, I said – I was – I decided, “I don’t see any reason why I shouldn’t.” And...

CM-U: Is that what he said?

Joseph Glasco: No.

CM-U: Oh, no, you were thinking that.

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. ’Cause I’d had a show at the Museum of Modern Art. [“15 Americans,” Museum of Modern Art, New York, April 9-July 27, 1952]

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And a few people had turned my head and said, you know, that I had admired. So I was just curious, really, what this man, who set himself as a [word inaudible] – “Clem, what do you think of my work?” He said, “I think it’s too tight.” That’s his answer. That’s perfectly – that’s fine. And it was tight as you can get.

Marti Mayo: _____ [phrase inaudible]...

Joseph Glasco: But, I mean, I’ve met tight things that are real good.

CM-U: (laughs) Right.

Joseph Glasco: And so I let it go like that. A butterfly. You don’t pick it up. You just let it fly away. There was no hard feelings. There was just – that was that. And Lee, the next day said, “He should never have asked Clem that question.” And Jackson said, “I don’t see why not.”

CM-U: That’s right.

Joseph Glasco: “It’s a perfectly good question to me.” It didn’t change me. I didn’t become an abstract expressionist ’cause I didn’t know how.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: But slowly, as the fashions changed and the figure comes in, I find I get more – and older – I get more and more interested in abstract painting.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And working with acrylic because it dries faster. It’s not a think – it’s a think thing.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: More of a – which they invented for the Abstract Expressionists.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: Some good businessmen got together and said, “It’s time to get some paint that dries fast.”

CM-U: Oh, it was also the advent of plastics after the war.

Joseph Glasco: Advent of plastics. Exactly.

CM-U: And that's really true.

Joseph Glasco: It was a big, marvelous change there. Which Andy Warhol was of course the big innovator in.

Marti Mayo: Right.

CM-U: Yeah.

[00:18:18]

CM-U: And then at what point did the collage come in?

Joseph Glasco: The collage came in accidentally. One day in about 1978, I was working blindly, as usual, on the floor with some things.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And I suddenly said – saw something lying there, and said, “This would work better. It's the exact color I wanted. It's the exact shape. If I put it in top of there – instead of painting it on there, I'm going to put it there.” So I put it there, and it worked. And I said, “Well, that's what they call collage. You've never done that, but why don't we just let's do a few of those. It's quick.”

Joseph Glasco: So I bought some Elmer's Glue, and I began playing with that.

CM-U: So this is the...

Joseph Glasco: And it became – I liked sculpture very much. I am most happy when I am chipping and molding clay. It's a very sensual thing. Painting is a very difficult – it's another – it's a flat surface...

Marti Mayo: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ...that you have to turn magic onto to make alive. Sculpture, you can walk around – I mean, the people who do it are happier than painters.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Painters tend to be a more depressed type, I think. And sculptors are always a little lighter.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And it's because of that problem. So when I sculpted, I was quite happy. And I did all the bronzes, and marbles, and all of that.

CM-U: So the collage kind of provided that _____ [phrase inaudible]

Joseph Glasco: So the collage got that tactile thing...

Marti Mayo: Right.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ...I got from sculpture. I got to use paint and I could slap – and I could work big, and I could slap Elmer's Glue on it. I asked the Guggenheim [Museum, New York], "What's the best glue?" They told me Elmer's, so I used Elmer's.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And they are supposed to have the best – they use the best quality stuff sometimes.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum. And were you working flat when you were doing these?

Joseph Glasco: I was working flat. I was working all kinds of ways.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Each day was different. I'd slap one up there. If I'd see something I want up there. And to try to get – they became an all over thing, which pleased me, because that's what appealed to me in Jackson's.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: But I couldn't do it with the paintbrush, but I could do it with a collage.

CM-U: That's interesting. So you found your own medium for really doing that?

Joseph Glasco: Yeah.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: And it was totally thought of in the night, the middle of the night. I didn't get it out of an art magazine.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: Collage *happened* to me. And it worked for me for about ten years or something. I was really getting off on it, and new doors would open, and I would do it in other ways [sounds like]. Real tight, and real close, like this one. The one you saw was real tight.

[00:20:50]

CM-U: Were the canvases generally painted first, and then you would put other color on?

Joseph Glasco: It would – usually I would start free...

CM-U: With a brush.

Joseph Glasco: ...and go to tight.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Go to the small from the big.

CM-U: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: It just was natural. I had to deal with the whole canvas, because it was a thrilling thing to do. [Makes a sound like spraying].

CM-U: Oh, yeah.

Joseph Glasco: And you could pick – then you could fill it in. And the acrylic drying fast, you could – you could just have a ball. And then come over it and slap – instantly, you’d change everything by putting hard edge color over it.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And then you’d have to – “Hey, that doesn’t work.” So you’d have to do another one over here. Then you are up all night thinking...

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ...”Well, how –” I like what Jasper Johns said about painting. He said, “You do something to it, and you do something to it, and then you do something to it.” You know.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: So you do something to it, you do something to it, and then you do something to it. Finally, you sit back and say, “It doesn’t need anything anymore.” They sort of breathe.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: Oddly and hesitatingly, but, you know...

CM-U: Different tempos.

Joseph Glasco: Different tempos.

CM-U: Different tempos.

[00:21:54]

Marti Mayo: Were you concerned, Joe – once you started working with a collage, were you concerned about – were you aware of – did it interest you how it broke up the surface?

Joseph Glasco: What was that again?

Marti Mayo: Were you interested in how it broke the surface? The picture plane.

Joseph Glasco: The collage?

Marti Mayo: Yeah, the collage.

Joseph Glasco: Well, the collage became the picture plane

Marti Mayo: Right.

Joseph Glasco: Whatever you'd done before that was underpainting, unless you did – I mean, no, that's not exactly true. But the minute you did that, you stepped onto another plane.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: You stopped onto another problem. Because rarely – I think there's one piece that has one collage _____ [phrase inaudible]. But I would want to work on the whole thing...

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: ...so to control it that way rather than – and then when I lost control of it, get a paintbrush and go back and paint it again just like a painting. So I would keep some of these ten years in the studio, keep trying to change them.

[00:22:46]

CM-U: Did you ever have to take one off? Or did you just – I mean...

Joseph Glasco: Take off a piece that was glued on the collage?

CM-U: Yeah. Did you ever put something on, and then decide – or you just keep going on the top...

Joseph Glasco: Sure. But it's a bitch to get Elmer's Glue off...

CM-U: I know it is.

Joseph Glasco: ...once it's dry.

CM-U: I know it is.

Joseph Glasco: So I just paint over it.

CM-U: Just paint over it? Right.

Joseph Glasco: Because it left a skin of sort of rough – because neatness, you don't get any marks for neatness.

CM-U: Right.

Marti Mayo: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: And not in art. So I was pretty careless about – but I never did things like put – sometimes I would want to work over an oil with acrylic, so the only way I could do it was with collage.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: So it would stick, you understand. If I had used collage paint, it would have not attached to the oil...

CM-U: Bonded well.

Joseph Glasco: Bonded [word inaudible]. But you're a restorer, and you know all about that.

CM-U: No, but I think that's very true.

[00:23:39]

Joseph Glasco: But I've been trying to be – I've had a classical training in oil painting. And all of those that I did in those 45, 50 years ago, have stood up, the edge. [sounds like] I used a third Damar varnish. I learned this from Rico Lebrun. A third turpentine, rectified. And a third linseed oil. Good linseed oil. And stirred that up. That was the primary medium of El Greco and various artists like that. They had a more sophisticated one, but you put this varnish – Damar, which is...

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: ...and it makes the oil do something...

CM-U: Very saturated.

Joseph Glasco: Saturated. It makes it very, for me, sexual and touchy.

CM-U: It is, very.

Joseph Glasco: And I liked to (gestures as if painting), you know, at that time.

CM-U: Did you locally put it on, or was it kind of an all over...

Joseph Glasco: No, I put on every stroke, one at a time.

Marti Mayo: Uh-huh.

CM-U: So you used it to enhance specific areas?

Marti Mayo: Damar or [word inaudible]?

Joseph Glasco: Well, as you proceeded, as you filled the area. I would usually put an umber glaze...

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: ...to get – the white is the first enemy of the artist. I mean, this is – I'm talking old-fashioned, traditional painting...

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ...which is what I do.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: Sometimes it just looks a little wild. But you get rid of this with – you seal the canvas with a burnt umber primer.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Linseed. Using the same stuff.

CM-U: Right. Using that medium.

- Joseph Glasco: With a little more turpentine so it won't cost so much [sounds like].
- CM-U: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: And you cover the whole thing with this burnt umber, see. Then you work it. That dries, whatever. Then you go into that. It sizes the canvas. It's over the gesso.
- CM-U: So do you apply a gesso first?
- Joseph Glasco: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.
- CM-U: Or do you buy the canvas that's already primed?
- Joseph Glasco: You have to gesso a canvas because if you don't, paint will rot the...
- CM-U: Right. Go through. Did you buy the canvases already primed, or did you...
- Joseph Glasco: Sometimes. And I did – I committed sins in those lines, too. Intentionally. As Jackson did in those black heads on canvas.
- CM-U: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: They were all where your paint goes through the...
- CM-U: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: ...which will in time rot, but who doesn't?
- CM-U: Well, you know, I've read that artists at the time used rivet glue, which was like Elmer's Glue, as a kind of sealant.
- Joseph Glasco: Maybe. It's something I don't know about.
- CM-U: Do you remember – okay. It's like – it's that same sort of...
- Joseph Glasco: 'Cause I wasn't doing collages at that time...
- CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: ...that they were...

CM-U: So it wasn't something that you...

Joseph Glasco: ...like [Conrad] Marca-Relli and people.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: I was not – I didn't do these until the end of the sixties.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Beginning of the seventies, really. Collage.

CM-U: And then did you put a varnish? Did you ever varnish your work, after?

Joseph Glasco: Usually an oil, yes. If I wanted a gloss, I would put Damar varnish with – used the same process.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And then maybe lighten the turpentine so you get a richer...

[00:26:25]

CM-U: What about stretchers, and stretcher depth?

Joseph Glasco: Stretchers.

CM-U: Was that ever an issue for you?

Joseph Glasco: It's always been – everything's an issue with me.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Particularly the depth – except for when I was in art school. Then nothing was...

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ... _____ [phrase inaudible] sex. But I'd just buy those cheap things, you know, that...

CM-U: Um-hum.

(laughter)

Joseph Glasco: But then I got more evolved, and I started getting different – like, I'd like a big, thick one. But I've always paid a lot of money for my stretchers.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: The best kind. Because you can unhook them, and screw them, and bend them, and turn them, and turn them.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: So as long as I've had the money, I've had good canvases.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: But I've never stretched one – I haven't stretched a canvas in thirty years. I just hate doing it.

CM-U: And so you have someone to do it for you?

Joseph Glasco: I'd rather not paint than – yeah.

CM-U: And you use linen, or cotton? What do...

Joseph Glasco: Cotton.

CM-U: Cotton?

Joseph Glasco: Usually. I have used linen.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: But I never know if the painting is going to be worth the linen I painted it on.

Marti Mayo: (laughs)

Joseph Glasco: And I hate spending all that money.

CM-U: It is expensive.

Joseph Glasco: Oh, now if I were Roy Lichtenstein, and I knew this was sold to the Museum of Modern Art for \$500 million dollars, I'd probably do it on linen just to be nice.

(laughter)

Joseph Glasco: But other than that...

Marti Mayo: _____ [phrase inaudible]

Joseph Glasco: That's just, I mean, that's cotton. Let's just put it on cotton with gesso.

Marti Mayo: That's gotta be Joe [sounds like].

Joseph Glasco: And if you want us to – we can sand it down. Meh.

Marti Mayo: That's right.

[00:27:42]

CM-U: On the screen that the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston owns...

Joseph Glasco: Um-hum.

CM-U: ...that was painted on both sides.

Joseph Glasco: Yes.

CM-U: Did you – was there any kind of special preparation you had to do in order to paint that?

Joseph Glasco: Oh, indeed there was.

CM-U: Indeed? Yeah. Do you want to talk about that?

Joseph Glasco: Did you think that just came out of the sky?

CM-U: No, I had a feeling it didn't.

Joseph Glasco: I found it in my backyard?

CM-U: But I was just trying to decide how to get you to talk about it.

Joseph Glasco: I found it in the trash. Okay. No, I had an idea. I had a friend who bought a big castle in England, and he was a fan of mine. I thought he would be interested in this Henry the Eighth dining room place. If he had four screens, seven feet high – then I had to change that to four inches more to make it scale right. By four feet each, and so that one could eat in the middle, and the servants – of which there were many, in white gloves, various things – you didn't have to look at them. Or let them listen to you. They could stand behind those things. Or go get – fix the food, and just bring it around. It would be free standing in a huge Tudor room.

Man: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And so I made them for the light and French [sounds like] and – I mean, not light and French, but, you know. And it's sort of lighthearted, not – definitely abstract, so there's no looking for images. You just want to forget about them and just look at them and forget about them.

Joseph Glasco: Then that got me into – suddenly, one day, I wanted to do a big one. I don't know how that came about. So I bought as many panels as needed, and I had a studio that was big enough. And I worked on it for about six months, but I could never finish it. One side was black and white, and the other side was color. And I went to the opera to see the Kabuki Theater. And something clicked in me when I saw the artists perform on that stage that night that told me something that's brought me home to finish. And I finished it that night. I got – I remember that I connected it very much with...

Marti Mayo: And this was in New York, right, Joe?

Joseph Glasco: Right. So that's how that happened. It comes in four pieces.

CM-U: Is that the first time you painted on both sides of the canvas? Or are they two canvases?

Joseph Glasco: I had done four before that. Smaller.

CM-U: Uh-huh. The ones you mentioned.

Joseph Glasco: Uh-huh.

CM-U: And have never since? None since?

Joseph Glasco: None since.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: I have never been able to repeat a success. I tried so hard. I mean, I would do sculptures that Alfred Barr [Founding Director, MoMA] liked – in bronze – bought – put up in his museum. In the Museum of Modern Art. And then I'd go home and say, "I wasn't thinking about it. That was a snap. I can do hundreds of those." I couldn't do *one*. There was no – and this keeps happening. I take a quantum leap in doing something. Then I'm left standing there, breathless, without an idea in my head. And I have to start all over again. And in marble sculpture that happened in certain stages, I've made – recently I've made a jump...

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: ...and it felt marvelous. Now whether I – I mean, I think that I'm old enough now to – and I wasn't – I'm sober enough to remember how it happened. Because if you remember when you're doing something, why you're doing it, you can do it again.

CM-U: Yeah. Maybe...

Joseph Glasco: Now if you're drunk, you can't remember why you – and there may be, 'cause there's a lot of mystery coming in there.

CM-U: That's right.

Joseph Glasco: But when that mystery _____ [word inaudible] – you can get used to mystery, you know; you can kind of flesh it out...

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: ...and say, “This is working because of this.” And you just be nice to yourself and let the painting do itself. If I do that, lighten up. I have a tendency to get pretty heavy.

[00:31:33]

CM-U: Well, in some of the newer work that we saw at the Galveston Arts Center, that was painting again over some of the earlier collage?

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. Yeah.

CM-U: And, again...

Joseph Glasco: I love doing that.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: What was your – was there a question?

CM-U: Well, my question was, it was just – I mean, did you do any particular preparation of the older work before you just started painting again? Or just started on it.

Joseph Glasco: Well, it is a preparation in itself.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: I look at everything I’ve done as an addition and a subtraction. It doesn’t matter if I did it 15 years ago, or ten. Whatever I do to it, the next thing is, I’m subtracting something because I’m hiding something. I’m adding something, and so I’m adding something. I’m changing the painting. I am going to start a new painting. And that begins that process.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: If you touch a painting, it’s a new painting. The next day. It’s what it is when you finish it. But the minute you add something, you’ve got your work – you’ve got your – you’ve got to make that work for the rest – you know, do you _____ [phrase inaudible], do you understand that?

- CM-U: Yes, I do understand what you are saying. Yeah.
- Joseph Glasco: Of course you do.
- Marti Mayo: But you didn't prepare...
- Joseph Glasco: Jackson – I hate to keep bringing up Jackson, but he was so smart.
- CM-U: No.
- Joseph Glasco: One of – the smartest man I ever knew about painting. But talking about it practically, “If you go back into a painting, he used to say, “you’ve got to be willing to just start all over.” I mean, you’ve got to be willing to be rested [sounds like]. Because if you go in there and try to do a little corner, forget it. You’ll always, in the back of your mind, say, “That little corner is fixed,” or something. So you have to take on the whole painting if you are going to take on anything at all.
- CM-U: You know, that’s what makes – that’s what defines a very good restoration. Because often we are asked to just focus on one little problem.
- Joseph Glasco: Yeah. And that would be...
- CM-U: And unless you have a sense of the whole, you can destroy the whole work by not correctly treating that one area.
- Joseph Glasco: I can see exactly what – particularly in modern painting. Now this would not necessarily be true in [Diego] Velázquez or someone.
- CM-U: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: You could work on – where one student worked on lace one day, and then they had – so you could go back through the process and find the right way. But in an abstract painting, which has a lot of whims in it, moments that you capture when you have – is the essence of it. Which only really works for a short time, and for very few people.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Mine changed. I did other things like collage. And got – even, I did Mondrians into it and things that – all sorts of things that got mixed into it that would make it come out, not as innovative. More decorative, whatever. But not as influenced – not – I mean, just another take on an old story.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And I couldn't settle for that.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: I hope they can.

CM-U: Well...well the work –

Joseph Glasco: And if they don't, it's perfectly all right. But I do enjoy it.

CM-U: Well, I was just so overwhelmed by the new work. I mean, it was just so exciting to see it.

Joseph Glasco: I like the new work myself. I went over there and looked at it. And it had another dimension. Now when I look at some of these around here, I say, "Listen, you weren't settling this [sounds like]. You needed to wake up a little bit. It's better than that."

CM-U: (laughs)

Joseph Glasco: It can be a lot better than that.

CM-U: Yes.

Joseph Glasco: Now I hope – of course, one never knows what the next step will be. That's the way life is [sounds like].

CM-U: Well, that's what you were describing, your kind of quantum leaps. That's sort of the way you work. You've just got to...

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. Now whether I can finally take a kind of quantum leap with me. I mean, take all that and just stay there. Or keep – I don't know what will happen. I think I've got it all under control.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And I have enough money so I don't have to worry about a thing...

CM-U: You don't have to worry about it. Which makes a big difference. Yeah.

[00:35:12]

CM-U: In some of the work, some of the paintings in the eighties, you had velvet all around...

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. I did four velvet paintings. [All *Untitled*, 1980-82; two are collection of the artist; one is collection of Julian and Jacqueline Schnabel; and one is collection of The Pace Gallery, New York.]

CM-U: Uh-huh. Now what was that? Was that added, or...

Joseph Glasco: It was worked on all at the same time. There are four of them, and they should never have been separated, because they were also for four rooms, an orange, a purple, a blue, and then – there was to be a dining room, and there was to be *tour de forces*, in a sense...

CM-U: I mean, they were to be on the walls of one room?

Joseph Glasco: Yes. They were all fabrics.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: And each one was outlined in a fabric. It's not a dismally heavy piece of idea. It's more of a decorative, [Jean-Antoine] Watteau-ish, decorating a room, thing.

Marti Mayo: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Like the screens were meant to be.

Man: Um-hum. Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: No heavy duty. You don't have to have forty feet. You can put a four panel, four panel, four panel in a beautiful dining room, and it still works.

CM-U: I see.

Joseph Glasco: Let the servants look at the colored side one night, and then the people eating dinner look at the black and white side. Or however you want to do it. Which one.

CM-U: Did you – was the velvet considered sort of a framing element?

Joseph Glasco: It was a framing element, and it was also – I had to coordinate, I had to make it not steal the picture.

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: It was not easy.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And I don't know that I succeeded. But I've been told they do.

[00:36:28]

CM-U: What about framing in general? Otherwise. Do you prefer frames, or not, or...

Joseph Glasco: It depends. Paper things, yes.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: But I usually try to find someone with extremely discreet good judgment – which is not easy. Because I'm not as good at it. I do as much as I can on the painting. I don't think of the frame later. So it's not included in my – there are painters who think of the frame when they think of the painting.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: But I'm not one of those.

CM-U: But you do prefer a frame? I mean, the edge – it isn't important that it...

Joseph Glasco: I prefer – sometimes yes, sometimes no.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: It all depends on the piece and the work. Some look much better raw with all the fingerprints along the sides.

CM-U: So it's really an individual? It's an individual...

Joseph Glasco: Every painting is individual. Some of them require a gloss varnish, and some will be a spotted gloss varnish. Some of them matte. And some blacks are better matte than glossy. They are stronger. They pop out.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: I don't like necessarily a whole painting glazed. Sometimes it's necessary with these acrylic glazes or with an oil.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: But I did take a long course in glazing in oil. Defined [sounds like] underpainting in the classical mode of all Renaissance painting, which is underpainted and glazed. Slowly, slowly, slowly, as you know.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: Layer by layer.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Till finally you get an umber glaze to make the whole thing work.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: [Nicolas] Poussin was loose there. He should have gotten one more – his blues always stick out to me. I know that you are [sounds like] a big Poussin lover, but there are certain artists that had it down pat. I like [Peter Paul] Rubens.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: I think he's...

- CM-U: Wow! Glazing is amazing.
- Joseph Glasco: Glazing is amazing. It was the trick of the Renaissance.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Joseph Glasco: Then some have carried it over into the twentieth century paintings. [Pablo] Picasso has used it. Matisse wasn't too heavy on it. But he knows, when he uses it, to effect...
- Marti Mayo: It's very interesting what happens in *Big Green* [1990]...
- Joseph Glasco: Excuse me. Clement Greenberg was very conscious of this kind of information.
- CM-U: Oh, really?
- Joseph Glasco: That's why it made him an important man. Jackson also knew it. That glazing – he praised one of my paintings once, Clem, by saying, “Your use of underpainting and glazing is masterly. I like it very much.”
- CM-U: Hmm.
- Joseph Glasco: So that he was kinda – I did that, since I'd learned that from a master, I used it in painting.
- CM-U: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: The painting you worked on had a lot of glazing.
- CM-U: Um-hum. Also...
- Joseph Glasco: I still do it in acrylic.
- CM-U: Yeah. I was going to say – and also that dance of kind of gloss and matte. There's kind of a play, which is very enlivening on the surface.
- Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Some of those paintings at the [Galveston] Arts Center have all gloss. Some have splotches.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: And some have – you know, it's all different.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: But it's very important how you do your surface. How you glaze; how you treat it after you finish it.

[00:39:50]

CM-U: Have you had a sense of – looking at some of your earlier work – that some of it has sunken in? Or are you still seeing the surface...

Joseph Glasco: It's pretty good, actually. To have been painted when it was.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: I used Winsor & Newton color and good materials. And it all holds up.

CM-U: I guess my question was leading to, in the future, is that some – is that kind of an effect...

Joseph Glasco: Problematic?

CM-U: No, not problematic. Was that an effect that the restorer should maybe try to achieve? That kind of bringing up an area with a _____ [phrase inaudible] of gloss [sounds like].

Joseph Glasco: Well, the only thing I can think of you can remember is my medium.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: The third, a third, a third...

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ...of what that I told you.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: And in that, they can get closer to what I was using.

CM-U: Right.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

CM-U: So as it sinks in...

Joseph Glasco: Damar varnish. Turpentine. And linseed oil.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: It's equal. Third, third, third.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Was my medium for all the time I was working in oil.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Sometimes I'd just use turpentine. Or sometime, you know, like you just play.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: But, as a rule, it was sort of a given.

[00:40:53]

Marti Mayo: I was going to ask Joe about *Big Green* [1990]...

Joseph Glasco: Um-hum.

- Marti Mayo: ...which you described to me as a painting that had been made earlier, and utterly changed, in your view and in mine...
- Joseph Glasco: Right. Allison [sounds like]...
- Marti Mayo: ...by this glaze that went on it at the very last minute, and it's in the Galveston show...
- Joseph Glasco: Yeah. It is very important in acrylic paint, and in oil paint, too, whether you choose to layer – to put it all over solid. Some paintings, it works on beautifully and brings out the life in them. Which is the point, to give pleasure...
- CM-U: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: ...and light, and however you do it. But before I – what is the Phillips woman? I mean, the Whitney curator?
- CM-U: Lisa Phillips. [Curator, Whitney Museum of American Art]
- Marti Mayo: Lisa Phillips.
- Joseph Glasco: Lisa Phillips came down here. She didn't see that painting finished. I was working on it. But she picked another one...
- Marti Mayo: Um-hum.
- Joseph Glasco: ...and that was to be in that, put in the Biennale. [1991 Whitney Biennial] I sent her a photograph of this *after* I worked on it. I did not glaze it. I was really afraid to. I was afraid I'd – it got pretty good, and I thought, "If I go one step further, I might just blow this."
- Marti Mayo: (laughs)
- Joseph Glasco: And I was delighted to be in the Whitney. So I said "Fuck it. Take it." And they took it up there. And it didn't look bad, but it didn't sparkle. And the blues – it was related to the blues working with the green.
- CM-U: Um-hum.

- Joseph Glasco: When I did it here, just inches and minutes before my heart attack after it – oh, it’s all right.
- Marti Mayo: No, Joe got off the ladder and had a heart attack after he glazed the picture.
- CM-U: Oh, my.
- Joseph Glasco: Well, I was – I was so curious. And the stress of waiting to do that. I had waited five years.
- CM-U: I can understand.
- Joseph Glasco: And then to walk in – it takes forever for emulsion to turn from white to clear in acrylic. And I walked in the kitchen. And I had to wait at least 45 minutes. It was that 45 minutes before I walked around the corner – ’cause I walk out of the room, out of the house, and out of the town before I want to come back and look at a painting to see what I really think about it.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Joseph Glasco: Because you don’t know, when you walk away, it’s the best thing you ever did, or it’s shit.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Joseph Glasco: But when you come back, you instantly know, “I’ve got something,” or, “I’ve got nothing.”
- Marti Mayo: But it changed the painting utterly.
- Joseph Glasco: Totally.
- Marti Mayo: And it...
- Joseph Glasco: It brought the blues and the greens; it worked.
- Marti Mayo: It’s an entirely different painting.

Joseph Glasco: I should have done it originally. I didn't have the damned nerve. But the minute I did it, it worked. And I had people tell me, "Oh, it's a good painting." But then, when they saw it again, they said, "Mmm."

[00:43:31]

Joseph Glasco: So it's terribly important. Everything, as you know, as a restorer, that you do to a painting, it's critically important. But you cannot take it so at the time as the creator of it. You must – [Gustav] Mahler said something beautiful. He said, "Art is the highest form of play."

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: So you must – it must be kept playful, but it must be kept to where it doesn't fall off on the floor after you finish. And these kids all using toilet paper and everything, that's fine. But if it's going to be in a museum possibly next year, and they are going to call you, like Alfred Barr did to me once, and say, "You know, your painting's on the floor. It fell on the..."

CM-U: What?! What was that all about?

Marti Mayo: I don't know this story.

Joseph Glasco: I had a painting like this (holds arms out). He looked at it for five months, for hanging by his office, before he decided to buy it. Then he bought it. This – I must have been twenty-four or something. And he finally said, "Yes, I'm going to buy it." It was four hundred dollars. That's no vast amount.

CM-U: Wow!

Joseph Glasco: At that time, it was okay. And so he appraised it every day by walking by it. In his mind. And finally gave me a yes. And then not too long after, a year, it all started falling on the floor. I had seen [Jean] Dubuffet, and he had given me his menu – I mean, his...

CM-U: Formula for making something?

Joseph Glasco: ...recipe...

CM-U: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: ...for sand, and grit, and shit on the phone and table [sounds like]. But I didn't get it all right. I didn't get it at all right. And he left something out, I think.

(laughter)

CM-U: Like all good cooks, right?

Joseph Glasco: Right. Like all good painters.

CM-U: Like all good painters.

Joseph Glasco: I'll tell you everything but the one thing you need.

Marti Mayo: All good French cooks, right? (laughs)

Joseph Glasco: And he's French as you can get. So Dubuffet lied to me.

CM-U: Oh, amazing!

Joseph Glasco: So the painting crimped [sounds like]. And I said, well, what do we do about it? I mean, "Okay, I'm sorry to hear it." He said, "Why don't we – there's a bronze sculpture we like very much. Will you trade it with us?" I said, "Sure. Sure. Take it."

CM-U: Oh.

Joseph Glasco: So they took a bronze sculpture, which they still have [sounds like].

CM-U: So what happened to the painting?

Joseph Glasco: The painting came home. John Frankenheimer, the film director, came by the next day or sometime. He said, "What's that?" And I said, "The Museum of Modern Art just returned it 'cause the paint's fell off of it." And he said, "Well, I like it just like it is." And I said, "It's for sale."

CM-U: (laughs)

Marti Mayo: This boy *is* from East Texas, right?

Joseph Glasco: “It’s four hundred dollars. With or without paint.”

(laughter)

Joseph Glasco: And I guess he still has it.

[00:46:10]

CM-U: Was that a singular instance of putting sand in your paints, or did you...

Joseph Glasco: Yes. No, I did it before, and it stayed on. That one in there’s got some sand in it.

CM-U: Uh-huh. I thought there was a texture in some of those earlier ones.

Joseph Glasco: And there’s cat pee on the drawings. There’s everything in the world on them. Because I was not – and I still don’t – really take myself that seriously.

CM-U: Well, except that your techniques are very good. I mean, you know...

Marti Mayo: Right.

CM-U: ...so obviously you are concerned.

Joseph Glasco: Oh, I am.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: I don’t want someone to call me up and say, “Look, you’ve got – this is falling apart...”

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: No, no. I’m quite careful.

CM-U: Was that always an issue, like, even when – let’s say in the 1950s, when you were very young, and you were in that circle of painters. Was permanence something they thought about? Or is that something that you...

Joseph Glasco: It was something I thought about.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Because I painted very differently than Jackson [Pollock].

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: He was in it for the effect, and the red, and the blacks, and the glossy. And I was into the Winsor & Newton buggy – little bugs crawling all over the picture. Doing my little fretworks. Little love affairs to people – love letters to people.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: You know. I'm often painting good when I'm in love.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Or when I've just been left.

CM-U: That's true, isn't it?

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. So it's really more like a _____ [word inaudible]. And it just blew the critics' minds because it first of all created a kind of sensation. Because they had never seen anything so weird in their lives. And they had had all the Abstract Expressionist (holds arms out wide) – This was just the opposite. This was very tschk (holds hands close together and then near head) mind worms.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And they sort of took it as, "Well, there's this – and then there's *this*."

CM-U: (laughs) Right. Right. And here's alternative!

Marti Mayo: And that's basically what the criticism of the time says: "And then there's this."

Joseph Glasco: And then you've got him, this nitwit from East Texas who paints with one brush until it's one hair, and he finishes his painting. But [Jean] Dubuffet

liked him, and Jackson [Pollock] liked him, and I did. And I understood him perfectly. Now I don't always today know what in the hell I had in mind.

[00:48:10]

CM-U: It was interesting. I was involved in looking at some of the [Piet] Mondrian paintings for this exhibition...

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. I just got a beautiful book of Mondrian.

CM-U: Did you? Is it the catalogue?

Joseph Glasco: Yes. Do you want me to get it?

CM-U: Yeah. It's amazing how, you know, he, too, was very involved with the brushwork.

Joseph Glasco: Well, let me show you something. Girls, I'll be right back. (walks out of frame)

CM-U: (to camera) How are we doing?

Laurie M: Good.

Marti Mayo: (whispers to CM-U) He's getting tired.

CM-U: Tired? I think he is too.

Joseph Glasco: I was just going to talk a little bit about this Mondrian, which – where is the camera? Can the camera pick up on that?

Laurie M: Yeah. Scoot back a bit, Joe.

Joseph Glasco: Okay. This is one of his later paintings.

CM-U: Why don't you sit down and hold it?

Marti Mayo: You just sit down, and I'll bet she can get right to it.

Joseph Glasco: Okay. You can zoom in on that. Look at that, Carol.

CM-U: Wow!

Joseph Glasco: See the overlaps...

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: ...the intelligence?

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: It's what, you know – how close I am. I mean, how pleased I am to see that.

CM-U: And some of this is paper, you know, that he has placed on. Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: It's not at all – you, who know [Yves] Klein well – or, not Klein, but the one who did the blue people.

CM-U: Yeah. Yves Klein. Yeah. Sure.

Joseph Glasco: Yves Klein. Yves Klein I was talking about, not Franz.

[all voices speaking at the same time]

Joseph Glasco: So you would know all about the handprints thing [sounds like]. (points at book) You would know how he would use the paper to make all sorts of ways to, “What happened last?” Like, this over-crosses this. But it doesn't necessarily this.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: What happened last?

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: Like in [Eugène] Delacroix when he's doing lace. Now did he do that pearl highlight first?

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: Or did he do that kid – who's been doing the lace kid – do all that lace first?

- CM-U: Right. No, it's really a wonder to look at some of these. And to see the brushwork.
- Joseph Glasco: Uh-huh.
- CM-U: But it made me – I mean, when you were talking about your own use of brushwork, is what _____ [phrase inaudible]
- Joseph Glasco: Well, see, I can't stand just this and this (waves hands left and right, and up and down).
- CM-U: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: I have to – I've got to have a pirouette in there...
- CM-U: Yeah.
- Joseph Glasco: ...to make mine alive to me.
- CM-U: Yeah. Well, yours are very alive.
- Joseph Glasco: You'll have to forgive me.
- CM-U: No, they're very alive indeed. Indeed.
- Joseph Glasco: Well, I don't mind being alive. Now his [Mondrian's] are alive, too.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Marti Mayo: Um-hum.
- Joseph Glasco: But he didn't have that bent personality I have.
- CM-U: Well, you're Joseph Glasco.
- Joseph Glasco: I'm me. Yeah, I'm me.
- CM-U: You're you. Right.
- Joseph Glasco: I just adore these subtle things. They really truly please me.

CM-U: Well, I was just interested when you were talking about use of the brush...

Joseph Glasco: But you mentioned Mondrian, and then...

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: ...and then I interrupted.

CM-U: Well, I was just interested in that tight use of the brush that you are describing...

[00:50:33]

Joseph Glasco: Uh-huh. I like using – I just discovered tape.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: If I want a hard line, I can put taping on there. Most commercial artists – I had never used it until just this year. Until I found out – 'cause it always looked so fake to me.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: But there's a way to make everything real. Right? In time. Practice.

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: But just so that – if it looks, if it works in the painting, it doesn't matter how you get it there.

CM-U: That's true.

Joseph Glasco: You can get your grandmother to put it in there, or stencil, or tape...

CM-U: So you've been using tape for making edges...

Joseph Glasco: I'm using it so I can get a hard edge...

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: ...with a soft edge. Or, all hard, or all soft. Whatever. But occasionally I've got to have a hard line there, and a certain color.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Marti Mayo: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: And the only way I can get it without using glue – and I'm tired and sick of washing glue off my hands. I've lost that compulsion to add.

CM-U: With the collage _____ [phrase inaudible].

Joseph Glasco: With the collage.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: Now I want to use paint.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: Which makes it easier, cheaper. I don't have to clean up so much brushes.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And it's just simpler.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And I get the same thing. I can think paint. I can play, and play, and play.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: The same way, only – and I don't always use tape. I don't always have to have straight lines in a painting.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: But sometimes.

CM-U: Well, it's using it to suit you.

Joseph Glasco: It's just kinda getting your music finally that you really like, and then you play that music. As an old piano player or violinist will. He doesn't have to go play the latest kid down the block's new concerto. But he can just reflect – he can do this for fun. His Schubert. Or get it down to where it's a real pleasure for him and you.

CM-U: Well, that is indeed what you're doing. Your new work is showing that...

Joseph Glasco: Oh, thank you.

CM-U: ...very much.

Marti Mayo: Yeah.

CM-U: And thank you [sounds like].

Joseph Glasco: I felt it when I did it...

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: ...that I had done something that the heart attack was certainly worth. I mean, not – you know, not to be melodramatic, but I wouldn't trade for a minute.

CM-U: Thank you, very much.

Joseph Glasco: I haven't talked to you a lot about it. This one, I've talked to so much that I've given you most of my attention. When this one already knows what I am going to say before I say it.

Marti Mayo: I have part of it, but there's always a new story, Joe.

Joseph Glasco: Is there?

Marti Mayo: See, I never – there are a lot of stories I didn't know until this afternoon.

[00:52:55]

Marti Mayo: Joe, you talked to me once about that you knew Twombly.

Joseph Glasco: Yes...

Marti Mayo: And that you were – you saw each other in Italy. You knew each other in Italy?

Joseph Glasco: No, Twombly – oh, Twombly. Twombly. I was thinking about that other one. Twombly knew me – every summer in Mýkonos, for years. But I didn't remember a thing about him.

Marti Mayo: That's right. That's...

Joseph Glasco: It's rather embarrassing. And he kept telling Julian [Schnabel], "Oh, yes, I know Joe very well. He gave me a drawing," and this and that. And – are we on, girls? Then I'll be careful.

CM-U: (laughs) That's all right. We just...

Joseph Glasco: Not careful, but just, in any case. It was Mýkonos, Greece before it was popular, in the sixties.

Marti Mayo: Um-hum. Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And I had just discovered that I was happy, for the first time in my life, and was having a ball, and Greece was wonderful in those days. And Cy came there, and was there, apparently, each summer. And we saw a lot of each other daily. And then I had had some kind of thing at the Museum of Modern Art. He perhaps had seen my work, and knew my name, and...

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: ...and there had been a lot of publicity, unexpected publicity about it. And reviews. But Twombly, I don't think, had started showing. I don't know. I don't know what I – but in any case, I met him recently, and we still got along fine.

CM-U: Oh, you mean you met him recently here?

Joseph Glasco: I saw him recently.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Not in Galveston, but down in Florida.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: And we reminisced about Mýkonos.

CM-U: Um-hum.

[00:54:33]

CM-U: I wanted to get back to just one other aspect of the collage that we were talking about.

Joseph Glasco: Sure. Uh-huh.

CM-U: You talked about your work with addition and subtraction, and how the collage element allowed that.

Joseph Glasco: Um-hum.

CM-U: Was it also a way of erasing, in a way?

Joseph Glasco: Yes. Yes.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: Subtraction is erasing.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: It not only covers instantly, where you don't have to worry about the brush stroke. But you could – I would cut a pattern of – all around a room, say, of various shapes and sizes. And I had it worked out rather like a factory. I could train kids to do it, too. And then I'd put them on – But they could...

Marti Mayo: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: Cover them with glue, and then stick it on there. You've got it – without even looking. And then you go back, and before you look, you step back and you see what it needs. And so it's nearly like painting with what they call action painting. Just trying to go into it, know where the will is dead [sounds like]...

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: ...and where you are just automatically letting the painting tell you, “Give me a little of this. Give me that. Go swing over here. Let’s do this.” And so when you get through, sometimes – sometimes! – you have something that says something or has meaning and beauty. Rarely.

CM-U: Would you, like, cut several up? So that it would go fast?

Joseph Glasco: I would cut fifteen.

CM-U: Yeah. So there were _____ [word inaudible] cut.

Joseph Glasco: Twenty. Sometimes a hundred.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Where I’d go bam, bam. I’d cover them so deep...

CM-U: And you’d just have a glue pot? Or your Elmer’s?

Joseph Glasco: I just had a big glue pot, with a big brush. I would have it a quarter of an inch deep in glue. So they never got dry. If they got dry, I’d just wet them up again.

CM-U: Oh, I see. So you would paste them all on the floor?

Joseph Glasco: I could paint a whole – I could paint – I could cover this surface (points toward wall) in two hours.

CM-U: So you’d have them all on the floor, already pasted?

Joseph Glasco: Yeah. Yeah.

CM-U: I see.

Joseph Glasco: I’d paint the painting.

CM-U: Right.

Joseph Glasco: Then suddenly slap a color, that in collage, I wanted to try [sounds like]. And it was actually really fun.

CM-U: I can imagine.

Joseph Glasco: And thrilling. And then slowly it defined the kind of palette, color for me.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Joseph Glasco: And then I'd get little tiny dots – tiny little things, and stick on them, you know. Big painting. And get it down to where I could see it from a distance, and then go up there and put little finishing pieces on it.

CM-U: Hmm.

Joseph Glasco: So it worked for me beautifully. Then I got tired of bending over, you know.

CM-U: Yeah.

Joseph Glasco: And gluing. And it is so awful to wash off. But I certainly did enjoy it. But why do the same thing forever, anyway?

CM-U: Yeah. No, no, no, you were ready to...

Joseph Glasco: I think the same things – the paintings I'm doing now, for me, are the same thing, only a different – they have maybe added something, or lost something, or whatever. But I lost the need for the all over pattern, that sort of Islamic mosaic feeling.

Marti Mayo: Uh-huh.

Joseph Glasco: Which I thought imperative from my – I was just remembering, I was just breaking through into Pollock from figurative painting in the – and so I had to – it had to be, for my sanity, an all over scene [sounds like].

Marti Mayo: Uh-huh.

CM-U: Um-hum.

[00:57:37]

- CM-U: I was just remembering, trying to remember, what you had said about Pollock with the restoration, about a good painting. And you had said...
- Joseph Glasco: What he said was – I was worrying about, “Ooh, it’s gonna get something on it.” My work, or something. He said, “Don’t worry about that. If it’s a good painting, it can’t get hurt.”
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Joseph Glasco: You know?
- CM-U: It’ll survive.
- Joseph Glasco: It’ll survive. Because it works. And it’s served its purpose. So forget about getting a little paint on it. You can – you know the painting. It becomes an alive thing. Like, a baby, before it comes out, it’s doubtful ’cause you don’t know what’s coming out. But once it’s out, you see what you’ve got. You can’t – I mean, it will just happen.
- Marti Mayo: Right.
- Joseph Glasco: It’s no longer a threat. It’s got five fingers and five _____ [phrase inaudible].
- CM-U: It’s a done deal, right.
- Joseph Glasco: A done deal.
- Marti Mayo: There you go.
- Joseph Glasco: So you take it from there. It’s real hard to scratch it and not be able to fix it.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- Joseph Glasco: But you scratch something sort of tacky _____ [phrase inaudible], and it’s going to be harder ’cause you’ve got to do these little tricks [sounds like].
- CM-U: That’s true. Well, thank you. This was really, really terrific.
- Joseph Glasco: I hope you got what you wanted.

CM-U: I did. It was very informative, and it was a real pleasure. And it really...

Joseph Glasco: Well, it was nice to be talked to...

CM-U: Thank you.

Joseph Glasco: ...and asked questions. Of course, I didn't know the answers before, you know so much.

CM-U: Well, you certainly provided the information we needed.

Joseph Glasco: Great.

CM-U: And it's very exciting.

Joseph Glasco: That's good. I'm so glad.

CM-U: Thank you.

[Break in video]

CM-U: I wouldn't want to end this session today without thanking Marti Mayo, who was really instrumental in arranging for this interview, and also for the show that Joe had of his work at the Contemporary Arts Museum in '86, and recently the show at the Galveston Arts Center, in which she wrote the catalogue. She has been a great source of help and information, and this interview was made much easier because of her. I'd also like to say that the exhibition of Joe's new work at the Galveston Arts Center is a very special occasion, and we are very happy to have been able to do this interview in honor of it. Thank you.

[END RECORDING]