



**Artists Documentation Program
Video Interview Transcript**

**LAWRENCE WEINER
JANUARY 16, 2008**

Interviewed by:

**Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founding Director,
Artists Documentation Program, and
Associate Director for Conservation and Research,
Whitney Museum of American Art
Video by Carlton Bright | Total Run Time: 00:35:18
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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 Associate Director for Conservation and Research, Whitney Museum of American Art; Lawrence Weiner, Artist]

[BEGIN RECORDING]

[00:00:50]

CM-U: We're going to start with today is January 16, 2008. I am at the Whitney with Lawrence Weiner in his exhibition. I am a conservator, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro. I am interested in preserving things – physical stuff.

L. Weiner: Um-hum.

CM-U: And I know, when we talk about your work, when we talk about materiality, like I wrote to you, language is material, so...

L. Weiner: Yes, it is.

CM-U: So in talking about the kinds of things that maybe we can turn our mind to as kind of the more physical stuff of your work, and how one, as a conservator, should think about that...

L. Weiner: I really don't know.

CM-U: ...in terms of conservation.

L. Weiner: I am perplexed, because the nature of the work is that it's a specific object without a specific form.

CM-U: Correct. Um-hum.

L. Weiner: How do you preserve something that is not a specific form?

CM-U: Hmm.

L. Weiner: I don't know.

CM-U: But some things have taken a physical form.

L. Weiner: At some stages.

CM-U: At some stages. And those stages change. So is it a question – let's – I though we should walk and talk and look at specific...

L. Weiner: Do tell...

CM-U: ..specific works.

L. Weiner: Yes.

[00:02:00]

CM-U: Let's look here. Let's look at these. [*Untitled*, 1968, Collections of Chuck Ginnever, Jack and Nell Wendler, Julia and Robert Barry]

L. Weiner: Well, this is easy. This is paintings.

CM-U: Yeah. Right.

L. Weiner: You conserve paintings the way people conserve paintings.

CM-U: Are these paintings from the period? Or have these remade?

L. Weiner: Oh, no, no. Everything, this is from the period.

CM-U: This is from the period? So in this...

L. Weiner: Built them all by – built them all by hand. Built all the stretchers, all by hand.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: And they seem to hold up reasonably well.

CM-U: Very well. They look extraordinarily well.

L. Weiner: Yes.

CM-U: And so that's – but in this case, in this physical state, this is how they should remain. This is the work.

L. Weiner: Ah, since the people who own them want them to look like that, yes.

CM-U: Okay.

- L. Weiner: Okay?
- CM-U: Okay. And should...
- L. Weiner: As for me, I made the paint always that it's reasonably active, so that the paint will continue to slide around a bit inside.
- CM-U: What do you mean?
- L. Weiner: The colors, well, there's chemicals that, when you are making the paint, that are make – that are not – they are in the canvas. And as you can see, there's discolorations here and there from outside temperature and things.
- CM-U: Like things like this sort of thing.
- L. Weiner: Like – a thing like that is all built into the painting.
- CM-U: And they say it's...
- L. Weiner: I guess it reaches – when it's a certain point, it stops. It stops going.
- CM-U: Um-hum. And it's acrylic paint?
- L. Weiner: Some of it is acrylic. Some of it is some other things.
- CM-U: Um-hum. So...
- L. Weiner: I say it's acrylic 'cause I don't remember.
- CM-U: Right. So at this point, you're in your studio, and you're working with the materials and all these kind of traditional materiality – physical questions...
- L. Weiner: Yes.
- CM-U: ...about material...
- L. Weiner: Yeah.
- CM-U: ...are sort of – and in terms of preserving and caring for them, those same criteria apply?
- L. Weiner: Yeah. Except this piece over here is an interesting thing.

CM-U: Yeah.

[00:03:26]

L. Weiner: This [*Untitled*, 1961, Collection of Dana Ohlmeyer and Elliot Lloyd] was in the collection of another, of an artist, Elliott Lloyd; and it's been there since it was made. And it's house paint from 1961. And it's exactly the same as it was when I painted it. And it's house paint I bought on Canal Street. You know, in little...

CM-U: Those little jars?

L. Weiner: ...those little cans. The little cans that were left over from big runs.

CM-U: So they were cheap. And they were available.

L. Weiner: Yes, they were available. And that seems to have held up all right.

CM-U: And you wouldn't – you couldn't imagine any sort of repainting of this? I mean, this is...

L. Weiner: No. As a matter of fact, it was brought into the conservation section, and they were thinking of just seeing what they could do. Happily, the person who had it kept it clean. Some of the paintings that came, the ones from London and all, they were filthy in the back. They had to vacuum them.

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: But that has nothing to do with the artist.

CM-U: Right. Correct. That's just upkeep and so on.

L. Weiner: That's just upkeep.

CM-U: Yeah.

L. Weiner: But this was kept clean, and it's exactly the way...

CM-U: And it looks very – it looks the same to you.

L. Weiner: It looks like I've seen the black and white photographs look. I can't tell you if the – but it was mottled white. It was all the various things...

CM-U: It's wonderful.

L. Weiner: ...that's titanium [sounds like].

CM-U: And it definitely has a sense of aging in it. I mean, the material...

L. Weiner: Yes, it's built into it, yeah.

CM-U: Yeah. And what about the others?

L. Weiner: Those – that's gouache [*Untitled*, n.d., Collection of Kirsten Weiner]...

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: ...with plastic under all if it – you know, spray plastic.

CM-U: A varnish of some sort?

L. Weiner: But some sort of – no, some sort of spray plastic fixative or something.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

L. Weiner: That's gouache and ink on canvas.

CM-U: And it looks so beautiful.

L. Weiner: And that's acrylic on newspaper.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

[00:05:03]

CM-U: Have you – of this body of work...

L. Weiner: Yeah.

CM-U: ...have you ever seen them in a way that they were damaged or treated or destroyed in a way that you felt compromised what you were trying to say?

L. Weiner: No.

CM-U: You're a lucky artist.

- L. Weiner: No. It was built into the work. I mean, it's a pity...
- CM-U: The aging was built into the work.
- L. Weiner: ...it's a pity, yeah. It's the same as with drawings. When you get your drawings. Drawings are a means that I use to be able to figure out things. They are notes.
- CM-U: Right.
- L. Weiner: I try. I use acid-free paper when I can, if I'm not on the road, and it's not paper from a hotel.
- CM-U: Sure. Hmm.
- L. Weiner: I try to remember about acid-free glue. But I really don't care. I'll use lipstick if I have to.
- CM-U: Hmm.
- L. Weiner: And my feelings, and many of the people who collect drawings of mine's feeling are, you get ten years of absolute pleasure out of something, don't complain.
- CM-U: Okay. And then that's okay? And then it goes.
- L. Weiner: It's fine with me.
- CM-U: And then it can be recreated as something else?
- L. Weiner: Why – and also, drawings are basically all notes for reproduction. So when they are reproduced, you don't have any kind of a problem. It's the information on the surface, and whatever little gesture that carries over that information on the surface is carried over in a reproduction and a photograph.
- CM-U: So, for you...
- L. Weiner: For me, it's about the same.
- CM-U: Uh-hum. But now there are certain decisions about the physicality of even language on a wall...

L. Weiner: Yes. Yes.

CM-U: ...that have to be made.

L. Weiner: Yeah.

CM-U: And what are the kinds of criteria that you have for that? I mean, like, if you look at a wall, and the different types...

L. Weiner: Totally emotional.

CM-U: ...the color. And that's – you're making these in the site [sounds like]...

L. Weiner: Emotional decision. But it's an emotional decision.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

L. Weiner: The aesthetics are inherent in you.

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: You are not going to be doing something that, you know, that goes against what you consider aesthetics...

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: ...and what you consider the politics of aesthetics. But, that leaves you an enormous, enormous range. When I'm not happy with a typeface, when I'm not happy with the language, I design my own. I designed *Margaret Seaworthy Gothic*.

CM-U: I'm sorry?

L. Weiner: I designed Margaret Seaworthy Gothic...

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: ...which got away from that whole problem because I don't like Helvetica. I don't like what it stands for. Franklin Gothic, I could use. I found a thing called *Offline*. You'll see it turn up in the show. I just will then, but I can't tell you that they are artist's decisions. They are emotional decisions of somebody who makes art, and how they want to present it.

CM-U: That's correct. I understand.

L. Weiner: They are how you dress in the morning when you go out the door.

CM-U: Right. Right. And then at a later date, you might choose another type...

L. Weiner: Oh, with...

CM-U: They are always changing.

L. Weiner: All of these pieces have been shown different ways.

CM-U: Right.

[00:07:37]

L. Weiner: And I'm not sure yet. That's what's been holding me back a bit in California, whether I want to carry the presentation to MOCA of the way certain works were presented, or whether I want to change each one.

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: And once I make the decision, then I'll know what I'll do.

CM-U: And do you feel this is always your decision as the artist?

L. Weiner: No. When the work is sold, it's the decision of the person who acquires the work.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: They can tattoo it on their *tuchus* for all I care.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: As long as it doesn't change the work, and they're happy.

CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. Weiner: Because the point of a sculpture is for people to use it to figure out their place in the world.

- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: People place things in the way that they can use it. If you – you know, you don't put a compass inside a drawer unless you want not to know where you are.
- CM-U: Right. In your own work over the years, and using letters and language on a wall...
- L. Weiner: Um-hum.
- CM-U: ...you must become more comfortable with certain materials, and that must be always something that you are thinking about? Uh, type...
- L. Weiner: I don't quite understand...
- CM-U: ...color, sheen of the letters?
- L. Weiner: Oh.
- CM-U: That sort of – or is it just that moment?
- L. Weiner: You are dealing with a palette. I don't know if I'm more comfortable with – it's green, as well as blue, as well as red. It really is.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: I don't know what I'm more comfortable with. I know what goes against what I feel is the political message.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: A certain dignity about the work, and a certain dignity of things. But that doesn't necessarily mean it can't be done with just crayon.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: I did my whole show, my retrospective at ARC in Paris ["Sculpture: Lawrence Weiner," ARC/Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, June 27-September 22, 1985] with crayon and chalk.
- CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. Weiner: And I didn't find any problem with that. The work does not really require a dinner jacket. Okay. Sometimes it's nice, if you want to.

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: But I really don't...

CM-U: If that – should that be...

L. Weiner: ...it's not to get away from it, it's...

[00:09:31]

L. Weiner: But when you look at any of these installations, they are just thought through as much as they possibly can be. And then presented.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: I don't usually even – I'll present it to somebody who is purchasing one and say, you know, that I'll help with the installation once.

CM-U: Um-hum. Aha.

L. Weiner: ...and afterwards they have to make their own decisions.

CM-U: Uh-huh. Then they do that...

L. Weiner: I'll help with the practical concepts if they need it, but other than that, no. I really think if the work is presented in a manner that its meaning is built into its inherent force, then it's okay.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: As I said, I didn't think there was that much of an excitement [sounds like]...

CM-U: No?

[00:10:11]

L. Weiner: This piece is an interesting one because it is a rebuild...

- CM-U: Yeah, come on. Let's do it [sounds like]. Okay, tell me about this [*The Stone on the table*, 1960-62, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam].
- L. Weiner: It was a piece that was from 1960 to '62, I guess, in the backyard. It was initially a stone that I went with Michael Shamberg and picked up, which was in the breaking down part of the Brooklyn Bridge.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: And then somehow or other it was shown here and there, and it was going to go in the New Museum show for early work ["Early Work: Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez Aranda, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner," New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, April 3-June 3, 1982]...
- CM-U: Oh. Uh-huh.
- L. Weiner: ...a long, long time ago. Lynda Benglis was in the show. I don't remember the dates, but you can check it out.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: And it was misplaced in the warehouse. It was just a stone on the table, and they couldn't find it.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: So we rebuilt it, and I went with Michael to get it out of the storeroom and recut it. But we took it from the Manhattan bridge rubble...
- CM-U: So the original...
- L. Weiner: ...by mistake. By mistake.
- CM-U: By mistake.
- [both voices occasionally speak at the same time; hard to distinguish between them]
- L. Weiner: So the original was the Brooklyn Bridge, and that's the rubble.
- CM-U: So that's the memory part, right?

- L. Weiner: And this is now in the Stedelijk, and this is where it was since it was at the New Museum. This is the way it stays.
- CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: I am very happy with this, that it's at the Stedelijk.
- CM-U: And natural aging? Whatever happens?
- L. Weiner: Oh, yeah. I built the damn thing. I built both of them.
- CM-U: If it's damaged, it gets fixed, and just...
- L. Weiner: I don't know. There was a broken splinter here. Yes, they've fixed the splinter.
- CM-U: They just fixed the splinter...
- L. Weiner: Which I thought was foolish. I was just ready to rip it off, and everybody said, "No." And I'm saying, "But it's just a table."
- CM-U: It's just a table – yeah. Yeah.
- L. Weiner: Sorry.
- CM-U: No, no, no. No, no, no, no, this is – no, this is central to what I do.
- L. Weiner: The hardest part was to reduplicate the that because I had...
- CM-U: To reduplicate what?
- L. Weiner: The stone. Because the stone had started out at one of the – it was like the Gulley Jimson film [*The Horse's Mouth*, 1958]. The stone had started out very large, and it was my trying to figure out what the hell to do with it...
- CM-U: Right.
- L. Weiner: ...and then I finally realized it was about placing the stone on the table. It wasn't about cutting it. And the table was built in a studio on Bleecker Street, and then in the backyard. With goggles, and gloves...
- CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: ...and big stonecutting tools, until I realized that, no, I was looking for a rectangular stone. Irregular. And that was good enough.

CM-U: And that was it.

L. Weiner: That was it. It's nice to have all the paint from all the bridge building _____ [phrase inaudible; both voices speaking at the same time].

CM-U: Yeah. Exactly. And there are choices here. I mean, it has a certain – it has a history in it, is what it has.

L. Weiner: Yes. Well, obviously this maybe could have fallen someplace where – after it was sent off. This is an interesting thing. And it's quite sturdy. I mean, I'm not much of a carpenter, but it seems to not have fallen apart.

CM-U: It's a table.

L. Weiner: It's a table.

CM-U: And that was the important concept here.

L. Weiner: It didn't fall on anybody.

CM-U: Yeah. So, should the Stedelijk at some point need another table, as far as you're concerned, if it's a table...

L. Weiner: I have no idea. That's the Stedelijk's problem.

CM-U: That's the Stedelijk's problem. Okay.

[00:12:51]

CM-U: Some of the lettering is placed on the wall? Physically placed on the wall?

L. Weiner: Yeah. My curators – yeah...

CM-U: Some of it is stenciling? Stencil?

L. Weiner: My curators asked if they could have some things painted on the wall.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

- L. Weiner: And because it really has a different feel...
- CM-U: Right.
- L. Weiner: ...I didn't see why not.
- CM-U: Okay.
- L. Weiner: I find the vinyl often works, and painting on the wall works, writing with a pencil works. Stenciling – that's the original stencil [*A BIT OF MATTER AND A LITTLE BIT MORE*], from when I showed it at P.S. 1. It's not the original. I think I recut it.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: But it's the original stencil to make the stencil.
- CM-U: Uh-huh. Okay.
- L. Weiner: It's an old Stenso stencil from my high school days, I think.
- CM-U: Stenso. Golly, I remember those in high school.
- L. Weiner: High school days. I still have it.
- CM-U: Um-hum? You still have it? Of course.
- L. Weiner: I still have it because I had to do that for the Downtown Show. At the Grey Art Center ["The Downtown Show: The New York Art Scene, 1974-1984," Grey Art Gallery, January 10-April 1, 2006].
- CM-U: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.
- L. Weiner: I had – I promised I would recut it for them because the other stencil, the owner of the work didn't want to lend them the original stencil.
- CM-U: Hmm. Ah, that brings up an interesting issue. But in your work, that makes perfect sense.
- L. Weiner: It's theirs.
- CM-U: It's theirs.

L. Weiner: It's their choice.

CM-U: It's theirs, and – right.

L. Weiner: It's the same as Herman.

CM-U: And it doesn't matter.

L. Weiner: Herman Daled asked that...

L. Weiner: Hi, how are you? [speaking to gallery attendant]

Attendant: I am okay. I am part of your art museum.

L. Weiner: Are you...

Attendant: The shadow...

L. Weiner: Yes, you are the shadow. That's not so bad.

Attendant: Yes, it's good.

L. Weiner: It adds much to it.

Attendant: Yes, visitors say, I am part of your art. It's good.

CM-U: She's protecting it. Very good. Thank you.

L. Weiner: No, you see people really do take those.

CM-U: Oh, yes. I've taken them. (laughs)

L. Weiner: Yeah. And Herman asked. And that's what they did.

CM-U: Was it particular that this [*PEBBLES AND STRAW STREWN ON A LEVEL WITH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER*] be tape, as opposed to painted? It didn't matter?

L. Weiner: I thought that it would be less trouble for the Whitney if they used vinyl...

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: ...and it turned out, when they were rebuilding the walls for me, one of the machines had gone across it and they had to fix part of the vinyl. It's hell to refix things from painting on the floor.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

L. Weiner: If it were a permanent installation, I'd have it done with epoxy or something.

CM-U: Right. Right. So, again, it's just kind of the practical considerations on what...

L. Weiner: Totally practical...

CM-U: Totally...

L. Weiner: ...and, again, totally emotional.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: Dependent upon how I felt at the moment.

CM-U: Um-hum.

[00:15:10]

L. Weiner: And the drawings, as you can see, from staples to anything that was a necessity to make the drawing.

CM-U: So at this point there...

L. Weiner: That was exciting. That drawing [*AS PER THE LINES DRAWN (Galileo)*, 2007, Collection of the artist] was above my desk...

CM-U: Talk to me about this.

L. Weiner: ...in the temporary studio. And to be able to put a drawing that's been above your desk, which you had made about that, in a retrospective like that, is fantastic for me.

CM-U: Yeah. I can understand that.

- L. Weiner: That's why I like showing the drawings that I was doing to explain to my curators what my problems about making a retrospective were. Whereas these [*Spheres of Influence*, 1990, (suite of 8 drawings), Collection of Tate Modern] are really quite straightforward.
- CM-U: Um-hum. But this is very much a unique piece, but not really.
- L. Weiner: It's a drawing, yeah.
- CM-U: It's a drawing. So you see it...
- L. Weiner: But it could be reproduced.
- CM-U: It could be reproduced _____ [phrase inaudible]. Yeah.
- L. Weiner: Even these pieces, which I am really happy with, they are made with ball-point pen. And that comes from one day, I believe, having coffee or a drink at Claes and Coosje's house...
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: ...Claes Oldenburg's house.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: And he was laughing because I had a pen, and it exploded as usual. Everybody does on the road, in your drawing kit. He said, "I did this set of drawings with a ball-point pen," and he tossed a notebook on the table. I was just knocked out. They were beautiful. Beautiful. He's a beautiful drawer.
- CM-U: Drawer. Yeah, he is.
- L. Weiner: They were – and I was totally knocked out. Here it was with a ball-point pen. So I went to Britain and did a set of drawings [*A Question of Balance*, 1981, Collection of Centre Georges Pompidou] with a ball-point pen.
- CM-U: They're beautiful. They are wonderful.
- L. Weiner: And they held up from the Pompidou.
- CM-U: Oh, well, yeah, they will.

- L. Weiner: Um-hum.
- CM-U: I guess – you know, I guess some of the things that can happen in terms of aging is, of course, fading of colors.
- L. Weiner: This is rubber stamps [*1 For the Money / 2 For the Show / 2 To Get Ready / 4 To Go*, 1991].
- CM-U: This is – sorry?
- L. Weiner: Rubber stamps. The rubber stamps fade.
- CM-U: Ohh. Yeah. Okay. So...
- L. Weiner: It's the way life is.
- CM-U: Just do it again.
- L. Weiner: Hmm. Or, just let it fade.
- CM-U: Let it fade. Let it go away.
- L. Weiner: Yeah. Everything is not forever.
- CM-U: No.
- L. Weiner: That was on the boat for years [*Ships at Sea*, n.d., Collection of Jack & Nell Wendler]. On my boat. And then Jack Wendler picked it up in Amsterdam, and that has been hanging in his house in Block Island, which is pretty open in its situation. And it holds up. Those are the cigarette papers from old Rizla paper.
- CM-U: Oh, is that right?
- L. Weiner: Yeah.
- CM-U: I didn't realize that. That you've then colored? Or was that...
- L. Weiner: I colored them [sounds like]...
- CM-U: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

- L. Weiner: I notched and colored them.
- CM-U: I love the – this is the varnish just from the...
- L. Weiner: This is a thing from children's – children had these blocks that fit into that.
- CM-U: Ohh.
- L. Weiner: That told a little story...
- CM-U: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And this looks like it was some kind of copper paint at some point, maybe? Or something like that? Kind of copperish color.
- L. Weiner: More or less. It was probably a copper marker.
- CM-U: Yeah. Uh-huh.
- L. Weiner: These all are rubber stamps [No title, 1990, (suite of 8 drawings), Collection of the artist].
- [00:17:58]**
- CM-U: So there's a sense of life. Things age. They change. They go away.
- L. Weiner: They change. But you can't be that precious about it.
- CM-U: They go away.
- L. Weiner: You should be careful with things if you like them.
- CM-U: Right. Right.
- L. Weiner: But then again, it's – again, it's its meaning. Meaning can be reproduced.
- CM-U: Yeah. Yeah.
- L. Weiner: And the skill of what they talk about, you know, being able to draw – because I can draw [sounds like] – the skill and all, that's carried across in a reproduction...
- CM-U: Hmm.

- L. Weiner: We all – I mean, like I grew up in the South Bronx; I grew up looking at reproductions, and occasionally at the Metropolitan. Then when the Modern became more open. But it was enough to get me interested.
- CM-U: Well, you've gotten us interested, that's for sure.
- L. Weiner: Yeah.
- CM-U: It works. Yes.
- L. Weiner: Yeah, it works.
- CM-U: Yes, it works. Indeed.
- L. Weiner: But you don't have to fetish-ize it.
- CM-U: What about something like this [*ONE PINT GLOSS WHITE LACQUER POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY*]?
- L. Weiner: Well, what about it? It's white paint on the floor.
- CM-U: That needs to be shiny? Needs to look that way?
- L. Weiner: It doesn't need to be anything. It needs to be on the floor.
- CM-U: It needs to be on the floor.
- L. Weiner: And I can walk across it. I honestly can. See? _____ [word inaudible]
See? The world hasn't come to an end.
- (laughter)
- CM-U: And it could be in any other material? It could be in any other thing, as long as it's on the floor?
- L. Weiner: It couldn't be any other color 'cause that was – I think about white enamel.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- L. Weiner: And that's an idea of a white spot on the ground, as opposed to a black spot because those things are different materials.

- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: But other than that, it could be on any floor, anywhere.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: As I said, I might be disappointing you.
- CM-U: No, you're not disappointing me.
- L. Weiner: It's typing...
- CM-U: You're not disappointing me at all.
- L. Weiner: That's typing paper. They have one – they're from like sixty...
- CM-U: This one [*Untitled*, 1963, Collection of the artist].
- L. Weiner: Sixty-two or something – or whatever they are. Yeah, sixty – I can't see.
- CM-U: Sixty-three.
- L. Weiner: Sixty-three. That's typing paper. That's the paper that you get your shirts back in [*Untitled*, 1967, Collection of the artist].
- CM-U: I tell you, I'm just astonished by really how well preserved everything is for...
- L. Weiner: I think...
- CM-U: ...and even though you're saying...
- L. Weiner: ...that material is...
- CM-U: Yeah. Material has a life of its own.
- L. Weiner: Yes, it does.
- CM-U: And it looks its best when it does.
- L. Weiner: Yeah, this is all just typing paper. And the kind you get at JC Penney, probably, or, you know...

[00:20:00]

CM-U: How do you keep your art at home? How do you keep stuff that you own at home?

L. Weiner: Oh, I don't. I don't like things in the studio that are finished. I think that at one point there was like I kept a small [John] Chamberlain foam piece for a while and watched it rot...

CM-U: Yeah, I know.

L. Weiner: ...and watched it rot.

CM-U: I know them. I know them. Yeah.

L. Weiner: Kept it in my studio. But that was a very sentimental...

CM-U: Yeah.

L. Weiner: But I don't like finished things in the studio. So when they're finished, they go someplace else. When I had a tiny little studio, they went into a cardboard box in the hallway.

CM-U: Away. Out of sight.

L. Weiner: Out of sight.

CM-U: Away. Uh-huh. I understand.

L. Weiner: Although occasionally the people that I lived with liked the stuff, so they'd have things that they like out. And, yeah, I'm not a – I'm funny about that stuff.

CM-U: Well, I'm glad I asked because I'm interested in you.

L. Weiner: Yeah.

CM-U: And in that.

L. Weiner: Yeah, in the studio, I don't like it...

CM-U: So I have this sense...

L. Weiner: ...but in the rest of the house...

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: ...there's other floors.

CM-U: Yeah.

L. Weiner: That's another ballgame.

CM-U: What's that?

L. Weiner: People put it up if they want it. And it can be up. Alice [Weiner, wife of the artist] used to keep her *Broken Off* collection up on the wall on a stairwell.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: And with the rebuilding, we don't have a stairwell, so I don't have any idea what she is going to do now.

(laughter)

CM-U: But that's Alice's problem, right?

L. Weiner: That's Alice's problem.

CM-U: That's Alice's problem.

L. Weiner: Exactly.

CM-U: Okay. I get the sense that, if you want to do a drawing, you want to do work, you grab what's available, and you...

L. Weiner: Yeah.

CM-U: ...and you do it?

L. Weiner: Unless it's something I wanted to try, like, uh, this [No Title, 1966, Collection of The Siegelau Collection & Archives] – probably I wanted to try some very expensive gouache...

CM-U: It's beautiful. Beautiful color in that.

L. Weiner: ...because I was making this painting, and I was broke, and I went and found this absolutely beautiful French gouache. I think we brought it back in '63.

CM-U: Oh, it's gorgeous.

L. Weiner: And it's held up...

CM-U: And it's gorgeous. Very much. Very much.

L. Weiner: Yeah.

L. Weiner: And this one's from the Modern [*Untitled*, 1965, Collection of MoMA Library]. I think it was in a – I don't really know if that's the one. Yeah, it was in an antiwar show, and a curator from the Modern had bought it.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: And then when she passed away, or when she was cleaning up her life, she gave it to the Modern.

CM-U: That's good. Yeah. That's right.

L. Weiner: It was one of the first few drawings I sold for a reasonable sum of money like a hundred and twenty-five dollars. Leon Golub and I stood there and couldn't imagine we got a hundred and twenty-five dollars. But I didn't tell him it was for the antiwar movement, but a hundred and twenty-five dollars for a contemporary drawing. (laughs)

CM-U: Fantastic. Fantastic. Yeah, they look remarkably well, Lawrence, as – I mean, really. I mean, they are framed. The paper is darkened on the edges.

L. Weiner: That's all just gouache on regular white [sounds like] piece of paper.

CM-U: Um-hum.

[00:22:35]

CM-U: There's a clarity to the material. I mean, there's something. There's not a complexity.

L. Weiner: I like materials. I like materials a lot.

- CM-U: Yeah. You know, I mean...
- L. Weiner: I find them sensual.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- L. Weiner: There's a sensuality involved in the whole process. And it's the same as all the work. It's about – it's very sensual. Sculpture is a sensual thing. Drawing is extremely sensual.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- L. Weiner: I'm proud of my drawings, but I'm not a fetishist about it.
- CM-U: I understand.
- L. Weiner: If they fade, they fade.
- CM-U: Right. I understand that. But you said – I get a sense of that sensuality when I look at it.
- L. Weiner: I should hope.
- CM-U: And I couldn't find the word I was looking for.
- L. Weiner: Nice word, sensuality.
- CM-U: It's a very good word. I'm glad you brought it up because that's what I was trying to articulate myself when I look at the different textures and the different feel of the materials in this show.
- L. Weiner: Yeah.
- CM-U: Even though we're not talking about physical materials.
- L. Weiner: Yeah, but you know, you make a public exhibition for people.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- L. Weiner: In fact, it's a public performance. If you don't take into account that the people that are coming to see your exhibition can understand what you're

doing – because of course they can; if you could do it, they could understand it – but you try the best you can to present it without any tricks...

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: ...in the most sensual manner within your concept of sensuality...

CM-U: Correct. That makes sense.

L. Weiner: ...that's what you do when you get an opportunity to make a show. You try to make each piece carry with it the sensuality that you thought in terms of when you were making it.

CM-U: Have you had surprises in doing shows?

L. Weiner: You mean to find out what I really wanted?

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: Yeah, of course. Or it's, you know, don't wish for something, you might get it.

(laughter)

CM-U: Yes.

L. Weiner: It's happened four or five times...

CM-U: I've lived long enough to know that.

L. Weiner: But happily they've invented white paint.

(laughter)

L. Weiner: And they could fix it.

CM-U: And you have done that? You've changed your mind...

L. Weiner: Oh, many, many times.

CM-U: Put something up and then...

L. Weiner: And looked at it, and realized that was a horse's ass. I didn't get it right. And had it taken down and re-changed.

CM-U: Not getting it right would have to do with the appearance of it on the wall.

L. Weiner: Of the way it was – it just was sending the wrong message.

CM-U: Yeah.

L. Weiner: And we do care about what messages we send.

CM-U: We do.

L. Weiner: Happily.

CM-U: Yes. Intentionally.

L. Weiner: Yes. That's what we're responsible for. That's what we get paid for.

CM-U: Well, you get paid for that. I get paid for preserving it.

L. Weiner: Well, that's all the same thing.

CM-U: It is indeed.

L. Weiner: You couldn't preserve it if somebody didn't make it.

CM-U: That's true. Or someone didn't get it. Right.

[00:24:59]

CM-U: Okay. Comments about anything on the walls here?

L. Weiner: No. What would there be to comment on? I like the idea that we were able to use posters as posters.

CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. Weiner: I am making one change in MOCA. The yellow poster with the many-colored objects piece.

CM-U: Let's go up there.

- L. Weiner: That's going – the “many-colored objects” is going to be painted on the wall or vinyl.
- CM-U: The same scale or larger?
- L. Weiner: No, no. Larger.
- CM-U: Much larger.
- L. Weiner: Definitely. And we are going to replace the “AS LONG AS IT LASTS” stencil where the yellow thing is. So it's two separate things.
- CM-U: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- L. Weiner: In fact, I've done that already. That's about as far as I've gone.
- CM-U: And the reflective surface over there?
- L. Weiner: Some of them are shiny, and some of them are matte, and some of them are satin.
- CM-U: Yeah, they are.
- L. Weiner: _____ [phrase inaudible]
- CM-U: Do you tend to choose a...
- L. Weiner: You have shiny, and matte, and...
- CM-U: I do.
- L. Weiner: ...and satin somewhere. Do you have satin?
- CM-U: That's what keeps it all alive.
- L. Weiner: That's the nature of life.
- CM-U: Right.
- L. Weiner: I'm very proud of this show, by the way. But maybe I shouldn't do this on the mic. But I am very proud of the show.

CM-U: You should be proud of this show.

L. Weiner: It worked, and I'm so pleased with people that worked on it [sounds like]. The staff that installed the walls, they did such a beautiful job.

CM-U: Being careful and...

L. Weiner: No, no. They solved problems that I hadn't noticed, and things like that.

CM-U: Structural problems and so on, yeah.

L. Weiner: Yeah. We can look at the other things...

CM-U: Okay.

L. Weiner: ...in the corner here...

CM-U: How are you doing? You all right?

L. Weiner: Oh, I'm fine. Don't worry about me. I didn't feel very well the last couple of days, and – but you can't say anything to people. They send you e-mails saying that they're getting over their cold.

[00:26:49]

L. Weiner: This was a funny one.

CM-U: Yeah, let's talk about that one.

L. Weiner: I mean, there's books, which I'll be talking about this evening...

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: ...but all this other stuff, that's all just standard made, and it holds up pretty well.

CM-U: Um-hum. It does indeed.

L. Weiner: And most of this stuff that's here has been used or something like that. Or people's kids have played with it, as they should. I was always impressed by my daughter when she was a little girl. See, she went to boarding school

when she was like sixteen. In Vermont or something. And she took with her, folded up, a Tina Gerard drawing...

CM-U: She took a Tina Gerard. I know. Yeah.

L. Weiner: ...and a Sol Lewitt drawing, because Sol was her godfather. And a small Carl Andre thing. She just put them up on the wall with pushpins.

CM-U: Isn't that wonderful, though?

L. Weiner: And she carried them with her until they disassembled themselves. And the people involved were not at all upset. That was what it was. It was made for somebody to be living with it. You know, I have a different attitude towards that.

CM-U: No, I don't. No, I'm interested because...

L. Weiner: Not than yours, but I have a different attitude than you're supposed to.

CM-U: I know you do.

L. Weiner: I don't like people when they ruin something for no reason. Makes no sense whatsoever.

CM-U: Right.

L. Weiner: But when it's being used and used and used, a dog-eared book has the same information and the same classiness and the same structure as one that's pristine.

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: But you can't see it if it's pristine. Then it doesn't function as a book, does it?

CM-U: I like the sense...

L. Weiner: Although the first book that I did do was – and that was due to economics, we – and that was the world's worst binding job.

CM-U: Oh, yeah.

L. Weiner: Which is _____ [word inaudible]. It just falls apart.

CM-U: And what did you do?

L. Weiner: Nothing. What can you do?

CM-U: What can you do?

L. Weiner: We were, you know.

CM-U: So that one's apart? That one's...

L. Weiner: That one's there. It's not apart. It's...

CM-U: It's not apart anymore.

L. Weiner: People take it – no, the people are careful with it, but if it's used the way some of the other books are used, it, it's not going to last very long. This worked nicely. This little shelf. Yeah, this is all just stuff. It will be different in L.A. MOCA. I mean, they use the – oh, I shouldn't tell anybody. I'm not supposed to. Because I haven't talked to my curator yet.

CM-U: Okay. We'll work that out.

[00:29:11]

L. Weiner: And this is about half the posters. A little less than half. And we are going to be able to do all the posters in MOCA...

CM-U: Oh, really? The whole room?

L. Weiner: Because I'm building a curved wall like...

CM-U: That will be nice.

L. Weiner: ..._____ [word inaudible] would like. Like a carousel.

CM-U: Oh, nice.

L. Weiner: Like a fairgrounds. It's a fairground wall. And that fairground wall – so the whole show is more or less outside, and then you go inside, and there's a selection from the outside because a lot of – most of the work is on posters. A lot of it is.

- CM-U: So these posters are all relatively new posters? Or are these original old posters? Or you have remade them?
- L. Weiner: These are from – no, heavens, no.
- CM-U: No?
- L. Weiner: They – posters carry with them their whole story. 1995, 1965...
- CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.
- L. Weiner: I think '65 or '64, I'm not sure. '65. 1972. I mean, posters can tell a story. They carry information, but you don't have to have a little ticket or anything else on it. '73.
- CM-U: And so those that are covered in Plex or Mylar are because of the owner?
- L. Weiner: They are all covered in Mylar because the Vancouver Art Gallery has a collection [*234 Posters*, n.d., Collection of Vancouver Art Gallery]...
- CM-U: Okay.
- L. Weiner: ...and they have one that's in there for scholars, and one covered in this sort of Mylar for traveling. And if you notice, they can send a crate, and the whole archive can go so that people can participate with it. Because some of these things are interesting for people _____ [phrase inaudible], and not just my design. And that one, you know, that – taking Cole Porter, "Every time we say goodbye, we die a little."
- CM-U: Hmm.
- L. Weiner: It's for children's AIDS.
- CM-U: Hmm.
- L. Weiner: Just the changing from "I" to a "we."
- CM-U: I'm sorry?
- L. Weiner: Just the changing of an "I" to a "we."
- CM-U: Makes all the difference.

- L. Weiner: Uh-huh. And these are from the seventies. And there's – some posters, I mean, this is on really lousy paper and things.
- CM-U: But, you know, the color – I mean, they are in remarkably, incredibly good condition.
- L. Weiner: And this one _____ [phrase inaudible]...
- CM-U: And how could they stay in such good condition?
- L. Weiner: The Vancouver Art Gallery takes very good care of them, so...
- CM-U: Takes very good care of them.
- L. Weiner: That's a funny story because they – when Vancouver took the archive over from Nova Scotia...
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- L. Weiner: ...because Nova Scotia didn't have the resources any longer. It was much too big, and much too many people wanting to see it. They asked me to make a poster, and this was the size they gave me. And it was like the largest poster they could conceive of.
- CM-U: Uh-hum.
- L. Weiner: They couldn't print it in Canada. They couldn't find a press bed. And I kept saying, "Well, I'll lower it down." No, no, no. They had to ship it – which for Canadians, it's is a big deal – they had to ship it to the States for a press bed to print it.
- CM-U: What – do you have any reason why they had this preconceived idea of the size?
- L. Weiner: That was the size they wanted.
- CM-U: They just wanted it. It looks wonderful.
- L. Weiner: Yeah. So. And this is newsprint, or part, a kind of a newsprint. Not very good paper, but it's still there.
- CM-U: It still looks terrific.

L. Weiner: The whole catalog was on the poster in Spanish and in English.

[00:32:23]

CM-U: Is there ever a point where you see something, and you say, “Okay, it’s done now?” I mean, “Its life is over. It...” Or the physical...

L. Weiner: I don’t have anything to say about it.

CM-U: The physical?

L. Weiner: These are things that people have collected.

CM-U: Okay.

L. Weiner: My job is to make things and to get them in the world. And to make sure that somebody doesn’t censor them. Okay? That’s it. If they use themselves out, where you’ve installed something and it goes away eventually, it goes away. I had this big conversation about conservation with the French government...

CM-U: Hmm.

L. Weiner: ...a piece of mine [*Placé sur un point fixe (Pris) depuis un point fixe*, 1992, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris] that had been on a – a far, what is it called? – a lighthouse...

CM-U: Um-hum.

L. Weiner: ...for going back and forth from Dover – was moved by the authorities because they owned it. They owned it, and they were getting it into the Tuileries, which was a big deal. And I wanted it painted on the wall of the Tuileries, and they thought that’s something else. A national monument...

CM-U: Right. Right.

L. Weiner: ...and they wanted to do it bronze or in this or this. And I said, “No. You have to paint it on the wall.” We figured out some very good installers. We figured out a beautiful way of doing it with an epoxy inside the wall.

CM-U: Hmm.

L. Weiner: It became a very popular piece. The wall started to collapse because it's that embankment...

(laughter)

L. Weiner: ...and they went mad. They wanted – I had to go over there and look at it. I had to talk to people about how to repair it. And I kept saying, “You don't have to repair it. Nobody really, you know – you can still read the piece. So part of the I is off, and the wall is coming down. It's part of its life.” The Tuileries' wall collapses. It crumbles. They're not going to really fix the wall; they are going to fix the work into it.

CM-U: Hmm.

L. Weiner: If they fix the wall, then have them repaint it on it. I don't mind a little decay. I mean, look, you know, _____ [phrase inaudible] says, “*C'est pas mal, mais c'est pas toi.*” When you look in the mirror, it's not bad, but it ain't you.

CM-U: (laughing)

L. Weiner: It's true. And on that note, I think that will end it [sounds like]...

CM-U: It's very true. And on that note, I think we – I thank you very much. That's really great.

[END RECORDING]