



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: James Rosenquist
Date: October 21, 1993
Location: The Menil Collection
Interviewer: Carol Mancusi-Ungaro
Video: Laurie McDonald / **Edit:** Laurie McDonald
Total Run Time: 01:04:20

Abstract:

Artist James Rosenquist speaks with Artists Documentation Program Founding Director and Menil Chief Conservator, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro. The conversation focuses on several of Rosenquist's paintings, including *Promenade of Merce Cunningham*, 1963, owned by the Menil Collection. Rosenquist discusses his early career, as well as the materials and techniques that he employed in his painting. Throughout the interview, Rosenquist outlines his intent for the future conservation and exhibition of his work.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):

Corporate Name(s)

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Artists Documentation Program
Harvard University. Art Museums
Menil Collection (Houston, Tex.)
Whitney Museum of American Art

Genre(s)

Interviews
Oral histories

Personal Name(s)

Mancusi-Ungaro, Carol
McDonald, Laurie
Rosenquist, James, 1933-

Subject(s)

Art--Conservation and restoration
Art--Technique
Artists--Interviews
Artists' materials
Artists--United States--Biography
Painting, American--20th century

Exhibitions/Works:

Names of exhibitions and works referenced during this interview appear below in gray cells.

Controlled Vocabulary:

Except where indicated, all keywords employ Getty vocabularies (AAT/ULAN/TGN). Those marked with (*) employ Library of Congress Authorities. Those marked with (**) employ local terms.

| Time | Contents | Subject Keywords |
|----------|--|---|
| 00:00:01 | Opening Credits | |
| 00:00:43 | Introduction Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, James Rosenquist | |
| 00:01:10 | (Image) James Rosenquist <i>Promenade of Merce Cunningham, 1963</i> The Menil Collection, Houston, Formerly in the Collection of Christophe de Menil | paintings (visual works) Menil Collection |
| 00:01:10 | Technical Specifications and Historical Anecdote Rosenquist traces the provenance of <i>Promenade of Merce Cunningham</i> and describes the materials and processes that he used to create the painting. | billboards (site elements) canvas collage (technique) commercial art Cunningham, Merce linen (material) Ménil, Christophe de Menil, Dominique de Menil, John de mineral spirit oil paint (paint) photomechanical processes Renaissance screen printing squaring (transferring technique) vehicle (binder) Winsor & Newton* |
| 00:03:30 | Historical Anecdote Rosenquist describes his early training as an artist. | artists' materials Art Students' League Dickinson, Edwin Walter Dickinson, Sidney E. draftsmen (artists) Grosz, George Minneapolis School of Art* scholarships |
| 00:06:24 | Technical Specifications Rosenquist describes the materials and techniques that he used in his early career as an outdoor billboard painter. | barium yellow (pigment) billboards (site elements) cadmium yellow (pigment) |

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| | | <p>carmine (lake) charcoal sticks commercial art deterioration enamel paint lead white M. Grumbacher Inc.* New York oil paint (paint) Prussian blue (pigment) rain sand sheet metal squaring (transferring technique) sunlight surface texture wear wind (weather-related phenomena) Winsor & Newton*</p> |
| 00:08:18 | <p>Technical Specifications Rosenquist describes some of the materials and techniques that he used in his large-scale outdoor works. Among those works was a mural that Philip Johnson commissioned him to paint for the New York State Pavilion at the 1964-65 World's Fair.</p> | <p>barium yellow (pigment) Bocour, Leonard, 1910- brilliant (color attribute) cadmium yellow (pigment) color shift durability exhibition buildings fluorescence industrial paint Johnson, Philip M. Grumbacher Inc.* New York World's Fair (1964-1965) * oil paint (paint) permanence rose (color) ultramarine blue (pigment) violet pigment wind (weather-related phenomena) Winsor & Newton*</p> |
| 00:10:59 | <p>Technical Specifications Rosenquist discusses the materials that he used in his early studio practice, as well as his long-standing concern about permanence of materials. He and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss the effects of aging on oil paintings and the challenges inherent in their restoration.</p> | <p>binder (material) Blockx** dry color drying oil paint (paint) permanence pigment restoration (process) simplicity varnish</p> |
| 00:13:11 | <p>Historical Anecdote and Concept/Nature of Work Rosenquist describes his early experiments with scale and color,</p> | <p>billboards (site elements)</p> |

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| | which he conducted during his career as a commercial billboard painter. | color (pigment) Johns, Jasper scale (relative size) social realism squaring (transferring technique) |
| 00:16:11 | Technical Specifications Rosenquist describes how he used color and varnish to create the appearance of black-and-white film in a painting. | black-and-white film gray (color) tint varnish yellowing |
| 00:16:41 | (Image) James Rosenquist <i>I Love You with My Ford, 1961</i> Moderna Museet, Stockholm | paintings (visual works) Moderna museet (Stockholm, Sweden)* |
| 00:16:54 | (Exhibition Reference) “Hand-Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955-62” (traveling exhibition) Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles December 6, 1992-March 7, 1993 | exhibitions (events) Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art |
| 00:17:20 | Technical Specifications Rosenquist describes his current color palette. He also references a formula for beeswax linings that he inherited from Morris Kantor during his time at the Art Students’ League in New York. | alizarin crimson (pigment) artists’ materials Art Students’ League beeswax black pigment blue pigment burnt sienna (pigment) burnt umber (pigment) green pigment Kantor, Morris lining (process) manganese blue phthalocyanine blue red pigment rose (color) Thalo blue (color) transparency (optical property) ultramarine blue (pigment) Winsor & Newton* |
| 00:19:40 | Technical Specifications and Exhibition Rosenquist describes the ground that he employed in <i>Promenade of Merce Cunningham</i> . He expresses his preferences regarding the use of varnish and glazing on paintings. | acrylic paint glazing (glass) ground (material) oil (substance) varnish |
| 00:20:50 | Process of Creation Rosenquist expresses his opinions regarding the use of ephemeral materials, both for inspiration and for the creation of more permanent works. He also reflects on the idea of artists valuing permanence in their works. | artist’s intent creativity inspiration Institut Valencià d’Art Modern* |

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| | | maquettes (sculptures) permanence preliminary sketches (sketches) Rauschenberg, Robert |
| 00:23:14 | (Work Reference) James Rosenquist <i>Pearls Before Swine, Flowers Before Flames, 1990</i> Private collection | paintings (visual works) |
| 00:24:14 | Historical Anecdote Rosenquist discusses the materials that other artists used. He mentions Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg, and Franz Kline. | artists' materials Belgian linen building materials canvas cotton (textile) De Kooning, Willem duck (textile) house paint Kline, Franz Leo Castelli Gallery linen (material) Ludwig, Peter, 1925-1996* mixed media primer (material) quality Rauschenberg, Robert restoration (process) Rothko, Mark |
| 00:27:39 | Conservation Issues Rosenquist expresses the need for artists to ensure that their works achieve permanence. He also discusses the effects of aging on a work. | age artist's intent canvas Coenties Slip* cotton (textile) duck (textile) durability permanence Pollock, Jackson studios (work spaces) unprimed canvas yellowing |
| 00:30:20 | Conservation Issues Rosenquist describes occasions when his own works were damaged or when he undertook their restoration. | basic liquid epoxy canvas cutting (dividing) damage Four Seasons (Restaurant)* International Fair of Contemporary Art (FIAC)** Lichtenstein, Roy lining (process) nylon razor blades restoration (process) soluble nylon** |

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| | | <p>surface properties warp weft Winsor & Newton*</p> |
| 00:33:36 | <p>Historical Anecdote and Conservation Issues Rosenquist gives an account of his visit to the Sistine Chapel during its restoration.</p> | <p>Bernini, Gian Lorenzo Buonarroti, Michelangelo chiaroscuro glue Hale, Robert Beverly life drawing lighting modeling (shading) overcleaning restoration Sistine Chapel Thompson, Mimi*</p> |
| 00:37:23 | <p>Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Rosenquist explains his rationale for inserting laminated plywood boards behind his later canvases.</p> | <p>canvas plywood quality stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) warp warping weft wood (plant material)</p> |
| 00:37:23 | <p>(Work References) James Rosenquist <i>Secret Incarnation, 1984</i> The Toledo Museum of Art; Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey James Rosenquist <i>Dew Blossoms, 1985</i></p> | <p>paintings (visual works)</p> |
| 00:41:38 | <p>Conservation Issues Rosenquist expresses the need for paintings to have solid supports to ensure the permanence of their images. He also assesses the relative condition of several of his works that are held in various collections.</p> | <p>contraction durability expansion mechanical cracks paper (fiber product) permanence supports (artists' materials)</p> |
| 00:42:22 | <p>(Exhibition Reference) "James Rosenquist: Time Dust, The Complete Graphics, 1962-1992" (traveling exhibition) Organized by [University Art Museum of California State University at Long Beach] March 1993-April 1997</p> | <p>exhibitions (events)</p> |
| 00:43:43 | <p>(Work Reference) James Rosenquist <i>Lanai, 1964</i> The John and Kimiko Powers Collection</p> | <p>paintings (visual works)</p> |

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| 00:43:57 | Conservation Issues Rosenquist expresses the degree to which he accepts natural aging in his works. | age canvas |
| 00:44:01 | (Work Reference) James Rosenquist <i>Astor Victoria, 1959</i> Collection of the artist | paintings (visual works) |
| 00:44:56 | Concept/Nature of Work and Historical Anecdote Rosenquist describes his early experiments with color and nonobjective painting, including his attempts to create a sense of mystery with his images. | color (perceived attribute) Nonobjective paintings (visual works) Pop (fine arts styles) Warhol, Andy |
| 00:47:23 | Technical Specifications and Historical Anecdote Rosenquist describes his feelings toward the advent of new materials in the late 1950s and 1960s. He also describes what he perceives to be a shortage of technical education in contemporary art schools. | acrylic paint art education artists' materials Booth, Cameron gesso ground (material) house paint industrial paint Rothko, Mark Still, Clyfford techniques (processes) |
| 00:50:42 | Historical Anecdote Rosenquist tells humorous anecdotes about his career as a billboard painter. | billboards (site elements) commercial art industrial paint |
| 00:51:46 | Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Rosenquist discusses various technical issues that are of general concern to him, including different paints' drying tendencies and its capacity for permanence. | acrylic paint black pigment damage drying lead white oil paint (paint) permanence pigment simplicity |
| 00:56:42 | Concept/Nature of Work and Historical Anecdote Rosenquist describes how artists can use material as inspiration. He tells the story of a gift of artists' materials that he gave to Robert Rauschenberg for his birthday. | artists' materials inspiration plywood printmaking Rauschenberg, Robert |
| 00:59:28 | Historical Anecdote Rosenquist reflects on the situation of contemporary artists, particularly changes that occurred to the cultural and economic landscape during the latter part of the twentieth century. | Art Students' League Indiana, Robert Jack, Robert** Kelly, Ellsworth King, Basil** Kline, Franz Rauschenberg, Robert |
| 01:03:35 | Closing Credits | |