Artists Documentation Program

Video Interview Transcript

DAVID NOVROS

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Interviewed by:

Elizabeth Lunning, Chief Conservator, The Menil Collection;

Brad Epley, Associate Paintings Conservator, The Menil Collection;

and Christa Haiml, Mellon Conservation Fellow, The Menil Collection

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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): Elizabeth Lunning, Chief Conservator/Paper Conservator, The Menil Collection; David Novros, Artist; Christa Haiml, Mellon Conservation Fellow, The Menil Collection; Brad Epley, Associate Paintings Conservator, The Menil Collection.]

[BEGIN RECORDING]

[00:00:53]

E. Lunning: My name is Elizabeth Lunning, and I am the Chief Conservator and Paper Conservator at the Menil Collection. It's September 12, 2005, and I am standing here with David Novros and my colleagues, Brad Epley and Christa Haiml. In 1997, David came down and did an interview with Carol Mancusi-Ungaro about his Untitled 1966 painting [*6:30*, 1966, The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust], which is behind us. And we thought it would be interesting if he came back and we could talk a little about how his opinions might have changed about this painting. And we also wanted to talk to him about how we could go about minimizing some damage on one of the panels of his Room No. 3 [*Untitled [Room 3]*, 1973-1975, The Menil Collection, Houston, partial gift of David Novros with funds provided by the Pinewood Foundation]. And finally, we wanted to talk to him about how we might recreate a painting that was made 40 years ago, and what the implications of that are.

E. Lunning: Since David and Brad and Christa are much more familiar with these issues and the treatments that have taken place, I'm going to leave most of the discussion to them; but you might hear a question from me every now and again. And, David, I thought, if you started and talked a little bit about the history of the materials, and what's happened to this painting, it's very, I would say, complicated and interesting.

[00:02:12]

David Novros: Okay. I made the painting in 1966. It's one of a group that I made for a show at the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles. I made this painting as a physical object along with the others in the driveway of my friend Paul Mogensen in Southgate, California. Then I sprayed them, painted them, in the studio that Virginia Dwan had set up for the artists in the Dwan Gallery in Venice, California.

[00:02:47]

David Novros: I'll start with the chassis, the structures. They are made out of plywood, which was cut to shape and then backed with 1x2, and using a quarter round on the front to keep the canvas off the face. Pretty straightforward. Then the canvas itself is cotton duck, also straightforward. Now at that point I was playing around with nontraditional painting materials. I was looking for kinds of paint that were particularly tough and durable. I tried using acrylic lacquers, which I liked; but I was looking for something even tougher. And somebody had told me about a company in Compton, California, which was near Southgate, that sold a paint that was the toughest paint this person had ever seen. So I went to the company's showroom, and I was shown a paint which was a vinyl lacquer. Its principal use was in isolation rooms in insane asylums because it was so tough and so flexible and so washable that almost nothing that was done to it could damage it, I was told. So it sounded great. Just the right stuff.

David Novros: So I used that as the undercoat. I used it in a white, and I sprayed it. Pretty mechanically. Then the overcoat of that, the glaze that used over that, was sprayed with an acrylic lacquer – No, I beg your pardon, with the same vinyl lacquer clear, in which I used a material called Murano that was at that point made by some people called the Mearl Corporation. And Murano was then a lead powder that was fabricated so that it, if sprayed on white, it would give you the reflection color plus the refraction color, which was the complement. So as you walked along the painting, the color would change from one color to – the painting would change from, in this case, red to green; sometimes blue to yellow, etc.

[00:04:58]

David Novros: This fit my intentions perfectly because I was trying to make a kind of mural, kinesthetic mural painting, which I have wanted to make always, so that you didn't stand in front of the painting and have it do something to you, but rather you walked along and interacted with it in that way. And this kind of change in the color and light facilitated that movement.

David Novros: The paintings were shown. This painting was sold from the show to a woman named Gates Lloyd, Mrs. Gates Lloyd of Philadelphia. She had a number of very great paintings; Pollock, Adam and Eve painting, for one, and great de Koonings and other really good paintings. So I was always very pleased that the painting had gone to her, knowing that it would eventually end up in an institutional situation.

David Novros: Wrong. She died. The heirs put it up for auction. But it was damaged. It had been cracked. I have no idea how the original cracking occurred. We've – all have lots of theories about it. But I then restored it myself in my studio in New York at their behest, and put it away. And I never heard anything again from them for years. They'd forgotten about it, or whatever. Meanwhile, I had to put it in my own storage space, which wasn't heated or cooled. Which was not the greatest place for it. And when I saw it the next time, I realized it was really badly damaged.

David Novros: At that point, I got contacted by the heirs to the Gates Lloyd people, who said they wanted to auction it. And I let them know that it would be really impossible to auction it in the condition it was in, and they wouldn't be getting that much money for it anyway. So why not try to give it – let me give it to The Menil Foundation, or get The Menil Foundation to come up with the small amount of money they wanted to buy it, so that it would come, even in the damaged condition. That's what took place.

[00:07:00]

David Novros: It's been here ever since. The intention has been to restore it in some way, but over the years, even since I was here last, the crack has widened. The paint has come away further. Christa and Brad have both done work on it and found what they think is the reason, which I concur with. We'll go into that later, I suppose. And I'm here now to work on the idea of making another version of this painting, a modern version of this painting, which I will do exactly as I did the original, pretty much, with the exception that the Murano material that I used is no longer made. Because it was lead, it's been made illegal. Now I use a mica version of the same material, and that's what we will do.

Christa Haiml: I was interested in, if you could elaborate a little bit more on how you think it looks different from when you last saw it? If you can remember that. I mean, do you remember any lifting of the paint where the cracks are…

David Novros: No.

Christa Haiml: …off the surface? Or that would be only in the top left of the work?

David Novros: Yeah. That, that's happened since I was before. It was cracked, but the cracks were on the same plane pretty much as the painting.

[00:08:19]

Christa Haiml: And also we have noticed those deposits on the surface. That might also be something new that developed in the last few years?

David Novros: Yeah. What Christa is talking about is, there is – on this angle, it is difficult to see, but there's a kind of a flattening of the paint in certain areas. A dulling of the paint. I think it's an efflorescence of sort, and it's being caused apparently organically from the paint material. It grows back after it's been rubbed off.

Christa Haiml: Yeah.

David Novros: And it's an insoluble problem.

Christa Haiml: Yeah. Well, the analys – we had the material analyzed, and it showed that it's a UV absorber that migrated out of the paint. So, something that was added to the commercial paint to act as a – to block the UV from the paint.

David Novros: Huh.

Christa Haiml: And I brushed it off the surface, and then, curiously, it came back two days later.

David Novros: Yeah, this has never happened to these paintings in my experience in the past, and I think it has to do with, when I restored it the last time, I used a different material than I had originally, and the interaction of the solvents might be causing that. Although I don't really know. And what's more, Christa's discoveries about this, one that it had a UV factor built into the paint, uh, came as a big surprise to me; and I am delighted to find out about it. (laughs)

Christa Haiml: It's nothing that you have seen on other paintings that you executed in this very technique with the same materials?

David Novros: No. It's unique. I have only seen it in – I'll tell you the experience I've had where I've seen it. I've seen it in fresco.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: I've seen a lot of efflorescence in the fresco. Which does the same thing. It powders, the stuff comes up to the surface. Bad. Bad situation.

Christa Haiml: Yes.

David Novros: And I've seen it also in – when I've used synthetic resin enamels, high gloss, and I've used one kind, and I've put it on. And then I've used another kind, years later, and covered it. And it never dries glossy. It just goes kind of dull, like this…

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: …and it's the same kind of interaction of solvents, I think, that's causing that problem. Those are the only other experiences I've had with this.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

[00:10:29]

E. Lunning: David, when you restored this the first time, you said you'd used a different material than when you made it.

David Novros: Yeah.

E. Lunning: What did you use that time?

David Novros: The second time I restored it, I used acrylic lacquer. Which was a – with an elasticizer in it. Which is another lacquer normally used on car bodies.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: And I had used it on my fiberglass paintings and found that it was really a good material. Tough. All of that. Didn't crack. I've never had any cracking on the fiberglass paintings, for example. But the solvent was toluene, and I think that solvent was maybe a different solvent, even, than the solvent that I had used in the vinyl material. I don't remember, to be honest.

Christa Haiml: Yeah.

E. Lunning: And the iridescent material?

David Novros: Well, the iridescent material was no longer being made, so I had to use this mica substitute, which is now very common. They call it – what do they call it, light diffusion material?

E. Lunning: Something like that.

David Novros: Something like that.

E. Lunning: Yeah.

David Novros: It's sold in the art stores now. And when I was first using it, you had to – it was primarily used for autos, custom cars, cosmetics, that sort of thing.

E. Lunning: Hmm.

David Novros: So, ironically, since I first made this, it's become an art material, but it's no longer art material that I want to use really that much – in the same way. It's not as good as the lead was. It's like lead primer or something, you know.

Brad Epley: There's a difference, then, in the way that the initial lead pigments reacted to the light, and then the – I don't know, these interference pigments that you used in the subsequent restoration. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the degree of difference that there were between the color shifts.

David Novros: The original, the lead Murano material, gave an extremely intense difference between the reflected color and the refracted color. So if you had a red, it was really red; and as you turned the angle, it became a green, and it was really a green. Now there are some of these new pigments that are being made that do that, but the only ones I found go from a gold to a kind of violet. Gold to green. None of them have this quality of going to the complement color that I'd used before. Now they may exist, and maybe we'll be able to do some, you know, work and find them somewhere. I hope. But I haven't been able to find them. And when I tried contacting the company in New York, they – I couldn't find them in the phone book, or in their factory in Peekskill or any of that. Christa told me she found them on the Web.

Christa Haiml: Yeah, we'll have to look into it again. It's been awhile.

David Novros: But we'll have to look into it and see what we can do.

Christa Haiml: Yeah.

[00:13:18]

David Novros: I think that we can make a facsimile material for these paintings and redo that would be satisfactory.

Brad Epley: Okay.

David Novros: When I say "satisfactory," I'm talking about, within the parameters of my ambitions for the painting.

Brad Epley: So that difference in the sort of extreme of the color shift – there's a certain compromise, I guess, that you're comfortable with? Since we may not be able to achieve that exact…

David Novros: Yeah. We're going to find out because we are going to do these tests. And as I said to you before, when we do the tests, I have a green Murano, and I have a red Murano. And if it looks to me like the red Murano won't give this degree of shift – which I think it will…

Brad Epley: Um-hum.

David Novros: …but if for some reason it doesn't, then maybe I'll play around, and we'll try using the green and the red at the same time, and really paint it. But we'll find out. And I know this opens up a whole can of worms regarding conservation issues. You know, in terms of original thing, is it okay to do another version of the original thing? But I'm alive. I'm here. Now it's not like I'm a dead person, who you can't ask about it. Who won't say – and even the living people are often mistrusted by conservators, you know. I've been told, "Well, we don't want you to restore that because you'll just make it the way you want it."

(laughter)

David Novros: You know? And I go, "Well, I don't know. That hadn't occurred to me. I'll really just make it…" No, I'd prefer to have the conservation done by conservators. But in this instance, we are going to – you know, we are going to see what's what with this; and we're going to collaborate. So this is going to be truly a collaboration. It won't be a new painting by me, and it won't be a restoration job by you. It will be a collaboration to make what's acceptable to all of us as a living object that fulfills my, you know, my ambitions.

[00:15:26]

Christa Haiml: I suppose there is a certain degree of aging that you do accept in your work. I was interested in hearing about – like, for example, when you last saw the work, and it had already cracks, but they weren't lifted off the surface as they are now, did you think that it was still in an exhibitable condition?

David Novros: No.

Christa Haiml: Already at the time, that kind of aging had gone so far that it wasn't acceptable to you?

David Novros: Yeah. I mean, no reason to accept it because I'm still here. I can make another one. Wherever it's a situation in which I feel I can make it look more like I wanted it to look like, I'd like to have the opportunity to do that.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: When someone's dead, then the issue gets really thorny.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: And you don't know quite, unless it's been written – you know, some sort, or given a video of what they want.

Christa Haiml: Well, have you thought about that at all? Let's say, when you couldn't (hesitates) – well, I was interested also in the – for example…

David Novros: Are you going to ask me about my own death?

Christa Haiml: No.

(laughter)

David Novros: You've got a hell of a nerve.

(laughter)

Christa Haiml: Uh, if there is – if you do view this work and, for example, the "room painting" [*Untitled*, 1973-1975 (Room 3), The Menil Collection, Houston, partial gift of David Novros with funds provided by the Pinewood Foundation] that we have over there, differently in terms of – I seem to remember from the previous interview that you said that there was less of an interest in hand – I mean, obviously it's sprayed, and the other one, the other work is brushed – do you see a lot of what you call drawing in the paint with brush and palette knife. So I imagine that you would feel differently about someone, let's say, painting over a square if it got really badly damaged. Someone other than you. Whereas you might feel that someone could replicate a panel of this work.

David Novros: It's a very fair question. And it goes back to the early questions about minimal art in general, when people were making what were thought of as industrial surfaces using industrial materials. Judd, you know, and whoever. And the idea was that anybody could make this. A guy in a factory could do it.

David Novros: Okay. For purposes of not wanting to be precious, and not wanting to get overly complex in discussing the issue, when people have asked me this question, I say, "Well, you know, I guess anybody could just…" But I don't really believe that.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: Because I know that I was drawing, even on the spray painting ones.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: Now I know this is going against my own argument that it can be remade.

E. Lunning: Yes, it is.

David Novros: But I'm the one who is going to be making it.

Christa Haiml: Yeah.

David Novros: And I have the actual physical memory. I can remember almost every pass on this painting with the spray gun. I can remember my thought processes and my state of being at the time. And I have great confidence that I can remake this with exactly the same poetic intention, and the same kind of drawing – albeit with the spraying – that I used then. Even if it's one color. That's what people don't understand about one color painting for the most part.

David Novros: There's been a lot of one color painting since the mid sixties; and what separates, let's say, one Ryman from another Ryman, or one of Brice's paintings from another one of Brice's paintings, one color, it's an intangible thing. And it has to do with presence. And I really think that that presence is manufactured in the artist's intention. Sometimes they're not so good. Maybe the feel wasn't there, you know. But it's something that's within the artist's DNA. It's not something that can be replicated. Both those painters are obviously very painterly, you know.

David Novros: But even flat things, even like the Newman. I mean, when Newman repainted the red painting, he didn't try to make it exactly as that red. He wasn't restoring the red painting; he was making the contemporary version of that. Well, I want to do the same thing with this, but it will be a lot closer to this than Newman's red painting was to that. It won't be exactly the same, but it will be close.

E. Lunning: All these things you're saying, I think, are one reason why conservators feel that a replication of something is never really the same. That the original has something…

David Novros: Yeah, but if the…

E. Lunning: …not necessarily better…

David Novros: No, but if the original is in a state where it's so different from the originally intended, what's the point?

E. Lunning: Right.

David Novros: I mean, I can understand that argument.

[00:19:54]

David Novros: I don't necessarily – you know, for instance, cleaning. You know, a lot of conservators are loath to clean paintings because they don't want to destroy the aging effect. And, you know, also there is the imbalances and all that sort of thing that occur. Well, that's a good argument, you know. But if it's done correctly…

David Novros: I'll give you an example. As a kid, I went to Florence, and I saw the Masaccio, right? I had it in my mind all my life, and it's really had a big effect on me and on my work. It was cleaned. And suddenly this dark chiaroscuro – it was the one of the change, exchange of the money – and I saw this new one, and it was like being hit in the head. "So now what am I going to do? Will I have to go back and rethink all my thinking?" Nah, it's not necessary. You can go forward. You have that one in your heart and your mind from the past. You have the next thing, and that's good, too.

David Novros: The only thing that is bad is when it's something is restored, and something is lost…

E. Lunning: Right.

David Novros: …in the course of the restoration. You know. I think that's bad. That doesn't occur when you remake a facsimile. If I remake this as a facsimile, we can keep this.

E. Lunning: Right.

David Novros: Anybody can look at it and see, you know, "Oh, yeah, that thing – that thing looks likes the surface of the moon, and this one…" But the way it will look when we finish the facsimile will look a lot more like what I intended than this one does now. And that's how I would answer the restorer.

[00:21:27]

E. Lunning: But, Brad and Christa, can I ask you a little bit – or David, why is it that one of those panels looks unlike any of the others?

David Novros: I just assume it was a mistake on my part. This is a – this is a lilac (points at painting panel). Is this what you're talking about?

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: Yeah. This is the lilac Murano. This is the red Murano. They look very close in the jar. And what I think happened was, I screwed up. When I restored it, I used the wrong red in that one panel. That's all I can think, but I don't remember, really.

E. Lunning: Do you have any ideas about why some panels have cracked so much more than others? No?

David Novros: No. The vagaries of plastics.

E. Lunning: Yeah.

David Novros: No idea.

[00:22:22]

Brad Epley: I was going to ask one other question. In the previous interview, the '97 interview in December, this was really one of several in a gallery show in

1966, right? In California? ["David Novros: Five Paintings," Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, November 1-26, 1966]

David Novros: Um-hum.

Brad Epley: Are there any existing really from that show? Again, in that interview, you gave a kind of description of the various fates of these things. (image of Dwan gallery installation)

David Novros: There's not a single one of those original paintings – there's not a single one that's existing anymore. There were one – there were, I think – there was one black painting, which is now no longer in existence. It was destroyed. Then the other ones were sent to New York. I showed this one in the Dwan Gallery show (image of exhibition) in New York, in the next year. ["David Novros: Paintings," Dwan Gallery, New York, April 1-28, 1967] It exists still as the object that it was.

Brad Epley: Uh-huh.

David Novros: The other ones that were in that show were also all white paintings. Huge. Very big paintings. And they were all destroyed in a boiler room disaster at the Park Place Gallery where I had them stored.

Christa Haiml: Two of them, right? Is that right?

David Novros: No, there were more that.

Christa Haiml: Oh, more than that.

David Novros: There were, uh – one, two – well, I beg your pardon. You know, there is another one in existence. The one at the Modern Museum [Museum of Modern Art, New York].

David Novros: I think it was caused by an oxidation in the cotton duck itself, and it created these little brown spots on the surface. And I worked with Jim Coddington, the chief restorer at the Modern. We collaborated, just as we are about to do here. We repainted it, although we didn't use a different object. We used that one. We sealed it and painted it. And it was a very good experience. The painting looked great, the last time I saw it, anyway.

David Novros: And so there is that one. Yeah. And then I remade one of the paintings that was in the show in a half size because the original painting was 24 feet long. I made a 12 foot long one.

Christa Haiml: Was there any particular reason why you didn't reproduce it full scale?

David Novros: Yeah. I, I didn't reproduce it full scale because I didn't think there would be an opportunity to, you know, get it out. Get it seen. As it was, it was in 12 pieces; so it was hard as it was to hang. And Virginia Dwan wanted it, wanted the thing. I said, "Would you mind if I make this half scale?"

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: And then she did, and we gave it – she gave it to the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art [MOCA]. And that one, I brushed that. I didn't even spray it. I wanted it made clear it was a totally different painting 'cause it was half scale. And I brushed it, using Murano white.

Christa Haiml: What's the difference in surface when you brush it, as opposed to – can you tell how it looked different? Was it less glossy?

David Novros: You can't tell. I'm a good brusher.

(laughter)

Christa Haiml: And in '97 you also mentioned one that was in your brother's closet at the time. Is that still there?

David Novros: Was I talking about…

Christa Haiml: It was a black one, I believe, and it was in the second room…

David Novros: That's the black one I'm referring to.

Christa Haiml: That got destroyed?

David Novros: That got destroyed. Yeah. That was also in the Dwan show. It had been hanging in my father's (Lester Novros, Filmmaker) studio. My father's film studio in Los Angeles. And uh, (pauses) gone. Yeah. I have often thought of reproducing that group of paintings, as well as a painting that was in the Systemic Painting show. [*2:16*, 1965, Lent by Park Place Gallery to "Systemic Painting," Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, September-November 1966]

Big double right angle painting that I'd made, that got destroyed as well. I've got a little file at home that says, you know, "Restore someday." Remake someday. And those paintings are in there because I, I think they are really good, good paintings; and I'd like to have them around, you know. And I don't have any problem in remaking them, or having them remade somehow now. I have all the drawings for them. You know, they're simple graph paper drawings, but they are enough to be able to get the scale correct and the materials correct.

[00:26:40]

E. Lunning: David, as I stand here looking at your painting, I see a couple or several overall characteristics. One is definitely that it's shiny. One is that it has some texture. One is, leaving aside the lilac "L" shape, the colors are pretty much the same but not exactly.

David Novros: Um-hum.

E. Lunning: Which of all these things are important to you?

David Novros: Well, they're all interrelated.

E. Lunning: So you wouldn't like the paint as much, for example, if it was matte? If you could get the same…

David Novros: No, it couldn't be matte. There's no way you could do this matte. The effect is dependent on a reflective surface.

E. Lunning: But isn't it also true that you – if you could get it matte, would you want it matte? I know that you couldn't.

David Novros: No, I mean I've never even thought about it. Never even crossed my mind. I have no preference for matte against glossy. I think both of them have their use. And you just – it depends on the intention, you know.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: I paint even today – and especially today – I paint using all different surfaces. It's very frustrating. Most people paint one surface, you know. Especially modern painting. It's kind of flat, you know, usually, or kind of one thing. But to me, I'm very interested in the interrelationship between glossy surfaces and what they do, and with the Murano, and that sort of thing. And flat

surfaces – unfortunately, it's terrifically frustrating. You can, for instance, get exactly the sort of color that you want in an area, and the drawing and everything, and if it dries with the wrong reflectivity, it destroys the – and also, you can paint something under certain light conditions, thinking that you've solved the problem; and then have them seen in another light condition, and the problem is still there. That's one of the reasons why I really prefer painting in place, making painted places. Because these questions of light's interaction with the work is a constant, pretty much given the seasons and all. That seems to me a much more profound way to interact surfaces of paintings than with incandescent light.

E. Lunning: Have you gotten – when you've had exhibitions, have you gotten involved with the lighting of them?

David Novros: Um-hum. Yeah. Usually. When I can.

E. Lunning: Right. When they let you.

David Novros: Yeah. I mean, you know, I always think of the story of Rothko in the Modern Museum – hassles of him wanting to light his own show, and how upset they were that he wanted them so dark and all of that, you know. Same thing, I think, at the Tate. They're not there anymore. But I really liked those paintings in that kind of light. And this idea of a perfectly lit painting in a perfect white wall, to me is just boring, you know. It's like really…

E. Lunning: Yeah.

David Novros: …not interesting.

[00:29:40]

Christa Haiml: Have you ever made a full-scale replica of a work that was damaged or not restorable before?

David Novros: Yeah. In fact, I've made four of them. I told you earlier that I'd had a [solo] show in Stuttgart with a dealer named Muller in 1966. They were gold right angle paintings. When he sent them back to me, they all had big, black, greasy handprints all over the surfaces which couldn't be removed. They were some kind of – really like grease, you know. And he claims that it must have happened in customs. I never found out. But when I got those back, I remade them immediately. And I remade them with Murano, the same material. Instead of using gold powder, I used Murano because by then I

realized that the gold powder that I'd been using would oxidize eventually and not be so good for the paintings. So I remade them. Yeah, I did those.

Christa Haiml: And what happened to the other set? Did you…

David Novros: They're destroyed. Yeah. I destroyed them. Wiped them out. Now one of the original paintings, one of those paintings, which had disappeared – but apparently Muller had it all along – is in the Daimler-Benz Collection in Berlin.

Christa Haiml: Yeah.

[00:30:59]

David Novros: You know, can I say something?

Christa Haiml: Yes, please.

David Novros: I want to add this in. I want to make it clear that I am interested in restoring this painting because – out of a feeling of responsibility for the painting. You know, I'm not interested in it as, you know, kind of an argument about restoration…

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: …or an argument against restoration. I love – I really like this painting a lot. I think it's a really good painting.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: I want it to look as good as it can, you know, for the future. But it won't make any difference if I restore any of my work, if it can't be seen. And so I'm hoping that by participating in these kinds of things, I might have a leg up on getting my work seen again. And that's really what I'm interested in here.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: I think the activity of this sort of restoring thing is very valuable, but it can also become meaningless, you know. It can be turned into just an academic exercise unless the work itself has a life and gets seen in the real world.

Christa Haiml: Right.

E. Lunning: Should we talk about the "room" panel? Do we have more questions here?

Christa Haiml: Yeah, about the replica. I was also wondering how you would see the – if we made the replica now, how we would see it? Because we would, of course, keep this version; and that would probably be in storage as – would that be a study object, and the replica would be an exhibition copy? Or would you – you know, that whole question about how would it be labeled? Should it be apparent to the visitor? Would the date be 1966 slash '05? Or do you have any thoughts on that?

David Novros: I understand the reason for these questions, and I understand why it's important to some people. As far as I'm concerned, once this is done, and we all agree that the copy painting is really okay, and it meets all our criteria about being close to this one in appearance – in fact, even better than this one in appearance – then I'd be very happy for this one to go into study for restorers, for people who want to see what we did and how it's been done. I think it has a value from that point of view. And I don't think it should ever be shown in public, you know, as an expression of what I've done. This one, the copy, will be fine. And I don't think it should be labeled anything but 1966.

Christa Haiml: Then…

David Novros: That's when I – or '67. I don't think this makes any sense. What are you going to say? "Oh, yeah, we used a Murano instead of – or we used this other kind of paint instead of Murano." Nobody cares. Nobody who sees this will care. And in terms of authenticity, nobody who sees this would be able to make a differentiation. So, I mean, that kind of concern doesn't interest me, you know, historically. It just isn't of any importance to me. Maybe some – for historians or something you make a little asterisk, you know. Sort of like home runs hit on steroids.

(laughter)

[00:34:08]

Brad Epley: Wasn't there a question about the title, actually?

Christa Haiml: Oh, yes, actually about the title. Because in our – in the master file in our file, it is an untitled work, and…

David Novros: No, no, they all have titles for this work.

Christa Haiml: I know. Hm?

David Novros: They have titles. But the titles are numerical.

Christa Haiml: It's *6:32*?

David Novros: Say what?

Christa Haiml: *6:32*?

David Novros: Yup. [The title is actually *6:30*.]

Christa Haiml: Okay. Because I…

David Novros: Do you know why – do you know why that is the number?

Christa Haiml: It's six elements and 32 edges? Or exposed edges?

David Novros: That's right. Thirty-two sides. Yeah.

Christa Haiml: So you don't count the edges where it butts – where they butt against each other? It's just the exposed edges?

David Novros: Yeah.

Christa Haiml: Okay. Yeah, because I only found – came across the title in a newspaper clipping on the exhibition, and in our file it's not actually – it's untitled.

David Novros: Yeah. I did this on all the paintings from '65 through '67. I titled them that way. Then I just stopped altogether titling.

[00:34:59]

Christa Haiml: And I was also wondering, have you used the materials that we got to make a mock-up for the replica, the Liquin and the Kremer pigments, have you used that before to create these kinds of surfaces?

David Novros: I have. In fact, I'm using them now on paintings I'm working on in my studio.

Christa Haiml: Oh, so…

David Novros: I still use it.

Christa Haiml: Okay.

David Novros: Yeah.

Christa Haiml: So it's not something that's – it's not something that you've done so long ago that you would have to get back into it at this point?

David Novros: No. Spraying is a reasonably simple activity.

Christa Haiml: No, but [phrase inaudible]…

David Novros: But I use the material all the time with brushes, you know. I just use it all the time. It's a constant in my work. I am using it now in these paintings in my studio because there are areas in the painting that I wanted to evoke kind of glass, the appearance of glass. So that's why I'm using it.

Christa Haiml: Do you want to talk about the supports and the alternatives to the aluminum?

Brad Epley: Oh right! Because in discussions about making the replica of this, different ideas about using aluminum honeycomb panels or – and whether or not to wrap those in canvas. Things like that.

David Novros: Yeah. In the first interview we did, I think I made this point, that had I had the money in 1966 – first place, if I had had the patron, I would have done these as frescoes. As wall paintings. But I didn't have the patron. And if I'd had the money, I would have made them out of aluminum honeycomb, which was a material I was aware of at the time, and which would have saved me a lot of time in preparing the surface. I could have simply put a primer coat down and then the material. I wouldn't have had any irregularities, which used to bother me. And the Murano pigment would have functioned a lot more spectacularly on metal, as it does on car bodies. 'Cause I've sprayed metal with it, too. And it works better on metal.

[00:36:58]

E. Lunning: Why would you have made these as wall paintings?

David Novros: Well, you know, I'm a muralist.

E. Lunning: Okay.

David Novros: Everything I've done since about 1965 has been through my ambition to paint murals. To paint wall painting.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: Or ceiling painting, or whatever. So a lot of my work is a compensatory activity. For instance, the single – using the wall in the paintings like this was a kind of reference to a mural. You know, it's not about objects. There was a lot of writing about my paintings being reliefs…

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: …or kind of sculptural, or something. That couldn't be further from the fact, you know. It's exactly what I wasn't wanting to do. I was wanting to incorporate them into the wall and make them even more mural. And eventually I ended up using the thin fiberglass panels to even make it less material and less physical. Then when I began making these large paintings, really big wall size paintings, then I used the canvas itself as a wall.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: So it's all been going in that direction.

E. Lunning: Okay.

[Break in video]

[00:38:09]

Christa Haiml: So the issue in this painting was the handprint that happened, I believe, when you repainted this square in 1985? Or in the eighties? And then someone must have put their hand into the wet paint without you being aware of this? I think you only noticed it when you came back for the interview in '97. And it interferes, it really does, with the paint, and is quite disturbing because it catches the light. So I tried to – made an attempt at reducing that effect with not too much success so far. Or at least from – if you look at it from up front, it looks better, I believe. But then in raking light you can still see the difference in reflection and gloss.

David Novros: Yeah.

Christa Haiml: So what I did is, on these two finger marks, I filled the troughs or the depths in those marks with filling material, and retouched on top of it. And then on one of the finger marks, I actually gently sanded down the ridges of the paint, which is, of course, something that we do not normally do as conservators. We would never sand original paint down. And this was done because you had talked about this extensively in the previous interview and…

David Novros: I think I said that's what I would do.

Christa Haiml: Yeah, that's what you would do.

David Novros: Yeah.

Christa Haiml: Really, in this case, it couldn't be dealt with differently, so – and we also feel that preferably we would deal with this locally rather than overpainting the entire square. But of course if this is not – doesn't yield a satisfactory result, we may have to…

David Novros: Yes.

Christa Haiml: …resort to – I mean, there is still an option that you would rework the entire square.

[00:40:05]

David Novros: Yeah. I'd like to tie this into what we were talking about, about this issue of mechanical application.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: Minimal art. The idea of what drawing means.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: For me, drawing is not about touch, in the sense of it being like an art touch necessarily. It's not about being able to do verisimilitude. It's not about those kinds of things. Drawing is about how the drawing, how the material is conceived on the surface, in a way. That is the same for that painting as it is for this painting. It is for everything that I do. Now this painting is really drawn heavily. There's a lot of marks that meaning. Someone could say, "Oh, yeah, but they only go this way and that way." And I am reminded, when I was doing a fresco for Don Judd's place, his son was behind me. He

was then very small. And he was standing behind me, and I was painting this thing, you know. And he says – and he was going behind me, and he was going like this." (Gestures to indicate vertical strokes) And that was the drawing.

David Novros: Now that may appear simplistic and not very important, but to me it was terribly important at the time. And when I was doing this very – I used a palette knife in this, and I worked a great deal to try to get the gesture of just vertical and horizontal to be drawn in a certain way, using the reflectivity and anti-reflectivity. The painting of mine, the mural of mine that's in the Museum of Fine Arts here, the fresco, is also painted with this kind of drawing, only it's a little looser. And people have even asked me, "Did you intend that to go like that?"

E. Lunning: Uh-huh.

David Novros: You know. Because people's concept of what drawing is, is so limited. You know, when you see the Newman, even – the drawing in the red of this Newman, for instance, that's over here is really different from the drawing in the next one he made. And you can see how his intention is expressed in the drawing. One is a lot harder than the others. The _____ [word inaudible]. It's very subtle stuff, you know. But it's because, I think, the general education towards the meaning of drawing is so poor. It's only thought of, you know, somebody to really make that line, you know.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: Or really make it look like a tree or something. But I think drawing is a lot more profound than that. Especially in relation to color.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: So I wanted to say that the drawing in this panel we were talking about is essentially – goes like this. (makes vertical gestures) Now you know the panel should be turned around this way, so this is a horizontal gesture. And I was using really thick, big palette knives. So, if somebody is really highly skilled, and they go back, and they find a damage of this sort, they touch it in, and then they repaint it, and I'm standing three feet away from it and I can't see it, great. I couldn't be happier, you know. But if I notice that the gesture, the line, has been interrupted by that activity in some way, and the person hasn't taken it into consideration when they did the restoration, then I'm not going to be real happy about it. Because it's a kind of an affirmation of the

fact that I'm not really drawing in the first place. If you follow me. So, yeah. Did I answer that one? It was kind of rambling, but did I get at what we were talking about?

Christa Haiml: Yes, I think so.

David Novros: Okay.

[00:43:40]

Christa Haiml: I was also curious. Do you remember what prompted the repainting in the first place?

David Novros: I do. This painting was part of a room. It was Room 3 of a three-room construction that I created for The Rice Institute when The Menil Foundation was housed in a thing call "The Barn" at The Rice Institute. These three rooms are interrelated. They are meant to really be seen as one room. One thing. There's a logic of going from a chromatic area through a grisaille back to chromatic. And after that show, this painting – one of the rooms was bought by Mrs. de Menil.

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: This one, I arranged to have given to the Foundation by a patron in New York. And the third one is in the Fort Worth Museum. This painting was lent to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles for their opening exhibition, 1985. ["The First Show: Paintings and Sculpture from Eight Collections 1940-1980," The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, November 20, 1983-February 10, 1984] It was installed separately. I agreed to the separation of the ones. Although I am not happy about having the rooms seen separately, I'd rather have them seen separately than not at all.

David Novros: And Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, who was then the restorer here at The Menil Foundation, came out, and we met. Because she had seen that there was some damage to the painting, to that panel. And she agreed that I could come and restore it. Which I did. I taped the area out. I sanded it down, and I restored it. I'm assuming that that night, or at some period, somebody – a guard, or somebody in the museum, while the paint was still wet – because it dries very fast, the Liquin in it – came and put a few handprints in it, you know. I don't think it was malicious, necessarily; but these things happen, so…

E. Lunning: But at that time you repainted the entire rectangle, right?

David Novros: At that time I repainted the entire rectangle.

Christa Haiml: Yeah.

[00:45:47]

David Novros: And now that I am seeing this in the light, I am seeing a kind of a grayed area too – do you see that Chr–?

Christa Haiml: What do you see?

David Novros: Do you see something here, like a kind of a graying?

Brad Epley: Yeah, I think see…

Christa Haiml: Yes.

David Novros: Well, I hadn't noticed that before. I don't know what that is, so maybe we can deal with that.

Christa Haiml: Do you think that marks like this (points to upper right-hand quadrant of damaged rectangle of painting) are also to do with someone touching…

David Novros: No, that's something, just an object in the paint. (gestures to suggest painting with a brush)

Christa Haiml: To do with the application of the paint?

David Novros: Yeah.

Christa Haiml: But originally you didn't – so you used Liquin for the restoration and you used oil paint with Damar and linseed oil…

David Novros: Damar and linseed, yeah.

Christa Haiml: …originally?

David Novros: And the reason I used the Liquin was because it dries fast, and because friends of mine who are restorers at the Met had assured me that it has the least amount of yellowing. It would retain its purity better than almost any other material. Also, it is highly flexible, which makes it a really good material for making these big paintings.

[00:46:43]

Brad Epley: I was wondering if you could talk also – earlier when we were talking about this painting, you talked about your thoughts about some of these passages where the sort of gloss has sunken in a little bit, so you have these glossy versus slightly more matte areas adjacent to each other.

David Novros: Yeah.

Brad Epley: If you could talk about your ideas about the intention of that, and about how aware you were of that effect at the time, versus seeing it happen over time.

David Novros: Um-hum. Yeah, when – I mean, this painting now as you see it isn't really *that* different from when I finished painting it. Even the areas where there has been this sinking in in places, it was pretty much like that when I finished the painting. I had seen the painting. I had exhibited this room before it came down to The Menil. I had shown at the Bykert Gallery. So I had seen it up. And I liked that difference, the differentiation. A lot of it wasn't intentional. You know, the gloss/flat. However, if I hadn't liked it, I would have repainted it. So in a funny way, everything is intentional because everything is a matter of acceptance or not accepting, and this issue of, "Did he mean it to be like that or not?" is pointless if I am presenting it. If I'm allowing it out, I mean it to be like that. To take my word for it. No, I quite like it.

E. Lunning: Has it developed more over time?

David Novros: No, you know, the painting looks really to my memory, whatever that's worth. It looks very, very, very good. It looks exactly as it does in my memory, and as it did the last time I saw it. I don't see any real change in it at all. Of course it has been in storage here for how long? How many years?

E. Lunning: I don't know. When was it at Rice?

David Novros: 1975.

E. Lunning: Thirty years.

David Novros: And then it was shown that one time in '85. So that's another 20 years. So things tend to stay pretty good when they're kept in a basement.

E. Lunning: (laughs) Not always.

David Novros: That's true, because certainly my paintings got destroyed in the Park Place basement.

[00:49:08]

E. Lunning: Now Christa may have explained this, but I didn't hear it. I see two very distinct kinds of surfaces there. A very – one that's almost like frosting at the upper left and at the center bottom.

David Novros: Um-hum.

E. Lunning: And then the one that's much more irregular, gloss and matte.

David Novros: Yeah. Actually there are more than…

E. Lunning: What accounts for that?

David Novros: Well, there's more than even that. For instance, the ochres are very flat.

E. Lunning: Right.

David Novros: What accounts is my intention. It has to do with the spatial activity of the painting.

E. Lunning: But how did you alter it?

David Novros: How did I alter it?

E. Lunning: With paint?

David Novros: Less or more Damar.

E. Lunning: Just less or more Damar?

David Novros: Yeah.

E. Lunning: Okay.

David Novros: Some of the flat ones have just maybe almost no Damar in them at all.

E. Lunning: Okay.

David Novros: I'm wondering now as we speak if they are more brittle than the other areas, but I don't know.

Christa Haiml: Well, there's hardly any cracks that developed. It looks very good.

David Novros: Right. The only crack is on the edge there where the canvas folded over to be moved.

Christa Haiml: Yeah. Where it's folded.

David Novros: No, this painting is in remarkably good shape. And I think if people who weren't familiar with it, and who weren't as involved as we are in this process saw the painting hanging up, they wouldn't even see that.

Christa Haiml: Uh-huh.

David Novros: They wouldn't be aware of it.

Christa Haiml: The finger marking. Yeah.

David Novros: I mean, it's not like the white painting. [*6:30*, 1966] That, I think anybody could see that it's clearly damaged, and clearly disturbing to the experience. This one I'd like to get restored, but I don't think, you know – do that – but it's nothing that really would keep me up at night.

Christa Haiml: Yeah.

[00:50:42]

E. Lunning: So you feel the way Christa has been progressing with the finger marks is acceptable?

David Novros: Yeah. It's completely acceptable.

E. Lunning: Good.

David Novros: I think it is just like this painting. Just like the white painting. If Christa finishes what she's doing with this, and she has an area we can look at, or she can look at – I trust her; I trust you – and you think, "Well, that's acceptable. You know, you can't really see any difference." Great. I'm happy. I'm delighted, you know. There are many ways to simulate the reflectivity of the surface. For instance, she could paint this, retouch it, in one material, and

then work on the surface even with another material. So she could replicate the kind of gesture, I think, pretty well. I think she can do it, you know. I don't have any question about it. In which case, that's fine with me, you know. Yeah. Again, it's, you know –

David Novros: I told somebody once, a historian, a friend of mine, you know. We were talking, and I was saying something about this idea of intention being central to my idea of being a painter. And she was amazed by that, you know. She said, "Intention." It was like an old-fashioned idea, you know, that the artist's intention should then be in some way created by the artist, or whatever. She thought it was the activity, not the intention…

E. Lunning: Huh!

David Novros: …that there was a separation. But then she's a very bright person, but she's so in the middle of the contemporary art world that she doesn't see that there is this way of behaving, where an artist has an intention and begins to work towards it. You know, the idea that you get working on a thing – especially frescoes; at the beginning, they all look so beautiful, you know. It's just the plaster, and the sinopia. And people always say, "Oh, you should just stop. You should stop now." But I'm not that kind of painter, you know. I have an intention. I work towards the intention. I only stop when I have gotten as close to it as I can. I mean, I think that's why I'm so interested in this issue of the restoration, recreating my intention…

E. Lunning: Right.

David Novros: …as much as the object which personifies it.

E. Lunning: Well, that's why I think it's important to talk to living artists. What's so interesting about this program. Because then you hear more what the intention was.

David Novros: I think it's incredibly invaluable. And I think it's amazing that it isn't done more often.

E. Lunning: Yeah.

[00:53:14]

David Novros: But it has to do, as you well know, with a lot of proprietorial thinking on the part of the restoration community, on the one hand; the commercial art world on the other hand; you know, this idea about authenticity…

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: …that somehow means something. But yet very few of the people that buy this stuff can tell the difference from – I've seen many, many things that have nothing to do with the original painting being sold off for lots and lots of money. And if the people were to know that it wasn't the original thing, they wouldn't spend the money.

E. Lunning: Not the original thing because it had been overly restored?

David Novros: Completely repainted. Yeah. Let's take [Barnett] Newman, for example. Take all those restorations by what's-his-name. [Daniel Goldreyer] You know. And all those things were terrible. They destroyed the paintings, you know. But if you blew the whistle on that, then all those people who were invested in selling that thing as a Newman would be really pissed off. And since Newman's dead, he couldn't say anything about it, you know. I mean, it's a real – it's a real interesting kind of problem. Nobody seems to really care about the intention or the integrity of the work itself. They seem to care more about shoring up their own positions vis-à-vis the work.

David Novros: Now I'll tell you, [James] Coddington at the Modern, you guys here, you are some of the only people that I know about who are interested in this point of view. In some cases they don't care. If the work doesn't have a great monetary value – like my work doesn't really go for a lot of money or anything – then they don't care. They say, "Oh, you want to come and work on it? Fine. Go ahead." It doesn't matter to anybody. So in a funny way I have a kind of advantage that way, and I can work with certain restorers and people who I admire in the field who work well with me, and I work – we collaborate on the thing. And it makes perfect sense. It's a perfectly sensible way to work.

David Novros: Like a lot of artists – and I was one of them – like to restore their own work, you know. They get tons of it, and they restore it. It's some income. You know, it's for all the reasons. But I've come to really hate doing it. It's like having to build – like, I've had to kind of invent architectural situations for my paintings 'cause there's no architects out there I can collaborate with.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: You know, I'd much prefer, though, really, to find an architect who – like [Renzo] Piano, or somebody whose work I admire, who would have admired my work, and who was willing to truly collaborate on something – we could work together. It would save me a lot of effort, you know. It might add to their work. Whatever. Same thing with restoration, you know. It ought to be collaborative whenever the artist is alive. It will save the artist the trouble of having to restore his own work, number one; and will give insight into the nature of the work, both to the restorers and to the general, you know, art public. And I think in that way it's enormously valuable. I'd like to see these videos have a much wider distribution, instead of seeing something on TV with, you know, some bullshit romantic music behind it, where the camera is zooming in and out of pictures and stuff.

E. Lunning: Ugh. Right. (laughs) Yeah.

David Novros: Why not have these things? You know, the real artists talking about their work in a way that isn't contrived and is really not entertainment.

E. Lunning: Right.

[Break in video]

[00:56:35]

E. Lunning: I wanted to go back a little, David. It's not quite the same situation, but it relates to the idea of an artist working on his own piece later.

David Novros: Um-hum.

E. Lunning: I know a case of an artist who saw a piece of his many, many years after it had been done. I can't tell you how many. And he wanted to cut a foot (holds hands in air approximately one foot apart from each other) off the bottom.

David Novros: Uh-huh.

E. Lunning: And the owner didn't want him to. How would you feel about a case like that? And would you feel differently if the owner was private, or if the owner was an institution?

David Novros: Whsh. There's this story about [Dr. Albert C.] Barnes, you know, _____ [word inaudible], Barnes, the collector.

E. Lunning: Oh, right.

David Novros: Barnes Foundation. He was a big supporter of [Chaïm] Soutine.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: And he owned one painting of Soutine's. It was of a boy with his hands like this. (folds one hand over the other) And the story is that Soutine was having a breakdown, and Barnes suggested he go to Switzerland. So he gave him a bunch of money and sent him off to Switzerland to this asylum. And before Barnes left, he said to his butler, "Look, whatever happens, if Monsieur Soutine shows up, do not let him in." Because he's always taking his paintings back and wanting to work on them some more, you know. Meanwhile, Soutine was lurking around the outskirts, waiting for Barnes to leave; and as soon as Barnes left, a minute later Soutine was at the door knocking, and the butler was there. And he said, "Uh, Monsieur Soutine, you know, really, you know, you're not supposed to come in." He said, "Oh, just for a moment. I want to look at my painting of the boy. I need to just think about something." So he came in, and the butler went into the next room. And while he was gone, Soutine had taken a knife, and he cut the hands out of the middle of the painting like this, you know. And he said to the butler as he was leaving, "The hands are a forgery."

(laughter)

David Novros: So, this issue about, you know, how long an artist can work on a thing after they've done it? I'm really a bad person to ask this question because – another example. I've been working on a group of paintings in my studio for about 20, 25 years almost now. And two of those paintings were sold about 15 years ago to somebody, but I never finished them, you know; and I've had them in my studio, and I've continued – I've worked on them almost every day, subsequently. This guy was patient, and he was patient, and he was patient. And then one thing led to another, and we had a kind of blowup. And he said, "Now, look, I'm really fed up with waiting for you to finish these paintings. I want you to pay me the money that I gave you for them, and that's it." So that's what I did, you know. I paid him back what he had paid me for the paintings, and now I have the paintings for myself. Because, you know, when you are working towards an intention…

E. Lunning: Right.

David Novros: …you can't be told by somebody outside when you've achieved it. You know. Now, retrospectively, that's a different question. When you've made something, you think you've achieved it…

E. Lunning: You've let it go…

David Novros: …and you see you want to change, then I really think you have to let it go. When you've absolutely let it go. I mean, if it's in your possession, then I think you can keep working on it indefinitely, like Cézanne, you know, adding pieces on…

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: A lot of artists have done that, you know. But that's another kind of neurosis, so…

E. Lunning: The inability to let something go.

David Novros: Not to let it go, but the inability to admit that you have – the inability to achieve your intention.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: And to still remember what your intention is.

E. Lunning: Yes.

David Novros: Be great if you could just sort of, "Oh, what was I doing? Oh, that's good. I'll take that." You know? But you build up this kind of history in the work. You know, your own activity in the work. And it becomes terribly important to you. It helps you get up in the morning, and go on and do the next thing. And if you cut that off short, I think then you are cutting short your own experience as a painter.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: So, I mean, it is to your – and I don't know if I'm answering your question…

E. Lunning: Yeah, I think you are.

David Novros: I don't think that once a thing has been made – even if you think you can make it better, quote unquote – that isn't the issue. It isn't about making it

better. It's about achieving – you can achieve your intention, and make something worse. This is an entirely possible scenario.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: You know, from the outside. From the outside view. From a curator's point of view, or a dealer's point of view. It oughtn't to be a consideration for an artist, I don't think.

E. Lunning: Um-hum.

David Novros: I mean, I would never want to change these paintings. There's nothing I would ever do on this one or the white painting. It would never even occur to me, you know. They were realized fully when I made them, and now we are just truly restoring. We're not changing. Do you have any more questions?

Christa Haiml: I don't.

[01:01:43]

E. Lunning: Do you want to talk about the mockups at all? Or the ways in which the mockups are different from the original? Or…

Brad Epley: It may be that we don't know quite yet until it's – do you think? Or…

David Novros: Well, I can say what we are going to do.

Brad Epley: Yeah. That would be great.

(inaudible background voices)

David Novros: Where we made these two rectangles, small rectangles, using the same materials that are in this painting; and we are going to spray them and compare the surfaces and the color, etc. to the one we have, to make sure we can make something that is going to be acceptable to everybody as a replica.

Christa Haiml: We're not quite – we are not using the same materials though.

David Novros: Close.

Christa Haiml: Close.

David Novros: I explained we're not going to use Murano.

Christa Haiml: Yes.

David Novros: But other than that, it's pretty much the same. We're not using acrylic lacquer. We are using Liquin.

Christa Haiml: And we're using pigment from Kremer. [Kremer Pigments, Inc.]

David Novros: Kremer. Yeah, Kremer's pigment…

Christa Haiml: Um-hum.

David Novros: …instead of the original Murano stuff. Yeah, I wish you guys would do this for everybody.

(laughter)

David Novros: There should be a huge…

E. Lunning: A little team going around the country.

David Novros: Really, there should be a huge national archive of this sort. There's the [Smithsonian] Archives of American Art, you know. They are very underfunded. They don't have any money. They hardly do this for anybody except the real famous people. And, you know…

E. Lunning: Do they video people, too?

David Novros: …it's a big resource. I know of certain people they've done it with, yeah.

E. Lunning: Oh, the Archives of American Art are incredible.

David Novros: Yeah.

E. Lunning: Yeah.

David Novros: It's a really good idea.

E. Lunning: Well, are we finished?

Brad Epley: I think maybe.

Christa Haiml: Yeah. I can't think of anything at this moment.

E. Lunning: Well, thank you. Thank you very much.

Brad Epley: Thank you.

Christa Haiml: Thank you.

E. Lunning: Thank you again.

David Novros: My pleasure, my pleasure.

E. Lunning: Thank you, Laurie and Larry.

David Novros: Thanks, Laurie and Larry. Disconnect me! Phew!

(laughter)

[01:03:19]

[End of interview. On screen there appears a montage of images of *6:30*, along with notations regarding materials and processes that Novros and the Menil Conservation Department used to fabricate a replica of *6:30*.]

[END RECORDING]