



**Artists Documentation Program
Video Interview Transcript**

RACHEL HARRISON

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Interviewed by:

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founding Director,

Artists Documentation Program and

Founding Director, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums

Video: Sam Ellison | Total Run Time: 01:00:11

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

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About the Artists Documentation Program

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

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

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

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[Speakers (in order of appearance): Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founding Director, Artists Documentation Program, Founding Director, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums; Rachel Harrison, Artist]

[BEGIN RECORDING]

[00:00:42]

CM-U: I am here, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro—we're at the Fogg with Rachel Harrison, and we are looking at a piece that says, that its title is *I'm with Stupid, 2007*. Correct? Yes.

R. Harrison: Yes.

[00:00:55]

CM-U: Yes. I guess there are a lot of things we're going to talk about. We are going to talk about installation. It arrived in pieces, and so it was put together here.

R. Harrison: Um-hum.

CM-U: So I guess the first thing is, how does it look to you? And what strikes you?

R. Harrison: In terms of its installation?

CM-U: Yeah. Let's talk first in terms...

R. Harrison: Okay. There were just...

CM-U: Well, just talk about – yes, in terms of installation.

R. Harrison: Okay. Well, this is where I don't know until I do it, and you said, "Don't do it yet." So I don't – do you – this is a document, right?

CM-U: Oh yeah.

R. Harrison: All right. So at one point, this was like this (adjusts artificial grass). And it came out more.

CM-U: It should be coming out more?

Rachel Harrison Interview Transcript, Artists Documentation Program, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, 09/20/2007

Video: adp2007c_harrison_001va.mp4 / Interview #: V12000-020.2007c / TRT: 01:00:11

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- R. Harrison: So I think that's how it should be.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. And I think that I didn't make the instructions, so we'll go over today the fact that...
- CM-U: Yes.
- R. Harrison: ...it might not be instructed that it should be sticking out more. With a lot of things, there's always styling to be done; and so that's like a – that's a very personal, subjective thing. So I can't say. So that's one thing, would be that.
- CM-U: That would be interesting, actually. Are you curious to know what it said in terms of – okay, go on.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. Do you want to go over the instructions?
- CM-U: Why don't we do it as we go with things you notice. So why don't we start with this?
- R. Harrison: Well, that was the main thing. I mean, this can also be that I don't know. It was in an exhibition before it was sent here...
- CM-U: Oh.
- R. Harrison: ...and I wasn't – it was at a group show at Paula Cooper's, and I didn't take it down. I didn't pack it. And I didn't make the instructions. So – and, like I said, I didn't know it was happening.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: So I don't know, for example, if the scarf was like this because it was packed that way, or that at one point – oh, this is attached. Okay. At one point I put silicone here.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: You want me to just talk about what had been done?
- CM-U: Yes.

- R. Harrison: Okay.
- CM-U: Yes.
- R. Harrison: There's no order to this?
- CM-U: No.
- R. Harrison: Okay. Silicone has been put between the headscarf and this material, which is a cement mixed with Parex®...
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: ...which we can get to later. Okay. So there's silicone between this, and this scarf, and then there's silicone between the scarf and this skull, which is a *papier mâché* skull made of brown paper that I purchased at Pearl Paint...
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: ...during Halloween season. So that was attached, and so there could have been some slippage with the scarf. But it's – like I said, it's such a slight thing that I think that's fine.
- CM-U: And is the skull attached to this body part?
- R. Harrison: No.
- CM-U: No. Okay.
- R. Harrison: I mean, it couldn't be. Because I didn't drill through it.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- R. Harrison: You can touch it if you want.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: So, that's what I'm saying – it's going from here to the scarf, and then from the scarf to here; but it's not moving that much.
- CM-U: Okay.

- R. Harrison: This is not attached, so this gets placed. So maybe also you need a hairdresser because you need to sort of (arranges wig on sculpture)...
- CM-U: (laughs)
- R. Harrison: Seriously.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. You know, you need to sort of – that’s what I’m saying. You need to do some styling, so, you know. So that, that’s something over time that, I guess, pictures would indicate the right location. Right? That you don’t want it to look too matted. So then you have the hair, and then you put the wig on it because there’s also like a balance...
- CM-U: So you don’t – I’m sorry – you don’t want it too matted? You want it to have this kind of free look. Is that what you’re saying?
- R. Harrison: Well, you know what – initially, it was more – this is the thing. Already it’s changed over time, and I don’t – like the Greek and Roman sculptures we were just talking about, I don’t know if it needs to be returned to its original state.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: I think this position is important. I think this is fine as it is. I think when the wig was acquired, it was slightly less matted. And then the hat – I would say that the hat was fine, and it was just based on pictures. And I’d also say that this was exhibited twice, and both times it was arranged slightly differently. So I would say that the carrot goes one way and the hat goes another.
- CM-U: Okay. That’s _____ [phrase inaudible]...
- R. Harrison: Something like that.
- CM-U: ...completely understood.
- R. Harrison: So you have a balance. There is a balance issue, that if you put it too far that way, it goes that way; and if you put it too far this way, it goes this way. So I think it is going to have to be loose. I think there is no set position for that. And it was sent with photographs. Can I see...

CM-U: Yes. I think it would be interesting for you to see them.

R. Harrison: Okay.

[00:04:42]

CM-U: I think we'll just go over it.

R. Harrison: Okay.

CM-U: Okay?

R. Harrison: Yeah. I'll let you read 'cause I don't...

CM-U: Let me lean this way, where it says to (reading): "Set up five cans of food on the base to match the details. Placement does not have to be an exact. A rough approximation will suffice."

R. Harrison: Um-hum.

CM-U: We're going to talk a lot about the cans and the food and – later?

R. Harrison: Yeah. Because we have to empty them.

CM-U: Okay. Right. "Position the wooden sculpture on top of five cans, making sure that the sides of the sculpture match up with the appropriate paint [sounds like] marks on the dolly."

R. Harrison: Hmm.

CM-U: "Placement of wooden sculpture should be roughly centered on the dolly."

R. Harrison: Okay. I think that's accurate. Yeah.

CM-U: "Position the sculpture with the skull, green wig, and maroon hat on top of the wooden sculpture so that the left side of the skull matches the image below."

R. Harrison: Okay.

CM-U: "This element of the sculpture is extremely fragile. Please handle with care, as the skull is not securely attached."

- R. Harrison: Okay. So we went over that.
- CM-U: Um-hum. Position the baby mannequin beside the sculpture with skull so that the back of the mannequin is oriented in the same direction as the skull faces.
- R. Harrison: Um-hum.
- CM-U: The purple necktie should then go over the edge of the wooden sculpture as seen in the above image. And the image shows it coming down between the writing [sounds like].
- R. Harrison: Okay.
- CM-U: Okay?
- R. Harrison: Oh, see, no, I've changed my mind, obviously. You can't tell.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: I'm ahead of you, but go on, yeah.
- CM-U: "The attached leg of the baby mannequin wraps around the base of the sculpture with skull so that the shoe is positioned to match the image below. The detached leg is positioned in roughly the same orientation and is draped over the sculpture with the skull base as shown below."
- R. Harrison: Okay.
- CM-U: You're okay with that?
- R. Harrison: Yeah. I mean, the thing is, it looks fine. So I guess somebody was able to interpret this to achieve this result.
- CM-U: Right, interpret from what you've done.
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: Right.

[00:06:29]

- R. Harrison: I mean, I guess that's something we talk about. Would you want to secure this? It feels secure. Oh, I guess they used silicone that I just ripped up. Was something placed here to secure it momentarily? I mean _____ [phrase inaudible]
- CM-U: No, I don't think anything was added. Uh-uh.
- R. Harrison: Okay. Do you think it would be better for the sculpture if these things were fixed? Or is this...
- CM-U: I think we should leave that to depend upon the history of its exhibition here. If it went to a retrospective of yours...
- R. Harrison: Right.
- CM-U: ...where it might be, you know, in a very crowded museum, maybe we would need to secure – how would you feel about it? Trying to secure or...
- R. Harrison: I don't know yet.
- CM-U: You don't know yet. Well...
- R. Harrison: I've been told by other conservators it's better not to secure the pieces in case they break. I know you said that there's reversible ways of securing it. So – or that things that are reversible.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: So maybe I would move towards the direction of reversible ways of securing it.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: And I would...
- CM-U: Temporary. Temporary.
- R. Harrison: Temporary, yeah.
- CM-U: Yeah. That would be what I would think, too.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. That makes sense to me.

- CM-U: Right. And we can do that.
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: There are ways that we can do that. Let me just read and make sure that there's nothing else that doesn't make sense to you. "Be sure the baby mannequin's T-shirt covers the end of the detached leg."
- R. Harrison: Yeah. Do you know what that means over here? I can show you specifically. I don't know if you want this on.
- CM-U: Yeah. I you should come around.
- R. Harrison: This is actually something that's important. Every time it was installed it was different, but there – you don't want this to show. It's the dirty secret.
- CM-U: (laughs)
- R. Harrison: Okay? So you don't want that to show. And the position of the – there is flex – you want it to look as though this leg is attached, and it's all normal. And actually – can I see the picture for a second? Does it say anything about the position of the – because this is slightly different, but I don't think it's bad that this is not over more. Like – no, okay.
- CM-U: No, it doesn't.
- R. Harrison: All right. Because I don't know if you want...
- CM-U: That's so _____ [phrase inaudible].
- R. Harrison: Another way to install this would be that if this was up there, I think then you have less chance of having that show.
- CM-U: So that the body _____ [phrase inaudible]...
- R. Harrison: 'Cause the leg is not attached. So I don't it to – I don't want you to know that the leg is not attached. So I think the way it is, is fine. Does it say anything else about the T-shirt? No.
- CM-U: That's it for the T-shirt. Well, in terms of condition, we haven't talked about it. But that's it in terms of positioning.

R. Harrison: Right.

[00:08:40]

R. Harrison: See, now, if you were to ever put this on a pedestal, you wouldn't be able to see that eye. Right? I mean, in terms of those other things we were talking about? In terms of this being – I think it's important that this is at this height, and that it's on the floor. And that it shouldn't be raised. Because this [probably referring to mannequin's eye] is a very important detail. So if you were to have this...

CM-U: Yeah, yeah. Well the other things, so – okay, but not even raising it, if a barrier is put on the floor to keep people away...

R. Harrison: That would not be ideal either.

CM-U: Because you still couldn't get that one-on-one...

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: ...angle that you're talking about.

R. Harrison: Yeah. And I'm aware that not – like, children don't have the access to that. I'm aware that people of different heights may experience it differently, but the fact that a general public could see that eye at that height is important.

CM-U: Okay. That's important to know.

R. Harrison: Yeah. So I'm anti-barrier for that.

CM-U: It's important, given – looking at the work, it's obviously important to be able to walk around it.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: So the installation would have to allow space around it. It couldn't be in a secured place.

R. Harrison: Absolutely. This could not be shown so there wasn't enough space for someone to walk all the way around it. And it is not important that this is the first view. It's equally successful if you were to encounter the sculpture from this side. This could be turned. If I was to install this gallery, I would – it

would be possible I would have the side view or another view. This might not be the first view. So there's no – it doesn't have to be positioned in any specific way. But you must be able to access all four – if we say this has four sides...

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: All four sides of it equally. And I would probably prefer that there wasn't something that made it appear as though this is the front.

CM-U: Yeah.

R. Harrison: The way this is installed in the room now, it appears as though this is a front because it's addressing the door. Which is fine for this installation, but in the future, it wouldn't have to be that way.

CM-U: One could even say that it would be more – you are more encouraged to go around if it weren't that way, even.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: Yeah. I think which is what you're saying.

R. Harrison: Yeah. Which would be – because this is also a face. So if you wanted to address the figure, you could say that this is also equally the front.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: Because there is a face there as well. And this is also a face because of the way the headscarf is, so it's a double head.

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

R. Harrison: So there's actually three. There's one – I'd say one, two, three on this side, and one, two, three on that side. Because this is two masks. And then a third face. So there's six sets of eyes here, but then there's only four sets of eyes there. Or that would be one way of looking at it.

[00:11:24]

CM-U: Let's talk about the grass.

- R. Harrison: The which?
- CM-U: The grass.
- R. Harrison: Okay.
- CM-U: It says, “Position fake grass bundle between baby mannequin’s legs and the base of the sculpture with the skull so that the bundle sits comfortably in place with blades of grass allowed to rest where they may.”
- R. Harrison: Okay.
- CM-U: But you feel that it needs to sort of come into the space beyond it [sounds like].
- R. Harrison: Slightly. It shouldn’t – I would say that the position begins higher than it was. Rather than touching the bottom, it’s just slightly higher.
- CM-U: Okay. Good. Good.
- R. Harrison: It’s a slight adjustment, but that it has a more forward – it’s slightly more aggressive, I think.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: I agree.
- R. Harrison: Okay. It is more aggressive. Yeah. I mean, we’re at Harvard here, so we can...
- CM-U: Did you dye the hair, or was that the color of the wig?
- R. Harrison: No. It came that way. So it’s a multicolored wig.
- CM-U: And I see that the greens are different in the color.
- R. Harrison: It is. And it’s possible that this is a wig that someone gave me, and it – no, it’s streaked. But someone gave me a bunch of wigs that had come from a window, that had been damaged by light. But I don’t know if this is one of them.

CM-U: It has that feel to me.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: 'Cause you see where it has this much bluer [sounds like]...

R. Harrison: It's from New York City. I think this is – I think it's from some place where I got three wigs from a window.

CM-U: It has...

R. Harrison: But it – doesn't it also look like it's dyed in the style when women streak their hair to look like tiger stripes?

CM-U: Uh...

R. Harrison: You know, blondes do that look?

CM-U: Yes. Yes.

R. Harrison: And that looks to me – it's in the – I thought that this was...

CM-U: Well, I see that here. But here I just see this kind of bluing of the green.

R. Harrison: Which could be from sun damage. Yeah.

CM-U: It's kind of great, though. I like it. _____ [phrase inaudible]

R. Harrison: Okay, now I'm upset that the bangs aren't as visible. That I changed it. So maybe I'll put it back.

CM-U: It's done what?

R. Harrison: No, I had hidden the bangs. And the fact that it has bangs, it's, um, I just wanted them to be visible.

CM-U: Okay, let's _____ [phrase inaudible].

R. Harrison: This is really strange.

CM-U: No, I think it's really – well, we just have to get through this stuff, and then we'll get on...

R. Harrison: Okay.

CM-U: “Position the toy carrot in baby mannequin’s upturned hand so that the stem of the carrot is held firmly in place by the hand’s grip.”

R. Harrison: This is perfect that way it is. Yeah.

CM-U: “Be sure the carrot is positioned roughly vertical as shown in the images below.”

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: Okay. Good.

R. Harrison: That position is fine.

CM-U: Good.

R. Harrison: And gravity. It will adjust from gravity.

[00:13:47]

CM-U: Okay. So now let’s talk more just sort of about condition of it. How does it look to you compared to the last time you saw it?

R. Harrison: Fine. Yeah, no, I think it’s fine. There is one thing about the condition that changed, and I don’t know where. So I’ll just say, as it is now – and this might be part of another conversation about the paint, the condition of the paint, that I would think you would want to talk about in terms of cleaning.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: This area, when it was first exhibited, was never cleaned on purpose. So it actually – this piece, the base of this piece was in my studio for over a year and had accumulated a tremendous amount of dust, which I chose to leave. And I notice that some of it is gone now.

CM-U: Yeah. _____ [phrase inaudible].

R. Harrison: So but I don’t know if this was cleaned at Paula Cooper Gallery, my gallery, or here. But it wasn’t cleaned by me. So I would say now we don’t clean the inside.

- CM-U: Good point.
- R. Harrison: 'Cause there are pieces of it here and there, but there used to be a lot of dust here. It wasn't over-cleaned, 'cause there's some webs right there.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: But it's cleaner than it was when it left my studio.
- CM-U: Is that your feeling in general? I mean, what about...
- R. Harrison: No. This particular piece, the inside of this box is an accumulation. So, I mean, it's kind of – I don't want to say anything too fixed because obviously the paint application is deliberate and casual on many parts of the sculpture. But here, for example, drips. So the dust within this space does not need to be cleaned up. So that's not my position of here, like this could be cleaned; but that shouldn't be cleaned.
- CM-U: Because that was a found object, more or less, with the...
- R. Harrison: No. No, no, I made this. It was never a found object.
- CM-U: Okay. All right. But it...
- R. Harrison: Because it's an interior. Like, you don't clean the inside of a pedestal.
- CM-U: Okay. Okay.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. I should phrase it that way. Yeah.
- CM-U: Okay.
- [00:15:42]**
- CM-U: So what about the paint? Tell us what it is, and application.
- R. Harrison: Okay. So what it...
- CM-U: It is.

- R. Harrison: Okay. All of the paint on this piece is acrylic, and I can't be certain, but I think most of this paint is an acrylic paint I use on all of my sculptures, which I mix myself with liquid pigment and binder.
- CM-U: Hmm. Do you _____ [word inaudible] an acrylic medium?
- R. Harrison: I use Guerra paint from – do you know on the East Village on 13th Street?
- CM-U: No.
- R. Harrison: Oh, there's this guy, Art Guerra, who makes his own paint. He's had a store there for twenty years.
- CM-U: Oh, yeah, I do know that name.
- R. Harrison: It's completely non-fugitive. I once painted the dashboard of a car with this, and it didn't change. You can tell from the top to the bottom, it did not change. So it's artist's paint. A lot of artists use it.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: And so he has dry pigments and liquid pigments. I buy the liquid pigments. He also has metallic powders that you can add to paint.
- CM-U: Hmm.
- R. Harrison: So if there's metallic in the surface, it was because of a powder that was added to a binder; and the binder was either – if it's a flat – if it looks matte, it's a silica-based binder. And he sells a product called Acrylic 40, or Acrylic 50, or Acrylic 65, and it's an acrylic binder with different percentages of acrylic in it.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: So the pigment, the wet pigment goes into the wet binder and is mixed.
- CM-U: You have total control over the saturation of the color.
- R. Harrison: Absolutely.
- CM-U: And you can make it just what you want.

R. Harrison: Absolutely. And this is true of all of my work. Like the painted sculptures I referred to when we were talking across the street.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: Yeah. So in terms of these paints being applied in layers, yeah, I have control over that. I mean, also, that it's acrylic; so it dries quickly. So I can see it very quickly and then decide, either in a short period of time or a long period of time, whether or not it should change.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: And this piece was worked on for many months. So the paint was applied slowly over a period of very many months. That was because some of it would have been – this piece was in the studio while I was working on a body of work that I knew was going to be shown as one project, which was a solo show in New York this year, at Greene Naftali. So I was making all of those sculptures, and this was in the studio at the same time, and I – it was pretty certain it would not be shown at the same time because the other pieces were meant to be seen together, and this was not meant to be seen with them. At that time. For this show. So some of it might be because I was using orange on another sculpture, and it was left over. So some of the paint might have been mixed for other sculptures I was working on. There was a large...

CM-U: This was the show "If I Did It"?

R. Harrison: Yes.

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: So there was a large sculpture in the middle of that show that had many, many colors on it. So I was mixing many colors for a couple of months. So that's where the colors here are very likely a result of that. And I'd say that about all the colors that are on the top of it. Meaning, not what's on the base because the base was first. And so that's what the paint is made out of. What else do you want me to say about the paint?

CM-U: Let me just review this again. But it's not so much that these materials were around, and this is residual paint. You were just using these colors on others, and used it on this as well.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: Or is it a mix of both?

R. Harrison: It's a mix of both.

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: Yeah, they were – yeah. I mean, that's a kind of – I mean, I guess, I'm not a painter, so that's how, even the way I am talking about it with hesitation, because I don't know how painters talk about it if...

CM-U: No, you...

R. Harrison: You know. Well, if Cy Twombly has like a bunch of paint on the table, and it's intended for one painting; and then he's got another painting there, and it ends up – you know, it's – I don't know if colors – some painters mix very specific colors for specific pieces, so...

CM-U: _____ [phrase inaudible]

R. Harrison: Right? So it's _____ [phrase inaudible].

CM-U: Yes. Yeah.

R. Harrison: Yeah. So...

CM-U: But, no, I think it's a very organic process, what you just described.

R. Harrison: It's a very organic process.

CM-U: The thing that I was getting at, it's not accident. It was intentional...

R. Harrison: Oh, it was intentional. Yeah.

CM-U: That's what I meant.

R. Harrison: Okay.

CM-U: If it was just a residual accident...

R. Harrison: Right. Absolutely. And, yeah, I don't know. That's where I'm hesitating 'cause I don't know what is of interest for this purpose. For the conversation, in terms of the paint application, about if it's accidental, or if it...

[00:19:48]

R. Harrison: I mean, at one point – the piece began as another sculpture.

CM-U: Hmm.

R. Harrison: So, in terms of this pedestal, I had – I mean, the initial part of it, the base, this is one box that I made out of plywood...

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: ...that I then put holes in because I had a couple of sculptures where they were on pedestals, and there were holes in the pedestal. So it was another series of sculptures.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: And then this failed, or wasn't needed, or didn't work out. And so then I cut the pedestal in two pieces. But I should backtrack. Okay. So it was a pedestal that had holes in it.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: And at that stage, when this was complete, I wrote – and maybe the camera wants to come over here. I wrote, "I'm with stupid." So – I mean, we can move this for a second. So you've got the "I'm with" here, and you've got – that's actually why I should say I would probably install it so you see this side first.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: My privileged view would be that you would walk in, and you would see this, and you could read that it was, "I'm with Stupid." (backs up, then looks at painting on wall behind her) That's Rudolf Stingel, uh-huh. Yeah.

(laughter)

CM-U: That makes sense, right.

- R. Harrison: Yeah. Does that make sense?
- CM-U: Yeah. It does to me.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. So why don't you shoot it from here, so you can see the language that we're talking about. So this was a contained box, and I wrote that; and then it was cut in half and altered.
- CM-U: Got it. So it was contained. Just as you – a contained box, and you cut it up and put holes in it, and so on.
- R. Harrison: And I mean, you can tell. I mean, it seems like you can tell. This is secured now, right? I secured that. Yeah. So this has been secured. There are screws from the bottom that secure this to that.
- CM-U: What about the print on the tie?
- R. Harrison: That was bought at the Victoria and Albert Museum...
- CM-U: It was?
- R. Harrison: ...in London.
- CM-U: That's the way – so that was – that's proprietary. That's how you bought it?
- R. Harrison: Yeah. Somebody referred to it as a novelty tie.
- CM-U: I see.
- R. Harrison: I don't know if we put that in the list. We did a really detailed list of materials for a catalogue. Yeah, so I bought the tie like this. So, that's why I'm saying, it's another face.

[00:21:52]

- CM-U: One of the things that interests me so much is that there are all kinds of materials here. I mean, there are materials that are fragile, and materials that will probably outlast – definitely outlast us and generations to come.
- R. Harrison: Anything plastic?
- CM-U: Yeah, I think that they are going to be around awhile.

Rachel Harrison Interview Transcript, Artists Documentation Program, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, 09/20/2007

Video: adp2007c_harrison_001va.mp4 / Interview #: V12000-020.2007c / TRT: 01:00:11

- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: Are the feathers are more fragile? Maybe not.
- R. Harrison: Okay.
- CM-U: There are colors that might be more fugitive. That might be a color that's, you know, a proprietary color maybe in the scarf.
- R. Harrison: Oh.
- CM-U: As opposed to these good paints you are talking about.
- R. Harrison: Right.
- CM-U: So this is what I find really interesting about your work, in terms when we think about longevity, of how these will age differentially.
- R. Harrison: Um-hum.
- CM-U: And how – I mean, I realize, you know, your ideas about this could be evolving, but how do – how would one respond to that when, for example, in a more traditional singular, or even just two _____ [word inaudible] type of material, they might age the same. It wouldn't set up a dichotomy within the work.
- R. Harrison: Right.
- CM-U: And so when we make these decisions about what to restore, it's generally, "Oh, well this holds – it's held together by this. This one part has aged differentially, so let's try to bring it back into marriage with the rest."
- R. Harrison: What do you do with an oil painting where the paint is applied in different thicknesses?
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: It takes different times to dry. 'Cause it's the same paint...
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: ...but the thickness makes it – it will affect its lifespan...

- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: ...if it will crack.
- CM-U: It'll crack. So we just accept the cracks, but if the crack became such a fissure that your eye went to only it, then we would fill and inpaint it and we'd hide it.
- R. Harrison: Oh, okay.
- CM-U: Right? So I realize this is something that will probably come over time as you and I continue our conversations, but it's an interesting...
- R. Harrison: No, I have – but I could go through all the materials here, I mean, just to be specific...
- CM-U: Yeah. And just tell me sort of what you thinking about them.
- R. Harrison: So I'm going to start from the bottom up.
- CM-U: Good.
- R. Harrison: I want to know if these wheels were fixed. No. There's no lock on them. Okay. I would – yeah, a lot of my sculptures over the years have ended up on dollies because I work alone in the studio, and I have to move things around a lot. You know, it began out of necessity, right?
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: I have had sculptures – and I have some sculptures in which the wheels are attached to the actual base of a form.
- CM-U: So they become...
- R. Harrison: That's not a dolly.
- CM-U: ...visual elements. They no longer work.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. So when they end up in institutions where there's a public, we fix the wheels.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.

R. Harrison: This has been situations that haven't had carpets, where it's actually hard to move this.

CM-U: Oh.

R. Harrison: So I would feel comfortable, starting from the bottom up, to say that these wheels – okay, so the Carnegie International has a form that – or the Carnegie [Museum of Art], whatever you call it, has a form that has wheels attached to the bottom of a wood base, that's then covered with cement and painted.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: And the piece is called *Utopia*. I decided after they acquired it that we would change the wheels to wheels that had locks. Because their floors are very slippery, so I didn't want the public to be able to push the sculpture.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: So that was something that I felt comfortable with, thinking that the condition of its viewing has changed from a studio to a gallery to a place that actually has a lot of people, like school groups. They get a lot of school groups, where a kid might push it. So I – if it became a concern for this context, or if the work was loaned to a place in which it was decided that this should be stabilized, I would feel comfortable changing these wheels as long as they were similar.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: So that would mean the same size, and the same kind of wheel. But it would absolutely be fine if the bolt was a slightly different size. So I would say, kind of like the Jasper Johns fork being good enough [referring to the replacement of a missing fork in Jasper Johns, *Voice*, 1964-1967] ...

CM-U: Right. Right.

R. Harrison: ...when it comes to the wheels, it's good enough.

CM-U: Right. But then you would have a lock on it.

R. Harrison: Well, you know, you can buy wheels with locks.

CM-U: Okay.

- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: I have another – yeah, I was thinking the kinds of wheels that have locks...
- CM-U: So you would change them to ones that lock.
- R. Harrison: Yeah, to ones that lock. Another solution would be that you and I come up with something about how to fix these.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: Now I've suggested to people, "Well, why don't we just use – you know, stick some Gorilla glue in there?"
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: So I would just put some Gorilla glue in there, and then you would have the exact same wheels. If that was to happen, kind of like the cans, this is a – this piece is casual. And it's very specific. Everything here, including the paint, is very specific; but the way it's installed, if it's like this, or if it's like that, is okay. But I would want the wheels fixed in such a way that they were all at different angles. So they should not all be parallel and straight to each other. They should be, you know, as though you actually were moving it around, and it just stopped.
- CM-U: So that...
- R. Harrison: So they are all at slightly different angles, the same way that the cans are at slightly different angles.
- CM-U: Okay. So a decision was made to fix them, we could do that. We could determine how they should look when we fix them.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. Maybe we want to fix them. Problem solved.
- CM-U: It makes sense to me. I mean...
- R. Harrison: I would actually...
- CM-U: ...if you like the look of this...

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: ...and we could figure out a way to fix them, why not?

R. Harrison: Okay. Let's fix the wheels so they're permanent.

[00:26:46]

R. Harrison: Along those same lines, you know, like I was saying, last year, last spring in particular was incredibly busy, and I had too much going on. I was going to – and this is where, you know, I could consult with you in the future about this – but I think that the cans should be empty. I know that the can needs to be emptied and completely cleaned.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: The label should remain exactly as it is. I considered putting a piece of wood that I would cut at this height, and screwing in from the top to the bottom, so this became attached to this.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

R. Harrison: You could even find – I don't know if you can get wooden, you know, pieces of wood that are round, this big...

CM-U: Yeah. Dowels.

R. Harrison: Yeah? But like a big dowel.

CM-U: Yeah.

R. Harrison: I mean, it's a three-inch diameter. So you get a big dowel. So you cut the top and the bottom of the can. You put the wood in there. And then this is, you know, inch ply, or three-quarter ply, and you go in from there, and you go in from there; and it's just...

CM-U: Well then...

R. Harrison: ...if it was myself, I would use screws; and then this would be fixed.

CM-U: Well, then you'd see it coming out of the top here, right?

- R. Harrison: And I decided that was okay. You're right.
- CM-U: That's it. You'd see it a little bit.
- R. Harrison: You would see it. And maybe if that...
- CM-U: Or, maybe we could – don't have to do it – maybe just do it from the bottom up.
- R. Harrison: You could do it from the bottom up, and you wouldn't have to see it. And then the other thing is that this could be secured to this in the future.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- R. Harrison: This is one idea.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: While I'm here today, I fix the cans exactly how I think they should be in terms of the angles.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: And you secure this to this, and then this just always rests on top.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: Because the weight – it is sturdy. It's much sturdier than it looks.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: The weight distribution, it's not heavy. So there is, between the plywood and everything, the cans are providing an adequate base. That's a good idea.
- CM-U: I think that makes sense to me. Because I was thinking, you know, it's one thing to just drill a hole and then liquid run out of a can. But when there are solids in these cans, we are going to have to really un _____ [phrase inaudible].and put it back...
- R. Harrison: Undo it and clean it. Yeah. And...
- CM-U: ...at the bottom [sounds like] _____ [phrase inaudible].

R. Harrison: And I was going to do it. Like I say, I was going to do it myself; but then it got taken away without me – I was really planning on doing it. Because I knew the show was one month, and I was like, “Oh, then I’ll empty the cans.”

CM-U: What I like about your idea of filling them with something solid, in the shape of a dowel or something, is that it also – it lends – it takes the weight off of them. Because now they are going to be empty.

R. Harrison: That was another thing...

CM-U: They’re just metal – they’re just thin tin cans...

R. Harrison: ...I was thinking about that...

CM-U: ...there is something else taking the weight.

R. Harrison: No, I was absolutely thinking about that also in terms of – and this is where you can tell me – in terms of this aluminum, if there’s air inside of it, rather it being contained and closed like, can it support the weight?

CM-U: Well, why should we do it? I mean, if we can leave it, we should.

R. Harrison: Okay.

CM-U: Because we don’t want it to crush in any way.

R. Harrison: That would be great. Yeah.

CM-U: I think that’s a really good idea that you have, to do that.

R. Harrison: Okay. It was my idea to do it, and I was even going to do it where there would then be four screws in the top. Because, in my thinking, I notice when I look at sculpture or assemblage like this, I’m very aware of how something is constructed, and I notice every single screw on the piece, whether or not the artist intended it. So I would actually take pleasure in knowing that someone noticed that I had done that.

(laughter)

R. Harrison: You know what I’m saying, about the five people...

CM-U: The structure. Yeah.

- R. Harrison: ...the five people who notice whether or not the earring is right. I mean, that it would actually be – and it would add another layer of interest to me, that this work, that somebody else would have that curiosity. I don't think it's the meaning of the work. I don't think it's something anyone should write about or talk about...
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: ...but that, on a very personal level. Like, "Oh, what an amusement. That's how they did that. Yeah."
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: So we can talk again about that. But for now, it seems like the best solution is to relieve the stress and not have it show from the top. I think ideally you don't have the screws on the top.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: And you just have them from the bottom.
- CM-U: Yeah, it occurs to me that it also has a packing implication.
- R. Harrison: Absolutely.
- CM-U: Because, you know, I don't know what the crate looks like. But we don't know how it's – if we attach it to the top, then we may have a much different size work, than if we just have it...
- R. Harrison: Right. So, in pieces is better. Yeah.
- CM-U: I think so.
- R. Harrison: Yes. Yeah.
- CM-U: Do you want to position them the way you want them? Or should we keep talking?
- R. Harrison: Let's keep talking, and then at the end, yeah.
- CM-U: All right. What about the labels...

- R. Harrison: I wanted – can – right...
- CM-U: ...on intermittent scratches or...
- R. Harrison: They're fine because they were bought on the shelf, and they were fine.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: I mean – I don't know, I mean, it's not like these are Rauschenberg cardboard pieces where you're going to take all the acid out of the paper. So the paper will age.
- CM-U: No, no, no, I'm not worried about that. It's not a concern [sounds like].
- R. Harrison: But the paper will age...
- CM-U: Yeah.
- R. Harrison: ...and the dye will fade.
- CM-U: Fade. Right.
- R. Harrison: I think that's fine. Yeah, I think that actually is fine because – I mean, I could say it could be replaced with something similar, but I don't think you'll ever find, like, the Princella Cut Sweet Potatoes, necessarily, in Boston. I mean, maybe you would. I don't know.
- CM-U: I mean, there would be no reason to. Because by the time we reconfigure it, you know, there's no reason why it should be damaged in any way. It may fade.
- R. Harrison: It'll fade.
- CM-U: But that's it.
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: Because we are going to be taking all the pressure off.
- R. Harrison: If anything was to happen, you know, where it came off the – I would want it to be put back as it was.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: So if it was to unpeel, like the adhesive...

CM-U: Yes.

R. Harrison: ...was to become unpeeled...

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: ...it should be put back.

CM-U: So you want it to look like a can of food would on the shelf?

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: Because I do think that was one of the questions.

R. Harrison: Um-hum.

[00:31:56]

R. Harrison: Just because we are going from the bottom up...

CM-U: Yeah.

R. Harrison: ...this is the same material that is on that red head form. That round head form right there.

CM-U: Okay. So that's that cement and...

R. Harrison: Yeah, it's – yeah. Do you want me to talk about that?

CM-U: Yes.

R. Harrison: Okay. This material is approximately fifty percent white portland cement. Added fifty percent of this – I'm going to say it's an industrial adhesive. It's called Parex®, and it's used for exterior stucco. So it's what you see on, like, fake – you know, shopping malls that have fake columns on the outside. This is what the stuff is used for, so it's a product to cover Styrofoam. That's its application. And it's rated to – you know, it's outside material in terms of it withstanding temperature change. Because it's, you know, Northeast. So –

and it's – because Michelle asked me all these questions. That's how I'm talking about it.

CM-U: Good. _____ [phrase inaudible]. Good.

R. Harrison: So the adhesive is wet when I add it. And I add more water.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: And since it's very – I don't measure it. So sometimes there's more cement, and sometimes there's more – so this is residual from another work when it fell off.

CM-U: And what about the color? _____ [phrase inaudible] yellow over time.

R. Harrison: This is the color. It gets yellow over time because it's unpainted. And that's fine.

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: So as I see it – like plaster. As it yellows, that's fine. Because I know that when pieces are on view, just from foot traffic, you know, you do get dirt on surfaces.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: So I would say, like a very – I mean, if you are in the practice of cleaning sculptures here – I mean, like what happens to the gridded Sol Lewitt if it gets dusty? Someone comes and cleans it?

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: Yeah. So I think, in a very normal way, you would do that. But if this discolors, that's fine.

CM-U: My take on what you are saying is that if it's – you want your works to be kept cleaned enough so that they don't look unkempt...

R. Harrison: Right.

CM-U: ...but you don't want them fancied up. And the boxes to remain the way _____ [phrase inaudible]...

R. Harrison: Just the inside. Yeah. That's perfect.

CM-U: Okay. That makes sense.

R. Harrison: So this material is then painted. So that's like what's up here. And I think that there are one or two places where there isn't any paint.

[Break in video]

R. Harrison: So this material was then put over this, which is plywood. This is probably like a piece of pine wood. You can see it there.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: That's unpainted wood. These pieces of wood were attached with probably drywall screws. This head form, or this round spherical form, probably has a variety of materials inside, including – that are all contained by a plastic bag, which was then covered with rags dipped into that material. So that's what this is.

CM-U: Great. There's nothing perishable in there? It would just be something...

R. Harrison: No, no, no. No explosives. And no food.

(laughter)

CM-U: No diamond rings.

R. Harrison: No diamond ring. No food.

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: And I've talked to other people about this. I mean, it's also sealed by – no, it's probably plastic.

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: It's probably plastic and cardboard. Maybe a piece of wood.

CM-U: Just to kind of fill out the form [sounds like].

R. Harrison: Actually there is wood. This piece of wood extends in the side.

Rachel Harrison Interview Transcript, Artists Documentation Program, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, 09/20/2007

Video: adp2007c_harrison_001va.mp4 / Interview #: V12000-020.2007c / TRT: 01:00:11

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CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: This is incredibly durable stuff. Like, I drop my sculptures on the floor, and only sometimes do they break.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: Depends on how thick it's applied.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: I was told by the person who sells – I've had a lot of conversations with the manufacturer about this material, and he said, if I put it over wood, I should prime the wood first. I should use a primer. Because of the acid in the cement eating into the wood. So sometimes I prime the wood, and sometimes I don't. I mean, just in terms of all of my works.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: Sometimes it's applied directly over wood. Sometimes there's Styrofoam onto wood. But here, this is probably wood. I don't think there's any Styrofoam here. So in terms of the rags, he said, "Oh." You know, and I also said, "You know, I'm not building a house with this. I'm make sculpture that's then going to be taken care of, and not in freezing cold or extreme heat. You know, do you think that the rags would be okay? I'm using anything between a sheet, or a T-shirt, or cotton kinds of rags. Or should I use – they sell a mesh, like a fiberglass, or a plastic mesh. And he said something like that is better. So what they sell are these sheets of this mesh, like a screening material..."

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: ...in different hole sizes. But I haven't used that in this piece.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: In terms of how they believe the material should be used.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: Because if it's not – because they believe it will crack, especially if it's on a round surface.

- CM-U: Yeah, but they are thinking in much thicker layers, I'm sure.
- R. Harrison: They're thinking buildings.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. No, they don't. They put it on really thin.
- CM-U: Oh, they do, really?
- R. Harrison: They put on three really thin coats. And then they actually have a stucco grade that has an aggregate in it, to get a stucco _____ [phrase inaudible]. Depending on what you want from it.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- R. Harrison: Yeah, I can show – I have samples from the company.
- CM-U: It's interesting. Yeah, I'm just curious.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. Anyway...
- CM-U: And you chose this material, why?
- R. Harrison: I knew – actually I knew another artist who was working with it years and years ago, painting on it.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- R. Harrison: And then I decided to try it for sculpture.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: Yeah, a painter showed me it.
- CM-U: And you like it because it takes paint well? Or it's...
- R. Harrison: I like it because it's incredibly – I mean, this is part of the _____ [word inaudible] – technically, I didn't study sculpture, so I don't really have – I'm self-taught. So I don't have a lot of traditional material. I've never – I was never schooled in any kind of traditional materials, so I don't really also believe that sculpture should be made in marble or bronze. But no one does,

so that's irrelevant. This material is very easy to work with. Like people say, plaster is forgiving, but plaster cracks. I mean, plaster I actually find to be difficult to work with. I've never worked with it. I made works out of paper mache, and they did fall apart and break. And this became a more durable surface that would then take paint in a way that a paper surface couldn't. Because it could also take layers of paint. So there are layers – there are many layers of acrylic paint on this. In areas. And what I was going to show you before was, I was just saying that...

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: ...if it's – like this white area is the cement without paint over it.

CM-U: Hmm.

R. Harrison: That's not white paint. That's probably the only area that's not painted. I mean, any place that you see an area like that is unpainted. And this is – you can see the wood. This is the – this plywood wasn't painted. So the plywood is part of it. So I wanted that to show.

CM-U: I can see it there.

R. Harrison: Yeah, you can see the wood everywhere. That's not a problem.

[00:38:19]

R. Harrison: Yeah, I mean, this a thing like – I don't know what is interesting for your purposes.

CM-U: Oh, this is – oh, let's talk about the shoes.

R. Harrison: Okay. Century 21.

CM-U: Yeah? Okay.

R. Harrison: Seriously.

CM-U: (laughs) That's the source.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: They are going to change.

- R. Harrison: How?
- CM-U: They are going to – the plastic will harden.
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: And there will be yellowing.
- R. Harrison: Uh-huh.
- CM-U: And possible drying.
- R. Harrison: Um-hum.
- CM-U: And cracking. That sort of thing.
- R. Harrison: Um-hum.
- CM-U: We just accept that?
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: Or do we go out and try and find new shoes?
- R. Harrison: Oh, you're not going to find these shoes. Because, when you go to Century 21, they are always what's left over, anyway, from three years ago.
- CM-U: So you're okay with – I mean, obviously, we just have to accept that.
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- R. Harrison: Absolutely. The mannequin – I bought the mannequin. And we could talk about the mannequin as well.
- CM-U: Yes, sure. Let's go.
- R. Harrison: I bought the mannequin in a department store in Germany that was going out of business. So it's also very old. And it already has, like, plenty of – you can look at the head – plenty of signs of decay. I never cleaned it really. I mean, I

sort of cleaned it a little bit, but I never went nuts. So there is dirt from when I bought it.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: Oh, would you want to fix this? This is how – do you want to see how this goes? You know how it's – there's a lock inside.

CM-U: Oh, yeah. Well, that would be a great – why don't you come around with the camera and show that.

R. Harrison: I don't know. What do you want?

CM-U: Because we will not take it apart the way she just did.

R. Harrison: Oh, yeah? Okay. (laughter) But it's good to know, right?

CM-U: Very good to know.

R. Harrison: Okay. So all of the joints are like that. But now you're going to have to look at the instructions to find out how it is. It's part of the – this is an offering. You know how the gods...

CM-U: Uh-huh. Yeah.

R. Harrison: ...in any kind of art, and art from any part of the world, the god offers you something with your hands [sounds like]. So this is an offering. So the hand is – and it came – I mean, in that it was connected to the – we'll call it the "If I Did It" show...

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: ...there was a mannequin with a hand that was offering you nothing – with a Dick Cheney mask – so that's connected. The Janus head is connected. The double-sided head. And the devotion of the hand. And that there isn't one meaning for, in different cultures, hands mean different things. So there's no one way to read that hand, but in my own thinking, it's connected to that. And so the way we're saying that the sneakers will get old and change, this can get old and change.

R. Harrison: I, you know, wouldn't want it to look uncared for, the way you were saying. But if this ends up cracking, that's fine.

[00:40:36]

R. Harrison: I don't know what to do about the eyelashes. What's going to happen to the eyelashes? Oh, yeah, this [referring to rubber face mask] is going to fall apart.

CM-U: Yeah, it will.

R. Harrison: Oh, this is a problem because someone told me that the Dick Cheney mask would completely melt. And they told me that Mike Kelley has his masks he used in a performance in the last seventies and late eighties, and they were stored, and now they're just flat. And that I should have it remade. It was for another mask. I should have it cast and remade in silicone.

CM-U: Well, that's a very interesting question that I have to ask you.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: Because that's not a found mask. Then, it's a constructive one.

R. Harrison: Right.

CM-U: And that, we can do. We can do that.

R. Harrison: It would just be at great expense.

CM-U: Yeah.

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: And in my experience with Kienholz using rubber masks, for example, in thirty years, thirty-five years, it had completely disintegrated.

R. Harrison: Hmm.

CM-U: But it was a rubber Halloween mask.

R. Harrison: But was it a rubber mask that was made in the fifties or sixties?

CM-U: Yes.

R. Harrison: Which – is that different than a rubber mask that was made in 2006?

- CM-U: I don't know.
- R. Harrison: Because the rubber has changed.
- CM-U: Yes. It's possible.
- R. Harrison: But maybe the rubber is of a lesser quality, because many products now made out of rubber I thought were made of a lesser...
- CM-U: Yeah.
- R. Harrison: ...because they use biodegradable – they recycle.
- CM-U: Yeah. But...
- R. Harrison: And it disintegrates.
- CM-U: This is in a museum environment...
- R. Harrison: Okay.
- CM-U: ...and we don't know what that piece was in. So my guess is...
- R. Harrison: The Kienholz?
- CM-U: ...that this is going to do a lot – the Kienholz piece. So, you know, this could do much better.
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: It was also – it was stored. It was a piece called *John Doe* [1959, The Menil Collection, Houston], and the mask was stored in a wooden drawer behind, so it was, you know, in this wooden drawer, too. That was kind of an acidic wooden environment that it lived in. So we'll see.
- R. Harrison: What about this? Okay, so this – I mean, I think this is just a cat mask, but what about – this is a Batman mask...
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: ...for a child. What about this plastic? What will happen to that?

- CM-U: I can imagine it drying out.
- R. Harrison: Um-hum.
- CM-U: And this is obviously a very important element.
- R. Harrison: Um-hum.
- CM-U: And so we would re-adhere it as best we could.
- R. Harrison: For me, I don't have a difference between – I have a – when I make something, it's a huge difference between a found object and a constructed object. Because all my work is composed of found objects and constructed elements together. Right? So that's like a structural problem there.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: But once something exists, I don't have a problem with it being remade.
- CM-U: Okay. That's interesting. That's helpful, yeah.
- R. Harrison: So I actually – I don't think it's necessary, right now.
- CM-U: Right. No.
- R. Harrison: At all.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: But, for me, how this looks. What's important now is how it looks. So something that's an easier thing to say is that, if these [referring to feathers on head of mannequin] start to look really bad, I think they should be replaced with something similar.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: I think it's important that one is blue and one is orange, and the approximate size.
- CM-U: Good.

R. Harrison: But if it was slightly different, if they were slightly wider or slightly taller, if it was a slightly different blue, or a slightly different orange. I mean, obviously I had in my own interpretation of this meaning a relationship between this and that. But any orange would make that connection. So these could be replaced tomorrow if they started to look really bad. This [referring to Batman mask] is going – this is being held on by this elastic. So this is probably the first thing to go, I would imagine. This will no longer hold this. This is also – oh, this is from the cat mask.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: And then this [referring to Batman mask] is being held on by this [referring to cat mask]. There is nothing – or did I glue? No, I siliconed it on. You can see the silicone. In fact, when I did it, you couldn't see it. So that means it's shifted. Do you see the silicone?

CM-U: Yeah, I see it.

R. Harrison: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So you know what? All this is now silicone. There is silicone between the cat mask and the Batman mask, and there's silicone between the Batman and the head. And this is really already pretty dirty.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: But that's from being in Paula Cooper's for a month, probably.

[00:44:32]

CM-U: Okay. So they started out found objects for you. You constructed them in this. Our challenge is to keep them in as good of condition as possible. If we need to restore them, or reconstruct them in some way – so it would be, in the case of the feathers...

R. Harrison: They can be replaced.

CM-U: ...replaced.

R. Harrison: Everything here could be replaced with something similar. I don't have a problem with that. I mean, if you – you know, if you – and this is also where – I bought this [referring to cat mask] at the Halloween store on Third Avenue. Should I go get another one and send it to you?

- CM-U: Yes. _____ [phrase inaudible].
- R. Harrison: You want one or two? (laughs)
- CM-U: Well, what we did in the case of – going back to the Kienholz again – is, we stored it in a sealed bag with this – we made a container with _____ [word inaudible], which absorbs oxygen...
- R. Harrison: Oh, boy.
- CM-U: ...and these materials. Yeah, we got kind of sophisticated in trying to keep it...
- R. Harrison: See, I think...
- CM-U: Now that might be too much over the head [sounds like]. But Ed was already gone. I wasn't – I didn't have an opportunity to ask him the questions I'm asking you.
- R. Harrison: No. No. And I actually am glad to know that you did that. And maybe it's also more my casual attitude towards it right now, which could change. But right now, I would like to suggest that – I mean, I know that even if I give you these, and they are in an airtight, dark environment, they'll slow down the aging process.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. So maybe that makes sense.
- CM-U: I think it does. You know, it's interesting. As we begin to think about what this new museum at the Whitney is going to be, for example, one of the things that's clear to me in my department, which will be different from others, is, we have to have a huge facility for storing parts. Replacing, replacement parts...
- R. Harrison: Well, what – I mean, this is a whole other conversation in terms of technology, though.
- CM-U: Yeah.

- R. Harrison: I mean, I was – even now I’m like, “Oh, I should get back to Michelle about just getting rid of that DVD player.” Yeah. So, because I mean, in terms of parts, it’s...
- CM-U: I don’t think – my own feeling, and I, of course, need to know yours; but we would make every effort to preserve what you have here and the materials you do have here, as they are.
- R. Harrison: Right.
- CM-U: They were your choice. They convey what you wanted to convey. But in the future, should we need to, we would try to restore what you have, as opposed to replace...
- R. Harrison: Right.
- CM-U: ...but at some point, because you accept aging...
- R. Harrison: Absolutely.
- CM-U: ...and you’re okay with that...
- R. Harrison: Yeah.
- CM-U: ...but at some point, when it’s beyond restoration to a point where it’s not reading anymore as the proper mask...
- R. Harrison: Exactly.
- CM-U: ...then it’s at that point that one would consider a reconstruction, it seems to me.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. And to me, it would be fine if this was a reconstructed cat mask made out of totally different materials, and a totally different process, but it ended up this color, and it had little teeth, it would be fine.
- CM-U: Okay. Good. So yeah, that’s exactly what we need to know.
- R. Harrison: Absolutely. Yeah.
- CM-U: That’s exactly what we need to know.

R. Harrison: I feel the same way about the carrot. I feel the same way about all the elements. I think it's fine. This scarf was, you know, purchased in a Salvation Army or something, so it's – it already looks old. It's fine for the scarf to age. It's fine for the shoes to age. I think aging is a natural part of the process, so that's fine.

[00:47:25]

CM-U: Okay. We're talking about the shoes and how, given the nature of them, you know, they are going to crack and age. So they're going to be old shoes on a young child.

R. Harrison: I don't see a young child here.

CM-U: Okay. Good. What do you see?

R. Harrison: You know, some mannequin with a mask and a T-shirt and sneakers on it.

CM-U: Good.

R. Harrison: I see a representation of a small human, but...

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: I think that if we're talking about over time, nobody is going to know what SpongeBob is. I was interested in getting these sneakers, that the SpongeBob is matching the Pokemon, you know, which is just about – I mean, that's how it signifies it's a child, is 'cause of its branding.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: So I would say that it is still a child, even if the things that it's wearing are old. It's a child from the past. They used to dress children like adults, so – and paint portraits of them, and so this is just – it's, you know – it's court painting.

CM-U: I see, yeah. Okay.

R. Harrison: You should never call my work ugly.

CM-U: (laughs)

R. Harrison: You should never use the word “ugly” in talking about my work.

CM-U: Okay.

R. Harrison: My work is not ugly.

[Break in video]

CM-U: Do we want to position the cans the way you want them?

R. Harrison: Yeah. Just because we are going to go through the materials...

CM-U: Yes. Let’s finish.

R. Harrison: Yeah, I wanted to do that. Because when you said that these [referring to shoes on mannequin] were going to get old and fall apart, and we’re talking about plastic things cracking, and that this is important...

CM-U: Yeah.

R. Harrison: ...but it could be reglued, and I wouldn’t care. If the eyelash fell off, it could be put back.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: Things like that are fine. What about this material [referring to artificial grass]? I have no idea what this is. Some kind of plastic.

CM-U: Yeah.

R. Harrison: Will this start drooping more? Will it...

CM-U: Maybe – yeah, that’s actually a good thing for us to talk about...

R. Harrison: Because that, that I’m suddenly – I don’t think I could find another one of those. Because this is also something old that I bought in a secondhand shop, so I wouldn’t know how to give you a second – send you another one.

CM-U: If you had to describe this, and what it’s doing physically with the sculpture, how would you do that? What’s important about it?

R. Harrison: Physically, is that it comes out of the figure.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: That's it's kind of like the way that language works in terms of puns, that there's a relationship between this, these green hairs and this green hair. So there's a – I don't know; I don't want to say – it's not a formal relationship, because it's different. And the fact that – but it's artificial grass, so it's also something fake that's meant to look real; and it deals with nature, and in the way that traditional still life painting works in terms of arrangements. It's something to add color, right? It's something that is decorative. It's a decorative grass. And I think it would be hard to locate which elements in this piece are non-decorative. I consider it like – down to the wheels and the dolly, I think there's like – in my own personal relationship to the parts, I've turned everything into a decorative element. But this, in its category, is intended to make a place more beautiful.

R. Harrison: So what it's doing physically is, it's coming out. And it's draping down. And it's suggesting wind. And it's suggesting nature. And it's suggesting a little bit of chaos and disorder. Because obviously there's a lot of ordered sections...

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: ...I mean, this – again, I think it's a very structural piece where you have heads looking in different directions. Multiple faces, in different directions, or in opposed directions. And this is slightly more chaotic.

CM-U: But it has the sense of being an artificial representation of something natural...

R. Harrison: Yeah.

CM-U: ...something green. Something that gives the idea of organic growth. So...

R. Harrison: We read it as fake grass.

CM-U: ...should this change...

R. Harrison: It should be fake grass.

CM-U: Fake grass, yeah.

R. Harrison: There should be similar fake grass.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: Down to the – and actually I would feel – like you said in terms of it being – you know, I found this, and I just thought this was a great thing. I mean...

CM-U: (laughs) It is a great thing.

R. Harrison: ...I had it on my desk, you know. I mean, I just said, “This is a great thing.” So you could buy individual strands of grass and remake this.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: And I wouldn’t – I mean, somebody made this.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: Right? I mean, the tape is coming off. So it’s absolutely – I feel absolutely fine with these being replaced or remade or whatever it is. Yeah, I know, now I’m all worried about that, but we’ll get there later.

CM-U: That’s fine.

[00:51:54]

R. Harrison: So this is another relationship between this and this tassel. So I bought the hat – because I’m also wondering how this velvet is going to change. It’s probably going to be fine. Or the shells will be fine.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: This plastic paint will probably flake off a little bit. I mean, if it’s not worn, I guess not. But this was bought in Jackson Heights in Queens, and so I don’t know, in terms of – I don’t know anything about it, in terms of – or I don’t know that much about it in terms of, you know, if how it would change or what it would do. I don’t know how to describe it, necessarily. But I think that this is another thing in terms of the visual connection...

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: ...with that and the feathers. And then these are – oh, these are Mardi Gras beads, and these have been – I’m worried about that, too.

- CM-U: Let's _____ [phrase inaudible]
- R. Harrison: These beads. And this is another material thing. The beads were set into the cement here and then painted.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- R. Harrison: Because they are attached there.
- CM-U: Right. Right.
- R. Harrison: So that's permanent. I'm just trying to think if there's anything we haven't covered. And then I'm stalling time a bit, but – you know what, there's a sticker on these beans. Right there.
- CM-U: Does it say thirty – is that the...
- R. Harrison: It's actually like – 'cause I also got it in _____ [word inaudible]. I'm not going to say it's Hindi. It's some – it's not – it doesn't say "thirty." It's something else. It's some other kind of...
- CM-U: No, but yes, it does.
- R. Harrison: No, but it – it's a different. It's more decorative. It's more – it's like...
- CM-U: Oh, 'cause it goes off here, you're right. You're right.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. I think it's a character.
- CM-U: Oh, you're right.
- R. Harrison: 'Cause it came on – I had a whole sheet of them.
- CM-U: Oh, you applied that to it.
- R. Harrison: I applied that.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. I put this sticker on this can.
- CM-U: Did you get a picture of that, Sean [sounds like]?

- Man: No, I didn't.
- R. Harrison: And then I want to look at this because this is where maybe I should just say the cans are fine as they are. 'Cause there really isn't...
- CM-U: This was noted by the conservators.
- R. Harrison: The sticker?
- CM-U: Yeah.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. I applied that.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: Yeah, let's just say that this, since this was set up according to the directions – I just moved it – the cans can be – otherwise every time I'm moving it now, I'm more aware of the fact that I'm messing up the label. Because I probably caused the scratches on all those labels. I mean, I don't – it wasn't a concern. Oh, my knees are – so I would say that however it is, is fine.
- CM-U: Okay.
- R. Harrison: I'll put that forward a little bit (moves can). Yeah, so if you wanted to go and secure that, that would be fine. I think we covered all the materials.
- CM-U: I think we have, too.
- R. Harrison: In terms of the materials, I think that's it (pauses to read wall label). Did you have, I don't know, what's important?
- [00:55:19]**
- R. Harrison: I called this the Mary Heilmann painting (points to painting on box) on the...
- CM-U: You call it the Mary...
- R. Harrison: Mary Heilmann painting. And it was. That was – that's my attempt to paint like Mary Heilmann. Yeah. So the choice – because I was thinking – I mean, I don't think these are conservation issues, but when I talked to Michelle there were other things...

- CM-U: Yeah, let's talk. Yes. I want to hear them.
- R. Harrison: Okay. So the choice of colors, and the intentional way that this is painted there – like, I'd say that the marks are a combination of intended things, like – I'm making a Mary Heilmann painting right now – so the orange on the outside is an extension of that to accidental things that I might have been carrying a brush where something dripped. But I might have also flicked it on purpose to create the look of something that was accidental.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: So a lot of the paint marks on here are, you know, a manipulation rather than actual accident. The purple was added after the scarf and the tie to increase the amount of purple because there wasn't a lot of purple.
- CM-U: Other than the writing.
- R. Harrison: Well, that's true. The writing was purple. I don't know. It just...
- CM-U: Because you needed it, yeah.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. I'm thinking like in terms of the choice of colors.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: Because I said this thing before, about how some of them – I mean, I don't think you could go through the "If I Did It" show and be like, "Oh, that's the same pink." I don't think it's really true. And then I know that that's what made me think about the Mary Heilmann was that, "Oh, that has nothing to do with those sculptures."
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: But some of the paint on here, which you can't see, probably does. Oh, there's cracks here, which are fine. Maybe you should acknowledge that there are cracks there.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- R. Harrison: When I put the material, the cement material, over the wood, if I make it too wet and it goes on too thick, there's already cracks. And so sometimes I apply

a second coat and – or I’ll even just like do a little bit, like just – and then the crack is gone.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: So this crack was always there, and that’s fine.

CM-U: Um-hum. Makes sense.

R. Harrison: Yeah. So I was thinking, if you were to see other cracks, it would be okay.

CM-U: Um-hum.

R. Harrison: I don’t know, do metal screws come out of wood, and do things pop out that way?

CM-U: No, well...

R. Harrison: Not really.

CM-U: ...not really, and if it did, we would just do it, then.

R. Harrison: But, I mean, is that something to address, like, should it be put back? Or should it fall apart?

CM-U: I guess my assumption would be that it should be. That every attempt should be made to keep it in the appearance of this now.

R. Harrison: Okay, without going overboard.

CM-U: Right.

R. Harrison: Yeah. Okay.

CM-U: Yeah. Yeah, without...

R. Harrison: Well no – when – ’cause when somebody said that I should take that Dick Cheney mask and have it cast in silicone and have another one remade, I just thought, “Can’t I go online and buy another one?”

CM-U: Right. Exactly. I agree.

- R. Harrison: And keep it in a box.
- CM-U: That's right. That's right.
- R. Harrison: So...
- CM-U: That's absolutely right.
- R. Harrison: Yeah. So that was what I'm saying. When I have had recommendations that don't – that feel too extreme.
- CM-U: Right.
- R. Harrison: You know.
- CM-U: Overall, it looks very good to me.
- R. Harrison: Yeah, I think it's fine.
- CM-U: And I think that you've answered the conservation issues very well. As well as installation issues, which are so related to _____ [phrase inaudible].
- R. Harrison: Yeah. Because we were talking about framing and installation. I think this thing of not – it being on the same level, the floor, as a Donald Judd, and having all sides visible, and it also at different times can be installed in different ways, in terms of what side you see first. This is not the way to see it, necessarily. I think it's – I think most people would put it this way. And most people would like it this way. I think this is probably the most popular way to put it, in terms of the doorway. I mean, that it makes sense. It's generous. So for this situation, that's okay.
- CM-U: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?
- R. Harrison: No, I think that's enough.
- CM-U: Thank you.

[END RECORDING]