



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: Glenn Ligon

Date: May 2, 2011

Location: Whitney Museum of American Art

Interviewers: Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Matthew Skopek

Video/Edit: Carlton Bright / Laurie McDonald

Total Run Time: 01:18:47

Abstract:

Artist Glenn Ligon discusses his work with Artists Documentation Program Founding Director and Whitney Associate Director for Conservation and Research, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro. During the interview, they are joined by Whitney Assistant Conservator, Matthew Skopek. The discussion focuses primarily on the materials and methods that Ligon used to create his works. Throughout the interview, Ligon reflects on his wishes for his works' future conservation.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):

Corporate Name(s)

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

Genre(s)

Interviews
Oral histories

Personal Name(s)

Ligon, Glenn, 1960-
McDonald, Laurie
Skopek, Matthew

Subject(s)

Art--Conservation and restoration
Artists' materials
Art--Technique
Drawing
Painting, American

Exhibitions/Works:

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

Controlled Vocabulary:

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

Time	Contents	Subject Keywords
00:00:02	Opening Credits	
00:00:50	Introduction Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Glenn Ligon	
00:00:55	(Exhibition Reference) "Glenn Ligon: America" Whitney Museum of American Art March 10-June 5, 2011	
00:01:00	Concept/Nature of Work Ligon discusses his painterly influences and his use of materiality in a series of early works.	Abstract Expressionist artists' materials brushwork De Kooning, Willem Guston, Philip hand-painted painting techniques stenciling
00:01:44	(Image) Glenn Ligon No. 417 (Sweetheart), 1988 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.184 Glenn Ligon No. 167 (Sailors), 1989 Private collection Glenn Ligon No. 752 (Colored People), 1990 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.188	
00:02:25	Technical Specifications Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of early painted works on paper. Ligon reflects on the choices he made in creating them	acrylic paint broadsheet (format) brushwork deckle edges Jack Richeson & Co., Inc, Kimberly, Wisconsin** letters (signs) newspapers oil paint (paint) painting techniques paint stick** scale (relative size) Shiva Artist's Paintstik (TM)**

ADP Interview Video Index

Indexed by: Heather Nodler, September 2012

Video: adp2011a_ligon_001va.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.2011a / Interview date: 05/02/2011

		stenciling stencils (tools) wash technique wax
00:02:42	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>No. 417 (Sweetheart), 1988 (detail of wash and stenciling)</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.184	
00:03:49	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>No. 417 (Sweetheart), 1988 (detail of stenciling)</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.184	
00:04:30	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>No. 417 (Sweetheart), 1988 (details of tack holes)</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.184	
00:05:14	Conservation Issues Ligon offers his opinions regarding changes he has observed in a series of his early painted works on paper.	acceptable aging Landau, Emily Fisher* planes (mathematics) visual inspection
00:05:30	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>No. 609 (Numbers), 1990 (detail of stiff paper)</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.187	
00:06:08	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a different series of early painted works on paper. He offers his opinions regarding the works' condition.	cracks dust enamel paint flat files oil paint (paint) paper (fiber product) reflectance Rothkopf, Scott, 1976-* staining storage visual inspection
00:06:23	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled, 1985</i> Collection of the artist	
00:08:33	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled, 1985 (detail of oil staining)</i>	

ADP Interview Video Index

Indexed by: Heather Nodler, September 2012

Video: adp2011a_ligon_001va.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.2011a / Interview date: 05/02/2011

	Collection of the artist	
00:08:38	Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Ligon discusses the materials and techniques that he used to create <i>Untitled (I Am a Man)</i> , 1988. In doing so, he reflects on how his choice of material informed the work conceptually.	cracking drying enamel paint flat (form attributes) oil paint (paint) shine
00:08:44	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (I Am a Man)</i> , 1988 Collection of the artist	
00:10:17	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (I Am a Man)</i> , 1988 (detail of cracking) Collection of the artist	
00:11:16	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (I Am a Man)</i> , 1988 (detail of area of flatness) Collection of the artist	
00:11:38	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (I Am a Man)</i> , 1988 (detail of other painting) Collection of the artist	
00:11:49	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Ligon discusses the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of stenciled paintings on door panels in the late 1980s. He reflects on how his choice of materials and techniques affected the works' aging and appearance.	black pigment color shift gesso paint stick** panels (wood) raw umber (pigment) Shiva Artist's Paintstik (TM)** stenciling tint white pigment yellow ocher (pigment)
00:11:52	(Images) <i>Untitled (I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background)</i> , 1990 Collection of Eileen Harris Norton <i>Untitled (I Remember the Very Day That I Became Colored)</i> , 1990 Collection of George C. Wolfe <i>Untitled (I Do Not Always Feel Colored)</i> , 1990 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of The Bohen Foundation in honor of Thomas N. Armstrong III 2001.275 <i>Untitled (I Am Not Tragically Colored)</i> , 1990 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of The Bohen Foundation in honor of Thomas N. Armstrong III 2001.276	

ADP Interview Video Index

Indexed by: Heather Nodler, September 2012

Video: adp2011a_ligon_001va.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.2011a / Interview date: 05/02/2011

00:13:16	(Image) <i>Untitled (I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background)</i> , 1990 (detail of pigments) Collection of Eileen Harris Norton	
00:13:50	(Image) <i>Untitled (I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background)</i> , 1990 (detail of stenciled letters) Collection of Eileen Harris Norton	
00:14:29	Technical Specifications Ligon details how he manipulated his materials to create the impression of correction and chance.	gesso paint stick** scraping stenciling temperature
00:14:43	(Image) <i>Untitled (I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background)</i> , 1990 (detail of evenness in stenciled letters) Collection of Eileen Harris Norton	
00:16:09	(Image) <i>Untitled (I Remember the Very Day That I Became Colored)</i> , 1990 (detail of area of correction) Collection of George C. Wolfe	
00:16:53	(Image) <i>Untitled (I Do Not Always Feel Colored)</i> , 1990 (detail of dense area) Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of The Bohlen Foundation in honor of Thomas N. Armstrong III 2001.275	
00:19:10	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Ligon reflects on his choice of supports for his paintings, particularly his use of doors, versus canvas.	canvas doors flat (form attributes) panels (wood) planes (mathematics) stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) warping
00:22:52	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Ligon continues to discuss his use of supports, in particular his shift to using canvas on panels that he had custom fabricated. He explains how the different supports affect the appearance of the work.	beveling canvas doors edges (object portions) panels (wood) Simon Liu, Inc.*
00:25:01	Technical Specifications Ligon explains why some of the letters in his paintings are stenciled on more thickly than others. He also discusses his tendency to rework stenciled areas.	letters (signs) reworking stenciling thickness
00:27:13	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues	bone black

ADP Interview Video Index

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	Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of white, stenciled paintings. He also describes a shift that occurred in the color of one of the paintings, which he ultimately reworked. He then goes on to discuss variations in the blacks of some of his black oil stick paintings.	color shift ivory black Mars black (pigment) paint stick** R&F Pigment Sticks (TM)** reworking Shiva Artist's Paintstik TM**
00:28:00	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (I Was Somebody)</i> , 1990 and 2003 (detail of color shift) Collection of John and Mary Pappajohn	
00:28:43	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (I Was Somebody)</i> , 1990 and 2003 (detail of white stenciled letters) Collection of John and Mary Pappajohn	
00:29:17	(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (I Was Somebody)</i> , 1990 and 2003 (detail of white stenciled letters) Collection of John and Mary Pappajohn	
00:31:17	(Image) Installation view of black, stenciled paintings, showing differences in rhythm.	
00:31:48	Conservation Issues and Exhibition Ligon describes a set of photographs that the Guggenheim replaced because they had faded differentially. He also expresses his opinions regarding the photographs' installation at the Whitney.	fading Mapplethorpe, Robert Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
00:31:55	(Images) Glenn Ligon <i>Notes on the Margin of the Black Book</i> , 1991-93 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; gift of The Bohlen Foundation	
00:33:39	Technical Specifications Ligon discusses the materials and techniques that he used to create another series of stenciled, black paintings.	background canvas gesso ivory black Mars black (pigment) oil paint (paint) paint stick** Serra, Richard stenciling Winsor & Newton

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		Winsor & Newton Artists' Oilbars**
00:33:39	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>White #3, 1993</i> The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>White #14, 1994</i> Collection of the artist</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>White #5, 1993</i> The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica</p>	
00:34:42	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>White #14, 1994 (detail of surface)</i> Collection of the artist</p>	
00:37:25	<p>Technical Specifications Ligon continues to discuss the materials and techniques that he used to create another series of stenciled, black paintings.</p>	<p>canvas edges (object portions) gesso painters tape painting techniques reflectance stretchers (framing and mounting equipment)</p>
00:37:38	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>White #3, 1993 (detail of gesso flecks)</i> The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica</p>	
00:38:57	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>White #3, 1993 (detail of painters tape bulge)</i> The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica</p>	
00:39:13	<p>Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Ligon and Mancusi-Ungaro discuss possible explanations for variations in color and density across his black, stenciled paintings. Ligon then reflects on his choice of black as a dominant color for his works and his practices with regard to discarding works.</p>	<p>black (color) color (perceived attribute) density letters (signs) matte (optical property) Newman, Barnett Rothko, Mark</p>
00:42:07	<p>(Artwork Reference) Barnett Newman Stations of the Cross, 1958-1966</p> <p>Mark Rothko Rothko Chapel Paintings, 1964-1967</p>	

ADP Interview Video Index

Indexed by: Heather Nodler, September 2012

Video: adp2011a_ligon_001va.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.2011a / Interview date: 05/02/2011

00:44:19	<p>Process of Creation and Technical Specifications Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create two series: a series of works based on newspaper images and a series of self-portraits. In doing so, he reflects on how the work was affected by the technology available to him at the time and the importance of personalization and the hand in a work.</p>	<p>handmade moiré effect newspapers screen printing self-portraits</p>
00:44:25	<p>(Images)</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>Screen, 1996</i> The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>We're Black and Strong (I), 1996</i> San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Accessions Committee Fund: gift of Frances and John Bowes, Emily L. Carroll and Thomas W. Weisel, Collectors Forum, Susan and Robert Green, Danielle and Brooks Walker Jr., and Phyllis Wattis</p>	
00:44:37	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Self-Portraits Series, 1996</i></p>	
00:47:14	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Rückenfigur, 2009</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee T.2010.71</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled, 2008</i> Rubell Family Collection</p>	
00:47:46	<p>Technical Specifications and Concept/Nature of Work Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create his works that employ newspaper images and coal dust. In doing so, he explains the significance of their use.</p>	<p>Baldwin, James, 1924-1987* coal glue India ink (ink) Warhol, Andy</p>
00:47:56	<p>(Image) <i>Untitled (Speech/Crowd #2), 2000</i> Collection of the artist</p>	
00:50:10	<p>(Image) <i>Untitled (Speech/Crowd #2), 2000 (detail of coal dust)</i> Collection of the artist</p>	
00:52:03	<p>Technical Specifications Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create</p>	<p>acrylic paint color (pigment)</p>

ADP Interview Video Index

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	a series of colorful, stencil-based paintings.	gesso letters (signs) linen (material) paint stick** R&F Pigment Sticks (TM)** stenciling
00:52:29	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Beautiful Black Men</i>, 1995 Collection of Peter Norton</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>Niggers Ain't Scared</i>, 1996 Collection of the artist</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>Mudbone (Liar)</i>, 1993 Collection of Raymond J. McGuire</p>	
00:53:08	<p>Technical Specifications Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of black, stencil-based paintings that employ coal dust. In doing so, he describes how he made his own oil sticks.</p>	beeswax brushwork coal drying letters (signs) oil paint (paint) paint stick** R&F Pigment Sticks (TM)** Shiva Artist's Paintstik <small>TM**</small> stenciling Winsor & Newton Artists' Oilbars**
00:53:26	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Stranger #20</i>, 2004 Collection of Raymond J. McGuire</p>	
00:57:10	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (Conclusion)</i>, 2004 Collection of Jill and Peter Kraus</p>	
00:58:02	<p>(Image) Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled (Conclusion)</i>, 2004 (detail of painted edge) Collection of Jill and Peter Kraus</p>	
00:58:08	<p>Technical Specifications Ligon discusses a black stencil-based painting in which he employed scraping extensively.</p>	quotations (texts) scraping self-portraits

00:58:14	(Image) <i>Self-Portrait, 2002</i> Collection of the artist	
00:58:51	(Image) <i>Self-Portrait, 2002 (detail of oil stick on surface)</i> Collection of the artist	
01:01:07	(Exhibition Reference) "Documenta 11" Kassel, Germany June 8-September 15, 2002	
01:01:33	Technical Specifications Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create a series of paintings based on children's coloring books.	gouache (paint) lead white oil paint (paint) paint stick** primer (material)
01:01:38	(Images) <i>Harriet Tubman (Version 2) #1, 2000</i> Collection of Eileen Harris Norton <i>Sun (Version 2), #1, 2001</i> Collection of Eileen Harris Norton <i>Furaha (Version 1), 2000</i> Collection of the artist <i>Harriet Tubman (Version 1), #1, 2000</i> Collection of the artist <i>Graduating Girl (Version 2) #1, 2000</i> Collection of Agnes Gund <i>Icicle (Version 1) #1, 2000</i> Collection of the artist <i>Boy on Tire (Version 1) #1, 2000</i> Marieluise Hessel Collection, Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York <i>Isaac Hayes (Version 1) #1, 2000</i> Collection of Julio Serrano Segovia <i>Frederick Douglass (Version 2) #1, 2001</i> Collection of the artist <i>Salimu (Version 1) #2, 2001</i> Collection of the artist	

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01:03:10	<p>Technical Specifications Ligon describes the materials and techniques that he used to create his works in neon light.</p>	<p>black pigment chipping Dickens, Charles glassblowing handmade neon lamps replicas silicone</p>
01:03:17	<p>(Images)</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>Rückenfigur</i>, 2009 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee T.2010.71</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled</i>, 2008 Rubell Family Collection</p> <p>Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled</i>, 2006 Tate, London; purchased with funds provided by the American Fund for the Tate Gallery, 2008</p>	
01:05:53	<p>Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled</i>, 2006 (detail of chips in paint) Tate, London; purchased with funds provided by the American Fund for the Tate Gallery, 2008</p>	
01:06:07	<p>Conservation Issues and Concept/Nature of Work Ligon reflects on the nature of exhibition copies, natural aging, and restoration of works.</p>	<p>color (perceived attribute) damage glass (material) Kosuth, Joseph natural aging** neon lamps New Museum of Contemporary Art Prince, Richard replicas restoration (process) Tate Modern</p>
01:06:45	<p>Glenn Ligon <i>Untitled</i>, 2006 (detail of silicone joint) Tate, London; purchased with funds provided by the American Fund for the Tate Gallery, 2008</p>	
01:10:43	<p>Conservation Issues and Concept/Nature of Work Ligon continues to reflect on the nature of exhibition copies, natural aging, and restoration of works, using his neon works as an</p>	<p>electric wiring Nauman, Bruce neon lamps</p>

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	example.	
01:17:54	Closing Credits	