



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: Casey Reas
Date: July 4, 2019
Location: University of California, Los Angeles
Interviewers: Christina G.A. McLean
Video/Edit: Cuyler Ballenger
Total Run Time: 01:22:41

Abstract:

Casey Reas discusses his work and processes with Christina McClean, drawing connections between his practice and that of Sol LeWitt. The conversation includes his beliefs about what constitutes a work and his feelings about conservation and restoration, as well as descriptions of his processes of creation and preferences for exhibiting his work.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):

Corporate Name(s)

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

Genre(s)

Interviews
Oral histories

Personal Name(s)

Reas, Casey
McClean, Christina

Subject(s)

Art--Conservation and restoration
Art, Modern -- 21st century
Art--Technique
Computer Art

Exhibitions/Works:

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

Controlled Vocabulary:

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

Time	Contents	Subject Keywords
00:00:01	Opening Credits	
00:00:31	Introduction Christina McLean, Casey Reas	
00:00:49	Process of Creation Casey Reas talks about the origins of his work with software as an artistic medium. He discusses learning to create code-based drawings, and the possibilities and challenges of drawing with software.	computer art (visual works) lines (artistic concept) Massachusetts Institute of Technology nineteen nineties* software
00:03:25	Process of Creation Casey Reas describes his processes of creation, including sketching in code, and requirements for time-based works.	computer art (visual works) diagrams processes Processing (computer program language)* sketches software
00:05:57	Nature of Work Casey Reas discusses revisiting and restoring earlier works. He clarifies that some works evolve into new, different works, while others remain true to the original.	computer art (visual works) restoration (process)
00:06:09	Artwork Reference Casey Reas <i>Path</i> (series), 2001/2014 Sold by the artist after restoration to an undisclosed collector	
00:06:53	Process of Creation Casey Reas discusses his early series, <i>Path</i> , and explains its naming convention. He further explains how <i>Path</i> began as works on paper, because he was unable to create and run it as software in 2001 due to technological limits. Reas also describes the process of later translating it from a work on paper to a work in software.	C++ (computer program language)* computer art (visual works) computer languages and codes Java (computer program language)* motion

		Processing (computer program language)* restoration (process)
00:08:54	The interview is briefly interrupted by an earthquake	
00:10:47	Process of Creation and Nature of Work Casey Reas clarifies whether the different creations of <i>Path</i> are separate new works or iterations of the same work. He discusses reasons why a work may need to change, specifically citing advances in the technology used to create or display it. Reas explains that for him the essence of a work is not the final visual output, but how the images convey the underlying system.	computer art (visual works) computer languages and codes computers drawings (visual works) emulation operating systems restoration (process) software technology (general associated concept) video monitors
00:13:46	Process of Creation and Conservation Issues Casey Reas discusses how he performs all of the software code restorations himself, but that he would be open to having others involved.	assistant artists computer art (visual works) restoration (process) software works on paper
00:14:31	Process of Creation Casey Reas describes how works that he created for the Whitney's Artport Commission led to the <i>Process</i> series. He explains that the commission works, <i>Structure 1, 2, & 3</i> , were studies to understand LeWitt's work within the framework of software, and the differences between working with wall drawings and software.	computer art (visual works) LeWitt, Sol Whitney Museum of American Art software
00:16:13	Process of Creation Casey Reas discusses having other artists interpret his instructions for <i>Structure 3</i> . He describes how the variability in results led to his more precise instructions for the <i>Process</i> series, and explains his clarifications to the instructions.	artist's intent collaboration computer art (visual works) instructions (document genre) interpretation software
00:18:32	Process of Creation Casey Reas describes his processes for creating and modifying his software-based works. He specifically discusses the <i>Process</i> series, and how it generated new softwares and works on paper.	computer art (visual works) computer languages and codes instructions (document genre) software works on paper

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00:20:58	Process of Creation Casey Reas clarifies that his still images were not captures from the kinetic software works, but a separate branch of his work, and describes different attributes of the work that the two media can show.	computer art (visual works) software technology (general associated concept) works on paper
00:22:45	Process of Creation and Nature of Work Casey Reas describes how his <i>Process</i> works all have a definite start point, but continue for an indefinite duration, structuring and modifying themselves as they run. He discusses the work always feeling like itself despite every start being from a random seed.	computer art (visual works) entropy software
00:25:36	Exhibition Casey Reas discusses his expectations of a viewer in deciphering the system underlying his work.	artist's intent computer art (visual works) software
00:27:01	Exhibition Casey Reas discusses the titling of his work. He explains how originally the instructions had always been shown on the wall next to the installation as part of the work, until the show at SFMoMA and the Whitney exhibition.	artist's titles instructions (document genre) LeWitt, Sol San Francisco Museum of Modern Art wall labels
00:27:29	Exhibition Reference <i>Field Conditions</i> San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco September 1, 2021-January 6, 2013	
00:27:47	Exhibition Reference <i>Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art, 1965–2018</i> Whitney Museum of American Art, New York September 28, 2018–April 14, 2019	
00:29:19	Exhibition Casey Reas discusses <i>Software Structure 3</i> as the first instance of his work being shown in a gallery space and describes its installation at the Whitney. He also explains his preferences for modifying works based on whether they are projected or viewed on screen.	computer art (visual works) installations (exhibitions) projections (visual works) video monitors Whitney Museum of American Art
00:32:07	Conservation Issues, Process of Creation, and Technical Specifications Casey Reas describes the restoration of <i>Software Structure 3, 2004</i> . He specifically discusses porting the original Java Applet into different coding languages, and describes how each software program renders lines, creating a different experience in each environment.	artist's intent browsers computer art (visual works) C++ (computer program language)* computer languages

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		<p>and codes Flash (computer file)* Java (computer program language)* JavaScript (computer program language)* lines (artistic concept) Processing (computer program language)* restoration (process) software</p>
00:35:32	<p>Process of Creation Casey Reas describes his creation process, including the decisions he makes to determine the appearance of the final rendering. He discusses how a software engineer would be able to recognize the differences in code, analogous to an artist recognizing different papers.</p>	<p>Arches® Papers** high resolution JavaScript (computer program language)* lines (artistic concept) pixels resolution (optical concept) software video monitors</p>
00:38:25	<p>Process of Creation and Technical Specifications Casey Reas describes his use of Processing, a software sketchbook project he developed with Ben Fry. He describes originally using Processing for sketching his work, and then porting them into Java or C++ to render, but later as computers and Processing became more powerful, he was able to use it for the entire creation process.</p>	<p>C++ (computer program language)* computer art (visual works) computer languages and codes Fry, Ben Java (computer program language)* Processing (computer program language)* sketching software technology (general associated concept)</p>
00:40:20	<p>Process of Creation and Nature of Work Casey Reas discusses his bodies of work that generate their visuals from his code instructions versus those that interpret an image based on source media. He describes the evolution of <i>Process</i> series into the <i>Ultraconcentrated</i> series</p>	<p>computer art (visual works) geometric shape geometry software sources (general concept)</p>
00:42:32	<p>Process of Creation and Technical Specifications Casey Reas discusses the reasons for his shift in focus from thinking about systems to thinking about media. He describes creating <i>Signal to</i></p>	<p>advertisements Beall Center for Art and Technology* broadcasts</p>

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	<p><i>Noise</i>, 2012 at the Beall Center in Irvine from a live television feed, and the evolution of the project to include an audio component in later installations. Reas also discusses continuing to add audio to his works and collaborating with composers to do so.</p>	<p>collaboration composers (people in music) Familian, David* Internet Irvine (inhabited place) mass media newspapers photojournalism (discipline) sources (general concept) YouTube (electronic resource)*</p>
00:43:35	<p>Artwork Reference Casey Reas <i>Signal to Noise (Software 1)</i>, 2012 Custom software (color, silent), digital video, computer, screen Dimensions variable, horizontal</p>	
00:46:27	<p>Exhibition Reference <i>Day For Night Music Festival</i>, Houston, Texas 77201 December 19-20, 2015</p>	
00:47:50	<p>Process of Creation Casey Reas discusses the impact collaborations have had on his work and thinking, and his shift from live media to video production. He specifically describes directing videos for the band, The National, working with architects on <i>Textile Room/Casey Reas Loves Los Angeles</i>, 2013, and collaborating with Tal Rosner on projections for the New World Center in Miami.</p>	<p>architects artists' materials Banham, Reyner composers (people in music) New World Symphony* Rosner, Tal, 1978 -* scale (relative size) The National**</p>
00:48:18	<p>Artwork Reference Videos for select tracks from <i>The National's "Sleep Well Beast"</i> Released Sept. 8, 2017 4AD Record Label</p>	
00:49:29	<p>Artwork Reference Casey Reas, P-A-T-T-E-R-N-S, and North Sails <i>MOCA Textile Room/Casey Reas Loves Los Angeles</i>, 2013 Custom software, computer, three projectors, steel, carbon fiber Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles</p>	
00:49:40	<p>Artwork Reference Reynor Banham <i>Reynor Banham Loves Los Angeles</i>, 1972 One Pair of Eyes, S1.E57</p>	

00:49:50	<p>Artwork Reference Casey Reas, Tal Rosner, and Ghery Partners, LLC <i>Chronograph</i>, 2011 Custom software, computer, projectors, 7,000-square-foot projection wall, New World Center, Miami Commissioned by the New World Symphony for the opening of the New World Center</p>	
00:50:46	<p>Process of Creation and Nature of Work Casey Reas describes his process of creating the murals for the Dell Building at the University of Texas at Austin. He discusses using <i>Ultraconcentrated</i> as source materials for the work, and explains why it was produced to be a static work rather than a projection. He also discusses the book that he later produced about the murals.</p>	<p>LeWitt, Sol murals (general, decorations on wall) RRose Editions* University of Texas at Austin works on paper</p>
00:55:50	<p>Process of Creation and Nature of Work Casey Reas ponders whether the murals at the University of Texas at Austin should have been painted instead of archival pigment prints, and offers his reasons for choosing to create the prints rather than hand painting the murals. He also discusses how the murals do not photograph well and lose their sense of energy if not viewed in person.</p>	<p>color (perceived attribute) large-format murals (general, decorations on wall) pigment prints</p>
00:58:02	<p>Concept/Nature of Work Casey Reas describes the differences between experiencing his murals at the University of Texas at Austin and the book he produced about them. He demonstrates different juxtapositions of iterations that are possible with the unbound book, and explains his intent for producing it that way.</p>	<p>unbound volumes groupings (general concept) artist's intent retrospectives</p>
01:02:06	<p>Conservation Issues and Nature of Work Casey Reas offers his feelings about the conservation of his works, emphasizing the importance of the works being remade. Reas and McClean discuss the connections between Reas and LeWitt, especially the concept of their works being systems or sets of instructions.</p>	<p>conservation concepts instructions (document genre) LeWitt, Sol restoration (process) software</p>
01:04:51	<p>Exhibition and Nature of Work Casey Reas discusses how works change with each wall that they are projected on. He describes varying conditions that affect a work, and specifically mentions works shown at an exhibition at the Whitney in which he had to compromise on projection size.</p>	<p>aspect ratio computer art (visual works) installations (exhibitions) projections (visual works) resolution (optical concept) scale (relative size) software walls Whitney Museum of</p>

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		American Art
01:07:27	<p>Exhibition</p> <p>Casey Reas discusses his observations about Sol LeWitt’s work. He specifically addresses LeWitt’s attention to the precision of the materials, and states that he aspires to be that precise in the detail of his work. Reas provides examples of aspects of the environment he needs to control in order to have his work display correctly, such as the wall color and lighting levels.</p>	<p>electric wires</p> <p>Flavin, Dan</p> <p>installations (exhibitions)</p> <p>LeWitt, Sol</p> <p>lighting</p> <p>software</p> <p>video monitors</p>
01:09:06	<p>Conservation Issues</p> <p>Casey Reas and Christina McClean discuss the parallels between materials Sol LeWitt used being discontinued and the hardware Reas uses becoming obsolete. Reas further discusses the need to plan for hardware obsolescence when creating works with software, and describes the documentation he provides with every work, including guidelines for its restoration. He also explicitly states that the source code is not the work; it is the instructions for producing the work.</p>	<p>LeWitt, Sol</p> <p>cathode ray tubes</p> <p>computer art (visual works)</p> <p>documents</p> <p>emulation</p> <p>hardware (computer)</p> <p>instructions (document genre)</p> <p>obsolescence</p> <p>software</p>
01:13:16	<p>Conservation Issues</p> <p>Casey Reas discusses his belief that works in software are more archival than works in physical media. McClean and Reas continue to discuss the parallels between LeWitt’s and Reas’ practices and intentions regarding recreating or restoring their work.</p>	<p>computer art (visual works)</p> <p>conservation</p> <p>concepts</p> <p>instructions (document genre)</p> <p>LeWitt, Sol</p> <p>Software</p>
01:16:16	<p>Nature of Work</p> <p>Casey Reas discusses aspects of Sol LeWitt’s practice that influence his own. He describes the impact on him of DANCE, a performance piece that LeWitt collaborated on with Lucinda Childs and Philip Glass.</p>	<p>Childs, Lucinda</p> <p>Glass, Philip</p> <p>influence</p> <p>LeWitt, Sol</p> <p>performance art</p> <p>Royce Hall**</p> <p>wall drawings</p>
01:17:04	<p>Artwork Reference</p> <p><i>Dance, 1979</i></p> <p>Collaboration between Lucinda Childs, Sol LeWitt, and Philip Glass</p> <p>Performed December, 1979 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music</p>	
01:18:19	<p>Process of Creation and Nature of Work</p> <p>Casey Reas discusses how he looks to other artists and Art History to inform his practice and work, citing examples such as his inspiration from LeWitt wall drawings for the Whitney commission and his current project of remaking Stan Brakhage films.</p>	<p>art history</p> <p>Brakhage, Stan</p> <p>LeWitt, Sol</p> <p>wall drawings</p> <p>Whitney Museum of American Art</p>
01:18:41	<p>Artwork Reference</p> <p>Casey Reas, Jared Tarbell, Robert Hodgkin, and William Ngan</p>	

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	<i>{Software} Structures</i> (series), 2004/2016 JavaScript Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art	
01:22:13	Closing Credits	