Artists Documentation Program

Audio Interview Transcript

CASEY REAS

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Interviewed by:

Christina McLean, Artists Documentation Program

Fellow, The Menil Collection

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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.

Acceptable Use

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[Speakers (in order of appearance): Christina McLean, The Menil Collection; Casey Reas, Artist]

[BEGIN INTERVIEW]

[00:00:31]

Christina McLean: Today is July 4, 2019. And sitting with Casey Reas, I'm Christina McClean, and this interview is for the Artists Documentation Program. Thank you for -- well, I came to you, but... (laughs)

Casey Reas: Yeah, absolutely. That's good.

Christina McLean: So maybe we can start a little bit with the background of your work?

Casey Reas: Sure.

Christina McLean: So maybe how you began with software as an artistic medium, and what kind of struck that interest?

Casey Reas: Yeah, absolutely. (pauses) It's hard to know where to start. I think the interest has always been in drawing and making pictures -- like, always. And so I started working with software in the late 1990s, and I started working with it in a more shallow way. And then I started to have ideas for work that I wasn't able to produce, and so I needed to go deeper into learning code in order to make that work. And those first works were software-based or code-based drawings, where the lines had their own energy and their own behavior and their own motion, so they were kinetic, sort of indefinite, time-based drawings. And it's technically really challenging to work with software. It takes a long time to develop any basic sense of -- well, being able to -- it's two parts: It's being able to imagine what you want to do and then to realize that in the code, but the more you learn about the code, I think, the more opens up -- like, you see more potential and more possibility. So that was a multi-year-long process to learn that.

And I learned I would say as much as -- I applied myself and learned a lot, but it was really my two-plus years that I spent in graduate school at MIT where I really was able to dig in and learn quickly. And then I think a lot of the first works that I made were a result of work that I had done towards the tail end of that time at MIT. And then it took a few years after to really find my footing

and to get enough experience making work and to sort of increase my ability to imagine the work and make the work. And that's a journey that's -- you know, 20 years later, is still ongoing.

Christina McLean: And how does that start, from imagining a work into creating a work?

Casey Reas: It's usually different for each sort of series or body of work. And sometimes -- I do a lot of just sort of work that's unrelated to things I've done before. I find that that's really a positive way of developing new ideas and keeping energy going. And sometimes that work folds into something years later, and sometimes it doesn't. It's just sort of an anomaly. So sometimes things happen in a really traditional way, where ideas are very vague and then they become sketches. And a lot of the sketches for software are more diagrams than they are drawings or, you know, sketches of what something will look like. Because oftentimes, things are systems or process-based, so you're sort of making diagrams that are relationships of one thing to another.

Christina McLean: And that's sketching in code things that are diagrams --

Casey Reas: First just sketching on paper.

Christina McLean: Okay.

Casey Reas: Yeah, yeah. And then it goes into sketching and code -- which relates to the Processing software project that I've been doing for the last 17 years now with Ben Fry. So it goes from sketching on -- in paper to sketching in code. And then... that's if the work is developing in a really organic way. And then other times there's an idea that's more clear, and that can just be created more directly, without going through the longer process.

So the idea of sketching in code is that you -- I think it's important -- for me, it's important to sketch in a media that's more similar or related to what the final work will be. So if it's a work that's time-based, a work where time is essential to it, it's important to see how it moves and how it feels when it moves. And so that's why it's important to move into some sort of video- or software-based sketching. And then a lot of times, the work develops in a very process-based way, where it may move in a range of different directions, and then maybe one of those seems more -- has more energy, and so it'll move along there, and kind of develops in a tree, and sometimes it comes back and goes somewhere else. And there's a lot of work that -- I mean, that nobody ever sees other than myself. It's a whole bunch of files in different folders on a machine.

[00:05:56]

Christina McLean: And then do those get revisited sometimes, or when you cut them off, do they get cut off? (laughs)

Casey Reas: Both. Yeah. Sometimes they get revisited. I still have things that I continue to revisit. Like, for example, one work that I showed in -- I think I just showed it most recently in 2017 -- it had a start in 2001. And that work actually needed to be recoded or sort of restored. And then in that process, I made a decision to change it quite a bit, so it has an original form, and then it has this newer form. But I think a lot of work with software continues to evolve and change, and whether it becomes a different work as it evolves or it stays more true to the original piece, that's, I think, up to the individual work and decisions that get made.

Christina McLean: And what was that work that you recently revisited from (inaudible)?

Casey Reas: That was some of the earliest work. It was called *Path*. And then a lot of my work just has numbers after the name of it -- so *Path (Software 1)*, *Path (Software 2)*. Those works originally weren't software-based works; they were works on paper. At that time, the -- I guess another thing about software that's frustrating and also interesting is that I wasn't able to make that work as software in 2001, but I was able to make it as software later, because it just wasn't able to run in real time -- it wasn't able to run at 24, 30, or 60 frames per second back then. So that's why it became a work on paper originally.

Christina McLean: And so in order to put it into software, you had to do a restoration?

Casey Reas: I did.

Christina McLean: And how does that work -- getting back into the frame of mind of creating that early 2000s work, and then...? Clearly, you still had a vision for what it was going to look like in software.

Casey Reas: Yeah, yeah. Well, I think it's partially technical work, and then it's partially figuring out what the essence of that work is and modifying it to, I think, put the focus there. So the major change that I made in that work is that originally it was -- it's a -- I would just say minimal sort of line -- curved line-based drawing. I decided to take all of the color out of it and just to focus on the motion. And instead of -- and I reduced the number of lines in a way to focus even more of the motion of each individual piece, and the way that each line relates to the others. But then the technical work was porting it from a coding

language called C++ to a coding language called -- which is the processing language, which is built around or on top of the Java programming language.

Christina McLean: And is that now -- do you consider that the same work?

Casey Reas: That's an earthquake.

Christina McLean: Pardon me?

Casey Reas: That's an earthquake.

Christina McLean: An earthquake? (laughs) That's what that was?

Casey Reas: Yeah, yeah.

Christina McLean: (pauses) Oh my goodness. Yeah, I can feel my chair. (laughs)

Casey Reas: That's the strongest one I've ever felt.

Christina McLean: Oh my goodness. I have never felt an earthquake before.

Casey Reas: (pauses) Sorry. Yeah. So --

Christina McLean: No, please, pause for earthquakes. (laughs)

Casey Reas: That's the strongest one I think I've felt in 16 years of living here.

Christina McLean: Let me know if we need to hide under the desk. (laughs)

Casey Reas: No, this -- I --

Christina McLean: Wow.

Casey Reas: -- I think we're okay.

Christina McLean: (pauses) I lived off the coast of British Columbia, and that was always something we talked about, is earthquakes and what to do if it happened, and it just felt so foreign to me, being from the other side of the mountains. And... Yeah, that's the first earthquake. (laughs)

Casey Reas: Not so fun.

Christina McLean: Lots of fun, yeah.

Casey Reas: Yeah, not so fun.

Christina McLean: (laughs) Yeah, not --

Casey Reas: (inaudible). Yeah, it's frightening. Okay. (pauses)

Christina McLean: I think my mic might get my heart beating. (laughs) Yeah. (pauses) Yeah, the blinds cord is still moving.

[00:10:46]

Casey Reas: (pauses) Okay.

Christina McLean: (laughs) Where were we before the earthquake happened? (laughs)

Casey Reas: Something not so essential as the tectonic plates moving.

Christina McLean: Yes.

Casey Reas: I don't remember.

Christina McLean: We were talking about *Path* and if it's -- I think I asked if the work -- if this is now just a new iteration of that work, or are they separate works?

Casey Reas: Well, the original work were the drawings, and those drawings remain as they are and as they were. So in this particular case, it didn't exist as a software work before, so I created a software work from the -- so the code existed, but it wasn't work that was -- it was code that was for making the paper-based media for the drawings. And so I modified that code to create a new work from that same period. And then when I ever need to restore a work that was originally software, I keep it as close to the original as possible. And so those things -- oftentimes they need to change because the operating system of the computers change and they just won't run the code anymore. Or the display technology changes -- so, for example, the screen might have -- it might have been made for a low-resolution screen, and it should be modified for a more -- like, a current resolution screen. And so the work changes when that happens, but it changes in a -- I would say a minor way. Maybe that's a little bit like doing the same wall drawing on different walls.

Like, I think of the work as -- it should evolve to that extent and be flexible in that way. I think if you work in software, I think the artist can make that choice if they want to emulate the original form of the work, which is another approach, and then the other one is to restore the work for whatever the current sort of technical frame is.

Christina McLean: So that's keeping it as close to the visual outputs of the original as -- because you have to modify the code in order to...? Okay.

Casey Reas: Yeah. And I think for me, the essence of the work isn't really how it looks; it's how the images convey the underlying system that's there. So I think of that as really the essence. So -- when it gets modified for whatever the current technology is, it does change visually, but that's unimportant to me, because the core is still there.

Christina McLean: Is being maintained and...?

Casey Reas: Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah.

Christina McLean: And you do all of those restorations yourself?

Casey Reas: At this point I do.

Christina McLean: At this point?

Casey Reas: Yeah.

Christina McLean: Are you interested in inviting other people into that space with you?

Casey Reas: Yeah, that would be totally --

Christina McLean: Would you like to f--

Casey Reas: -- fine with me. I think it's just a matter of scale, I think. My studio doesn't operate at that scale right now.

Christina McLean: And would you -- if you could pass that on to someone else to do so that you could continue just making new work?

Casey Reas: Yeah, that would be great. Yeah. (laughter) I mean, to be involved in improving it, of course -- while I'm still around. But yeah, that would be ideal.

Christina McLean: Maybe we can talk a bit about the *Process* series --

Casey Reas: Sure.

Christina McLean: -- that you did. Did that start with the Artport commission at the Whitney?

Casey Reas: It did -- or I would say the Artport commission was the beginning of that -- where the -- those works aren't a part of the *Process* series, but the work for that commission led to all of the ideas that directly -- very directly became the *Process* series. And so that work was -- the Artport commission was to think about LeWitt's work in the frame of software. And I did a few ports of wall drawings into code as a way to just really simply understand some of the differences between the media -- you know, drawing on surfaces versus something being performed in light. And then from there, I developed a set of -- my own sets of instructions. And then those were -- I think they were called *Structure 1*, *2*, and *3*, and then the *Process* series started at *4*. So I kind of -- I switched the focus away from, I would say, something more rigid to something which is more in flow, something that's more active.

[00:15:47]

Christina McLean: So would you consider that a formal name change of the first ones, or do they still get the name *Software Structure 1*, *2*, and *3*.

Casey Reas: They have their name -- the original name.

Christina McLean: And then starting with *4*, recognizing that that's a continuation --

Casey Reas: Yes.

Christina McLean: -- of that?

Casey Reas: Yeah. I don't know if that was the best idea in hindsight, but that was the decision I made at the time. So it made sense then, and I'm sticking to it. Yeah.

Christina McLean: And of the three, the third one, you had three other artists interpret your instructions?

Casey Reas: Yes.

Christina McLean: And were you comfortable with the level of variability that you got from their interpretations?

Casey Reas: Yeah. I was surprised by how different they were from what I expected to see. And so the -- when I started the *Process* series moving forward, I made the instructions to be more precise -- more clear, more detail -- so that, I think, when those instructions are interpreted, they will be more of the essence of what I was trying to get at in the work.

Christina McLean: Have you had someone else try to interpret them since?

Casey Reas: I actually haven't. I should. I've had a few plans, but they've never -- I haven't pushed it. But I'd be really interested in doing that.

Christina McLean: And so how did you clarify or refine those instructions?

Casey Reas: So I guess that work, it has -- in the *Process* series, there are three layers to it. There's a set of forms, which are the minimal sort of line and circle, and then it has the behaviors that then get applied to those forms. And then the process instruction itself is how to construct images from how those forms are moving and interacting according to their behaviors. So, for example, it says that if two circles overlap, draw a line between their center points, and draw that line as a black line. So that's -- it's a level of precision that wasn't in the structures.

Christina McLean: Okay. Yes, that sounds (laughs) a lot more clear.

Casey Reas: I think before it just said -- I don't remember the language, but it was vague -- something like, "Draw the intersections of these elements." And then now I'm saying, "Draw it in this way, with this gray value," or something like that.

Christina McLean: So do you often start with those predefined rules and then work within those constraints, or do you (inaudible)?

Casey Reas: It's... I had made a lot of this -- I had been sketching a lot of this work before I made the rules, and so the rules were a way of codifying work that I had already been doing more intuitively. And then -- but then once I had the rules started, that was generative. I was able to identify other rules that were, I would say, logical within the way those rules had unfolded -- or been structured from the original work. And then those new behaviors and ways of drawing generated new work. So I think maybe -- I mean, a really clear difference between the wall drawing work and the process work is, there's

only *Process 4* through *20*. There's very few of them. And I think that's because each process became, in a way, its own body of work -- oftentimes generating other software that that was the starting point for -- so like, *Process 4*, *Software 1*, *Software 2*, *Software 3*. Also generating a lot of works on paper for some of them. And then sometimes even objects, too.

So I think -- I had a series of shows for a number of years which were usually one or two of the *Process* works, and all the other work that derives from those.

Christina McLean: Interesting. So what sorts of modifications were you making to those first processes that...?

Casey Reas: It was basically just breaking the rules. So the process work itself is really following those rules clearly, and then the other work was using the rules as a base, but then just intuitively doing other things with it. It was oftentimes adding more choreography to it -- or more structure, to go beyond what could easily be encoded as a set of rules -- oftentimes adding color, oftentimes superimposing or layering things.

[00:20:58]

Christina McLean: And I think -- what was that? I was thinking about how those -- you had the kinetic images, but then you also had the stills. And I believe in our previous conversation, you had alluded that both informed the viewer of the system, but the kinetic work now seems to have trumped those still images to some extent.

Casey Reas: Hmm. (pauses) Yeah, I think something to clarify about the still images -- they were never captures from what the software was doing; they were always a separate branch of work. So they went through a lot of modifications and changes and evolution to become these works on paper. Really, the idea that the -- well, doing -- making adjustments for the media itself. So I think the thing about the software works are that they have an indefinite duration. They're always doing something a little bit unexpected, so they're conditional media. But they're very low resolution -- like, they're very coarse. And the number of elements that can be used in the work is dictated by how fast the computer is, which is a real frustration. And so the software version is able to show some components of what the work is about, and the works on paper are able to show other possibilities of what that core system can be -- basically, allowing it -- what can happen when it no longer needs to be a real-time work.

Christina McLean: And most of them have a defined beginning, but not necessarily a defined end?

Casey Reas: Exactly. Yeah. So lately I've been using the word "indefinite" a lot.

Christina McLean: "Indefinite."

Casey Reas: Rather than "infinite," because I think that -- it's just wrong. So they always have a beginning. And almost all the process work starts in a maximum -- state of maximum entropy. So... And then while they start to run, they begin to order and structure themselves according to the behaviors of the elements. And then those compositions -- they maintain a similar density over a long period of time, but the elements are always moving and shifting -- and basically just modifying themselves as the elements follow their behaviors and different images emerge through that.

Christina McLean: So what would be considered a full performance of the work?

Casey Reas: I think ideally it would just keep going continuously.

Christina McLean: Throughout the course of the full exhibition, or...?

Casey Reas: Or forever.

Christina McLean: Or forever. Yeah, forever would be great. (laughs)

Casey Reas: Uh-huh. I think -- I mean, from an experiential point of view, after it's been running for about 10 minutes or so -- depending on the process -- you would never be able to tell if it had been running for five years or it had been running for 20 minutes. It doesn't change in that way. But because every time it runs it starts with a random seed -- and there's a small amount of indeterminacy in the way each piece moves. It never does -- it will never do the same thing twice, but it ceases to become -- well, none of them are chaotic. They all -- the work always feels like itself. It's oftentimes -- I mean, making a gross or coarse analogy to painting, it feels like it's the same painting, but it's always differently formed. And then if it feels like it's a different work, then it's a different work.

Christina McLean: It's a different work?

Casey Reas: Mm-hmm. They never change in a way where it feels like it's something different over a period of weeks or a period of days. So the differences are -- I

mean, they're clear to somebody who knows the work, but they are subtle in that way. And the works mostly are slow; they're not frenetic. They shift over time. So if you're sitting in front of the work and you're concentrating on it, you can see the movement very clearly. But they have a rhythm and a pace that is slow.

[00:25:32]

Christina McLean: They definitely invite you to sit and watch them for some time, and the movement is very intriguing. And I get the sense you want the viewer to be able to sit and contemplate the system, in a sense -- or should the viewer be able to decipher that system quickly? Do they need to decipher the system at all to enjoy the work? Or...?

Casey Reas: I don't have expectations for the viewer in that way. (laughter) I think -- you know, some people come to it and they want to solve it or figure it out, and other people just don't. That's not something I even think about. It's just -- I think, for me, I like to just experience the work and to be in the work -- to kind of slow down with it and to notice it. There are also compositions that are all fields -- there's no, like, strong, traditional figure-ground relationship. Everything is -- I would say, like, variable differentiation across the surface. And so there's typically thousands of events happening at the same time. And so you can focus on one area and then maybe move somewhere else, but everything's happening continuously. There's no -- nothing to focus on. And that's very intentional in the work.

Christina McLean: And I was thinking of it in terms of -- LeWitt often used the concept of the work as the title of the work, and then we don't see that with yours. And --

Casey Reas: I think I've not been clear enough about that over time. (pauses) Yeah, I think that's actually true. So one of those works was shown at SFMOMA in a show maybe five or seven years ago, and I think that was the first time that the instructions were not on the wall next to the work. And that was a curatorial decision that they wanted to make, and I kind of bent to their will. (laughter) And then the same thing happened at the Whitney show, too. So prior to those two shows, the work has -- had always been shown with the instructions on the wall next to the system. And it evolved in a way where they were diptychs, so you would see the -- what I call the diagram, which was the forms and their behaviors, on one side, and then next to that you would see the process itself, which was the instructions about how to make an image out of those diagrams. And then you would have the instructions for either on the other side. So that was all available to the viewer. And that just shifted very

recently -- really, after I stopped making the work and it started to be shown in different kinds of venues, that's when the instructions stopped being a part of the work.

Christina McLean: And are you happy with that change?

Casey Reas: I'm okay with it, yeah. If I wasn't okay with it, I wouldn't allow it --

Christina McLean: Sure?. (laughs)

Casey Reas: -- but it was a shift that -- it was unexpected, but I think it's one that's good. I think in both of those shows, the full instructions were in the didactic for the work. So it was available to the viewer; it just wasn't as -- it wasn't a prominent part of the piece.

Christina McLean: And the -- so the software structure work was first an online work?

Casey Reas: Exclusively online, yeah.

Christina McLean: Exclusively online. And then it has been shown in the gallery...

Casey Reas: Yeah, I think when the *Software Structure 3* was shown in the Whitney, that was the first time that work has ever been shown as a work outside of its online context. And I think the thing about the *Software Structures* piece is that it included an essay, it included the LeWitt reconstructions, it included all of the sketches that made its way into that work -- so it was about 12 pieces of software that developed from the first line of code all the way through to the final *Structure 3.* And so all of those things, as well as a set of -- a conversation or dialogue that I had between the three different people who were commissioned to reinterpret -- so it was lot of different kinds of material living together. So when that piece was shown in the Whitney, it was the first time that it was shown just strictly as an image, without that extra context with it. I mean, it had other works around it to provide context, which was, for me, an extraordinary thrill -- to have work with those other -- by those other artists.

[00:30:41]

Christina McLean: And in order -- well, in showing it in the gallery space, in order to juxtapose it with the LeWitt, the color relationships of the forms change, so the background went from -- I believe it was white online --

Casey Reas: It did, yeah.

Christina McLean: -- and then black in the gallery?

Casey Reas: Mm-hmm.

Christina McLean: Can you talk about that change -- or that -- the variabilities?

Casey Reas: That's a change that I really wanted to push for because it was being projected. That's my preference for projection -- because it's reversed. Like, in screen-based media, the white reflects at you; with a projection, basically you're just blasting a white rectangle onto the wall, and that white rectangle becomes the strongest element, because it's just so much light being thrown at the wall and then reflecting back. So with screen-based work, I almost always have a white ground, and with projection-based work, I always use a black ground. And that way, the lines are -- the light is the line itself.

Christina McLean: That makes perfect sense.

Casey Reas: So it involved changing the -- [I would say?] modifying it from the original description, I think.

Christina McLean: And so if it were to be shown as a projection again, that would be the preference, to have a black background?

Casey Reas: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Christina McLean: Okay. And then maybe we can talk a bit about the restoration of that work from its 2004 iteration, I believe, to 2016?

Casey Reas: Sure, sure. That was more of a technical restoration, where the goal was to keep the work as close to the original as possible. And so it was switching it from being a -- what was called a Java applet, which was a way of exporting a Java program so that it could be viewed through a web browser. And at the start of the twenty-first century, that was a very common and widespread, seamless way of presenting software work, through a web browser. But I think through a lot of changes in the way web browsers worked over the decade or so after, now you can't show an applet through a web browser anymore, so I ported it to JavaScript, which is the way people do that now. And so it moved from being a processing program based on Java to a p5.js, which is related to processing, but the JavaScript version. So that's the technical part of it.

And then a part of, actually, the original project was to implement the *Structure 3* in Java and another environment at that time that was really compatible with web browsers called Flash -- and then also in C++, which is a programming language that goes back into the mid-1980s, and C goes back into the 1970s. And C++ programs can't run through a web browser. They run a lot faster -- you can do more, they can be more full-screen -- like, more immersive images. So looking at the same system in those three different programming languages was a part of the original project.

And then we have a lot of commentary on the site about that -- about how the system or the structure of the -- sorry -- like, the system defined in the structure changes when it gets put into those different software materials. Should I say more about that?

Christina McLean: Yeah, that would be great.

Casey Reas: Okay. So at the time, the way the lines were rendered was different in each medium, so that changes how we experience it. I think if we make another gross, crude analogy to physical work, it would be like, "Let's make this line with a 8B pencil, let's make this line with an HB pencil, let's make this line with a big piece of charcoal." Like, it's still the same line, but you -- it feels different to the viewer. The experience of that line is different.

So in the software world, each of those environments rendered the line differently -- so some were more crisp; other were -- had more fuzz to them. And then also -- for example, in the Flash version at that time, I think it was only possible to run about six frames per second, and so it was, like, jerky motion -- it wasn't fluid. And then the Java and C++ version was able to run more than 24 frames per second, and so it was a smooth, kind of continuous motion. And so the software material had a really strong impact on how the intention of the image was able to come through. And then so in the -- when was the last port? Was it 2016?

[00:35:36]

Christina McLean: Twenty sixteen, yeah.

Casey Reas: Switching it from Java to JavaScript had some of those changes, but they were more minor. So I think the quality of the lines shifted a little bit because of how they're rendered. So I think if we think about sort of, like, Greek geometry -- like, we have this -- I think a line is an idea, a circle is an idea, and that's something that has been really important for a lot of my work -- that

it's an idea first and foremost. And so if you want to render a line, you have to make decisions about how that line is imaged in software. And so everything in software is based on pixels. And so back in 2001, pixels were pretty big -- when we're projecting large, like at the Whitney, the pixels are pretty large. But now we have screens that are really high resolution, and the pixels -- they begin to disappear now.

But anyway, so if you have a line, we think of a line as being -- connecting two points, or the shortest distance between two points. You need to figure out how you change those pixels from white to black or black to white in order to render that line. And every piece of software, every software material, renders them a little bit differently. So is it going to be thin and crisp? Is it going to be pixilated or anti-aliased? Is it going to be kind of not totally black but moving more towards, like, a fuzzy gray? And that's determined by the software material. So it changed a little bit on the port to p5.

Christina McLean: It did.

Casey Reas: Because p5 in JavaScript renders the lines a little bit differently than the original Processing. And that's really getting in the weeds of all of this, but --

Christina McLean: No, that's great.

Casey Reas: -- it's a part of the craft of it.

Christina McLean: So if someone had more knowledge of -- was more software-literate than potentially I am, would I be able to look at those and...?

Casey Reas: You'd definitely see a difference, for sure.

Christina McLean: And maybe know which software programming language was used for those different -- so are they artifacts of the medium used, I guess is (inaudible)?

Casey Reas: They're definitely artifacts of the medium. You would see a difference, but you wouldn't read that difference with -- as information. Someone who knows paper knows that's an Arches paper and that's a different kind of paper. I'm learning that, but I don't have that knowledge right now. But someone who knows code will go, "Oh, that was rendered in C++ and that was rendered in something else." For sure.

Christina McLean: And you predominantly use Processing to -- all the way to the end of your work? Or is it just sketching?

Casey Reas: Almost always -- almost exclusively. Yeah, so when Processing first started back in 2001, it was made as a software sketchbook and was used for doing all the sketching. It didn't have enough -- computers weren't fast enough, and it wasn't using -- utilizing the power of the computer in a way where the final work could be made. So final work for me needs to be full screen, needs to be able to just handle -- I mean, it's technical, it's craft, but it needs to handle a lot of geometry in order to make the images that I want to make. I mean, it wasn't capable of doing that. So it would be sketched in Processing and then ported to either Java or C++, which are languages that allow you to get more power out of the machine --- where C++ is the most power. So everything was always sketched in Processing and then ported to C++. But then as computers got faster, as graphics cards got faster, and as Processing was able to integrate or use the power of the graphics card, it was able to do everything I wanted it to do. And so the work just started in Processing and became Processing all the way through.

I think it's my focus on the idea of process that led to Processing being called that and the works being called process work. And that's always been a confusion for everybody -- like, including galleries who have worked with [the?]... So I just wanted to make that clarification -- that they're two very different things.

Christina McLean: Yeah. And I think we often have that with -- you know, system and systems is also a bit of an area of confusion -- not in your work, but in a lot of work.

Casey Reas: Interesting.

Christina McLean: One of the other things that I found really interesting is, this body of work, the instructions created the full visual environment, where some of your other work uses source imagery from mass media and then interprets -- is interpreted through a program or through an algorithm. How do you see those things? Are they different, in a way, creating the environment fully?

[00:40:51]

Casey Reas: It is. Yeah, it's different, for sure. The *Process* works I worked on exclusively -- almost exclusively -- sorry -- from 2004 to 2010. And then there were other things I wanted to explore, and over a period of years it

evolved into [this?] next, larger body of work that I call the *Ultraconcentrated* series, which all use source media. So it's still based in systems and still based in code, but instead of everything being purely constructed, other media is being brought in, and then the system is affecting that other media. So there's another layer of material to work with. And the work changes visually really radically, even though it's still work constructed with code and largely about the -- well, it's about the core systems working with the media that's being brought in, so it is distinctly different.

And it kind of -- it loses that... I'm not going to use that word. (laughter) It's sort of this idea of platonic shapes and, like, Euclidean geometry, and that fascination -- which I think, for me, has always been about a different kind of abstraction than visual abstraction. It's been an abstraction of how things work at a core fundamental level, like in the way the periodic table of the elements sort of defines all the elements that work together, that form everything else. That kind of focus on clear systems left, and it became more active engagement in thinking about, I would say, media -- yeah, in media and how it affects our culture and my own life.

I became really obsessed with media, and working on these small sets of media that were... that I had a lot of personal stake in, things that were really confusing to me that I wanted to try and make work with in order to make some sense out of it. And so those were the newspaper photojournalism source material, the social media network face profile images, and then I spent a lot of time working with television signals.

Christina McLean: Including one that the -- correct me if I'm wrong -- I think it was *Signal and Noise* [sic, *Signal to Noise*], where the images from television were captured live and displayed live in a gallery?

Casey Reas: Yeah, that's right. I've only actually been able to pull that off once, and that was at the Beall Center in Irvine, because they were able to technically manage that. Because it's a bit fragile, so it would break every few days. (laughter) And David, who runs that gallery -- the curator -- was able to just get it going again. I don't think it broke that much, but there was the potential of it breaking at any moment, and he was able to manage that.

Before I -- and it's a different project. Originally, I was curious about curating the data set, and I still feel like that was the -- that is and remains to be the core of the project. But I also wanted to run it in this other way and see how that worked, too -- which was more the real-time way. So I would tune in a specific frequency, which would correspond to a network, and then I

would collect material that was the most consumed material -- so, what are most people watching? And then I would distill each of -- like, hours of video down to what I felt was, like, the essence. So if it's an advertisement, it's sort of the most glossy photography and the most glossy advertisements for consumer electronics and cars and beauty products and things like that -- a lot of Viagra commercials, which are just really disturbing. And then for the other media, maybe if it was sports, it would be, like, the action moments; if it was a detective show, it would be gruesome things -- you know, the shocking moments. And then all that was put together into -- like, hours upon hours -- into a single hour. And then that one hour was played in a loop. But each time the loop played through, it would be taken apart and reassembled in different ways.

So that's what that -- the television signal work, where it started. And I think I made maybe six of those as separate pieces. And then I did -- eventually I discovered that that work needed sound, and so I did a number of those works with audio -- where the original audio for the source material was being distorted in an analogous way to the visual source material was being distorted. And they also -- well, no -- I mean, those works had been displayed on television screens -- so, like, back on its native format -- but I think they've been most impactful as installations. So I've had a few opportunities -- actually, the first one was in Houston in 2015 -- to show that very large, with really kind of body-moving-shaking sound -- like, a lot of bass that would actually physically move your cells around.

[00:46:43]

Christina McLean: Like the earthquake. (laughs)

Casey Reas: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. But controlled rather than scary and frightening.

Christina McLean: Is that the only time you've used audio?

Casey Reas: No. But it was the start. It was the start of using audio. And then I did a few other types of -- like, different works with television sig-- with internet video signals -- basically doing a YouTube search and then just grabbing the material that came with that search and then building work about that -- or from that. And then I continued on future bodies of work to include sound. And that -- the work I'm doing right now will -- I'm going to be working with a composer to do sound for that work, too. When I've done sound, I've always collaborated, because I like to collaborate, but also, I just don't have

that expertise. I know enough about sound to be dangerous, I think, (laughter) and so it's good to collaborate with somebody with that.

Christina McLean: Do you want to talk more about some of your collaborations?

Casey Reas: Sure. Yeah. I think the majority of the collaborations over the years have been with architects, and then now I'm moving into a phase where I hope to be collaborating more with composers. And that also corresponds to a shift in -- away from doing real-time work to working in video for the first time ever. So in 2017, I made five videos in collaboration with The National, which is, for lack of a better word, like, a rock band. And so those were the first video works that I made. And for me, that launched a lot of possibility of working with video, and that's what I'm doing right now. I think new works will come out of that initial collaboration. And two of the people in that band are people who I used to work with all the time when I was in school -- undergraduate. And we were in a band before, and we had been collaborating, like, all the time for five years. And so that was after, like, a 15-year period of us going our separate ways -- like, working together again.

So I think the collaboration for that project was very much of working with photographers, cinematographers, and then talking through ideas with the band, but then I was the director -- and then for the last one, co-director of all the video work for that.

With the architects, that's allowed me to work at scale and with material and space in a way that it just extended the work. And I think the *Textile Room* is the architect's name for the project, but my name for my part of the project is *Casey Reas Loves Los Angeles*, which is based off of a Reyner Banham film -- he was an architectural historian -- called *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles*. It's very directly inspired by that film that he made.

And then I think a really pivotal collaboration for me was working with Tal Rosner. And we did the New World Symphony, like, large software projection on the Gehry building that they opened there. And that was the first time that I worked with other media -- so that was working with Tal's photography of that building and of the neighborhood where the building is. And I think it's right to say that that opened up my imagination about working with other kinds of media sources. So I think all that *Ultraconcentrated* work that came after kind of grew out of that collaboration.

So collaboration for me over the years has been a way of triggering new ideas and opening up opportunities and possibilities -- working at scale and working

with materials and thinking more deeply about sound -- and even opening new media, like video.

[00:50:46]

Christina McLean: And maybe we can revisit the *Ultraconcentrated* series. And that's --

Casey Reas: That was wide-ranging.

Christina McLean: It was very wide-ranging. I'm thinking about how you used that to then create the murals at University of Texas at Austin in the Dell Building, because those are an interesting touch point for me, looking into LeWitt. Can you just talk about that project? The LeWitt murals -- the wall drawings were there prior to your installation.

Casey Reas: It was. And also the sculpture, too. I don't remember the name of the sculpture.

Christina McLean: It's a concrete sculpture? Circle --

Casey Reas: Like, gray or white blocks --

Christina McLean: -- like, with towers?

Casey Reas: Yeah, it's a circle with I don't know how many towers -- eight or six coming out of [it?]. So that's at the front of the building. And then the LeWitt wall drawings -- I mean, you probably know this, but I don't know -- they're, like, washes of pigment. They're really interest-- they're wonderful works. The color is so saturated and so deep in those pieces.

So those pieces were commissioned, I think, when the building was built, and then my understanding is that the department -- the computer science department that was occupying the building wanted to have more work in the building, and so they identified a site. And then I think that was all done through the Landmarks Program at UT Austin, which manages their collection across the campus.

And so I was commissioned for producing work for those two walls that they had identified. And I visited the campus, met with a committee of faculty members and talked about the research going on in the building, looked at the LeWitt works, took a lot of photography, thought about the building itself. I think that work was largely -- for me, it was a synthesis between what I was

interested in making and the kind of research that was happening in that building. I think the overlap for that was really image processing. And they were doing -- they're doing, ongoing, a lot of work in computer graphics and in image processing there, and that's -- in a way, I was exploring that in my own way through the *Ultraconcentrated* work and the *Signal to Noise* work. What else [can I?] say about that?

Christina McLean: So you used the *Ultraconcentrated* work as sources to develop these static-imaged murals... I think I was thinking about the translation of a moving image then into a static image that is permanently installed on the wall.

Casey Reas: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. So I think, like with the earlier work, before I started working in software, I was always working with two-dimensional images on paper. So I think that's where things really started for me. And I think that's why I've continued to work within that throughout the whole time. But this work was developed really specifically knowing that it couldn't be software media at the moment; it's just too -- as if -- to say in a nerdy way, there's, like, too much information. So this -- the work needs to be rendered. It happens -- it gets built through software over a period of time, and then sort of the finished work is there. So this work couldn't be produced as a software projection; it was made specifically knowing that it would be a static work.

And so that was one part of it, and then the other part was working at that scale. So this is just an example of that work. And then I produced -- this book is produced through RRose Editions and it just came out about a year ago, and was made years after the mural was finished. And so what this book shows is the system itself -- like, these are other possible works that were generated through the software from the system, but not those that were selected for the final mural. So it shows more about what the system is than can be done there on the wall.

So one thing I've thought a lot about this work over the years is, it's done as an archival pigment print. Should it have been painted? Could it have been painted? The range of colors in this right now couldn't have been painted, but should it have been sort of reduced in color and turned into... But I think I'd been working at large scale with these archival pigment prints for such a long time that it was a really natural fit -- and was really built into the commission from the very beginning.

[00:56:24]

Christina McLean: Well, and if they were painted, you would have human-drawn lines, as opposed to perfect lines.

Casey Reas: Yeah, mm-hmm. Exactly. I think in this one you can see some of the -- I mean, the quality of the work is just the precision -- so, like, in that area, that would change really strongly --

Christina McLean: Dramatically.

Casey Reas: -- if it had a hand in it.

Christina McLean: Well, and one --

Casey Reas: And the amount of -- I think these were -- I mean, these were made to work really well -- like, as we're looking at them right now on paper. But when you're in that space, the amount of I would say, like, energy in all these intersecting lines from multiple perspectives is a really strong physical sensation that gets lost completely any time it gets photographed. So that's a disappointment for me. So, like, you need to be there to experience it. It was made for that scale -- it was made to be standing in front of a 12-foot wall -- you know, a few feet away or moving back a little bit further. Because there's no real way to get far away from the work because of the architecture. So a lot of -- like, I would say a lot of energy in this project went into working with the size of the wall and the size of -- the relative size of our bodies and trying to make it work in that space. Which is -- this is a different experience, but... Yeah.

Christina McLean: And how do those relate? I guess having a book in front of you is a much more intimate experience than standing in front of a wall.

Casey Reas: Sure.

Christina McLean: So the printing of this you're happy with, but are -- the experiential parts of looking at the work --

Casey Reas: It's just different.

Christina McLean: It's just different?

Casey Reas: Yeah. I think what's exciting to me about this version of it is that you can -- when it's in book format, you get these different juxtapositions. And it was

done as an unbound book, so that you can reorder them and get different kinds of juxtapositions. For example, like that.

Christina McLean: Oh, yes.

Casey Reas: So it's a different project. It has a different kind of experience. But it's getting at the essence of what that work was about in a different way.

Christina McLean: Well, and in --

Casey Reas: And I think --

Christina McLean: -- in a similar way, you know --

Casey Reas: Also, it -- sorry.

Christina McLean: No, no, please.

Casey Reas: Something that's always been there in the work is looking at this one and looking at this one and just experiencing them, both as individual things, but also, I always -- almost always work in sets and pairs. So what's different from this than the other, and what's the space in between? Like, I really want people, if they're open to it, to get into the space of, what is the full space of opportunity of this system. And the way that that can happen is by viewing it in time over a long duration, or looking at two still images and seeing what's between those -- like, the gaps in between. So I think it's similar to how a number of painters work, in grouping and systems and things like that. And you oftentimes don't have an opportunity to see those after the first showing, because the works all get separated and dispersed -- unless they're, you know, concrete series, forced to stay together.

Christina McLean: Well, and that's why retrospectives often become very important, because those are the opportunity to see the work in conversation with itself again. And...

Casey Reas: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Christina McLean: And currently, there's a retrospective of Sol LeWitt wall drawings at Mass MoCA, so that's being able to see a sampling of it. But, you know, that's 105 of the 1,350 wall drawings that exist in the world. And...

[01:00:37]

Casey Reas: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And oftentimes the -- yeah, the retrospectives are revelations. Like, I thought I knew what this artist's work was, but then when you see the dura-- yeah, the work over the decades and you see it together, it's really different -- a surprise.

Christina McLean: There are, yeah, a lot of surprises in that.

Casey Reas: I haven't been to Mass MoCA yet.

Christina McLean: You should definitely --

Casey Reas: How many more years?

Christina McLean: They added -- it had finished about 10 years, so it all was installed by 2008, and after 10 years, they announced that they were going to add an additional 10 years, so it went from being 25 years to being 35 years. So you have 25 more years to see it. I think you'll have a chance to get up there. (laughs)

Casey Reas: Yeah, yeah. For sure. I've tried to go a few times already, but it hasn't panned out.

Christina McLean: Well --

Casey Reas: It'll happen.

Christina McLean: It'll happen. It'll happen, for sure. Well, I think you've answered all the preconceived questions that I really had for you. Maybe -- is there anything else you think we can glean from Sol LeWitt for the preservation of your work, or vice versa?

Casey Reas: I mean, I think an essential thing is that the work gets remade. I think that's a radical idea. And I think that is -- for the work that I do in software, it's an essential idea. Are there examples of that prior to conserving LeWitt's work -- the idea that the work is a set of instructions that gets re-...? I think -- there's a lot of work that's instructions, but it's performative work, so a work that's instructions that's also image-based or picture-based work is such a radical idea, and it was a really important idea for launching years, years of work that I've produced. So I'm really grateful for that. Are there other connections that you see?

Christina McLean: Well, the allowance of variability in that is definitely one that I see. So -- you've talked a lot today about what those variabilities might be. And I think for LeWitt, it's interesting to be able to see his initial drawing, and then often that would be executed by the drafters, and then the final diagram of what the wall drawing could become was done after the first installation -- in a number of cases.

Casey Reas: Oh, wow.

Christina McLean: So its possibility to be rescaled is done after its first iteration. So that -- there's a lot of conversation happening right now about what the extent of those variabilities are, but what it seems to distill down to is, as long as the system and the concept are being respected, then it is still the work. And LeWitt, in an interview we have with Carol Mancuso-Ungaro and LeWitt in 2005, he talks about, if an aesthetic decision has to be made, it's only the artist who can make that. So it's really coming down to the system and the concept being respected. That seems to be the grounds for variability.

Casey Reas: Sure, sure, sure. I think also -- and maybe we -- I didn't talk about it, but installation variability, too, is essential to a lot of this work. A lot of the software work, when it's projected -- which has been my preferred method over the last many years -- it is almost always projected floor to ceiling and edge to edge with the wall. And that was another Whitney compromise -- was not being able to do that. And so the work changes with each wall. The aspect ratio changes. And as we know, walls are idiosyncratic.

So there's also -- it's a detail, but there's a part of the software which basically has these black quadrilaterals on the edges, and those get moved in order to (inaudible) -- because no wall is a perfect rectangle to mask it precisely on the wall. So there's large changes that happen with each wall in terms of the scale and the aspect ratio.

And a really big thing for digital work -- I think it's an important thing to have -- is the resolution. So if it's a 12-foot-by-15-foot wall, are you going to be projecting 1920 pixels by 1080 pixels? Are you going to be projecting, like, 4K pixels and 2K pixels? And that kind of resolution has a huge impact on how you receive the work -- what you -- but it's something that's oftentimes outside of control. And it doesn't radically change the work, but it does change it.

[01:06:44]

Christina McLean: It changes the experience of the work.

Casey Reas: For sure. Like, for example, the pieces in the Whitney were too low resolution, but that was something that had to be with the constraints of the projectors that were able to be used for that.

Christina McLean: And there was a work on a screen in that show, as well.

Casey Reas: Mm-hmm.

Christina McLean: So was that because you didn't want to compromise on the resolution of that work in any sort of way, and so it had to have been shown on a screen?

Casey Reas: That work is more of a sketch, more of a study. So I think it's really well suited to be small. Yeah. So I think that that's good as a screen. I think -- I mean, another thing -- I might be wrong about this, but something that I have thought a lot about LeWitt's work is, the precision of the -- just a deep attention to the materials. Like, if it's going to be red, it's going to be this precise red. But that level of detail is something that I aspire to carry forward with the software-based work, and that includes the quality of the screens being used. And it includes how the screens are hung -- and kind of like Dan Flavin's work -- it's -- like, there's no wires there. And it's a struggle with institutions to be able to break into the walls and put the wires in and all those kinds of things. And -- like, you can see this wall is painted a dark color, and that's because -- I think if the screens are on the white walls, there's so much of a strong contrast of the shape of a screen. And the control over the light levels in the space...

You're showing work on software, which is inherently immaterial, but I need to be in precise control over the environment in order to display that immaterial work, and that includes the lighting, the -- I mean, all those details. And that's something that -- yeah, that -- I learned a lot from reading about the relationship between the ambiguity of maybe the instructions for a LeWitt piece and the precision at which they need to be executed.

Christina McLean: Well, and there is a lot of things that are in some of the catalogue raisonnés where it explains exactly what those materials were at that time. So there was no kind of mystery of what those were; he stipulated certain types of inks. But then within his own lifetime, those inks were discontinued, so there -- we had that precedence of him saying, "Okay, well, the work still exists even without these inks, but let's emulate that color in a new material." So that happened within his lifetime, which gives us a little more information

about how to make those decisions going forward if the current materials are no longer fabricated.

Casey Reas: Right, right, right.

Christina McLean: And I see a good parallel with maybe the hardware of your work, and how, you know, we might not need to stockpile that specific hardware; it can be displayed on something else -- if we know what -- the color qualities we're looking for in your work or [more of those things?].

[01:10:25]

Casey Reas: Yeah, exactly. So I think that's the case -- well, I mean, when you work -- maybe when you work with pigments, you don't need to think as much about a company that makes a certain pigment stopping to produce if they've been producing it for 100 years, but that clearly happened and happens. But with software, it needs to run on hardware; it's a given that it's going to shift dramatically. And so I think that just needs to be built in for the plan of the work... Yeah, if the work will be emulated -- or if you -- I think some artists need the work to be displayed on a cathode ray tube of some vintage, and so that stuff needs to be stockpiled.

But I chose in this work to follow the -- I would say the LeWitt model of, the work needs to be reinvented for whatever the present materials that are available. And for this kind of work, it changes every decade or so pretty dramatically. I'm starting to get requests from collectors through the galleries to restore works. It's becoming an issue. Yeah.

Christina McLean: So is that something you have journaled or written down that accompanies the work -- those types of specifications?

Casey Reas: Yeah. When the work is collected -- a set of six prints are produced for the documentation which show the original iteration of the work -- so if it needs to be restored and I'm not around, that can be used as a template for, this is how it is meant to look. The most important thing that gets in the conservation package is the source code, because that is -- I make a really clear distinction in writing that the source code isn't the work; the source code is a way of encoding the work. But it is -- the source code, for anybody who can read that source code, it very clearly describes the system that's needed to produce the work. And then, of course, the software itself comes with the work, too, but it's -- and I've also clearly, in writing, said that that software is

just -- it's going to be a -- there's going to come a time where it's not going to be playable media anymore.

Christina McLean: All sorts of challenges there.

Casey Reas: Yeah. I mean, I really believe deeply that the software-based work is more archival than works that are made in material -- I mean, with this idea of LeWitt's -- that the work -- all the information for the work is there, and that work doesn't -- that information doesn't degrade; it's ideas, and those ideas can stay constant across the decades. And the precise implementation is not the point. I mean, it -- yes, I have specifications, and yes, this is how it should look, but that's not what the true quality of the work is. So I think with that frame of mind, the work is infinitely archival. There's no materials to degrade, because it can always be reformed in whatever the material of the moment is.

Christina McLean: And that's really one of the beauties [that?] LeWitt -- he had the foresight to be thinking about those things, and quite early on in his wall drawing practice, where... We move walls a lot in galleries, in museums, in people's homes, and, you know, you bump up a chair against it, and if those materials were precious, these works would not have lasted a very long time. But the allowance for variability -- and, you know, it doesn't have to be a wall of these exact dimensions as long as the system is being respected. And I see that a lot with projections, and allowing those variabilities. But where it comes down to maybe some aesthetic decisions is, for better or worse, there are some things we just don't know the answer if he would have liked those things. So we've made it so there's a -- I say "we," but it's not me doing this (laughs) -- there's a consistent way to prepare a wall, and if it's not prepared in that way, there would be some variance to how the work looked. So maybe let's not allow for that to happen. But...

So I think there's certain things that we also rely on -- the social memory of the drafters who worked with him in order to make this transition that's happening now. Because soon, soon enough, there might not be anyone who --

[01:15:55]

Casey Reas: Has a direct line?

Christina McLean: -- has that direct line. And how do we make the transition from knowing LeWitt, respecting the work and him as an individual, to only knowing the

work and him through the work? And I think it'll be really interesting to watch that progress.

Casey Reas: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think another thing about his practice is the ability to carry the ideas through a range of materials -- like, working with photography, working with the structures, working with the wall drawings. I mean, my focus has always been on the wall drawings, because I make pictures, but knowing that those ideas carry through in those different ways has been influential on me, as well.

And then also, I mean, just the idea that a number of other artists share that the work is not an abstraction of anything; the work is what it is -- that's been a huge influence on me, as well. I think that's maybe more of a given or more obvious, but I think it's good to say it explicitly, too.

The dance piece -- with Lucinda Childs -- and who was the -- and Philip Glass -- you know, every decade or so I'll go see a performance and it will just really resonate with me and sort of change my view of the world. For me, that -- seeing that performed -- actually, here at UCLA, at Royce Hall, a number of years ago -- was a work like that. So I don't really know enough about his collaboration in that work or how much he really saw that as being critical for his own practice, or if it was more of a -- just something that had happened. But I think those three different artists working in different media together making something also had a -- has a large impact on me as well.

And maybe that, and a number of other pieces of media, have been really influential on, I think, defining my desire to cross with other disciplines and make work that evolves further from what I know how to do -- like, working with -- yeah, composers.

Christina McLean: So what's kind of sparked that interest to look at other historical art movements or individual artists and drawing those connections to your own work? What catalyzed that?

Casey Reas: I mean, with the Whitney commission, it was specifically this disturbing question -- it was like, I'm an artist, I'm working with code. Clearly, it's not a blank slate. Like, what from art history relates to this work that I'm making? And the wall drawings were the clearest related work. And I didn't know much about the wall drawings when I did that -- the whole point of that commission was digging deep into that as an open-ended exploration, as open-ended -- doing research through making is something that I always do. I

do things that I don't think are significant works, but that's how I process the world, that's how I think, is by making, not by -- yeah, that's just how I think.

And so lately, I've been doing something similar with Stan Brakhage films -- like, I've been remaking certain Stan Brakhage films in my own context, with my sort of -- with the media and materials that are available today, and seeing how those ideas play out. And so that work, like with the LeWitt work before, has led to things that I wasn't able to conceive of before I did that -- sort of making-based research.

So I think we maybe talked about this a little bit in the last talk, is that I -- I don't think it's unique, but, I mean, a lot of artists do (laughs) research art history. I spend so much time looking at work -- and this is back to paintings -- like, I've spent a lifetime in museums looking at paintings, and I think that it just informs everything. A lot of time in Europe looking at paintings -- centuries back -- and I think it informs everything. But it just takes a long time to learn so much art history. And so what we learn in our formal education is -- it's typically, like, surface -- as an artist, not as an art historian -- surface-level, across everything. So doing these deeper investigations into the history of concrete art, into early video synthesis, into avant-garde film, going deeper than just, like, the surface level, going back and reading essays written at the time -- I mean, that's just stuff that's taken me 20 years to kind of continue to go through and learn more about the work that's feeding what I'm doing now. And as I do that, it changes the work -- I learn about all these precedents and all these ideas that influence the present. So lately, it's been video -- building on top of everything that's been explored and thought about before.

Christina McLean: That's great. Well, I think that kind of... Is there anything else you want to add?

Casey Reas: Probably, but I can't think of it right now.

Christina McLean: (laughs) [Absolutely?].

Casey Reas: And it's a lot of material.

Christina McLean: Yeah.

Casey Reas: Yeah. Thank you.

Christina McLean: Yeah, thank you.

[01:22:41]

[END]