



**Artists Documentation Program
Video Interview Transcript**

**DAN CYTRON ON SAM FRANCIS
OCTOBER 7, 1999**

**Interviewed by:
Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founding Director, Artists Documentation Program,
and William C. Agee, Curator, The Menil Collection;**

**Video: Laurie McDonald | Total Run Time: 01:36:22
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“Sam Francis: Paintings 1947-1990,” January 28-April 2, 2000**

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

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About the Artists Documentation Program

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

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

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

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[Speakers (in order of appearance): Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Chief Conservator, The Menil Collection; Dan Cytron, Assistant to Sam Francis; William C. Agee, Curator]

[BEGIN RECORDING]

CM-U: Okay. Today is October 7th, 1999, and we are here in The Menil at the Sam Francis exhibition. With me is Dan Cytron, who worked with Sam Francis for many years, and Bill Agee, who is curator of the exhibition here at The Menil. This is informal, but I wanted to start by just asking you, Dan, when you started working with Sam, and how that came about? And what you actually did?

Cytron: Oh, I was asked by a friend of mine to help, and he was very interested in Sam Francis, who I had never heard of. Says, “Well, I’ve got – I have a friend of his who is a contractor, and we can work in his garden. Clean out some junk.” And so I went with this – his name is Artisan Phillips [sounds like] – and so we went to his house and started pulling weeds. And then...

CM-U: And this was where?

Cytron: At his house on West Channel Road in Santa Monica Canyon in '67.

Agee: Formerly the Charlie Chaplin house, wasn't it?

Cytron: Right.

CM-U: Oh, really?

Cytron: Yeah. One of several with _____ [word inaudible]. Yeah. And so then, yeah, when we were done with that, he says, “Well, tomorrow I’ve got this – I’ve got to move some stuff in my studio down in Ocean Park.” So that’s where we went next. We kind of proved ourselves at being manually – dexterity. And so we went to the studio there and started transferring his paint and materials from one room into a new room which used to be a sailmaker’s – it used to – it actually was the second floor of a Masonic lodge. And the large room that had a beautiful wooden floor and windows overlooking the outside of the building was – a sailmaker had been there, and he had left; and now Sam was taking over that space. And the space where he was at that time had been Richard Diebenkorn’s. And Diebenkorn was on the other side of the wall, and that’s where he did the Ocean Park paintings.

Cytron: So I helped move stuff out of Diebenkorn’s – from this room into Diebenkorn’s, and Diebenkorn’s into Sam’s room, and from Sam’s into the sailmaker’s loft.

- Agee: Was Diebenkorn still working there?
- Cytron: Oh, yeah.
- Agee: Yeah, he was still there.
- Cytron: So – and it had been originally kind of – the studios were handed from friend to friend. And so that was so – that’s where – so my friend, who was very enthralled by Sam, just was – wanted to impress him so tremendously. And I had never heard of him. I could care – I said, “Oh, no, nice space.” And so – and moving his stuff around. And so the word – well, he – Sam, you know, my – he wanted desperately to be his – to somehow have this connection, and he shut him down like closing the door on the darkness. And then he said to me, “Well, how’d you like to work for me?” I’m going, “Huh?”
- Cytron: Okay. So we went to his house, and I looked at his big studio. He had just finished building it.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And I said, “Nice space.” And it had no art in it. And I said, “Sure. Okay.” Because that would help – I had no plans. It was in my last year of graduate school, so – “Okay. Great.” And then at the time I was living in Highland Park, which is east of the city. And then the opportunity came to live there, and so I said, “Well, why not?” So I moved into a little house there and just started working, preparing stuff in the house and the studio. And that’s where these things started.
- CM-U: So it was – was it actually making strainers, that kind of thing? Or was it working on the house itself?
- Cytron: Oh, I was the studio assistant. I was stretching canvases and gessoing and preparing materials.
- CM-U: And where was he getting the canvases at that point? Did you ever pick up supplies for him?
- Cytron: He – there was a man named Lucius Hudson, at the time, who would make smaller canvases that were ready-mades. And he would make the stretcher bars. And the canvas was ordered out of New York. Later on he ordered canvases out of Belgium.
- CM-U: So it was mainly linen that he was working on?

Dan Cytron/Sam Francis Interview Transcript, Artists Documentation Program, The Menil Collection, 10/07/1999

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- Cytron: Well, the linen. Yes, we had linen, but this was straight cotton duck. And that came out of Alabama, actually. The biggest mill. It had ten-foot wide, and some other materials. But they – basically we just had the rolls, and threw them down there, cut them, and put them together. The big Berlin mural was where he had the largest piece of linen that had been made until that – up to that time, for a large canvas. He had two large, giant pieces of linen made. Beautiful linen, out of – one for the final painting, and one was for a – in case he screwed it up.
- CM-U: Did you...
- Cytron: He actually had three. And then we made a smaller sketch, and then went from there. A kind of – it was a major commission that he got that just changed – it was just a wonderful thing.
- CM-U: And when you were – for example, this painting behind us...
- Cytron: Um-hum.
- CM-U: ...is this something that you would have primed yourself? He would have bought the linen unprimed?
- Cytron: Yeah. We'd get the canvas and stretch it on the bars. The bars are made by Lucius. They are adjustable, so they can be expanded. And lay it on the canvas. Lay it on the floor, and stretch it up, and then literally hand gesso it.
- CM-U: Okay. Gesso it flat?
- Cytron: Yeah. And then partially – actually we'd flip it over. So we'd get up there and literally, with a – this one, I think, has got the little – we tinted the gesso. So this one, I think, has a little...
- Agee: Hmm.
- Cytron: ...green in it. We did some green, some red. Kind of slightly pink.
- CM-U: And they were water-based gessesoes?
- Cytron: Yeah. Yeah. But he had, as I said, some older paintings there. And I saw actually how he had done it himself. And his surface is very different than – you can see his strokes that he would put on the surfaces on the canvas. So you can see his rhythm.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: This is a very different approach. This was very – it almost lost some of that personality. And when it initially went on, you could kind of see my rhythm, but not Sam's rhythm. So I used to think it was kind of funny. Because they end up being – if you thought of it in terms of percentages, more my painting than his. But...

CM-U: I guess so.

Agee: You can see some of the green tinting coming up. Now that's very interesting, you know, under a strong light.

Cytron: It would – he didn't want it pure white.

CM-U: And did he pick a different color for grounds of different paintings?

Cytron: Well, basically those are the two that he kind of wanted to – wanted to give a little bit of a difference to.

Agee: _____ [word inaudible]

CM-U: Did he mention why that was important to him?

Cytron: No. No, I didn't really question his aesthetic choices because that really wasn't my world [sounds like] to do that.

CM-U: I understand.

Cytron: But he – basically these were all painted flat on the ground, and he – these were done with acrylics from – Nova Color was part of it. That's a small company in Culver City that made colors.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: And he would literally – he started using Photo-Flo, which Kodak had, in order to – as a water tension breaker. That was very important to him, so he could allow the material to flow out.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: So he would mix Photo-Flo right in with the paint?

Cytron: He would – well, no, actually he would put the water down. Then add a little bit of the Photo-Flo to it so it would break the surface tension. Then he would put the paint down and have it kind of use the...

CM-U: So that's how you get that kind of bleed along the edge?

Cytron: Well, basically he's defined the extent of the color, and then by keeping it moist – and the Photo-Flo would allow the lighter materials that weren't so heavy to flow out to that edge. Or if they were already a more opaque material or – rather than instead of a dye, they were an inorganic color, they would tend to be more stable and not move as quickly. So he used the cadmium yellows, which don't tend to move very much. You see the phthalo blues. You see the phthalo greens. And, he's using the carbazole violets. Basically the standard – and these were done with dispersions. And as I mentioned...

CM-U: Would you explain that? I mean, it's kind of...

Cytron: Yes. In coatings, when you have – a dispersion is where you take a material and you disperse it in something that's not a dry – it's just a media that allows it to be flowing. And so you take this material, and you literally mill it and kind of allow it to break apart to its fundamental particle size in some kind of a liquid. In this case it's a glycol material. In this case it happened to be ethylene glycol, which is not particularly healthy; but that's what they made in at the time because it's a universal dispersant for both oil and some – and water-based materials. It's the same thing you see in antifreeze.

[00:10:40]

CM-U: Yeah.

Agee: Hmm.

Cytron: So that's – and so he had, as I mentioned, this material. A lot of it came from – when he was in Japan, he connected with a company called Hoechst, which is now Hoechst Celanese, which is a big pigment manufacturer, pharmaceutical company, and they make – they are like – it's primary chemistry. And so they made these pigments that are used in paint and car colors and everything else. So he glommed onto some of these in Japan. How he found it, I don't know. He never mentioned specifically. He wouldn't really want to tell you where he got things unless you asked him specifically because that meant that the secrets were going to get out. But he had to tell me because I could see what was there.

- Cytron: So he had some material that he had from Japan, and so we would open up the materials, and he would start to paint with that. And that's where he made this transition from oil paint to these because these were such – they were essentially a watercolor, but they had no binder. There was nothing to allow them to adhere to the surface because the glycol has no adhesive qualities. So he would add, in this case, Roplex, or a standard water-based acrylic to them, in order to give it something to hold onto. And the other factor is that this is such minute amounts that – and so strong – that he was much more generous in the beginning because he would put more resin in there than normal. And when they are like this, they tend to dissipate; so you don't see the resin. So there is just – and they acted very much like a gouache where you have a lot of the pigment surface and very little resin to make it look bright and shiny.
- CM-U: And what was the color in itself? Was it liquid or was it dry pigment?
- Cytron: Well, it's a – the pigment all comes from some chemical reaction, unless they are an inorganic pigment. Then it comes from a calcining, or a – where you heat the material up and literally break it down into powder. Force it to chemically – so it's all chemicals that are – particle sizes are whatever they are. And then they are kept in suspension. That's what keeping it dispersed is, to keep it so they don't agglomerate and become large clumps. And then when you add water to it, they tend to open up. Watercolors are highly ground pigment in gum arabic, usually.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: And these are not inorganic colors. In other words, they are not oxides. Oxides are things like – the yellow is a cadmium, and it's a heavy metal that is literally – it precipitated out of chemical reactions, and it's not going anywhere. But it's a very heavy, large particle. It's like a – if you compare the organic colors, organic color is like the size of my fist compared to a ball the size of this room, which is an inorganic color.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: So you can get a hell of a lot of these little balls, as compared to one big ball. And so you don't need – when you add water to this, they tend to spread out. So you don't need a lot of these to make a pigment. So they are more transparent. They allow you to kind of sense that flowing. And that's kind of what you are sensing.
- CM-U: And that was something that was very specific to his intent? To get that effect?

- Cytron: Well, he loved that kind of flow.
- Agee: The flow.
- Cytron: The watercolors are what he started – I mean, he saw that in the beginning.
- CM-U: I was going to ask you, Bill, is that something, is that an interest that went through his career?
- Agee: Yeah. It seems to me, the flow and movement of paint is very evident. And I think from the earliest point onward. And I think that – you know, I talked – and I'm fascinated by that large painting of 1952 from Shiga, which is in Japan, which is like a big watercolor. I mean, it reminds me of – it is as if he looked at Cezanne, which I'm sure he did – wants to emulate that quality of a Cezanne watercolor, but now in a painting, large scale, abstract painting. Modern idiom. So, I mean, I sense that in a lot of the work, that he loves the fluidity of watercolor, but he gets that in paint. And there is a fluidity in the later pictures, the very late pictures of the '80s, too, although that is more like lava. I mean, it seems to me it just pours, like molten...
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Agee: ...some molten, organic material. But, yeah, that flow and that rhythm. One thing eliding into another. So there is that sense of time they talked about. It seems very important.
- CM-U: How did he prepare his papers? You must have worked with those as well?
- Cytron: Well, some of the paper he – we gessoed and did the very same thing. We put a water base gesso. Although I did make up some rabbit skin glue gessos in the beginning. But he kind of pulled away from all the kind of oil and the historical [sounds like] material like that because it was so cumbersome to work with.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: It just wasn't immediate. He liked it...
- CM-U: He liked the fast.
- Cytron: He liked – he wanted to work now.
- Agee: Yeah.

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Cytron: And his focus was then, and he didn't want – he didn't like to go over things. That was kind of, almost – he would do a – occasionally he would edit things. But on the whole, it was that moment.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: I mean, he had – he was going to Japan after I first started there, and then he would come back, and the idea of immediacy became even more important. And I didn't quite understand. I thought, as an art student, well, the artist does everything himself. Well, no that wasn't – there may have been a time when Sam did that, but at that point in time, no. He wanted it done. He wanted to get to the moment of where he was working. That was the most important thing. And the scale, and the involvement he was there, was very important. And that was the key. That was his – you know, he didn't want anyone around. That was when he did his work, and...

CM-U: So you made up the materials, but then you were not there when he was actually painting?

Cytron: Well, I was there sometimes.

CM-U: Yes.

Cytron: But on the whole, yeah, this was his private time.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Cytron: That's when he did his work. And it was not something – it's almost like the – and there's some film out that you see Sam painting. It's rather – in fact he even had himself photographed while he was painting, just to try to document that. But on the whole, it was pretty much his focus on doing it, and he wasn't there for – it wasn't entertainment.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: It was his meditation, basically.

Agee: That immediacy comes through. That's very interesting. And I felt that. And if there is other evidence for it in the film...

Cytron: I don't think he wanted anything belabored.

Agee: Yeah.

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- Cytron: In fact, I think that was what he didn't want.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: He didn't want to have to work on it, and work on it, and work on it.
- Agee: Yeah.
- CM-U: Did he destroy work? I mean, if he was working on something, and the immediate kind of effect was what he was after, were there times when something just went awry, and rather than reworking it, he just threw it away? Destroyed it?
- Cytron: Well, I think you have to understand that Sam believed – didn't edit himself. He believed that everything he did was okay.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: It was not – you see, we can't put our moral judgments on where we think. And his painting was about where his mind went. It was not a good painting, or a bad painting. It was just his painting.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: In fact at one point he said, "Well, you pick the show for me," and we put the pieces out there. And I said, "I'm pretty uncomfortable. I mean, it's what I'm interested in, but what about what..." "No," he said, "no, you pick it out. You know what's okay." And so he – and I thought, "Well, that's a strange kind of point of view." And I had to change my orientation to realize that when he wanted – when he had a commission, or something that was very important, where it had to get done – let's say the big Berlin mural – I mean, he worked, and he worked, and it was something that took forever. I mean, he worked very hard on that. It was going to be his – I think, in most of the cases, if he was there, it was going to be okay. There was no mistakes. It was just, he had to make sure he was focusing on what was going to be done, and it will be all right.
- Cytron: And it's trusting yourself. It's the most amazing kind of unmoralizing that I've ever seen. In fact, I think that's probably the – his truest nature was that he didn't really want to be moral, as we would try to say, "Well, there's a right

way and a wrong way.” It’s just, “This is the way it is.” And he was in that place, as an artist, that he had kind of said, “Well, that’s okay in this arena.”

[00:19:48]

Agee: This gets to the crux of Sam as an artist, as I understand him; and it’s very clear. Sam has been criticized for that by lots of people, that Sam didn’t edit the work. I’ve probably said that or thought that. But that was not Sam. And in a day of highly structured careers, and career moves, and strategies, I mean, that’s just not Sam. And what he was at that moment, that was his art. And that was the way it was going to be. I think that was Sam, and I think it was also... David Smith. I’ve just been up at Storm King looking at the show up there.

CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.

Agee: There was a symposium. Smith talked about the same kind of thing. I think that that’s a little bit of an idea of the ’40s and ’50s American art, after the war, is to get that flow going. And Smith said, “If you prefer one piece over another, that’s your business. But that’s not the way I think about it. I see it all as part of one continuum, one flow of work and ideas.” Smith very much liked James Joyce. To get himself warmed up, he would read from Joyce, for example, and get the flow of consciousness going.

Agee: I think for Sam, also, it’s part – I mean, I think of Sam as a color painter. And I think that that’s also the practice of the color painter. You have to literally stay limber. You have to work and stay loose and keep that flow going. And if you stop and think and edit, I think it breaks it. But Sam has been – you hear it a lot. “Well, Sam needed a good editor.” But that wasn’t going to be.

Cytron: But the materials he’s using are not open to editing.

CM-U: Right.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: You can’t edit with a watercolor.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: You’re absolutely right.

Cytron: So he couldn’t – he wasn’t doing – I mean, yes, there are some oil paintings...

- CM-U: I was going to say, but then in the earlier work, he was. In fact, in some of the earlier work, there is not even an isolated ground. He's letting the color kind of bleed into the fabric.
- Cytron: That's right. Right. But it all started – it starts – you know, one thing I learned about Sam was – and a mistake. It took me a while to figure it out. His work was more about the drawing. They literally are drawings. They are more colored drawings than anything I have ever seen. It is not about trying to reproduce something else. He is drawing all the time, and so the shapes that are there are sometimes a drawing that is enlarged, and sometimes it is smaller. And so the strokes are very important, and the shapes are really, really very relevant.
- CM-U: What were the brushes like? What was his attitude toward brushes?
- Cytron: Oh, well, he...
- CM-U: He bought them everywhere?
- Cytron: At wherever he could find them. In France they had the wonderful mop brushes, the kind of the squirrel hair brush that he used to bring back. They were not available here at the time.
- Agee: The mop brush, yeah.
- Cytron: He had every kind of brush in the world. At that point in time, he had enough money coming in that he didn't deny himself access to anything. Now it's funny. He didn't choose a lot of paints – you know, European style paint brushes that a painter would use for a wall. He chose mostly some things that are softer, more Orientalness in its flavor, in the scale. They would literally have some of these French mop brushes that were very, very large. I mean, I don't know how many squirrels had to die for them, but... But he had some extravagant things that he could afford to have that would give him these wonderful soft areas. And he was very much involved in the act of the moment.
- Cytron: I think that – I mean, it's just – yeah, the brushes were quite extensive. He would bring them back from Europe, or we would order them, or we'd buy them. Wherever we could find, we'd start buying stuff.
- CM-U: Did he mainly paint with a brush?
- Cytron: Yeah.

- CM-U: Roller, I guess, later on?
- Cytron: Well, around this time, we had bought some large rollers. Commercial rollers, that we had gotten actually. He said, "You're taking too long putting the gesso on. Use a roller."
- Agee: That's a funny story.
- Cytron: So we bought the rollers, and we were rolling it. And he looked at that, and he saw how – you know, he would watch me working, whatever the case is. And so I said, "Well, you know..." And so we got him some other rollers, and he started saying, "Well, why don't I just put the water down with that?" And then he started saying, "Well, I'm putting it down with a brush. Why not do that?"
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And so it became another – it was a matter of scale. Before, he would use a mop to make the water, and then he would paint into the water where the large painting – he would – the scale was basically what he had. And all of a sudden these rollers gave him, you know, this wide of water going down in a uniform manner, and he could get it done, get it over with, get the scale changed. In other words, by changing the scale of the stroke, the whole painting could be dealt with differently.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Agee: Right.
- Cytron: So the big paintings suddenly had these huge...
- Agee: Huge paths.
- Cytron: ...huge, giant pathways. Where before he was stuck to the smaller ones. And so it was basically putting tiny little things down. Where he could just get it over with, and make the scale and the drama so much more direct.
- CM-U: Well, I think we'll move into the other room and talk about that. But before we do, did you want to – or maybe we'll save your roller story when we move into the other room.
- Agee: Well, no, it's about somebody else. But it's about rollers. But Flavin once said, "You know, somebody had said that Michelangelo had taken 15 years to paint the Sistine ceiling, and if he had listened to me and used rollers, he could have

done it in a month.” But I wonder, then, before we go into the other room, is there anything about some of the earlier paintings that Sam might have said, or you might have observed? I am particularly interested, for example, and Carol, you have to _____ [word inaudible] some of this, on the gray Paris pictures? Because how did he get that down? I mean, it’s – and get that color? It’s scumbled or – I mean, it’s a wonderful, gritty, and yet atmospheric. They are miracles of – and I just don’t know about how – did he ever talk about that?

Cytron: Yeah, he talked about it. Because I had only seen a few of these he had in his house. You know, they were in storage, and then they would come out every once in a while. So I said, “Pretty amazing. Those are unusual.” He said, “Well, I didn’t have...” He was living on the G.I. Bill.

Agee: Right. Yeah.

Cytron: “So,” he said, “I didn’t have very much money. And so I made those tubes of paint last a long time.” So part of it was the economics of it.

Agee: The economics of it. Right.

CM-U: So he just had to roll them in, and then he...

Cytron: He tried to make that stuff last. And he wanted to do scale. Now if you think of the normal painting that would – the amount of materials he’d have to use in order to do something that size, if he was a traditional painter...

Agee: Yeah. Right.

Cytron: ...you couldn’t afford it. I mean... It would be – I mean, just think of all the tubes and tubes and tubes and tubes. Well, he was living on – he was an ex-soldier on a disability, living with his wife in Paris, scrounging around, trying to make – do something.

Agee: Seventy-five bucks a month, or some...

Cytron: Yeah.

CM-U: And yet the effect is that kind of ethereal effect that we see. And you can definitely see what interested him in it...

Cytron: Oh, yes.

- CM-U: ...even though it may have been dictated by need, there is certainly an aesthetic effect that resulted from that.
- Agee: Right.
- Cytron: And there was a small French manufacturer of artists' paints there.
- CM-U: Do you remember the name of that?
- Cytron: Lucien Lefevre, I think is...
- Agee: _____ [word inaudible] Lefevre.
- Cytron: And so he would go to their shop, and he would get their paint, and he would use that. And also – I mean, he was very much conscious – and you can see, when he started making some sales, all of a sudden he could make the palette get better. I mean, he was very conscious of how to – try to make his life more – have more life to it. It's pretty amazing. And I look at those paintings very much like the early watercolors you have here. They are actually kind of the same kind of world, only they've been – they are from a very small world and a small space to now he's in the land of real painting.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: Because at the time, why would you go to New York? In 1950? There's nothing there. He went – he jumped to the traditional where everyone was taught. I mean, you can see he was – France. In San Francisco, he is being taught, "Where is art from?" Art came from Europe.
- Agee: Yeah.
- CM-U: In Paris.
- Cytron: "I'll go to Paris."
- Agee: Yeah. Sure. It's the bastion. It's an old American idea.
- CM-U: Sure.
- Cytron: Right.
- Agee: Paris is culture. And from the West Coast, you would – yeah, sure.

CM-U: There are a few things I wanted to ask you just before we move from this room onto the other. What about stretchers? Did he have a preference for stretcher depth? I notice on the picture from Sweden, it's such a narrow – it's barely an inch deep, and I wondered if he had a preference or talked about stretcher depth? Or if that was somewhat of an issue?

Cytron: The stretchers that came out of New York were always much thicker, and they were older style. They weren't using the triangles in the end to enlarge them. Lucius kind of invented this expandable stretcher bar that he worked on and used some different kind of ways of having tension. And it was much – it wasn't as thick as that. It could be thinner. And it was a better hardwood. So that was just to keep the weight down. And it meant that it also was easier to stretch. Maybe – I don't know about longevity, but it was certainly easier to stretch.

[00:29:57]

CM-U: Um-hum.

Agee: They are huge paintings, sure.

CM-U: And clearly those on paper, at least the ones in the exhibition, have frames. And some of the paintings do, too. Did he ever comment about the frame? What was his thought about framing?

Cytron: He didn't like them framed. He liked it raw. You know, I think he – the only thing that he mentioned once is that he had a show that was in Europe, and the material came by boat. And somehow the large painting was destroyed in transit.

Agee: Oh, it's a Basel. The Basel Murals. Yeah.

Cytron: And it had gotten damaged. And he was very unhappy because he had to work on it again. And also it was disappointing to see the work disappear. He was aware of other artists who had lost work in fires and all kinds of other things. Sam very rarely reworked anything, and so to have something that – it had a life of its own. If people didn't care about it – I mean, he used to have a St. Bernard called Soska, and this dog was, you know, going through the studio. He would have the works on paper, and then you'd see these dog prints on the works on paper.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: And I'm thinking, "Who left the door open?" "Oh, it's okay. It's okay." And so we'd have to go, and we'd have to take the erasers and take the dog prints off. But if it was up to him, he could care less.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: He thought that was just funny.

CM-U: Did he rework those Basel Murals?

Agee: No.

CM-U: Oh, he didn't?

Agee: I don't – I don't – there are three sections. One of them was – he finally cut away part of the section. And he never reworked them, as far as I know.

Cytron: No.

Agee: So that the third of the – one of the murals is in the Stedelijk in Amsterdam. The third is at the Norton Simon – the second is at the Norton Simon Museum now. The third is now – and these, each was, I think, eighteen feet long. I mean, big, big pictures. It exists now only in two or three segments...

Cytron: Right.

Agee: ...and so you get a sense of...

CM-U: You mean he cut it down?

Agee: He cut it. It was just – the canvas was rotted out.

Cytron: Right. There was no way to repair it.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: And he wasn't about to redo it.

CM-U: What happened to the canvas, exactly? I don't understand.

Cytron: There was water damage in shipping.

CM-U: I see.

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- Cytron: It was in a container boat or something, and it just got damaged, and that's the way – I mean, it was one of those things. That's why a lot of the work, that people didn't want to send it. The Japanese said, "No more."
- Agee: Yeah. Right. And so that has been shown through a reproduction. I'm not sure of the system, but a kind of reproduction system. They have made panels that duplicate. It doesn't work very well.
- CM-U: Oh, they tried to put it back together?
- Agee: Yeah, they tried to put it back together. But you can see it. And they did that in Paris. I didn't think that was successful at all. But in Los Angeles, where all this enormous amount of space, nothing but space, at MOCA we did have – I put the panels up and tried to reproduce the spacing, so that least you got the sense of the – because this was an extraordinary impact that these would have made. And as I indicated and wrote about it – when I went to Basel and saw that, I thought I saw what Sam had in mind. Because they are on the stairwell, and that central panel faces out on these windows. It's now in reconstruction. And the great sky opens up, and there is this extraordinary church, St. Elizabeth's spire that soars up. And that window, and those murals, opens – reflects those windows, I'm sure.
- Agee: So it was a great commission, but the town fathers in Basel – it was commissioned in '56. He finishes it in '58. It hangs there until '64, but then they would not buy them. For – I don't know. I searched the archives, and I don't have any – in Basel, and I couldn't find out why. But some kind of town politics or something like that. I think that Arnold Rudlinger had commissioned them, and I think – I suspect that they thought he was paying too much attention and too much money on Sam's work, but I don't know.
- CM-U: Hmm.
- Agee: But that – _____ [phrase inaudible] Sam was, and I think there is more to be done on this. Sam and the great French mural tradition, which is still very much alive in the '50s in Paris. And when he sees those Monets. And to this day, when you go down to the Orangerie, it – bam! I mean, you're just knocked out. It is one of the great decorative, and I mean decorative in the best sense, decorative cycles in the world ever. I mean, you go from there, and go see Giotto at Assisi. I mean, it will all be the same kind of thing. And Sam's ability to think in a mural size. And then the internal scale is also what he is really good at. And of course there is a difference within size and scale, right?
- CM-U: Sure.

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- Agee: Were there any other early pictures that he talked about, or you asked him about, Dan, that is anything that bears remarking on?
- Cytron: He had so few of these works when I was there. I had to go to Europe to see them.
- CM-U: I guess one of the things that strikes you about the early work is this great sense of verticality because of the drips that he kind of allows happens. So you have this sense of gravity, and you have this sense of coming down. And definitely you feel him working in the vertical format.
- Cytron: Yeah.
- CM-U: As opposed to when you get to something like this. And I guess, as you are going to lead us into the later work, it's more flat. There is really a different, an orientation there in terms of how he is presenting the space.
- Cytron: I think a lot of it has to do with just his physical condition.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Cytron: He had a fused spine, so he was not – he didn't talk about... Let me put it this way. When I first met Sam, he was always coughing. He was coughing from day one until – ever since I knew him, he was always [sound like coughing or clearing throat] having an infection, something going on.
- Agee: Yeah. He lived out of sickness.
- Cytron: And so it was always – and I said to him, “Well, I don't want to be around this person if he's sick all the time.” And then he – but that's just the way he was fighting his stuff. And for him to – it was enough for him to try to figure out ways to make it so he could solve the problems. And working flat was fine. I mean, he couldn't have done these giant murals any other way.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And the small works were all done on tables or on the floor. And I believe that – I mean, this didn't just happen quickly. It had to have transpired in the... I know I've seen pictures when he was in Switzerland doing some of the other paintings, when he was recouping after that. He didn't – I don't know. I never asked him about that because it just didn't – I didn't see him in another light, and the paintings weren't there as evidence.

- CM-U: Right.
- Agee: Yeah.
- CM-U: After working flat, he would let them – put them up to dry, and look at them, and reassess them? Or not really? It was just sort of that kind of a priori treatment? He painted them, and that was that?
- Cytron: Well, he certainly put them up and looked at them. He pinned them on the wall, the small pieces, and he put the paintings there after they had – to set up...
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: ...and check them out. He may have worked on them again after looking at them, if he wanted to change things. But at some point it was done. But the other factor is, he would be working. He'd have to do a show, and he would wait and wait and wait till the deadlines came up.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And so part of it was his own – it was a lot of energy for him to get up to even face the canvas, or to face the painting because he didn't do it – and later on he would do more on a daily basis, but it was just, basic, "I've got to get it done. I've got to solve the problem." Because life was more interesting than in the studio sometimes.
- CM-U: Right.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: I mean, he had a family and so forth.
- CM-U: What about varnish? Did you – did he like varnish? Use it as an isolating coat, or mixed in?
- Cytron: No. That's – the work is very – the reason it has its softness and vulnerability is because the surface is very vulnerable.
- CM-U: Um-hum.

- Cytron: And it was almost a joke sometimes because he did some work that was monotypes on a large press, and he put dry pigment in, and they press it down. And the stuff would be kind of popping off in the Plexiglas covers. And I used to – I mean, I'd just shake my head because that's just the way it was. But you don't get this kind of soft, beautiful, brilliant color by putting a surface on top of it.
- Agee: Um-hum.
- Cytron: You don't get the flat kind of richness. The oil paints are the closest thing you'll see to that. And if it so happens that when he mixed some resin in with his color, that was maybe more than he thought about, it happens to have more of a gloss to it, it's because he – I'll put it this way. He put it that way, and it ended up being sometimes a change. I don't know if it was thoughtful, or if it was just because that's just the way. I would say he was responsible for all of it.
- CM-U: Right. Forgive me if I'm repeating, but what type of resin was he mixing in with the colors at that point? Some sort of...
- Cytron: Well, first of all, the first thing he was using was from Bocour, which was these...
- CM-U: It's the Magna color?
- Cytron: ...the Magna color. Which was the biggest change in painting that had been done in a long time because it was an oil base that had this acrylic resin with a solvent in it, and it dried fairly quickly, as compared to oil paint.
- CM-U: Right.
- [00:40:10]
- Cytron: That sped up the process tremendously.
- CM-U: How did he find out about those paints, do you know?
- Cytron: Len Bocour would go and knock on doors.
- Agee: Yeah. _____ [phrase inaudible].
- CM-U: So he was in New York at that point then?

- Cytron: Yes.
- CM-U: Sam was? Okay.
- Cytron: And Len would literally try to find the artist and offer him these wonderful things.
- Agee: Lenny was indefatigable. I remember – I mean, being in New York then, and Lenny was everywhere. He was at every opening. He'd go around and introduce himself. He came up and introduced himself to me. I mean, I was a junior curator. And he said, "Oh, and why don't you come down?" And I went down and saw what he was doing. He was just out there. Yeah.
- Cytron: He liked the fact of working with artists. He felt very connected. Then there was a company, Shiva, which is another color he went to. They made some special – basically, at the time Sam was starting to paint, he had a transition of materials from basically inorganic colors and traditional colors to these new, modern, more synthetic colors. What you see in the early paintings, you see basically your ultramarine blues, and you see your traditional – I mean, they are all traditional colors. The cadmium yellows. The modern pigments are really brought in by these people who kind of grabbed what was modern being made. And Shiva, they started making these transparent oil colors. The kinds of things that weren't really in evidence before, that had effects you couldn't achieve. They were made for tinting, or basically for scumbling colors or having transparencies.
- Cytron: Well, that was not normal in the past. You'd have to work on it and use varnish on it. But these were made so they would do that. And then with the Magna, they had those qualities, and they started using the modern phthalo colors and some of the better reds. And then with the advent of – I tried to push towards even more advanced coloring systems. Blues that weren't there before, like indanthrone blue, which wasn't really popular. It was too expensive for most people. And then – but it had these other qualities, and you see it enter into it. Sam never had – he very rarely used black. So most of the colors you have are the most intense of the pure colors, so they tend to look black or very dark. So the tonal range is very large.
- Agee: He always made a point of saying that. "I don't use black. I work toward it."
- CM-U: Before we move from this painting, I am struck – I was from the moment it went up here – at what remarkably good condition it's in. And that the ground is so white still. Can you remember any instances or any discussion where there might have been a handprint on something? Or – I mean, you mentioned the

dog walking through – but where there might have been some sort of condition problem? And would he have just accepted that as the life of the work, or would he have felt that it interrupted the white feeling of the...

Cytron: No, no, no.

CM-U: ...and he had to do something?

Cytron: On the paintings, the works on paper were always – I won't say that they were not the same level of the works on the canvas. There is too much involved in this. So if he saw marks on there, we'd go and clean them up. He didn't want them there. And people would put finger marks or pencils. You'd see them come back from a show, and someone had left their little signature on it. And, no, that wasn't acceptable. But we made these fairly well. I mean, these have, what, three or four coats of gesso on it to begin with. Well, that's not normal to begin with.

CM-U: Right.

Agee: Three or four coats, huh? Yeah, right.

Cytron: I mean, we spent a lot of hours making sure it was right. And then he would do his kind of finish on them.

CM-U: When the picture came back from a show and did have these little marks, you'd treat them locally? Do you ever remember having to redo a whole...

Cytron: No, they'd never be redone. No.

CM-U: No?

Cytron: Everything was done in terms of physically removing. Never to be repainted.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Cytron: Sometimes we had some material. But I wouldn't want to try to reproduce that color at that point in time.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: Because these would be colored, let's say, green or pink. The subtlety was so – it was of such minute detail. If you changed that, all of a sudden you'd get the funny little blotch on it.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: How well we know.

[laughter and inaudible remarks]

Cytron: And one of the difficulties is that there is no real way to reproduce that because, when you mix these tiny little particles in such fine percentages, the ultraviolet will still break them down.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: Nothing is permanent. I mean, except inorganic colors, and that's...

CM-U: Did he store his works rolled in the studio?

Cytron: Yeah. They came back – usually what happened is that the works came back from a show, and they were never redone unless he was trying to sell them, or he wanted to show them to someone for another show. And then we had to restretch them and put them up there. But each time a work is restretched, there is more damage. There is no real solution. At least I am not aware of any other than – you still, every time a staple gun goes through, you are going to make cuts into the canvas. So there is all this – the less they are moved, the better.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: I mean, it's like china. The more you loan them to friends, the less you are going to have.

CM-U: Yes, that's true.

Agee: One question that comes up all the time is in terms of the earlier work. And, Carol, maybe you can – you have observed this. Did he ever work on unprimed canvas? I can't see that he did.

Cytron: I don't think so. I've never seen that.

Agee: I have never seen it. But somehow that – several reporters and critics asked me that, and somehow the unprimed canvas is a talisman almost of modern art or something. It's as if that...

Cytron: No, he...

- Agee: ...is apparently better, or a real mark of an Abstract Expressionist. So I, "I don't think so."
- Cytron: No, no. He was very conscious of the French tradition of using rabbit skin glue sizing.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And that's what he said he did, and that's why he wanted me to make it up for him. Which I did.
- Agee: Sizing, yeah. It's part of that French tradition. Sure.
- Cytron: But he learned his painting of this scale in France. It was not – that is the history. That is the tradition.
- CM-U: Well, I think, though, that can be expanded a bit. Because the American painters – and I'm thinking of Barnett Newman; Pollock, too; Clyfford Still...
- Agee: Right.
- CM-U: ...used rivet glue – and it was a water base synthetic adhesive – as a priming for the canvases.
- Agee: Right.
- CM-U: So the raw canvases of Barney Newman, for example, have this priming that one could...
- Agee: They're still associated with...
- CM-U: ...associate with, like rabbit skin glue priming. It's synthetic, and it's thinner, but it was definitely put on as a protector.
- Agee: Right.
- CM-U: And we've found out, with Pollock, that he would do it on his Black pours of '51...
- Agee: I remember you speaking of that.
- CM-U: ...either before or after. And so I think that the artist had a certain need, whether he painted, you know, whatever tradition he painted in. And if the canvas was

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going to have a life, they sealed it in some way, whether they used a synthetic material or rabbit skin glue. So I'm not sure that that's a really fair distinction for that, to define an American abstract painter that way.

Agee: It became – that's my sense of it, though, is that somehow that that was a mark, that you worked directly, and _____ [phrase inaudible]...

CM-U: Well, certainly the canvas became a more active player.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: I mean, the canvas became a major player.

Agee: Right.

CM-U: And so in that way, I suppose, its preparation was more important than if it were going to be covered over with a paint layer.

Agee: Right. But it's almost – it's really very difficult to – I mean, if the painting is going to have a life, as you say, not to prime it in some way. That was very interesting, your Pollock talk at the Modern, in the pre-exhibition symposium, when you sat us down on the floor and we were looking at – it was wonderful.

CM-U: Well, we were sort of still beginning to work that through...

Agee: Right.

CM-U: ...and we are seeing it...

Agee: And you pointed out that technically, not literally, those Black pour paintings of Pollock are not soaked into the canvas because there is that priming.

CM-U: Well, some are, and some aren't.

Agee: Some are. Some aren't. But *Echo*, I think, that you talked about, is not. Which is a great... Because one of the ideas that came out of Pollock was the idea of direct pour, or direct stain, directly into the mat of the fabric. And that's apparently not really true. I mean, it looks that way; but it's not really true.

CM-U: Well, then he did it on – he certainly did, in one instance in '47, '48, where he bled through, and then turned the canvas around and used the reverse of the canvas...

Agee: Right.

CM-U: ...as the ground. So he still played with those effects. But I think Sam Francis, in his own way, was playing with those kinds of effects, too. I mean, he wasn't using the bleed, per se, but he was interested in the color kind of having a life of its own on the ground. On the support. So I sort of – I mean, it makes sense to me how he is working from the early work and toward this.

Agee: You know, just one other thing. I remember you talked, Dan, about that wonderful soft effect of – pliable and rich effect that it has. Sam's work. And when I ran into Walter – I had just started working in the show, and I ran into Walter and Carol, and they asked me what I was doing. I was finishing up some work on Arthur Dove, and I said, "I'm going to start this Sam Francis show." And it's, "Great. Two soft painters. Very much alike." Well, you know, he had – Walter had his way.

CM-U: He's right.

Agee: He was right. There is also some connection in the shapes, literal shapes that I am seeing here, too. So that's... Okay.

CM-U: Let's move into the other room.

Agee: Great.

CM-U: Okay?

[background scene changes]

[00:49:52]

Agee: When I was doing the Noland Circle Show for the MFA over here, one of the best of the circles, Graham Gund had it. And I went to see it and I was just horrified, because all across the bottom were these brown stains. Oh, what happened? "Oh, my kid spilled his coke on the..." I said when did that happen? "About ten years ago." And I don't know whether he ever got it out or not...

CM-U: I think he took it to Lenny Potoff

Agee: Lenny took it, that's right! That's right, that's right, afterwards, yeah he got it to Lenny

CM-U: Yeah

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Agee: That's right, I forgot that.

CM-U: Let's start talking about this painting behind you. Because this is – where are we now?

Agee: Joyous Lake of 1977.

CM-U: Okay.

Agee: Which I think is one of his best paintings, certainly of the '70s, and of his entire career, I think, too.

CM-U: So at this point you have been working with Sam for ten years. And you are still – what have changed in the way of what you are making now in terms of paints?

Cytron: Well, in that period of time, where I was now kind of giving Sam all his colors. And that's – so I was supplying him with all his materials. And we had now a bigger choice of pigments. So some of the yellows you see there are more intense than he had before, and had more tonality, so they could be extended further.

Agee: Had he charged you with finding – “Can you make me more intense colors?” Because it seems at this point that he really is looking to push the envelope, as it were, in terms of the intensity of his color. At least that's the effect I get. And those yellows really do hit out at you as something that you don't really see. At least I can't think of anything that you see like this, before this.

Cytron: Well, it's just that the manufacturers would make a product. Most of the pigments that are made – that artists use – are kind of – they happen to be lucky that they're made. It's not – people don't make pigments for artists; they make it for General Motors, or they make it for Ford...

Agee: Right.

Cytron: ...or they make it for Caterpillar. And they don't care about artists. Artists are the – artists kind of get the – it happens to be not a secondary, or even a third – tertiary. It's the kind of market that no one even thinks exists, and doesn't care about. They don't, “How many tons of a certain color are artists going to buy?” Very little. Except in what they call the marketplace, which is the hobbyists. Now the hobbyists will buy paint this size, and spend \$1.50 or \$2.00, and it costs the paint company 30 cents, if that, to make it. Now artists demand much higher quality in their – anyone who makes too many demands is really – no

one really wants to deal with people who are highly demanding. And rightfully so. Why should they? They are not buying enough.

Cytron: And so the people – so what I would have to do is, I would have to go to the manufacturer and purchase in commercial quality and quantity material that normally would only be used by a specialty person. In other words, who wants a highly permanent yellow? First of all, when most of the world is thinking in terms of two weeks, or six weeks maximum. Most pigment is used in a magazine, like *Vogue Magazine*. It is only designed for six weeks, and then it fades. And so these are not designed for that, so the colors that are designed or chemically bonded, made up for this, are designed for automobiles that are out there in the sun for two years. And you don't want the color to change. And those pigments are not inexpensive because they are too expensive to make. And they are only made maybe by one or two machines the size of this room in the world. And then they are distributed to other people. And so you pay a premium. And so either you are fortunate enough where they are making it, there is someone out there who happens to want it in this form, and so they'll manufacture it, and we can buy a little bit of that because they still have it on the shelf, or you have to make it yourself.

Cytron: And it ended up, I got involved in "make it myself" because the pigments I wanted weren't even made up in easy ways. They were made up in dry form. And then you have to put it in the form you want. So these were the beginning in the late '70s, early '80s, where there is a few things that were started up, that were unusual. And they were permanent colors that had been designed for that. So where something would cost a normal paint company \$1.50 a pound, these were like \$35 to \$70 a pound.

Agee: Wow!

Cytron: So who is going to spend that kind of money? Well, Sam was in a position at that point, saying, "Do it."

CM-U: And he thought it was important to do?

Cytron: Oh, yeah. Because he knew – I had been with him long enough to know what he wanted. And he liked the idea of – he didn't know what to do, but he knew what he wanted.

Agee: Hmm.

Cytron: He wasn't going to spend any time involved in the technology of it, but he liked someone to deal with it. I had spent two years going to school, getting a degree

in coatings technology because I wanted to know how to do it. And then I figured out this great plan where I would – at this point, I said, “Sam, how would you like to have your prints and your paintings being of the same pigment? So they’ll be absolutely – you could have, actually do a drawing, and it will be just like the print?” “Oh, yeah? Okay.”

Cytron: So we worked out a deal where we went into business together to make it happen.

CM-U: Cool.

Cytron: And so this is the time of the year we started. The first color we made was an ultramarine. There’s lots of ultramarines out there, but I find the right one was made in Belgium at the time, that was as beautiful as you could get. And I could make it both in a printing ink and to use on the canvas. And then he had something that no one else had. And so then we went to the next color. Went to the next. Going from color to color, expanding, expanding, expanding. And so he started to get this new range of colors that no one else could have.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: And you see it starting to happen. It starts to – and also, at the time he had done some large paintings, kind of pole paintings that were – which I like to call it, you know, 1,500 paintings on one canvas. And they were, in a sense, very dark and kind of without life to them. And he was going through a divorce, and...

Agee: What did you call them? What...

Cytron: Pole.

Agee: Pole paintings?

Cytron: Yeah. They are kind of poles with multiple little squares all over the place.

Agee: Oh, oh, yeah. Yeah.

Cytron: And there was a show they had at the Otis, of these paintings

Cytron: Paint companies are the most conservative business I ever met, were the people, when I was in school. Paint companies are, “We have a formula, and we do the formula. And if it works, we don’t change it.” And most people, they think, “Well, I want a yellow in my house.” It isn’t a yellow like this. It’s white with a little yellow in it. You put pure yellow on the wall, and you might as well put

you in Bellevue. I mean – you know, “Oh, the guy’s crazy. Why did you paint the house that color?” And so, you know – the best thing I can think about it is the metaphor of using opera. People sing, and then there’s opera singers who have to go from very quiet to very loud. And that’s art. And kind of one note singing can be, but it’s not dynamic. And Sam very much wanted dynamic color.

Agee: Dynamic color.

Cytron: And he also – as I saw in the early paintings where, unless he used a very permanent color, they were going to fade. And actually the edge paintings were a perfect example because several years later, I looked – I said, “Can I see the color in there?” And I was having trouble.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Cytron: ‘Cause they’d been out there, and the sun would bleach them out. And if I didn’t know that I had put color in there, you wouldn’t find out. So I’d say to myself, “Uhh, no, we’ve got to find something better. If I were doing that, I would want it better.” So then we’d try to find pigment that would have a rating that was much more permanent, where the bonds, the chemical bonds, are much more stable. And that’s one of the difficulties, is, he wanted transparency. And inorganic colors don’t give it to you. Ultramarine will, but you see it comes grainy and has a kind – you see the large size of it. Where these inorganic colors, which are basically from oil and from chemical reactions, are very fine particles. They tend to allow you this beautiful veil of color, this kind of watercolor feeling.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: Would he ask for a certain color? I mean, how did you know which ones to go for?

Cytron: I would find what was out there and present him options.

CM-U: I see.

Cytron: And I’d say, “What do you want? And here’s this, this...” Or I’d find something I thought was really wonderful. “What do you think of this?” And he’d either say, “Go for it,” or, “Uhh, I don’t want to.” And I was surprised sometimes he didn’t find some things that were rather unusual, he wouldn’t be interested. But I realized those were my choices, not his.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: I am the one that is selecting. He is selecting from that.

CM-U: Did you ever sell or provide these colors for other artists?

[00:59:44]

Cytron: Yeah. So – yeah, I mentioned – I was making watercolors at one point. And so Ken Nolan got some. And, oh, a few other people. I mean, it was a question – originally the idea was to make printing inks, and then to use those same pigments that I was making colors for the paintings and the printing inks. And then the litho shop, which got to be very large. We had not only lithography, we brought in an etching printer. So all of a sudden we are making – the time and demands, making those particular materials, were just very large. And so the making it for other people became – well, if I had extra, once again, I could sell it to somebody else. But they were basically all handmade. They are very – I mean, we had some very high tech machinery, but it was very time consuming, very – a lot of money involved, and you had to be focused at all times making it. It's one of those – a three roll mill is an old machine, but you can't let your mind wander or you might lose some fingers.

Agee: _____ [word inaudible]

Cytron: And so you had to be focused on this kind of thing. So with that kind of demands – in any kind of coatings manufacturing, it's very – you can't – it isn't a casual activity.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: It isn't something – you have to be focused on it. So the idea of giving to other people meant that I would have to contact them. We mentioned Len Bocour. I wasn't out there at every show hustling the work. Because, to be honest, I was there in order to get the materials for my own work that I was doing, and to provide Sam, because I couldn't afford the thousands and thousands of dollars it took to buy this stuff.

CM-U: I see.

Cytron: So where was I going to get this wonderful stuff? So I had another incentive for me. "Well, if I can get him to purchase some of this, then I can have some."

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- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: And I wanted to go to more permanent things. And so in my – I mean, that’s kind of my edge, too, is, I wanted to, in helping myself, I was going to help him.
- CM-U: But you must have had an interest in this to begin with? Clearly you went back to school...
- Cytron: Yes.
- CM-U: ...and really...
- Cytron: Yeah. Well, I said, “I don’t know how to do this.” Here I had gone six years to art school, and I ended up, I didn’t – like, I went to a place. I said, “Can you teach me?” He says, “You can take a class. I don’t have time to teach you.” And so I said, “Oh, okay.”
- CM-U: Getting back to the painting behind us, it seems to me that I am seeing dripping from the stick as well on this. Something that’s kind of different here.
- Cytron: Well, he used the end of the brush.
- CM-U: The end of the brush.
- Cytron: And he just dragged it through. I mean, Sam, when he – his influence of the Japanese kind of painting, of calligraphy and sumi-e painting, is really for real.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: I mean, he opened himself to that opportunity, and he would use anything. Because the Chinese were using – he had some brushes made of feathers that he would use. And he would use anything, twigs. He’d try anything that was kind of – that made sense to him, or that he felt comfortable with. And so he also – it’s funny. He understood Jackson Pollock. He liked that gesture. It was integrated. You know, he figured, “Well, it was part of the language of the times.” So he was game to use that, and it was all right.
- CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.
- Cytron: And it’s not – you know, it’s almost like an affectation. It’s the pork pie hat, you know. It really was. He integrated enough that it really was his.
- CM-U: Oh, absolutely. I think the feeling is completely different...

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- Cytron: Yeah.
- CM-U: ...for example, here, than in a Pollock.
- Agee: The phenomenon of dripping, which we associate most famously with Pollock, is a widespread painterly device that's in effect by '42 or '43. It's used by all kinds of people, and all kinds of artists, and they integrate it into their own painterly personalities. Sam included.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: But it's mostly a drawing tool.
- Agee: Yeah.
- CM-U: I see that. It's really interesting that you say that because, especially in contrast to Pollock, I mean, he is really drawing with it. He is really defining a space with it.
- Cytron: Yeah. And it's – I mean, it was just really kind of – I kept trying not to think of it that way because I wanted it to be something else. But that's what it is.
- Agee: It's drawing. Sure. Yeah.
- CM-U: So we are seeing roller here certainly, also.
- Cytron: Yeah, this is a great evidence of using that standard roller that you see in your home in order to get the scale changed. I mean, these are – the only thing, because it is such uniformity. But in a sense, there is a tremendous relief for me because it is so stable.
- Agee: Yeah. Well, much of Sam's work, the later work, he will use a kind of eccentric grid patterning. Again, a kind of internal architecture. But it's very loose. But it's clear. And the painting across the hall especially, or even here. And within that, he is able to introduce a kind of painterly fluidity that is wonderful. It's a wonderful combination of that stable along with the painterly and the unpredictable. It's...
- CM-U: The freedom.
- Agee: ...and the total freedom, yeah. But he needs some kind of structure in there to guide him, as it were, to get him going.

- Cytron: And you have to understand that when I make these colors, they are made in 5-gallon containers. Huge quantities of this dispersion. And it wasn't just – and each color was in this large barrel. And then he would take out of that, or just dip into there, and go on to it.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And the irony is, it wasn't that, because he had five gallons of a special green, or a high intensity yellow, he didn't have to use it in equal proportions on the canvas. I mean, it's not as if – I mean, it's like any baker. You don't have to add a lot of cloves to get the flavor in there.
- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: And so – and I was always – and I said, "Unfortunately, I have to buy this quantity in order to get this color." "It's okay. You buy it."
- CM-U: And then did he use little bowls? Or what did he use?
- Cytron: Yeah. He would take stuff out, and he would mix it up separately. So it was really a tremendous choice on what you see. The color choice is not because of cost, not because of quantity. It truly is a choice based on whatever his emotional or desire was to put it there. So it's not one of those... Where before there might have been an economic determination...
- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: ...that was over with by this time.
- Agee: That's out the window by...
- Cytron: So what you see here is absolutely as unrestricted a decision-making as possible. There wasn't any reason. He had a choice of anything he wanted, and they kept getting more, more colors. He would allow himself to have that opportunity. And the prints got even better.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And the paintings got even more – to me, they were almost more Baroque. More aspects of his life.
- Agee: Richer and more complex. Yeah.

CM-U: But as we move on, we see that the paint takes on a different texture. For example, in the other room, it gets – there is kind of a more body to the paint.

Cytron: Yeah. Sam – I used to think, when I first saw that he was using it, that there was some kind of – I didn't understand the metaphor. And it disturbed me. I was saying, "Well, you know..." I was pushing more opaque colors. Because some of these colors that became available were a strontium yellow, which is a really beautiful yellow that is – and I was grinding it, and it was absolutely a color we had never seen before. Or some of these, an orange that was – it was an organic color, but the companies had now designed an inorganic color like – an organic color like an inorganic color. So the particle size of these tiny little organic colors were now made larger. So they had the – they could almost pass one for the other. They could look like a cadmium orange. And it wasn't cadmium orange at all. So it had this kind of opaque richness that before was only in transparent. You couldn't ever really get it strong.

Cytron: And so I was – I wanted those colors, and I was putting them. "You want to try these? Want to try these?" I mean, it's almost self-serving in some strange way, but at the same time, he was game to it also. He said, "Okay, we'll have some of that, too." The only thing that occurred to me – and it's funny; in this lecture you gave last night kind of made something come out, which was the idea that up until that point, Sam never had any limits. Things never solidified. There was never a point where he had reached an extreme. It was always in transition. And all of a sudden you see these extreme moments starting to present themselves. It's almost as if he had hit a wall and said, "Oh, that is the end point." And I never quite wanted to look at it till last night. They never really pushed the dynamic to that point, especially in color. The dark colors, yes. But in terms of the vividness.

Cytron: I was working with very thick colors personally, so I had a hard time relating to seeing them starting to appear in his canvases. That's a personal problem that I had. And so I am not the right person to – I don't know quite where that goes, other than, with this perspective of time, I see a change that I wasn't aware of.

[01:10:13]

Agee: Hmm.

Cytron: That's the value of coming to see the show.

Agee: One thing that happens is, there is this wonderful film and transparency even amidst this richness. But in the paintings of the '80s, you get a new density.

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CM-U: Yes.

Cytron: Yeah.

Agee: And a literal thickness. I mean, it's like lava. It's flowing out...

CM-U: Yes.

Cytron: Yeah.

Agee: And I can't conceive of a more intense yellow, say...

Cytron: Right.

Agee: ...or a more intense red. I can't conceive of it. Of course Josef Albers said, "Say 'red' to twenty people, and you get twenty different reds." But I just can't think how it could be more...

CM-U: Intense.

Agee: ...more intense.

Cytron: I was showing Sam some colors, and there was my, what I call a hot red. And it was about as...

Agee: _____ [phrase inaudible]

Cytron: ...about as most beautiful – I had a very, what I call hot red and a cool red. And they are about as intense and as beautiful a red as I had ever seen. So in the shop there – and there is, with George Page, who was the master printer, and Jacob, and – "So, Sam, what do you think of this red?" "That's not red."

[laughter]

Cytron: And I'm going, "Yeah, right." "That's not real red." And so the poet in him, kind of that other side – in other words, faced with the reality of what, that the end point of what that red was, that's not what red is. Even the reality of red wasn't what the red that he had, what the red was, what it meant to him.

CM-U: Cool [sounds like].

Agee: _____ [phrase inaudible]

- Cytron: I mean, that was kind of one moment, and I am going, “What the hell is he talking about?”
- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: “What is he doing? Why is he doing this?” It was kind of – but you have to understand that he spoke – he had another world, of which was poetry.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: Trying to talk in terms of explaining his world with words. And that was very private. He had his own writings and so forth.
- Agee: Right.
- Cytron: And so this was more what that was about. And the spirit of this is the poetry of it, not the materials. And, I mean, that’s what I was faced with, having to face these things, this object. And he loved that. “Oh, Dan’ll take care of it.” And then he had – he was free to go ahead and make poetry with it.
- CM-U: It’s a remarkable advantage.
- Agee: A poetic lyric abstraction. Yeah. It is from start to finish in different...
- Cytron: Yeah. And I think you have to look at it differently because he pretty much said, “I don’t want to have anything to do with this stuff. You take care of it.” And it took him a long time to use this thick material.
- CM-U: I was just going to ask you that. How did using this thicker material affect the way he worked?
- Cytron: I don’t think it changed anything. The only thing it did is, he still dealt with it immediately.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: You see those piles where he just kind of dumps it on. It didn’t matter. That’s the same way he painted the other stuff, only it happened to be that instead of putting a brush down, it was – thunk! That’s it. And finally in the end, it is just the act of – it’s one of these little globs, gotten real big.
- Agee: And real thick.

- Cytron: Right. And in the end it didn't matter. That's why we can't use the morality of it, that, "Well, gee, it's not proper that he do that." This is a person who has cared for that brush, so why is he suddenly not using the brush? Well, it's okay.
- CM-U: It's interesting. How did you make it thicker?
- Cytron: Oh, I used – in this case, in making the dispersions, I had to decide. I tried to maximize the amount of pigment, the pigment to volume concentration.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: Basically, the maximum amount of pigment. Just so it ended up, you could move it. If you have too little liquid in it, then it ends up turning back into, instead of fine particles together, it started agglomerating and making these almost like mud clumps.
- CM-U: Or paste, or something.
- Cytron: Yeah, paste. Well. So then you have to keep the liquid up there. And so what happened is, he would leave it out. Some of that glycol I was using instead of – I was using propylene glycol, a kind of a food grade...
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: ...which meant that it wasn't poisonous. So you could literally eat it if you wanted to. I wouldn't recommend it, but... Because I... And that was available. It wasn't really available before. So what I was making, the dispersions were far less hazardous than what I had originally gotten from the manufacturers because they were aimed at another kind of world. You know, commercial painting is not the same as working with people.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: So he would have the – and glycol is very kind of alcohol material. And so it eventually evaporates, just like if you left a wine glass out there. Or put it in a sauté. You know, the alcohol disappears. Over time the glycol kind of evaporates out. And he would let it sit there, and sit there, and sit there. It wouldn't seal because there is nothing to seal, but it would start to lose the alcohol and would thicken up. And then he would add what he wanted to. And of course it wasn't – I mean, I have to say, he did it on purpose because otherwise that's the way he wanted to deal with it. There was this time element, and all of a sudden, external time elements got into it.

- Agee: Right. Probably another...
- CM-U: So that's what accounts for the kind of physical – physicality of the painting in the foyer? That kind of very thick, but almost looks cushiony.
- Cytron: Part of that particular, there is a pigment in there. That's a blue, this very special blue that was – Pigment Blue 60, if you want to know what that is. That's how it's designated. But it comes only in dry form. Then I have to take that. I have to redisperse it. The process is – and this is just as a paint process – the manufacturing process is, you take some chemicals. You throw it in a big vat. And they precipitate this material. In other words, a solid comes out of mixing all these chemicals. And then they put it through filters, and the filter holds the particles, and the other stuff goes by into something else. Now when it's in this liquid – and it's water with this pigment in it – that is the best form of any kind of colorant. And sometimes if you are lucky, you can buy it that way.
- Agee: Ha.
- Cytron: And people who are in the paint business love it that way because there is no finer particle size you can ever get because it's right from the manufacturing process. And the chemical, when they make it, they can control the particle size, the color, the bounce, whatever. That's where all the real chemistry and the high tech is. If it isn't going to be used right away, it's filtered out; and it's made to dry. Once it dries, they start to stick together; and then they have to remill it. But it's never as fine as they had originally.
- Cytron: So by the time I got this particular color, it was in the dry form. Well, it meant that it was never going to be fine. Now to make it into a water based material for watercolors – it's different if you are going to take this and make it into a printing ink. The printing ink goes through a roller mill where it's smashed and smeared, and all the little particles are brought open again, and surrounded by, in this case, a linseed oil.
- Cytron: But in water material, how are you going to do that? Well, I tried making – without any binder. Now you have to understand, you can't take this material, run it through roller mills, because there is nothing for it – the water evaporates.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: So you are essentially not helping yourself. So it has to be done in a less efficient way. So some of the colors, when they are made into dispersants, are never as fine as they might be, and they end up looking very crusty. And so they still have the ability to make these things happen, the transparency and so

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forth, but they don't have the same fineness. And so you'll see some of the colors that have come from the factory, made that way. Like the phthalo blue. You know, this is a typical phthalo blue. There are five different phthalo blues they make commercially, and that happens to be one.

Cytron: And so it's the most common color made today. It is used in all printing inks, all color printing. And so that one disperses beautifully. Very fine particle size and so forth. But you can't get that in these other colors. Never going to work the same way. And so, in mixing that up and adding the resin, it's going to be a little clumpy because he is not, once again, manufacturing it again.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Cytron: He is taking it out of there, working with it. And Sam would not be someone who would spend hours preparing personally. It was prepared for him. You know, when I stopped preparing in the studio, he had a series of other people who were just doing it. And they didn't have the background.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: So they would just do it the way they thought it was. And he wasn't about – he, once again, let their aesthetic or their level deal with it. Or he would do it himself. It was not as important as the painting act in the preparation. So it was up to me to make it as best as possible, but I wasn't there all the time and couldn't be responsible for that. So when you see some differences in texture, he worked with what was there.

Agee: Right. Yeah.

Cytron: And if you see it more glossy, it's because he put more resin in it. Because the reflection aspect is the resin. Or, some of the pigment, when it is very highly dense like that, looks very metallic.

[01:20:08]

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: And that's a quality of the pigment. There's nothing you can – and that's called bronzing. And so there is a different aspect of the pigment. And Sam would use that. He liked it. In fact, he used to make some print – "Leave it. I want it to bronze."

CM-U: Oh.

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- Cytron: He liked the idea of pushing the effect as much as possible. So I go on the side of his being far more responsible, knowledgeable, than being accidental.
- Agee: Oh, yeah.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Cytron: So, I mean, I have to take that position.
- CM-U: I couldn't help but be impressed when I looked at the large paintings, mural size, on the wall, of the different reflectants in the material. When you – I think you called it “shimmer” last night, Bill. And you really do have a sense of that...
- Agee: Yeah. Yeah.
- CM-U: ...in the materials. And I assumed it was something that he was very conscious of, and manipulated for a visual effect.
- Cytron: Well, I don't know if – I think, yes, I think after doing one painting and seeing it dry, he'd know what was going to happen.
- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: So, yes, I would think that would be the case. But initially I don't know if he knew what was going to happen.
- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: But he knew that if he added more resin, it was going to get this kind of surface on it. But when he used a new color, I don't think he knew quite what was going to happen. We used some wonderful colors. I mean, we had some things that no one ever uses because they are just too damn expensive. We had some manganese violets, and things that – and some cobalt violets, which are very, very expensive. They are inorganic colors. They are made in small batches here in Pennsylvania, by some very small companies that are – cobalt colors, cobalt, you have to understand, comes from Tanzania, and they are mined. And they are used primarily for jet engines and for tooling. So to make – and some ceramics in the past. And so to an artist, to use them, it's just not. They are too much money. I mean, you go to an art store and find what cobalt colors – they have cobalt hue. That's not real cobalt color. Or in France they would have cobalt green. That's because they were making it then. It's very popular. But in this country it's not – really, it's too expensive to – you might get it in a

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watercolor if you're lucky. Very expensive for a little watercolor. Now Sam was getting these in 5-gallon containers.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: _____ [word inaudible]

Cytron: I'd be making fifteen gallons of this at a time. I mean, we spent at one point – just the cost of materials was a quarter of a million dollars.

CM-U: My word.

Agee: Yeah, he was...

Cytron: So you have to understand that this was not – this was a major commitment.

Agee: Yes.

CM-U: Did you continue making colors for him right up until his death?

Cytron: Yeah.

CM-U: And what did you do with all the colors that were left over?

Cytron: The colors that were left over, I stored for about a year and a half. I thought I could go back into production. Essentially the – I made materials for the litho shop, which was using the same materials to – for enough materials to complete the unfinished editions. And then the estate really didn't want to maintain that, so our arrangement was that I owned it, so I had had it. So what do I do with it? Well, because I had not spent – I had spent some time trying to tell other people about it, but I actually had to charge what it really cost. And there were very few people willing to pay the price for the real goods.

Agee: Yeah.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Cytron: And it turns out that we are very fortunate that someone was willing to make it happen. Because it's not normal. As I said, most – if this was made for the hobbyist, I could sell lots of little kids in grammar school lots of poster paint. But this is not poster paint material. And so here I was stuck with – I had to literally do ten cents on the dollar. And I got two – sixteen pallet loads, two

semi-trucks full, ended up going to back East here to some artists' materials people.

CM-U: Good.

Cytron: And finally I have – I finally sold off all the equipment. So that time in my life is done. I mean, it was very expensive and costly on a personal level because I was learning how to not be contaminated by this material. I mean, these wonderful colors have a – you know, it's funny. We think about color. Color has an emotional appeal, but then there's the reality of what it is. As an example, the cobalt violet. Cobalt metal itself is very bad for the body. And the EPA, you wouldn't want it – it's not something that you normally would be allowed to use. But in this level you can because this is a commercial kind of enterprise. So in the process of making it, I'd have to be scrupulously clean.

Cytron: Well, in the very beginning, I was kind of stupid. And that's what you learn. You finally learn not to be so stupid about what your health is about. So this material was available. It would oxidize. It would change. The reason there is a problem with some of this material is because cobalt is a drying material. Now this accelerates the oil polymerization. Well, we are made of oil, so when it gets in us, it accelerates our polymerization; and that means we – that's what heart disease is all about, and hardening of the arteries, and all kinds of other things. And it affects other organs. So that was an issue with Sam. So we got him to be much cleaner, much more thoughtful. Not to let the dust be around.

CM-U: No.

Cytron: I don't believe it was the cause of his illness, but it was something that, when we – to offer these wonderful colors to the world, there is a price to be paid.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: And it wasn't just dollars. It was, you want those beautiful violets and pinks, and elegant colors that don't normally exist, well, they're there, but you have to not only pay a high price to get in, but you pay a high price in _____ [word inaudible] to keep going.

CM-U: Right.

Cytron: And so I was paying part of that price in order to make it happen. So that was another _____ [word inaudible]. "Do you want to continue?" "Absolutely not."

CM-U: No. You'd done that.

Cytron: So I – I mean, that's...

Agee: Sam was – in this sense was literally unique. I mean, in what he was – the amounts and the expense and – I mean, quarter of a million dollars.

CM-U: That's extraordinary...

Agee: It is almost beyond...

Cytron: That's what I said.

Agee: Yeah. Almost beyond belief.

Cytron: That's the real cost.

Agee: Even for a prosperous artist. I mean...

Cytron: Well, he put his money where his – where he felt it was important.

Agee: Yeah, sure. Yeah.

Cytron: As a colorist. I mean...

Agee: As a colorist, yeah.

Cytron: I mean, it's not that this happened all the time. But there was one point where this was, "I am embarking on this activity in order to get this into my work." And then, you know, it's always amusing to me to see people kind of think like it's ordinary.

Agee: Yeah. No, it's just...

CM-U: Education.

Agee: That this is just stuff that gets knocked out. Yeah, I've heard that a lot. The...

CM-U: ...you know, in the future, you want to try to preserve what that sense is.

Agee: Yeah.

- CM-U: And it's just remarkable to hear of an artist who was willing, even though he himself wasn't doing it, was willing to...
- Cytron: He personally, to be honest, could care less whether it was going to fade or not. And that's why I told you the story about these mottle prints. Because you have to laugh at someone who is going to pay for something when the pigment is popping off the canvas, or off the paper.
- Agee: Off the paper, yeah.
- Cytron: And at the same time, he liked the fact that I would choose these things in order to make him have to integrate that into his work. I mean – believe me, a funny thing is, he'd never say to me to my face. I'd hear it from other people. "Oh, yeah, you know, he's using this really great color." I said, "I've never heard him say that to me." Because it was not in his best interest to keep me, "Dan, you're doing a great job. We love what you're doing."
- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: That was not his nature. His nature was to keep you on edge, keep you trying to do better. Because if he let you know, well, then, he'd lose his edge.
- CM-U: Might slack off a little. Did you have another question, Bill?
- Agee: I was very curious about the last group of paintings, the small paintings, the 150 paintings that...
- Cytron: Oh, yeah. Okay.
- Agee: ...that he had in the studio, and were bought en masse, and were seen as _____ [phrase inaudible]. Is there any light you can shed on those, or...
- Cytron: It was very difficult for him to work at that period of time. He had two people helping him. He had Doug, who is another individual. I don't want to leave people out.
- Agee: Doug and Karth? What's...
- Cytron: Krouth Brand.
- Agee: Krouth, yeah.

Cytron: Krouth was the person that came in as a studio assistant after – when I left the first time. And Krouth, I have to, I should say was probably the most understanding of Sam that I’ve ever seen. A wonderful person.

Agee: Krouth? Yeah.

Cytron: And who was trying to make Sam’s world happen. His ego was not as strong as mine, in my own way; but in a sense that he was willing to really make Sam’s world happen in his way. And he was a good steward in that sense. And these paintings that were at the end were – Sam made the decisions, but he was not in good shape.

Agee: No.

Cytron: And so they were much more direct than – direct in the sense that they were not – there was nothing subtle about them.

Agee: Right.

Cytron: If you want yellow, it was yellow. If you want blue, it’s blue there. And so it’s the bam-bam-bam. It’s almost – thinking of those wonderful kind of Matisse paper cutouts...

Agee: Cutouts...

[01:29:58]

Cytron: ...where he was not physically – but he would just make the things happen there. And I saw the installation of those pieces. I saw the paintings there, and I saw the installation. It’s a – I have a strange thing. I don’t like seeing in situ reproductions.

Agee: Yeah.

Cytron: It’s like – it really bothers _____ [phrase inaudible]. But the fact that he was willing to focus and put the energy in, when he knew that he needed to make it happen. I had made a whole set of watercolors for him in anticipation of his not being well, and so they were really wonderful. They were just absolutely – I mean, every color that you see here was made into this eight ounces of watercolor. Now eight ounces would last most people a lifetime.

Agee: Yeah.

- Cytron: But he had 36 unique colors sitting there. And I had this idea, “Well, Sam, here you go. You can – when you’re not feeling well, you can lay down and just watercolor them in.” Actually he never used it. His wife used it.
- Agee: Ha.
- Cytron: But he used these colors that I had made in the regular painting to do these paintings with. And so – and then he – of the people who had been at the time started buying, things were more convenient because Sam was withdrawing from the world.
- Agee: Yeah. He was so sick.
- Cytron: And so they would buy from – oh, we just went to a local art store and just bought some colors, and he was just pouring it down.
- CM-U: So they were more – so the commercial colors started – you know, they were just buying all...
- Cytron: Well, they were from other people.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- Cytron: And so, yes, he had this, but because they didn’t have the – he was much – they were trying to be more expedient to get things accomplished.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Cytron: And just to find the good times when he was able to do the work was the important thing. So I didn’t have my ego so much was involved in that. It just...
- CM-U: Right.
- Cytron: I was just happy he did it. I was surprised and kind of – because all of a sudden they became flaps of color overlapping the paper. And they become these wonderful kind of three dimensional objects.
- Agee: Right.
- Cytron: They kind of transcend the paper. They are kind of overflowing...

- Agee: We have one here where actually the paint flows over and becomes a surface itself.
- Cytron: Also, he liked to change things. So I don't feel bad about it. I mean, if you see a transition, you see this physicality finally emerging.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: It was there in the very beginning. You see those very gray ones. You see the texture on it.
- Agee: The texture and...
- Cytron: And instead of being transparent, all of a sudden it's a different rich color.
- Agee: It is literally working out of the materials.
- CM-U: It is. It is.
- Agee: Letting the _____ [phrase inaudible].
- CM-U: That's absolutely right.
- Agee: Exactly. And it's from there from start to finish.
- CM-U: It's what good artists do.
- Agee: That's a very good call. Yeah. But that suite of the – I call it the Suite of 150 Pictures. Was Sam able to actually physically do all, or was he directing somebody that did...
- Cytron: No, he was doing.
- Agee: He was doing the work. Yeah.
- Cytron: I mean, I wasn't there in the room. But I know that he wouldn't – no, he wouldn't let anyone else do it. That wasn't the point of it.
- Agee: Some people have thought that maybe, you know, that they were actually carried out by other people.
- Cytron: Well _____ [phrase inaudible]

- Agee: I just couldn't believe that.
- Cytron: I wasn't there. I don't know. I don't – he may have – I mean, it's a wonderful fantasy. But I know that he – the process was more important than just getting – he didn't need to do it.
- Agee: Yes.
- Cytron: It wasn't because he had an economic need to do it.
- Agee: No, he certainly didn't.
- Cytron: So I wouldn't know why he would let someone paint for him.
- Agee: No. And he – it was that painting had brought him back to life, literally, when he was in the hospital in the '40s.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Agee: And it became his life in many ways. And it's at that last way of holding off death, it seemed to me. I mean, he was so sick. And to do these 150 pictures in a two month period. I mean, it is just an extraordinary feat.
- Cytron: At some point I went to see him. He really didn't want to see me. He was not – _____ [phrase inaudible]. But someone who has a drool cup, who is not in physically good shape. He didn't want people to see him.
- CM-U: Well, sure.
- Agee: He just didn't want... Yeah.
- Cytron: And, I mean, I – he knew better. I mean, I didn't care. I mean, I knew the man. It wasn't a matter of that. But he had this – he didn't want that out there.
- Agee: Yeah.
- Cytron: And so – and it wasn't pleasant. And the people around him at the time were very dedicated. They even donated their own blood to him. I mean, it was an unbelievable kind of dedication.
- Agee: Right.

- Cytron: Giving part of their life to him. I mean, it's in a real way, not just symbolic. So, I mean, the – and that's kind of amazing.
- CM-U: Are you still making artists' colors now?
- Cytron: No.
- CM-U: That's over?
- Cytron: No. That – I made a decision to move on from there. It's not that I don't know about it. I still have some material left over that I kept for myself, but on the whole, the investment was so great, and the amount of real estate it takes to make that happen, and involvement. There weren't that many artists out there who were willing to pay the fare. That I was aware of. Now that doesn't mean there aren't there now.
- CM-U: Yeah. Well, thank you, Dan. This has been just wonderful. It's been so informative. And I think Sam Francis was very fortunate to have you indeed.
- Cytron: We were both fortunate to work together.
- CM-U: You were both fortunate.
- Agee: Yeah.
- CM-U: Thank you. Thank you, Bill. It's terrific.
- Cytron: Thanks, Bill.
- Agee: Thank you, Dan. It was great.

[END RECORDING]