



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: David Novros

Date: September 12, 2005

Location: The Menil Collection, Conservation Studio

Interviewers: Elizabeth Lunning, Brad Epley, and Christa Haiml

Video/Edit: Laurie McDonald

Total Run Time: 01:06:08

Abstract:

Artist David Novros speaks with Menil Chief Conservator and Paper Conservator Elizabeth Lunning, Menil Associate Paintings Conservator Brad Epley, and Mellon Conservation Fellow Christa Haiml. The conversation focuses on the painting *6:30*, 1966, which appeared in his solo exhibitions at Virginia Dwan's galleries in Los Angeles and New York in 1966 and 1967, respectively. The Menil Collection later acquired the painting after it suffered severe damage in the artist's storage space. Novros discusses Dwan's patronage of his work, as well as whether the Menil should restore *6:30*, or attempt to create an exhibition copy. Also discussed is the painting series *Untitled [Rooms 1-3]*, 1973-1975, which appeared alongside the work of Brice Marden and Mark Rothko in a 1975 exhibition at the Rice Museum, Rice University. Novros discusses that exhibition extensively, as well as the work of those artists. Throughout the interview, Novros outlines his intent for the future conservation and exhibition of his work. In 1997, Novros participated in a similar ADP interview with Artists Documentation Program Founding Director and former Menil Chief Conservator, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):

Corporate Name(s)

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

Genre(s)

Interviews
Oral histories

Personal Name(s)

Dwan, Virginia
Mancusi-Ungaro, Carol
McDonald, Laurie
Novros, David, 1941-
Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970

Subject(s)

Art commissions
 Art--Conservation and restoration
 Art--Technique
 Artists--Interviews
 Color-field painting--United States
 Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles, Calif.)
 Dwan Gallery (New York, N.Y.)
 Mural painting and decoration
 Painting, American

Exhibitions/Works:

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

Controlled Vocabulary:

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

Time	Contents	Subject Keywords
00:00:01	Opening Credits	
00:00:53	Introduction Elizabeth Lunning, David Novros, Brad Epley, Christa Haiml	
00:01:18	(Image) David Novros 6:30, 1966 The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:01:37	(Image) David Novros <i>Untitled [Room 3], 1973-1975</i> The Menil Collection, Houston, partial gift of David Novros with funds provided by the Pinewood Foundation	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:02:12	Process of Creation and Technical Specifications Novros describes the circumstances that led him to paint <i>6:30</i> , including his relationships with gallerist Virginia Dwan and artist Paul Mogensen.	Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles, Calif.)* Dwan, Virginia* exhibitions (events) Menil Collection Mogensen, Paul New York paintings (visual works)
00:02:20	(Exhibition Reference) "David Novros: Five Paintings" Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles November 1-26, 1966	Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles, Calif.)* Dwan, Virginia* exhibitions (events)
00:02:47	Technical Specifications Novros discusses how he fabricated <i>6:30</i> , including how he built the plywood panel stretchers and set up a spray booth to apply rubbery vinyl lacquer and Murano lead pigment, commonly used for its dichroic effects in automobile applications.	canvas cotton (textile) dichroism duck (textile) industrial paint

		Mearl Corporation** Murano pigment** oxidation paint layers panels (wood) quarter rounds spray painting stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) surface properties vinyl paint
00:04:58	Concept/Nature of Work and Historical Anecdote Novros explains his view of 6:30 as a “kinesthetic” mural painting. He outlines the painting’s provenance, including damages to the work while it was held in a private collection and in the artist’s storage space.	cracks damage Lloyd, H. Gates** Menil Collection mural paintings (visual works) New York provenance restoration (process)
00:07:00	Conservation Issues and Concept/Nature of Work Novros discusses his intention, in light of conservation research that had been done, of making a modern exhibition copy of 6:30. He also observes in detail that the paint had increasingly cracked, and that chemical deposits had appeared on the paint since he last saw it.	damage lead (metal) mica (mineral) Murano pigment** replicas restoration (process)
00:08:04	(Image) David Novros 6:30, 1966 (detail of cracks and color shift) The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:08:19	Conservation Issues Novros describes an efflorescence that appeared on the surface of 6:30. He discusses possible explanations for it and describes instances where he had seen similar effects in different works.	efflorescence enamel (fused coating)
00:08:32	(Image) David Novros 6:30, 1966 (detail in raking light) The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:10:29	Conservation Issues Novros describes the materials he previously used to restore 6:30. In particular, he discusses the dichroic Murano pigment he used to overpaint the restored work and contrasts it with the original pigment he had used.	dichroism lacquer (coating) mica (mineral) Murano pigment** overpaint (paint layer) restoration (process) toluene
00:13:18	Concept/Nature of Work Novros describes the elements of 6:30 that would be necessary to include in order to make a reasonable exhibition copy. He also explains his notion of creating a replica as a collaboration between	authenticity conservators replicas

	artist and conservator.	
00:14:04	(Image) David Novros 6:30, 1966 (detail of color shift) The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:15:26	Conservation Issues and Concept/Nature of Work Novros expresses his opinions regarding what constitutes acceptable aging of his works, as well as how he would want conservators to treat his work when he is no longer living. He discusses the philosophical difference between restoration of works and replication of works, as well as the difference between an original work and the artist's original intent.	age artist's intent brushwork damage drawing (image-making) hand-painted Marden, Brice Minimal Newman, Barnett paintbrushes palette knives (painting equipment) restoration (process) Ryman, Robert spray painting
00:19:06	(Image) Barnett Newman Be I, 1949 The Menil Collection, gift of Annalee Newman	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:19:54	Conservation Issues Novros discusses the issue of whether natural aging should be cleaned from paintings. He supports his opinions by relating an example of his own experiences with a Masaccio painting. Novros proposes how to remedy a "bad" restoration by making a replica.	cleaning Masaccio natural aging restoration (process)
00:20:18	(Images) Masaccio <i>The Tribute Money</i>, c. 1427 (before and after conservation treatment) Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence	paintings (visual works)
00:21:27	Technical Specifications Novros addresses why one panel of 6:30 is a different color from the others, as well as why only some of the panels exhibit cracks.	Murano pigment** overpaint (paint layer) restoration (process)
00:22:22	Historical Anecdote Novros discusses the provenance of, and restoration work done on, various other paintings that appeared in his 1966 exhibition at Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles. He also describes his running list of paintings that he would like to restore or remake someday.	brushwork Coddington, James* damage Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles, Calif.)* Dwan Gallery (New York, N.Y.) Dwan, Virginia* Museum of Modern Art Murano pigment**

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		overpaint (paint layer) Park Place Gallery (New York, N.Y.)* surface properties
00:22:41	(Image) "David Novros: Five Paintings" Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles November 1-26, 1966 (installation view)	Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles, Calif.)* Dwan, Virginia* exhibitions (events)
00:23:03	(Image) "David Novros: Paintings" Dwan Gallery, New York April 1-28, 1967 (installation view)	Dwan Gallery (New York, N.Y.) Dwan, Virginia* exhibitions (events)
00:23:37	(Image) David Novros VI:XXXII, 1966 (repainted in 1990) Museum of Modern Art, New York Gift of Charles Cowles	Museum of Modern Art paintings (visual works)
00:26:00	(Work Reference and Exhibition Reference) David Novros 2:16, 1965 "Systemic Painting" Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum September-November, 1966	exhibitions (events) paintings (visual works) Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
00:26:40	Concept/Nature of Work and Exhibition Novros discusses the importance of surface reflectance in his paintings, his preference for "painting in place," and his direct involvement in lighting exhibitions of his works.	artist's intent gloss (optical property) incandescent lamps (lighting devices) lighting matte (optical property) Museum of Modern Art reflectance Rothko, Mark surface properties Tate Modern
00:29:06	(Exhibition Reference) "Mark Rothko" Museum of Modern Art, New York January 18-March 12, 1961	exhibitions (events) Museum of Modern Art
00:29:17	(Work Reference) Mark Rothko Seagram Murals, 1958-59 Tate Modern, London	paintings (visual works) Tate Modern
00:29:40	Conservation Issues and Technical Specifications Novros describes a prior occasion when he made full-scale replicas of paintings that had appeared in a show at Galerie Müller in Stuttgart. Included is his account of choosing to use a new material.	damage replicas Galerie Müller*

00:29:59	(Exhibition Reference) Solo Exhibition Galerie Müller, Stuttgart, 1966	exhibitions (events) Galerie Müller*
00:30:59	Concept/Nature of Work and Exhibition Novros elaborates on his specific reasons for wanting to restore his paintings as well as how he would conceive of the authenticity of a replica, what conservators should do with the original, and how museums should label replicas in exhibitions.	authenticity dating replicas research (function) restoration (process) titles (documents)
00:34:08	Concept/Nature of Work Novros explains how he titled his 1965-67 right-angle paintings, in particular <i>6:30</i> .	titles (documents)
00:34:59	Technical Specifications Novros discusses the materials that he intends to use to create a replica of <i>6:30</i> , including paints and supports.	aluminum (metal) canvas glass (material) Kremer Pigmente (Firm)* Murano pigment** patronage priming (coating process) replicas spray painting surface properties Winsor & Newton Liquin Medium**
00:36:58	Concept/Nature of Work Novros discusses his ambition to be a muralist and how that affects his work conceptually.	bas-reliefs (sculpture) fiberglass mural painting (image-making) mural paintings (visual works)
00:38:09	Conservation Issues Christa Haiml describes her recent treatment of an area of severe damage on <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i> .	artist's intent conservators damage gloss (optical property) reflectance restoration (process) sanding (abrasion) surface properties
00:38:17	(Image) David Novros <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i>, 1973-1975 (detail of handprint) The Menil Collection, Houston, partial gift of David Novros with funds provided by the Pinewood Foundation.	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:40:05	Concept/Nature of Work Novros discusses his ideas regarding drawing, relating <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i> to the fresco commissions that he created for Donald Judd and Pennzoil, as well as to the work of Barnett Newman. He also discusses the importance of drawing in the damaged panel of <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i> .	drawing (image-making) frescoes (paintings) Judd, Donald Newman, Barnett palette knives (painting equipment) surface properties

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00:40:47	(Image) David Novros <i>Untitled [Room 3], 1973-1975 (detail of heavily drawn area)</i> The Menil Collection, Houston, partial gift of David Novros with funds provided by the Pinewood Foundation.	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:40:57	(Image) David Novros <i>Untitled, 1970</i> © David Novros, Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York	Judd, Donald paintings (visual works)
00:41:34	(Work Reference) David Novros <i>Untitled (Pennzoil Fresco), 1975</i> Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	paintings (visual works) Museum of Fine Arts
00:41:58	(Image) Barnett Newman <i>Be I, 1949</i> The Menil Collection, gift of Annalee Newman	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
00:43:40	Historical Anecdote and Concept/Nature of Work Novros describes the circumstances that led him to rework an area of <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i> .	damage exhibiting installations (exhibitions) Menil, Dominique de Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth Museum of Contemporary Art restoration (process) vehicle (binder) Winsor & Newton Liquin Medium**
00:43:47	(Images) "Marden, Novros, Rothko: Painting in the Age of Actuality" Rice Museum, Rice University, Houston April 18-May 31, 1975 (installation views)	exhibitions (events) Rice Museum* works of art
00:44:33	(Exhibition Reference) "The First Show: Paintings and Sculpture from Eight Collections 1940-1980" The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, November 20, 1983-February 10, 1984	exhibitions (events) Museum of Contemporary Art
00:45:47	Conservation Issues and Technical Specifications Novros assesses the current condition of <i>Untitled [Rooms 1-3]</i> and explains his choice of materials for an earlier restoration that he completed on the painting.	dammar restoration (process) vehicle (binder) visual inspection Winsor & Newton Liquin Medium**
00:46:43	Conservation Issues Novros addresses questions regarding areas of <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i> where surfaces appear to have become more matte over time.	artist's intent Bykert Gallery gloss (optical property)

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		matte (optical property) surface properties
00:49:08	Technical Specifications and Conservation Issues Novros describes how he used materials to alter the surface of <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i> and continues to assess the painting's condition.	dammar gloss (optical property) matte (optical property) surface properties
00:50:42	Conservation Issues Novros assesses the restoration work that Haiml performed on <i>Untitled [Room 3]</i> .	artist's intent restoration (process) sinopia (pigment)
00:53:14	Concept/Nature of Work Novros reflects on authenticity as it relates to conservation and the art market. He also discusses the collaborative relationship between artists and conservators, and artists restoring their own work.	Artistic collaboration* artist's intent art market authenticity Coddington, James* conservators Metropolitan Museum of Art Newman, Barnett Piano, Renzo
00:56:35	Concept/Nature of Work Novros expresses his opinions regarding an artist's intent, specifically how long an artist should be allowed to make changes to a work after it has left the studio. He uses two anecdotes, including one about his own work, to support his opinions and discusses the extent to which the works discussed in this interview achieved his intentions.	artist's intent Barnes, Dr. Albert C. Barnes Foundation Cézanne, Paul Soutine, Chaïm collectors ownership
01:01:43	Technical Specifications Novros describes his plans for creating an exhibition copy of <i>6:30</i> .	Kremer Pigmente (Firm)* lacquer (coating) Murano pigment** replicas Winsor & Newton Liquin Medium**
01:03:39	Coda to Interview Notations are provided regarding the materials and processes that Novros and the Menil Conservation Department used to fabricate a replica of <i>6:30</i> .	replicas
01:04:05	(Images) David Novros <i>6:30</i>, 1966 The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust David Novros <i>6:30</i>, 1966-2006 The Menil Collection, Houston, purchased with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust	Menil Collection paintings (visual works)
01:05:17	Closing Credits	