



**Artists Documentation Program
Video Interview Transcript**

WADE GUYTON

May 24, 2010

Interviewed by:

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro

**Founding Director, Artists Documentation Program, and
Associate Director for Conservation and Research, Whitney Museum of American Art**

Video: Carlton Bright | Total Run Time: 01:13:17

Location: Wade Guyton Studio, New York

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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; Wade Guyton, Artist; Virginia Overton, Studio Manager]

[BEGIN INTERVIEW]

[00:00:42]

CM-U: I'm Carol Mancusi-Ungaro. It's May 24th, 2010. I'm here in Wade Guyton's studio in New York City, and we're about to talk about a piece that the Whitney has just acquired from Wade [*Untitled*, 2008, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee, the Director's Discretionary Fund, Allison and Warren B. Kanders, Andrew and Christine Hall, Donna Rosen, Pamella DeVos, Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond J. Learsy, Ginevra Caltagirone, Miyoung Lee, and Gregory Miller 2011.22a-h]. And we're also in the studio, so we're going to be looking at other things as well.

[00:00:57]

CM-U: All right. Let's start with when you made it, and did you make it in New York?

Wade Guyton: All right. This piece was made in New York. But I didn't make it in this studio. At that time, let's see, it was about—it would have been December 2009. Right?

CM-U: So just last December?

Wade Guyton: No. No, 2008, sorry.

CM-U: No, eight, okay.

Wade Guyton: Okay, December 2008, in my studio in midtown, which is much smaller than this. So I was never able to see the whole piece together until I got it to Milan. So I was making individual...

CM-U: Oh, so you never actually saw it installed together.

Wade Guyton: I didn't see it. And I actually didn't know if it would work as one, single piece until it was installed there.

CM-U: How did you—I mean this is jumping ahead, I know, but did you have to play with where the parts went in relation to one another?

- Wade Guyton: Luckily, if I remember correctly, as it was unpacked, the proprietors took them out of the crates. We stretched them in New York, and then sent the eight individual canvases there. And I knew the room. I knew it was a long, narrow room. And I hoped it would work, but I still wasn't sure if it would. And as they unpacked the individual panels, they just leaned them against the wall. And if I remember correctly, that order we kept, so...
- CM-U: Is that important to you, that element of chance? That that's the way they came out?
- Wade Guyton: Yes. I mean it always—I'm not saying that I wouldn't have changed it, but I think it did work out, luckily. And the chance—chance is always involved in my work in a number of ways. And in the installation as well as in the making so...
- CM-U: What about...
- Wade Guyton: But this piece would not be rearranged. Like that one opening of the crate, and arranging the paintings would happen once. And then that became—then the piece was complete, and that became the template for the piece. So it's not like we could rearrange the panels again.
- CM-U: Right. Okay. And what about the distance between? Just while we're on installation.
- Wade Guyton: Um, I decided that on-site, but I knew that the spacing would make a big difference. I was able to see like two or three together in the studio, and I realized as they were further apart, that this white gap became a major part of the piece. And the gap between like this white part of each panel is kind of a gap in the printing. It's part of the file, but it's a hole in the file. And so that this gap and this gap, their relationship was really important. So the spacing—I realized as this space got closer to this. These being more similar seemed to work better, holding the piece together as one. And as they got further apart, you—you read them as individual panels. And if they got too close together—the strange thing is as they got closer together, they also read as separate panels. And when you're looking at it with this spacing. Or at least I have even now, I get confused. I don't really get confused, but optically, there's a confusion between that space and—or where the panels might end. Like the fold in each panel and the gap between the panels. It's really clear like in a photograph, straight on. You always—your eyes want to go to the gap between, instead of to the center of the painting.
- CM-U: That's interesting. Why is that, do you think?

Wade Guyton: I don't know.

CM-U: That's right. That's right. That is true.

Wade Guyton: Yeah. But I like that experience, and I had only shown the individual panels before. And of course, the center seam was the center. And I always hang them low, they have something to do with my body size, and relating to—relating to that center seam and the symmetry or asymmetry of the panel. So putting them all together, this other space popped out at me.

[00:05:28]

CM-U: How interesting. It's like a whole other dimension that you had to deal with then. Okay, so then the white wall is important that it be white.

Wade Guyton: So the white wall is important, right.

CM-U: Because otherwise it would have a completely different...

Wade Guyton: Otherwise it wouldn't work. And, as you know, that installation in Moscow...

CM-U: I've forgotten that.

Wade Guyton: Baibakov Art projects, Moscow, about a year ago [Group Exhibition: "FIVE," Baibakov Art Projects, Red October Chocolate Factory, Moscow, May 21-July 13, 2009]. They installed the work on a black wall. They painted the wall black, and I didn't know they were doing that. (laughs) And I didn't know until after I got the installation shots, and the work—the piece, it doesn't work the same way.

CM-U: Interesting.

Wade Guyton: It's not an installation I liked.

CM-U: Did you see them as separate panels?

Wade Guyton: You do.

CM-U: Except the black must continue in kind of a funny way.

Wade Guyton: The black, but it doesn't do the—it doesn't do the same thing. Yeah.

- CM-U: Hm. And the distance from the floor, you said something about relation to your body.
- Wade Guyton: Yeah, it's usually—I like them low. So this is about—I should know exactly. It's about nine, ten inches. —
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Wade Guyton: So they're usually about the same height. Unless the space is—the dimensions of the space are radically different, but...
- CM-U: You said, did I understand you, that this is the first multiple-part piece?
- Wade Guyton: This is the first one, yeah.
- CM-U: And the choice of eight, is that just the way you ended it? Or was that the way you started thinking about eight?
- Wade Guyton: (laughs) Well, I only got eight done in time for the show. I kind of made—I was working on it at the very last minute. So and I was guessing that that would be a sufficient number of panels to deal with this room.
- CM-U: I see, given the space.
- Wade Guyton: Given the space, I knew the vague dimensions. Even though like in the studio, it looked totally different. And there was no way to like really plan it out. And I don't use models, ever, so I was guessing. It kind of felt right. It felt like it also recorded a duration of time for me. That and I feel like that's always with the paintings. That they—I print one side, then the other, and that their composition—they're about recording an event as well as having—as well as being a painting. So I thought the series...
- CM-U: So time was very much a part of this series?
- Wade Guyton: Time was important, yeah. I didn't really realize it, but I made that decision that, "Okay, well, this is all the time I have. This is a sufficient amount of work." And so that became the end to it.
- CM-U: But also the time and the process.
- Wade Guyton: Exactly, yeah. So watching (laughs) watching it being made. Of course, I'm the one making it. But I also--I'm always watching it being made, so...

CM-U: Yes. We'll get to that more when we get closer, but there's a lot of you in all of this. I mean there's a lot of your decision-making in this.

[00:08:40]

CM-U: Okay, so they were made in New York, and then they were packed up. And the first time you saw them fully installed...

Wade Guyton: In Milan.

CMU: Was in Milan.

Wade Guyton: At the Gió Marconi Gallery.

CM-U: And then Moscow, and then back here.

Wade Guyton: The show in Moscow, yes. And it was also shown in Miami.

CM-U: Uh-huh. Okay, so in terms of do you—so did you make these in an order? I'm sorry, I didn't understand that. I remember you saying there were eight.

Wade Guyton: Probably, I did make them in an order, but I don't know. I couldn't tell you now what order they were made in.

CM-U: Okay, so the line of them is not determined by an order.

Wade Guyton: I could tell you that I—no, the order of the panels—their final order has nothing to do with the order that they were made in.

CM-U: Okay.

Wade Guyton: I can kind of guess based on—should I tell you what the image or the source is and kind of the...

CM-U: Sure, wherever you'd like to go.

Wade Guyton: I can kind of tell which panels might have happened later, because I know I can kind of feel where it—knowing the course of the way I work, and how one thing leads to another, I can kind of tell which decisions I would have allowed later on. And so each painting—each panel is basically one file printed on the left side, or on one side and then the other side. And the canvas is folded in half, and in this case the Photoshop file is half of this. And then one, two, three, six black bars drawn in Photoshop. And then nothing is really done to the file. It's the same file, over and over again. This might be a good

example of one that happened early on, because you can kind of see how the lines almost line up left and right. Or the very first one in the row might be a good example.

CM-U: You mean in relation to one another?

Wade Guyton: In relation to—yeah, sorry. So they become—it's literally doubled, but then you have the sense that the fold is actually like a mirroring of the other side. But it's not technically—I mean, because of—because the image is just black stripes, you don't see—you don't get the sense of symmetry or folding in the image. You get the sense of a—like this continuous line going across. A line that's broken up. Does that make sense?

CM-U: Yes, it does. Especially when you look at these closer lines that do seem to line up.

Wade Guyton: Right, that is kind of strange.

(laughter)

CM-U: I mean, that looks like it lines up.

Wade Guyton: Right. So this would have been an early one, probably. One of the later ones would be—maybe—this one or this one. Possibly. I could be wrong.

CM-U: Because the lines, because they're so disjunctive.

Wade Guyton: Because there's more... I would have been more careful to try to complete the file, and then like halfway through, in the process of doing this, I would get a little more lazy, and lax, and let certain things like this happen. And then I would finish the painting and then move on to trying to make what I would call maybe more—well, I don't want to say that. Complete is not really—it's not a good...

CM-U: So all these—all of these are one program? Right? One file?

Wade Guyton: One file. And on each panel, the file is printed twice. So this one is printed once. Sometimes I don't know if it's printed on the left side or the right side first. Because the linen is folded, taped—the edges are taped, so the printer thinks it's only printing out one ply instead of two. And but it doesn't really—I don't pay attention to whether I'm printing the right side or the left side first. So it could be just at that point, when the canvas is laying on the table, it's top, and front and back, or top and bottom. And so sometimes the left goes first, sometimes the right. So the one side of the panel.

[00:13:24]

Wade Guyton: I can tell you which one was printed first. Like this is—this one on the left side was printed first, and then it was flipped when it was folded, and went back through the printer, and this was the second printing.

CM-U: How can you tell this one was printed first?

Wade Guyton: Because, first of all, these marks—because the printer—because the canvas goes through the printer twice, one side is being—usually while it's wet is being dragged through—the underside is being dragged through the machine, and gets scratched up, either the inside of the printer or when it goes down to the floor. So on this side, like these vertical scratches and this mark—this mark happens from going through.

CM-U: Oh, when it goes down onto the floor?

Wade Guyton: No, this is inside the printer.

CM-U: Oh, the printer, okay.

Wade Guyton: Because it's kind of going around a curve, and down. It's not a flatbed printer. And then these scratches happen—the vertical scratches happen on the floor. And then the side that was printed last—it just usually has less scratches on it.

CM-U: Stays on the top?

Wade Guyton: Yeah.

CM-U: Do you think it'd be helpful to look at the printer at this point, and then we'll come back?

Wade Guyton: Yeah, probably. (laughs) Yeah, sure.

CM-U: Does that make sense? —

Wade Guyton: I don't have anything set up in here. Do you want to help me with a piece of linen?

Virginia Overton: Sure.

CM-U: It's okay. This is very informal.

Wade Guyton: And then I don't know if it's—maybe I can set one up to print. But let's pull this out of—let's put this on the floor in there.

Virginia Overton: Okay.

Wade Guyton: And then...

[00:15:32]

CM-U: So this is the example of the folded...

Wade Guyton: Yeah. Yes. It is. So I'll show you how it goes through the printer.

CM-U: So this is the folded, primed canvas that you've taped together to make it seem like one ply.

Wade Guyton: Exactly. So, tape along the top. So because the printer is able to—I don't know how it does it—but it can tell if two pieces of paper have gone in or two pieces of whatever media have gone in. And of course, it doesn't want to do that. It's designed for efficiency, productivity. So it doesn't screw up or (laughs) kind of. Until you do this. So this goes in taped and first. And—It doesn't really easily go in. And Carol, you can see all of—this is good to look at too—all of this ink here is...

CM-U: Oh yeah. What we saw, what you were saying the paint...

Wade Guyton: You kind of see that dragged on the front of some of those paintings. And these, all these scratches, this is from like just trying to cut paper or linen. And it just, you know, accumulates so much ink from the backside of the paper or the other side that's not being printed, or that has been printed.

CM-U: But this is something that you have control over. You like this to a degree.

Wade Guyton: I do. I leave it.

CM-U: You leave it?

Wade Guyton: Yeah. So I don't clean it after each time. After a while, it does kind of get—it can get really goopy, and there's a point when maybe if I'm starting over with something, or when I was making the blue paintings for this collaboration with Steven Prina ["Wade Guyton and Stephen Prina," Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, February 5-27, 2010], that I didn't want all this extra black ink mixed in. So I would clean it. But normally, whatever comes

out just kind of stays, and it accumulates on the paintings. So this gets kind of lined up here as well as it can (pulling canvas through printer), and—it gets...

Wade Guyton: Do you want me to actually—I could—should we do that (looks at computer)?

CM-U: It's entirely up to you if you want. But I...

Wade Guyton: Yeah, why not? I have to—it'll take me just a second to...

CM-U: It's entirely up to you.

Wade Guyton: We can also—(talking to studio manager) pull that out, because we can then—sorry.

Virginia Overton: Oh, you want to see it? No. No. I just didn't want it to be in the way.

Wade Guyton: Cause then we might want to look at that. That's a good example too.

Virginia Overton: (pulls canvas out from under printer) Do you want it unfolded so you can see it or...

Wade Guyton: Umm, it doesn't need to just yet. So actually, what the printer's doing right now—you can hear it cleaning the heads. It's kind of going through a cycle of cleaning.

CM-U: So it's doing its own cleaning.

Wade Guyton: Yeah. Which—it does periodically. A lot of the surface marks that end up in a lot of—are in the panel—that are in a lot of the panels are—you'll see like pinstripes. And that is from the heads being clogged. At least the way I can understand. I mean (laughs) my dumb understanding of it is that's what happens. So since it hasn't been used in a while, and it is—just starting up. It'll go through this whole cleaning process. So it should be—it should print pretty cleanly the first time. But we'll see. And then I don't know if we should look at—this might be—look at the file.

[00:19:55]

Wade Guyton: This is not the file for the painting in there. I looked for that file, and I don't have it. But this is the file that—I used for the other black monochromes. And basically, it would be very similar to the—I'd say the Milan piece. I can kind of make a—this is not exactly what it was, but something like that. Okay.

Here I would be going through—like this is just the standard Epson printer software. And in here, I would select like whether I'm using color ink or just black ink. So the eight panel piece is only using black ink. So the ink is a lot thinner. I can show you what it looks like if we do color and you can see the heavier quality of the ink. Let's just do that one, so... —So it pulls up the linen to try to find the optimum place to start printing. So if you'll notice on the panels up there, sometimes the left side is higher than the right side. So often that happens because the printer will not like where I've set it up to start printing, and maybe you know after it's gone through on one side, the other side might be—there might be ink smudges. And it can see the ink smudges, so it'll then move the linen down to print at a different setting; at a different point.

CM-U: Move down. So from what you're describing, it would be impossible to duplicate any one.

Wade Guyton: Yeah, I don't think you—no. Because—well, not in the same—you wouldn't be able to duplicate it in the same way. And I (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

CM-U: It would have to be an image of itself with all of its...

Wade Guyton: It would have to be an image of that, and then (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

CM-U: And then that becomes the file.

Wade Guyton: So this is also an example of what happens (laughter) when there's too much ink coming out. And the linen isn't...

CM-U: Isn't absorbing it.

Wade Guyton: It's not absorbing it, yeah. And often this will happen when printing with all seven inks, rather than just using black ink.

CM-U: And that's what it's doing now?

Wade Guyton: That's what it's doing right now. Yeah. So..

CM-U: Yeah, but this is helpful to see.

Wade Guyton: Yeah, and just washes.

CM-U: It's such a clean edge there at the top. Yeah.

Wade Guyton Interview Transcript, Artists Documentation Program, The Menil Collection, 05/24/2010

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- Wade Guyton: And so gravity's pulling it and bringing it down.
- CM-U: Oh, I see the lines now.
- Wade Guyton: And—so in a lot of my other paintings, you can see in some cases there are drips. And we used to have a lot of this ink. And the drips always go up because when the painting is stretched, this is the top of the painting.
- CM-U: That's the top.
- Wade Guyton: Meaning this is the top of the file. So...
- CM-U: Now I understand that. I didn't exactly get that the other day. Now I get that. This is very helpful, Wade, to actually see it. It's helpful to understand it.
- Wade Guyton: And you can also see how, look. Originally, I lined up the linen across that line. And you know, we do the best we can to cut this and make a perfect rectangle. But because of the you know, thickness and whatever, if it's a tiny bit off. Like by this—at this point, it probably will stop printing. There it stopped printing because it's too far off.
- CM-U: Because it's too far off of alignment.
- Wade Guyton: And it'll say—paper out because it doesn't see the paper anymore.
- CM-U: It doesn't read it.
- Wade Guyton: So what I—if I'm paying attention, I would have while it was printing, pulled this over so it wouldn't stop. Because what it's going to do is I'm going to restart it, and it will either... It won't want to start where it left off. Sometimes it will, but occasionally then it'll have to—you have to restart the entire file. So that potentially is what happened in maybe like the third panel. There's a strange gap at the bottom. Like it probably just stopped and didn't start.
- CM-U: I don't know where to look. (laughter)
- Wade Guyton: I know, there's so much going on.
- CM-U: Let's finish, and then I want to go see what you mean about the third panel over there. This is amazing.
- Wade Guyton: This is really ugly.

CM-U: No, but this is good. It should be ugly. This is what we're doing. We're trying to... (laughter)

Wade Guyton: And here's something else that is happening that I don't understand.

[00:25:34]

CM-U: It's printing another one on—right on top there?

Wade Guyton: It's starting again I think where I left off. But it decided that it can't print all the way across.

CM-U: All the way across, yeah.

Wade Guyton: So this happens every—or information just kind of drops out.

CM-U: I find this so interesting because you know, you look—you hear about your work, and it seems so impersonal. But I'm seeing this very personal because you're making decisions every step of the way. Then do you pull this out or you don't care?

Wade Guyton: Well, I usually pull it out because I don't like—there's a lot of ink. It'll print back on top of itself. And occasionally it looks Okay. If there's a lot of ink, I don't really like it. So now it's just decided from now on that it's not going to print the full bar. So I can stop and reset it, but it's... —

CM-U: I find it immensely interesting because I feel like your relationship to these materials is as intimate as any artist with a brush and oil paint or anything else. It really is even though there's a machine involved. Your attention to it and your decision making about it is none—not any less.

Wade Guyton: Not really.

CM-U: It's really not.

Wade Guyton: I mean (laughter) I've developed a weird relationship with the machine. Not intentionally at all. I really I think in the beginning, I thought that making works with the printer or the computer would kind of take my decision making away, and make it more easy, easier, or more machine like. But it really wasn't the case. And then I developed this—yeah, I guess relationship with the printer, the computer, and the way these two... And this—and the material, and figure out like how they communicate with each other. And there's a lot of negotiation that has to happen throughout the whole process.

- CM-U: There must be times you get to a point and you go stop. It's just like you would have stopped.
- Wade Guyton: Well, this I would have stopped a long time ago.
- CM-U: It's just not doing--
- Wade Guyton: The moment that it started doing that, I would have said no. (laughter) Because this is really ugly.
- CM-U: You don't want that effect.
- Wade Guyton: Unfortunately, it's on camera, so...
- CM-U: No, that's good.
- Wade Guyton: You know that it's like this is about...
- CM-U: It's good. We want something ugly on camera. We don't want you doing your masterpiece on camera. (laughter)
- Wade Guyton: Well, we didn't get the masterpiece, yeah. But--
- M: Did you print out what was (inaudible)?
- Wade Guyton: Well, all the dripping isn't really... It doesn't really work for me right now, at least in this kind of a painting. And there are other types of paintings that I've made that incorporated the running ink. But not in this particular way. And the bars—I just like the edges to be sharp. So this would have been—or this is a good candidate for to—to become a monochrome. In which case I would put it back through and print a full black rectangle over it. But in this...
- CM-U: Does it show through that differentially?
- Wade Guyton: Yeah, these it becomes embedded in the painting. And the first what I call monochromes that I made were in fact that they were like corrections. I was actually making X paintings, and the—this—I was getting this kind of effect. Or a variety of other kind of mushy effects that I didn't really like. And I determined there was a problem with the—or inconsistency with the linen. So I was really frustrated with that. So I print—I was just blacking it all out so I didn't have to look at it. Because the material is really expensive, and I was kind of super frustrated with it. Like I also felt like I had no control over it. And that was my way of (laughter) taking it back.

CM-U: Well, you did. You did.

Wade Guyton: And then that became—I realize that that could also be... I didn't know at first that that would end up becoming a template for the next body of work, but...

CM-U: But that's the way the process is, right? I mean that's the way an artist works.

Wade Guyton: Right. And for me, a lot of my work happens to come out of discovering certain accidents or chance effects, and then letting that become a template for a group of other works.

[00:30:40]

CM-U: So just to reiterate, so that—because this is an important point. That in your work, the drips are not in the direction in which they're hung because of the way it comes out the printer.

Wade Guyton: Exactly. Usually there are a couple examples in which case the drips go up and down. But generally, the drips when they're stretched, they go up.

CM-U: And do you have a distinct sense of up and down when the drips go both directions? Do you indicate that in some way?

Wade Guyton: They are—really, offhand I can only think of two paintings that the drips go up and down. And it is the top is indicated, yeah.

CM-U: The right top arrow or something.

Wade Guyton: Yeah, just some (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). (laughter) There's something in there that (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

CM-U: Well, every artist has his way of doing that or her way of doing that.

Wade Guyton: Usually, (laughter) these paintings are signed, and the signature usually goes at the bottom. And often there's an arrow for the top in case there's some kind of question. But that doesn't mean that accidents don't happen.

CM-U: Have you ever changed your mind?

Wade Guyton: No. Not about that. —Not about a direction, whether a painting should go up or down. Because I can tell if something's been printed. I can tell the drips—other than the drips, I can just... I can tell if something—the direction in which something gets printed. So unless I'm really screwed up.

- CM-U: Well you—that's because you've made the file. So you have a sense of that, right?
- Wade Guyton: Right. Even with a block rectangle, yeah. (laughter)
- CM-U: I mean in this case, I mean they don't—the one—the painting in the other room doesn't have any drips. So I mean sometimes they do.
- Wade Guyton: I can kind of tell with the angles and, I don't know if you want to look at this.
- CM-U: Let's go back and forth. I think that's fine.
- Wade Guyton: Let's see. —I could tell... It's usually because things start out more—they start out correct-ish at the top. And as the canvas is going through the printer, things usually go awry later on.
- CM-U: That makes sense.
- Wade Guyton: Except in this case, I started over, so it's over printing in that one at the beginning.
- CM-U: So is that—that's a second printing? No. It is.
- Wade Guyton: Yeah, that is.
- CM-U: So you had the first band on...
- Wade Guyton: So I can't tell you exactly why it went through the printer again, but it could have gotten jammed at the moment, or something at the time just didn't seem right. So I pulled it back out and put it back through. And it looks like the file just kept printing from that point—I know why. This really dark part is the first bar, and it was—I must have thought it was too light. Actually, it looks really mushy. So maybe it was too much ink was coming out, and I decided to print again using less ink. Because I was always trying—the other issue with this piece is I was trying to finish it very quickly. (laughter) And I wanted the ink to dry as fast as I could get it to dry. So I used—like the economy or the draft setting in the printer software.
- CM-U: Oh that's right, you mentioned that. So you have that control as well, then?
- Wade Guyton: I do have that control.
- CM-U: How much ink you're putting on.

Wade Guyton: So it looks like I might have tried to use less ink after it started, and then it continued... I'm not exactly sure what happened. For some reason, the file stopped here, and it wouldn't continue more.

CM-U: It's so beautiful that way, yeah. (pause)

Wade Guyton: And I can't tell you what happened there. (laughter) —

CM-U: I've—I imagine that there—this must happen where you print on both sides, and then you look at it, and go, "No, it's just not good."

Wade Guyton: Sometimes I don't even know until... Often I don't know until they're opened up.

CM-U: You undo it. But there must be times you make it, you open up, and you go...

Wade Guyton: Yeah, often.

CM-U: And then you could reuse that for another work or...

Wade Guyton: Once they're opened up... Well,—I could. Like I could—it depends. Some things are salvageable. It's not like anything can then become a monochrome. There were a few like come here and look at that. Like that's an example. It was one of the first ones I made. And the Xs, this is actually an example where the X is printed. When it was an X painting, that would have been the top. And then when it became a monochrome, this is the top. So originally, when I was printing the Xs, that was the end that was going through the printer first. So that I can see that these marks here indicate the direction. And then when I printed the black rectangles over it, see the Xs through, and then that was the top. So in the end, that's the top of the painting.

[00:36:13]

CM-U: And then what's something like this?

Wade Guyton: That's leftover from the Xs underneath.

CM-U: (pause) Your canvases are very flat. Who makes your stretchers? Are they stretchers or just strainers? Do you get to key them out?

Wade Guyton: They're—these are made by Simon Liu, I believe.

CM-U: Key stretchers?

Wade Guyton Interview Transcript, Artists Documentation Program, The Menil Collection, 05/24/2010

Video: adp2010a_20100524_003va.mp4 / Interview #: VI2000-020.2010a / TRT: 01:13:17

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- Wade Guyton: They're keyed, yup. Do you want to look at the back or...
- CM-U: Yes.
- Wade Guyton: Okay. (laughter)
- CM-U: Do you have one you can show, or should we just move this?
- Wade Guyton: Oh, we could look at that one. That one might be the same. I—I'm kind of new to painting, so I've been experimenting with new things. This is from 2007, and...
- CM-U: And so this is an expansion bolt stretcher then. So it all—when you do this, it evens it out in a way. You move the bars to get the same time.
- Wade Guyton: No. These—well, these—this one only controls this.
- CM-U: But when you're at a mitre it moves them the same, at the same time. —Where do you get the linen? And what—how do you specify what you want?
- Wade Guyton: The linen comes—it comes from a company called Artfix. And they're located in France.
- CM-U: They're...?
- Wade Guyton: In France, in Provence. And I just buy it as it comes. So it's pre-brined, and I just happen upon it. I like the surface of it, I started working with it. And then I—it's made for oil painting. And then I realized that each time they make a batch, it's slightly different. And this difference isn't really registered to an oil painter, I don't think. Or my guess is that the oil sticks to it no matter what. But the printer, these differences are really registered by the printer. So that's sometimes really frustrating. And that's why the—when I started making the X—or when I was working with the X paintings, and they were always getting really mushy. I went to them. And they kept telling me that no, nothing's different, it's always the same. And I was like no, no, it's really different. (laughter) But they didn't really take me seriously, so. But I can tell if they're...
- CM-U: It's the absorbency you think is different when they prepare it; the color as well?
- Wade Guyton: The color is definitely different. —You know, some of them are more yellow than others. And the yellow I guess is—it fades over time. And like in

these—so you see I think the first two panels are a bit more yellow than the others.

CM-U: Yeah, I see that. I see that.

Wade Guyton: But they were more yellow, if I remember correctly, a year ago. So what they've said is that over time, that the yellow fades and becomes whiter.

CM-U: Is that disturbing to you?

Wade Guyton: No. Sometimes if they're too yell—maybe the yellow is more disturbing to me, than the fact that they all whiten— that doesn't bother me. When—I prefer it to be a little more white but...

[00:39:53]

CM-U: So how long do you wait before you flip it over and do a second side?

Wade Guyton: It depends. Like now, I mean in this case I wouldn't be using this again. So let's—and since it's so wet.

CM-U: It dries pretty quickly though. Oh yeah, it's still..

Wade Guyton: It's these parts that are really heavy. I don't normally do that. But well, let's just put it through again and try a different setting, and then we'll see what the effect is.

CM-U: It's only if you want to do it because you've shown us the process.

Wade Guyton: Yeah, but we can see how the... So what's happening here is you see this is getting dragged over this, and going through the metal part of the printer. — And since it's still wet, it's going to transfer a lot onto the inside of the printer.

CM-U: But now it's going back across the whole...

Wade Guyton: Yeah, it's reading the surface to find where it should print. And then it went to about the same spot that it did last time. So I'm going to print differently, with different setting. Just with black ink.

CM-U: So now I understand more fully what I've read about people saying that you manipulate the canvas. I see what you're doing. You're trying to realign it in a way.

Wade Guyton: I don't really do it that much. I mean I like to not really touch it. But if I have to, it's usually an attempt to correct when it's going off ... Like I wouldn't be—like right now, I wouldn't juggle it around to just make an effect at all.

[00:43:04]

CM-U: Thank you. Have you always printed on canvas, or have you done this on paper as well?

Wade Guyton: Well, not on this printer, but I started out making what I call "drawings". I started using the printer on paper -- I would tear pages out of books, and put them through a smaller printer, like that one on the flat files. And that's how I started working with the computer and the printer. And then those were all unique as well, and so I was thinking of them as drawings. And decided that—I wasn't a painter before. I thought, well, if these are drawings, how would I make a painting? I would need to change the scale and the material. I at first made some experiments on raw linen with—that wasn't primed, and raw canvas. And the ink would soak in, so it was much more a completely different effect.

CM-U: It would still go through a printer?

Wade Guyton: It was really tough because it was really much softer and would get jammed.

CM-U: Yeah, I would think so. It's interesting, it's such a different effect.

Wade Guyton: So here, you see the lines are like this where—and also you can see like this white banding or—I think this is when the heads are kind of getting clogged. And so you get this very regular, pinstriping. But if it was a different kind of canvas, it's still kind of bleeding a bit. So these pinstripes aren't so sharp. And that has to do with the surface absorbing.

CM-U: More absorbency.

Wade Guyton: And the ink is running more than it would on other canvases or other batches that have gotten from the same fabricator.

CM-U: I can't help but think of other artists (inaudible) the sharpness of the line is so important, and how difficult that is to get, in different media. And yet I think it's just as difficult in what you're doing. I do. I do.

Wade Guyton: I'm always looking for a sharp line.

CM-U: The implication is to think oh, well, this is not nearly as complicated, but it is.

Wade Guyton: It really is.

CM-U: It is, I can see that.

[00:46:03]

CM-U: As you do these over time, you must begin to see things that the machine does that you hadn't even noticed at one point. And that must introduce a certain variable that you probably hadn't considered before. Is that true?

Wade Guyton: Yes. I'm trying to think of a good example. Often they are things that I'm not able to manipulate or put to any use beyond... I just kind of have to let them happen, and then I'm not able to... There are different things that I'm able to use and that affect the way I make the next work. And then others, other kind of chance happenings that are just unusual events that I can't then replicate or control. But like in this case, and I don't think this is the printer. But in this over here, you see suddenly these lines are very crisp. Or in different places of the canvas, it's more where the irregularity of the canvas that causes that I think. But on a larger scale...those things can become really—have a larger visual effect.

CM-U: I can see that.

Wade Guyton: You know, within the painting.

CM-U: Well, that's another aspect of the work. There's no manipulation, there's very little manipulation other—later—other than your decision to transform it into something else.

Wade Guyton: Yeah, the only manipulation or the only manipulation other than that is the cropping. So I do decide where...but it's never—the cropping only happens either at the top or the bottom. So either the image moves up or moves down on the stretcher. But the seam is always in the center; dead center on the stretcher.

CM-U: So what size stretcher do you order compared to the size of the canvas?

Wade Guyton: These, well, they're my standard right now. It has been for a few years is 69 inches wide by 84 tall. And that partially is the—due to the width of the canvas, but also my old elevator – it was the biggest painting I could get out of the building and through the door. So that—I think there's a little bit more

on the left or right. And there's obviously more on the top or bottom. But I stuck with that standard for now. Except for... (laughter)

CM-U: That's hard to change. I mean there's a real—you know, there's a real comfort that you kind of get with that I would imagine.

Wade Guyton: Well, it was an arbitrary thing, and it seemed to—you know, it then set the template for the following works. —So we'll take it out, and see what happened on the back. So you can see all of these kinds of scratches that...—That are either—I think they're from the inside of the printer, not from the floor...the super, regular sharp ones like this one is great, and that just comes from the printer; there's some sharp piece of... sharp edge in the printer. And then also—it was a much bigger deal when I was making these very wet monochromes, but they would also collect the dirt from the floor. And that would become embedded in those paintings.

[00:50:30]

CM-U: How long do you let them dry before you stretch them out?

Wade Guyton: I guess as long as I can. Sometimes it just depends on what kind of schedule I have.

CM-U: How much time you have.

Wade Guyton: Or—if I really want to see it, or sometimes I'll work for a long time where things just pile up. And then I go back to them.

CM-U: So it could be weeks? Days?

Wade Guyton: Sometimes it could be weeks. Sometimes there are things in a pile that—yeah, that I've let sit for a long time; months.

CM-U: Have you ever stretched something up and then decided to put it back through the press?

Wade Guyton: No. But I have stretched things, and then decided they weren't good and they had to come off the stretcher. But once they're stretched, there's no way to get back to the printer.

CM-U: Because they've been bent around the edge?

Wade Guyton: Yeah. —Even—it's even difficult like for this to go back—like if we were to untape it, unfold it. We could probably get it back through the printer again,

but it's much more difficult because it just goes through a lot of other damage. You know, that makes it even more hard for the printer to kind of figure out.

CM-U: I understand that. I mean--

Wade Guyton: Also in this case then it's harder for the printer find where to start. So...

CM-U: Because the printer's always responding to what's already there.

Wade Guyton: It's designed not to print over itself. So especially in the cases of the monochromes, where I was printing several layers, there was a lot of trickery involved.

CM-U: Yeah, I'll bet. Convincing it to do something it doesn't want to do.

Wade Guyton: It's really a lot of coaxing.

[00:52:18]

CM-U: Which was the first one you did on the printer? Was it a colored one? Was it one of the Xs?

Wade Guyton: The very first one I made was actually a red rectangle and a black dot. (laughter)

CM-U: Do you still have it?

Wade Guyton: It sounds so important. I do have it.

CM-U: Do you have a certain set?

Wade Guyton: I know, yeah.

CM-U: Yeah, it has a certain importance to you, I'm sure. And was it large?

Wade Guyton: I mean it's not so great but it was just because it was the first one. That's why I still have it, because it wasn't so good.

CM-U: Was it large like this?

Wade Guyton: No, it was small. But the first several that I made for a couple of years. It took me a long time to figure out that. Now it's kind of a no brainer, but it's

surprising that it took me so long. But was just printing 44 inches wide, and just not trying to avoid or bypass the parameters of the printer. I was just using what I had. So they were also—I realized I could print tall or long, but I didn't realize I could double the width.

CM-U: Right.

Wade Guyton: So the first one was—the very first one was maybe after it stretched, like 38 inches square, or something like that. And then I started making more tall, rectangular paintings. And then I realized—they didn't seem to register as paint. They were really—their format was really strange. So then I was doing my—the first show of the paintings in New York. It was in a really small room at Friedrich Petzel, and I thought I needed to make a—I don't know, a heftier painting. So instead of—oh, I would—I wasn't able to afford a bigger printer. So I'd done this trick of folding a long time ago with the drawings when I had large books that I was tearing apart, and folding, and taping, and putting through the small printer. And so I remembered that I could do that, and (inaudible). And then it seemed to be much more important than just increasing the scale, because the seam then became the most important part of the composition of the painting or the structure of the painting. Surprisingly. So in the beginning, these, before they were folded, it was much more about a picture, and then they became a lot more sculptural to me. After that, manipulation of the material came in.

CM-U: Well, what's interesting is that you start by seeing it vertically, then you make it, and then you only see it horizontally until you undo it, right? And then you probably pin it up on the wall before you stretch it, or do you just go right ahead and stretch it?

Wade Guyton: I used to.

CM-U: How do you crop it? Is it down flat? I'm sorry.

Wade Guyton: I lay it down flat. I kind of look at it. You know, since it's always the same size, these days I can kind of guess where it... I would take out a measuring tape and figure out the possible places for it to end. And then turn it face down, and do the fine tuning face down. Because then it's usually about... This is not a good example, but it is about these tiny margins. And whether the image wraps around the side, on the top, or at the bottom. Well, it always wraps around the side, but how much it wraps around the top or the bottom. And whether the painting is going to be sitting on the image, or if the image should always be on the front.

CM-U: Whether the painting?

- Wade Guyton: Well, like I mean whether it wraps around the bottom. They also sit on the floor for me, so I'm always thinking of it as like standing on the floor.
- CM-U: Well, that was my question. I mean so that was kind of my question. You're looking at them on the floor.
- Wade Guyton: And then even when they stand up, we have that one on the wall. But like in the studio, I always have them sitting on the floor.
- CM-U: That's what I was trying to think about you making that translation on the floor, visually. A visual translation to it vertically. —I don't know. Well, this has been terrific. Thank you. Should we go back and look at the work, and see if there's things about it?
- Wade Guyton: Sure.
- CM-U: Unless there's anything else you want to comment about this?
- Wade Guyton: I don't think so. Yeah, we could go back.
- CM-U: And anything else you'd like to talk about, we'd be happy to.

[00:56:54]

- CM-U: Before we get onto paper, let's finish. I have a few more questions here, Okay? How—I mean one of the things that struck me the other day too is how flat your seam is. I mean your fold. So do you do anything extra to get it flat?
- Wade Guyton: We don't do anything extra. At first, (laughter) the funny thing is I thought in the very beginning, the first group of paintings that we folded I was really worried about this fold, like we got to get this out. And (laughter) I decided as it was faced down, I was going to iron it out. And (laughter) I was installing the show at Petzel, and of course Friedrich comes in, starts talking to me, and I'm ironing. And I get—and I'm so spacey. I forgot, I get distracted, and the iron... I mean it's so Lucille Ball, you know? You're like this is so crazy. But the thing starts smoking, and then on the other side there's a big iron mark on the front of the painting. Because it transferred, it was like laying on glassine or something. So after that, we decided not to try anything. And it's fine, actually. The stretching takes the seam out.
- CM-U: I'm really surprised, because there's such a tight fold in order to get it through the printer. It's just amazing to me. And as I look down the wall, I don't see any deformation. They're tight.

Wade Guyton: They're kind of tight. They're a little..

CM-U: Well, it's from the weather, probably. One of the things that struck me the other day, and does so again is when you look diagonally down the wall. You know, the black of your edges reads differently. Because I guess they're in shadow, or they're perpendicular to the light as opposed to parallel to the light. And it really has a beautiful dimension; it's really quite different. And I guess depending upon how flat the wall is, that could actually be almost like a mosaic.

Wade Guyton: Right. Well, this wall isn't very flat. (laughter)

CM-U: No, I know, so it's working that way like kind of a mosaic.

Wade Guyton: It's really working here. (laughter)

CM-U: (laughter) It is. So what you're saying is we may not have this effect elsewhere?

Wade Guyton: You may not have that at the Whitney.

CM-U: But it's really quite beautiful.

Wade Guyton: But you can—you're welcome to build an uneven wall. (laughter)

[00:58:58]

CM-U: The only other thing I guess we should talk about is this damage that happened in Italy. So we can distinguish that again, once again, from things. So what happened was... Well, do you want to—what we know?

Wade Guyton: What happened was as far as I know, we installed the painting on the day of the opening. There was someone cleaning the floor using I think maybe a floor polisher. And as she went by, I guess she just wasn't paying attention. And either—maybe there was a cord coming out from the handle or the handle itself, but it scraped from here, and then it looks like she moved away. And then came back into the paintings down at the end, And did—started here again across all the way there, and then hits here again and then again there.

CM-U: And one of the indications you were making—or one of the confirmations you had that this was in fact damage other than you remembering the works of course, was that the line went through the fold.

Wade Guyton: It's because—yeah, the line—the scrape went across the fold. And so for me,

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any kind of scratch... Anything that's happening during the process is to me, part of the work. But once the piece is stretched, then any additional marking or scratching would be considered damage. So I could tell that when the linen's folded in half, one side—one side or the other is on the floor. It's impossible for a mark to happen across both sides. At least, I can't think of a way. You know, or—and for it to cross in that manner. So that's the give away here. Or the other thing is when they're stretched, you have... Like in this case, you have a corner that doesn't exist when it's on the stretch. So this mark is a giveaway as well. Usually, there are scrapes that happen. Most of them are vertical. There are occasional marks that happen that are kind of horizontal or go diagonal, but that's because of you know, a piece. Maybe I slide it on the floor while we're moving it around. But...

[01:01:34]

CM-U: And there isn't any—there's no other coating that you put on once they've come out of the printer? That's it.

Wade Guyton: I don't. —

CM-U: That's probably just as well if you want to keep them white really. Because then it's more complicated. I mean I could imagine us feeling the need to clean if the white got soiled or (inaudible) wanted to clean it; surface clean it in some way. We have all kinds of way of doing that without interfering with the gloss. Because you have a very definitive surface there.

Wade Guyton: And what about this area though? Like this is dirty. But that's from the process.

CM-U: Well, that's why it's important for us to document it now that that's part of your process. And then any other cleaning would be any kind of just superficial grime that gets on it over time. —

Wade Guyton: You just want to keep one side clean, and one side... Like this is the side that was on the floor, and this side. Just only clean one half of the painting.

CM-U: Just clean half.

Wade Guyton: Then you'll be safe.

CM-U: I think that kind of sums up my questions about this piece. I don't think I've... Is there anything else you'd like to discuss about it?

Wade Guyton: I don't think. I can't think of anything.

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CM-U: Now is this a black that was black, or is this the presence of all the color?

Wade Guyton: No, this is all—only black.

CM-U: Only black.

Wade Guyton: No color. And you can tell when there is color, like the piece on the floor.

CM-U: The one we just did.

Wade Guyton: You can see it's kind of greenish, so the cyan is coming through. Or sometimes it's a little more yellow. But in all of these, you can only see—it's only using I guess the two: there's a black and what they call light black; gray.

[01:03:27]

CM-U: Let's look at some works on paper. I know that Whitney has a work; at least one.

Wade Guyton: They have a piece...a framed group of drawings that was shown at the biannual in 2004. And so it was made for that show. Let's see if we can find some similar...

CM-U: Or we can just talk about...

Wade Guyton: We can use this as an example here. Because they're similar to what the Whitney has. There's a whole group. And these are some of the first ones that I made. At the time, I was interested in different kinds of architecture. And I was also making sculptures. So I was looking for a way to also make something portable. I wasn't really—I was never a drawer. So I started tearing pages out of books and magazines that I was already looking at as source material for other works that I was making. And initially started drawing with a sharpie marker on these pages. Just very simple,— basically lines; some other geometric forms, but very rudimentary. And the marker was leaving all these marks, and it really felt like I was drawing—you could tell that they were drawn. And I wasn't really feeling it. (laughter) I don't know. The labor didn't seem to make sense to—with what I was—with the result. I don't know, it didn't make any sense. So I realized that I have one of these printers on my desk that was being used for printing e-mails, printing photos. And realized that that could make these lines more efficiently, faster. And then I also became fascinated with you know, just the printing on top of the printing, on top of a printed piece of material. This kind of—anachronistic form of printing, combined with this kind of new but cheap form of printing. And in this case, where these lines intersect, there's something kind of great

that would happen visually. —So that became my drawing activity. You know, and these files were made... The paintings were all made in Photoshop, with a Photoshop file, and the drawings are made in Microsoft Word, generally. And for me, at the same time, it was—I was using Word because I felt like it related to writing. And like using the computer in a certain way that seemed appropriate. I don't know.

CM-U: It makes sense.

Wade Guyton: Yeah, so I'd tear out a page like these from a book, put them directly into the printer. Should we do it?

CM-U: You don't have to.

Wade Guyton: We don't have to. (laughter)

CM-U: Unless you want to. I'd love it if you did, but you don't have to.

Wade Guyton: Let's see. I have to hold this. I'm not connected. —

CM-U: Well, I'd hate for you to waste one of your images though that you're...

Wade Guyton: No, it's fine. There's tons of books to be torn up. —They're usually better if I'm not even thinking about it.

CM-U: So have you gotten Epson to give you any of this equipment?

Wade Guyton: No. I've never asked. (laughter) I don't think I'm a good advertisement for..

CM-U: You don't think you're a good...

Wade Guyton: I'm not really using the printer the way that they—I'm not taking advantage of the attributes that I think they want to advertise. —So (inaudible). In this case, (inaudible). —There are leftover files from the other day. Was this when you were here?

CM-U: No. No.

Wade Guyton: No, this is another group. So that was supposed to be a complete red circle.

CM-U: It's cool, I like that.

Wade Guyton: Donna was here the other day and we did a demonstration. —But because like the paper ended up not being—oh, that's a complete one.

- CM-U: Depending upon where the paper was in it, is that what you're saying?
- Wade Guyton: Exactly. So if it's not going in line, if it's not perfectly aligned, then it either will stop or yeah, I guess... This one's not so bad. See, then it keeps wanting more.
- CM-U: Oh, it keeps wanting more to eat.
- Wade Guyton: Yeah, well. —Cause that one it really did eat. So occasionally, that happens. (laughter) Now we're jammed, but that's what happens occasionally. —
- CM-U: Fabulous. So what is this that we're looking at though? Why is it—is it just different absorbency in the paper?
- Wade Guyton: Yeah.
- CM-U: And look, I see what you're saying about the canvas before, because it's so clear there. Because at first, I was thinking when you said that, that doesn't make a whole lot of sense because it's all the same substrate. So why should it absorb differently, but it does?
- Wade Guyton: I mean in this case, it could be like oils left on the paper, but who knows.
- CM-U: Well, I've been very grateful for your time, and your openness, and generosity.
- Wade Guyton: It's been a pleasure.
- CM-U: And explaining this to us. And I marvel at the control that you have over all of this.
- Wade Guyton: I hope it was useful. (laughter)
- CM-U: And all the decisions you have to make as you go ahead.
- Wade Guyton: I'm bluffing.
- CM-U: You've convinced me, anyway. Thank you, Wade.
- Wade Guyton: Thank you.
- CM-U: Really great.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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