

[Beginning of recorded material]

So I think I'm going to do something slightly different tonight, especially for you folks because we're in the Lake District. I'm not going to show anything other than paintings, well I am not going to show photographs of paintings. I'm only going to show works in other mediums.

So what I'd like to do is show paintings that have some relationship to landscape, that are inspired, enriched or patinaed by the light of the landscape or the ideas of figures in landscape.

The first painting I'm showing you is called *Mooseurach*, and Moseurach is where we live and work in Germany where I am teaching. We have a studio out in the countryside and we live on a bio-farm so we are surrounded by animals and nature. The name of *Mooseurach* comes from the name moss, I don't know what the rest of it means but I know that ma equals moss. And *Mooseurach* is a place which is framed by a green-grey rolling mist and thunder storms, very violent weather like America, and the culture of America. This painting is the first painting I made. I consider myself as most of you probably would guess, as an urban painter. But what I've tried to do with my work as I have gained experience and intimacy with my work is to try to bring the experience of the world to an abstract syntax. This painting, you'll see that the spaces between the block are very opened up and there are lots of pink and orange coming through from the back. Most who would know my work would expect it to be more conclusively interlocked in the way that walls are built. And my paintings are indeed, built. My inspirations are people of course like Mondrian, and particularly Cezanne. I might point out, however, that I don't feel very close to Mondrian emotionally. My paintings are fundamentally emotional and poetic in their intention, at least. So you can see that the kind of green comes into my work, and this is quite new. I have been coming to my work probably for about ten years. But as soon as we got to ma sora, Germany, in this countryside and I had

been living on the farm, it happened automatically. So what I am working with, in a sense, is a grid open to the world, among my useful in comparing my work with the late great Agnes Martin, whose work is a lot gentler than mine, of course, but was formed by the light of New Mexico. And she did not like being referred to as a minimalist. She was an experienced painter, as am I. When we were working today on the hills of the Lake District and it occurred to me then, I was thinking about this upcoming lecture, and I was thinking about romanticism and German romanticism and since I am involved in both cultures, it is natural to make comparisons. The English countryside I think influences English romanticism, it makes it airy, and light whereas romanticism in Germany is a romanticism of darkness and light. It is a romanticism of greater contrast. When one is looking through the forest of Germany it is very apparent that this is the case. So this has formed the two sensibilities which of course are responsible for great examples of romanticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I thought it was useful as an observation the painting here has a lot of darkness in it of course. And my paintings tend to be oppositions of light and dark, horizontal and vertical. Here the blocks are not cemented into place. Their precariousness is the sensitivity in the painting, I believe. The to the background,

The way the background can come through. And make the slabs tremble, make them slightly destabilize. There's a sense of the precariousness of the human condition that I am trying to show in these paintings, particularly the paintings that I am showing now.

Now I will go back in time to this painting. I am not going to show you my work chronologically. This is called "The Bather". It was made in 1983, or 4. And it's homage to Matisse's painting. At this time I was making my paintings with sections that were bolted together. The difference between the paintings I was making in the eighties and the paintings I am making now is very great. The paintings I was making in the eighties were actually physically built first. So I was making a very powerful competition, fight between the fiction and the physical side of the painting. And here you see examples of romantic painting which is running down vertically in the painting and the sense that the body or the idea of a figure and the green and blue environment in which it stands. And the painting is made up of different levels and is sort of broken up juxtaposed bolted

together and it has about it a kind of physical aggression, but, nevertheless referring to some kind of idyllic situation with the luminosity of the color particularly in the pink section.

This is another painting from the eighties when I was living in New York [where] I made all of these paintings, of course. I hadn't at that time, begun to think about returning to Europe in the way that I have now, and it might also be useful to point out that when I was making these paintings the dominant style was figuration, exemplified by artists such as [Bobawitz] and [Anselm Kiefer]. So, again, even the paintings at that time were physical and aggressive, as were their paintings, I was working against the idea of a picturization of abstraction to figuration. This painting is called "River" and it has a kind of narrative sense or a flowing sense from left to right and right to left backwards and forward. It has a very prominent central panel that bulges out that again makes a reference to the figure. All of these paintings I was doing at that time were all made with these sections in the center of the painting that were measured off with my own body. That is how I would decide how wide they were by holding my arms forth like this and they would tend to be hip-width or shoulder-width. Now, situate these in the middle of this construction that I then attempted to overwhelm with the romantic painting.

So this painting is called "Outback". I painted it before I had been to Australia, by the way. But I was thinking about Australia when I painted it, I was thinking about the desert. And when I went to Australia this year or just last year, I was struck by how accurate it was, how accurate the color was, which testifies I suppose to the importance of photography. The painting comes out and it goes back. So I was making a conversation about this notion of back and out, out and back, and I ended up calling it "Outback". I make these lines, bright lines in the ground, I paint between the black lines so the black lines are channels and what is left of a very earth-like material made with color that is in fact, taken out of the ground. I mean that is how we get these colors. They are from the material upon which we walk. So these are all earth colors in this painting. It looks a little dark now, but it's a pretty moody painting.

I was in England one time, I was at the [unintelligible], a well-known opportunistic cynic, who has now decided that the painting after all, is splendid. And isn't it just, splendid, that is? That [unintelligible] will be moving on one day of course, and me I'll just be stuck, painting, which is my destiny. Anyways this painting has again, this sense of an inset. A sense of something stuck into it. It might be interesting to point out now that the paintings I made in the seventies I am not showing you any work, all of the paintings, very rigorously painting, mostly in black. And painting, abstract painting, had reached a point in its development at that time, around 1979, 1980, where most competitive abstract painting that one saw around, particularly in New York, was all-over painting, was called field painting, where something is painted in a way that expresses a point of view, or an attitude or a procedure, and it is started and finished and then that's the painting. And what I had wanted to do around this time is reintroduce this idea of relationships. So I was putting things together. I started to put things with other things, in other words, just to make a relationship because the sense of relationship had been taken out of most interesting abstract painting and I felt it should be put back in, if one were to make abstract paintings that had a future.

This big painting here is called "Lost Land". This is an extremely depressive painting and it is a very dark painting, quite challenging, and was not I imagine fall under the definition of decorative abstraction. It has a wasted quality to it, a brutal quality, where all of these browns- and the browns in the painting are moved around with the brush in a physically insistent way. I am telling the story of the painting, explaining the structure of the painting by the way that the brush is moved around and very little attention to changing the color. So it has about it a kind of wordful quality, a desperate quality one might say. I have forgotten something very important that I wanted to say. Does anyone know what it is? I would certainly appreciate them raising their hand. Are there any mind readers in the audience? I know there are a lot of hippie people out in the Lake District. Well, I believe in that kind of thing, so if anyone knows, please raise your hand.

It is so irritating isn't it, when you forget something. Yeah, when I was a little boy my father used to come home every night and he would say do you know the junk about the

empty bucket, and then I would be tormented the way I am right now, trying to remember what the answer was. And then he sat up, and said, there's nothing in there. I still haven't remembered. Okay, so never mind, moving right along-so this painting is one of the most brutal paintings I have ever made. And of course the title is desperate, "Lost Land", and to have a land that is lost is in a sense, terrible. And of course it is a painting about the loss of the land. So, this of course, something we all have to fight for, and it becomes increasingly difficult. And this painting is about that, that feeling of loss, and then in the corner of the painting is a very aggressive black and white statement that is quite hard, tough. It stops the painting from being interpreted any way, overtly lyrical, overtly sentimental. So it is a pretty tough painting and I think it's kind of appropriate that it's in a museum in Germany, which in a sense is a lost land, or a land in a process of rebuilding its spiritual place, its ethical spiritual collateral.

This is a painting called "Umbria", and it's a much more peaceful painting than the last one I just showed you. Again, made in the eighties, I think. I think this was made in 89, and it was made after I made a trip to Italy. I was very struck by the way that the color yellow in Italy was always changing. In the morning it would be one color in the afternoon it would be another color, in the evening another color. The other thing that struck me about Italy and the life of Italy is even though one could say that the yellow changes during the day, if one is looking at a scene, it is static. So you can look at landscape in Italy for hours and it doesn't really change. I am talking about in Umbria, where I was. I was sitting in the back of a hotel looking over these hills and they were like a painting, they were like an Italian painting. And they were still, and there was very, very little shadow there. Everything was clear, and like a photograph. Now, the light in England changes all of the time, its [unintelligible]. There are clouds passing over, there's rain in the air, there's light in the air, there's clouds, it's dark, it's bright, there's wind there's not wind. England of course is a country that has every season in every day, as they say. And you know, don't forget your umbrella, don't forget your raincoat, and don't forget your sun cream, all in the same day. And this, I think, has affected the art, that's why, in a way, romanticism as exemplified around here, is so powerful because of the environment, the physical environment, and why one can make a painting like this as a

remembrance of a trip to Italy because the light is so constant and secure. It's a nice day and you know it's going to be a nice day all of the way through. It's very clear and you can look at things for a long time. It allows you to contemplate. So this painting is made up of two L's that are bolted together and they hold a figure in the center. So, again, what I am trying to do with paintings in this period is to try and cut out the shapes first, and paint in the bands afterwards, and then bolt them together and then make these relationships. But they are relationships that are always cut in some way.

In addition, it's implicit when looking at these paintings that the paintings can come apart. So the relationships are sculpted, but they are also provisional. So when the painting leaves the room, I have opened up, the relationships are broken. The relationships are only put back together when it is time to look at the painting. I think this is characteristic of all of the paintings I made in the 80's, when once again, abstraction was the minority activity. Now, I've remembered what I wanted to say. I guess it's going to have to wait. I was trained as a figurative painter. Now there was never any doubt in my mind that I was going to be a painter. The only question for me was what kind of a painter. I was either going to be an abstract painter, or not an abstract painter. And when I gave up figuration, I gave up figuration for abstraction. But, I had never considered abandoning painting. I am absolutely committed to its potential for expression for its ability to reflect the human condition directly as a kind of foot print. And the way I am making paintings it is absolutely crucial that the painting has the personality and the knowledge of life lived of the person who painted it. So, I believe that painting, put into my definition of painting, depends absolutely on bringing together over a lifetime the hand the mind the heart and the eye. And you can't really circumnavigate this. People try to of course for the marketplace. They try to get other people to make their paintings and then they sell them as their own, as a kind of brand name. But I am the polar opposite of this. My paintings are made by me. The other thing I wanted to say is that my painting is a form of abstraction that has a sense of the body, a powerful sense of the body.

This painting is called "Africa" and the reason it has a sense of the body is because of the time that I spent drawing the figure and painting the figure. So I can paint things with the

weight of the human body. This has made my paintings into a kind of individualistic form of modernism. So I represent and probably misrepresent modernism. And I am sure that I misrepresent notions of abstraction, but what I am really trying to do is put life back into painting, and it's not really crucial that one thinks of the paintings as abstraction or not. Of course they are abstract paintings, you can't recognize figures in them, but you can recognize this sense of things, the sense of places where you might have been, experiences you might have had, physical experiences you might have had, and the sense of your own body, and the urgency with which the painting is painted, the directness with which the painting is painted. And the other thing I would like to talk about is the sense of directness in my work which I equate with a form, with a brand of honesty. I was always struck with Vincent Van Gogh's idea that he wanted to be honest in his work. And I think that mystery that comes with directness is more profound than the mystery that is, in a sense, manufactured by the obscure, either technically or visually.

This painting is called "October". It has an autumnal red light, and of course this is a window painting. These paintings that I make that have windows in them are in a sense they can be looked at as a wall with a window, it can be looked at as a painting, it can be looked at as a rug, as a figure on the ground or as a carpet. I have a strong relationship to carpet and the window in these paintings is cut, so you are again feeling the romance of the painting, the weight of the painted surface, the saturation of color, and this is constantly being cut out. It is important to note that these insets are painted outside the painting and then they are put in, taken out and put in, taken out and put in, until the painting is finished. So I paint the outside and the inside separately in these window paintings.

This painting is one of my absolute favorites from this period. It's called "Red Star". And I was thinking in a sense, in a way it's not a picture of the sky but the sensation of a huge field with a pointed. I was obliged to call it Red Star, because I was thinking of the sky, the night sky and a bright red point in it, or in this case a window. The painting of course is architectural, as you can see. A lot of the paintings from this period, until the

end of the 80's are very dark and brooding, and a huge painting, and quite challenging and in a sense, quite difficult to like, as are many of my paintings, quite difficult to like.

But I think that the issue of stubbornness is very important in art, particularly in painting. No, it's very important in art. An easy entry is likely to be temporary in other words. My own belief is that relationships that are somehow complete with all of the abrasiveness of life seem more authentic to me, than what one might call an obvious sense of beauty. And this one, again, is not imbued with an obvious sense of beauty.

This is called "Black Garden". It is a very aggressive painting. All of these paintings from this period namely "Red Star" and "Black Garden" were shown in New York, at the David McKee Gallery in November 1990, I believe. And it was a week before the Iraq One started. It was very interesting. All of the paintings were reserved. They were huge black and aggressive pictures. I was surprised. Then the war started and none of the paintings were reserved, and none of the paintings were sold. It was really something. It was as if my exhibition was somehow like that war. These paintings were dark, brooding, had a lot of foreboding in them. "Black Garden" is a garden that is really burned out. But it's a powerful painting. It's one of my favorite paintings. It has this totemic inset in the right side. The black and white looks like it could almost be borrowed from an African mask, and then a kind of broken up left side designed as if it has been cut up and put back together again with a huge vertical, well two huge verticals in the right panel that is projecting out. So it's a tremendously disjointed and aggressive painting. Again, nothing to do with decoration really, it's strictly habitat sense.

In this painting, I should have mentioned that thing about body before. This painting is called "Body" and it's again one of my favorite paintings. It's in a museum in Japan now. It has a strong sense of order, classicism. And the color in this painting is very clear, almost conceptual in the sense that it is organized in terms of color, and no color, very simple. Except of course in the way that the painting is made, is of course, experiential, the way that the color is put down, the way the white is broken is a result of a lot of work, and is a result of a lot of labor. And there is much labor in my painting. So I think my



paintings when I look at them myself in great number, seem to be overwhelmingly manual, almost desperately so, as if someone is fighting to insist that paintings can be painted. The other thing I have said about my painting is that there are not negative spaces in my painting. That's always true of Van Gogh's paintings. Everything is filled out, pushed out to the edge. All space, deep space, is blocked out, with repetition. So, the work has a constant beat running through it, and all groups of stripes all groups of bands are butting other groups of bands, which again, push out all negative space. It's not to say that one does not get a sense of space, but the sense of space in the paintings is extremely close to the surface. It is very connected to their materiality, to their body, in fact. So these paintings that come from the 80's and from the 90's are tremendously assertive, physically and aggressive.

This is a more recent painting. Here, I think you can perceive a significant difference. This painting is in the exhibition. It is called, "Wall of Light Sky", which is, of course, impossibility. Because you can't have a wall of sky, it's a contradiction. So, it's based on a feeling on a hope, on a poetic aspiration. I painted the painting over a very long period of time, and quite slowly developed all of these delicate colors delicate color combinations. It is [unintelligible] still, but still relates in a sense, to a history of religious painting. Plus, it can go through a doorway.

So it can be put in any church that would like to buy it. So, as you can see, in painting like this there are strong rivulets left in the margin. So I am painting the same old stuff, the stuff that I've been painting for the last thirty years, but I am painting it in a slightly different way, and this is really the point of my agenda. What I have attempted to do with my life is to, is to, take a very old pictorial module, and also a pictorial module that we are using in computers, and I have tried to fill it with a human life, over time. So over time I have tried to close down the gap between myself and the way that I am making my paintings. So it's really a devotional position or an existential position, a little of both perhaps, and I think that it takes a very, very long time to do this, to do these kinds of paintings. So it basically takes a life. So for painters now who paint like this, who are a similar opinion about what culture needs, they tend to tend to have to work for a very

long time in isolation, or in neglect. Not that that happened to me so much or it did when I first went to New York and nobody wanted my pictures for the first seven years. I haven't really been without an audience since I started showing my work. But the scenario is getting worse now for painters. So, it would take people longer to come through this way. Of course there's the other way too, which is hip, clued-in, fashion-conscious, ironic and slit.

And I am a counter-force to this, quite a vocal counter-force to this. And I believe it's very important to be so. So if someone were to ask me what this painting was like and they were on the telephone, and being unable to show it to them, I said, well, it's like a giant Morandi, that is painted in a grid, which is of course, like "Wall of Light Sky" not possible. Because if you had a giant Morandi it would defeat the whole purpose of his work, which is about utmost reverence, which is again counterpoint to the large scale progression of American art. What I have done with some of these paintings is to keep the emblematic power of American art that I have learned, that I have learned in America, that I have learned looking at America. And of course, that I learned looking at architecture, Japanese architecture and so on, and then I have tried to fill it up with what I know, what I feel and what I have lived. And I think in a painting like this, it comes through quite well. The paint is quite dry, and there are very delicate pink and grey colors that seem to be near and far. None of the blacks are really black, they change. So the whole painting in a sense really is like the sky, but it's like the city as sky, one might say, or if the city were sky, turned into sky, it would look like this, maybe.

This painting is from another group of paintings that I've been working on and I am still working on. It's called "Landscape Sea". So I am using these paintings to make a reference to the horizon line and to the sense of near and far, and having distance, objects, within a single painting. It was said of English abstraction and European abstraction after the war was the weakness of that kind of painting in relation to American abstract expressionism was that the European painters, particularly the English painters were somehow pastoral, that they were overly affectionately connected to the notions of the landscape. And the American painters of this period, [unintelligible] I am talking about, were intent on

separating themselves from the kind of European humanism, a European sense of classicism and a European relationship to the landscape. However, [Clifford Still's] paintings do look like [Cameron Duchee] in New Mexico or Texas, wherever he is. And I don't believe it's necessary to fight these battles that have already been won, and it's not really now a question of whether a painting is declaring itself as abstract or winning new territory for abstraction. I don't think that that's really the place, the position of painting anymore, in the history of painting. So what I am doing is going back to the whole history or painting.

I am a European person and that is for me to use. So I use the colors that one sees in the paintings of Manet. Those are very comfortable to me. That's my culture and those are my cultural roots. And these paintings, this painting in particular one can see this grey at the bottom, pale yellow, and these paintings one may associate with European painting, but not really with American painting. But anyways, there's a figure ground thing going on here which I am still very interested in and which I would not like to abandon.

There's a painting in the exhibition that's called "Figure in Blue." I think-I'm not sure. Is it? "Figure in Blue?" Let's consult the dictionary here the dictionary of images. God damn it, I can't find it. As a working title, later to be edited, it's called "Figure in Blue", or "Red Figure". Anyways, as a title, figure is, yes. And, it is something that I don't want to give up on. And I can still make my paintings like I want to make them, but I wouldn't want to give up on the idea of bringing the figure into a painting, whether the painting looks abstract or not. So I am bending abstraction around. I am trying to make it expressive, open and porous. This is an atypical little painting I thought you might like to see it. It's called "Landline" part of a little group of paintings that may or may not have a future in my life. And they are made with horizontal bands and I am thinking about horizon lines dividing a surface like this, painting things in different ways. So some parts are thin, some parts are thick. I'll see where it goes, I don't know. I am open to it.

This one is called "Wall of Light Ocean" and it conveniently lives by the ocean, San Francisco I believe, and the painting, like "Wall of Light Pale Light", , has a ragged

border that I took from my work on paper, from my pastel. The age of the painting, there is one painting in this exhibition I would like you to look at in this way. It's got an uncertain border and it makes the relationship between the image and the architecture, the architecture of the canvas stretcher, more uncertain. And it includes a band of hesitation outside the picture, which I find interesting. It doesn't happen to a majority of these "wall of light" paintings, but I am quite interested in it. I like to feel my way, paint my way up to the edge of the painting. The painting is cushioned as it hits the wall, but it's not quite environmentally as confrontational as some of the others. But anyways, you see here this kind of Oceanic blue, bright white colors like the foam of the ocean, the white you see in the sky. And the whole painting has quite a lot of air in it. And this sense of arias is assisted by this band of space, referring to the canvas color running around the outside. And this one is another painting along similar lines. This one is called "Wall of Light Beach". You need the ocean, you need the beach, and you need the beach to sit on so you can look at the ocean. This one I painted one night in my studio quite late in a moment of perfect inspiration and I kept it. I have it in my studio. I was just running this color through the painting over and over again. And the yellow and the yellow over different colors were transformed by the colors underneath. This brings me to a very important point in my work, which is the issue of color. How does he get those colors? Well, what I do is I make a situation

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