



**The Library**  
UC SAN DIEGO

**Artist Interviews: Terry Allen, Johnny Coleman,  
Yolanda Gutierrez, Nancy Rubins**

1994

27 minutes, 49 seconds

Interviewees: Terry Allen; Johnny Coleman; Yolanda Gutierrez; Nancy Rubins

Transcribed by: Stephanie Duncan

[inSite Archive](#)

UC San Diego Library Digital Collections

<https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb3723171g>

Copyright: Under copyright (US)

Rights Holder: UC Regents

Use: This work is available from the UC San Diego Library. This digital copy of the work is intended to support research, teaching, and private study.

Constraint(s) on Use: This work is protected by the U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Use of this work beyond that allowed by "fair use" requires written permission of the UC Regents. Responsibility for obtaining permissions and any use and distribution of this work rests exclusively with the user and not the UC San Diego Library. Inquiries can be made to the UC San Diego Library program having custody of the work.

Time	Transcription
0:01	[InSite_Archive_94 Artist Interviews/ Terry Allen / Johnny Coleman / Yolanda Gutiérrez / Nancy Rubins
0:08	[Produced by Southwestern College English and Spanish/ 28 min.]
0:16	[video cuts to static]
0:18	[inSITE94 Southwestern Community College]
0:38	[video cuts to static]
0:40	[video cuts to black screen]
0:55	[music] [Johnny Coleman]
1:13	[Crossroads]
1:18	[music fades out] Johnny Coleman: This piece is generated out of what was shared with all of these people that I found all over the country, and bringing it into this space whose whole function was a baggage building--which is functionally about movement and people bringing in their lives--packed up and folded--into a space, and it intersects with other people's individual, packed up, discrete, folded lives and then it moves out again. So the piece is a crossroads, and it deals with these kinds of intersecting lives that are drawn from all over the country, and then cross for a moment in this one, specific space.
1:56	[Baggage Building]
2:00	Johnny Coleman: You see somebody, and you fall into a conversation with them, and we talk about whatever it is that we talk about. And so it's--it's really just been a lot of exchanging whatever it is that's been going on in our lives. And for the most part you would expect it--you'd be talking about the weather, you'd be talking about O.J., or you'd be talking about [sighs]--you know--what's going on around the corner. But for the most part, we moved through that pretty quickly and just started talking about what seems to be just a consistent energy that's felt, and it's being expressed by many different people differently everywhere that I've been. And--and that's a sense of real change that's imminent, and a sense of pressure, and--you know--being on the point of a pivot--something that's just about to shift. And it's being expressed in a very personal means, you know?
3:00	Johnny Coleman: But the whole piece--you know, I--for me, it's really a storytelling piece. And that is the turning point I think. You know, when I did that--I, I realized it, it wasn't just about me, it was about him too. You know, it was me helping him. It was me loving him, it was what kept everything going. You know, it was--it wasn't about, "Am I going to get to go to school this year?" [crosstalk fades in] It

wasn't about "Why don't I have a bicycle?" or "Why don't I have this?" or "Why don't I have that?" It was about saying; "Thank God I've got you." [unclear]

- 3:38 [crosstalk continues] Voice 1:...I remember one time we drank about two hundred and fifty dollars worth of whiskey. A little bottle of whiskey--Johnnie Walker Red, going to Chicago. We were so drunk when we got off that train...[cross talk continues]
- 3:48 [crosstalk continues] Johnny Coleman: ...nothing can stop a train that's moving, and he threw me on that day, and he says, "Just hang on son! And stay away from that door. If you fall off, it's gonna cut you in half. Hell, that was enough. I was right and center of that floor, holding on. You can see knuckle marks now that's--you know. And I hear here Dad holler, "God, Ow, Shit! [laughing] He's back there--he was on that train behind, he jumped up to the top...[unclear] [music fades in]
- 4:14 [Johnny Coleman Crossroads / Baggage Building in memory of Beula]
- 4:24 [Commissioned by Sushi Performance & Visual Art for inSITE94]
- 4:27 [Produced & Edited by Kathleen Tolen]
- 4:31 [Videography Sally Cunningham, Kathleen Tolen, Cynthia Bourget, Robert Schneider]
- 4:34 ["Crossroads" by Robert Johnson]
- 4:38 [Produced at Southwestern College in cooperation with inSITE 94]
- 4:41 [Special thanks to: Johnny Coleman, David Zapf Gallery, inSITE94, Robert Schneider, Richard Spain, Southwestern College Telemedia Department]
- 4:45 [c. 1995 TheLeen Productions]
- 4:47 [music fades out]
- 4:55 [inSite 94]
- 4:55 [music fades in]
- 4:57 Terry: I'm not interested in making art that's about art.
- 4:59 [Terry Allen]
- 5:00 Terry: I'm interested in making work that--that's--engages people. It's about people, and about the times that--that we--live in.
- 5:20 Terry: Across the razor, across the razor.
- 5:22 [the razor]

- 5:32 Terry: One of my first visits down here for the *InSite* thing, to kind of decide--see what I was gonna do, they were just putting up the wall down in Playas [de Tijuana, Mexico]. It reminded me of razor blades--these stacks of this metal that they used for the wall. So I--I just kind of always referred to it at the razor blade wall. And I kind of immediately knew that I wanted to deal with something that had to do with that wall, and something that had to do with the immediacy of both sides of it. I initially proposed two concrete blocks, one on each side of the border on the beach right down--that were probably thirty feet, I think, away from the wall on each side with this sound system--microphone, speaker system--where that people could actually walk up, and stand on this platform, this concrete, and speak to the other side, [music stops] or yell at the other side, or play music to the other side.
- 6:44 [man plays saxophone into the microphone]
- 6:49 Terry Allen: The *InSite* people like the idea a lot. [music stops] The--but when they kind of started testing the waters with the bureaucracies that they would have to deal with in terms to build--building this thing. They just kind of hit a brick wall with it. So, I--I tried to think how I could still do--have the same idea, but something that wouldn't be quite as threatening to people. And I just basically put it on wheels, I pu--decided to build platforms on vans with a ladder where--and--and they became this kind of mobile free speech units that are--you know--and that's how it came about. It was just kind of a process, but it always--it was always that thing of wanting there to be dialogue, or offer an opportunity on both sides to address the other side. And address the border directly, not as--not as some kind of visual art or whatever, but have it--an actual human response.
- 7:55 Voice 2, speaking into the microphone of the art installation: ...because most Americans don't even know what a "Mexican" is, and they are very ignorant of Mexico. I lived here for 15 years. See, I'm white. Ok? You see me? I'm white, and did I get jumped or get my throat cut? Did anything happen to me? No, nothing. It's a lot of misinformation and slander that you're promoting. I'll give you another example: Do you know that most of the people who are stopped by the Border Patrol and harassed by the Border Patrol are not even Mexicans, they're Americans--Mexican-Americans? Do you think that if I was down by the border up by Canada, you think some Border Patrol would stop me? It would have nothing to do with my color would it? Nah, nothing with that would it?
- 8:38 Terry: I--I think it's about people always first. It's--the first thing is--is it's about people, not about borders, not about even cultures. It's about human beings communicating with one another. And that's where it needs to start as far as I'm concerned.
- 8:52 [man plays saxophone into microphone]

- 8:57 Terry: Really don't know what to expect and that's what the piece is about too, you know? It's about--I think confronting...confronting this weird situation with laws and rules in supposedly a free country, which you know...[trails off]. And it's--it's amazing to me how all you want to do is set up a situation where people can talk to each other, or talk across to the other side and it becomes such an infringement--infringements of rules and laws and--whatever.
- 9:28 Voice 3, speaking into the microphone of the art installation: I am Mexican, and I am proud to be Mexican. And the only thing I can say is I just try to make myself--try to live better. And that's what we are all trying to do over here. And I sincerely hope that Kathleen Brown wins instead of Pete Wilson cause she's gonna make everything a little bit more easier for us, and probably for you too, so you won't hate us that much.
- 9:55 [music plays from the speakers of the art installation]
- 10:00 Terry: I'm not sure that my--my work is about borders so much in terms of like the U.S.-Mexican Border as it's about what those borders are between all of us and--and that we have in our own selves that we are constantly crossing back and forth. And in a sense it's--it's a large symbol for that I think--if it's symbolic. I'm interested in that idea how people of like hearts, different minds whatever can take an arbitrary line, and it becomes this incredible barricade between--for good, evil, right, wrong, rich, poor, sad, happy--all of--all of the contradictions on just an arbitrary line that's on a map, you know?
- 11:05 Terry: I kind of think everything that--that's, that we think of as bad about the border there's--there's something good about it because it's really the first and last chance you have for people to get together, you know?
- 11:19 [on screen, text labels each side of a wall leading into the ocean "Mexico" and "USA"]
- 11:20 Terry: and the irony is--is that now we have this wall there, or you have this fence there, which is--it's almost obscene. [music fades out]
- 11:30 [screen fades to black]
- 11:32 [music fades in] [Videographers Mario Daley, Joe Wagstaff]
- 11:37 [Produced, Directed and Edited By Mario Daley]
- 11:43 [Production Coordinator Robert Schneider Southwestern College]
- 11:49 [Additional Footage Provided by UCSD TV]
- 11:54 [Special Thanks To Patricia Taylor, UCSD TV]

- 11:59 [Thanks To Southwestern College Telemedia Staff Richard, Marisol & Lou]
- 12:05 [inSITE94]
- 12:18 [1995 Faustino Day Productions] [music ends]
- 12:26 [screen fades to black]
- 12:55 [De Paso]
- 13:00 [The sound of a train passing by]
- 13:04 [Instalación del Arte]
- 13:22 Voice over the intercom at a train station: Good morning ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention please, now arriving Amtrak Train 550 [unclear]
- 13:40 [train noises fade out]
- 13:45 Narrator: "I find a poetic and conceptual relationship with the train station," writes Yolanda Gutiérrez, "Since by its nature, it implies passage--and like death is a place through which all must necessarily pass." De paso, just passing through.
- 14:10 Narrator: For this installation over forty clouds were hung from the ceiling of the depot, arranged in such a way that it would feel as if a wind were taking them away. Each cloud is made of a thin, iron structure supporting hundreds of threads that suspend animal bones.
- 14:32 Yolanda, speaking in Spanish with English subtitles: The reason I used bones, in this case, bones that have been incinerated, is because I like to talk about life, the essence of life. I use materials that have been alive at one time. It is as if I try for that spirit to remain. I formed the bones into clouds because I think of them as a metaphor, referring to the idea of movement, of the ethereal, the ephemeral. This is a story that will explain why I formed the bones into clouds. At the time I was trying to think of what to do for this installation, an aunt of mine passed away. She was cremated. And when we went to the ovens, my mother saw the smoke. She asked if the smoke fell on the houses around the cemetery. She thought this was horrible. Afterwards, I realized that it was a very poetic idea. That what was left of people would stay in the environment. This led me to the idea of the clouds.
- 16:18 Yolanda, speaking Spanish with English subtitles: I hope that when people are sitting in this room, they look up at the clouds as they are spending time, waiting for a train, and when they realize the clouds are made of bone, they will remember that we too are made of bones. That we are also in part animals--not to say that we are animals [laughs]. That they will think of their own existence, about their death. Think how they are here for only a moment.

- 17:06 Narrator: This installation attempts to express a view of life as constant movement, as if we pass through this world and then at death, our travelling spirits--like clouds--move on to occupy another time and another space in an unending journey.
- 17:29 [train noises]
- 17:33 [Yolanda Gutiérrez was sponsored by the National Institute of Bellas Artes Mexico for inSITE94]
- 17:41 [rolling credits on screen: Production by Sally Cunningham; Special thanks to Walther Boelsterly INBA, Michael Krichman inSITE94, and Constance Cunningham, Cameron Cunningham, Paul Heimgaertner]
- 17:55 [Cunningham Productions 1994] [trains noises fade out]
- 18:02 [screen fades to black]
- 18:02 [Airplane Parts and Building A Large Growth for San Diego]
- 18:22 [machinery noises]
- 18:27 ["One Piece"]
- 18:32 [a montage of construction outside of a building]
- 19:57 [Nancy Rubins was sponsored by Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego for inSITE94]
- 20:03 Rolling credits on screen: Edited by Sally Cunningham; Camera Operator Sally Cunningham; Production Assistance by Kathleen Tolen, Joseph Wagstaff; Special thanks to Nancy Rubins, Michael Krichman inSITE 94, Robert Schneider Southwestern College, Cameron Cunningham]
- 20:13 [©1994]
- 20:19 [screen fades to black]
- 21:13 [Southwestern College presents inSITE94]
- 21:26 [Johnny Coleman]
- 21:33 Johnny Coleman: [crosstalk] ...bicycle?" or "Why don't I have this?" or "Why don't I have that?" It was about saying; "Thank God I've got you." [Unclear]
- 21:40 [crosstalk continues] Voice 1:...I remember one time we drank about two hundred and fifty dollar's worth of whiskey. A little bottle of whiskey--Johnnie Walker Red.

- 21:47 Johnny Walker: This piece This piece is generated out of what was shared with all of these people that I found all over the country, and bringing it into this space whose whole function was a baggage building--which is functionally about movement and people bringing in their lives--packed up and folded--into a space, and it intersects with other people's individual, packed up, discrete, folded lives and then it moves out again. So the piece is a crossroads, and it deals with these kinds of intersecting lives that are drawn from all over the country, and then cross for a moment in this one, specific space.
- 22:26 Johnny Coleman: [crosstalk] You see somebody, and you fall into a conversation with them, and we talk about whatever it is that we talk about. And so it's--it's really just been a lot of exchanging whatever it is that's been going on in our lives. But for the most part, we moved through that pretty quickly and just started talking about what seems to be just a consistent energy that's felt, and it's being expressed by many different people differently everywhere that I've been.
- 23:01 [Ulf Rollof]
- 23:04 Ulf Rollof: The reason that I'm working on this side is that Michael Krichman showed me this side and I really fell in love with it, and I realized that this is it because this is exactly where it all happens. Here you have the train coming through--one train a day, comes through these steel gates. And the steel gates, to me, represent the complete entrance, the complete locate, the complete stop of everything--of communication, transportation, all means of interchange. Because of that, the train has always in the arts been a symbol of speed, and power, and velocity, and all these things, and here it really stops like this. The site was perfect, I thought, for this project. My project is all about a little train going around and around and around, built out of carousel parts that I found in Tijuana. On the carousel is mounted five Christmas trees, and they will go around and around, and you sit in this chair here, and you view the [unclear] like a looking point, a look out point - mirador en Espanol. But all the time you have this entrance of the Christmas trees, or the fir trees, which to me is, my culture, is the foreigner--that tree is foreign here; it's not part of the nature at all here. So what you see is the foreigner all the time getting mixed into the surroundings here, so it's the con--contrary to the fence which stops everything and has a straight motion--this has a circular motion. And you mix the Christmas tree into the whole surrounding so to speak. And that will--to me--explain how it's been felt to be a foreigner here, that I think it's important to know that you are a foreigner when you act down here and live down here in order to respect the surroundings.
- 25:02 [screen fades to black]
- 25:03 [Terry Allen]



- 25:10 [music] Terry Allen: I'm interested in making work that--that's--engages people. It's about people, and about the times that--that we--live in.
- 25:18 [the razor] Terry Allen: *The Razor*. One of my first visits down here for the *InSite* thing, they were just putting up the wall down in Playas [de Tijuana, Mexico]. It reminded me of razor blades--these stacks of this metal that they used for the wall. So I--I just kind of always referred to it at the razor blade wall. I kind of immediately knew that I wanted to deal with something that had to do with that wall, and something that had to do with the immediacy of both sides of it. I decided to build platforms on vans and they became this kind of mobile, free speech units. The *InSite* people like the idea a lot, but when they kind of started testing the waters with the bureaucracies that they would have to deal with in terms of building this thing, they just kind of hit a brick wall. It was always that thing of wanting there to be dialogue, or offer an opportunity on both sides to address the other side and address the border directly. I kind of think everything that we think of as bad about the border there's something good about it because it's really the first and last chance you have for people to get together, and the irony is--is that now we have this wall. It's almost obscene.
- 26:36 [screen fades to black, music stops]
- 26:38 [Johnny Coleman Crossroads; Edited by Kathleen Tolen; Videography Sally Cunningham, Kathleen Tolen, Robert Schneider]
- 26:45 [Ulf Rollof Carousel; Edited by Sally Cunningham; Videography Salling Cunningham, Kathleen Tolen, Raul Cardona]
- 26:52 [Terry Allen The Razor; Edited by Mario Daley, Richard Spain; Videography Mario Daley, Joe Wagstaff, UCSD TV]
- 26:59 [Special Thanks Terry Allen, Johnny Coleman, Ulf Rollof, inSITE94, Michael Krichman, Robert Schneider, Cynthia Bourget, John Newhouse]
- 27:06 [Produced at Southwestern College c. 1995]
- 27:08 [screen fades to black]
- 27:49 [end of video]