

KATHY HIGH: So, I mean, I think they're collecting this for the archive at Donnell. And it's... What I'm trying to do is just interview people to find out when you got involved in video making—as you said earlier in your introduction, like, it was 1975—and sort of what brought you to it. Just to start, if you could.

RICHARD FUNG: Oh, I'm on?

HIGH: Yeah, you're on.

FUNG: I actually started... I first came across video at...

HIGH: I'm sorry. Start by saying your name, so that's on the tape.

FUNG: Oh, ok. My name is Richard Fung. And I first got involved with video, I first saw video at art school. I was actually studying industrial design. And I kind of got disillusioned with it, and I started studying media. And then I worked with a woman called Sylvia Spring, who had moved to Toronto and was teaching guerilla television techniques. And so we went around shooting strikes and things like that, which was quite liberating for me. Then I worked as a community video animator at a public housing project in Toronto that had gotten really bad reviews in the press. And they hired me to use video and community television as a way of boosting the morale of the community, and also presenting a different image of the community to itself.

FUNG (Cont.): From there, I moved into the actual cable station itself. And I think that that was sort of a goal, in the age of public access, where a lot of— there was a lot of stress on invention and breaking rules, of using media in a kind of democratic way. It was a sort of utopian moment, that people have spoken about at this conference.

HIGH: And what were the actual tools that you were using, in terms of the equipment? You know, the machines. Like, what formats were you using at that point?

FUNG: When I first started at school, and... Right in the beginning, we were using the Sony reel-to-reel PortaPak, the one that turns into spaghetti when you (laughs) press stop. And then after that, at the television station, I used a three-quarter-inch camcorder— not camcorder, sorry, three-quarter-inch PortaPak with the deck, which I would have to lug on the bus (laughs) from the station where I was working to the community. It was quite heavy.

HIGH: When you were— did you edit much? I mean, you know, were the tapes, like, just sort of real time that they run? How did you structure them, in terms of... 'Cause I know that editing facilities at that point were kind of limited, especially with the half-inch; you know, and did that change how you looked at the work itself, or how you treated the material when you were interviewing people, et cetera?

FUNG: The half-inch material was actually quite a short time for me, and it's sort of sunk into the recesses of my memory. I think it's— I think I'm repressing something, because the experience was so bad. It always used to turn into spaghetti, (laughs) no matter what I did.

In terms of the... When I moved into the three-quarter-inch work and was working with communities, there were editing facilities, and so I did edit. However, that was a period when we were definitely told, quite explicitly, that a program should only be as long as it needs to be. And so we weren't editing down to specific television times. And at the end of the week, when we would schedule the work, it was actually quite a creative process to fit pieces together, 'cause it was more like a kind of uneven mosaic, rather than sort of like half-hour slots or one-hour slots that you have in regular television.

HIGH: Mm-hm. So you moved from that into sort of academia at some point—I don't quite know the transition—and, you know, what would be called art making. And so when did that happen, and how did that shift kind of come about? 'Cause it sounds like the way you're describing the work with public access, like that was really community work. And then it shifted to something else; but it's not *really* something else. You wanna talk about that?

FUNG: This conference has been really interesting for me, attending this session led by Deirdre Boyle, because it's raised a lot of questions in my own mind around different kinds of overlapping communities and how they worked. I went to art school, but I achieve—... Quite—relatively recently in my career, I've sort of started using the term artist to describe myself. I always thought of myself as a kind of video activist, or some other kind of thing, right? And you know, I've thought about this a lot, and I'm completely—I haven't teased it all out yet, to be able to make, like, the definitive statement. Like, the past is still continuous, in terms of that process.

But when I was at the community station, we worked with a number of different groups. And one of them I remember was an artists group, where A/Space had gotten money to have artists work with the community channel, and have that work projected—I mean cablecast. And we also worked with—I remember Vera Frenkel, who's an important Canadian video artist also worked at the station. So I was exposed to people doing that kind of work, although at that time, I didn't see myself really as part of that community. I knew people like Lisa Steelee. And in fact, one of the tapes, one of the first tapes I remember was documenting an event where there were performance artists and video artists working on a... It was one of the—a huge event in Toronto, where the *Body Politic*, which was a gay and lesbian magazine, had been charged with pedophilia. I mean, printing an article on pedophilia was a huge anti-censorship campaign. It was quite an event, where artists, activists, and all different kinds of people came together. And so I knew these people.

FUNG (Cont.): Then, after three years, I kind of got disillusioned with where cable access was going; it seemed to be moving more in a corporate direction. And I gave up, went to South America for a year, almost, and then came back and went into academia. At that point, John Grayson(sp?), who...

HIGH: What year was this?

FUNG: That was 1980. 'Cause we went to Nicaragua, down south(?), the end of the year. And then I came back and went to school and studied film theory and film history. And I was gonna go into this academic field. I was— wanted to go to NYU and do a Ph.D. in film studies. And then John Grayson, who had been living in the States, working at AIVF, came back to Toronto and said, “You cannot become a theorist, you have to be an artist; and I will make you an artist. I have a camcorder, and I’ll shoot anything you want.” And so that’s how I ended up making a first independent tape. I had been one of the founders of the Asian Gay Lesbian Movement in the country, and I decided to do this tape where we would do a kind of consciousness raising tool. And so John and I sort of pieced this thing together. Well, he shot and I directed and edited it. And then it came out. And I didn’t expect anything to happen with it. But then it got picked up at the Grayson Seminars, which is a documentary seminar. And then Linda Blackaby picked it up and programmed it at Flaherty. And then all of a sudden I was a video artist. (laughs) That’s how I became a video artist.

HIGH: Do you have any questions?

WOMAN: No.

HIGH: Do you have anything you wanna add?

FUNG: (laughs) Not really.

HIGH: Not really. (inaudible) That was very good. (tape stops, re-starts)

TONY CONRAD: —quite cool, actually. I could never wear that. You know, I would get hell for it. (they laugh)

HIGH: Ok, so tell us who you are. Who are you?

CONRAD: Tony Conrad.

HIGH: Tony Conrad. I've heard of you.

CONRAD: Mm-hm. That's because I knew you for quite a long time. (they laugh)

HIGH: So what have you done? When did you get into this video stuff?

CONRAD: Oh, video. (High: Yeah) Well, I was thinking about that. The first video I made was... It was a spin-off from a film that I made, where I was painting panels to try to make the emulsion myself. I thought: I could make a video like this. And I silkscreened screen shapes onto a black background, out of fluorescent paint, so that they would glow in the dark. Phosphorescent paint. And those were the first videos I made. They weren't tapes, they were conceptual videos.

HIGH: And when was that?

CONRAD: That... (laughs) I think I that was in '75. No, '73 or '2. (High: Uh-huh) 1973.

HIGH: Did anybody see these?

CONRAD: Oh, yeah.

HIGH: Yeah?

CONRAD: Yeah, sure, sure.

HIGH: So where'd you show them?

CONRAD: I had a show... Where the heck did I have a show? Someplace like the Kitchen or something like that. I showed the movies at Millennium. (High: Uh-huh) I had a twenty-movie show, that was all big painted panels that I put up, like a huge gallery show. Then I went to Ivan Carp(?). He was a big dealer at the time. I said, "So, is this art?" 'Cause I didn't know (laughs) anything about art at that time. And he said, "What I'm interested in is a legible— is an international video— is an international visual iconography. And these don't offer that. They look like Robert Ryman's paintings anyway," which— there was some stuff he was doing at the time; it didn't really connect to me. Too bad. But real video?

I actually was invited to teach video up at Buffalo before I had really made any video to speak of at all. I never had access to any gear. When I moved up there, I was eager to get my hands on the gear. But they didn't have a microphone. Only cameras. There was no microphone. And so I had to use... They did have a PortaPak.

HIGH: That was half-inch reel-to-reel?

CONRAD: Half-inch reel-to-reel stuff, yeah. It was fun. And that's the first stuff I did, was black and white half-inch reel-to-reel. It was about '75. '76? It was 1976.

HIGH: What was that tape like? Or those tapes.

CONRAD: Oh. Well... There were tapes where I was punishing the camera. I was complaining about the camera, because it wasn't doing its job correctly! (laughs) And I thought it would fun to sort of leave the viewer out and do some... It was performance work, in that way. It was artificial and contrived—and embarrassing, which I liked about it. Very embarrassing. Meanwhile, the person who'd invited me there, Woody Vasulka, went back to his loft, where he had color cameras and computers and imaging processing gear, microphones. (laughs) Steina and Woody let me borrow a color camera one day. (laughs)

HIGH: We know what happened.

CONRAD: Well, I made a tape then. I tried to make a tape. That's how I got in. It was really... It was wonderful.

HIGH: So tell me, this work sounds different from the film work you were doing at the time.

CONRAD: Well...

HIGH: Is it different? Or was it... How so?

CONRAD: No, it was exactly the same. I just told you. The film I was making— I had stopped making movies, more or less, because I was moving into making the emulsion. And then, when I came to Buffalo and ran into people who were also disturbed about viewership, about authority problems, about the— you know, like, this relationship to the stuff, to the process, to— who were concerned to break away from the formal, the patterns of formal construction of art... You know, all those people like Cindy and Robert and Zwack(?) and Nancy, and all of the people at Hallwells. And then the people who they invited to come to town, who were their friends from CalArts, you know... Like Jack Goldstein and David Salle and all of that. Well, there was a whole environment where there was a way of personalizing the art, personalizing the tools, bringing the human issues back in, deciding that the human issues were more significant than anything else. And so I started working with genre, because it made the... It foregrounded the people, and made some of the other issues less difficult. You know, just toss the art out. Get onto it, you know. And video is right in line with that. Right in line. Really right in line.

The one medium that I really found I liked was shooting on super-8 and postproducing on video.

HIGH: When did you do that?

CONRAD: Oh, in 1980— '70— no, yeah... In 1980, I made a long war film that never really got much popular acclaim, because it was made to try to work with an audience reaction, where the audience would be very— would find the film very inadequate and distasteful. And that was part of the aesthetic. And (laughs) the audiences found it very inadequate and distasteful. Right on! It worked! God! But then they didn't wanna watch it again. It was just a— it was a 20th century audience. Sad. Sad. Just— it was ahead of its time.

HIGH: And I remember a tape you made, where you were simulating these kind of ADO effects.

CONRAD: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

HIGH: This one with Tony Baloney(?)?

CONRAD: Yeah, yeah.

HIGH: When was that? That was in around that time, in the beginning of the eighties?

CONRAD: Yeah. Well, that was... Yeah, it was... Then being... I went through a time when I was filled with consternation at the processes that were being developed as art processes and reinstitutionalized, like appropriation and these kind of things, and high cultural values. And I really did try to parody those, to try to bring some kind of dignity back into the field by destroying the idea of dignity. Another gull-darned paradox! Didn't quite work, but it was... (laughs)

HIGH: What was that tape called?

CONRAD: It was good. That was called *Ipsa Facto*.

HIGH: And that was when?

CONRAD: Wow, look who's walkin' by.

WOMAN: (inaudible)

CONRAD: (laughs) Gee. What a crowd. (laughs) Power lunch. (they laugh) What are you doing this for?

HIGH: Sherry asked me to do it.

CONRAD: Oh, really?

HIGH: It's for the Donnell Library, I think.

CONRAD: Oh, I see. Well, what a... Let's get serious; is there anything else that I can offer in the way of information?

HIGH: Yeah, who's in the book?

CONRAD: In the book?

HIGH: Exercise(?) book.

CONRAD: Oh, the— this is people who suggested their interest in some kind of a listserv or something like that, to deal with a set of issues that are endemic to the institutional context of media at the moment. And I don't know if it would be appropriate to put this in the videotape, but... I'll give you the first names only. Wait. How come they're all women? Oh, no, no, no; Hank and Ron, good. Whew! Tony, Scott, Paul. Good, ok. Some fellas are in here, too! And Sarah(sp?) and Melissa and Susan and Mara(sp?) and Deborah(sp?) and Patty(sp?) and Gina(sp?) and Barbara and DuPong (sp?) and Theresa(sp?) and Rohesia(sp?).

HIGH: Sounds like...

CONRAD: Yeah, I'm proud of these people having the interest in continuing the communication process, because this upstate meeting has the advantage of bringing an incredible group together. And it happens all the time in New York, that a group comes together, but somehow, that it would happen in Syracuse is very strange. And just the effort, just the thing of it happening, isolates it in some way from the hubbub context of other things. So then it becomes special, in a certain sense, is establishing some kind of virtual context for communication. I mean, it's real now; but later, everybody'll say, "I was in Syracuse?" You know, it's like we went to heaven or hell, or maybe limbo (they laugh) for... Yeah. Picturing limbo; you can call this that, you know. Anyway, so we went to limbo for a day or two, and... It could be even productive. Could be— it *should* be productive, because there are— there's a lot of experience and insight in the... And differences. (High: Right) Differences. Valuable differences in outlook and opinion and... I mean, *vast* differences. I think if people were listening more carefully, I think they'd be knifing each other! Whew! (High: Let's see what happens. It's scary, you know. I mean, especially if there was money out there; but luckily, there isn't. (they laugh) So... There aren't any— there's no jobs to speak of, there's no money, you know, so everybody can say, "Oh, yeah, well, we disagree on this issue." And that's really the situation which inspires a lively discourse, that we should be having. There's a guy over there who just wanted to have a discourse about science tapes or law tapes or something

CONRAD (Cont.): like that. Nobody wants that! They want to have a discourse about art tapes. You know, so they're gonna be upset with him, you know. But that's a vital discourse; we should be having that kind of discussion. Like, why aren't they talking about surveillance bank tapes? You know, I think bank tapes or... I mean, everybody says, "Oh, our tapes are so radical," but then, you know, are they really that radical? Are the gestures that radical? People think these are— they've been radical. I don't think it's... It's not a very good barometer, video. It's like, nobody really— I mean, maybe people did fantasize that video was going to change the world. In this area of symbolic gestures that people in the 1960s believed—I believed in 'em, too. I went and picketed the Museum of Modern Art, with a sign that said, "Destroy the Museum of Modern Art." It wasn't just, like, to try to... Well, it was to try to make a statement. We didn't really believe it would come tumbling down like Job, you know; but we wouldn't have been dissatisfied if it had. The idea was that there was some stability, solidity in the conviction behind this. But also, that it had— that the symbolic gesture had some validity, in and of itself. And...

HIGH: When was that?

CONRAD: Huh?

HIGH: When did you protest?

CONRAD: Oh, that was about '65, something, '64. It was post-Fluxus environment. But now, we're more... Because of these discourses, like people can quote Fucot(?) and so forth. No one can believe that a symbolic action has a total validating quality, because they understand this is a form of idealism that's transparently obvious at this time, just in terms of— just culturally transparent. So we don't have those same things happening. And the same way, I think that the people who believed that they could totally transform American culture or world culture by shooting a videotape, in some sense were invested in an idealistic sensibility, which we can see still, you know, is still— there's still a confusion about that. But... There may be other ways of looking at that. I mean, there's certainly— we certainly do need more information about the structure of culture, and how community is formed, and what communication does to that formation, and how it's interlocking with the process, and the outcome of that.

I sort of see, in some sense the question as one of de-development. De-development is what happens when you don't recirculate the product of— the cultural product to the people. Because I'm just going by, like, third world development, the process of third world development. If you wanna see development, then the best thing to do is to take the indigenous knowledge and institutions and recirculate this to the people themselves, so that they see this in the context of their own problems as simultaneously visible, and then they find their own solutions. But if you take that process away, as you do when you have, like, a dominant media, then you de-develop people, and they lose the ability to communicate. I mean, we're hearing, like, a whole roomful of teachers saying their

CONRAD (Cont.): students don't even understand the idea of even shooting (laughs) their own videotapes, even though they have cameras. God, it's very weird.

HIGH: Thank you. Anything to close(?) that's good, very good?

CONRAD: What? Well, that was more... This isn't just about how I got started in video, I'm sorry, but...

HIGH: I know. It's good.

WOMAN: (inaudible)

HIGH: But you should probably say who you are.

RICHARD SIMMONS: My name is Richard Simmons.

HIGH: And how did you first get involved with video and video art?

SIMMONS: I was an assistant to David Ross at the University Museum from around 1972 to 1974, and when David left, I became the curator. And he moved to Long Beach.

HIGH: And how did you become interested?

SIMMONS: And I was a painter at the time, and... But after I saw my first artist video, I became very interested. And by the time he'd left, I probably had absorbed more information than anybody else in the culture.

HIGH: And why was that?

SIMMONS: Because I couldn't let anything go by unseen.

HIGH: So whose work did you see, and what did you...? What was it like? What kind of work were you showing? Single channel, installation?

SIMMONS: Oh, everything. From Nam June Paik's multiple television installations to Frank Gillette's monitoring of various animal and insect life. And I stayed at the University until January of 1981. And in that time, from the perspective of a museum curator, as opposed to the perspective of a teacher, for example, like a teacher cloistered in a university, where students have paid tuition to prove their interest, a museum curator is faced with the general public. And...

Which brings me to one of the last topics in the discussion inside. I think that one of the neuroses of video art is when artists and people associated with video art, the more we see, the more we cull from artists' work with video, the more jealous we become of broadcast television, the more easily we can look at it as pap and mindless. So we

SIMMONS (Cont.): become jealous, we... You know, they've got this big system, this big money making system that fosters this pandering to the public, when really vital stuff goes unseen by the general public. It makes us very jealous, I think, and gives us the illusion that if we could just show all this work to the general public, they'd be more supportive of it. I don't believe that. I think that the general public doesn't want anything to do with it. I don't think they ever will. It may be a negative attitude, but I think that's the way it is; I think that's the realist. The most that an artist can do is make the best work that they can do; the most a curator can do is show the best work they can find. Trying to force your ideas down the general public's throat is a way to rub them the wrong way, right away. And I think that the conference here showed that everyone is still very neurotic about the state of affairs. Here's this little cloistered conference, protected by the umbrella of Syracuse University, and the general public isn't responding. The general public's not going to respond. I had people tell me at the university, when I got into philosophical arguments with them—I mean general people coming into the museum—I've had people tell me, "I don't *want* anything that makes my mind work. I wanna be entertained. I worked all week." So that's what you're up against. Other cultures, like if... Let's pick out any ten hours of video, even the most demanding stuff, and show it in Finland, maybe ten to twenty-five percent of the people would look at it seriously, because they're in a different culture. They might not get bombarded, the way we get bombarded by pap. So they take it more seriously. They take everything more serious. But in the United States...

HIGH: Right, but you were...

SIMMONS: ...we don't live in a thoughtful culture.

HIGH: But you were a curator for a number of years, and... So I mean, even though... I mean, your attitude sounds sort of discouraging for that position, for one who had that position. I mean, does this come out of having worked in that position and dealing with the public?

SIMMONS: Oh, sure. Well, in 1974, I was very idealistic.

HIGH: So what did you think then?

SIMMONS: Oh, utopia. You know: The more I can show, the more people I can get to pay attention to it, the better off the culture will be, the more thoughtful it will become.

HIGH: Well, ok, now...

SIMMONS: (inaudible)

HIGH: ...I was someone who came and looked at that work, and was influenced by that work, to the point where I'm here today.

SIMMONS: You're not somebody from the general public. You're a student, who paid to hard cash to go to school to learn on this subject. You proved your interest already. You're different.

HIGH: I don't think I'm that different.

SIMMONS: You are.

HIGH: What do you think?

WOMAN: I disagree, too. Like, I mean, I don't think it's a problem that we, you know, she was in an institution, and that she saw... Like, she came out of the institution, too—I don't know; like, that doesn't seem a problem to me, the fact that you went to see that work, were inspired by it, that you remember—that she remembered you, like, specifically, was excited that you were gonna be here. You clearly influenced, like...

HIGH: Yeah, it was your selection, and your exhibitions that were completely inspirational. So I mean, ok, maybe I'm one person out of I don't know how many hundreds who came through...

SIMMONS: Oh, there are a lot more like you.

HIGH: So then how 'bout that?

SIMMONS: But that's a very small percentage, minute. When I say general public, I don't mean art students who've already paid hard cash for tuition to learn about a particular medium. You are in that category. You're not in the general population, in that sense. I mean, sure you make it up, just like I do. But...

HIGH: Ok, but speak to me...

SIMMONS: Well, we're talking about Joe Bum Cigarski in Mattydale.

HIGH: Ok. But these tapes are probably gonna go into the Donnell Library, and people like myself, or Tara(sp?), or yourself will probably look at them because...

SIMMONS: Who are already interested. People who are already interested. Difference.

HIGH: Exactly.

SIMMONS: Different people.

HIGH: Exactly. But for us, like, what was it that drew you to this medium...? I mean, it's, like, a very big question; I'm not saying it's something you can answer so easily. I know it's a big question. But what drew you to this medium, with all of— you know, maybe that idealism you're talking about.

SIMMONS: Oh, it was provocative, it was thought provoking, it was interesting.

HIGH: And how...

SIMMONS: Every time I saw something, it was more interesting. But that's because I was an artist already. I already had an aptitude for paying attention to things that ordinary people would just walk by casually, like it was a cigar ad.

HIGH: And what was the date of, like, the first tape you saw? And what was that, do you remember?

SIMMONS: Oh, June, 1972. I think the first tapes I saw were Dimitri Devyatkin's tapes of his— that he shot in Russia. So it was Russian culture. And I'd never seen Russian culture from a non-crisis perspective. And it was wonderful and heart warming. And I saw that those Russians were not different than I. It was wonderful.

HIGH: Right. And so from that tape, then...

SIMMONS: And the next thing I saw was maybe Bill Wegman. Laughed my ass off. Still laughing. Next, Nam June Paik. Wonderful stuff. Made my head spin. Put a smile on my face, wouldn't come off for a week. You know? Wonderful stuff, wonderful stuff. And— but peop— you know, here I'm part of that small part of the general public that goes to art museums. It's different. You know, Joe Bum Cigarsky in Mattydale goes to an art museum when his kid makes a picture that gets picked out by the school and the schools brow-beat the museum into showing all the students' work. That when Joe Bum Cigarsky goes. And all he does is look at his kid's work.

HIGH: Well, what do you think of this conference? I mean, what do you think of people getting together and trying to save...

SIMMONS: Oh, I think conferences are a good idea. I'm sort of surprised... I mean, I think the last time I saw all these people together, or many of these people together, was late seventies. I know that there was a Media Alliance in New York State that was just coming up as a strengthening factor in the media arts world. I don't know what happened to them; I don't even know if they still exist.

HIGH: They do.

SIMMONS: And I went to New York a few times for Media Alliance conferences. I think I went to Cortland once for a Media Alliance meeting. But I don't know... I

SIMMONS (Cont.): don't know what happened to them after that, if they still exist, and are they still holding conferences, and do conferences like this happen often?

HIGH: No. Not really.

SIMMONS: I think that the choice of panelists today was brilliant. And that's Deirdre's work, right? Wonderful. Wonderful complexion of people. You know, I hadn't— I haven't seen Barbara London in fifteen years. I didn't know what she was up to. And it's clear to me that she's definitely keeper of the flame. She's done a very fine job, I think. And she had a wonderful selection of things today. And I know that it is hard to excerpt stuff; I never let myself do it, and it was always a hindrance. If I had been able to excerpt tapes, I could've gotten a lot farther, perhaps. But here again, whenever I lectured, I lectured to people who had already proven their interest. You know, I had a captive audience, just like a professor has.

WOMAN: Sorry, I have to go, if you wanna keep going...

HIGH: Well, no, I... (tape stops, re-starts; brief comments) So tell me what you name is, and then tell me, like, what were some of the first encounters you had with video
(inaudible)

CONNIE COLEMAN: Ok. Well, I'll try to remember. I'm Connie Coleman. And for the past— it's past twenty; we used to say twenty years, but unfortunately, it's going beyond that. (laughs) For the past twenty-some years, I've been in partnership with Alan Powell. And we met in Providence, Rhode Island, when he was with Electron Movers. And I met him... I'm not exactly sure when I met him, but I was an artist in residence for the Rhode Island State Arts Council. And we were doing a lot of events to engage as many people as possible in mediums. And I was the craftsman in residence. And I started making floating— kind of floating event-type pieces. Because I had so many people to deal with, I had to find some way to get the very personal aspect of weaving into, like, a broad arena. So I was experimenting with body stuff, and happening events and things. And I was asked to produce a piece that would document the Arts Council's artist in residence program, and I produced a floating grid. And I had Alan's Electron Movers group videotape it for me, so that it could be broadcast over the local PBS affiliate. And that was my first encounter as a maker with, like, trying to make anything.

HIGH: And that was when?

COLEMAN: That was 1976, that I produced that piece. That's my very first video piece. And it's a piece called *Magic Carpet*. And of course, I had no notion of what the political issues were having to do with broadcast and non-broadcast television; I was just making my work. When I took my final half-inch open-reel tape to the PBS affiliate in

COLEMAN (Cont.): Providence, they laughed at me, and they wouldn't broadcast it. So I had to go and find a way to get it to be, you know, boosted. And it ended up at the Catholic Video Center in Boston, to be transferred to quad. So my very first piece went from open-reel to quad. And I still have that as an icon.

HIGH: Well, explain what quad is, 'cause people might not know.

COLEMAN: Well, it was two-inch open-reel, at that time, broadcast standard videotape, and required these mother machines that, you know, they only existed in a few places; but in New England, and particularly in Boston, the Catholic Church was sort of at the cutting edge of technology, because Bishop Sheen broadcast from Boston. So that's where you went to get things boosted. Unless you could get into one of the TV affiliates. So anyway, that was my first personal experience with making anything. And when Alan showed me the playback of what they had shot of my event, I stopped making anything; at that point, I wanted to make it as video, because the image on the screen became what I was trying to create in the air. And there was no need to make it any other way. So from that point forward, I sort of stopped making all these other things that I made. And Alan and I became far more engaged. I started doing his crew work for him, and... He was doing a lot of performance pieces and institution setups, and I would... I mean, he would, like, try to drown in my bathtub and I'd be videotaping him and things like that. I did not understand what was going on, but it was more interesting than what I was doing on my own, (laughs) so I did it. So...

COLEMAN (Cont.): Prior to that, the only video I'd really seen was Stumbling into Global Village, in— Alan thinks it was 1970.

HIGH: That was in New York City?

COLEMAN: In— yeah. 1970. And I think it was 1970, 'cause it was my senior class trip from RISD, when we went to look at the design houses, and some dude we were staying with (laughs) dragged us to this place where it was happening, and so I didn't know what was going on. People were screwing on mats everywhere, and it was dark, and there were flashing lights and TV monitors and... I mean, I have this impression of something happening, but I really can't put it together in a congealed fashion. It's only because Alan told me what I saw afterwards that I know that I was there. You know? It just was this moment that you pass through.

But early stuff... From the point in 1976, when I saw my floating line become, you know, an electronic line, at that point everything in my... I guess everything in terms of my studio work changed. It just— it stopped working. I had been trying to remove string from the loom; I'd been making environments; I'd been making drawings that were attached to very delicate paper; I was doing a lot of pulp work. But I was trying to release everything into a time format, kind of taking tapestry into time. And I was missing it. And since I'd been trained as a textile artist, I loved process, I loved seeing things emerge through process. And when I saw pixels, finally, that became my surface. I never went

COLEMAN (Cont.): back. Except now I'm printmaking. I'm doing a lot of electronic printmaking. But I have been all along. That's always been my sketch medium, so even from the very early days at the TV Center, when Ralph Hocking and David Jones were developing sort of very, very primitive kind of print programs using worn out ribbons and dot matrix printers, I started using that technology right away. And I still believe in that early stuff, that really low res gritty stuff. I'm not a real fan of laser printers; I like ink jets, I like splat, I like touch. I like all those things. So I don't know what more to tell you; you're gonna have to ask me another question, or I'll shut up. (laughs)

HIGH: I think that's really good. I think that's really good, 'cause this is really just to get sort of... (tape stops, re-starts) So tell me your name.

ALAN POWELL: My name is Alan Powell. Ok, and I've been working in video since 1971. My first experience with video was as a freshman at Rhode Island School of Design. A teacher named Alan Sondheim brought Raindance Corporation and Vito Acconci and Dennis Oppenheim up to RISD that winter, and they started showing their video pieces. And when they brought Raindance was the first time that we all got to actually play on the equipment. And for me, it was the beginning... When I went to RISD, I was very much interested in letting go of art as an object, and interested in art as visual information, and information space. And what I saw the first time I saw the video switcher of Raindance was this ability to, sort of in real time, collage different realities. That summer, a friend of mine started working as an editor for John Reilly at Global

POWELL (Cont.): Village. So then I sort of right away kind of fell into another world of it, where I got to kind of watch John Reilly and Rudy Stern, and I spent a couple days working for Rudy in Global Village, just kind of helping out, working, wiring up stuff. And I went back to RISD that fall very much committed to just starting to work in video. And myself, my roommate, Dennis Hlynsky, and my girlfriend at the time, Laurie McDonald were the very first video majors at Rhode Island School of Design.

Then we started making video sort of— kind of a combination half documentary, half experimental. And that winter, I went down to Technosphere, and there was a woman in there sort of looking at CMAs and seeing how they worked, and it was Steina Vasulka. And we started talking, and she said, “Oh, come over to the Kitchen.” And later that winter, I brought my... Two things happened that winter; I met Steina for the first time, and we saw these tapes out at the National Center for Experiments in Television, and really liked 'em, and wrote a letter to Brice Howard, asking him to come out and visit us. And he came out Christmas of 1971, and just sort of fell in love with the group of us, and set us up as a satellite to the National Center for Experiments in Television. And what was unique at that time, it sort of took the community access of Raindance and Videofrecks and combined it with a particular philosophical position of Brice, which was called the video mix, where you would create this matrix of sort of open lines to images and sounds, and it was a collaboration of many different artists sort of inputting, and many different ways to input ideas and signals, and that the video screen was a common surface.

POWELL (Cont.): And my entire experience at Rhode Island School of Design from '71 through '74 was always working in real time with this concept of video mix. We didn't really start getting into editing until the end of my senior year there.

HIGH: So you were working with half-inch reel-to-reel?

POWELL: Half-inch reel-to-reel, and we were designing... I build a matrix switcher that would allow ten inputs, ten outputs. I saw one at the Vasulka's and said, "Ok, where do you get this, you know, little box?" And so I sat down with my technician, and... We had just— RISD had hired their first video technician, and he was a broadcast guy, and we sorta had to pound away for him to understand that we needed to know everything; we needed to know how to wire the studios; and that was part of his job, is that there were gonna be no lines between student, teacher, and technician. And it was a very, very open-ended working environment. And by the end of our senior year, we decided to go the route and establish a video group called Electron Movers, which was made up of, well, four people at first: Bob Jungels, Laurie McDonald, myself, and Dennis Hlynsky. And then soon afterwards, Dorothy Jungels joined, who was a dancer, and Ed Tannenbaum, who was an engineer. And we set up this video center, and it sorta had three functions. One was a community media center, and we were doing workshops. We had every fourth grader in Providence, Rhode Island doing video. We were all doing our individual artwork, and also doing collaborative pieces; and we were doing sort of artist in the school pieces, and installations; and also running a public gallery space that could

POWELL (Cont.): be used for performance space and things like that. And eventually, that's how I met Connie Coleman, was she started coming in to do documentations of her performance pieces and institution sculpture, and Connie and I started working together with that.

HIGH: And I forgot to ask you this, Connie, but also Alan, what do you think of this conference? What do you think of the importance of this conference? Or what are the...?

POWELL: I think it's an important time for the conference, because I think it's getting harder and harder for these groups of people to gather, and I do think it's time for people to come together and talk about what happened, and some of the ideas that were exchanged there. And also to even talk about the complex issue of building a history, and whose history it is, and how that process... Because, I mean, what I came away, listening to Paul Ryan from Raindance was a tremendous emphasis on process. And that was very much what was important to us. You know, it was a motivating factor for me, away from the art object, was towards visual process, and about art making being a social process, not the individual artist locked away in a studio. And that was a very, very important thing. And I think that's important to bring out to this. And I think it is a complex issue. Can we take it to that next step? Is the web another generation model for that? It's hard to say. But it's been a very, very useful experience for me. Connie?

HIGH: And...

COLEMAN: How do I feel?

HIGH: How do you feel about the conference here?

COLEMAN: I was delighted, (laughs) until I heard David Ross last night. I went home really bummed out.

HIGH: Because...?

COLEMAN: Because he was terribly boring. (they laugh) I have to say, he really bored me to death. And I realize... I've tried to analyze why. It's not sour grapes or anything; it has more to do with the fact that we make this work out of passion. That's why we make— or at least, I think for Alan and I, that's why we make this work. And if we are not passionate about something, then we go do something else instead. And I think for the artists we respect the most, they make it because they have to. They really have to make it. It's not about all the academic issues that have been developed as a way of discussing it after the fact. So I understand that Ross is trying to follow the passion, because it's his job to sort of stay at the cutting edge; but sustaining a lifetime as an artist in this culture, when you get eaten up so quickly, is something... Are we old enough to have a history? Yeah, I think we are. Do we have something to share? Absolutely, definitely, we do. It's getting harder and harder to even explain how it used to be. Because if you look at current tools, like the camera you're holding, inherent in that tool

COLEMAN (Cont.): is everything that used to take a full room to hold. You know? The compartmentalization and micro... What's the word? When you micronize, make small that which is huge, that miniaturization, yeah. I guess you can't— you take for granted that it's always going to work; but it was nice to be with it at a time when it didn't work so easily, and the struggle gave one a chance to open themselves up, to see possibility. I think it's harder and harder now for people to have that kind of inner exploration. And that's what we seek to continue to teach, to practice. And maybe if the historians can at least hear us struggle with the language about what that life experience is, it's useful, because it is the human— it's the human drama. You know, I don't think we're all that unusual from any other artists at any other time, you know? It's just these are our days, and the tools are extremely powerful, and time seems to evaporate. So... We don't have the time to mull it over very much, you know? We're gonna have a history before we ever died, (laughs) you know? It's like we've gotta have our history, too; we've had everything else first, you know? It's like...

I'm just delighted to see folks I didn't think I'd see again in my lifetime. I'm really pleased with that. And we've always felt such a strong affinity with the folks at the TV Center, that there always was a community, and there still is a community. I really beg to differ with a lot of people saying there wasn't a community. There always was a community. It's still there, when needed. And... You know, I guess I don't have much more to say about it than that.

HIGH: Thanks.

COLEMAN: You're welcome.

MAN: Ok. Any time.

PEER BODE: Ok. My name is Peer Bode. And are you gonna ask me a question, or did you already ask it?

HIGH: No, I guess I already asked it...

BODE: Yeah, which was about the...

HIGH: ...which is to state, like, when you first got involved with...

BODE: Yeah, when... My first experience with video, and then my first actual involvement with making it. In the late sixties, I had the... While visiting my brother, who was living in Manhattan, and having the opportunity to roam around the West Village, I, by accident, walked into what was the Mercer Art Center at the time, and Woody and Steina, who I did not know, but— had one of their pieces, Multi MonitorX, with the images drifting across the screens. And I was a teenager, and you know, quite unexpectedly saw this, and was just amazed by it; I had never seen anything like that

BODE (Cont.): before. And probably about two or three years later, I got to see—again in Manhattan, at a place called... I'm not— maybe I'll remember it. It was a place connected with DuArt Film Labs, and it was a video production facility, a small one. And this would've been, like, '70, '71. And they had on the screen running, a videotape that apparently, Woody and Steina had made of Jimi Hendrix performing at the Fillmore East, and had colorized it and had mixed feedback and various things in it. And I actually remember— at that point I was already studying film at SUNY Binghamton, in the film program that had just started the year or two before, by Larry Gottheim and Ken Jacobs, and was studying the films of the new American cinema, as well as Warhol films and what was called experimental film, new American cinema, independent cinema at that time. So when I actually saw Woody and Steina's tape, my first reaction was that I was really grossed out by it. (laughs) I thought it was really ugly and horrible. Sort of clichés of the sixties and light shows, et cetera. That was actually my reaction to that. So the first one was very positive, the next one was not so much.

I also had the good fortune of being in Binghamton, and Ralph Hocking, who had started the Community Center for Experiments in Television, or some name to that effect, had moved the facility to downtown Binghamton, and what then became the Experimental Television Center was this loft space downtown. And my first walking up into that was walking into a space where a large open space was filled with cameras and monitors in feedback situation, and also flashing light structures, and sirens, and what was in a sense, a kind of automated parade. Had a very Americana aspect to the iconography and

BODE (Cont.): imagery. And also this feedback happening. It was just an abandoned—there was no one there, and it was just all running. And again, was... You know, this idea, this environment, electronic environment, in terms of... You know. So those were probably my first experiences of, quote, “video work.” Somewhere in there, I had, because of connections with the New York— I lived in New York City, I had the chance to Nam June’s show at Bonino Gallery, the Gardens piece, and... You know, the Nam June and Fluxus work was... You can come through.

WOMAN: Sorry.

BODE: Yeah. The Nam June and Fluxus work was very much in the air, and Nam June, who I always thought of as— later thought as some kind of, like, godfather of the TV Center, I mean, in the sense that the concept of an electronic facility, where artists would be able to work, and engineers and designers would be able to come and interface with artists and develop circuits and things, and that there would then be a space for artists to experiment, that was something in a catalogue of Nam June’s retrospective at the Everson that Judson Rosebush, I think, put together. Nam June lays out—actually, it’s text that came from when he was in Stony Brook—this notion of this kind of center, which in some ways, existed in Germany already, in terms of audio, but this was this kind of speculation about it, in terms of television and video. And Ralph was somebody who befriended Nam June, and it was a great opportunity to sort of play that idea out. And so the Center was in Binghamton. And as a film student, I had some connections with— I

BODE (Cont.): think the first time I actually worked there was working with Nicholas Ray, a filmmaker who was in Binghamton for two years, who together with the class and various classmates over that period, we worked on a feature film that ended up going to the Cannes Film Festival. And it was a very long, engaged project, part of which involved electronic manipulation. And we went down to the TV Center. And that was really my first experience sort of being abandoned there, and with Nick and a few other fellow students, trying to figure out how the keyer worked and how this thing worked and how that thing worked. And...

HIGH: What year was that?

BODE: That was probably in 1972, '73. It was when the center first had moved to Binghamton. I again had the... I was a serious film student, and I had a lot of the... That was really most of what my experience was. I was also— it was in the context of there being these very, very strong debates or sentiments of the filmmakers, as to what a terrible medium was, what an ugly blue light it was, how inarticulate, and how ugly that frame was that wasn't even a real rectangle, but this kind of happy face. And you know, I think— I don't know that I believed all of that; but on some level, I must've absorbed some of that, as well. And probably the other aspect, I also just saw such remarkable film work, which has been, I think, a really important part of my education and experience that I'm still working out of and extending into video, in terms of what could be

BODE (Cont.): electronic cinema. And a lot of that stuff really fed me, in terms of where— you know, what the work was that really excited me, was the film work.

When I graduated from the film program—and that probably is some indication also of sort of a difficulty that was around all of that—I began to make video, and actually felt that I had to make a decision to make video, and not to make film; and in fact, ended various friendships, and people who I haven't seen in years—partially because we've now, you know, gone our separate ways, but... You know, at the point where we were still— we didn't talk to each other anymore, and it was really a very severe thing that happened. And I remember actually making a very conscious decision that yes, video in fact interested me. I wasn't sure there was a whole lotta work that was that interesting that I had seen in it; but obviously, its potential was phenomenal. And I had ideas for things, you know, like, that I would like to do in it. And there was a lot of freedom in it, you know, because of the openness and the kind of newness of it.

The other thing that is a kind of context for me, that was the experience, the environment that I came out of, was that my father was an electronic tool designer, Harold Bode, and developed some of— he's really one of the pioneers of electronic music development, and a lot of things I found out later that I didn't know growing up in that household, but that he had developed the first modular audio synthesizer that the Moog was based on, and that the early kind of fancier processing modules that were in the Moog were actually the frequency shifter and remodulator that he had developed. So that was a kind of

BODE (Cont.): environment that was about the electronic arts. And so there was now an obvious connection. I mean, now it's really obvious, obvious. But, you know, there was something that I had to deal with, but maybe that I saw also, that had to do with having studying cinema, being aware of electronic sound devices, and a bit about the history of that, in that a connection could be made between them.

One other overlay, which is, like, sort of a half-parent, brother, who's eleven years older than I am, Ralf Bode, who's a cinematographer, and who in the late sixties and then early seventies was making films like *Saturday Night Fever*, that he was the director of photography on, and a whole slew of actually very successful and actually significant films, and stylistically significant films, was also part of sort of some kind of personal dialogue that I was dealing with that had to do with production and making things. And with that as a kind of framing, I could... You know, I still don't know how that all gets processed, but the notion of electronic cinema and the making of then a body of work—and having seen the model of new American cinema as a way for people to deal with personal image making, and notions about tools, and the notions of personal scale in the making of things, is something that continues to interest me, nourish me, and is, you know, stylistically, some of what— (tape stops, re-starts)

HIGH: Ok, so continue.

BODE: Yeah, ok.

HIGH: Say your name again, just 'cause...

BODE: Peer Bode.

HIGH: Continue.

BODE: Yeah, so... I guess all that I quickly wanna add to that is that I had the very, very good fortune of deciding somewhere along the line of seeking out people who were interested in these kinds of things, and had at the same time, the very good fortune of finding myself, as I said, in Binghamton and having the connection with the Experimental Television Center there. And also the cinema department that brought through Larry Gottheim, and Ken Jacobs, and Peter Kubelka, and Nicholas Ray, and Dan Barnett, and Sol Levine(sp?), and a very active new American cinema scene that was happening. And after I was in Binghamton, I went to Buffalo and continued that experience, in terms of the meeting up and dealing— or experiencing Woody and Steina Vasulka at the department for media study, Paul Sherrits(sp?), and Hollis Frampton, and Jerry O'Grady(sp?), and got to get sort of like a second part to my education, which was of a very, very different sort than what I had gotten in Binghamton. And when I got out of that educational experience, I came back to Binghamton and became involved with the Experimental Television Center and did some museum shows and a number of workshops and various things, and— on a voluntary basis; and then managed to connect up with a program that existed in the late seventies called SETA, that was something

BODE (Cont.): that President Carter had that was a jobs development program, and you could have a job for six months, and if the institution was interested in then giving you the job, they would extend the support for another six, so you could have a year of time. And that actually helped a lot of different people and a lot of art activities get going. And it got me into working at the Center as the programs coordinator, which then I did for the next seven or eight years, during which time then I had the opportunity to work with a number of the designers who were working at the Center, including, and to the most extent, working with David Jones. And during that time that I was there, we were able to build and take the prototypes that David had developed, and with a group that we called, like, the Tuesday afternoon club, of Barbara Buckner and Neil Sussman and Matt Schlanger—that's who I forgot earlier—and myself, that we built these boards to— built these prototypes to then make printed boards, with the idea that this then could be a way that we would have particular tools we wanted, and also the larger community could also get their hands on this thing that one just couldn't get one's hands on. And during that time, I worked on the framebuffer, together with David and...

So that's another part of the experience that was great, in terms of that part of the making of the work actually involved dealing with making some of the tools, which— there were things about it that were successful, things that were a failure. But it had to do, again, with this notion of, quote, “personal tool art making,” and that to take on what really is a kind of difficult issue about what tools you need to be able to make work, and to create situations of freedom and empowerment that allowed one not just to make one piece,

BODE (Cont.): because of some kind of funding that then one spent somewhere, but to become independent and be an independent media maker, and sort of all the, you know, potentials around that.

HIGH: Thank you.

BODE: Yeah. Hey, great, thanks.

HIGH: That was really good.

BODE: Yeah.

HIGH: I've started.

WOMAN: Ok.

MAN: I'll record you walking away(?).

LISA STEELE: Just say(?) my name is Lisa Steele, and I was hired to teach video at A/Space Gallery in April of 1972. I had never seen a videotape before that time, and A/Space Gallery in Toronto was the first artist space in Toronto to have—it was one of the first artist spaces in Toronto, but certainly was the first one to have video equipment

STEELE (Cont.): on the premises. And it was given to them by a dealership. Like, a guy named Jack Patterson, who ran Pat's Video Center. And he gave them this equipment on kind of an extended loan, which of course, was very good for business. He has one of the largest businesses in Toronto now. But that's another story.

I was hired... I refer to myself as one of the first affirmative action hirings in the country, because I was hired because I was woman. They wanted to hire two people—it was one of those government grant things that was hiring a lot of people. They wanted to teach video to community groups...

HIGH: Oh, you have to say what country this is.

STEELE: In Canada.

HIGH: Right.

STEELE: I said Toronto. Most people know that, eh?

HIGH: I think so.

STEELE: Ok. I'm in Canada. And they wanted to teach video to community groups, and they had money to hire two people, and we had to set up the program. And they hired

STEELE (Cont.): Tom Sherman first, I believe, and then they hired me, because I was a woman. I had done photography and film before, and I was enthusiastic. And I needed a job. So I took it, and I then learned how to do video, at that point. And I read *Expanded Cinema*, and I committed to memory the chapter in— the Gene Youngblood chapter on the video signal itself. And I was able from them on to transmit this information verbatim to my students. So I began teaching right away. We had community groups that came in and out and in and out. And I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed it tremendously. And we also did projects with kids who would come from the neighborhood. And we did Saturday morning theater and video projects, and we did adult theater projects, we worked with groups from schools. We just taught people kind of ad hoc, who wanted to come in and do stuff.

And simultaneous with this, somewhere around— before the summer, we were setting up... Let me see, was it then? We were starting... No, it wasn't. Ok, there were not— there was a little bit of video work, and I believe that it was the first summer, that I saw Jane Wright and Walter Wright's video from Experimental Television Center in Binghamton. And they came to Toronto with their— they were together at that point, and both of them were producing work. And I believe Jane was producing on quarter-inch video at that point. I know. It's an unusual format, but that is my memory. I also remember a tremendous amount of feedback that came probably from the Center at that point, and I believe most of it was orchestrated to *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida*. I'm very sure of that. We showed hours of that, in the back room, in the video part, alright?

STEELE (Cont.): So that was, I believe, the summer of 1972. In August, we closed the facility for a month; we took a holiday. And that was— in August of 1972, I made my first videotape. I took the equipment home with me from the Center— or A/Space, and I made a tape called *Juggling*. And I don't know how to juggle, so that was my first performance for the camera. And then I went on; I did lots of other work after that. But that was my first videotape. And I then showed it, I brought it back— and I pretty much did all my work in my own home for a long period of time, and that was a little bit different than some of the other work that was going on that was more formal, because the people who were... Ok, let me...

I did see video art before I had— did my own work, obviously, because the people at A/Space were producing it. A couple— some sculptors—Robert Bowers, Stephen Crews(sp?). And just before I had been hired, Vito Acconci had been at A/Space doing a series of performances that were videotaped. So I saw that work. So I was becoming... And I started to read *Avalanche*. But I couldn't stand the word, "my piece." I couldn't say that I was working on my piece. It was, like, I was unable to do that. So I was having some linguistic problems, along with some other things. And I always had to work in my own home, for the most part, at that time.

Since we're sitting in upstate New York right now, I will say that the presence of John Orentlicher was very important to me, 'cause I also started to see some of his early work somewhere between '72 and '74. And he invited me to give a little talk at Ypsilanti,

STEELE (Cont.): Michigan, where he was teaching at University of Michigan, or Michigan State—I don't know what it's called—in Ypsilanti, where he was teaching then. And that was the first time I think I'd spoken about my work in public, in a more public setting. So that's most of the very early part.

I can say that the... I carried on from there and did a lot of work. And the only other thing I want to say about the very early stuff is that I was first put the... Oh, the other early work I saw was from Guelph, the University of Guelph, a guy named Eric Cameron, and Noel Harding. Noel Harding was Eric's student. They came to A/Space. We had video nights set up, and we would show work at that point. I saw a lot of stuff from across the country. People would, you know, come through town, and you know, it was a little café, and it was— you know, it was a scene, it was quite fun. And you would show your own work in that context, also. But I saw Peter Campus' work at that point. And that would be 1973, late '73 or early '74. And that was— I was quite impressed with that work. But I thought it was a bit too serious. My work wasn't very serious at that point, so... I wasn't quite prepared to do that kind of serious work.

And the only other thing I would say about the early part was that the first person who put me in an exhibition was Peggy Gale. And it was— I was not in any— my videotapes were in the opening show of—it was quite a large show, many videotapes were in this show; I was not alone—was called Videospace. And it was at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and it was the first video survey in... It certainly was in Toronto; I don't know if it was in

STEELE (Cont.): Canada or not. But it was a gigantic show of primarily Canadian work, although I think there was a little bit of international work in it.

HIGH: What year was that?

STEELE: 1974. It was the fall of 1974, because I had just started work at Interval House; I'd quit A/Space. I worked at a women's shelter then. And they used my picture from juggling on the poster, and all the women from the house were so excited, because they saw the poster. (laughs) And so they thought I was going to be a star. Little did they know that video art was not gonna be a stardom making thing. And then there was a long period where I produced my own work, until 1983, when I started to work with my partner, Kim Tomczak, right over here.

HIGH: Oh, Kim, hi.

STEELE: And how Kim will tell you his story. He was already producing work.

KIM TOMCZAK: And I lived in Vancouver before 1983, when I met— or before 1980, when I met Lisa. And Vancouver was a bit of a different scene; we were most connected with the West Coast, obviously, with Ant Farm and TVTV, and the technology was kind of drifting, both... Well, obviously from Japan, but in fact, it sort of came from Europe, really, and then it hit North America, 'cause it really— somehow, the PortaPak went to

TOMCZAK: Europe before it came to North America. A lot of us forget that. But that did happen. So we— but we mostly got it from the West Coast of the States, with a little bit of influence from the rest of Canada. But video started out there at the sort of the Western Front, the Video Inn, and there was a couple of independent media cooperatives, one called...

STEELE: Intermedia. (inaudible)

TOMCZAK: Intermedia, yeah, that's right. And then we, all of us got access through Cable 10 in Vancouver, where we had artist cable shows, and a gay cable show called Gayblevision, which is still my favorite name for a TV show. And then also, I was introduced to it before that, at art school, when I was in art school in Vancouver. And the first tape I saw was Bruce Nauman's black balls, where he, you know, paints his balls black and pulls on his dick and makes 'em sort of bounce. And I was in a painting class, and most— as those of us who've gone to art school, most of the students were middle-aged women, and they didn't know what the heck to make of this video art piece. But that's where I was first introduced to it. And then somehow, we got PortaPaks to take home. And I can't remember whether we got them from Intermedia or from the art school itself, but we all of a sudden had PortaPaks in our, like, kind of loft studios that we had during art school. And so I kind of was a painter at that point, but I drifted quite quickly towards video. And upon graduation, the last time I touched painting or a paint brush was the day I finished art school; and then I went immediately into video and

TOMCZAK: photography. And that would've been 1974, 1975. And then I guess I made my first real tape around 1976. I had made a few tapes, which still exist, and then moved to Toronto in 1980. And then shortly after meeting Lisa, we started to work together. In 1982 or '83, (Steele: '83) I think was the first piece that we completed.

HIGH: And those early works of yours, what were they like, or what were they called?

TOMCZAK: They were like performance-based pieces. And then I was fortunate to work at a... I had started an art gallery, art center called Pumps(?) Center for the Arts out there. And we were lucky to have been given equipment by the Canada Council, which was quite generous in those days. So we had a good three-quarter-inch machine, and a good color camera, and some audio equipment. And then we coupled with the Cable 10 system. So we would shoot stuff in our studios and we would edit for free up at Cable 10. And that's how we'd make our first— or that's how I made my first projects. And that's how most of the artists around me made our first projects. And the Cable 10 didn't seem to care.

HIGH: And what format were you working (inaudible)

TOMCZAK: We— I learned on PortaPak, you know, half-inch open-reel. And then quickly migrated in... Like, the three-quarter-inch was of being introduced. Well, it was really saturated around 1978, so fortunately for me, I migrated to three-quarter-inch quite

TOMCZAK (Cont.): quickly. A lot of people kept working in open reel, because they had the wherewithal to edit on it and stuff, but I skipped that and went right into the RM-440 on the three-quarter-inch machines, (laughs) which were still pretty clunky, but worked a lot better than the open reel machines. So I never finished a tape, I never really completed a tape on open reel. So I have none of that to worry about. (they laugh)
Although (inaudible voice) the three-quarter-inch tapes are falling apart pretty fast, too.

And then since 1983, we've worked together in Toronto and in different part... Like, we've done different projects in different places in Vancouver. Certainly, we've shown all over the place. And we've made, I guess, about six or seven projects since then. Since 1983? At least.

STEELE: Yeah.

TOMCZAK: Some feature length, some short, some long, some that don't get shown anymore. And here we are today in Syracuse, 1998. Up-to-date.

HIGH: And what about V Tape?

TOMCZAK: V Tape, we started in... It was started by five artists, Lisa was one of them, in 1980—by Rodney Werton(sp?), Colin Campbell, Clive Robertson, Susan Britton, who lives in New York now, Lisa Steele... Is that five? (Voice: Mm-hm) And it was a

TOMCZAK (Cont.): breakaway from Art Metropole, which was the first ever video distributor in the world. And then this group of five broke off and formed their own collective distribution company. And then in 1982, Lisa and I expanded that with a year long research project; in 1983, we got it up and running in earnest. And we expanded it to be the... Well, it's certainly the largest distribution company in Canada of artists' work, and it's probably one of the largest ones in the world. And we—I like to always say that. It's probably, in terms of the population of the country, it's probably about five times more active than a place like the Video Data Bank, for example, if you think of the American population being ten times the size. We're much bigger than that. And it's been very successful, and we've managed to get into distribution a tremendously wide variety of artists' work, and experimental, innovative documentary makers, as well. We don't make a distinction between the two forms. And we have an interesting policy, that we accept all work that is given to us. You know, as long as they sign a contract and give us submasters and all that kind of stuff. So we've ended up with a tremendously wide variety of material, which I don't think any other distributor in the world could claim to have such a breadth of material. It's meant that we become a very important kind of central location for people to find stuff, which may, you know, find that right pair of shoes, as some people say about it.

STEELE: But it's also, we are—we encourage the collection and the cataloguing of the artists. We focus on the artists themselves. We don't focus on thematic or anything else. If the artist has one tape in distribution, then if they have others, then we'll—you know,

STEELE (Cont.): we encourage them, “Well, where’s your new tape? You know, bring it to us,” blah-blah-blah. Or we may go back and bring in to distribution earlier works. You know, we are sort of— we feel— there’s always been a kind of an archival nature to, I think, what we’ve done. But also, there’s a non— we felt that the traditional distributors, even the non-profit ones, were gatekeepers, to a certain extent; and that we felt that in fact, programmers, and festival people, and researchers needed more—since there was no other access to it—they needed to know the breadth of the field, and that their selections would start to reflect that. And it’s true. It actually worked out. We said it would happen, and it did. (laughs) The very unlikely programs and stuff get put together. Some works have only been shown once in their life publicly, you know, after they’re first made; but they probably wouldn’t have had that showing if they hadn’t been, you know, listed and had a curator see: Oh, that’s perfect for my program. So...

TOMCZAK: And we give a very good home to...

STEELE: (laughs) A very good home.

TOMCZAK: ...orphaned videotapes.

STEELE: Orphaned video.

TOMCZAK: Yeah. Orphaned video, that’s right.

STEELE: But we have many not orphaned works that are shown extensively and collected extensively and, you know, we have our own... You know, like Electronic Arts Intermix has, you know, we have our own stars, too, people like Richard Fung, whose work—John Grayson—whose works are incredibly well collected and well exhibited—Vera Frankel. So...

TOMCZAK: Lisa Steele.

STEELE: Me.

TOMCZAK: Tom Sherman. Lots of people.

STEELE: Yeah. So...

HIGH: Thank you.

TOMCZAK: Thank you.

HIGH: We're rolling. Ok, any time.

SARA HORNBACHER: Sara Hornbacher.

HIGH: And when did you first start working with video? Do you remember the date, the year?

HORNBACHER: I worked with video in 1974, as an undergrad, but I wasn't really very taken with it. I thought it was interesting to use it conceptually, but it was black and white and, you know, that was all I knew about it. And I was—I went to the Projected Images show at the Walker in 1975. And I was blown away. And so I sort of followed those people east. And particularly Paul Scherritz(sp?).

HIGH: Who was in that show?

HORNBACHER: Paul Sherritz, Hollis Frampton, Robert Whitman, Ted Victoria, Rocky Krebs(?), Peter Campus, Michael Snow. Incredible show. And they did a version of it at the Whitney later, but it wasn't the same show. Because the Walker has this vast expanse, you know, of real estate to do a show like that, so... It was beautiful. Really nice. And they were all there for about a week, you know, and lecturing and so forth. And I started asking them—because I was ready to gra—I was in my last year of school. And so I asked them... I think it was September of '74, actually, and then I went to Buffalo in '75, fall of '75. So I went to Buffalo in November, then. And I applied for the school and got accepted. And then before I actually went, I got a full scholarship, so that was great. And I think it was, like, the result of the Women's Movement, and I had

HORNBACHER (Cont.): very good grades, and I could write, and things like that, so... It was very nice. And it gave me a lot of freedom, you know, to have that money when I was there. And...

But I'd started out in film. And I was really interested in installation, and I had done an installation for my thesis show, my undergrad show, where I used fifty slide projectors. And so I was, you know— it was the predecessor... I was waiting and ready, let's say. And then when I was in... I didn't take a class from Woody the first semester, and then you know, there was lots of interest and curiosity and activity around what Woody was doing, and so I decided: Well, I should take a class from Woody. And that was the beginning of it. And I really liked video and I liked his approach. I liked, you know, his dealing with the medium the way he did. And you know, it was a modernist, I guess, approach at the time, to talk about the medium. And I had studied structuralism as an undergraduate, so that was good too, because that made me have a base when I got to Buffalo.

And I decided that— I saw the trouble Paul had, you know, doing his film installations, and it was really his installation that really changed me, I think. You know, like, that wow experience. And so I knew I couldn't do it, though, because the times were changing, and it was hard enough for him. So I switched into video. And I really liked it. But I was still using film and video together for a while, for about another year. And then I... And I started going to the TV Center. And that made a big difference.

HIGH: And what years were these, then?

HORNBACHER: My first residency at the(?) TV Center was fall of 1976.

HIGH: Hm.

HORNBACHER: Yeah. And I was still working in film. I had a residency at Cinemedia in Rochester, to edit a film. And I edited every three frames, and I decided: Oh, I don't think so. (laughs) I think I'll use David Jones' sequencer instead. (laughs) So, yeah, exactly. And... I think all this talk about community is very interesting, 'cause I do think that that—I still feel that this is my community. And even though I don't live in New York anymore, I come back for residencies. These are the people that I talk to about ideas. And it'll be that way for life. You know, it is a community. And so that has a lot to do with sustaining you, you know, when you have that. And you know, you have other communities, too, but... It feels good. And... Everybody's sort of a... You know, there's a tension, I think, that I kind of was talking about today, and that is that if you decide that you're gonna do your work in the gallery environment, that some people are going to say that you've sold out and you've kind of left, you know, the more activist base of the field. And I was trying to say that we're all cultural workers, and wherever we... You know, it's what's going on in your mind, and how you approach this—Ralph's use of attitude about it. Because you remember Chrissie saying how difficult it was for museums to deal with this work. And so we're still, when we show in museums and galleries, we have to

HORNBACHER (Cont.): do all the work. It's not like we can walk in, you know, like a painter. Every time I'm installing a show, I say, "Oh, I wish I were a painter." Every single time. Because it's just so much work. And so I think that's a good activity for an artist to do. I mean, it's a commitment. And I'm not really interested in money. I've never been interested in money, so... It's about getting the work done; it's about getting the work seen; it's about being able to go on and do more work. And I'm too driven about the work evolving to not have to do it that way. And so I just hope that, you know, that factionalism in the field doesn't continue. I don't think it's healthy. I think it's much better to say that there're all these different places that we can place work and do our work. 'Cause I've been very involved in a lot of different areas of the field—you know, doing the journal issue, you know, that was completely a voluntary effort. I'm doing lots of curating. And I stopped doing that, (laughs) because I realized that there was some kind of a conflict with the other curators if you're an artist; they didn't appreciate it too much. And it was a lotta work, too, so you kind of have to pick your battles, I guess. And now, with being a department head, and teaching eighteen contact hours, and trying to do my work, I'm stretched to the point where I can't—I couldn't do any more.

HIGH: And the first tape that you ever made, do you remember what that was like?

HORNBACHER: Yeah, it was called *Rolloff of*... What was it called? *A Flagging Index of Proportion* or something like that. I don't even know now. But that's the one that got me a CAPS grant in 1980. So that one's in several collections. And it was,

HORNBACHER (Cont.): like... The first video I shot here— or I mean in Buffalo, was of Niagara Falls. And I shot ninety minutes in two days, so I had all this rich footage to work with. I had figured out... It was the Panasonic camcorder with AGC. It was the first one that had automatic gate(?) control. So you could... You know, it would fluctuate with the luminance. So with the light hitting the water, and it was just when the ice was going out, so that the floes of ice would get hot. And so it had a lot of potential for keying and everything in video. And... But I wasn't satisfied with that, so I colorized the footage, and then I intercut it with colorbars. And you know, at that point, if you were editing on half-inch equipment, it was like this thing with the handle. And of course you were gonna get flags on the edits. So that was part of the piece.

HIGH: It's great.

HORNBACHER: Yeah. So that was the first one. And then I was still doing film. I did a film called *Leaving Everything to be Desired*, and it was really, in a way, I suppose, based a lot on Ernie Gehr's *Serene Velocity*. I had been very impressed with that film, so... Mine was a lot more complicated than his; it wasn't just a single location. But it did involve those shifts of the Z-space, or the deep space, to the frontal plane. And also issues of perception and illusionism and things like that. And so I made several films. And then I started working with the rodetra(?). And I used the film camera to shoot the rodetra. So I was— I told Bill—he's never seen this footage, and I'm gonna send it to him because, you know, I'm sure— he said he's interested in seeing what people had

HORNBACHER (Cont.): done with the tool. And so, you know, grad... And then I took that footage into video. So I didn't give up on film completely until probably 1978 sometime. Close to graduation, I gave up on film. But I shot about twenty-thousand feet of film there, and I've got this incredible archive that I don't know what to do with, actually. It's much easier... I mean, it's not gonna go away, like video, 'cause of the, you know, quality, or the preservation issues aren't the same with film. So that's good. But you've got the other problems, because how do you all of a sudden make a film? You need money. So I don't know what will happen. At some point, I'll probably try to get some of it into the archives, 'cause there's stuff of Paul and so... I mean, I was the one running around with the camcorder all the time. People didn't really like it, actually; they were like: We don't like somebody in the media community turning the camera on us. (laughter) And I thought there was a real contradiction in that. (laughs) And now it's so accepted; everybody does it all... I mean, how many people are with cameras here? And nobody thinks anything of it anymore.

HIGH: Right.

HORNBACHER: But they were not comfortable with that. Hollis, particularly. Hollis hated that. So... Yeah. But, you know, anyway, I have all this nice footage now. And... Yeah, it's interesting, because you know, it's sort of like that thing about, well, you could go back and spend the rest of your life archiving what you have already done and what's there; or you can keep moving on and dealing with new ideas. And I think it's, for me,

HORNBACHER (Cont.): much more interesting to sort of be aware of what's happening in the culture and responding to that. So... I probably never will be able to make myself (laughs) go back and deal with it. That's why I wanna give it to somebody else.

HIGH: Right.

HORNBACHER: Yeah.

HIGH: Right.

HORNBACHER: But... Yeah, and Peer's been a big influence. Peer and I are really good friends, and we stay really in touch. And I actually had three days with Peer and Pym(sp?) in June, and all we did was eat, talk, and project video, and... It was just nonstop for three days. And it was great. So... This idea of doing what we're doing here today, talking about, you know, all this stuff about the field, and talking about our own work and our relationship to it, and talking about how we teach, and you know, how can we make it better? I think—I'm always struggling to find better ways to teach, especially because there's so much resistance on the part of students now to some of what, you know, we have experienced. And yet once you get to them, then there's no resistance. So it's just, like, trying to figure out how to cross that line with them. And somebody commented—I guess it was in Atlanta—commented at how much, you know, I was

HORNBACHER (Cont.): involved with my students. And I feel that's part of the politics. Part of the politics is never to give up being a video art until I die. I won't. Because I can't. I can't stop, because then that continuum wouldn't be there. And the other is, you know, teach as long as I can. Because I think it's the best activity for an artist to be... You know, in other words, it's like you're learning from your students, and you're teaching your students, and there's this exchange, and you're forced to keep thinking, and they're very challenging and... Because they're coming from another generation and...

I love the medium, so it's easy to teach that. It's harder to find the acceptance in the ideas. And I've heard many of the people here say the same thing, so I think that's just a general problem we all have now with the educational situation, when it's so driven by job as a goal. I mean, in the seventies, there was so much—the cost of living was so much lower, all of us were still coming from a sixties mindset, and so those were kind of considerations. We were just curious and wanted to learn. And of course, it wasn't old then, either; it's old now. You know? But anyway... I think that's it, right?

HIGH: Yeah, that's great.

(inaudible voice)

HIGH: So start again.

LISTER: Ok, my name is Ardele Lister.

HIGH: And Ardele, when was the first time you ever encountered what we might call video art? Do you remember the date, also?

LISTER: Oh, well, yeah. I was doing my MA in art history in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1973, I guess. And I was asked by Arts Canada to cover the first International Festival of Women in Film, which had really happened in a big way in Toronto and New York, but had sort of smaller festivals traveling around San Francisco, L.A., Vancouver. And they had neglected to send anyone there, so they said to me, "Can you please see as many things as possible?" And I said alright. And so I stayed up for three days and three nights, and I saw fifty-four films made by women. And tapes. And of course, my mind was blown, because I had taken a lot of film history, appreciation, semiotics courses, and in fact, was writing my thesis about the aesthetics of film. And I had probably seen one film by Maya Duran(sp?) and one film by Elaine May, and that was all that I had really seen, so it was a real revelation, and... 'Cause I was down there for the whole time, pretty much. I was hanging out with the women who organized the Vancouver component of the festival, and they were kind of a varied group. It turned out I was, like, probably the youngest one. There were a couple of women over forty who were more involved in photography. And the energy was so incredible that we kind of decided that we needed to keep meeting, because you know, why should the end of the festival mean that this something shouldn't continue? So we met, at first thinking that we

LISTER (Cont.): would just try and make sure that women's film and video could be seen on a regular basis, and... And then within about a week or two, we decided we needed to learn how to make it, and make our own. And we called ourselves Reel Feelings, R-E-E-L, capital F. And we're very excited. There was an actress among us, and I was an art historian, and these two women who were photographers, and a couple of other people with different skills. And we pooled our resources and... There were a few organizations in Vancouver then, like Metromedia and Video Inn that were community based media groups. And we would avail ourselves of some of their courses and their, you know, equipment, and sometimes pool money to have somebody teach us about lighting or whatever. And we just started to make stuff. We bought a PortaPak. We bought a PortaPak, one of those that's in there. We still have it, I think.

HIGH: A reel-to-reel.

LISTER: Yeah. And we had— we made these cable TV shows, like, about women and health, and one was about women in the arts, and... And I got a job, shortly after that, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, doing video production, producing a weekly show, actually, for the local cable network and for the gallery. So by now, we're in about 1974 or something like that. And we would just keep doing this. I mean, increasing our skills. And we'd go out and, you know, go up for, like, little educational corporate jobs to do a little thing about, you know, discrimination against immigrants or something in Vancouver at the time. And people would always laugh at us and call us "the girls." And

LISTER (Cont.): so we opened a bank account in the name of The Girls, 'cause we thought: Well, if they're gonna call us the girls, they should write checks to the girls, you know. Pink checks. And we dealt with all that bullshit that was about, you know, a medium that, even though it was still fairly new, I mean, was pretty much about, you know, men being—a lotta men—still being pretty withholding about technical information. And you weren't *really* competent unless you could carry, you know, a hundred-and-fifty pounds of equipment. And, I mean, after going to a chiropractor for a long time, my chiropractor said, "Hey, you know, this is a stupid way to prove yourself. I mean, (laughs) you don't really need to carry all this equipment all the time just to— you know, so that those guys'll think that you can do stuff."

And actually, we applied for a grant. It was the first time they decided to have the International Year of the Woman, 1975. And we applied for a grant to the Secretary of State's office in Canada, for money to do a film, a 16 millimeter film. And that became *So Where's My Prince, Already?* Actually, the first thing that we did on film—I mean, we did video, all these video cable shows and stuff like that; but we sort of also wanted to learn film, and we did a one minute commercial called *Headache*, which was supposed to air on national TV, that was a sort of spoof on headache commercials, that was sponsored by the NFB. They gave us the equipment and three-hundred-and-fifty dollars to do the whole thing. And then we did this film called *So Where's My Prince, Already?*, which is a twenty minute color 16, sort of tragicomedy about love and marriage, and the pitfalls that young women, you know, kind of encounter if you're gonna buy into the mythology

LISTER (Cont.): of romantic love. And it was selected for the Second International Festival of Women's Films in New York. And that was really thrilling, because in these three years, between never having been exposed to any of it or knowing about it, and then, you know— and meeting all these people at the festival and stuff, then we were in the second festival in New York. And so me and two of the women who made the film, who were in *Reel Feelings*, came for the festival. And it was very exciting, and we saw more films and videos by women. And then I just really like New York, so I stayed. And that's how I got involved in video.

And then when I was here, after about, I don't know, six months or so, I got a job at AIVF, being the sort of administrator on Short Film Showcase, which was this little thing that— it was a program where short films by artists were put into movie theaters. And then I saw that they were doing their stupid Gestetner newsletter to all their members, which ended up being really thick—speaking of old technology—and stapled, inexpensive to mail. And I had been involved in a magazine in Canada that I started called *Criteria*, and I said, "Hey, you guys, why don't we make a real magazine out of this?" And they said, "We don't have any money." And I said, "Well, tell me what you spend in paper, Gestetner, and postage, and I'll see if I can make a real magazine for that money." And that's how *The Independent* was started. And that's, you know, my subsequent, like, phase of being involved with independent video and the community here.

HIGH: What do you think of this conference? Not, like, the specifics, but generally, getting people together.

LISTER: Oh, it's wonderful. We have difficulty doing that, because we all lead, you know, really busy lives, and not that many of us earn a living from making art with video. And so it's all too rare that we get together and are able to talk to one another. I mean, the thing that I find really, you know, great is that, like, when I talk to people who have some history with, you know, some aspect of being involved in the making of art with video, it's like we don't have to start at the beginning to have a conversation. You know? 'Cause you know what I do, and I know what you do. And it's... You know, I was saying to Tom last night in the restaurant, "I've taken to saying quite publicly that what I do is I make unpopular culture." And I don't tell people I make video art anymore, because that was so, like, blank-o, you know? It didn't matter if you were talking to filmmakers or artists or anybody; they would sort of go, like, you know: Huh? Or you'd be relegated into: We know you're not famous; we know you're not this, we know you're not that; 'cause how *can* you be? You know, it's not really a commodity medium, unless you're making, you know, big, fancy installations and you're one of the three people that institutions are interested in. So, you know, I... It's wonderful to be able to hang out with people who have been involved in unpopular culture. When we live in a culture and share— we share the same tools as the people who make popular culture. And as the rest of the world receives popular culture... And we are this very small group of people who have any critical distance, who have been willing to take apart, you know, the medium

LISTER (Cont.): physically, metaphysically, artistically, and who still, for whatever insane reasons, wanna make a statement.

HIGH: Thank you.

(inaudible voices)

RITA MYERS: Ok. My name is Rita Myers, and... Well, I'm sitting here trying to recollect how it was that I first began using video. And it's actually not so hard to recollect that, because it's one of those, you know, sort of turning points and big moments that people have in their lives. I was in graduate school. It was around 1973 or '74. And I was doing performance pieces that involved setting up a certain kind of structure in my space. I had this old studio, sort of shabby studio on Twenty-eighth Street.

HIGH: Where were you in school?

MYERS: I was in Hunter College. And I shared that studio space with Bill Beirne, who's also done a significant amount of video, especially in the seventies and eighties. And...
Take two. We're editing this all together?

HIGH: Now I'm going again.

MYERS: Alright. I'm gonna start over again.

HIGH: Ok, start over again.

MYERS: My name is Rita Myers, and I've been a video artist since about 1973. And that's going to be— that's the point at which my story begins. (laughs) I was a graduate student. I was at Hunter College. I was studying primarily with Bob Morris and with Linda Nochlin, and I rented a small studio on Twenty-eighth Street with Bill Bierne, who's also done quite a bit of video work. And Bill and I, we were doing some performances. We were working together, sort of helping each other out in the studio. And the performances that I was doing at the time were very related to issues that were current at the time. I would construct certain kinds of spaces in the studio, and then try to move my body through those spaces. And some of them were really kind of very wacky performances. In one case, I built a shelf...

HIGH: (inaudible)

MYERS: In one case, I built a shelf right up to the ceiling. There was just enough room between the ceiling and the base of the shelf for my body to be on. And about two guys had to lift me up there and put me onto the shelf, and it was graduate school, so when the class came in, I was sort of inching my way along the shelf, on my back. So we wanted to document this activity. So Bill and I went to the AV department of Hunter

LISTER (Cont.): College, and they had this new thing called a PortaPak, a video PortaPak. And it was a little, you know, it was an open reel little camera. And we took it out for an afternoon, and I went back up on the shelf and Bill videotaped my performance. And I realized that this architectural structure that I had built in the space, if I looked at the video monitor in a certain way, it could present itself as a certain kind of space. You know, here was a box; here was a room, if you will; and that room, that space in that box, could be adjusted, and I could do performances that had essentially the same kind of configuration as I was doing in real architecture. So that was... So it was quite by accident that I started making video art.

And one of those first performances, which the date is 1974, is called *Slow Squeeze*. And it's just—I begin by lying down on the floor, and the camera very slowly zooms in. You don't even notice; there's imperceptible changes. But the space is constricting and constricting and constricting, and I have to keep adjusting my body so that it will remain within that space, until it's—I'm entirely just crunched up into this little ball, and you know, there's no room, there's no room left. It looks kind of silly now. And I just saw it. It's also impossibly long and tedious, like all early video. And I just saw it this afternoon for the first time projected, which, you know, completely negates its rationalization, because there is no, you know— although there is an edge of the frame, there is no box holding the image. And, you know, then I continued to do a few other pieces, and then sort of, video became this sort of inextricable part of the work. And it's now 1998, and I've just started working on some new pieces, and I'm trying to rectify that (laughs) by

LISTER (Cont.): branching out into maybe other media, less video, more sculpture—sort of changing the configuration a little bit.

HIGH: Great. You remember other works that were being made at the time when you started to do these early performance documentation pieces?

MYERS: Yeah, well, what was very—I mean, what was a very big influence at the time were Yvonne Rainer doing the dances that she was doing at that time, that had very much to do with setting up a certain kind of task. In fact, I think her phrase that she coined was this notion of task performance, which was, you know, you had to set up certain parameters, set up a certain kind of system, and perform within that system. So I think, you know, being a graduate student, I was very much looking at that and being very influenced by that. There was also the whole sort of universe of process art, which was investigating the ways in which materials behaved, and allowing the innate behavior of materials to describe what the sculpture would become. So those kinds of rationalizations, those kinds of ways of working that relied on a particular kind of system to drive the work home, you know? Whether they were rules or a mathematical system, like in the case of Sol LeWitt, or behavior of materials, like in the case of Serra, these were very much ideas that were current at the time.

HIGH: What do you think of the conference?

MYERS: I thought— well, I think, given that I was— you know, I arrived late and left early. (laughs) I wish it hadn't been on a Friday because, you know, some of us work all day on Fridays. But anyway... It was— I think that it was really fun. I think that it also fulfilled a kind of essential agenda in allowing us to look at old work, but look at it kind of in a rigorous manner, not just with this sort of effusive nostalgia about the good old days and everything and to try to... And I think that that kind of rigor is what's essential, if we want to make certain kinds of decisions about what the history will be. And certainly, what the history will be is going to depend on what we decide to preserve. And, you know, history is a very— it's a fluid and... It's a creative thing, you know? It's not sort of rooted— it's not rooted, and it's not written in stone. So it seems that part of the purpose of conferences like this is to decide how that history's going to be written. And I very much appreciate having been invited, and to be able to show my work, which, you know, does span all of these years, and has gone through... You know, looking at it in— you know, sort of bringing a little piece from the seventies, and something from the eighties, and something from the nineties together is a really interesting kind of exercise for an artist to take, because you see how both— you have very consistent themes in your work; and then you see these really enormous kinds of changes, you know? And how those changes also parallel the field, and how those changes are, you know, sort of one voice in a greater community. And you know, just in my panel, we had also Reggie Woolery and we had Kristin Lucas, who... You know, so we had this really beautiful kind of intergenerational conversation going on, also, just in looking at our work and looking at each other's work. So I would count that as a very good experience.

HIGH: Thank you.

MYERS: Alright, Kathy.

HIGH: Bye, Rita.

MYERS: Bye, Kath. (they laugh; END OF VIDEOTAPE ONE)