Oral history interview with November 22, 2011

Rothrock, Rick
Sculptor

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MARGARET: This is Margaret Winslow speaking with Rick Rothrock in the artist’s home on November 22, 2011.

RICK: This piece was part of my graduate work or at least two pieces, it’s either end of the exact same thing.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: It was in a state park and I went and I did soundings of a pond, and I put pylons in and made this ridge. You can see that early relationship between this chaos, and that real calmness, and this energy here was absolutely amazing, but I did it with a dance group—Deb Loewen.

MARGARET: Yeah. I had the opportunity to speak with her on the phone.

RICK: Oh good.

MARGARET: Yeah, she is out in Milwaukee I think.

RICK: In the mid-west somewhere. She was brilliant I mean she enthused people you know she understood, and she had people that were committed to her teaching and her dance group.

MARGARET: It feels like she was really developing a modern program at the University of Delaware, and she was specifically interested in kind of something specific.
RICK: Very much so.

MARGARET: Dance okay.

RICK: Very much so. We collaborated on this project and we did it in October and we brought bus loads of students out to the park a night. They did the dance performance in the piece using—

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: It was beautiful, so descriptive—I mean she taught me things about it that I didn’t know you know it was like—it was very cool.

MARGARET: Was this a state park in New Castle County?

RICK: Yeah, it says this White Clay Creek.

MARGARET: Oh at White Clay okay. I’m sure no one filmed this performance did they?

RICK: We did get some rather crude footage—

MARGARET: Really.

RICK: I don’t know where it is I mean, I have some tapes. We did make a film of the blast—I don’t know where it is a have no idea it’s lost. We have a little bit of footage—I probably have a little bit of footage of *Moon*.

MARGARET: This is *Moon*?

RICK: Yeah.

MARGARET: Where the dancers kind of up on these forms or where they—

RICK: The interesting thing was, see the how the texture in the center of the pond is rippled and the outsides are not. That is like a water break like a pier. At one point they got in the center and they were making waves, and waves that go this way, but they wouldn’t go out into here. This then would be like glass, and then this would be like waves radiating out from the center, that was beautiful. Then they got some flares and they worked in this space with flares like using it for acrobatics with it, but pretty formal pretty ceremonial kind of quality to it.

MARGARET: Okay, this was all improv?

RICK: No they had choreographed the piece.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: It was so nice to have Deb and her energy as a part of it.
MARGARET: Right.

RICK: It was definitely that point of coming together the sculpture and dance.

MARGARET: Had you all discussed the project before you made the piece or was it really kind of afterwards she came with it?

RICK: Well they helped me make the piece. We had interns at the theatre department paint all of the skids, and help create the piece.

MARGARET: So it was really collaboration from the beginning?

RICK: Yeah.

MARGARET: So it’s not the two of you working kind of independently and then bringing the final piece together?

RICK: I didn’t work on the dance.

MARGARET: Right, but you were?

RICK: Construction and she didn’t work on the conceptualization of the sculpture. The conceptualization sort of came together.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: As a performance.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: When I first came to school I was doing those fancy steel pieces, and I was thinking about the natural energy in the human endeavor problem, and came up with an idea to make explosive sculptures. The first thing I did when I went to graduate school—the December before graduate school I went to a school and studied explosives in Pennsylvania and I got an apprentice license for explosives. Then I went to graduate school and then I went to Bethlehem Steel, and I told them what I was doing, and how I needed this special kind of steel that malleable. They agreed to make this steel for me and give it to me.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Then I spent the whole fall and winter welding together these boxes into forms that were clustered. Some of them were wrapped and some of them were clustered. We took them up into the mountains in Pennsylvania to a quarry.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: And proceeded to explode, blow them up.
MARGARET: So you had placed the explosives in the form before you were—

RICK: No afterwards, there were openings.

MARGARET: Oh okay.

RICK: And they nestled see, so like this one because it was trying because the back was flat because it was attached to another piece which was triangular in the back that was flat. The explosion went boom that way.

MARGARET: Did you exhibit these sculptures?

RICK: Then I had an exhibit.

MARGARET: After okay.

RICK: Where the sculptures filled a gallery with all of the fragments and pieces. Actually one of the pieces was exhibited at the Delaware Art Museum. I think it was this piece.

MARGARET: Joe has mentioned a show that all the graduate students were involved with at the art museum. What is part of that exhibition or was it part of an annual exhibition?

RICK: I don’t remember that. The show that we did as a group was at the city county building.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: In the state building.

MARGARET: At the state building.

RICK: Yes the state building because—Look at this these are logs, poplar tree logs they are big. Somewhere I have a picture form the inside of the building it was such a perfect contrast to the geometry of the building you know the structure of the building, so it was that same dialogue, but I decided to do it with cardamom sort of pieces of log all cut the same way. They were all different diameters, so they got this great browning structure. I even did vector drawings of the loads, I had one—unless it’s upstairs. Do you know what a vector drawing and how vector drawings works? Each line is according is according to the amount of load, so I took a picture and then I assign a weight to each one based on its size. Then I plot the point from the center of the block to the point where is it hit the next log. I would plot the point from the center of the log to the point where it hit the next series of logs, all the way down through the pile. The lines had these incredible—

MARGARET: Great.

RICK: So as they lifted them off with the interruption of what you are looking at, so it’s another way of seeing what you were seeing.
MARGARET: Right. Did you include those drawings in the show?

RICK: I did yeah, I had those drawings some of them. I was interested in other dimensions at that time—that is a dimension you don’t see.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: It’s a distribution of the weight and how it relates to what you do see. That has become an important part of my work and still is—extra dimensions. I talk about that up at the carving studio and people look at me like I’m an old hippie.

MARGARET: But those are the realities of sculpture as well.

RICK: They are the realities of sculpture, that’s right. It exists through time and exists—there are invisible lines of force and gravity yeah.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: Yeah, so here is one talk about existing through time. I was out of graduate school. We did go to Art Park.

MARGARET: Was that when you were still in grad school?

RICK: It was sort of like yeah that May of the last year before we graduated

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: It as an interesting situation because the way I looked at it, it was I’m going to a place where I have never been before and I have got to create a piece and I want it to be size specific. What I’m going to do is I’m going to get all of the data I can possibly get describing this place, and try to anticipate what it’s like. In order to systematically get my head around the place I drew a grid over the top of the map/plan of the place, and then I took a surveyors tripod, and found each one of these spots in the grid.

MARGARET: That you had plotted in advance?

RICK: That I had plotted in advance someplace else, and then basically it was a very contemplative process because I’m thinking, and watching me become aware of a place. It changed my sense of direction entirely forever. I mean it was a great exercise I just came away with it having such a better way of getting my head around places I’ve never been, and understanding our self you know I’m just talking to you geometrically, systematically in distances. Then what I exhibited—I took black and white picture of every cross, and made a piece a of black line images that hung on the wall of each cross going into the next cross, so it became a grid system.

MARGARET: Okay.
RICK: But every cross had a different texture because it was from a different place in the park. That was a nice effective piece—that was a good piece.

MARGARET: Tell me in this image what is this material that you used?

RICK: This is lime I took one and just put it in water, so it wouldn’t hurt/do any environmental damage.

MARGARET: So this would’ve been—what year would this have been?


MARGARET: Tell me because I can’t but help think about Dennis Oppenheim, and Joseph Kosuth. Were you thinking about these artists as well?

RICK: Absolutely.

MARGARET: This kind of data collecting, understanding plays, gridding, and diagrams?

RICK: Absolutely, and its relationship to nature to like—Dennis Oppenheim especially. I meet somebody two years ago at the carving studio that was in a commune with Dennis Oppenheim at the time in May.

MARGARET: Really.

RICK: Yep, it was so cool, and she had written a book about it.

MARGARET: I have to say I consider myself very fortunate to have meet Dennis Oppenheim in 2004, when we were working on the New Castle County Sculpture Commission Project—the large piece that is now outside of the court house.

RICK: Yes.

MARGARET: He was one of the finalists for that project, and you know it’s only an afternoon meeting for just having the chance to meet him was pretty incredible.

RICK: Yeah, that’s what they were talking about him back in the day you know. She had pictures of family and kids, and you know hanging out in this commune. Of course it has like the feminist point of view with all things you know.

MARGARET: Were you thinking about these artists as kind of on your own or faculty at the University of Delaware discussing Delaware?

RICK: Well we had Stephen Antonakos also a visiting artist.

MARGARET: Oh really; I didn’t know that.
RICK: What happened to this is Joe had gotten a big grant to have all of these visiting artists come, and artists in residence. Oh you know who else? Nancy Holt.

MARGARET: Nancy Holt that’s incredible. I should get a list of who all the visiting artists were.

RICK: I have it in the publication someplace.

MARGARET: So Joe—

RICK: Joe was not—

MARGARET: At that program?

RICK: That is right, and you can definitely see the connection he had his N.Y. gallery you know sculpture down. You could see that one of the artists did a residency and I think his name was— also representative personnel.

MARGARET: Representative personnel okay.

RICK: He still has work at the Hirsch Ford, and Geometric Steel. My mind is like a steel trap once something gets locked it’s more like a circuit breaker it will come.

MARGARET: Okay so this was in—

RICK: ‘78.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: When I got out of school before we got the ArtSquad, well the ArtSquad was kind of going, but that summer I did—I have a lot of pictures. The University gave me the graphs, but this was the green of them all. It was a pretty non-functional place and I was impressed with the fact that the buildings were so deteriorated that there were trees and things growing up out of the rooms and stuff. The whole mall was covered with these atrocious cement barriers.

MARGARET: Is that what they were meant for?

RICK: Bollards, they’re called, to stop people from driving through and it was all pedestrian. Then they had these kiosks.

MARGARET: Oh wow this is a great picture.

RICK: So what I did is I made a bunch of drawings of what I wanted to do, and then I went door-to-door to all the merchants in the mall. I had a budget and I needed like four thousand dollars, and I proceeded to go, like Carol Balick had a place called Artisans III and Ninth Street Bookstore, and David—it was a clothing store, and they all gave me money, fifty dollars. Which was just enough money to buy this aluminum and have it fabricated into little planters that would
fit on top of the bollards in the kiosks, and then from the city of Wilmington we got dirt from the sewer plant.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: We filled the planters with dirt from the sewer plant and then the University department gave me enough graphs to plant on the top of all the bollards from like Sixth Street all the way to Tenth Street, and all of the tops of all the kiosks. I got one picture it’s, so funny of an older woman that is sitting at one of the kiosks and see is kind of bald you know on her head and she looks just like the kiosk. Nobody cut the grass.

MARGARET: No one cut them okay.

RICK: So by the end of the summer the grass on top of these kiosks was like a field, it was like to two feet high.

MARGARET: Right, because that would’ve been summer.

SUE: Hello.

MARGARET: Hi.

SUE: I’m Sue.

MARGARET: Margaret, nice to meet you.

SUE: I’m getting out right now. It’s very wet.

MARGARET: This would have been like around June, when did—

RICK: Yeah, it started early in June and then right out of the log thing.

MARGARET: Okay right after that. Then they would have been—this was on view through-

RICK: All summer.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Then we dismantled them—the city was a huge help. They lent me their trucks, let me their lips they were like whatever you know.

MARGARET: That’s incredible did you feel like there was support coming specifically from the Major’s office?

RICK: Yes absolutely Mayor McLaughlin at the time.

MARGARET: Mayor McLaughlin okay. Was part of the focus kind of on this part of Market Street? Was there a push to develop the market street mall?
RICK: Oh. No, no it was strictly in order to—for me as a proposal. I just put it out there; I want to do this.

MARGARET: Okay, but you felt like there was really that support.

RICK: Every door I knocked on and said, “I want to do this can you help me,” they said, “Sure; what do you need?”

MARGARET: That is great.

RICK: And that is why it happened.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: Because everybody just chimed in. I get the story back now from Cole Cruzman who is on the board of directors of sister cities. He’s probably in his seventies, but yeah he tells it like it was a legend because he owned the book store at the time. He tells about this crazy kid coming and asking for money you know, but nobody gave anybody any money.

MARGARET: Well it’s incredible I mean when people start remembering it when I was talking to Margaretta Frederick that was one of the specific things, that and the egg sculpture installation she remembered specifically. Like oh yes and there was grass and it had grown you know on top of these kiosks. She has these vivid memories of this installation.

RICK: Yeah, I have one picture that has the Mullins building across from the DCAD with a picture of it grown, with the two people on and it’s so funny because it’s floppy you know this looks like a bad haircut.

MARGARET: Right, and so it was on top of the kiosks and those—what are these?

RICK: Those are some kind of lighting things and there was a bad fountain here. I read a fountain book, and the fountain in Wilmington was given as an example of what not to do for a public fountain.

MARGARET: Oh my goodness.

RICK: It was the worst thing you could possibly put. It was brutal the aesthetic was pretty brutal you can see how previous sort of Louis Kahn kind of brutality.

MARGARET: They closed off Market Street—when was that?

RICK: It was close to that time it was like ‘76 or something like that.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: You sort it all out; I was kind of marking it I guess or making an ironic statement about the aesthetic and nature. I started making castings at the time to I don’t know where they are. Yes
I do, but let me show you this piece. We were talking about four seasons in nature. I made this in White Sands Park out west. I think everyone took a trip out.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: This is a puddle and the water goes down into these puddles, and it dries up and forms these crystals of plaster, and ants have come along after the puddle dried out.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Gypsum crystals.

MARGARET: Oh. Gypsum okay.

RICK: And the ants had come along and dug it in. The wind was blowing from this direction, so it had blown all of the sand off that and created a crescent mound coming up the other side of the ant hill.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: So I just went—I had plaster with me in the car and I just set this technique going, and pulling these textures of off things.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: I did dozens of them; I had a show of them in Philly. This is one that has survived; it’s one of them.

MARGARET: Wow. So this kind of recording—these are information?

RICK: But it’s an invisible thing.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: Because you’re not seeing it; you’re seeing yourself and so these I call them terra-casting things. I go in a farmer’s field I had one from a farmer’s field and I’d show pictures. I did an exhibit of one that was 12 x 20 and it was the same thing with a grid, and then I’d fit it back together in the gallery. I did one as a Fleisher piece—this is the gallery in Fleischer on Catharine Street in Philly I think it was ‘81 or ‘82, I’d say.

MARGARET: So wait tell me what—I’m listening.

RICK: There was a clay pit for a brick manufacturing facility south of New Castle.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: They let me go down in this clay quarry and it was wonderful because clay has substance so it shows the erosion, and the cracks and all of that stuff. I went and I caste plaster up against it
with dividers, so that I could pull out all of these pieces. Then I made a structure using wood, drywall, and plaster. Then I put all of that together again and then finished it like you would a wall, so you couldn’t see the joints the painted the whole thing, so it was like a segment that you took out of a mountain side.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: So you see the texture and it gives you access to this texture that otherwise you wouldn’t see ‘cause it’s—

MARGARET: And the extra dimensions.

RICK: Extra dimensions exactly, and here this is called Watermark. Then I went down to Bowers Beach down of, of Dover and they had this rippled sand which you have seen, so I just went and I made enough lineal feed caste of the ripple sand, and then I built this room. It was supposed to be a reference to a frieze except the frieze was established using wave patterns from the sand.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: It’s funny because—

MARGARET: So you built—

RICK: Sculpture Magazine this month.

MARGARET: Yeah, there is a lot of art referencing the [inaudible] right now.

RICK: I guess that’s what it is.

MARGARET: Really is its incredible the amount of work just looking back at the 1970s which in some cases, you know it’s almost like some scholars have kind of been invisible. You know are under “Researcher Exams Moment” which is exciting, but now it’s you know “Artists Been Re-Discovered.”

RICK: “ Been Re-Discovered—Again.”

MARGARET: You built out this room within the gallery?

RICK: Within the gallery.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Yeah, and bought dry wall in and framed it all up and Thora Jacobson was the Director at the time she was really great. She encouraged people to do whatever they wanted to do. That was kind of the culmination of this terra-casting business.
MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: This is all ArtSquad. Here is an article of the first ArtSquad project and it sort of breaks down the concepts.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Of what that is.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: I can give you—if you want I’ll burn a CD or DVD of this.

MARGARET: I would love to have all of—

RICK: Yeah, you’re welcome.

MARGARET: That would be great.

RICK: Then ArtSquad—so we started with the Brandywine Zoo and at the time—I was also pretty audacious I’d call anybody. I called Lawrence Alloway and asked him to come and give us a lecture. He agreed to, but then didn’t get there.

MARGARET: Oh no.

RICK: So I called Alan Sonfist, and asked him if he would be a visiting artist, so we were doing this thing at the zoo so he came to Wilmington for the weekend, and he sat in the cage in the zoo piece.

MARGARET: Just to back track just for a second, so ArtSquad would have been what year?

RICK: That started in ‘78 in the fall.

MARGARET: That was—

RICK: It went on to ‘82 or so—

MARGARET: That was grant funded?

RICK: It was started out with receiving a grant and I was the principle coordinator. Okay, so I think in ‘78 I made three thousand dollars from that. Always very entrepreneurial.

SUE: Excuse me for a minute would you like coffee or tea?

MARGARET: No, thank you.

SUE: Are you sure?
RICK: We are going to have it.

MARGARET: I think I’m fine.

SUE: You sure, water?

RICK: Tea, water?

MARGARET: No.

SUE: Some cider?

RICK: Green tea, cider?

MARGARET: Maybe some cider.

SUE: Okay.

MARGARET: Thank you. So those seeder funds were they kind of a host organization?

RICK: Yes the New Castle Academy of Arts studios.

MARGARET: Okay, did you feel like you were collaborating with these organizations like the Grand ones do or was it collaborative?

RICK: The concept was as a group we had some power politically, we could go and do whatever we wanted to wherever we wanted to do it.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: The concept was as a group we would pick a place, and develop a response to that place.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: That was artistic.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: You can see how it was an extension of my work you know, so that was really cool, but then it was something that everybody got to do.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: It was interesting the biggest point of contention in the group was that yin and yang about identity, and identity as a group, and identity as an artist. We struggled with that throughout the process, so that each event had a life of its own based around where we were at in the dialogue about our relationship to each other’s and our relationship to the place. We went back and forth
with all of us collaborating on a single piece, sort of like the Moon project, to all of us doing our own thing to some measure of both.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Where we would help each other out with our ideas or projects or somebody would initiate an idea, and then the people would pick up on it and start doing different aspects of it. That would be collaborative in different ways; we were definitely exploring that collaboration idea.

MARGARET: Was that a struggle kind of from the beginning or did you feel as though the individual artists came together with this kind of sense of group collaboration?

RICK: I think so if you read the one about the zoo where it starts it kind of lays out what our concept was at the time.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: It was definitely that we went there as a group and responded to the place as a group.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: I just read that let me see what they say here.

SUE: Beautiful thank you.

RICK: Can you read that?

SUE: There is one in here I think they are all hers they’re—

RICK: Oh damn.

MARGARET: I like that episode.

RICK: Yeah, that’s right. That is what Steve Brenner called his “Heart Attack.”

MARGARET: He called you “Art Attack?”

RICK: No that is what he called his “Heart Attack,” an episode.

MARGARET: Oh that’s what he called his “Heart Attack” and then—Now you said the county art studios are still in existence?

RICK: Yeah, Kiamensi Road I’m not sure who runs it, but they still have classes there—ceramics is the predominant thing.

MARGARET: Wow I feel like I’ve never—
SUE: Did you ever hear of J.B. Croftman she’s kind of wild?

RICK: She’s truly nice though.

MARGARET: Do they open up studios for first Friday things like that?

RICK: No.

MARGARET: Is it pretty quiet?

RICK: Yeah, it doesn’t aspire to be—

MARGARET: True—

RICK: It does not really aspire to function in the fine arts world.

MARGARET: Was it different in the ‘70s?

RICK: Only because of the ArtSquad.

SUE: Yeah.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: There were quite little places where you could go and take your ceramics, and I taught photography for a couple of years. So, yeah you can kind of get the intent from that article.

MARGARET: Okay and Stubs Wilson was involved with the arts studio?

RICK: Did he sign this stuff?

MARGARET: He did.

RICK: I want that.

MARGARET: Is that how they reference him the article?

RICK: Yes.

MARGARET: As well.

RICK: Yeah, he had inherited the project from Kathy was her first name, Harker was her maiden name. Kathy was bright and worked well with people, and you know had the kind of social skills to put the whole project together.

MARGARET: Okay.
RICK: She really was the brains behind it—at least she contacted me and said, “What do you want to do, Rick?” whatever you want to do that is what we want to do, so it was like, okay why don’t we do that.

MARGARET: About how many artists in the ArtSquad?

RICK: I think at one point there was sixty or so, it was a pretty big group.

MARGARET: That’s a big group.

RICK: Yeah, and it was actually that fall—What is this? It’s October 11, 1978. You see how many things were going on that year I mean it was like bam, bam, bam, it was like real energy.

MARGARET: Very high energy.

RICK: It was at that point we said, “You know the ArtSquad, this can’t be everything we need it to be.” That is when we had a meeting at the city county building that fall probably in November. Isabelle Carmen showed up in her wheelchair she had MS, she was married to Louie Rosenberg at the time she has since passed away. We had a meeting it was very small and it was about forming a group of artists to make an art center. That was the beginning of the discussion about the DCCA it wasn’t the DCCA at that point though.

MARGARET: So the ArtSquad wasn’t kind of enough—I mean did you feel like there were limitations in terms of space? Did you feel like you didn’t have the space to work?

RICK: We weren’t permanent.

MARGARET: A permanent home.

RICK: We wanted to expand this thing, this thing was limited in scope to the ArtSquad and the episodes, but it was about making it a lifestyle. You know where artist’s work sharing on a lot of different levels, and had those things available to them that they needed, it would empower them to make more work or be able to make their work.

MARGARET: Space to work and space to exhibit.

RICK: Yeah, exactly and an environment of support.

MARGARET: Right, community space to work space to show form for discussion all of that?

RICK: Yeah.

MARGARET: Of course so that is what was really missing with the ArtSquad because these were episodes that took place in different spots.

RICK: Already it was apparent that there was certainly an emotional art that was involved with each one because it there was enthusiasm in the beginning and then there was putting it all
together and then it was over. Then it was like, “What can I do next” you know, so there was emotional ebb that flowed that was associated with it, that probably the idea was that it was going to—somehow that would be moderated. You know you could maintain that level of excitement if it was permanent.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: Had I not been so naive all those great ideas probably would of never happened right? It’s funny how you watch as older people, people get all interested and think, “I’m not going to do that, I can’t do that” you build in these inhibitors and we didn’t have any of that. It wasn’t how are we going to pay for it, let’s do it. It definitely was not coming from us with any concern for economics or reality of how do you do it. I remember thinking at the time, well in 5 years we will have this DCCA thing all set up and then we can go on with the business. Then of course 30 years later the DCCA was still looking for its identity, and more things changing you know to meet real world considerations.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: Which only if I’d known.

MARGARET: Right those are realities.

RICK: Luckily, fortunately, that’s what’s great about young people—my daughters in the same place—whatever this is good I’m going to “Burning Man.” so yeah you can actually read the little sign.

MARGARET: Oh that’s great.

RICK: It was Homo Sapien and that was his exhibit he was mostly in the exhibit.

MARGARET: Where there any special hours for these kinds of episodes or was it really just when—for example when they—

RICK: They have it a Monday.

MARGARET: Okay, so it was kind of a one day exhibition?

RICK: Except for the preparation of course, yeah it was one day. I initiated a project on that day at the zoo where I went and took footprints of all the animals like the bear. I prepared a box—this was going with the casting, so I created a box of clay and then held an apple out for the bear and stuff, so there was clay in there and the bear stepped in the clay.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: To get the apple. We got the tiger. We got the raccoon, and the otter. Then what I did is I made a plaster cast, and then we made little clay cookies from the casts of the animals feet. Then we had another band in the exhibit space, and set up a kiln—this is Rob Ziminski and Kate
Norfleet. We fired the footprints and gave them out to kids that came to the zoo that day, so there was this process related piece where people would have a takeaway.

MARGARET: Do you have any?

RICK: I don’t think so any—

MARGARET: I read a lot of things by the way.

RICK: Maybe downtown—I do have a paper one which is a bear footprint.

MARGARET: Oh really.

RICK: I was playing with papers and I was making some things out of pulp paper at the time I used one of the molds to make a pulp paper foot-print. I think that is downtown. I remember seeing that recently. Oh this is Jan Master and Jan is still doing work like this.

MARGARET: I don’t know Jan Master is she local?

RICK: No, she is in Florida.

MARGARET: Okay.

SUE: She was local.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: She is still doing that actively as an artist of the whole group of us, I think Jan is probably the only artist that has stuck with it. This is Mame Witsil she is living in—she lives in Rehoboth.

MARGARET: What were they?

RICK: They were using natural materials, cast paper—

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: To make a little shelter.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Here is another Jan Master let’s see what that is. Oh yeah they took the llamas and they combed all of the entire llamas, and got all of the llamas hair and carted it and wove it into cloth. She was making paper here.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Yeah, that was another one of the projects I did, and the zoo was the first one.
MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: In Wilmington town square was one that was pretty amazing. There were other projects, but I kind of did this project and the city of Wilmington—this is all beef from Australia. It has a big cooler down at the port and they keep it at zero inside. We started by seeing if we couldn’t cut the ice out of the lake.

MARGARET: Oh.

RICK: See this we took a chainsaw and we started cutting the ice—

MARGARET: You cut the—

RICK: Check out the greatest picture of them harvesting ice, and it’s such a neat energy when you have water, and solid ice like right next to each other.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: It’s really cool energy. That is me, and this is Roger Frank. Roger went to N.Y., and got involved in finance and became a banker. He is still active and he’s at a meeting with a llama. Right after he got elected to do some advising about funding in the arts.

MARGARET: But no longer making work?

RICK: No he got into photography a lot and print making, but I don’t think he is making any art anymore now.

MARGARET: Okay was there difficulty in transporting the ice?

RICK: There were all kinds of difficulty, it just not a very controlled situation and the weather was—so we shifted the operation to the freezer and of course the city once again was short—whatever that word.

MARGARET: That’s incredible.

RICK: That’s fine. It’s funny I guess it’s been that way for me for a long time because that of—and on not so much with the sales administration, but certainly with the banker administration, and the Frawley administration, and McLaughlin. I’ve always had that kind of easy, easy relationship and they were very supportive of art and the arts, and I can initiate things.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Make initiatives and they would respond positively. There was lots of money, but it was all the support they would give you which is all that really mattered especially at this point. Then we moved it into place.
MARGARET: So you made the structures the wind structures for freezing the ice and then moved those with—

RICK: We cut it to fit a pattern.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Which I had made—speaking of opulent out of a casting from an ice crystal.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: So I clipped the ice I melted the casting, and then I made a drawing of the crystal structure of the ice, and then transferred that to a big scale, and froze pieces of ice that fit the pattern of the ice crystal.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Bob Jones is a writer for the News Journal on fishing and hunting. Dave Thompson is an artist who works in stainless steel in Boston.

MARGARET: Boston okay.

RICK: I’m not sure who that is?

MARGARET: Where they all members of ArtSquad?

RICK: They were all ArtSquad people yeah. Each person kind of had their own project going on at the same time.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Oh no that is another one look at it; it looks like what’s his name Michael Cromwell.

MARGARET: Oh it does; my goodness.

RICK: Wish it wasn’t—what else does it have?

MARGARET: That is the completed one?

RICK: That is the completed piece.

MARGARET: So they were held together with?

RICK: Brackets made out of steel.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: I drilled them and bolted them all together.
MARGARET: With that did you have internal lightening what was that light or no?

RICK: Yes we had a car up here.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: The headlights were showing, right there you can see it.

MARGARET: Could you walk into this piece I mean this piece is probably what like nine feet tall maybe nine to ten feet tall.

RICK: Eight feet tall.

MARGARET: Eight feet tall?

RICK: Yes you could walk in.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: I have a couple of murals that I made from black and whites that I took of a piece that is still downtown.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: The one girl her name—because they were translucent right.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: You could see a person inside it was fun—yeah this is my orange truck. That’s Tommy Bears’ orange truck. One thing we did is we always had a photographer, so we got really good documentation.

MARGARET: So all of the activities were well documented then.

RICK: Yes I got cases of slides, boxes of slides. I think that is about it.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: These are the best slides that I just sort of brought together. Then we did a piece at Winterthur. Tom got in touch with me about twenty years ago and he says, “You didn’t do a piece in Winterthur?” We are having this ongoing argument about whether you did this piece in Winterthur or not. Nobody thinks you did a piece in Winterthur. So I brought him out here and I showed him the slides he was like, “my God you did do a piece in Winterthur.”

MARGARET: That’s incredible. Did Winterthur approach you or you approach them?

RICK: No we approached Winterthur.
MARGARET: You approached them, and were you met with initial resistance?

RICK: No not at all.

MARGARET: Not at all, okay.

RICK: I just said look we want to do it, it will only last a day, and we are just going to come out here on Saturdays and just do art stuff.

MARGARET: It took place outside—

RICK: The gateway in the entry.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: This is the pond at Winterthur.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: Jan and Kate made these little boxes that floated out on the pond. You know who was involved in that one? Donald McLaughlin.

MARGARET: I don’t know him.

RICK: Donald is now a Professor up in Jersey he went to N.Y., soon thereafter; he is a painter.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: He set up an easel and on the easel he’s put clear plastic, and then he used the plastic to trace a painting of the landscape onto the plastic.

MARGARET: Onto the plastic okay.

RICK: Somewhere I have a picture of that. This is Cynthia Burt who was the Director of the Christina Cultural Arts Center at the time. This is, I remember her name she is an artist in Delaware at this time and she is a jeweler at this point.

MARGARET: A jeweler.

RICK: I remember her name she had a studio here in Garden for a while.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Then these things in the background—this artist from Philly came up his name was Abe Rothblatt and he was making line drawings, and he got like hundreds and hundreds of pieces of bamboo, and he was like sticking them all together and making line drawing in the landscape.

MARGARET: This was at?
RICK: Winterthur.

MARGARET: Winterthur as well.

RICK: Yeah in the entry way.

MARGARET: With that what kind of a dance piece was it more performance?

RICK: Yeah, there was a dance aspect to it.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: I almost had a name—let’s see what else is here. How come we have the same one twice—oh no this is Roger and his bridge. In the spirit of the whole thing there is a section of the landscape that you could not get to, so Roger went to the woodworking people at Winterthur and said, “I want to build a bridge,” and they said sure we could use a bridge there so he built a bridge. This is me and this is another bucket full of lime and what I did is—there is a little island in the center of the lake. I multiplied the distance from the island out past the lake, and I drew a line the shape of the island that surrounded the lake.

MARGARET: With lime?

RICK: With lime yes, there was a white line, and it was interesting because it encompassed all the other arts you know, so there was this relationship of things you couldn’t get to, and things you could get to—dimensions.

MARGARET: Right, oh wow.

RICK: Then we went to Lums Pond I’m sure I’m missing some and—

MARGARET: What was the frequency of the episodes was it every couple months?

RICK: Once a quarter yeah, probably once every three months. So this is the level that Jan’s little houses had come to.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: She was ahead of her time to if you think of that.

MARGARET: All those [inaudible] yeah.

RICK: Then I did a mold of Sue. I did a figure mold of Sue, and did demonstrations; poor Sue.

MARGARET: These were demonstrations on plaster-casting?

RICK: Yeah, at the time I was like Mr. Plaster cast because I was still doing the terra-forms.

MARGARET: Casting right.
RICK: I had certainly gone past that and just got into the forms themselves. The next piece was definitely about notion that the art could take you some place where you had never been before. I mean it’s because the ArtSquad became that you know it was opening doors. This piece this is the canal and this is sort of a hard sand cliff, and on the other side of the cliff is this ledge over the top of like a quick sand pit.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: So, I basically carved steps moved up around the corner, and then made a platform so you could go out. I was thinking of Chris—remember at the time Vita Acconci you wouldn’t remember, but Vito Acconci and Chris Burden at the time were doing these things where people would have to go one at a time, and have the intimate experience with the artist. Well this was sort of an attempt to create that in the context of the ArtSquad.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: You would have to find this place and I would be there and then you could get out on it, and access this precipitous thing which was great. It was kind of bad almost like—here you are in a public space inviting danger, and risk with the public you know.

MARGARET: Right that kind of precarious experience not quite like, Seed Bed but kind of inviting—

RICK: And sexual. It’s back to the sensuality and an intimacy with nature that is pretty culpable, it’s visceral you know.

MARGARET: Right, and so this was part of ArtSquad, but this wasn’t at Lums Pond?

RICK: This was at Lums Pond.

MARGARET: This was at Lums Pond.

RICK: The Annex that was part of the canal.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: One thing that isn’t presented in here is Bancroft Woods—we did a piece in Bancroft Woods, and that was an interesting piece because that was ultimately collaborative. It was really complex, but here; this is for you and these are some—these bottom four are just from when I teaching at the University. The top sixteen of them are from ArtSquad—Elaine Crivelli. Elaine was the Art Director and directed the art department at Philips Academy for a while.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: It was interesting how ArtSquaders went on to have careers in the arts.

MARGARET: Right. Are these free to scan?
RICK: You can have those.

MARGARET: You have multiples?

RICK: Yes, I have duplicates.

MARGARET: This is wonderful thank you. Students work—who was from Florida?

RICK: I forget.

MARGARET: His name isn’t Jim Anderson? Was he in here?

RICK: No.

MARGARET: No.

RICK: No, I don’t know Jim.

MARGARET: Okay.

RICK: Yeah.

MARGARET: It’s interesting the number of artists who are exploring the kind of downtown.

RICK: Deterioration.

MARGARET: Deterioration.

RICK: Yeah.

MARGARET: And really using that as subject matter, and painting prints—

RICK: Well that’s what making green money really was about that to.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: You know it was that which ultimately comes down to the relationship we have with nature.

MARGARET: Right.

RICK: Yeah.

MARGARET: Right, this is wonderful. Well in the interest of time for today—

RICK: I was going to say I didn’t ask you about time.

MARGARET: I’m going to stop this recording.
[End of Audio]
Duration 68 minutes