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**Oral history interview with Tomás Ybarra-
Frausto, 2014 May 1- 2015 May 25**

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Tomás Ybarra-Frausto on 2014 May 1- 2015 May 25. The interview took place in San Antonio, TX, and was conducted by Gilberto Cardenas for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Tomás Ybarra-Frausto has reviewed the transcript. His corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. This is Gilberto Cardenas and I'm interviewing Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. I'm doing this interview at his house here in San Antonio. And the interview is being conducted on April 30, 2014.

Hello, Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Hello, Gil.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: It's good to be here. I'm real pleased to be the person interviewing you.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I'm delighted.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: It's a real pleasure. And what I thought we'd do, Tomás, you have such a really important history and contributions that you've made. You not only have been a great professor, a great intellectual, a great mentor to many generations of younger scholars and curators and museum folks, an asset to the Latino art movement and the whole Chicano movement. And so we're going to cover a lot of topics.

And what I'd like to do is just initially there will be several interviews that we will start by asking you to tell us your birth date and maybe reflect a little bit about your family, your parents and the names of your parents, the names of their parents and where they came from and how long your family has been here in the United States, and if you have had family in Mexico or other places maybe you might comment on that or any extended family relationships you think were important to your formative years.

And then we'll get into maybe some childhood experiences, memories of your early days growing up in San Antonio, things that made you happy or unhappy. So pretty general initially.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So let's begin with your birth date.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay. Well, I think, as I reflect back, one important thing is that I think culture is ultimately the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. And so I'm very happy here to share some of the stories that will hopefully tell you a little bit about who I am.

I was born—and that's the first story. I was born in New Braunfels, Texas on December 22, 1937. But I was born on a ranch, my grandfather's ranch, a cotton ranch, and they didn't take me to register me to the county seat until a month later. And so there was a discrepancy between the day I was born and the year I was born. So in my birth—the birth certificate gave the date when they registered me in the Comal County seat, which was January 22, 1938. But actually, I was born on December 22, 1937. So I get to pick whether I'm a year older or a year younger [they laugh]. So that's a first story, kind of an uncertain beginning.

I was born, as I said, on my grandfather's ranch, a farm, cotton farm. My grandfather, Don Francisco Ybarra, and my grandmother—her name was—[San Juanita –TYF].

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, my grandfather, Don Francisco Ybarra, and my grandmother, San Juanita Ybarra.

And so my grandfather had this cotton farm and people came to work for him every year. They were like sharecroppers. And one of the [families –TYF] that came was the Fraustos. And the Fraustos came from northern Tejas. This is—New Braunfels is, you know, mid Tejas, south Tejas.

So that's where my [... –TYF] mother's family would come to work for my grandfather from up north, from Coleman, Texas. And her parents, my mother's parents—her father was Remedios Frausto and her mother is—I can't remember her first name—Frausto. So the Fraustos were from the north, northern Tejas, and we were from, you know, south Tejas.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Now, was Remedios Frausto born in the U.S. or—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes. Both of my grandparents were longtime Tejanos. I don't know exactly, you know, the beginning, but they were here before, certainly before the Mexican Revolution in 1910. So at least they were here in the early 19th century I would think.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: They were both Tejanos. So my mother's family, the Fraustos, came to New Braunfels and she met my father there. My father, Nicolás Ybarra, was the son of Francisco Ybarra. And so they got married and I was the firstborn child, the first male [grandson –TYF]. Francisco Ybarra, my dad's father, my grandfather, had several sons, I think four sons, and a couple of daughters. And my father was, like, the third son.

So my earliest recollections are the growing up on a typical Texas ranch. It was a ranch that had a corredor, a long, outside corredor where in the evenings people would gather. You know, the men would play—there was somebody who would—one of my cousins or, you know, uncles would play the guitar and they would sing and they would play cards. And I remember being nestled on my grandfather's lap.

I was muy chiquiado as we say, you know, I was spoiled because I was the first male child. The other sons of my grandfather at that time had been girls, so I was the first male [grandson –TYF]. And of course, I was the continuation of the Ybarra line for my grandfather.

So the rancho was—my grandfather was a very autocratic, almost 19th-century kind of macho, very strict. It was a very hierarchical family. The wives of his sons who were married, whenever one of his sons got married, he built a little house around the main house, so it was like a little compound. So

all his sons and his daughters-in-law lived there. And of course, all the daughters-in-law, with my grandmother, would help in the kitchen and so on.

Like I said, it was a typical rancho, it was a long—with a long corredor and then the rooms, you know, gave out into the corredor, the bedrooms, the living room, the dining room, the kitchen. And at one end of the corredor was a jamonera, a place where they had hams that hung on [hooks –TYF]—and chorizos. And my duty when I was growing up, maybe 3 or 4 or 5 years old, was to go to the jamonera and bring back the tortillas.

Every night the family ate together, all together. My grandfather, his wife and then all his married sons and their wives and all the kids, we all ate together at a big, long table. And my grandmother and my grandfather were at the head of the table. And they would bring the dishes, every dish they would bring to my grandfather and he would taste it first. And if he liked it, then he would give a nod of his head and then they would serve everyone else.

My duty was to bring the tortillas. So I would, right before dinner in the early evening, I would go down to the jamonera. And the tortillas were made in that afternoon, every day, fresh tortillas. All the women made the tortillas and then they packed them and put them in, you know, in cloth, wrapped in cloth and put them in this basket. And it was hung up with a rope.

And so my duty was to go and lower the basket, bring a little tray of tortillas. I had help, but I was—you know, that was what I was supposed to do, bring in the tortillas to the table, put them next to my grandfather and then he would pass them around.

And the fun part was, of course, that there were dogs, because there were a lot of, you know, hungry dogs. And so as I walked down to get the tortillas, all the dogs would snarl and, you know, try to bite me and so on.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I felt it was really quite an adventure to go from one end of the corridor to the other to bring the tortillas for dinner.

But the dinner was a family dinner. And like I said, my grandfather was an autocratic old style. You know, he tasted the food before everyone got served. And if he was—si andaba de malas—you know, if he was in a bad mood, he would push aside the soup, for example, and then nobody would get served, nobody would have the soup. Or he could castigate, you know, because he didn't like one thing or another.

Anyway, he also—my grandfather was a very fastidious man. The reason I'm focusing on my grandfather is because I was very close to him. I was, as I said, the first male [grandson –TYF], you know, his grandson. And so he was very fastidious. He always wore—una camisa planchada—a well-ironed shirt. And he had a little fob, a little watch fob. Sometimes he wore, you know, a little watch fob and this very well-pressed shirt, a big Stetson hat and boots. And he was a businessperson.

He was—New Braunfels was a German-speaking community, and so all the families around the rancho were German speaking. So all my little compañeritos at the beginning were mainly German-speaking kids. So I learned German, and at the ranch, at the house, we all spoke Spanish. I didn't learn English until I started school later in San Antonio.

So my earliest recollections are, in a way, me nestled in my grandfather's lap in the evening. He

smoked and so I could feel—I could smell the, you know, cigar and, you know, the [leather –TYF], the kind of, you know, men's smell. And he would hold me in his lap. And I— after we had eaten, everybody would sit in the corredor, like I said, people would tell jokes, they would tell stories, and I grew up listening and hearing, you know, all the stories or the folklore, you know, the traditional stories, you know, like *La Llorona*, the story of the devil, you know, who danced with this beautiful woman and they discovered he was a devil. You know, I didn't understand any of this, but I was inculcated into the songs and the music and the rhythm of Tejano, early Tejano kind of culture on the rancho.

My grandfather was, like I said, a boss. He was the boss, he was a Señor. Everybody called him Don Francisco. He was very autocratic now that I, you know, looking back. He, like I said, wore all these very carefully ironed shirts.

And so one day [a week –TYF] he would sit down with my grandmother and all his daughters-in-law, you know, the wives of his sons, who had been ironing all his clothes would bring his shirts to him to inspect one by one. And he would sit there and they would, you know, pass on a white shirt and he would examine it. And he would show me where to look for creases, you know, on the cuff or on the collar. And when he was in a bad mood, he would say to my grandmother, who was sitting next to him—ay, San Juanita, ¿Cómo quieres que yo, Don Francisco Ybarra, voy a poder andar en las calles de este pueblo con una camisa tan mal planchada?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: You know, how could I be walking around with an ill, you know, ironed shirt? And he would push it aside. So everybody, of course, wanted to have the shirt pristine and, you know, bien almidonada, bien planchada. And like I said, he was always very conscious of style.

So that's the other thing I'd began learning. Even though it was a ranch, everything, you know— there was a little altar. There was a little altar, a home altar, decorated with flowers and, you know, saints, statues of saints, a typical home altar. And even I remember, going back now, that the tortillas would always be wrapped in, you know, cloth that had been embroidered with, you know, the family name or little flowers or something. So there was always an added, you know, some sort of touch that made what the food or the presentation of food or the presentation of yourself, there was all this presentation, you know, all this ritual.

And so all of those notions of ritual and presentation and style, it wasn't that I was conscious. I mean, I'm a child. But I think that in some subconscious way I was learning that we come from a very formal culture with all kinds of hierarchies and ways of being and so on. So the ranch was a wonderful experience.

When it was time to gather the cotton, I would, you know, of course, they would take me out to the field. I was the owner's [grandson –TYF]. But I would sit on the costales as it would drag, as the workers would drag me.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What costales?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The costales were the big burlap [bags –TYF] where they put in the cotton. They picked it by hand and put it in these long costales that people had strapped on them. And they carried them as they marched down the rows of cotton. And I would sit in the costal and they would drag me around. I had two nicknames. One nickname was "el cien y cien" because I would say to everyone, yo tambien sé pisca, you know, I know how to pick cotton; yo pisca cien y

cienes, I pick, you know, [hundreds of –TYF] pounds.

Of course, I would grab the little, you know, [cotton buds –TYF] from the very bottom. And I was playing, you know, but I would say very proudly that I was also working and I was picking cien y cien.

And the other was because everybody when they got dressed up on weekends, you know, this was a rancharo, so everybody had boots and cowboy hats and so on. So they gave me a little pair of spurs, a little pair of gold spurs. So my grandfather called me "espuelitas de oro," you know, little gold spurs. And that was his sort of like nickname that he gave me.

So growing up, for me, as a privileged male child, I began—now that I look back, it's a very sort of complex reality of understanding how the women who cooked, who ironed, who washed the clothes, who did everything were slighted and were sort of invisibilized by the males, their conversation, their singing, their banter, the playing of cards and so on. This is much later reflections, but what I remember is this very full life of a ceremoniousness and ritualistic way of being.

You know, they had—there was a dance hall called a salón quemado, the burned-out hall, because as you know, in many places, the way people remember places are what things that are in their memory. Like when they call this salón quemado, this dance hall that had been burned, there was nothing there. But people still remembered it and they said, well, te vas por el salón quemado or te vas por la, you know, el—allí hay este—hay un árbol grande. You know, and of course there was no tree there anymore, but people remembered this tree that at one time had been there, this dance hall that at one time had been there. And they were still markers in their memory.

So the way that memory functioned was by all these markers. But it didn't matter whether they were visible or invisible, you know, memory had a way of marking a space, of marking a rhythm, of marking a kind of a history. So there was, there were dances. There were Diez y Seis de Septiembre, patriotic holidays, Cinco de Mayo.

Much later on, I would remember all of these things because when—well, what happened was my grandfather was a gambler. And he lost everything in a gambling bout. He lost, you know, his land and his trojas full of everything, you know, the cosecha, the horses. They say when my grandmother saw him when he came from this all-night card game, ya Francisco ha perdido todo.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so, you know, we had to move. He lost his land. He lost his inheritance. He lost—his children lost their inheritance. And so the family dispersed. And that's how we can to San Antonio.

My father, who, like I said, was the third, was the one that, in a way, I don't know, took pity on him or whatever, because the other sons, you know, he had squandered all their money. You know, they would work all year and they would give him all the money that he would put in the bank for them and he would dole out, you know, even though they were married and so on.

So my father was the one that, in some ways, I don't know, for whatever reason—he wasn't the oldest son, which is what you think the oldest son would have done; he was the third son. But he took, in a way, pity on the situation and brought my grandfather and my grandmother to San Antonio, and his wife and me. So that's how I got to San Antonio from this ranch.

And we were poor because my grandfather—my father, only work that he knew was ranch, working in, you know, on a ranch. And here we are in San Antonio. We were primarily Spanish speaking. My grandfather knew German, but [we're –TYF] in San Antonio, you know. So my father had to find work and find a place for his father, his mother, his wife and his child.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so we came to the West Side of San Antonio. It was one of the early colonias near Our Lady of the Lake, which is a landmark in San Antonio, Our Lady of the Lake University. At that time, Our Lady of the Lake University was a very prestigious school for niñas bien, well-educated Mexican women, who would come from Mexico, their parents would send them to study with the nuns in San Antonio. So there were upper-class Mexican women that came to study at Our Lady of the Lake.

And our colonia was around Our Lady of the Lake. There were—at that time, Our Lady of the Lake was way, way out from downtown. It was in a, you know—beyond the suburbs, in the early colonias. And they were, you know, the colonias were, you know, small, little houses, three-room sort of shotgun houses, unpaved streets, you know, small lots. And the people, it was like a beginning sort of like—yeah, in a beginning neighborhood. And that was another adventure for us.

We had, you know, indoor plumbing and we had water and electricity.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Now, was there a name to the colonia?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, it didn't have a name.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It was—it was just, you know, the street San Fernando, La Calle San Fernando.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: At nineteenth—nineteenth and San Fernando. So because we had many relatives still in New Braunfels and some of my cousins, you know, Francisco's sons and so on, slowly the family got reintegrated again. And so we would visit them in New Braunfels. And so I had the urban experience of being in San Antonio, but the small-town experiences, the rural experiences. So we'd go to New Braunfels for the Diez y Seis and we'd go for the Cinco de Mayo. And I remember many of the [group –TYF] traditions. [... –TYF] I started school in San Antonio at Ivanhoe Elementary School.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: How do you spell that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Ivanhoe—I-v-a-n-h-o-e, Ivanhoe Elementary School. And again, you know, it was, I would say, a hundred percent Mexican-American.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Was that you said when you were 11 or 10 or what?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, no, I was 6 years old.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, 6 years, okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I'm saying that going back and forth I remember because when I was 6 you don't remember a lot. But as I grew older, we would go to New Braunfels and that's when I remembered a lot of the festivales and so on that they had in New Braunfels.

So I was growing up in San Antonio. I went to first grade. And one of the first things that happened that is very vivid in my mind is when we went to—we had a cafeteria. And of course, we mainly ate, you know, Mexicano food. You know, we had tacos and tortillas and chorizo and papitas and, you know, the standards. So when I went to the cafeteria and they had sandwiches and salads, this was all new to me. And particularly when we were in line carrying a little tray and all of a sudden I'm, you know, 6 years old, I'm new to all of this, and all of a sudden I saw this thing that moved. And it was red or it was green or it was blue and it was moving and shaking. And I had never seen anything like that. I was just fascinated. It was Jell-O, you know. And I had never seen anything [like it –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So when we passed by, the server gave me a [thumps table] plunk of Jell-O on this little plate and I started crying because this thing was moving and I didn't know what it was. You know, what is this thing that is quivering and shaking, you know? And I wouldn't eat it. And so we'd sit down. And my classmates, you know, eat it. No, no, no; I closed my mouth, you know, because I didn't want to eat the Jell-O.

So I began integrating into a kind of a bicultural, more English-speaking from a Mexicano, in a way, rural tradition to a more urban, bilingual. The school was, like I said, about a hundred percent Mexican-American, but no Mexican-American teachers.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So how was your English at that point?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, it was not—it was not good. I mean, I was learning English.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Like I said, I spoke German and Spanish and I was learning English. But my parents—there's some stories about my schooling that I think are important.

Before I started—before I was, you know—at that time, there was no Kinder, you just started first grade. Before I went to first grade, my dad took me aside and, you know, they gave me consejos, you know. He told me the story about what is it that—what is a treasure that you can have that nobody can take away from you. And he told me the story. Some people think that the greatest treasure is to have a lot of money, but sometimes a thief can come and take all the money and you won't have any money. Some people think that a treasure is to have a lot of things, but there may be a flood and all these things are gone.

But he said the one thing that nobody can take away from you is an education, so we want you to be educated because an education is the greatest gift that we can give you and that is what we're giving you, a chance to be educated. And it's the most valuable, the most significant treasure that you can have. And you should be very—when you go to school, your teachers are going to be like your parents. You should listen to them, do what they tell you, because they're trying to give you part of a [great –TYF] treasure, which is an education.

And then he also took out a big atlas and he says come here. And he showed me where Latin America was. And he said [esta es Nuestra America, this is our America –TYF], not just the United

States of America, but all these countries, Argentina, Peru, Mexico, you know, Central America, all these are America. And he said let's see what language they speak. And so he would—we would look at the—he was pointing to a map, he started with Central America, you know, here's Guatemala, aqui se habla Español, they speak Spanish here. Mira, aqui está Puerto Rico, aqui se habla Español, they speak Spanish here. And he got all the way down, aqui está México, en México se habla Español, all the way, aqui está Chile, you know, way down at the bottom.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So how much education did your father have?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: He was—both my parents, I think, had a minimum elementary school education. They hadn't graduated from high school. So he would say, you know, here is the—here is our America, and you're an American, he would say, that's why you speak Spanish. Tú eres Americano. Por eso, hablas Español. Porque America no es un país, es un continente. It's not a—America is not a country, it's a continent.

And yes, there's a few places where they speak English, but look, look at all the places where they speak Spanish. And then he [told me –TYF], you should be very proud of speaking Spanish. And then he said, of course, we want you to learn English, too, because, he said, the other consejo that he gave me, was una persona que habla dos idiomas vale por dos, a person who speaks two languages is worth two people. And I said, well, yo quiero hablar cien, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I want to learn a hundred languages so I can be worth a hundred times. He said that's very good. Whatever many you learn, but you want to learn as many as you can because, again, that's part of the treasure. So he, my father, inculcated in me the notion of that teachers were part of the treasurer bearers of education, that I should learn and be respectful of them, that I was an American who spoke Spanish because America was a continent. And so it was like he was giving me the benediction and telling me what he expected of me, you know.

So there was no—never any, in my head, any notion or any fear that I would [not –TYF] do good in school, because I was—both my parents, my mom was the same way. She would also say the same thing, echoing my father. You are going to learn English and you're going to learn Spanish porque vas a valer por dos.

Okay, so I start school, all English-speaking teachers, no Mexicanos except for maybe the custodian or the kitchen help. And it was a Mexican-American school. And yet in this school, they wanted you to learn English. So this was a time when people had the notion that there was kind of like an official language or that English was the official language. So our teacher, my first grade teacher, first day in school, good morning, boys and girls, my name is Ms. Moran. We're going to have a lot of fun and we're going to learn a lot of things, numbers and colors and geography and history, but we're going to do all of this in English, because always remember you're an American, that's why you speak English.

So I raised my hand. I said, teacher, teacher, my dad says I'm an American, that's why I speak Spanish. So of course, I was sent to the corner, you know, [with –TYF] my face to the wall because this was an English-speaking school.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And one of the things they had was they had language monitors.

Every year they had an assembly at Ivanhoe Elementary School where I was going to school. Every year they had an assembly and they would pick one student per grade, first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, that was the elementary school, first through sixth, and you would be designated a language monitor. And you got to wear a bandolier with a big [badge –TYF] that said "language monitor."

And what language monitors were—and it was an official assembly. All the school went and they introduced the language monitors and everybody applauded. And what you were supposed to do as a language monitor was to come during recess, be out in recess, be out on the playground, and after recess to come spy and tell your teacher who of your friends were speaking Spanish.

And you know, in a way you were like a little Gestapo troop, you know, for the teachers.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I was very proud to be a language monitor. And I told my parents, [they responded –TYF], ¿Qué es esto? Qué no más Inglés se va hablar. Pues, nosotros hablamos Español y Español es un idioma magnífico. So my mom, my dad went to school and protested to the teachers and saying, look, we want him to learn English, we certainly want him to learn English, but he is a Spanish speaker and we love our language and we love our culture, and please don't let him spy on other kids and we don't want him to be a language monitor.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so this was a time when there was—later on I found out, in many, many places they did terrible things for people that spoke Spanish. The principal would come in with a ruler and he'd bang it on the table—I mean, you're 5 years old, you're looking and you're thinking that teachers are good and they're going to teach you all these things—bang on the table and he would say, you know, if you don't behave you're going to get that on your knuckles next time if I hear one word of Spanish.

And going down the hall, we would be playing around in Spanish and if you saw some teacher you immediately changed to English. But some kids were so traumatized with all of this that they just refused to speak, they grew silent. They neither spoke English, nor Spanish, they were aphonic. It was a terrible dilemma because on the one hand you were being told you're an American, that's why you speak English, but everywhere around you everybody was speaking Spanish.

And you were beginning to feel, well, who am I, I must not be an American because, you know, if I were I would be speaking English. Except some families, you know, like my parents felt that being bicultural and bilingual was important and even some of the teachers. Because in order to teach you English, they had to revert to the language that you had, so we learned a little ditty—it was called "Pollito Is a Chicken." And it said, pollito is a chicken, gallina is the hen, el lápiz is the pencil, la pluma is the pen. And so we'd repeat it every day. Pollito is a chicken, gallina is the hen, el lápiz is the pencil, la pluma is the pen. So you were learning bilingually, so they would learn—you would learn, you know, what one was another.

By this time I'm in the fourth grade or fifth grade. And one other experience before we [leave –TYF] elementary school. These are all very formative stories that I always remember and I think shape who I was.

When I was like in the fourth or fifth grade, we'd go to recess, after recess when you came [to your

room –TYF] from recess, you'd put your head down on your desk to sort of like calm down after running around and playing around. And then we had one teacher who always would put a riddle on the blackboard. So before we went out to recess, she would write the riddle on the blackboard and she would say the riddle for today is, when is a door not a door? And then we'd go out play and whatever, and then when you came back, you'd put your head down and you would then say, okay, lift your heads up. We'd lift up our heads and she would say, the riddle for today is, when is a door not a door?

And we were just mystified. And then she would give you the answer. When is a door not a door? When it's ajar. And when she said that, I was—I didn't know what—I knew that ajar wasn't a jar like a ceramic.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right. [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I knew it was something else. And then she said, ajar means it's open, you know, that means it's an open door. And so at that point, the reason it's important to me, because at that point somehow in my head I recognized the way that language works. Because I remembered when we had riddles in Spanish, one of them was, cuántas estrellas hay en el cielo, how many stars are there in the sky? And the answer is sin cuenta.

And then, of course, you understood that sin cuenta means without count, you can't count them, but also 50. Just like ajar means open, but also a jar. And that language is a kind of an approximation of things, but it can mean many, many things. One word can mean many, many different things. So I became fascinated by language from there on.

And that's probably the key to my then learning and being a literature professor and loving poetry and literature, the play with words and certainly much later on the bilingual [puns –TYF]. Chicano English-Spanish things, the way that you could create something that wasn't there by adding, you know, a metaphor or a word in Spanish or in English. So that was, more or less, my trajectory in elementary school.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can I ask you, Tomás, a question here?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I just want to make sure I've got this clear. Was your school all English speakers that you started at?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No. No, my school was primarily, I would say, the majority of the children were monolingual in Spanish.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay, all right. So it's just reversed.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. The teachers were the only ones that were [English speakers –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: There were some students that were bilingual, but I don't remember anybody being English-dominant, English-speaking.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The majority of us were Spanish-dominant and some were bilingual.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. That's fascinating just how that got you to a point of your interest with language and literature, as you mention, and what a moment, right?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, it was just a breakthrough when I understood how language works. A door, you know, a door is not a door when it's ajar, but it's doesn't mean that it's a jar, it just means it's open. And cuántas estrellas—and the most interesting thing was it was bilingual. I thought in Spanish and I got from the Spanish, sin cuenta, and then I transferred over to English, you know, and understood sort of like mechanisms, one mechanism of language play.

I must say, my teachers, for the most part, were diligent and caring. And they did the best they could. But they, none of them, understood how the Mexican culture was the basis of our identity and that they could use that as a base to make us—to enhance that identity. So maybe the pollito is a chicken, gallina is a hen.

At this time, the only other thing I want to add is that as I was going through my elementary school, we kept going back and forth to New Braunfels. And the reason that this is important is that we would go to the Cinco de Mayo or the Diez y Seis de Septiembre, and so I learned about all the traditions.

Like one of them was in talking about languages, at the Diez y Seis de Septiembre they had, or the Cinco de Mayo, they had what they call a tribuna libre which was an open forum. So they had a program and, you know, people would speak about all the heroes of Mexico and they would show pictures so that you would know who Benito Juarez was or what the Battle of Puebla was, or who Zaragoza was or, you know, Mexican independence, who the heroes and heroines of those battles were.

And they had a program, you know. Sometimes they had the consul from México come and talk. But after the official part, they had another—the tribuna libre was where they had a—a tribuna is like an open mike. They had a microphone set up and anybody could get up and orate. And so there were people in the community that were famous for being orators. As people would say, you know, el don de la palabra, they had, you know, the ability to move you through their words.

So some of these señores and señoras would get up at the Cinco de Mayo and they would do a speech in Spanish. But it was very dramatic, you know, very oratorical. Tenemos que recordar—the voice and everything was high rhetoric, you know. Tenemos que recordar que somos los hijos benditos de un noble país, you know. And then they would talk like that, and it was a cadence. It was, like, very oratorical, almost like a sermon. So I got to really listen and learn how language was very significant because, of course, it was patriotic.

But you know, here we are in the United States dealing with all these heroes of Mexico and everybody applauding, you know. So in some ways it reinforced, you know, what many of the institutionalized learning was trying to take away. And so that was the beginning of folding in, you know, George Washington and Benito Juarez, of folding in for many of us, the American mythos and the Mexican, you know, mythos and making your own.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you said George Washington and—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Benito Juarez.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Benito.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Or you know, the English and Spanish.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, yeah, right. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I remember, for example, they also had pastorelas, Nativity plays at Christmas. And they had all the kind of Catholic rituals, like the acostar del niño, levantar del niño. And we would go because it would be like in a dance hall or a public forum. And so I learned all of these customs and traditions by seeing them in a more rural community in [Texas –TYF]. They happened in San Antonio, too, on the West Side, but—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: But you say New [Braunfels –TYF]? In [... –TYF] Texas?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: In New Braunfels, yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: New Braunfels, all right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So that was growing up, that was one part. The other part was my bilingual part. And maybe we can talk about that later.

[... –TYF]

[END SD1 TR05.]

[No audio in SD1 TR06 and SD1 TR07. –Ed.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay, we can continue, Tomás.

It was really a wonderful conversation yesterday about your background and your formative years in San Antonio and before that in New Braunfels and the connections that you had between the two places where you lived, and some really interesting observations about your interests and kind of culture and the rituals and all the different things you described and how that was a very important impact, a long-lasting impact on your life.

So now we want to continue on with that discussion. And perhaps if you're ready or you think you want to make the leap to high school perhaps. Or you want to continue with elementary?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. I think I want to continue a little bit with the elementary. We're about 1945. I'm 7 years old. This is the end of the Second World War. And I think the thing I want to focus on is sort of the bicultural universe or the bicultural world that I grew up with and in.

I had two very formative experiences or many formative experiences in terms of my two maiden aunts, my mother's sisters, mi Tía Julia y mi Tía Alejandra. Tía Julia Frausto and [Tía –TYF] Alejandra Frausto were my mother's sisters. My mother was Libertad Frausto. And the two maiden aunts were sort of like the cultural bearers of the family. They had never gotten married and so they lived together. They worked in various places in San Antonio. They were part of the pecan shellers. They had been part of the pecan shellers' strike when Emma Tenayuca had the pecan shellers strike. They both worked as pecan shellers and in laundry and other things.

But these two aunts, Tía Julia and Tía Alejandra, Tía Ana we called her, Tía Ana and Tía Julia were the ones that were the cultural bearers. They were the ones that knew the stories and the riddles and the poems and the food and the songs in terms of our Mexican heritage. So all the Fraustos, my mother's sister, Tía Fidencia, her brother, Tío Vicente, all the family on my father's

side, de Ybarra-Fraustos, all the kids, all my little cousins would also go and visit Tía Ana and Tía Julia.

And in the summers, we would spend our summer vacations, we'd spend at least a week all together, all my cousins, we were living with Tía Ana and Tía Julia. And they were the ones that would teach us little riddles or little adivinanzas, you know, like, ¿Cuántas estrellas hay en el cielo? The answer, of course, is sin cuenta. Or ¿Lana sube or lana baja? And the answer is, la navaja. Or ¿Agua pasa por mi casa, cate de mi corazón. Es qué no me adivine estas adivinanzas es, puro burro cabezón.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Would you translate, please?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay. The riddles, like, the riddles are bilingual and they depend on the wordplay. For example, agua passa por mi casa, cate de mi corazón, it spells agua cate, so the answer to the riddle is in the riddle itself. So they would teach us the riddles, they would teach us the stories of *La Llorona*, *The Weeping Woman*, or other stories of buried treasure. And they would cook us food, you know, the kind of special foods for all the special holidays, capirotada for Easter and buñuelos for Christmas and so on.

Our parents did it, too, but they sent us to Tía Julia and Tía Ana because they were sort of like the cultural bearers. For example, it's in the summer and all, let's say, four or five little cousins all staying with them for a week. And they would give us lessons, sort of like teach us how to speak Spanish and kind of write out our first letters. We all had a little notebook. It was like una escuelita, a private little escuelita with the tutors being Tía Ana and Tía Julia.

And they would tell us things. For example, they had a lot of interesting furniture, you know, like carved tables and things. They had a very nice little house. And so we would always say, oh, that table's going to be mine, I really like that table or that chair. And Tía Ana would say, well, every single piece of furniture has one of your names on it, because when I'm gone you're going to get the table or the chairs or whatever. So we used to sort of like sneak underneath the table and look up to see if it had a name. And it didn't.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But anyway, so Tía Ana and Tía Julia were very important. They had a little garden and it had all the medicinal plants. [It was a –TYF] traditional garden, you know, lore that they taught us. This is ruda and it's good for earache. This is this kind of perejil, you use it for this or you use it for that. So they were instructing us in a lot of the norms and the ideas of Mexican culture.

Every afternoon we'd take a little siesta and then all of us would sleep for an hour or two. And when we'd wake up, they always had, you know, merienda which was, you know, hot chocolate, Mexican chocolate, chocolate, and pan dulce, some kind of sweet bread, you know.

So we all liked to go to Tía Ana and Tía Julia, particularly they were totally different. Tía Ana was very, very strict, Tía Julia was very, very loving and very, in a way, maternal. So Tía Ana and Tía Julia were very important in teaching me, you know, the kind of value system and the structures of feeling and the structures of language in terms of Spanish.

So this is [... –TYF] elementary school. Then I went to junior high school and that was Washington Irving Junior High School. That was very near where Tía Ana and Tía Julia lived. They lived on

Perez Street.

So again, in the junior high school, by this time I'm, you know, like 12, my teenage years. These were important because San Antonio at that point, this is 1947, '48, '49, por ahí. Ya estamos llegando a los cincuenta, we're getting close to the '50s.

San Antonio was—downtown San Antonio was very, very much alive. And this is when I was, you know, more conscious. I'm no longer a little boy, I'm a teenager. I would go to the public library and I loved to read. And so I remembered that one librarian, I would—at that point, the library was restricted, so they had books for children and books for adults. And if you had a child's card you couldn't get in—you couldn't go into the adult books. I mean, adult books meaning they were just regular books, there wasn't anything about, you know, them being adult. But the children's books were, you know, the children's stories and so on.

But one librarian, who saw that I loved to read, gave me and said, well, you can go into and take out the books for the big people. And so I read, for example, a translation in English of Guy de Maupassant, the French writer. And of course, Maupassant has a lot of stories of brothels and so on. And it had little drawings, you know. So I was learning a lot about life through books.

And so I think libraries and librarians have been really important. They would always let me check out as many books as I wanted to. And they would always suggest, have you read, you know, the *Robinson Crusoe*? Have you read *Les Misérables*? Have you read Dickens, you know? And I was an avid reader. I would take all the books and would read them, you know, inside out.

And I was always looking to see if there was somebody with my name, because I knew that certainly an Ybarra somewhere had written a book. And one day at the public library I found a book called *Young Men of Caracas* by T. Ybarra. And I said, oh, that's Tomás Ybarra, I wonder what this book is all about. And so I checked it out, of course. And the book was the adventures of a little boy in Caracas and Venezuela.

And so it was very interesting to me because he had my name, the boy, but he was living in Latin America and I was living in San Antonio. And his barrio and how he described it was totally different from my barrio on the West Side of San Antonio. But I got to know—I guess I was making a link between my experience and the experience of other Latin Americans and Latinos early on. I was interested in that.

So I'm growing up in San Antonio. This is the bicultural, bilingual San Antonio. Downtown was alive at that time. The downtown, you know, everybody came al centro, you know, which was the downtown. Of course, there were Spanish-speaking movies, there were Spanish-speaking newsstands, there were Spanish-speaking bookstores. There was *La Prensa*. There was music. Downtown was very much alive. The Teatro Nacional, the Teatro Zaragoza were both movie houses, but also they had Vaudeville. They had actos, you know, they had magicians and they had dancers and singers, some from Mexico and quite a few of the legendary Tejano singers, like Lydia Mendoza and Rosita Fernandez and so on.

So I was immersed in the kind of Mexicano culture. We had Market Square, a mercado where all the people came, bringing the fruits and vegetables from around San Antonio. And it was a very multicultural scene because there were a lot of Belgians, Chinese, Mexicanos, you know, all coming to the mercado. And of course, the mercado had a lot of puestos, a lot of little booths where they sold Mexican food.

So all by way of saying that, again, at home my dad had bought a big Zenith radio that was in our living room. And sometimes after dinner we'd gather around the radio and we'd listen to Mexican stations XEQ and XEW, which were the two major stations in Mexico. And so it's through the radio and through—they had, you know, not telenovelas, they had radionovelas. They had, you know, stories that they told, but they also had music. The night clubs, for example, El Patio was very famous in Mexico City.

So what I'm saying is at this time Mexico City was becoming a modern metropolis. Modernity had entered Mexico City and the music. And there were famous, famous singers like Agustín Lara, who had a very famous program called *La Hora Azul*. And so we'd listen to *A Hora Azul* in San Antonio.

What I'm saying is I'm underscoring that even though we were in the United States, for us, the culture, the Mexican culture and the Mexican-American culture was the milieu that I grew up in. We had the Mexican radio stations, we had Mexican movies by this time. Remember, this is in the '40s, this is the golden age of Mexican movies. This is all the big, big, still-fabled stars of Mexican movies, Pedro Infante, Gloria Marin, Dolores del Rio, Pedro Armendáriz, on and on and on. So we saw all of these stars in movies at the Nacional and the Zaragoza.

And then about 1947, I think, the legendary Alameda Theater opened. This was on Houston Street. And the Alameda was a palace of dreams. It was a fabulous Art Deco palace where they brought all the movies from Mexico, but it was a very elegant theater. It had winding staircases and chandeliers. And on the inside of the theater it had two big murals. On one side was a history of Mexico and on the other side was a history of Texas. And the audience, the Mexican Americans, sat in the middle. So in a symbolic way, sitting in the middle with Mexican culture on one side and American culture on the other, we were the ones that were putting it together.

And so this is what I'm trying to suggest. We were putting together the Mexican and American part. Of course, this is the beginning of the early civil rights movement in Tejas. Tejas was still segregated. Of course, there is the very famous case of the war hero who came back to Three Rivers, Tejas and was not permitted to be buried, Longoria, Felix Longoria, the Longoria affair. He wasn't permitted to be buried in the Anglo cemetery or to have his wake in the Anglo mortuary.

So this is when Hector P. Garcia [... –TYF] mobilized the community. And out of this came the GI Forum. So the GI Forum, the LULAC at this time, all these organizations were like the precursors to the early civil rights or early Mexican-American civil rights organizations.

And in many ways, in different ways, each of these early civil rights organizations all had a kind of a bilingual platform. They all were—many of them were made by GIs that had come back from the Second World War. Many of the GIs came back to San Antonio after the Second World War, '47, with the GI Bill they started going to college.

The industry after the war, there was a lot of industry in San Antonio. Kelly Field was a very important place for an emerging Mexican-American middle class. There, of course, had always been attorneys and doctors and so on, but now these were Mexican-American [scholars –TYF] and Mexican-American journalists and so on. So this was a beginning of the early civil rights movement in Tejas.

And also in San Antonio, this was the audience that went to the Alameda, working-class people like us and professional people, but everybody dressed up because it was quite a—it was a very elegant theater. The Alameda was, as I said, a palace of dreams. It was on Houston Street. And it showed all the latest Mexican movies. And it was a huge theater, and it was so elegant that they

had even a guarderia, you know, your parents would come in, they would sign their children, sign them in, they had a big room. It was like a nursery. And they had trained nurses that were there. And they would sign them in for, like, two hours while the movie was going, and then they'd walk upstairs to the movie. And then after the movie they'd go back and check out their kids.

So it had a guarderia. It was very, very elegant. And so it was a feeling of this modern city. This is the time of the Good Neighbor policy, Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy. And so the Teatro Alameda was part of a big building called La Casa de Mexico. And La Casa de Mexico was where the Mexican consulate was and where many of the offices of all the middle-class Mexican Americans, lawyers and doctors, and it was a professional office building for Mexican—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where was that at?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: On Houston Street right next to the Alameda, as part of the Alameda. So that was part of the Good Neighbor policy, the idea of San Antonio being a gateway city between the United States and Mexico. So it was there at the Alameda and on the side at the Casa de Mexico where, aside from the movies that were in the Teatro Alameda, in the theater, the consulate had an auditorium where they had poetry readings and they had an art gallery. And this is the first time I saw Mexican art. They would bring an exhibition of Diego Rivera or Covarrubias or somebody. And you know, they would have an opening, and somehow I got interested and would go to these things with friends and my parents.

So I was growing up really bicultural and bilingual. The Anglo part, the downtown, of course, had many other theaters. The Texas theater, the Majestic, the Empire, so it was quite wonderful because I would go from seeing Maria Felix, like, at the Alameda and then I could go the next day and see Esther Williams at the Majestic.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And I just made a transition from the English, you know, movies and the cowboys movies and then the Mexican. But the Mexican movies were particularly important because they—part of the thing was that we learn about the full aspect of full Mexican culture, indigenous Mexico, because they had a lot of important, significant movies about indigenous communities, like Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, *La Perla*, or *Maria Candelaria* with Dolores Del Rio about a little indigenous woman. So many of the stories revolved around indigenous Mexico.

There were also heroic movies of the Mexican Revolution and the struggles of the Mexican Revolution. So they were like history texts, and there were also movies of urban life in Mexico City, gangsters and night clubs and the music and the Vaudeville and the videttes and the singers. And so you had a full visual, you know, music, the music of the mambo, the cha-cha-cha, the boleros. You saw middle class and poor people, urban, poor people and indigenous communities. So we were learning what was denied us in the textbooks and in American culture, through the Mexican movies. They were very, very important.

The radio was [also –TYF] very important because the radio was not only the big stations from XEW, XEQ, all the major, but also this was the beginning of Mexican-American radio in San Antonio, and the Tejano music would come in early in the morning.

So it was a full experience of being bicultural and bilingual, from Hollywood, from Mexico City, from the local to the national. And so this is the—downtown was alive. There were theaters. There were—we're talking about the Mexican-American part of downtown, theaters.

There were, like I said, you know, bookstores. And the bookstores were important because they sold all the popular magazines, *Siempre* and *Hoy* and all the popular magazines. And we had *La Prensa*. So this is the milieu that I grew up in.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So *La Prensa*?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: *La Prensa* was a newspaper.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: *Siempre*? Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, *Siempre*. There were all the major periodicals of that period in Mexico—*Siempre*.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So *La Prensa*, *Siempre*, y *El Diablo*?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, I can't, you know, I can't remember all of them.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: *Siempre*, *Hoy*.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: *Hoy*, that was it, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And all the magazines had cultural supplements, suplementos culturales, even *La Prensa*. And the cultural supplements were, you know, it was a collection of poetry or drawings or portfolios of artists and so on in the newspapers. So you got a full gamut of high culture and popular culture at the very same time through the newspapers, the radio and the movies. So this was growing up when I was like in junior high school.

I always knew from the very beginning that I was going to go on to college. My parents had always taught me. I had, by this time, I had a sister and a brother, my sister, Hilda, and my brother, Hector. I'm the oldest and then Hilda was my sister and Hector was the baby. And so all three of us were immersed in this sort of bicultural, bilingual atmosphere of San Antonio.

I always knew that I was going on—I was the oldest, so I was—they were just, you know, Hilda was several years younger than I am and Hector is like 10 years younger. So when I was in high school, Hilda was like in junior high and Hector was just a baby.

So I knew I was going to college and there were only two college preparatory schools in San Antonio. One was Jefferson High School and the other one was Brackenridge High School. [... –TYF] And they were mainly Anglo schools. And so I decided to go to Brackenridge High School. At that time, you could go—the high school didn't have to be the high school in your district, you could go to another district.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So the two were, again?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Brackenridge High School and Jefferson High School, and I decided to go to Brackenridge because it had a wonderful band, and I loved the band, I loved music. And so I chose Brackenridge which was on the South Side and we lived on the West Side.

So I went to Brackenridge High School. [... –TYF] The majority of the high school was Anglo and there were a smattering of Mexican Americans. We had our own club, *La Estrella*. And you know, it

was a typical—these were the proms, these were the, you know, all the high school stuff. I became a member of the ROTC and I achieved the highest rank which was cadet colonel, so I was cadet colonel of the ROTC, which meant we all paraded at all the football games and so on, so we got to travel throughout the state of Texas.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So I've got to—you were a member of ROTC with the highest rank?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, I was cadet colonel. And I joined the drama club. And I joined, of course, the Spanish club and the history club.

But the most important thing that happened in terms of my later life was that one time when I'm at Brackenridge High School there was an ad in the school newspaper and somebody wanted a Spanish tutor. So of course as a Spanish speaker I applied or I called the number. And this was one of the really interesting and formative experiences of my life.

I went to the—I applied for the position of a language tutor and it turned out the woman who wanted the language tutor was the wife of Adja Yunkers. Adja Yunkers was a very famous Latvian printmaker.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Adja Yunkers, a famous Latvian. I mean, I didn't even know where Latvia was, but he was very important—I think he's an American Latvian printmaker.

They came to San Antonio because the Marion Koogler McNay Institute had a program where they invited visiting artists. And so Adja Yunkers was a visiting professor at the Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute. And his wife came with him, and since they were going to spend a couple of years on a fellowship here in San Antonio she decided she wanted to learn Spanish while she was here.

So they invited me into their home and I became like a surrogate son. They had a wonderful art library, a beautiful library with a lot of European, you know, material. Wonderful books and music and so on. So they started teaching me about modern art and, you know, letting me—they—he was a professor teaching at the Marion Koogler McNay Institute, so they would invite me to join them when they would go to dinner at the Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute because he was, you know, he was part of the staff, a professor.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Koogler with a K or C?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Huh?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: K, Koogler?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Koogler, K-o-o-g-l-e-r. The Marion Koogler Art Institute is one of the famous museums in San Antonio. So I would—I got used to going, to being a guest at the Marion Koogler Art Institute and, you know, being surrounded, of course, by Mrs. Koogler's great collection of modern art with Cézannes and Picassos and Manets and—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And she also had medieval art. So it was comprehensive, but it was beautiful because it was her villa that had been turned into this museum, so it was like a house, a personal house. And they would have dinners there [... –TYF]. I'm 17 years old, 17, yeah, 16, 17, and

here I am sitting and listening to—I'm, you know, quietly listening to all this art talk and discussions about Picasso.

And they had a wonderful—she had bought a Diego Rivera.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: This is Marion Koogler?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Marion Koogler. She was gone. It wasn't her, it was her institute, her museum.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so the director at that time and the staff, the curators and so on. So I got involved [with them –TYF].

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I got involved in listening to a lot of art talk and art discussions. And I started collecting postcards of art and of artists. So then I would have little—I would set up little—I would learn, I would go to the library. And let's say I saw a book on, let's say, Olmecs. And then I started trying to see if I could find postcards that had Olmec, reproductions of Olmec pieces. And I would read up about the Olmecs and I'd have a little exhibition of Olmecs by putting the postcards upon the wall and writing a little description. So that's how I got involved actually by learning a lot of art, by actually collecting little postcards, putting them in shoe boxes, labeling them, you know, modern art, contemporary art, European art, Latin American art.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Do you still have those?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so that's how I got involved through Adja Yunkers and his wife, who were, like, wonderful. You know, they were very learned and classically trained European artists and Europeans. You know, they had classical music they always played and so on. So I would go from the West Side, you know, eating tacos and tortillas and sometimes spend the early evening and they would show me their books and learning all about European art.

By this time I'm, you know, like a senior in high school and decided, of course, I was going to go to the University of Texas in Austin. So I didn't know or at that time there was no scholarships or minority anything. It was just the regular. [... –TYF] I never in my whole career had one fellowship of any sort. I just did it on my own. At that point there were few or I didn't know, nobody counseled me about, you know, what was available.

So I went to the University of Texas. And I stayed—since I graduated from Brackenridge High School, they placed me in Brackenridge dorm. George W. Brackenridge, [for whom –TYF] my high school was named, was a famous philanthropist. And there's a hall that he had donated to the University of Texas called Brackenridge Hall. And so that's where I wound up, at Brackenridge Hall

at the University of Texas. I think this is now 1956 or so.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I graduated from high school in '56, I think that's true.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I went, and Texas, Austin was a wonderful, wonderful little town. It was very small. It was not the high-tech, big city that it is now. It was a college town. This is the—they had the beginning of a music scene, kind of alternative music scene, Janis Joplin was doing her thing, and the early beginnings of the Austin sound on south Austin.

A lot of wonderful things happened to me at the University of Texas. I now go back and I say a lot of my professors now are buildings because this is a time when a lot of the fabled University of Texas professors were still there. George Sánchez was doing his last courses in the Education Department.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did you meet him?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes. Américo Paredes, of course, was the young scholar that was making new waves in terms of Texas folklore and his ideas of greater Mexico. So Américo Paredes was there, George Sánchez was there, a lot of important professors in the different departments.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Castañeda, was he there?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Carlos –TYF] Castañeda was there. Castañeda had just published his book on the Catholic heritage of Texas. So Castañeda, George Sánchez, Américo Paredes. I didn't—I took classes with Don Américo, but not with George Sánchez. They were emeritus by this time. But I saw them and they would come to meetings. I would see them on campus and I got to talk with them.

And in a way, it was the conversations with them that I felt I was beginning to be introduced into the sort of Mexican-American literary and intellectual traditions because they were the ones that actually had established it. There were no Mexican-American studies at that time.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right. So you had conversations with Paredes and Castañeda?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Castañeda—Paredes and Castañeda and Sánchez. The reason that I sort of like got to meet them was because I worked as a page in the library. And of course, I got to meet Nettie Lee Benson. Nettie Lee Benson, who is now the Nettie Lee Benson Castañeda, or something, library. But Nettie Lee Benson was an Anglo historian who focused on Mexican, colonial Mexican [history –TYF]. And she was quite a force and quite a legend, a wonderful lady, just a very distinguished lady. And she took me under her wing like she took a lot of Mexican-American workers at the library.

And of course, the library is, you know, such a distinguished library that, I mean, you could handle, somebody would ask for it and they had the letters of Cortés, they had wonderful, wonderful material from Mexico that you got to handle because you had to bring it to scholars that were doing research and so on.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I got to learn a lot of just by osmosis when people would require, they'd ask you to bring a book of colonial Mexican art and, you know, you'd go to the stacks and find it. And you'd have to wear gloves and put it on a little table to bring it out, or a stack of books. And of course, that gave you a little time to look at one or two and just learn or take a name down and then later on go to the card catalog and learn about that. So I was learning a lot by working at the library.

This is at the time of the Harry Ransom Center. The Harry Ransom Center was also quite significant in terms of American culture and particularly the Southwest. J. Frank Dobie was still at the University of Texas.

So in terms of a place where I was exposed to the kind of intellectual currents and traditions of Anglo American, all the way from Britain to south, to Texas, but also Mexican and Latin American. Of course, Texas has always had a very strong Latin American program and with a library that was one of the gems of Latin American art and Latin American culture and Latin American literature and history.

So I was in heaven at UT.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.] Now, how did you pay your way at UT? Did you get help from your family or—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, my family primarily. And I worked in the library. And I had—sometimes, you know, I was very, very poor. I remember that when I moved out of the dorm into a little apartment and I had to pay for that, you know, sometimes the only thing I had to eat was potatoes. And I would look forward to have a potato, put it, you know, in the oven and put a little butter and have a nice little potato with butter. And it was my meal.

[Beeper sounds.]

[... –TYF]

[END SD1 TR08.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay, it's recording.

This is number [card] two.

What do we want to say? Okay. Can you repeat?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes, we want to add my grandfather's name. And Francisco Ybarra was born in Zacatecas, Mexico October 22, 1871.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Francisco Ybarra, your grandfather, was born in Zacatecas, Mexico in what year?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: October 22, 1871.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And my grandmother was San Juana Ramirez, and she was born in Salinas, Peñón Blanco, Mexico on the November 19, 1874.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So both my grandfather, Francisco Ybarra, and my grandmother San Juana Ramirez, came to Tejas when they were small, in the 1800s.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Thank you for that supplement. That was very important for the first part of the taping that we did earlier.

So, Tomás, we left, I think, at the Harry Ransom Center. You were talking about Nettie Lee Benson and how you were exposed to the kind of Anglo-American intellectual, the Mexican-American intellectual. And I'm sorry, the Mexican and the Latin American intellectual traditions. I think that's where we left off.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And this is basically your work at the library.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So these are my undergraduate years at UT Austin. This is the time of the beatniks in California. And as I said, I was living in Brackenridge Hall. And one of my roommates was a music major. And he was from Dallas and his father was one of the board members of the Dallas Opera Association. So he would invite me to Dallas and we would sit in his father's box and watch the Dallas Opera Company.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What's his name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I can't remember his name.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The Dallas Opera Company at that time was famous because they would invite many international stars. So my first experience watching opera was to see Maria Callas, the great Italian diva, in *Medea*. And the production was, I mean, it was stunning. And I've never forgotten the chills of listening and hearing Maria Callas sing.

That season it so happened that most of the operas [were bel canto operas –TYF], so I thought that opera was all about Gluck and Donizetti [Monteverdi –TYF] and all the old, the traditional bel canto composers.

Later on when I became an opera enthusiast when I heard my first Puccini or my first Verdi, I was really shocked at how strident and modern they were because I was used to the old bel canto where [singers –TYF] would just sing and improvise and [ornament –TYF], particularly coloratura sopranos and so on.

So I got very interested early, and my love of opera stemmed from going to watch Maria Callas and then going to the Houston Grand Opera Association and Dallas Opera and San Antonio also had an opera. San Antonio had every year the Metropolitan Opera would come to visit in San Antonio. And so I got very interested in opera and music and classical music while I was at UT.

Also at UT, as I said, this was a time of [a kind of existentialism –TYF], everybody dressed in black and everybody, you know, that first period. This is when *Howl* in California, Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and the beatniks. And so there was a club on Guadalupe Street, or Guadalupe [pronounced 'gwad-ah-loop'-Ed.] as they say in Austin. It was like a little bar. And one night my roommate, whose father

was from the opera association, and I were there and there was this very little old lady who came. And we were very gentlemanly and we spoke with her and she asked us, well, do you have a place to stay? And we said, yes, we live in a dorm. And she said, well, I have a house and if you take care of the yard and clear the yard you can live in the house rent free just by working on the yard.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so we thanked her and accepted her offer. Little did we know when we visited the house it was this mansion, because she was one of the Driskill Hotel women. And so it was a Driskill mansion that was in south Austin way on a hill and it overlooked the whole downtown and the capitol and the university tower.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And it was a big, almost like a John Adams mansion, you know, many, many rooms. It had a ballroom. And in the ballroom engraved on the floor was the seal of the state of Texas. And so, you know, it was decrepit and old, but at one time it had been this very grandiose Victorian house.

And so my roommate and I moved in and we lived there and it became like party central. You know, on weekends everybody would bring—would come and there would be parties galore and people would bring mattresses because it had many, many—on the second floor, it had like a whole veranda and people would just put out mattresses and watch the moon and see the tower.

And it became—and remember, this is the hippie, everybody was toking up—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Cool.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and cool and listening to jazz. So it was an interesting moment of getting into American pop culture.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Tomás, what year was that or what level were you in college? A first year or second?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: This was—I must have been a sophomore.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Sophomore.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Sophomore or junior.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So again, I continued this sort of really trying to negotiate between the Anglo American and the Latino. At that time, of course, the university has always had a great Latin American studies program. And they had the Ransom Center published this wonderful, wonderful, still, to me, one of the really important [journals –TYF], *The Texas Quarterly*. They had special issues on Mexico—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —in which they had all the writers and the poets and the artists, very interesting. This is, you know, Juan Rulfo and Carlos Fuentes. And the first onda of Mexican writers,

contemporary Mexican writers.

And so through *The Texas Quarterly* and Miguel Gonzalez-Gerth, who was a poet at Texas, I was—I got sort of very much interested with the literati crowd at UT and, you know, readings at the Ransom Center.

UT at that time was, well, they called it the "Harvard on the prairie," UT, so they had, you know, wonderful professors from all over. And so it was not unusual for the Ransom Center to bring British writers and, you know, they were, in a way, more British than American and more Latin American than, you know, Mexican. They brought in a lot of the great writers. I remember hearing Dame Edith Sitwell and the whole Sitwell clan and a lot of poets and writers who came.

I was a humanities student learning literature—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: That was your major?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It was an undeclared major, but I mainly took literature courses and humanities programs in the Spanish department and theater and in the literature department. And you know, folklore with Américo Paredes, and so it was a well-rounded undergraduate.

I did very poorly in school because I was easily bored. And when they assigned something I quickly read the assignment, but then read two or three or four books around the topic. So when they asked questions of a particular assignment I was duh, I couldn't remember, but I knew a lot about it because I had read three or four books about the topic, but that wasn't the assignment.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I was learning a lot on my own and really not making very good grades. I was like a C student at best at Texas. But I had wonderful, wonderful professors. Silber was a professor of classics, John Silber, at that time. The guy, [Roger Shattuck –TYF], who wrote *The Banquet Years* about French existentialism and French writers was also there at Texas at that time. A lot of important American literature and British writers, you know, we can look at a list of who was there at that time to find out.

The same thing in the Spanish department. They had Jorge Luis Borges would come, Rulfo would come. You know, they would come to give lectures, but as undergraduates, I went to a lot of the literary [readings –TYF]—there was a wonderful bookstore on Guadalupe Street that had a lot of—the two owners of the bookstore had been Latin American studies majors and so they had a wonderful collection of Latin American books.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: José Luis?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: José Luis Cuevas?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Cuevas? No, the visitors.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I said—well, they would bring people like Borges and Juan Rulfo.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Borges, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So [these were –TYF] my experiences. Importantly, in terms of my future development, aside from all this cultural American, Latin America and British literature and

the arts and culture, I went to a lecture. I wasn't registered in the class, but I went to, just as an auditor, to several lectures by Jacinto Quirarte. Jacinto Quirarte had just published *Mexican-American Artists*. It's the first and only book, really, about the early—the story of the development of Mexican-American art in the United States.

And Jacinto Quirarte, who was a Mayanist and a pre-Columbianist, but since he was Mexican American he had taken an interest in Mexican-American art and probably [taught –TYF], if not the first, one of the first courses and classes on Mexican-American art.

And what I particularly remember, Mexican-American art taught at a major university in the United States, and what I particularly remember was one lecture that he gave on one of the women whose drawings, "Chelo" Amezcua, Consuelo Amezcua, I went to a lecture on her and just was fascinated by her story. She was from Del Rio, Tejas and was kind of a seer, she had these dreams and then she would paint these dreams. So she would dream about Nezahualcoyotl the great Aztec poet, and she would then do a painting, I'm sorry, a drawing.

And she called her drawings filigrana, filigree, Texas filigree. They were drawings on cardboard with felt pen. And I was just fascinated. I had never seen this kind of work or an artist who was, you know, an oneiric talking about her dreams and the things she saw in her dreams, like the ancient past. And she was talking about them as if they were just like contemporary.

So I was fascinated by—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did you get her work or—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Huh?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did you get her work, did you collect it?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, no, no. [Quirarte –TYF] was just giving a lecture and, you know, showed a lot of slides. But among all the other artists, I mean, Carmen Lomas Garza, the first generation of Mexican-American artists, many from Tejas, from south Tejas, Jacinto Quirarte, all the artists that are in his book he was teaching in his classes. But I particularly liked Chelo Amezcua.

And at the very same time, remember I was still coming to San Antonio and I was still involved with the Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute. The director at that time of the Marion Koogler McNay Institute was John Palmer Leeper. And one of the important curators there was Amy Freeman Lee. And Amy Freeman Lee is one of the first early exponents of Mexican-American art. And she had an exhibition of Chelo Amezcua at the Koogler McNay Institute. So in some ways we coincided, me discovering her through Jacinto Quirarte's lectures, and the exhibition at the Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute in San Antonio.

So I was so fascinated, I decided to go visit, to go visit Chelo. And the reason is because my two—because all—many of the Fraustos, my two maiden aunts, Tía Julia and Tía Ana, there was a whole passel of Fraustos in Del Rio. And so when we went to visit Del Rio, I made it a point to visit Chelo. And I've never forgotten the experience.

Consuelo Amezcua lived with her sister.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where? In—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: In—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Del Rio?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: In Del Rio, Tejas. She lived with her sister. They were both unmarried. And it was like a little fairytale house, a little wee house, and it was like across a little bridge. And we went and they were very proper ladies. You know—I went with my tía, my Tía Julia, and so I immediately got introduced, oh, yes, los Fraustos and everyone sort of talked as people in Tejas always do, connections of family, the Fraustos who lived in Del Rio and my aunt and so on. So I immediately got entre into her circle, into her house.

So they gave us pan dulce and café and then she showed me her work which was—Chelo Gonzalez Amezcua worked as a candy girl at the local Kress. She was a big woman, stout, had very, very thick glasses, very, very thick glasses so her eyes would look like owl eyes. And she always wore her hair in a bun and she always wore a flower or a ribbon. And she told me, bueno, es que yo no más vendo dulces, pero quiero siempre aparecer de buena cara, I always want to put my best foot forward when I sell my candies. So she was a candy girl at Kress's store. And she would do her art at night.

And the art was on discarded cardboard from shirts. When you send your shirts to the laundry, they iron them and [encase them in cardboard –TYF]. And they're kind of thick cardboard. And so this is what she saved. And on these cardboard—so her [drawings –TYF] were all almost standard size of that cardboard, her filigree [drawings –TYF], which were done with multicolored pens.

So it was fascinating. More fascinating was her story, because when we talked about her work, she said, well, I'm not really known in the United States, but a lot of my work is known in Europe, and my sister and I go to Vienna and to Europe de vez en cuando and so a lot of collectors there have my work. So it was fascinating to see a working-class, self-taught artist from Del Rio, [Texas –TYF] who had this kind of reputation with collectors in Europe more than in the United States. She was not known at that time until Jacinto Quirarte featured her on the cover of his book.

And so through Chelo Gonzalez Amezcua, the other thing that I remember, and this is also very important, after we had had our, you know, wonderful conversation and she talked about her experiences in Europe and her experiences as an artist, she was really a very poetic soul, you know, poetry and, you know, the way she pictorialized this interior universe of symbols and [dreams –TYF], her own magical realism in a way.

So just before we left, I heard a lot of yelping or like cats yelping. And we went outside, she said come to her backyard and it was full of stray cats. And she said, you know, the world is very terrible, particularly if you're a woman, even in the animal family. What people do is, when a cat has a litter of kittens, they take all the female kittens and put them in a bag and throw them into the Rio Grande, and they only want to keep the male kittens. And so my sister and I go and we uncover them and nurture them back to health and feed them, pobrecitas este, you know, aun entre los animales hay esta jerarquía, there's a gender hierarchy—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —even in terms of the animal kingdom and the people. Even the people have this hierarchy. So that made a very [sad –TYF]—the first time that I had really heard about gender in terms of art and in terms of artists. So I learned a lot from one afternoon with Chelo Gonzalez Amezcua in Del Rio, Tejas.

This is just one of the experiences that I was having at UT. The other, UT was formative years for

me. I was—I didn't really know, I was kind of like a student of culture, but I didn't have a particular area of concentration. So I started taking courses with Theodore Anderson, "Tug" Anderson, who was a professor of linguistics and he had come from Yale University. And Tug Anderson's idea was that if you taught children languages young enough they would learn the language without interference from—as many languages—that kids could learn many, many languages and could become almost native speakers because at one time the muscles and your vocal cords and all have settled in a particular way and it's hard to trill your r's in Spanish or make a French, you know, accent or so on. But if you start out young, you can do this.

And so I was learning. And he was particularly interested in elementary school. So I started to work with him, learning about teaching elementary school children foreign languages. I knew Spanish and I had studied Italian and French. And so I was very interested in his ideas.

And one day I opened up a *Life* magazine and I saw this very interesting picture of 11 men sitting, you know, looking out at the camera and one deliciously beautiful woman, elderly woman, with white hair. And they were standing in this landscape that was like glimmering and glistening. And I said, where is that? And it turned out that it was in the state of Washington, the Washington rainforest. And the men, the 11 or 10 men, were all artists, they were the Northwest School of Painting, Morris Graves, Mark Tobey, and all the rest. And the woman, this beautiful creature, was Zoe Dusanne who was their muse and their inspiration. And she sold their work. She had a gallery in Seattle, Zoe Dusanne.

And so I became fascinated by the Northwest School of Painters and Zoe Dusanne. And the idea of the Pacific Northwest seemed so foreign and so wonderful and so distinct from UT, you know, the hot scorpion summer of Texas.

Well, so I got fascinated by the Pacific Northwest. And my professor, Tug Anderson, this is a time of *Sputnik*. This is a time, I think it was 1950-something, when *Sputnik* was sent up. Russia sent up *Sputnik* and all of a sudden the U.S. became aware that we were losing a lot of our status because we were very insular, and so that we needed to come out and be part of the world again. And one way to do that would be so that Americans could be participants in the world they'd have to learn all the different languages.

And so Tug Anderson's idea of teaching languages to children caught on. And at this time, then the government, the U.S. government, had a lot of money for the NDEA Summer Language Institutes. And the idea of the institutes was to train teachers on how to teach children Spanish and French and German and different languages so that we could be competitive in the world market because of *Sputnik*. And so *Sputnik* spawned this whole interest in cultures and language.

And so Tug Anderson, my professor, I told him, I showed him the picture and told him, oh, look, I'd like to go to Seattle one day. And he said, oh, I have a very good—my best friend, my best buddy teaches at the University of Washington and his name is Howard Nostrand, Professor Howard Nostrand, who teaches French at the University of Washington. And if you'd like, I'll call him and see if he can find you something to do this summer. And I said that would be wonderful.

And he did. And Tug Anderson, yes, he said, as a matter of fact we've just gotten one of these NDEA Institutes to teach teachers how to teach children languages. So yes, Tomás, if you'd like to, we'd make you a demonstration teacher because, of course, I had to learn curriculum and all of this from Tug Anderson at UT. So that's how I got to the Pacific Northwest. I went to the University of Washington.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What was your title again?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I went to the University of Washington as a demonstration teacher for the NDEA Summer Institutes.

And it was sort of like a mind-opening experience. I was at the University of Washington and I started looking around. And of course, the ritzy school districts, you know, only the ritzy school districts throughout the country could afford to have extra teachers to teach languages and culture to young kids. So there was a very small, very, very elegant, ritzy neighborhood, a suburb of Seattle across a bridge from Lake Washington. And so that's where—Bellevue, WA.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Bellevue, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so that's in Bellevue, Medina and all the ritzy suburbs, that's where I started working to teach children Spanish and French. And the school district in Bellevue had a team of teachers. And we would go to different schools, we would travel to different schools and have like an hour per class with students, enough to teach them greetings and colors and, you know, conversation. And if you did it long enough, pretty soon the kids caught on very quickly and they were really learning to speak without an accent.

And so I became part of this traveling team. So I was very happy, you know, earning a good salary. A lot of the teachers were young. I was young. You know, I hadn't finished my B.A. yet, but I had already almost got like a teachers credential because of working with Tug Anderson.

And so I started really enjoying the Pacific Northwest. And everybody skied and had a boat and it was a whole other experience, a whole other way of living. So I got a little apartment in one of the—a wonderful little apartment [on –TYF] one of the lakes and, you know, with boats coming by every day. And I taught and I made friends.

And then one day for some reason, I decided to take a trip across the mountains, from Seattle to east of the mountains, eastern Washington. So I took the Greyhound bus from Seattle and I wound up in this little town called Granger, WA.

Now, as you know, the way that the Northwest is, there were a lot of Mexican-Americans in Seattle, but there was no precise neighborhood where they all lived. There was a black neighborhood in Seattle, but there was no defined Mexican-American neighborhood. Mexican Americans lived all over the city. So I never sort of was conscious of a Mexican-American community in Seattle.

So when I took the bus to eastern Washington, of course, eastern Washington is where all the Mexican-American communities were. Traditionally, a lot of them were internal migrants. It was internal migration from Texas, they would go up to the Pacific Northwest to pick hops to make beer, the hops and the apples and all the—it was a valley, just like the valley in California or the valley in south Texas. It was an agricultural valley.

And so a lot of the people had been going. And then, of course, as happens, a lot of people migrate out. They had formed little enclaves and little towns. And there were communities that were, you know, largely percentages of Mexican Americans. And they had been doing this all the way back. If you now read about the Mexicanos in the Pacific Northwest, all the way back to, you know, about the time of the California Gold Rush, because a lot of the arrieros, a lot of the muleteers that carried the gold or brought the gold from California to the Northwest, at one time the peso was the official currency in the state of Washington.

And so I got to—I arrived in this little town. I've never forgotten, it was like a Saturday evening. And I arrived in Granger, WA and all young men were—they had just come out of, like, a shower and all their hair was curly and, you know, they had their *camisas bien planchadas*, you know, their shirts were nicely ironed.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And all the young ladies, you know, were very beautiful. And you [felt –TYF] this frisson, this sort of, like, magical kind of sexual attraction going on. So I followed them. I followed this group. I had never been there, I'm, what, 21, something like that. I followed them and they went, of course, to a Mexican restaurant. And oh, God, it was so wonderful to eat Mexican food because I hadn't had that in Seattle. I just really felt it was like a little Mexico.

And then that weekend on Sunday, I went to church and was really disappointed because the church was segregated.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: How?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [...–TYF] It was a small little church, this little town is a couple thousand people. The balcony was where they sat or where they prayed and then the [ground floor –TYF] was where the growers sat and where they prayed. And I, coming from Tejas and coming from San Antonio, felt that this was wrong—I immediately begin thinking, you know, this is wrong.

And then I started asking around about this little town that was so Mexican to me.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Now, is this Granger still or somewhere else?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Granger, WA. And I discovered, you know, that many little towns like Granger were over half, if not more, Mexican Americans. And I began thinking, well, if they could organize themselves they could vote themselves into the mayor's office and they could vote themselves into the city council and the school board. But nobody was doing it. Remember, this is 1964, '65. The farm workers' struggle was just beginning in California. César Chávez and Dolores Huerta were just beginning to trying to work and unionize California farm workers.

And so I just felt that there was something wrong. And I kept going; I came back after that weekend, I came back to Seattle. And I just felt—I had never been—this was my political awakening as a Mexican American, really. In the Pacific Northwest, I realized, you know, how if people got together they could mobilize and could do something about their situation.

So I started asking around and one of the first people that I met, or soon thereafter, was Antonia Castañeda. Antonia Castañeda was born in Tejas in Crystal City, Tejas and her family had migrated from Tejas to the state of Washington. And so she was one of the first Chicanas who had a Bachelor's degree, who had a college education. And she was working at that time for Migrant Education Program. Because what happened is when a lot of the children would come from Tejas to Washington, they didn't have a record system. So the kids that were in the third grade, you know, they would ask their parents what grade, well, I don't know, I think he's in the third grade and they'd put him in the third grade.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But maybe he was already repeating the third grade because he was actually in the fourth grade.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so a lot of children were misplaced in the correct grade and some were, you know, more dominant in Spanish, and there was a lot of questions about where they belonged, what class and so on.

So Antonia was working with migrant education. And the first steerings of community mobilizations were beginning to happen. People were reading about what was happening in California. There were a couple of lawyers, Anglo lawyers, and one or two Mexican-American lawyers and community organizers.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So how did you meet Antonia specifically? Do you remember?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I don't remember specifically, but working through migrant education.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Through a migrant education committee that was—that actually was housed in the state capitol in Olympia. So I started working with migrant education and meeting, traveling around the state of Washington and meeting some of the leaders, the community leaders, the Mexican-American community leaders of these various communities who were beginning to think about things like having a farm workers' co-op because people would buy their food, the farm workers would buy their food por mayor, you know, sacks of tomatoes and stacks of potatoes.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, one other question on this. Was this that first summer or were you already moved to—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, I was coming back and forth. I was teaching in Bellevue, WA, going on weekends to [Granger –TYF] and seeing the situations. And then I decided, well, I really—I didn't feel that I could—here I was teaching these little children of these privileged classes in Bellevue, WA—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO:—how to speak Spanish, and across the mountains, you know, five hours from where I had a cushy job, the kids who spoke Spanish were being told that they should not speak Spanish and were being dissuaded from that.

And it was kind of a shock and a contradiction. And how come the children of these ritzy families—I remember one time I asked if there was a public library and they said, oh, we don't have a public library here because everybody has their own private library at home. So how this family and, again, privilege and the social structure, and I began understanding from [the ground up –TYF].

Plus, I began understanding the vitality of the culture, of the farm-working culture and working-class culture. I just fell in love with [the community –TYF], they were like my tíos and my tías and my, you know, the people in Tejas. A lot of them, of course, were Tejanos who [were now living here –TYF]. So I felt very much at home.

And so I started working in little towns. In Granger, there was—they established sort of a bilingual radio station that began teaching in Spanish.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Was that Radio Bilingue?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Radio Bilingue. It was before Radio Bilingue, but that—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay, a forerunner.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, a forerunner of Radio Bilingue, but it was a station that had news about what was going on with a now-evolving Mexican-American movement in California, primarily. And there were people there [like Ricardo Garcia and –TYF] Angie Grajeda who was a community organizer and she established the Brown Beret group in Granger.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Grajeda?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. And other people that then became important community organizers and lawyers and so on, Mexican American, for the Mexican-American community. But I was more interested—I was learning all of this, but I was never like involved in politics—I began learning about culture.

And then at this time I was also going to the University of Washington as a student because I was finishing my degree at the University of Washington, I had gone there from UT without finishing my B.A., finishing my degree at the University of Washington and going east of the mountains whenever I got a chance.

And in the school year in college you have summer vacation and you have, you know, spring vacation, so there were—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you finished your degree at?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: UT.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No, no, but—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: UW.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: At UW.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so I was now a northwesterner. I was at the University of Washington. [...–TYF]—and I met—my mentor there was Joseph Sommers. He was a professor in the Spanish department. And Joseph Sommers was one of the great writers and thinkers and critics of Mexican literature, particularly the literature of the Mexican revolution.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Joseph Sommers was one of the great and early Mexicanists. And his specialty was the Mexican Revolution and so, of course, with him and learning all the ideals of the Mexican Revolution and the literature of the Mexican Revolution. And Joseph Sommers himself was very politicized [... –TYF]. He had [lived –TYF] in the South and had worked with blacks, particularly with the [porters on the railroad –TYF] when the people on the trains got unionized and sort of worked a lot with mobilizing blacks, and so had been very much a part of the black civil rights struggle in the South.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You know, I had the privilege of meeting Joseph Sommers at the Latin

American Studies Association when he was in Houston, Tomás. I gave a paper, a very kind of strong, working-class orientation on migration. And he came up to me and just really just praised me and he was very encouraging. That's the only time I met him, but it was so nice to meet him.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I think it was, like, in 1978, I can't remember what year that was.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: He was a great inspiration in terms of a long, historical trajectory of working with civil rights with blacks. And now, of course, he was very much interested in the Chicano movement because of his concern with the Mexican Revolution and the revolutionary ideas of Mexico and now with the Mexican-American community who continue some of these ideals in the state of Washington.

So through Joseph Sommers, who became my mentor, Antonia was also at the University of Washington. So one summer, Joseph and other [faculty –TYF] at the university put in a grant. I think it was an NDEA Summer Institute. It was called Chicano Calmecac.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Chicano?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Calmecac. A calmecac was—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you spell that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —the school for the nobility in [... –TYF] ancient times, in pre-Columbian times among the Mexicas, among the Aztecs. A calmecac was a school of higher learning where you learn the philosophy and the arts and so on of the indigenous [cultures –TYF], indigenous community.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you spell calmecac?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Calmecac—c-a-l-m-e-c-a-c. And you know the Chicano movement and there were a lot of calmecacs all over—because it was, interestingly enough, the school for nobles. And of course, this was not the people that they were dealing with, not nobles, they were working-class people.

Anyway, this summer was a calmecac in Granger, WA. And so there was a little, abandoned church that was desacralized from the Catholic Church, that had been abandoned by the church. And so we took it over, the community took it over, and we made a little museum, probably the first Mexican-American museum in the country.

And the collection that they had was my collection because I had been collecting, going to Mexico a lot when I was in Tejas, and I had a collection of particularly pottery and textiles and a lot of posters, you know, of Zapata and Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution. And studying with Joseph Sommers, the writers and so on. So the calmecac was a series of lectures by [faculty –TYF] from the University of Washington. Sal Saporta, who was a linguist, talking about linguistics in Spanish and the importance—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Say that again, the name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Sal Saporta.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Spell that, Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Sal, S-a-l, Saporta, S-a-p-o-r-t-a. Sal Saporta, you know, Joseph Sommers, other [professors –TYF] from the University of Washington. So they would bring lecturers to Granger for an evening of lectures on Mexican folklore or Mexican music or Mexican traditions and so on. And then during the day we would have the calmecac with the children.

And we realized that the community was very rich in a lot of cultural bearers, people who knew the culture from their lived experience. There were people who sang, who could sing corridos very beautifully, who sang all the corridos of the Mexican Revolution. There were poetesses, women who remembered how to--declamadoras, women who knew how to [orate –TYF] rhetorically, you know, a lot of the poems, the traditional poems from Mexico. There were persons who knew Mexican folk dance. There were wonderful costureras, women who could sew anything. There were [marvelous –TYF] cooks who knew how to make all the different chiles and know all about chile and all about the nogadas and all about a lot of different [condiments –TYF].

So we—I began really learning the power of working-class culture and working-class communities. And I was involved because these were my—the community that I was living among [... –TYF]. [Several –TYF] of us were sort of put in with different families.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I stayed with the Lemos family.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Lemos?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. And the Lemos family, you know, just took me in. They gave me a bed and they would cook for me and would sit and talk. And through them I met other people in the community.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, just before we move, so you're no longer working at Bellevue then? You stopped working at that point?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I was no longer working at Bellevue. I was now going [to university –TYF] full time, I was now a full-time student at UT.

[... –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Lemos family?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The Lemos family was the one that took me in. And then I decided, well, the thing that I know about is culture so I'm going to really work with—and remember, this is a time when Luis Valdez was starting El Teatro Campesino in California. And so I decided, well, I'll do a teatro with the community. And we called it El Teatro del Piojo, The Lice Theater, because I remembered my childhood in San Antonio when every two weeks or so the nurse would come with two pencils [para espulgar –TYF], you know, she would look at your hair to see if you had cooties, if you had hair lice.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Is that piojo, p-i-o-j-o?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. And so when they did this, if you had head lice they would put powder, you know, to get rid of them, white powder. And so when the kids came out for recess, if

you had white powder on your hair nobody would play with you because you were ostracized, you were a piojoso, you had piojos. And so I decided this was a perfect metaphor, just like black is beautiful.

So the piojo, who had been a terrible, you know, symbol became a beautiful symbol. And so we use it, that became our logo, Teatro del Piojo.

And I worked. And I [organized –TYF] that Teatro del Piojo, the interesting thing was that all the people that worked [with El –TYF] Teatro del Piojo were all campesinos or workers. There were [few –TYF] students, you know, like—El Teatro Campesino, Luis Valdez started El Teatro Campesino when he was at San Jose State.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So a lot of the [Teatro Campesino –TYF] people there were students who had studied theater and were literature people and so on. We were just workers, farm workers and children. And it was wonderful because everybody worked together. We would have meetings and somebody said, oh, señora so-and-so could make a costume if you want this or that. Oh, señor so-and-so, he's a very good artist, he could paint, you know, a set if you want. Of course, we didn't have sets or costumes and stuff, we had the minimal things. But we did make masks and [props –TYF].

And the only theater that I knew was the classical Spanish theater because I had learned theater, Golden Age theater, at UT. And so using my training of classical Spanish theater and what I was learning from the community, we established El Teatro Piojo. It became sort of very famous in the Pacific Northwest. We traveled all around and we did little skits just like El Teatro Campesino, but we also did, you know, entremeses which were 16th-century Spanish [skits –TYF] and little sections from pastorelas and things like that that I knew from growing up in San Antonio.

So this was the—I had established the little museum. And actually for the opening of the museum —

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You did the skits, the pastorelas?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Pastorelas.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: You know, we [established –TYF] the little museum. And I remember one [exhibit –TYF]—we didn't have much, but we put [a photograph of –TYF] the Pyramid of the Sun and we blew it up very, very big and put a spotlight right in front of it, and in front of the Pyramid of the Sun we placed a bowl of frijoles, pinto beans. The idea was [to unite –TYF] these pinto beans and the Pyramid of the Sun, there's a relationship there, there's a cultural basis, and working-class people still have the pinto beans. So as you eat the pinto beans, you're getting back to the pre-Columbian [roots –TYF], the pre-Columbian great civilizations of Mexico.

So we tried to inculcate Mexican folklore and Mexican music. And it was a [fabulous –TYF] experience. But more important, I learned about the power and the resilience and the know-how and the making do with what you have, which later [inspired –TYF] *Rasquachismo* and other kinds of things, making do with what you have and how people [repurposed –TYF] everything. Those were some of the Northwest years and experiences.

By this time—oh, at one time there was a big fiesta in the community. And the Lemos and others said to me—well, at some point in the fiesta they call for the attention and they said, well, Tomás, you have worked with us for a couple of years here in the community, coming from the university, but now we want you to go back to the university and finish your degree. Because you have taught us how to speak for ourselves, now we're going to send you our children so you can teach them to speak for themselves.

So I really felt that I had a mandate from the community to finish my education and to go back to the university. And so very quickly, I mean by this time I was in graduate school, but I finished my Ph.D. at the University of Washington. And it was an interesting Ph.D. because it was an [interdisciplinary –TYF], or today we'd call it cultural studies. It was in art, music and literature, even though literature became my major [focus –TYF].

And in literature, I focused on popular literature, vernacular literature. And it was actually focused on poetry, on Chicano poetry, my Ph.D. And so it was never published. And it talked—there was a chapter on Poetas del Pueblo, poets of the community and the whole tradition of public oratory and public speaking. And then on the Mexican-American poets, particularly on Alurista, there was a whole chapter on Alurista and his poetics.

Several of the chapters [were –TYF] published as essays, like the one on Alurista [... –TYF]. So that was how I finished my Ph.D.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What year was that, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I can't remember.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And who was your dissertation director?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, Joseph Sommers—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and Bob Garfias It was an interdisciplinary Ph.D. so I would have to have people from different departments.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So spell Garfias's name.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: G-a-r-f-i-a-s. [Roberto –TYF] Garfias was an ethnomusicologist, a Mexican-American ethnomusicologist. But his specialty was Balinese and Japanese and Eastern music, not Mexican, but he was Mexican-American. And by this time, there were one or two other [Mexican-American –TYF] faculty members at UW.

It was a beginning—this was the beginning of Mexican-American studies at the University of Washington. So when the students came from eastern Washington, not only from Granger, but throughout eastern Washington, the universities had to [hire –TYF] faculty and had to have [counselors –TYF] like, adjunct faculty working with the students. And you know, they began hiring other faculty. And this is the beginning of Mexican—I can remember the first [group –TYF] of Mexican-American professors at the University of Washington. Bob Garfias [in music –TYF] was one. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano [in Spanish –TYF] was another one, [and Carlos –TYF] Gil, he was a historian.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so we were the first cadre of Mexican-American faculty. And you know, there was the first courses in Mexican-American studies at the University of Washington. So a lot of the students from eastern Washington came to the university. And so El Teatro del Piojo continued, but now at the University of Washington. They hired another Tejano to teach the drama courses. His name was Rubén Sierra and he was from San Antonio. And Rubén Sierra was a playwright, and so he took over the Teatro del Piojo at the university so students could get credit for taking teatro classes.

And so Rubén Sierra, who was a playwright, then did some of his own productions, his own plays [... –TYF]. So he became the teacher of the teatro and Mexican-American theater at the University of Washington.

By this time, the university had a multicultural center, Chicano artists painted murals on the walls. One important one is called *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. El nombre of the artist –Emilio Aguayo. Emilio Aguayo became one of the important artists, Mexican-American artists. And soon there were other Mexican-American artists, Alfredo Arreguin, who was actually Mexican, but was part of the community. Alfredo Arreguin, Emilio Aguayo, Danny—Daniel DeSiga, who was mainly a poster maker.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Daniel?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Daniel DeSiga.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you spell his last name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: DeSiga, D-e-S-i-g-a. And others who became like the first cadre or the first group of Mexican-American artists who became mobilized and would have meetings and talk about the Mexican-American art. There was a very famous painting *Las Cuatas*—

[...–TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, a famous painting by one of the [Northwest –TYF] Mexican-American women artists. There were very few women artists. [Cecilia Alvarez painted *Las Cuatas*. –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So there was a beginning of mobilizing of the artists. One of the interesting things is that somehow the students discovered an old mural done in one of the hiring halls. I think it was a Stevedore Hall, [a mural –TYF] by Jean Charlot, I think.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I was going to say, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And Jean Charlot had worked early on [in the Northwest –TYF] and painted this. And so it was a big—for the students, it was a big honor and a big discovery to know that a Mexican muralist had worked in Seattle and had left this mural and was sort of part of the tradition that they were working on.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And that was discovered where, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It was discovered at one of the hiring halls. I think it had to do with boating or, I don't know, some sort of maritime industries. And so they lobbied and had it restored

and brought to the University of Washington. And it was installed in one of the [performing arts buildings –TYF].

So this is a time when, again, there were poetry. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano started *Metamorfosis*, *Metamorphosis*, a journal of Mexican-American thought and culture, which published Northwest painters and Northwest poets and Northwest activists. By this time, there was a beginning of uncovering the history. Erasmo Gamboa, began writing the history of Mexican Americans in the Pacific Northwest. So there was like a renaissance of rediscovery of the impact of the Mexican-American community in the state of Washington.

And there was, at this time, the beginning of El Centro de la Raza in Seattle, which a lot of the students participated in. They took over this schoolhouse and converted it into El Centro de la Raza that became, like, the most important civil rights organization in the Pacific Northwest, El Centro de la Raza. And the director, [Roberto Maestas –TYF]. El Centro de la Raza became the center—by this time [... –TYF]. The national part of the Chicano movement is going on, but in Seattle, El Centro de la Raza was much more related to all the Latin American struggles in Cuba and in Chile and in Guatemala. And so El Centro de la Raza became the core anchor for a lot of—

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—social mobilization and activities, cultural, political in Seattle and throughout the state of Washington.

Roberto Maestas—Roberto Maestas was—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Roberto Maestas created the center, a multifaceted center for nutrition and health and education and arts, and so it became a really important center for the mobilization of the Mexican-American community.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I met him in Austin. He moved to Austin later, no?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I don't know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, I think he started his building on—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So Roberto Maestas is another important player of the Chicano movement. And you know, people like Antonia Castañeda continued working with a lot of social [projects –TYF]—at this time, Joseph Sommers and I one Christmas Eve we were now working on a—I had finished my dissertation, we were now working on a book, *Literatura Chicana; Texto Y Contexto. Chicano Literature; Text and Context*. And the texts were all the works of art and the context was the kind of larger [frame of Latin American literature –TYF], because Joseph was always a Pan-Americanist—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It was a book, it was probably one of the first compendiums of Mexican-American literature, but was very much misunderstood because people would say, well, why would you have Neruda in a book that has to do with Mexican Americans, you know? And of course, Neruda, the [reason –TYF] that we picked Neruda was his [play –TYF] on Joaquin Murrieta to show Latin Americans and Mexicans had been a common struggle.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And how a lot of the literature was Chilean literature or Bolivian literature with indigenous literature, and so we'd counterpoint, you know, a Bolivian or, you know, a Peruvian poem with a pre-Columbian poem to show that certain themes and certain relationships worked across cultures and indeed that the Chicano literature was the—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The type.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —texto, but the contexto was this larger part of literature, both high literature by Pablo Neruda and by, you know, the writers of the Mexican Revolution, but also popular literature.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But the *Canto General* and all the great literature of Latin America in some ways talks about themes that cross borders and cross frontiers.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so that we in the Pacific Northwest were related to all of these. We were working on the book. Joseph Sommers by this time was no longer at the University of Washington. He was in California. And one Christmas Eve we were, of course, kind of interested in a lot of the mobilizations on prison reform, on the farm workers' struggle, on health issues and so on. And we got a copy of a newspaper that was sent from Marion Penitentiary. And in it, it had a copy of Raúl Salinas's poem *A Trip Through the Mind Jail*. And we read it Christmas Eve and were just blown away by the poem. And Joseph explained to Antonia and me, we were working on the book together, Antonia Castañeda, Joseph Sommers and me, the meaning of the poem and how he was really moving stylistically. I mean, he used graffiti, you know, the word "con safos" is part of the— graffiti and tattoos as part of the graphic imagery in the poem.

And so it was expanding the notion of literature beyond the word to include graphics and how beautiful the poem was. It was such a moving experience to read it that we wrote him a long letter. And that's how we met Raúl.

And Raúl Salinas was incarcerated, I think Leavenworth at that time.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so we were working on the book. We would go to California to work on the book. But of course, we were still in Seattle. And so that's how we met Raúl Salinas. And later on while we were still in Seattle, Raúl Salinas, we invited him. He had to have a sponsor and Joseph was his sponsor. And we sort of got him out of jail and he came to the Pacific Northwest. And that's where one part of his life was spent. And he became part of the group that worked at El Centro de la Raza with Roberto Maestas, with Antonia Castañeda and particularly with prison reform.

And for Raúl, particularly with AIM, the Native American movement, he was very much a part of the AIM movement and all the struggles of native peoples. So in our own particular way, we were part of the gamut of [social –TYF] struggle of that particular period, AIM, the American Indian movement, the Chicano movement, obviously the black movement, you know, the social struggles of working-class people, whether they be indigenous, black, African or Latinos or Mexican.

And so that's how we came to understand. And so therefore, that's how we came to understand the Chicano movement as this international movement that related to human struggles, whether it was in Palestine or Cuba or all the third-world struggles for liberation, as part of the Chicano movement in the Pacific Northwest.

By this time, I had finished my Ph.D. I somehow got invited to apply, was asked to apply to teach at Stanford or to apply for a position at Stanford in the Spanish department.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Do you remember who got you connected?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Probably Joseph Sommers.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And one of the great literature professors at Stanford, a Chilean, Alegria—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What was the name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Fernando –TYF] Alegria, was a great writer and [an important –TYF] critic, Fernando Alegria, of Pablo Neruda and very politicized, very political. Anyway, I got to Stanford.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What year was that, Tomás, do you remember?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —to give [a job –TYF] talk to the faculty. And it was very interesting because I felt like UT had really prepared me for the kind of faculty person that Stanford would want. I was well-rounded, I knew about opera, I knew about literature, Latin American literature, I spoke three or four languages and I was very rooted in the community.

So at [Stanford –TYF] it was Fernando Alegria, Jean Franco—

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: J-e-a-n Franco, the great Latin American critic and writer was also at Stanford at that time.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: In the same department?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: In the Spanish department.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Both of them, right?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I came to the Spanish department and I remember what my [job –TYF] talk was—I talked about one of the chapters of my dissertation, the one on Alurista. And of course, this is the Spanish department. And so Alurista, of course, is really playing with English and Spanish and mixing English and Spanish, so these whole notions of purity of language and high language and low language and all of these, he blows them out the water by using examples and mixing them all up and creating actually a new vocabulary and a new poetics, including pre-Columbian and post-Columbian as he called it. And so it was kind of an interesting departure from a

very traditional Spanish department that was focused on major writers primarily from Latin America and from Spain.

So that was the other thing was, that I remember very well, one of the traditions at Stanford is that when they bring in a new faculty, the [standing –TYF] faculty has a dinner for you at the faculty club to welcome you into the faculty. And Fernando Alegria, who was the chair of the Spanish department, was the orator. And I very much remember what he said, how in the academy things do change. Because he talked about when he was a young scholar in the American academy that there was no such thing as Latin American literature, it was all peninsular literature, literature from Spain.

And all the people, wherever they came from, had to, in a way, use this as an entryway. So Stanford, of course, had, for a long time, the Espinosa brothers, you know, part of the Espinosas from New Mexico, who were the old, you know, Hispanic—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: How do you spell that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —New-Mexican scholars. I mean, Aurelio Espinosa was the one who worked to show that in New Mexico the literature of New Mexico was a continuation of the traditional Spanish that there was a continuity of the high culture of Spain and New Mexico. And he had been a professor at Stanford.

What I'm trying to say is that Stanford had the kind of elite culture so that even if it was like Aurelio Espinosa who was a New Mexican, what he was teaching was how this was related to Spain because there was very little Latin American literature that they were teaching. [... –TYF]

So Fernando Alegria in his speech talked about how things had changed. When he came, he opened the field or continued to make an aperture into the field of Latin American literature. And so Neruda and Gabriela Mistral and all the great Latin American writers entered the canon, whereas before it had been only [Cervantes and the writers –TYF] of the Golden Age.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Jacinto Benavente, I don't know. He's not a major writer, but he's a playwright. All I'm saying is that all the writers of the Golden Age—well, what he was saying was the field does change and there is an [aperture –TYF].

When I was a young professor, there was no Latin American literature, it was all peninsular Spanish literature. I opened the field and now, several generations later, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto is opening the field, extending the field to Mexican-American literature. And so now at Stanford we have peninsular literature, we have Latin American literature and we have Mexican-American literature and welcome to this fraternity and sorority of scholars who are, you know, united in this great enterprise of a literature that comes from the old world and the new, meeting together. And now in the United States, a new renaissance of mixing the old and the new and the Anglo world and the Mexican world and the Latin American world, like Alurista does in his poetry and the young Chicano writers.

So Alegria was praising Mexican-American, Chicano literature for, in a way, being this hybrid, this amalgam, this new part of American literature, meaning both Anglo-American and Latin American literature. And so it was a very warm, [cordial –TYF] welcome for a young person who was just beginning [his career –TYF].

So of course, soon thereafter I met the other faculty at Stanford, the other Chicano faculty. Arturo Islas was in the English department. Jerry Porras was in the business [school –TYF]. Al Camarillo was in the history department. Renato Rosaldo was in the anthropology department. And on and on. So these were the people that were the Chicano faculty at Stanford, but I was in the Spanish department.

So this is the beginning. By this time, there were Chicano students at Stanford. There was a Centro Chicano, there was a Chicano house, a dormitory—Tony and [Cecilia Burciaga –TYF]. There were Chicanos in the administration of Stanford [also –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Do you remember the names?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well [Fernando de Necochea and –TYF] Cecilia—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Cecilia.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —Cecilia Burciaga, Cecilia Burciaga was assistant to the president. Tony Burciaga, her husband—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —she and Tony were the directors of Casa Zapata, the Mexican-American theme house at Stanford. So it was a very vital community and that's how I then began my teaching career in Mexican-American culture.

And I always [valued the periphery –TYF]—I never saw myself as a center. Young professors that joined me, my cadre were people like Mary Pratt, Rina Benmayor. We started out together as young assistant professors. The senior professors were Alegria and Jean Franco and [scholars –TYF] like that.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So Mary Pratt was what department?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: We were all in the Spanish department.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Spanish, okay. And Rita, también?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Rina [Benmayor –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Rina.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Was in Spanish, too?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Spanish department. These were the [scholars –TYF]—those were my [cohort –TYF]. The other [Chicanos –TYF] were in history, anthropology, [education, and English –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right, yeah, got that.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and in the Spanish department were this group.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Got it.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I sort of established a foothold in [areas that nobody –TYF] wanted to teach [... –TYF]. Well, I was much more interested in genres that were not so popular, like the essay, the essay of ideas, because if I did a course on the essay I could [teach –TYF] an essay on architecture or an essay on opera or an essay on cooking or an essay on gardening. And so I became [an expert on essayists. All writers used –TYF] material from Latin American and Mexican American, but they were in all these different [genres –TYF] rather than [canonical genres –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So the courses that I taught were the essay of ideas, Latin American and Mexican-American theater, poetry, and the regular surveys of Mexican literature and Latin American literature and so on.

But I think my biggest aportamiento was to really break up the genres—because of my training and my background I had always been multifaceted, interested in all these things. My Ph.D. was an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in art, music and literature. I had to declare literature because at that time they had no things like what later became cultural studies, because I was actually one of the early professors of cultural studies.

So that's what I loved, I enjoyed. As you know, the students of Stanford were the elite, crème de la crème. We had small classes, you know, it was very individualized. And it was a glorious, youthful, extraordinary [experience –TYF].

[... –TYF]

[END SD2 TR02.]

[SD3 TR06-TR12 are test tracks. –Ed.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. This is Gilberto Cardenas. I'm with Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. We're at his condo in San Antonio. This is June 23, 2014. And we are now to our first session, focusing on his reflections about his experiences at Stanford as a professor there, as well as in the Bay Area.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, the Stanford years and the California years, I guess we're talking mid 1960s at the height of the civil rights movement and the Chicano Movimiento.

San Francisco was a particularly special place because, as opposed to other Mexican-American cities like San Antonio or Los Angeles or Tucson, the Bay Area was a Latino enclave. It had people from Central America, Latin America and, of course, Mexican Americans. So all the artistic activity, literary and otherwise, was focused on Latin America and a larger Latino context.

So in terms of the arts, the visual arts, San Francisco was very [innovative –TYF], the Bay Area, because it included—the nucleus was San Francisco, but also Berkeley. Remember, this is a time of the Berkeley free speech movement. All the energy that was spent in terms of trying to make America into a new America. And so the artists in the Bay Area, Berkeley, San Jose, San Francisco were all focused on this Latin American context.

In San Francisco, the arts organizations—I'll have to do more research and find the dates—but generally, the organizations, the Latino arts organizations started out with Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes which was an early grouping of Latin American and Chicano artists, Mexican-American artists in the Bay Area [were –TYF] organized in San Francisco to begin a kind of a cultural renaissance.

The Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes had programs in literature and music and the visual arts. So it spawned and it gave the first examples of people working in the fine arts, artists working in the fine arts, a chance to exhibit their work in a gallery space that they had.

Then the next important thing after Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes was the Galería de la Raza, founded by Ralph Maradiaga, Peter Rodriguez, René Yañez, and many other artists in the San Francisco Bay Area. The galería became one of the central places for the development of artists, but it was like most of the other Latino arts organizations, a kind of a multimedia space. It had a gallery. It had a little store. And it had a space for artists, for poets to read their poetry, and for musicians to play. So openings at the galería always had music and food and poetry and sometimes even performance or dance. So it was a multimedia kind of experience that people had.

The galería was also a place where the [artists –TYF] painted murals. They had portable murals that were painted on the outside usually for every exhibition. They would erase a mural and paint a new mural, so that brought in muralists, visual artists, sculptors and so on.

So very important, the galería was also a spot where they [incubated –TYF] a lot of graphic arts. The graphic arts were particularly important in the Bay Area, [especially in –TYF] the Spanish-language newspapers or the newspaper, some in English, some bilingual, [all –TYF] used a lot of artists to design their mastheads and to design their [content –TYF].

And in San Francisco, *El Tecolote* was a community newspaper where a lot of the artists wrote about their work. So they would have critiques, the earliest critics, the writers that were writing about Chicano art, would write in the newspapers, like *El Tecolote*. One of the [significant –TYF] things, *El Tecolote* was also aligned with a lot of the student movement that was going on, particularly at San Francisco State.

One important catalyst was Los Siete de la Raza, an important group of Latino activists in the Bay Area that were accused of fomenting [social activism –TYF] in the Bay Area. And so their cause was taken up by a lot of artists. Yolanda [Lopez –TYF] was René Yañez's [partner –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Lopez?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yolanda Lopez—Yolanda Lopez was really key and developed a lot of the graphics for *El Tecolote* newspaper, and especially Los Siete de la Raza, they would make broadsides and special little publications talking about social issues that artists would illustrate.

Aside from *El Tecolote* newspaper, *Tin-Tan* magazine was very important. *Tin-Tan* magazine had a lot of the covers designed by artists like Rupert Garcia. Alejandro Murguía was a poet who worked with Rupert at *Tin-Tan*. And the idea was that—the whole idea was that art should be accessible to the ordinary person so that the covers, the covers of *Tin-Tan* could be saved and pinned up on your wall as a poster. So a lot of the early lithographs and offset posters were the covers of magazines like *Tin-Tan*.

And then on the inside, they also had visual art that you could take out and put up on your wall. So many of the early graphic artists in the Bay Area used that [media. ... Many –TYF] artists through their work actually painted or used the images of important Mexican artists. So Rupert Garcia did a whole series of Frida Kahlo, Posada, Orozco, and Rivera, so that people could actually see what these artists looked like. Because a lot of times you hear a name and you wonder, well, what did they look like? And you got to see Rivera with his, you know, his corpulent body, a big, fat Rivera, and Orozco with his big, thick glasses that—and Frida Kahlo with her particular mexicana style of

dressing.

So you saw images and you began—you saw what Posada looked like, not only what he created, like the *Calaveras*, Posada's *Calaveras*, but also portraits of the artists. So it was a very interesting way in which the graphic art was both graphic and visual, that is visual because [they were –TYF] portraits of the artist as well as examples of their artwork. So the galería was—the whole Bay Area was very significant in terms of graphic art.

After the galería, also in the mission, there was La Raza Graphic Center which specialized in graphic art. Juan Fuentes was a very important artist for the group. Xavier Viramontes was another [major –TYF] artist that worked at La Raza Graphic Center.

And it was La Raza Graphic Center that made hundreds of reproductions of the artwork, the graphic art, that was being produced in the Bay Area. And the content of the graphic art were all the third-world struggles, because remember this is a period of the third world, the idea of the third world. And so all the struggles of third-world peoples, whether in Africa or Latin America or Asia, became part of the imagery that was drawn in the posters.

One absolutely key artist was Malaquias Montoya, because Malaquias Montoya brought forth all the third-world struggles and related them to the struggles of the Chicano movement in the Bay Area. So graphic art and La Raza Graphic Center was another key center for the development of Chicano art in the Bay Area.

Muralism was, as usual, one of the key items for development of Chicano art. In the Bay Area it was particularly noted because it had one of the earliest women's mural groups, Mujeres Muralistas. Mujeres Muralistas included people like Ester Hernandez and many, many other women artists in the Bay Area, Yolanda Lopez.

The aim of the Mujeres Muralistas, not only was it important to see women painting murals up on the scaffold, but also to see images of women on the walls themselves. So the Mujeres Muralistas also worked with imagery from third-world sources, but especially the nurturing and the heroines, the she-heroes of Latin America. So the Mujeres Muralistas brought forth a gendered imagery of the struggles of Latin American women, both politically, but also in terms of the way that women [labored –TYF] at the home in terms of cooking and in terms of [sewing –TYF] and in terms of keeping alive the traditions, the cultural traditions of Latina women. So the Mujeres Muralistas were a very [crucial –TYF] part of the Chicano mural movement in the Bay Area.

Aside from the Mujeres Muralistas and the Galería de la Raza and the Graphic Center, La Raza Graphic Center, the next important grouping in the Bay Area were the Mexican—was the Mission Cultural Center. The Mission Cultural Center also united artists, visual artists, and they were particularly important in terms of a teatro. They had a very [active –TYF] teatro group.

So the teatros, music, they also had tardeadas with music, poetry. And they had an [impressive –TYF] gallery space. So those were the outlets for visual art in the Bay Area.

The Bay Area was also rich because it established one of the first museums, the first Chicano museums, which was the Mexican Museum founded by Peter Rodriguez. This museum, the Mexican Museum, was located in different areas in San Francisco. And one of the important things was that it developed the kind of—the matrix for a lot of the later Latino museums that came up.

P. Rodriguez started—the collection of the Mexican Museum had four areas: pre-Columbian,

colonial, modern, and contemporary. So the idea was that, at this point in the 1960s, the Chicano artists were making contemporary art, also had a historical base that included modern Mexican art, colonial-Mexican art, and the pre-Columbian art.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, can you talk a little bit about your connection to that, the museums?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes. I was part of the board. At one time I was part of the board of the Mexican Museum and I worked with Peter Rodriguez particularly in trying to augment their collection. Early on, it was like all the Bay Area. The point that I'm stressing here is that the Bay Area, whether it's Casa Hispana de Bellas Artes or La Raza Graphic Center or the *Tecolote* newspaper, all had a Latin American, third-world orientation, so that the Mexican Museum, even though it was called Mexican Museum, was especially focused on Mexican-American and Mexican art, it also showed Central American and other artists.

So I worked with Peter Rodriguez and was—I was never a curator or anything like that, but I worked just in helping out and wrote some of the catalogs and wall texts for some of the exhibitions.

At this time, all of us were everywhere doing everything. So the museum didn't have Chicano curators except for Peter or writers or people like me and other scholars, Amalia Mesa-Bains, [and other –TYF] artists themselves, who would write about their own work. It was the idea that nobody should speak for us. It was the idea of first voice, that we had the capacity to write about our own art, explore the symbols, talk about the meaning in our own way.

This idea of first voice was also an important [aspect –TYF] of the museums at that [time –TYF]. The idea that [for –TYF] museums, was that it was sort of like a collaborative. Having one curator was not looked upon in a positive light at that point because the idea was that [of collaboration –TYF]. Curators worked with members of the community because there were also community advisers and community folk who had [folk –TYF] knowledge—remember at this time, there were no Chicano studies courses or very few Latin American studies courses. So the real knowledge base of what this art was all about was in the people themselves. So the curators worked with community folks to learn about the meaning and the deep meaning of the art works and the artifacts that they were handling.

One [significant –TYF], very key person in the Bay Area was Yolanda Garfias-Woo. Yolanda Garfias-Woo worked in the San Francisco Independent School District with teachers in Mexican cultural education, sort of teaching the children the culture of Mexico. She herself was an artist and an altarista, a woman who made altars. She was very key because she had a wonderful collection of Mexican textiles, had studied Mexican art, particularly women's art and textiles and altar-making. And she became the mentor for a lot of teachers, Mexican-American artists, particularly Amalia Mesa-Bains. So Amalia Mesa-Bains's later work in her installation works based on altars came directly from working with Yolanda Garfias-Woo.

But she was only one of many women and men in the Bay Area [knowledgeable –TYF] about Mexican traditions, for example the tradition of the Day of the Dead. Yolanda Garfias-Woo was key in introducing the tradition of Day of the Dead that artists then in the Bay Area took over, learned about and became one of the really significant re-thinking of Mexican art with a Chicano twist in the Bay Area.

So Yolanda Garfias-Woo is an example of the kind of knowledge base that was created from the community. So artists and curators, like Peter in the Mexican Museum, Peter Rodriguez himself was

one of these people that was knowledgeable, very knowledgeable about Mexican art, Mexican traditions. So it was people like them—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where is Peter from?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Peter was from the—he's from California.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: From Fresno and that area.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And Peter was very important in the development of the artists in that area, like La Brocha del Valle and other [groups –TYF]. And he came to San Francisco, but had been in Mexico and was very [key –TYF] in bringing in the knowledge of modern Mexican art and pre-Columbian art. He was a great collector of Mexican art and collected colonial art and pre-Columbian art and knew a lot of the artists in Mexico, particularly knew personally people like [Rufino –TYF] Tamayo and other important artists in Mexico. He knew them personally, so through them he could bring work from Mexico through [his –TYF] connections in Mexico.

So the Mexican Museum, Peter Rodriguez—what I'm stressing is that Mexico, Latin America, and the vernacular experiences of the community were very important in this development of the Chicano art museums.

The other equally important space for artists was the Galería de la Raza. The Galería de la Raza was a community center that didn't have a collection, but was a space, an alternative space for showing of Latino art. And again, the Galería de la Raza, founded by Ralph Maradiaga and René Yañez and Peter Rodriguez also had a third-world focus. So even though it was centered and focused on Mexican-American and Chicano art of the Bay Area, a lot of its exhibitions were also focused on third-world struggles. So whether it was Nicaragua or Cuba or Africa, exhibitions, for example, of Cuban posters or exhibitions of photographs of the struggles in Nicaragua or exhibitions of material from other third-world struggles in Africa, it was at the Galería de la Raza that the Chicano [community –TYF], Latino grouping came face-to-face with third world. And it was a key place where [graphic artists –TYF] like Malaquias Montoya, who himself developed a third-world orientation, and his imagery tried to connect struggles, whether it was apartheid and struggles in Africa or not only the struggles, but also the imagery, just like Rupert García had brought the images of Diego Rivera and Orozco, so did Malaquias Montoya bring the images of Mandela and other [heroes –TYF] of the third world into actual portraits so that [viewers –TYF] began understanding the people connection to the artwork being produced.

So the Galería de la Raza also was [instrumental –TYF] because of its curator René Yañez. René Yañez had a particular proclivity, a particular focus on cutting-edge art and experimental art so that, for example, while [communities –TYF] were doing traditional Mexican altars for Day of the Dead, he would do a modernist altar or an altar that had to do with Russian constructivism or other ideas, so that the community was learning about the [global –TYF] art movements in a space that was theirs, done by community folks, like René Yañez, who was also very interested in all the [art forms –TYF], the artwork that was [happening –TYF] with the mainline American art at the moment so—things like performance and, you know, like, more avant-garde. The avant-garde [arts –TYF] that were going on in New York or Los Angeles came through the galería, through people like René Yañez. So he was very key in opening up.

So I guess what I'm saying basically is that although all these Chicano art organizations and Chicano art, it was not a very—it was not limited to the Chicano art, but included the mainline art movements that were happening in New York, the world movements that were happening in the third world and the specific ways in which the Latino artists were reinterpreting the styles, these traditions, these ways of working, these ways of being through their own particular lens and their own particular sensibilities in the Bay Area.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And would you agree, Tomás, that the San Francisco Bay Area was probably unique in that way? I mean, other places did it, but it was probably most intense there?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes. I agree here. This was very intense. The intensity of this third-world orientation was particularly noted in San Francisco.

Aside from the northern part of the Bay Area, Berkeley was also key. And it was key because it was there that Octavio Romano founded *El Grito*, one of the really key early kind of multimedia magazines, literary journal that included artistic portfolios in every issue. So again, artists, particularly graphic artists, like Carmen Lomas Garza, Rupert García, Malaquias Montoya, a lot of people showed their graphic art through the portfolios that were published in *El Grito*.

But the literary part of *El Grito* was also very, very important. It established Premio Quinto Sol, which was the first—one of the first Chicano literary prizes for poetry [and –TYF] theater. And so some of the early writers of the Chicano movement came through and became known through publication in *El Grito*. And they reprinted offsets of their poetry so that poets could have copies. And so that's how distribution of poetry came throughout the country because *El Grito* sent out the portfolios and [distributed –TYF] the artists and the poets all over.

They also sponsored exhibitions. One key exhibition—I want to talk about two or three key exhibitions of this period because they also would give a flavor of the third world and how Chicano art was being developed.

One of the really key exhibitions was called *Nuevos Símbolos para la Nueva Raza, New Symbols for the New Race*. That happened in Berkeley. [Artists –TYF] took an old, abandoned house and they converted it into a space. And artists brought their work. There were also poets that came to read, musicians that came to play. So in many ways, it established this idea of art in a place that was comfortable for the community. They didn't have to go to an ornate museum with marbled floors, you know. It was in a house right down the block.

And so that night was a fiesta and people would come and bring food and bring their lawn chairs and sit around, and then the poets would read their poetry, and then somebody would come up and recite or an artist would talk about their work. This was called *Nuevos Símbolos para la Nueva Raza* because it was an idea and I think a key idea of the Chicano art movement that we needed new symbols for our new race, a new group of people.

The nueva raza was this amalgamation of people from all over Latin America, because raza doesn't mean one particular group, it means the community. And the idea was that even though we were Nicaragüenses or Colombianos or Centro Americanos or Mexicanos, that we all shared elements of a common culture. And this common culture was la raza and the common culture was a nueva raza, a new group of people.

Remember, one of the philosophical ideas of the moment was this idea of decolonization, the notion of many Latino groups in the U.S. and in the third world being colonies, internal colonies in the

U.S., you know, that we had to liberate ourselves and decolonize ourselves, decolonize our mind. Remember, this is a time of Fanon and his notions of decolonization.

In Spanish we had a word "concientización," that we would be concientizado, we would have consciousness, we would have a new consciousness, a new consciousness that we were a new group of people that were looking at our realities from a new perspective. And of course, this opened up the—and so this exhibition was called *Nuevos Simbolos*. We needed new symbols, new symbols that would show what this new group of people were struggling in the Chicano movement and in the third-world struggles in the United States.

One perfect example was Yolanda Lopez, Yolanda Lopez who took the symbol of the Virgen de Guadalupe, one of the key symbols—one of the key symbols—that amalgamated all the communities. And if you see—remember her very famous series of paintings of the Virgen in which she makes a virgen modern, she makes her—she's wearing like a modern dress or she shows how

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GILBERTO CARDENAS: Seamstress.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, she shows us seamstresses that are like her mother or her grandmother making the dress for the virgen. And there is a very famous [image –TYF] of Yolanda who is dressed in shorts, running shorts, in the colors of the Virgen, and she's coming out. She's, like, almost, like, she herself, that the virgen, the idea of the nurturing mother, which is la Virgen de Guadalupe. She was not only the Holy Mother of the Christian, religious, but also our own mothers and our own grandmothers.

And so this whole idea of new symbols, like, to take the old—sometimes it wasn't like, to create new symbols, but to take old symbols and give them new meaning. This is what she did with the Virgen de Guadalupe. And this is what a lot of Latino artists did with, for example, Posada, las calaveras de Posada. It was calaveras, but all of a sudden it was a low-rider calavera. And so the new meaning was, the new symbol was the calavera and the low-rider. And that's why Chicano art became sort of very a new amalgamation of the cultural—

And remember, in the Bay Area if you have the culture of more than 20 Latin American countries, imagine the wealth of imagery that artists could draw from. If you're from Venezuela, the, you know, the symbols, the meaning of the fruit, or if you're from Central America and you could take a banana, for example, the so-called "banana republics" and make a—turn it into something new, you know, a new symbol that had to do with struggle.

The key, I would say, the key ideology could be summed up in two words of that period, and the key, the words that I'm looking for was "resistance" and "affirmation." The resistance and affirmation were the key sort of ideological tools that nurtured a lot of the artwork of the period. Resistance, of course, meaning that this contemporary movement of the '60s in the galería, in the Mexican Museum, in the Mission Cultural Center, the art was resisting, you know, the imposed idea of what we were supposed to be and the imposed idea that there was [only one culture in the United States –TYF].

We were a mixed culture, we were multiple, we were both American, 100 percent American, but also Mexican or Central American. And putting these two things together made for very, sort of hallucinogenic, new images. And so this resistance and affirmation and the affirmation part was affirming that we were here to stay and that we were a part of the American experience and that we were using all our cultural knowledge and our cultural expertise in order to create and to make a

new America.

And so this was a notion of, I think, that spawned that was at the base of a lot of this new art that was symbolized in this exhibition, *Nuevos Simbolos para la Nueva Raza*.

Other examples of what I'm talking about of bringing in and changing were, for example, the Galería de la Raza did a major, major exhibition on Frida Kahlo.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: One of the first ones, no?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: One of the first exhibitions in the U.S. that brought a whole gendered perspective, people like Carmen Lomas Garza, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Yolanda Lopez and many other of the artists that worked at the Galería de la Raza, together with René Yañez, who was a very important impuler of [Chicano/ –TYF] Mexican art.

Remember, Frida Kahlo represented, again, an iconoclast, an iconoclast herself. She herself was a woman in Mexico that opened up a new space for women, using traditional Mexican iconography, but putting it in a new and a new, very personal way. And so Frida Kahlo became one of the key symbols for many of the Chicana artists.

And although Hayden Herrera wrote her book on Frida Kahlo, it was people like the women in the Bay Area that actually first sort of brought Frida Kahlo to the attention of the people in the Bay Area and the United States. One key woman in doing this was Dorinda Moreno. Dorinda Moreno was an activist in the Bay Area and she worked for a newspaper. She was also a graphic artist and a performance artist.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where is she from, do you know?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I don't know where she—well, she worked in the Bay Area.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Dorinda Moreno had a newspaper called, I think, *Razón Mestiza*. And the logo or the keymast for the newspaper was an image of Frida Kahlo, probably one of the first introductions of Frida Kahlo as an image into the lexicon of iconography, of Chicano iconography. She also did performances focused on Frida Kahlo.

So Frida Kahlo entered the Chicano iconography through people like Dorinda Moreno and the [artists –TYF] at the Galería de la Raza. This exhibition of Frida Kahlo was based on many of the altars that [artists did –TYF] for Frida Kahlo at the Galería de la Raza.

Also, the Bay Area [had –TYF] many non-Latino artists that had worked in Mexico with Rivera. And Frida was key because Lucienne Bloch and other people from the Bay Area who had worked with Mexican artists were still living, they were 80 and 90 years old. Some who had been assistants to Diego Rivera or Frida Kahlo were still living in the Bay Area.

So the transmission of the Mexican cultural lexicon and iconography came through the people themselves who had worked with Rivera or had worked with Frida Kahlo and through the younger group of artists in the Bay Area.

The preparation for the Frida exhibition was very intense. People like Amalia Mesa-Bains and [Maria Piñedo, among others –TYF]. They did a slide show. They did research on Frida. Rupert Garcia did a

bibliography on Frida—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Really? Oh.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —that became one of the really important sources for materials about Frida Kahlo in the United States. He traced all the books [and articles –TYF] at that time, before Hayden Herrera had written her book on Frida, or about the same time. Rupert Garcia's bibliography became kind of a standard work for people learning about Frida.

And also, this exhibition at the Galería de la Raza, which I would like to talk to or find out more about and talk more about at some point when I take my notes out—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, was there good coverage in the newspapers for that when it happened?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes. Well, no, the—well, there was good coverage in the local press.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And it also, the galería, it also put Frida on the map in terms of the Chicano press. Remember that the *Tecolote* and the Chicano press was also nationwide because the Latino movement, the Chicano movement was a nationwide movement. So newspapers in San Antonio, like *Caracol*, or other papers in Los Angeles also would carry their own stories that were done.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: They shared stories and they shared [graphics –TYF], so that's how the imagery and Frida sort of, like, circulated throughout the Southwest.

This key Frida Kahlo exhibition was significant because the altars, each of the artisans made an altar dedicated to Frida, used—this, again, is what I mean. They took the Mexican base of the altars and they re-Mexicanized them or Latinoized them in terms of their own particular take. So Carmen Lomas Garza did a mural—sorry, an altar in which she used a lot of south Tejas imagery and Don Pedro Jaramillo, [a curandero from –TYF] south Texas, he was part of her altar, but it also had images of Frida on it. And so Amalia Mesa-Bains did one, René Yañez did another one.

So this homage to Frida, homenaje Frida Kahlo, had been prepared because Amalia Mesa-Bains and [Maria Piñedo –TYF], one of the workers at the Galería de la Raza, had gone throughout the Bay Area to high schools and shown this [slide show –TYF]—at that time, there wasn't, there was no high technology. It was a slide show, that show, and had prepared the community. They had at the Galería de la Raza, they had meetings where they had pan dulce and coffee and people would talk about Frida Kahlo and show the slides as they were preparing the exhibition.

So it's an example of how the community—a community-based cultural center with scholars, some of the scholars from Berkeley and from San Francisco State, and community cultural keepers, like Yolanda Garfias-Woo and Peter Rodriguez, all work together to create this sort of mammoth exhibition on Frida Kahlo.

When it opened, it was a scandalous success. It was hundreds and hundreds, almost thousands of people came to the opening. And not only from throughout San Francisco and throughout California and throughout the country actually, people flew in for the exhibition. So it put the Galería on the

map and it showed how the Latino-Chicano community was using and creating this new art of the people and making new symbols for a very important civil rights [movement –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And then also the connections to Mexico, no? The Mexican art pieces.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right, it opened also the, obviously, the connection with Mexico, like I said, because some of the people who had worked with Rivera and other artists from Mexico came and actually, in many ways [it was a revelation –TYF] because Mexico was so international that it had forgotten a lot of the traditions. [Mexicans –TYF] began noticing Chicano art as revitalizing Mexican art.

So the Chicano art movement was not only important because it created a new form of American [culture –TYF], meaning America not in the sense of the United States, but in the real sense of America as a continent, that it united all, the United States, Central and Latin America, and the struggles of the third world. And so Chicano art became this amalgam, just like the Chicano community was made up of mestizos that put together elements from all their more than 20 Latino cultures.

So the Galería de la Raza was one of the key places and San Francisco was one of the key [areas –TYF] where creations of this new way of decolonial [thinking of –TYF] resistance and affirmation.

I'd like to mention a couple of things also, because although each of the [Latino –TYF] groups had their particular cultures, you know, we had as many taquerias in the mission as we had pupuserias. So people, they ate the food, they listened to the music of Latin American countries, so it was an amalgamation. The Mission [District –TYF] was an amalgamation of Latin America. And in many ways, it was a precursor to the now 21st-century idea of Latino art, because the Mexican-American art movement of the mission was really a larger Latino complex or Latino amalgamation.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So there's some other organizations there in the Bay Area, Mission Cultural Center.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, we talked—I talked a little bit about the Mission Cultural Center, the—la galería.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: But my question, Tomás, on that is just, real briefly, not to elaborate—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Sure.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —but did you have particular role there to do lectures or—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, my role in all of these was, yeah, I would give gallery talks and I would talk about—as a scholar, I was teaching at Stanford. And as a scholar of Latin American culture, I got invited at the galería, I was sort of like a consultant, unpaid, you know, of course.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Sure.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: None of us were paid. I was a consultant working with the curators and working with, in terms of my knowledge, particularly of Latin American art and literature. And so I, like I said, I would help write the catalogs, wrote a catalog for Carmen Lomas Garza, wrote—tried to help cross the bridge, the connection between U.S. Latinos and Latin America and this whole idea of a common culture.

This was particularly noted, I think, in another—since I was teaching at Stanford—and this is the beginning of the ethnic studies in American universities. And remember, this is a period of very significant struggles in Latin America when not only in Mexico, we've already talked about the student movement in Mexico and in Paris and so on, but also, you know, really revolutionary movements like the movement in Chile, you know, the Allende and the Pinochet years.

So in the Bay Area, I was at Stanford. So the Latin America—I was teaching, you know, Latin American and Chicano—Stanford was not, as a whole, but individuals—like one important person for all of this artistic cultural development in the Bay Area was Fernando Alegría. Professor Fernando Alegría was one of the great Latin Americanists. He was a professor of Latin American, particularly Chilean literature, at Stanford. And he was very key because he was one of the people, the Latin American scholars and critics that opened and paved the way for Chicano literature.

When I became a faculty member at Stanford, one of the traditions is that they have a dinner in which the chair of your department, in this case of the Latin American literature department, speaks. And it was Don Fernando Alegría. And he spoke very movingly about how when he came to the United States as a scholar and as a young assistant professor he opened, at that point, the only Hispanic literature that was taught was the literature from Spain and that was the literature that all of us were trained in. I was trained in the literature of Spain, the Spanish Golden Age, which was a European tradition. You know, it was part of the great tradition of Europe, the Golden Age of Spain and the golden literature of Spain and Goya and [Velázquez –TYF] all the visual artists of the Golden Age in Spain.

And so he talked about how when he came to the United States he opened the—was one of—he and many other younger scholars opened the road for Latin American literature. And here I was, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, I was now expanding the field into Chicano literature or the literature written by Latinos in the United States. So he talked about how, in all the disciplines, how they do grow and they do change. And that was a very awesome thing to hear for me as a young scholar of Chicano literature, to hear that I was part of this tradition that included Spain, Latin America, and I was now, like Don Fernando Alegría at one time had been, that there was a continuity.

And this notion of continuity was very important because individual artists, what we've been talking about, there was the Chicano art or the Latino art in the Bay Area continued the traditions from all the [mother –TYF] cultures, from all the 20 cultures in Latin America. So it was a very wonderful speech that he gave to usher me in and bring me into the Latin American studies and into Latino-Chicano literature at Stanford University.

Now, Don Fernando Alegría was not only a [scholar –TYF]—he was also a model, because he was not only a wonderful, illustrious professor of literature, but he was also an activist. He was a very politicized and political activist in the Bay Area. And through him, a lot of the traditions from Latin American political art, and particularly music and art, came through. He helped found La Peña in Berkeley, for example.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Who? Say the name again.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Fernando Alegría.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Alegría, okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Fernando Alegría was one of the founders of—he brought and helped put together people that founded La Peña and would lecture about the struggles that were

going on, particularly with Chile and in the Allende years.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And through Alegría, Don Fernando Alegría, he would also bring in all the music. He was—he knew Victor Jara, he knew all the people of the nueva canción, the nueva trova in Cuba, the nueva canción in Latin America, and would bring groups, Inti-Illimani and other groups, to play in Berkeley and in the Bay Area.

And so the whole movement of music, art, and literature, he knew all the great Latin-Americans, you know, poets, Neruda and Borges and García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes, and so he brought in all the Latin American, not only the literature that we all taught, learned from him and taught in, you know, all through the books, and we were teaching all this Latin American literature and Mexican literature and Chicano literature, I was doing Chicano literature, but importantly doing it with this larger—within the context of the struggles, the battles for freedom in Latin America.

So a lot of the music of Latin America, the music of nueva canción and nueva trova, and theater, Boal and his book *Teatro del Oprimido*, the *Theater of the Oppressed*, was very, very important to all the teatro groups in the United States. Because we learned, for example, there was one key play that almost every Chicano theater group did. It was a play called *El Hombre Que Se Convertió en Perro*, and it was about a man, an ordinary man, a worker who becomes a slave to the machine, the economic and cultural machine that was becoming the norm, you know, and he becomes dehumanized to the fact that he becomes almost like a dog. And of course, it's very funny because, you know, you get to wear a mask and behave like a dog. But he realized that he was becoming dehumanized. And the message, of course, was [that –TYF] this industrial complex that the United States represented primarily in Latin America was this dehumanizing machine that was making us all into animalistic we were forgetting, we were forgetting the joy of listening to poetry or singing.

And so the play is a very important part, *El Hombre Que Se Convertió en Perro*, to show how human nature is animalistic and it's only through the art and through poetry and through singing and through the theater that you become human. So it had a very important message.

And so a lot of Chicano theater groups began putting on this play and actually Chicanoizing and adding, you know. And you can see a very clear relationship, for example, between this play and Luis Valdez's play [*Las Dos Caras del Patrón* –TYF] where the guy wears a mask, like a pig mask, and he takes it off and he looks at it as his master and he says, patron, I look just like you! Meaning we're just as human as you are, so why are we playing this role of being the beasts of burden? We're just like you, we like poetry, we like literature.

So this message, I think, was very key and it was brought from Latin American music and art. And so Fernando Alegría and the Bay Area and the struggles, particularly of Chile at this point. So what I'm suggesting again, time and time again, that the Chicano civil rights movement had been a part through actually the visualization, the artists visualized for the community, you know, the people, the places and the symbols of all these struggles, all put together in their different ways, according to what kind of artwork they made.

So this is how all of this—and that's why, in many, many ways, I felt that Chicano art was not really understood because either people wanted you to be very specific and only deal with one particular set of iconography, like the sleeping giant, you know, or the sleeping [Mexican with a sombrero –TYF] underneath a cactus, which was the mainline vision of what Mexicans were like, you know, instead of this rich tradition of avant-garde art.

So Chicano and Latino artists in the U.S. got all this, you know, whether it was vanguard, because the new world itself which America represented to Europe and the relation between the Old World, Europe and the New World, all of the entanglements of that through the artists—and that's why it wasn't understood. Because you didn't paint or they wanted you to paint a Mexican señorita or a guy with a burro or whatever, so all of a sudden, Chicanos were doing like, people like the RCAF were doing performative art and people didn't get it, you know. They didn't understand it.

They wanted to keep you in your place. And we wanted to say no, we know the European tradition, but we've gotten it—it's not—modernity is not just, you know, what comes from Paris and London. It's also what comes from Buenos Aires and from Lima and from Mexico City. And so the modernity that a lot of Chicano artists used, the visualization of modernity in their contemporary art was the alternative modernities of Buenos Aires or Lima or Mexico City.

And all the movements that happened there, in Lima and Mexico City, also coming, abutting the movements that came, surrealism. Remember, in literature they're all tied together. In literature, we had this notion of, you know, magical realism. And the idea was the reality was not only what you saw but also an interior, imagined reality. So that was different from European surrealism, which was only you have to go beyond reality into some sort of [interiority –TYF]—and picture that as the reality.

And so Latino artists, some of them that were—it was never understood. A lot of people, like, you'd take Carmen Lomas Garza and she would make a realistic picture, supposedly, of what was happening in south Tejas, you know, very rooted, a tamal, people making tamales, you know. But all of a sudden in her work, there was a little symbol or a little something that showed you that this was imagined, she was imagining this kind of thing. So she was doing kind of a magical realism. It was an imagined reality. And so it was what all artists do. It was an internal vision of an outward society. And sometimes artists picture the external society and sometimes artists picture the internal vision of that society.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And some of her work is very realistic, though.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, it experiences—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: It's very realistic—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —you know, because her father, you know, the field in the backyard or, again, the tamalada, her mother teaching them how to do or—I'm sorry, the cascarones.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. Or, for example, she has one called *Los Abuelitos Picking Cactus*, you know, cutting cactus.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, see, she pictures the image of grandfather and grandmother going out picking cactus, because in south Tejas and throughout the Southwest and Mexico, people ate cactus, you know, as a salad but the cactus has a very symbolic meaning in Mexico. And the tunas, you know, the red tunas, the fruit of the cactus, you know, is very symbolic in pre-Columbian mythology, you know. And so through a realistic portrayal of cutting cactus that you eat in a salad, she was also showing what the cactus meant. If you knew the symbology, you knew that it tied you—that this was a food that was a pre-Columbian food that had a lot of [myths –TYF]

because the tuna of the cactus represents the heart. And what's why she has her paintings called *Pedacito De Mi Corazon*, you know, *Piece of My Heart*, because the heart was the tuna and the tuna, you know, was the [human –TYF] sacrifice.

So when the Aztecs sacrificed, you know, it had all that sacrificial notion of sacrifice of the heart, but it was this tuna. And so what I'm just saying is, like, in all mythology and in all symbology, people who knew what they meant, you know, like she from experience, you know, she pictured this. But embedded in there—and that's why we talked—that's why in Latin America they talk about magical realism because it was realistic, but it was magical because if you unlocked the key, if a community person tells you let me tell you what this cactus means in Mexico, and then she would start telling you and you understood what this symbol meant, you know, and all the traditions.

And that's why people didn't understand it because they thought what they were seeing was in her work, you know, a picture of a grandmother and grandfather picking, you know, the cactus. But what she's also showing is that that represents a whole cosmology, a whole ideology of pre-Columbian. And if people would explain or the critic would then have to explain all that, just like a North American critic, would have to explain a flower in a vase in a European painting meant there was a person dying or it was a symbol, a memento mori, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So we put together this whole thing. It's amazing how Chicano art is rich, so rich. And that's, I think, one of the key ways in which a lot of people haven't understood it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So could I ask you about—go to Stanford now. You're there at Stanford.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You're a professor.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you talk a little bit about the classes you taught and your students there and some of the other things that were happening there—Burciaga and su esposa—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Cecilia Burciaga.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Cecilia. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, Stanford was, like many other places, you know, one of the first elite universities that had Chicano faculty. This is the beginning of ethnic studies. There were some very key faculty members that were, I would say, significant—like in many other universities, you know, bringers of the consciousness in different fields. We had Renato Rosaldo, who was one of the great sociologists.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Anthropology.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Anthropologist—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —at Stanford. We had the historian who wrote about the barrio in

Los Angeles—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Alberto Camarillo.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —Alberto Camarillo. We had the great literary writer Arturo Islas. Those were some of the [professors –TYF] that were there when I was there. It was the first generation of Chicano scholars. [For example –TYF], Jerry Porras in the business school.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Arturo Pacheco –TYF]—professor in the educational department. And I was in the literature department. And so Stanford—and of course, we had all the great Latin American professors in anthropology, in Latin American studies. So it was a cadre of [stellar –TYF] professors like in many other places. The students were—the Chicano students were very, very active. The key catalysts were, as you mentioned, Burciaga, José Antonio Burciaga, who was a writer and a poet and a muralist and his wife, Cecilia Preciado Burciaga, who was one of the key high-placed administrators in the administration. And they came—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What was her background? Did she have an academic background or did she just come into the administration?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: She had an administrative background. They both came from Washington. They had both worked in Washington—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Really?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —José Antonio. They're from El Paso. And I can't remember what administration, they went to Washington and worked in the federal government. So they had government experience in D.C.—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: In D.C., okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —before coming to Stanford. And so they were very attuned to the whole national political, you know—they had worked inside had been on White House commissions and things like that. So they brought all that knowledge to Stanford—at that time, a lot of the different students—there were different houses for students that wanted to live together with other students that shared a particular religious or cultural or literary or—you know, for example, there was a Jewish house and there was a Chicano house. And so the Chicano house had as its masters—Stanford was based sort of like on the Eastern schools where they had a headmaster for a much smaller college. And you know, rather than the big university, it was a big university, but it had different colleges. And you lived together with people that were, more or less, in an area or in a field or in a culture, in this case like the Chicano [Theme house where –TYF] José Antonio Burciaga was the headmaster and Cecilia was the headmistress.

And this is where many of the people that were interested in Chicano studies, not only Chicano students, but other students who were interested in Latin American studies lived together at Stanford.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so this is the height of the Chicano movement. José Antonio Burciaga taught in the community in Palo Alto where Stanford is located. And they painted a mural,

one of the really important murals of the Chicano movement, inside Casa Zapata. It was very controversial. The imagery of the mural had a lot of—it was like a last supper and it was a last supper with many of the [Movimiento –TYF] heroes. Instead of the Biblical Last Supper, it had many of the heroes of the struggles in Latin America and the Chicano movement. So it had César Chávez, it had Che, it had a lot of [historical –TYF] people, from Sandino and so on, sort of having a last supper.

And you know, muralism is so intense and it's very—it's right in your face, you can't escape it. The image is very, very big. So a lot of the non-Chicano students were kind of offended. It was in the dining hall. And so, they were offended that this mural was in your face. They couldn't escape because that's the—because that's really what the mural is. You can't escape the message that it's giving. And the message that it's giving was a message of struggle and a third-world struggle. And the people that were not so [politically –TYF] inclined, you know, just didn't like it.

So nevertheless, José Antonio Burciaga persisted in having it and teaching the students through lectures and through seminars and through community [meetings –TYF] the meaning of the Chicano movement that was going on right at their doorstep, particularly in places like San Jose State and San Jose, which was very, very close.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So the Chicano house dorm was where a lot of the Chicano students lived and other non-Chicanos as well. And Cecilia Burciaga was also there. They were very key.

The Chicano students at Stanford that I knew, that I taught, I thought were very interesting because, in many cases, many of the Chicano students that came to Stanford were not, you know, working class. Their parents were professors or doctors or lawyers. There were some—they made a strong recruitment effort to bring in also working class, you know, farm worker kids who were from farm working families and urban poverty families. But many of the students were middle class.

This was me, coming as a professor at Stanford, but coming from the working class, I noticed several kinds of things. It was interesting, if you're interested in the dynamics. For example, many of the students spoke Spanish and they were very proficient in Spanish. So you know, they took Latin American studies classes or Chicano studies classes because Chicano literature was written both in Spanish and English and bilingually, and they had no problem, you know, switching in literature from English to Spanish.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But in many other places, particularly—they had a folklorico group, a dance group.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Do you remember what it called, did they have a name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Huh?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did they have a name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, I think it was just called the Stanford folklorico group.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And they had a mariachi group and a music group. So they were very Mexicanized and they were—and then all of a sudden I realized—they had a MEChA, you know, the Chicano student movement organization.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But when we went to conferences and I and other [faculty –TYF], like Camarillo and other faculty members, would join them at the statewide meetings of MEChA and we went to a state school, let's say Fresno State, we noticed immediately the students at Fresno State, which were primarily agricultural, working class, were, in many times, much more English dominant than the Stanford students which were much more fluid in Spanish. And then you began understanding why, because a lot of the Stanford students had had a maid from Central America or from Mexico, that taught them the language, that made the tortillas because both of their parents, who were professionals, were working in order to maintain their lifestyle. So they grew up with this nanny who spoke Spanish and who taught them all about [their heritage –TYF]. So they were Mexican—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —but in Fresno, the kids from poorer backgrounds would come home to television, and they were latch-door kids, you know. They would watch and their nanny was a television set, so they were much more proficient in English because they learned all about it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I began noticing and I began changing my idea, you know, because at this time identity was one of the key factors, both ideologically in terms of what was being taught, and also in terms of the visual arts, identity was one of the key—well, in a key sense, imagery. But I began understanding that identity was very complex and very layered. And the Stanford students were very adept at moving from a total English-speaking world, whether it was in music and art or literature, and a total Spanish-speaking world which was in art, music and literature.

And I began changing my mind, thinking, well, you can be perfectly—you can be a Chicano and only speak English or only speak Spanish or only speak both. So it wasn't a reductive idea of what Chicanos and Chicanismo and Chicano art was.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So that was what I learned from the Stanford students, that they came from different backgrounds and they were very complex. And so their identities, and particularly because we had a lot of also Central American students, so that I began understanding.

And José Antonio Burciaga, even though he was writing chapbooks about Chicano art and the experience that he had in El Paso, and the students were very keen about writing about their own communities and learning about their own communities, they manipulated and negotiated through [fluid identities –TYF]. And I think that was very key.

What I learned from the Stanford students was their ability to negotiate cultural systems, cultural traditions, cultural languages and be whole, whereas the dominant ideology was to be thinking that they had less. They actually had more. It was a very, very rich experience for me.

Of course, Stanford is an elite school. My classes were very small. We had, like, nine students. It was seminar style, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What did you teach, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Chicano literature—when?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No, what.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Chicano literature and Latin American literature, all the genres, theater. I was particularly interested in teaching the essay, the essay of ideas. Most of my colleagues wanted to teach the novel because that's the great genre in literature, but I was more interested in the essay because I taught the essay written in Spanish or by Chicanos about whatever. You can write an essay about food or about architecture or about gardening or about fashion. So I had the students read articles. And I brought in people like Carlos Monsiváis who was writing about [popular culture –TYF] or Elena Poniatowska who was writing about fashion or gardens, all kinds of different topics.

And so I became known for teaching courses that were more cultural, that had to do with all aspects of culture and not strictly literature. Although I taught theater courses and poetry and the novel, I preferred and I taught the courses that I was noted for, were these courses that were [seminars –TYF] on the essay of ideas and notions about ideas.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, so you've talked about the Bay Area, Stanford and what you were doing. At Stanford and in the Bay Area, how involved were you on some national things in connection with NACCS or just other organizations back in Washington? Did you stay connected beyond California at the time when you were based there?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, I was based in California, but I didn't have really—I mean, I was a faculty member and, like all faculty members, or at least the Chicano faculty members, we were all allied and part of the standard, you know, not only in our own discipline like, you know, *Hispania*, you know, the National Association of Hispanic Literature, the literary—NACCS, the National Association for Chicano Studies. We'd go to the conferences and present papers and do [professional –TYF] things like that.

But I wasn't involved in the national scene. I was strictly working with students at the university and in local [venues –TYF],—I would give lectures at local colleges. I was mainly a sort of a cultural-based [teacher –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: LASA?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: LASA, Latin American Studies Association—later on I was honored. I became a scholar, like they have a LASA scholar and a Chicano studies scholar. These are honors that the association gives you for work in that particular area.

But basically, I was a professor teaching my courses, dealing with students at Stanford, but also coming to Tejas because my family was in San Antonio. And so—and when I came to San Antonio, I know all the local—many of the local artists, the visual artists, the writers, because we were all in the network, you know, we all shared a network. And so I would come into San Antonio and work with the people at *Caracol* and the poets in San Antonio and establish poetry readings and meet with, you know, the artists of that generation that were here in San Antonio. So I was a cultural activist, but in the cultural [arena –TYF].

Of course, you know, we didn't separate activism from politics and from everything, so all of us were political and were doing our part for the struggle, in little ways. But I was primarily a professor.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: When you asked about my connection with other parts, it was not only Tejas, but it was also California, through the visual arts. And that's how I got to know—the two key places were obviously San Francisco and Los Angeles, but also the in-between spaces, like Fresno and so on. And all of those were modules of Chicano art and Chicano activism. La Brocha del Valle, you know, in the Fresno area, people at San Jose State, Sacramento was very important, particularly with the RCAF, the Royal Chicano Air Force. And Malaquias Montoya and Jose Montoya and Sid and "Louie the Foot," so graphic art, they were doing a lot of posters in Sacramento. They were doing a lot of murals.

So all the areas, muralism and—murals and posters and poetry and teatro and dance, all had their local, whether it's in Fresno, Sacramento, Los Angeles. Of course, Los Angeles no se diga, you know, had had its, you know, huge artistic community, artistic organizations, the Plaza De La Raza, all the organizations that were in the exhibition of the Getty, the new exhibition, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So during that time, Tomás, did you have origins of the African American, the movement? Do you want to address, please, civil rights, black power?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. Well, I think that we didn't talk about—we were focusing on the civil rights, on the Chicano civil rights movement. I think it's very important to augment the civil rights—the Chicano civil rights movement as a national movement because the majority of the information, even now the dominant information, is about the black student—about the black civil rights movement. And there was actually quite a lot of interface very early on, at least in the Bay Area, a lot of interface between the black civil rights movement, student movement, and all the different aspects of it, and the Latinos.

So the only thing I would say is just the fact that the notions that were developed from the civil rights—black civil rights movement flowed into the Latino civil rights movement. And in many cases, they were continuations, both in the civil rights.

Continuity and change, I think, is the key thing. The black civil rights movements continued a lot of the struggles of earlier, the Harlem Renaissance, other things, the same way that the Chicano civil rights movements, artistic movements, continued other struggles of the 1930s and 1940s. So the thing that we had in common was a whole history, the blacks and the Chicanos, a whole history of struggle from the very beginning and the fact that we were part of the American, of the U.S. movement.

There were black soldiers in the Civil War and there were Latino soldiers in the Civil War and in every single war we had fought for. Blacks and Chicanos had fought. They had Jim Crow, we had segregation. We had the same—we had many of the same experiences, but filtered through a different cultural lens. So it was the cultural lens that came from the Chicano experience that was at the base of the Chicano civil rights movement, but very aligned and closely aligned with the Afro-American because we had had the same sorts of struggles, albeit with different nuances and in different ways within the two group.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So the anti-war movement, the hippie movement?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Oh, one of the things that I didn't talk about, in the Bay Area, that was also very key for the Chicano art movement, because we're talking basically about the development of Chicano art, was the hippie movement, the psychedelic, and particularly important in terms of posters.

You know, the psychedelic art that were the posters done for all the multiple—*Moby Dick* and all the multiple groups, the Rolling Stones and all the—the hippie movement, the hippie movement in dress and in deportment, and particularly in their stress on nonviolence. This nonviolent love was important because the farm workers and Martin Luther King, part of that movement was also this sort of idea of almost a religious idea of love and of creating, you know a world in which people of all kinds and creeds and colors could be together.

So the hippies were very in your face. It was love, and it was love between all kinds of folks. It was love between two women or two men, and so in many ways the hippies were showing us that love and the boundaries of love are not explicit. And so they in their dress, you know, you had all of a sudden guys were wearing bells and necklaces and—

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay. We're talking about the hippie movement and particularly the influence of psychedelic posters on Chicano art. And it had to do with, like, the psychedelic posters, you know, the undulating print, the bold colors, more than anything.

So what Chicanos did, I think, is mix both the psychedelic posters and the graphics that were coming from Cuba, the Cuban poster art of the period, anterior period. And so the psychedelic posters is another way of bringing in the idea that American art, United States American art, the art of the United States, the movement that was going on, was important for the Chicano art movement, not only in terms of—

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Not only in terms of the iconography, but also the idea we're talking about, love and the idea of nonviolence. And so the nonviolence ideal was really key for the Chicano movement.

But also, it had a big impact in, I think, other things, like fashion and gender. All of a sudden, as we were talking about, you know, the guys started wearing necklaces and painting their faces and, you know, wearing brocades and vests, you know, with bells and fringe and beads, and so the lines were sort of blurred between male and female, between, you know, what was appropriate for males and what was appropriate for females, all of which was part of the blending and the mixing and the beginning of this new idea of mixed media or, you know working across boundaries.

Now, the other thing we didn't talk about was what was going on at this particular moment. We've stressed Latin America and Latino and Mexico and the other part, less the American, U.S., American contemporary art movement. So this is a point where in the United States and the East Coast, particularly in New York City, the New York City art movement, it was working with alternative spaces, the idea of alternative spaces, which, in turn, was sort of like an American idea, a U.S. idea, of the European Kunsthall—that is, a space that is dedicated to showing art, but it does not have a collection.

So in Europe, a lot of these alternative spaces, or Kunsthalls, would have—would spring up and

would have an exhibition of what was the art of the moment, but they didn't collect it. And then they would go on to the next phase. And so a lot of the alternative spaces in New York, like the New Museum.

You know, the idea was that they would collect for 10 years and show that and that would be their collection. Then at the end of 10 years, they would disperse the collection and start again. So it was constantly being renovated and it was just the art of the moment. And so this was—many of the Chicano art spaces, again, did not collect art, but kept it for a while and then, you know, revitalized it and had another exhibition, like the Kunsthal.

But it was also the idea that art at this time—remember, this is the beginning of conceptual art in New York City. The idea that art was not only what was happening on the walls, you know, pictures that were placed on the wall, but the art actually came off the wall and surrounded the viewer. This is the idea of the Happenings, you know, and of performance art. And so a lot of the, for example the sculptors, a lot of conceptual art was not on the wall, but it was on the floor and people were afraid to step on it. It came out—the art came out into the space of the viewer and the viewer couldn't help but interact with the work.

So this idea of interactivity and of the art working with the viewer himself, through performance, through the sculpture that you walked around, through images that were flashed on the screen that you actually could walk into the image and so on, were very much a part of the notion of art as a complete environment.

And this was, again, very important in Chicano art because it was not just art on the wall, like we've talked time and time again, it was interactive, the artwork was included in this sort of amalgam of poetry and of singing and performance, all sort of like mishmashed, a mash-up is what they would call it today. So mash-ups were very key elements of contemporary American art at the moment, and this influenced greatly, I think, Chicano art that was being produced.

I'm stressing the idea that Chicano art was as much a part of the art movements in American art, Anglo-American art, that was going on as it was of Latin American art that was going on at the moment. And I think that this part, the U.S. part, has not been studied enough. And people usually put Chicano art in relation to Latin America, but not in relation to U.S. And so pop art, which was also one of the important parts of the '60s and '70s, was really, is really fundamental to the understanding of Chicano art.

So Andy Warhol's ideas and all the pop art ideas of using, you know, the commodities of a moment and picturing them were very much a part of the Chicano art movement. The notions of pop art were very much a part of the Chicano art movement because people forget that artists, all these Latino artists were studying at American universities, they have degrees from American universities, so a lot of their work reflects the art movements and art currents that were appropriate at the time that they were at the university. So they learned from, both in technique and in material and in content, they were learning all the movements that were of the period and they were learning all the movements through their own studying and also the beginning of Latin American art courses at universities, like the University of Texas and UCLA.

So they were mixing and matching these two things. But for the most part, because of identity politics, Chicano art has mainly been seen as having elements of Latino, Latin American and Mexican art and not U.S., Anglo and European art. And I'm saying, no, the opposite is true. Precisely because of the cultural mixing of the communities themselves, they were putting European, Latin American and U.S., and I'm stressing U.S. because this is the part that I think really needs to be

studied.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, on that, too, how about, like, the farm workers' movement? What impact did it have in the Bay Area? Did you have any connections at all with the boycotts? Or did that impact—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Obviously, you know, the farm workers' movement was key and central to the ideology and the creation of a consciousness, a Chicano consciousness. And again, the farm workers' movement is another example of how on the surface—on the surface—it looks like one thing, but when you begin really understanding it, it's much, much deeper. You begin looking at the symbol of the Thunderbird, which was the flag of the farm workers' movement. And if you take the Thunderbird and turn it upside down, it becomes a pyramid. And so it's an inverted pyramid, you know. That's the symbol of the farm workers, you know, if you turn it upside down.

So again, the symbolism of pre-Columbian, the notion of—the Catholic notion of—the whole Catholic notion of pilgrimage and searching for a place, you know, is also a part of the farm workers' movement.

You know, Chávez capitalized on this religious iconography, the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, which was carried on all the pilgrimages. And they were called peregrinajes, you know, pilgrimages. So the struggle was not only a struggle that was political and of this world, but it was also almost [spiritual –TYF], it had a deeper meaning, it had a religious meaning of brotherhood and of creating a space of nonviolence, creating a space of love. So all of those things were impactful in the Chicano movement.

Theater, particularly El Teatro Campesino, that came out of the farm workers' movement, related to the farm workers' movement, was crucial. And another crucial thing, aside from the pilgrimage and the sort of more holy and spiritual, was the bawdiness and the language and the humor that Luis Valdez picked up from the community, you know, language and the wordplay and the double entendres and the symbols, so that when you sang or you told about a caged little bird, everybody understood who the caged little bird was. It wasn't an empty symbol, it was them that were in the cage and they had to liberate themselves, they had to open the cage. And it was just a song about a bird in a cage and wanting liberation, you know.

So again, time and time again, the ordinary symbols and the ordinary ways have a much deeper resonance if you understand the meaning of them. So the farm workers used, again, on the surface, you know, the image of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, the image of, you know, pilgrimage, the notion of pilgrimage. But in a deeper sense, the meaning of those things are embedded in both, you know, Catholicism and religious practices, but also in the deeper practices of humankind, you know.

So Luis Valdez picked up on the more realistic part, which was the humor and the wordplay and the language. But they also not only used, again, like, all the Chicano artists not only used, you know, old symbols with new meaning, like the Virgin of Guadalupe all of a sudden became, just like she had been in the Mexican Revolution, a revolutionary symbol, you know, with the farm workers' union, a symbol of struggle, but also related to the ordinary struggle of women and the grandmothers and the mothers who had cooked and who had, you know, preserved, through the food, the culture, the real culture, through the beans and the corn and the elements. And of course, it has the whole indigenous part through the food and so on.

So it was very rich and very dense in meaning, and the artists picked up on this. But it also introduced new elements, like Don Sotaco, you know, which was, you know, the guy, you know, a

farm worker who was struggling in the battle. But remember, the farm workers also used graphic arts very, very well. Posada—they did a lot of calaveras. *El Malcriado*, you know, the farm workers' newspaper, was key because *El Malcriado*, the very name of it, *El Malcriado*, the ill-bred one, meaning you have to go outside what you're supposed to do, you have to break the rules.

That was what they were saying, be a malcriado, you know, break the rules of being the downtrodden underling and stand up for your rights and fight for. Say I don't believe what you're saying, I'm going to create a new world, I don't believe this, I'm going to make, you know, I'm going to be a malcriado, I'm going to be ill-bred. In the words of—you know, I'm going to stand up to what you want me to be and I'm going to be who I want to be.

So the names *El Malcriado*, Don Sotaco—and they introduced new vocabulary, like esquiro, you know. Very few people—strike-breaker, you know—very few people knew that and all of a sudden it became, you know, a very common use, un esquiro, you know, you don't want to be an esquiro, you don't want to be a strike-breaker. And they began introducing into the vocabulary of ordinary folks words that were from Mexico and from a whole tradition of struggle, into their struggle in the United States.

They also were very key because in Delano where some of the—some early murals were painted by Chicano artists, they also brought—also, Mexican artists came. A brigade of Mexican artists came to Delano early on in the Chicano movement and had an interface with Chicano art.

So the Chicano artists learned from the Mexican, the Mexicans learned from the Chicano artists. And the Mexican artists went back to Mexico, then became important figures in contemporary Mexican art and began taking Chicano iconography and Chicano ideas into Mexican art, and they became known as the neomexicanistas, a whole generation of Mexican artists who claim and whose work you can see, was very, very much influenced by Chicano art, the Chicano art movement and the Chicano symbols.

And remember, again, at this time, you know, Zapata and, you know, the Virgen de Guadalupe and all the imagery that we think of as very Mexican, for a Mexican, for a whole generation of Mexican artists, this was very new, because they were very much in tune with European movements. You know, they were trying to emulate, you know, Europe and had forgotten their Mexican roots.

And so what the Chicanos were doing with Chicano art, saying we have to remind ourselves that we have a whole history of art and a whole history of iconography and we're reminding ourselves by bringing it into the foreground, the Mexican artists, learning from Chicano artists doing this, went to Mexico and said you guys have forgotten all the heroes of the Revolution and here the Chicanos are bringing in Zapata and Villa and the Virgen, and we have to teach a whole generation of the people.

And so the Chicano movement was not only influenced by Mexico, but Mexico was also influenced by the Chicano movement.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So two people—and just—we'll talk about them later, too—but just for that period of time, a student, Chon Noriega.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Chon Noriega was—well, yeah, Chon Noriega was at Stanford at the time I was there. And he was an—I think he was an anthropology student. He studied with [Renato Rosaldo –TYF] the anthropologist—the anthropology professor at Stanford, because he was a—Chon was in literature. I don't know what they call that [specific –TYF] program, third-world

consciousness or whatever it was, a mixture of the humanities, the arts and—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So did he study with Renato?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Renato Rosaldo—Renato Rosaldo was his professor. Mary Pratt—it was literature and Mary Pratt was in the [Spanish –TYF] department, she did Latin American literature. And then the Chicano faculty, like myself, Camarillo, all of us were part of his training, [Chon –TYF] took courses with us. But he was, at that—so his basic idea was this sort of, like, amalgamation of new world [... –TYF] consciousness. It was a heavy theoretical program of theories from all the disciplines, a mash with Latino and Chicano. So he became very equipped learning about the theories about the art movements and so on at Stanford.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The other person I want to ask you about, if I can, just for a reference point and we can talk later, Tere Romo. Did you know here then or was it later?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I met Tere Romo when I was at Stanford. She was working in Sacramento with the Royal Chicano Air Force. Well, she—I don't know that she was working for them, but she was active in the Sacramento and Bay Area and the Galería Posada in Sacramento, which was a bookstore and community center, the RCAF, and was very much a part of the Royal Chicano Air Force grouping which extended to people in literature and in the arts. And I think she curated shows at Galería Posada and for the RCAF.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did you do any work together at that time or—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No. Well, when you asked me about all the [art activists –TYF]—you know, I worked with a lot of folks, a lot of people.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Collectively.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Collectively. You know, we didn't have specific roles. We all shared work because we were all doing it together. So I worked with people at the Galería Posada whenever, for example, they did a television program. I explained what some of the artwork was and what their meaning of the fact that they were—I explained what I thought, gave my own vision as a cultural critic, that their work was really avant-garde because they were really a performative art group who dressed, you know, in outfits of the First World War, who made up stories about airplanes that they owned and whatever, that this was a kind of performative group that shared many of the notions of the conceptual art movements that were going on in New York City.

And if you look at their work now, I think people are beginning to see that. They had avant-garde, conceptual ideas in their artwork that on the surface looked very traditional and very sort of realistic, so I would explain my ideas of that. Like, they would have a television program about the RCAF, and they had music, you know. They had [a music group that –TYF] was very important. I keep saying that again.

"Chicanindio" it's called, they call themselves Chicano indigenous, Chicano indio, Chicano and indio mixed together, "Chicanindio" group that was Jose Montoya and other groups from the other—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Members—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —members of RCAF were also members of this [musical group –TYF].

Now, it's also very important, I mean, all the connections. Jose Montoya was from New Mexico, was also very key because he brought into the Chicano California art movement all the ideas of a very important art group in New Mexico, La Academia de Raza in New Mexico, and their ideas of the *resolana*, you know, the way in which New Mexico, the elders would meet.

Resolana is this place, space in the community, where, you know, you have a shady space where people gather to talk about philosophy and about the meaning of life and so on. And they created a whole school of scholars, of community scholars, people that knew the traditions of the *acequias* and the traditions of weaving and the traditions of singing *alabados* and the traditions of the *penitentes*, all of them would be taught in these *academias*, these academies that were community academies.

Jose Montoya was part of that group and he brought in—[Cleofas Jaramillo – TYF]—the key person who sang all the *alabados* and who sang all these things, to California, to the RCAF. And Jose Montoya, who was from New Mexico, continued that tradition of religious songs and mixed in the *Pachuco* thing, which he was. So you see, again, a mash-up of the *Pachuco* ideology and these ancient folk traditions from New Mexico, the sayings from New Mexico, the language from New Mexico. That was what Jose Montoya and RCAF were all about, mixing in the traditions of popular vernacular poetry and vernacular song with the urban traditions of, you know, boogie-woogie and the *Pachucos*.

So in every group you had an elder, a person who either came from Mexico or was born in Mexico or who had learned from his parents or from somebody in the community all these traditions. And that person, whether it was a healing tradition or artistic tradition or a literary tradition, was very key to a group. And you didn't have to be old to be a maintainer. I was sort of like a maintainer of those traditions because I had learned them from the community and from reading.

So anyway, Jose Montoya was one of these tradition-bearers who brought in New Mexico and urban L.A. into a mash-up, and that was the songs that they did in the *Casindio* group. They played boogie-woogie and they played *alabados*, and also in their way of life and their philosophy and in their mural movement and their graphic art.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can we talk about movements and the San Francisco Bay Area during the hippie time and the anti-work period, time? The LGBT were very strong and still very strong in San Francisco. Do you want to comment about that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, the gay movement, you know—the Chicano movement was very homophobic. There's no question. I remember I gave a talk once on John Rechy. And just like in the black power movement, it was exactly the same thing. Queers or gays are not part of our community, it's a white man's thing, you know, until people in the black community started, artists, visual artists particularly. They didn't want to show, you know, or even—or help out, you know, gay black artists. The same thing happened in the Chicano movement, you know. It was a machista movement in many, many ways, so gender was a late arrival. The last sort of bastion to be broken, I think, was that.

In theater, there were no—although a lot of the people were gay, it was not a part of the movement in the music, in the literature, in the—there were writers, but it was not talked about. It was, in many ways, it was kind of known, but it was not talked about—and yet, you know, people like Arturo Islas in his books, John Rechy in his book *City of Night* which was one of the, I would say, one of the great American [gay novels – TYF]—because he had a name "Rechy" people thought he was not Chicano. And because he wrote about the gay movement or being gay or transvestite, like the main

character in *City of Night*, it was not considered a Chicano novel.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so scholars like myself began talking about the fact that he was a Chicano and he was from—he had a different experience. He was Irish and Chicano. And all his books before *City of Night* are about the Chicano community in El Paso.

So the gay movement and gender itself became one of the later, probably not until maybe the '80s when people began talking and seeing and artists began coming out, because this was the moment when the gay power became prevalent. But it wasn't—I would say it was there, but not central until probably certain key writers and certain key activists, you know—Tomás Almaguer was one of the early and important writers, a sociologist—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yes.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —who began writing about homosexuality and the gay community and male desire. And then other people began writing about their gay experiences and became a topic and a discipline. When it became a discipline in the larger community, then a lot of Chicano writers, and now it's one of the important, significant elements of the whole Chicano art movement, both in the visual arts, in the literary arts and in the theater arts.

And people began—the first plays—the Mission Cultural Center was one of the first places where they had a play about being gay and being Chicano. ["The Reunion" –TYF] became then part of a community dialogue. Certain cases it happened against gay people. The community sort of mobilized to help them and support them and everybody then became mobilized and became part of the movement itself, that this was another area of human struggle and another area of civil rights and human rights.

And just like—and a lot of it had to do with, first, the emergence of the women's movement and the women struggling for gender equality and all the struggles to have women artists, which is still an ongoing struggle, represented in exhibitions and all-women exhibitions and curators, Tere and all the other people we've talked about, Judy Baca in L.A.—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Ester.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —Ester Hernandez, creating work that talked about gender and women. And then opening—it was actually the women more than the men, the women who—lesbian writers and lesbian activists who created and opened the door for male homosexuals and gay men to come into the movement.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, we're going to quit right now for this piece because we're almost at the end of the taping here. But I do want to, when we come back to this question, let's go back and answer the question to this period, talk about some of your writings at that time.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So we'll start with the next section. But I'm going to close here. Thank you very much, Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Thank you for being so patient. And I want you to ask more questions.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I will, yeah. [Laughs.] Let me put this—save this.

[... –TYF]

[END SD3 TR13.]

[No audio. SD4 TR01 –Ed.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, this is Gilberto Cardenas. I'm interviewing Tomás in San Antonio at his condo on July 17, 2014. This is our third interview session. And we're going to begin with his years in New York City at the Rockefeller Foundation, a very important period of time when Tomás made major contributions in many sectors.

So, Tomás, can I just—can I ask you to give a summary how you got to Rockefeller and maybe some of the people that you worked with, and your job title?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay. This is about 1987, '88. I was at Stanford, I had just gotten my tenure. And you know, I was happy at Stanford, but some unusual—one unusual thing happened. That is that in New York City at the Rockefeller Foundation they were going through some changes and the director of arts and humanities, Alberta Arhurs, who was a wonderful, wonderful woman, an activist, president of a college, and very active in the arts and the humanities in New York City, her second in command or the associate director was Steven Levine, L-e-v-i-n-e, Steven. Steven Levine had just gotten an offer to work—to be the president of CalArts in Los Angeles, outside of Los Angeles. And so he left the foundation to become president of CalArts in California.

And so they had a vacancy. So I imagine they invited—I don't know because I don't know the process, but I'm sure they invited some scholars from throughout the country—I remember, I had just gotten my tenure at Stanford—to come to New York City, to visit, and to, you know, probably they were looking us over to see if they could find a replacement for Steven Levine.

I came to New York City, and I was happy at Stanford, but when I talked to my compañero, Dudley Brooks, he would say, well—I asked him, you know, what about me going to New York City? And he said, well, Tomás, whenever you talk about Stanford you're talking about the problems that you're having now in terms of you've been doing it for a while and you're thinking you might want to change, you know, a focus or whatever. But whenever you talk about New York City, your eyes light up and you think about dreams and New York City is someplace that you would always want to be in in the arts and literature, so I just think you should follow your heart. But I'm not helping you, I'm not telling you go to New York City, just think about it and follow your heart. Well, I thought about it and I followed my heart, so I came to New York City.

Peter Goldmark had become the 11th president of the Rockefeller Foundation—Peter Goldmark, Jr. And so he was young and had all kinds of interesting ideas. I met him when I came to New York City. I really, really liked him. He asked me, if you came to New York City to work at the foundation, what would you like to do? And I said, well, before I tell you, Peter, tell me what you'd like to do, since he was just new. So he started telling me his ideas and his dreams, and we got into a very nice discussion. And I knew then that it would be wonderful to work with this humane person like Peter Goldmark.

So, I left and I had hopefully made a good impression. And sometime later I got a letter inviting me to join the staff of the arts and humanities with Alberta Arhurs and with other colleagues, like Lynn Szwaja—and Joan Shigekawa—Joan Shigekawa, who is now working at the NEA. So Lynn and Joan and I were the officers in the arts and humanities [division –TYF].

And when I got to the Rockefeller Foundation, it was an international foundation. It worked in Africa, had a lot of projects in Africa and Asia and was beginning to think of working in Latin America. It had already had the beginnings of work in Latin America in the '40s and '50s. They called it the Green Revolution, that is, they worked in agriculture and development. And so I had been interested in their work in the '40s in Mexico. And so they had not only worked in crops and in agriculture, but also in health and development, generally working with third-world countries, so called, at that time.

They had been sort of heavily criticized, the Rockefeller had been criticized, for what they called the Green Revolution, which was to import Northern methods of development and scientific methods of development and technological methods of development into cultures that were very ancient cultures culturally and whose basis for agriculture and science were culturally based rather than totally scientifically based.

And so there was a push-and-pull between the ideas of development from the North and the cultural basis for development from the South. And so this was an interesting debate. It had gone on for a while in health, in agriculture, and the areas that the foundation worked in. And now they were trying to work in the humanities.

In the humanities in the 1940s, they had launched a program also to work with young scholars because the idea of the foundation, the logo of the foundation is "for the well-being of human kind." And it had been started in 1913, was the oldest foundation in the country. It was based on Standard Oil money with the Rockefellers. And it had, it had worked a lot in many other areas, like education with historically black colleges, it had worked in agriculture. It was the well-being, you know, that not only should you have a full stomach, but you should also—your mind and your spirit should also be enlivened.

So from the very beginning, we put it in very simple terms in arts and humanities, this area that I worked in. It was sort of, like, making a living and making a life. And making a living had to do with jobs and agriculture and health and things that people had to work in, and making a life had to do with the humanities, things of the spirit, art and literature and music.

And both had—the Rockefeller by this time, by the 1980s, had a very distinguished record of working in both areas. They had worked with major American composers, major American dance companies like Merce Cunningham, and had helped a lot of different writers and also important scientists and development [specialists –TYF], particularly in health and agriculture throughout the world. So they had really been true to this notion of making a living and making a life.

You have to sort of, like, find ways to earn a living, but also find ways to enlarge your horizons through the arts. And so these were the two areas.

At the same time in the United States, remember, this is the late '60s, the beginning of the '70s, and in the humanities there was a big, almost, like, revolution. It was the beginning of interdisciplinary work. Because up to now, in most American colleges and universities, the disciplines had been separate, so you had art in one section and literature in another and social science in another and anthropology in another. And now the humanities were coming together and crossing boundaries. So there was very interesting work where humanists were [joining –TYF] with anthropologists and anthropologists were working with social scientists. They were trying to get a social context, you know, demographers and literary people. What kind of literature do people write when there's a shift?

And this is the beginning of, after the height of the civil rights movement when people of color in the

United States, Latinos, Afro Americans and Asians, had mounted this civil rights movement. And so the notions that the foundation had about arts and humanities were very applicable to these communities of color because they were also developing their institutions and developing their arts. And so the foundation, arts and humanities, then started beginning to work with humanities areas.

We had what was called humanities residency programs. And this was where programs throughout the country, humanities programs, that were the cutting edge, mixing, you know, social scientists and the arts or all different kinds of combinations. They submitted proposals and we vetted them. We visited a lot of these places, and I got to travel throughout the country, seeing really, really cutting-edge work in the humanities.

And then because of the relation of the multicultural communities in the United States, we began thinking, well there must be interesting work with these communities of origin. So we began thinking of a program that would link Asia with Asian-American scholars and thinkers in the U.S., and Africa with Afro-American scholars and thinkers in the development of Afro-American studies, and Latin America and Latinos who were developing.

Not only were the humanities in a turmoil and in a really new way of working, but so was the development of ethnic studies, so Latino studies and black studies and Asian studies. So the idea was could we sort of work with cultural origin and development of these cultures in the United States? And what were the questions, the problems, the intellectual questions, but also the social questions and problems of cultures in the United States and cultures of origin?

So in essence, this was the kind of push-and-pull that the arts and humanities at that time was working on. The ethnic studies [stressed –TYF] development. And so we began working with [ethnic –TYF] cultures in the United States, for me, of course, as a Mexican American. And the Rockefeller Foundation in the '50s had already worked in Mexico in the humanities, especially with artists.

In agriculture, remember that the great murals at Chapingo, which is a Mexican agricultural school, done by Diego Rivera, so Rivera—the Rockefeller already had notions of how art, in this case major artists like Diego Rivera, had mixed in notions of development through their visuals at the agricultural school, at Chapingo.

And so the foundation had also helped the Centro Mexicano de Escritores, a very [prominent –TYF] and prestigious center for young writers. In Mexico, this was [the birth –TYF] of la nueva onda. You know, people were beginning to write in new ways. Aside from the traditional 19th-century novel, people were experimenting. Just like in the humanities, they were crossing boundaries, they were putting in new ways of social context.

So the Rockefeller had worked with the Centro Mexicano de Escritores and had particularly worked with a literary journal called *El Corno Emplumado*. Margaret Randall [... –TYF], the director who had worked with *El Corno Emplumado*, had given scholarships to many young writers. And so, through the Rockefeller [grants, writers –TYF] like Juan Rulfo and Carlos Fuentes and others had gotten monies to further their careers.

So already in the '50s, the Rockefeller had worked both in agriculture, health, and in the humanities. So I thought it would be just the next phase if we now sort of worked with the Mexican-American community and the Mexican artists.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: One of the initiatives that I helped to spur with Alberta, it actually was Alberta's creation and I worked with her, was El Fideicomiso para la Cultura México-Estados Unidos, in Spanish, in English it was called the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture. It had—the idea was to have an office in Mexico City and a partnership between the Rockefeller Foundation, the Bancomer Foundation and Mexico's National Fund for Culture.

And the idea was to foster collaboration and exchange between the United States and Mexican artists and scholars. And this was very much in keeping with the notion of the new, the new thrust of the humanities.

So the fideicomiso was to support artists, cutting-edge artists that were beginning to work in all the different artistic disciplines in sort of a social context. And because it was a binational sort of consortium, obviously this was, I think, really important. Because it wasn't the foundation sort of going and saying this is how arts in Latin America should be, it was getting people from Latin America to work with scholars in the U.S. in a team, bicultural manner to look at proposals and to select companies and so on.

And the idea was to support the companies and individual artists that were really cutting edge, that were charting new ways in dance, in music, in theater, and to sort of, like, help them [advance –TYF] careers. A lot of them were mid-career or emerging companies that were really positioning Latin America in the world stage. There was a large, huge, new way of looking at the arts in Latin America.

So this—the interesting thing, and an important [innovation –TYF] was that it was a binational committee and the selection of the people that got the awards and the scholarships, both from the United States and in Mexico. So U.S. companies would go to Mexico, Mexican companies would come to the U.S. and sometimes they were paired. So we had very specifically companies that were interested in working with Mexican-American communities, and companies, Mexican-American companies, that were interested in working with specific companies in Mexico. Some were around the border, so there were projects [throughout –TYF] the border, because this is the beginning of the development of border studies and the idea of a transnational trans-border [culture –TYF].

The point is that all the projects were very high-level, significant projects that, in some ways, had a social context and developed the arts within a social context.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So can you give an example, Tomás, of, like, one of the projects from that time or universities that were cooperating? Do you recall?

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: There were—a lot of them were not university projects, they were projects of dance companies or theater groups.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Independent groups.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, independent groups. It was also very interesting because part of the idea was that Mexico was decentralizing culture, so that up to now all the major theater, art and music companies had been in Mexico City—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —but all of a sudden, Mexico was discovering that it had major

companies, like museums in northern Mexico or dance companies, you know, in Monterrey or in Yucatán, that a lot of regional—and the same thing was happening in the U.S. New York City had always been the kind of core, but now, you know, particularly among younger companies and among ethnically defined companies, you had companies in Los Angeles or Dallas or Houston. So both the United States and Mexico were beginning to see that there were many voices, many imaginations that had not been brought together into the national picture of American culture and also in terms of Mexico. So it was a very interesting, good time to sort of, like, get both sides together.

Then we began thinking, well, if we're working in Mexico with the Mexico Fund for Culture, we started expanding a little bit into other areas in Latin America. It was now—one of the ideas in the arts that we were working with also was the notion of, particularly in the visual arts, you know, the notion of, why is it now that the world is rapidly changing and people are no longer being bounded by national boundaries? Why is it that a lot of the arts, particularly in the visual arts, are bounded, like, when they have biennials? Like the oldest biennial, the Venice biennial in Venice, which has, you know, pavilions that are dedicated to each of the national cultures and countries, but most of the pavilions, you know, in a way, are dominated by the major powers and the smaller countries have really smaller pavilions.

And yet, the artists were crossing boundaries and making new ways of dealing with culture. And so we began thinking, could there be another way of dealing with an interconnected world that is no longer bounded by national boundaries?

So we began being interested in the notion of the visual arts in an unbounded kind of way. And like, particularly in Europe, you know, ways of showing art that had international participation, but no longer within national, you know, pavilions. *Documenta*, the German *Documenta*, was an example of an alternative to Venice, which is they would pick a theme and [artists –TYF] from all over the world would respond to that theme and artists would respond to that theme. So it was thematically interesting because you got views from Muslim countries and from, you know, Latin America, and not only from Europe, about certain kinds of themes, women or, you know, minoritized communities, because all the countries had all these elements. And so it began. It began creating a kind of opening up the arts. And so this idea, I think, of opening up and crossing boundaries were the beginning of what then became sort of transnational and global societies.

So I was part of this beginning of working at a very sort of, like, both in the United States and throughout the world, of a real, new kind of development with the arts and the humanities, but always in a social context. So that was—my years at the foundation were, we'd go on about a lot of projects and programs that were very specifically—but generally it was at this space where newer, integrated communication and connectedness were beginning to create. We helped a lot of writers, a lot of scholars, [like –TYF] Homi Bhabha, with new notions of nation and narration.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did they approach you or did you approach them, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, they sent proposals in. But the lead architects of many of the proposals were the leading thinkers and theoreticians, like Homi Bhabha or at Harvard, you know, in terms of the Latin American studies, or [the University of –TYF] Texas, you know, where they have a strong Latin American studies, or in Iowa with the writers, or in Los Angeles at UCLA.

And so we were working very much with new ideas of the humanities that sort of began eroding the idea of the national and beginning to work on a kind of a global, knowing that the local and the global were intertwined. So this was the beginning.

One important thing that I forgot. In Latin America we did a really important project, I think, a signature project. It was called La Red de Productores Latinoamericanos.

[... –TYF]

And these were—La Red means the network. And so the idea was to tie together cultural production, productores culturales, or cultural producers, cultural agents, people that had companies or theater companies or dance or whatever, but they're organized differently than in the U.S. So these cultural producers, many of them independent from the government-sponsored projects and programs.

Independent producers of culture, you know, had very little support. And they all wanted to sort of, like, you know, whether it's in Montevideo or in Buenos Aires or in Mexico [City –TYF], they all wanted to take their artists to Europe to participate in major projects there, or to the United States.

And so we thought, well, it's very important for them to go to Europe or to go to the United States, but it's equally important for them to know one another. And so the first step of La Red was to have—to organize them so that they would [start –TYF] knowing one another, so a company from Puerto Rico could go to Brazil, or a company from Peru could come to Argentina. Even [countries –TYF] that were next to each other really didn't know or had not communicated, because they wanted to jump over and come to New York City or come to L.A. or go to Paris. And so we thought, well, it was like an incremental step. What if they began knowing each other in Latin America [first –TYF]?

And out of this idea grew La Red de Productores Culturales. So the [plan –TYF] was for these directors—and again, it was sort of like letting them speak for themselves, letting them define what they wanted to do for them[selves –TYF] without the U.S. interfering and saying these are the [venues –TYF] in New York City and this is what you should be doing, how to develop their own infrastructure and how to develop their own projects and products.

And so they began working with each other. And pretty soon, The Red, they would begin having meetings, and at the meetings all the different companies would come and share across boundaries. So that was a notion, across boundaries, but in this case, Latin American boundaries are crossed.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Boundaries—and so they're using your money from Rockefeller to do this?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Or they were already doing it before?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right, right. No, we helped support.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The programs, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. We helped programs so that they could do a lot more independent [work –TYF]. And so they were just barely eking out—and so these projects that we helped support, vetted by them in their own with their own scholars and their own thinkers, began really redefining Latin American art. And in redefining Latin American art, they grew stronger and could then, you know, come and be very proud of their productions when they came to New York City or when they went to Europe.

So La Red was and continues today in a smaller scale, even without Rockefeller Foundation [support –TYF], because this was the idea, to seed a project in which people would get to know one another and begin working across national boundaries.

So La Red—so there are three areas that, to sum up, there are three areas that I feel that I made an impact on, one, the humanities residency fellowships in which we supported cutting-edge scholars and thinkers for redefining the humanities in a social context. The other area was the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture, specifically as a Mexican American, you know, how we helped Mexican artists in many disciplines to go back to their ancestral traditions and cultures with cutting-edge ways of doing that and presenting and mixing, making new culture that was not bounded by tradition, but used tradition as a base for explorations—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: A base, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —of new ways of doing culture. And the third was La Red de Productores Culturales.

Of course, we also worked in Africa and in Asia. So many of these—I'm only focusing on Latin America because this was one of my biggest portfolio areas, and also with—the whole foundation was working now in a global kind of way, moving from—it was, you know, from projects. It still funded a lot of projects in the U.S., but now it was moving towards a more global, interconnected sort of world.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, this is—what period of time was this?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, this was, you know—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: '90s?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —up to the—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: '87—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —'99, '98.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: In 1998, Gordon Conway succeeded Peter Goldmark. And that was a time soon after '98 that I left the foundation. I think I was there for a couple of years, '98, '99 maybe two years or three, and left the—retired from the Rockefeller Foundation.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And his—this is when the foundation, with all the different areas in health, education and so on, worked in a more global way.

So can we stop so we can think of where we're going next?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. But can you talk about Gordon Conway and that change? Was there a change in the foundation at that point when he came in?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, he had—Gordon Conway, you know, his idea—he was from agricultural sciences and development and had worked with one major project with Muslim

communities in Europe. So we began—the foundation began working in a new way.

Remember, this is a period of really technological change and interconnectivity and transnationalism. And so all these [bred –TYF] new sort of development models, new scientific models. So all those new things became forming kind of a new project for the foundation.

He opened up to a global, much more—the foundation had been international since the very beginning, but Gordon Conway [globalized it –TYF]. And by this time, not only was the ideals of the foundation changing, but also the structure of the foundation. That is, the board of directors of the foundation included many scholars from minoritized communities in the United States, many thinkers. Henry Cisneros from San Antonio was part of the board of the Rockefeller Foundation.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Antonia Hernandez.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes, Antonia Hernandez from California. And Asians, you know. So it reflected the kind of new America, the beginning of a new America and the relations of this new America, with minoritized communities on the board of directors, and people from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, scholars from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, leaders in agriculture and science, being members of the board of directors. So it truly became a global foundation.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: At that point, were the same people there that were there when you arrived in your department?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes, yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Lynn Szwaja?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Lynn and Joan and myself. During Conway's term was when we—soon after Conway came, Alberta Arthurs resigned and we looked for a new person. We had actually in our division, in the humanities division, Raymund Paredes, who was there for a while. And I worked with Raymund for, you know, his brief tenure at the foundation.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So, let's see—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can we talk about New York City, Tomás? You said—Broadway—where did you live? How did you get to where you got to?

[... –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, back to New York City and life in New York City. And you had a —

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay. Well, for me New York City continues to be one of the great adventures in my life. It started out, from the very beginning when I was still at Stanford before coming to New York City, every summer there was an Afro-American performance artist that would come to stay in apartment in San Francisco while I went to spend the summer with Dudley in Seattle. And so after four or five years, she would come and stay the summer while I was in Seattle.

So through her, you know, I got—you know, she would always be telling me about the newer things that were happening in New York City as a performance artist. Lorraine O'Grady was her name. And

Lorraine O'Grady was one of the early Afro-American performance artists in New York City. She spoke Spanish and had a love for Latin America as well.

So when she was—she came to New York City and she said to me one time—it just so happened, you know, it was at the very same time when I had gotten a letter inviting me to the [Rockefeller – TYF] foundation. She said, I have a friend who is an anthropologist who is from Paris and he has an apartment in New York City and I think he's supposed to go back to Paris about the time that you're thinking of going to New York City.

I had already gotten asked to join the foundation. And she said, at the time you're supposed to begin your tenure, he's supposed to be leaving New York City and you can have his apartment. And I said great, because I knew nothing about New York City except wanting to go there.

So it so happened that this guy said yes, the very week that you're coming to New York City to sort of look for an apartment to start sort of getting settled before your work at the foundation is the time when I'm leaving for Paris, so why don't you just take over. I live in an apartment. It's a fifth-floor walk-up at 90 St. Marks Place or, no, next door to 90 St. Marks Place. And I said great. I knew nothing about New York City. And he said, well, you know, it's a comfortable apartment and it's hard to find an apartment in New York City. And I said, good, I won't have to go through all the travails of looking for an apartment.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I got to New York City, I got to the airport, LaGuardia, and then I took a cab. And it came to the lower East Side. And as you know, New York City is, in a way, actually a city of many little enclaves. So people are confirmed, you know, East Siders or West Siders or Downtowners or Uptowners. And of course, the people in the Village, the East Village and the West Village. The Greenwich Village had history, a storied history of renegades and cultural workers and poets and so on. It was the unofficial capital of the creative people in New York City.

So I thought, wow, this is great, right in the middle of the east—Greenwich Village is divided into two parts, you know, East Village and the West Village. The West Village is the more gentrified, the more sort of upscale, more mainline artists live there, there are very important artists who live in the West Village. The East Village was the more scruffy, sort of renegade part of the village. And so this is where I landed.

And I remember very distinctly when I was coming by, there was a building, there was a brick building right as the cab stopped right there. And on the facade of the building was a little angel playing a cello. And I said, oh, I hope my building is that [one –TYF] because I just love this little angel. And that was sort of like a foretelling of the wonderful times that I would have in New York City.

So the guy [from France –TYF] was standing at the front gate. He had a key in his hand, he gave me the key, he jumped in the cab. He took the same cab that had left me there. And I was left standing. I opened the door, climbed up five floors to this wonderful little apartment. It was like a railroad apartment. It had a living room, it had a fireplace [and skylight –TYF]. And I said, wow, a fireplace in New York City. It had a little kitchen, a bedroom, like, a little extra room and a bathroom, one after another. But it overlooked a garden, and it had a [view of a –TYF] lot of trees. So it was right in the middle of the Village, but it had trees and I loved it immediately. I fell in love with New York City.

And so I lived in this apartment for a while until my partner, Dudley Brooks, came to New York City to join me. And one day—every time I took a shower in my apartment, I would look down, because this was on the fifth floor, and I would look down to this wonderful little garden. And on Sundays there was a couple that came down to this little terrace and they would sit there and drink their coffee and read the *New York Times* and it had a lot of plants. It was a beautiful little terrace. And I said, wow, this is terrific, this is really the New York City life. Being in Manhattan and having a terrace and enjoying it.

And one day, I saw them sort of moving their pots, you know, like, they were moving it all in one corner. And I said, I think they're moving, I think they're moving. And by this time, Dudley said, well, why don't you go over next door and talk to the landlady, maybe the apartment is available. So I did. And so she said, well, yes, they're moving. And so she invited Dudley and me to come for an interview, and we did. And we had just gone to the movies and we had seen a movie called *Zipped Up*. It was a movie about the fashion industry.

And so she asked us, like any New Yorker, well, what have you been doing in New York City? And we said, well, last night we went to a movie, *Zipped Up*. Oh, she said, I know the person the movie's all about because I used to work in fashion. Mrs. [Florence –TYF] Otway was the name of our landlady, and she worked in Paris and in London and in Milan. She was a shoe designer, and so she knew Mizrahi who was the person the movie, the documentary was based on, about New York City fashion. And so we were in right away. We talked movies, we talked Hollywood, and we liked her a great deal. She was a sophisticated, urbane, typical New Yorker, you know, an elderly woman who had been a career woman.

We liked the apartment. It was like a townhouse. And her son lived up on the top floor, like the garret, and then the apartment was one floor below, and she had the bottom floors. She had a beautiful, beautiful apartment with a garden. And our apartment, which was a wonderful, small, little New York City apartment, but it had a terrace. And this is where on Sundays we could now read the *New York Times* and have a drink and have our coffee, overlooking this beautiful garden surrounded by trees, and at night look up at the sky and from our window see, you know, the busyness of New York City.

So New York City became, like, a beacon. We were within, you know, like, 45 different screens. Within five blocks we could go to 45 different screens, movies, movie screens. The multiplexes had 10 screens and there were, like, five of them right around. And the Anthology of Film Archives was right next door. You know, Film Forum was, you know, several blocks away. All the new restaurants were beginning, it was near Chelsea, and all the new developments that were springing up in different areas of the Village.

So New York City was an enchanted place. You know, we immediately joined, you know, the MoMA, the Museum of Modern Art, the New Museum, which was one of the more adventurous, New Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, of course. And I could go—after work sometimes I'd call Dudley and say I'm not going to be in because I want to go see a new opera at the Metropolitan Opera House, and I would just take a bus from the foundation, which was right downtown, and in 30 minutes I would be at Lincoln Center and would have dinner by myself across the street, when Dudley was not joining me, or he would join me and we had [magical –TYF] dinners across the street from Lincoln Center, and then walk across the street and for 12 bucks, at that time, you could have standing room. And you know, a lot of—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I remember we went one time across the street—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: There was a bar—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. Right. There was—well, there were all kinds of bars there.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: We had one that we liked. And so by this time, it was a time of wonderful French cooking, now the legendary restaurants in New York City, La Côte Basque, La Caravelle, La Grenouille. Many of them, you know, have disappeared. La Grenouille is still there.

So it was an exciting time after the pop, Andy Warhol years, after Max's Kansas City and so on. And of course, the hip part was where we were living in the East Village. So there were all kinds of rowdy bars, you know, all kinds of gay bars, all kinds of—so it was, every night was like a carnival, every night was like—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Something. [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —something happening. And of course, we were part of—and because I worked at the foundation and we knew and supported many of the artists, you know, I wanted to go see, you know, a lot of the productions that we had supported. And sometimes many times the artists, because of this, would invite us to the after-dinner party or whatever. So this was the beginning of us. Broadway was alive, as always, so it was dance, music, opera, and good restaurants.

During the day, heady conversations with—somebody asked me at one time, what is it like working at the foundation? I said, well, it's like when I was in grad school and you had a group of six, you know, really stellar students that had read the latest books and they were teaching you, teaching me, all of these books and the latest trends and the latest things, only now the teachers were the artists and they were, you know, not—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The happenings.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, the happenings. So New York City remains a magical, [marvelous –TYF] period of time. I got to meet scholars. And New York City is a place of people from all over the world, scholars from all over the world. NYU had a major studies center, was developing a center for performance, performance art, and so, again, performance art, avant-garde art of all kinds.

And the beginning of, like, newer ideas. The Museo del Barrio was going strong at this time. Of course, we were supporters of the museo privately—the foundation had also given some grants, but we would go.

So New York City remains what New York City has always been, a place of adventure, new creations, new ideas. And it was a wonderful, wonderful time.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You had a lot of people, though, right? Now, I was fortunate to be at several, several dinners, many, many dinners at your house and you hosted a lot of people and I'm sure a lot of conversations went on, like the dinners, I attended. And can you say something about that or just how you used this those times?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, well, Dudley is a wonderful cook. So we had a small table for six people, so it was just perfect, because it was a wonderful conversational space. And a lot of times, people we had supported—my work in Latin America, particularly I supported so many of the intellectuals and writers and thinkers and artists and cultural makers that were really creating the new tendencies and the new ideas. And of course, a lot of them traveled to New York City, either because they were bringing their groups or because they were just coming to New York City, they were invited to speak at different universities.

So yes, our table became a wonderful place of convivios, of conversations that just went on into the night. We had wonderful dinners, good wine and just brilliant conversation. Because whether it was Néstor García Canclini from Mexico, or Lourdes Arizpe from Mexico, whether it was Guillermo Gómez-Peña from the West Coast, whether it was [artists –TYF] from the Taller Puertorriqueño, or the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, whether it was the director of the Ballet Hispanico, you know, whether it was the director or the workers from the Spanish-language theater in New York City, Miriam Colon, a lot of the [actors –TYF] from the different ensembles.

And then, of course, we were very interested in the younger artists, the people that were creating new spaces, particularly Asian American, African American and Latinos in New York City. So there were a lot of alternative spaces that we were, involved with.

So a lot of these folks came. And so, yes, the dinners and our little apartment—whenever we meet people, they always fondly remember 80 St. Marks Place. And a lot of people say, oh, I was in New York City and I passed 80 St. Marks Place and I said good-bye, you weren't there. And I said, no, I was there.

So I came to San Antonio. The next phase is San Antonio for me. So I don't know that we've covered a lot.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No, we did. It's a lot. Yeah, we can—we can always go back, too.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, I think maybe we should listen to this and see what else we can or I can—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You know, I'm worried about the playback part. I want to make sure I don't erase something.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: After it's all been transcribed, after it's transcribed?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, oh, yeah. So does this go back to San Antonio? No? Because you were in New York City a couple of decades it seemed like.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And you had wonderful experiences. You're beginning to think about leaving New York City, or how did you—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, let's see. Now, I don't even know when I retired. I'll have to look that up. I have a notebook that has all that. Maybe we should outline this and talk about it later so that we can—retirement.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay, let me put it on hold.

[END SD4 TR02.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: All right, Tomás. Thank you very much for the conversation about your New York City years and your work at the Rockefeller Foundation. It was very, very significant, not just for Latinos in the U.S., but for the whole experience you describe, and in a broader scale internationally as well. You introduced a lot of artists across borders, you know, and brought in a lot of ideas and inspired people with the lectures and conversations.

But another area that you made a big impact on for a lot of people and a lot of institutions is collecting art and your appreciation of art and the appreciation of archives and appreciation of collections. And maybe you could reflect a little bit about how you began collecting and what motivated you to collect and what value you saw in collecting.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, you know, one time I was thinking about, now from the vantage point of today, 2014, I was looking back and I was saying, well, what did we really accomplish during the civil rights movement, which is the generation that I belong to, the civil rights, the Chicano civil rights movement in the arts? And I said, well, so what did we leave behind for the generation, the present generation, in terms of the arts?

And it dawned on me in a very simple way, well, now they have an image bank. People have collected and put together archives and selections of a lot of the art that was done during that time. There's publications, there's now beginning of books, a series, the *A Ver* series is a good example at UCLA, where individual artists and their work is documented. So we left behind an image bank.

And we left behind an archive, an archive of stories, an archive of—and these—and this archive—I'm going to use, you know, Diana Taylor's notion of the archive and the repertoire. We left behind an archive, a repertoire and an image bank. And so I feel that I've contributed to each one of those areas, you know, the archive, the repertoire and the image bank, by collecting ephemeral material. Because one of the thrusts of the Chicano movement in the arts was preserving—it was a kind of a cultural project. And the two words that were in all the exhibitions and so on were "resistance" and "affirmation," an oppositional consciousness to the status quo and affirming of your own particular culture, your own, you know, way of doing things.

So based on this idea of resistance and affirmation, I started collecting, because I felt that all the exhibitions reflected these notions in one way or another.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And that it was not just the theorizing of it, but it was actually individual manifestations when you had both overt kind of socially conscious art, but also avant-garde art that had elements of resistance and affirmation.

So I started collecting, you know, ephemeral material, announcements to openings, because I realized that each postcard, even if they just announced one artist, had a list of all the artists that participated and the date of the first showing and so on. So I said, well, these are very important because it's out of this ephemeral material, these, as I call them, *pedacitos de papel*, little pieces of paper, it's from these *pedacitos de papel* that people can then create, you know, a narrative about the development of Chicano art. And it's in these pieces where it talks about who participated in this, who was there for this, you know, who were the participating artists. Or even if it was an individual artist, it had some very basic details of the shows that he had had and, you know, his

themes and so on.

So I started collecting by myself when I was—remember, I'm now—I lived in New York City, I lived in California, I lived in San Francisco. I would come to San Antonio because my parents were here. And each time that I came to San Antonio, each time when I was in San Francisco, I had been collecting, clipping, you know, and cutting little, tiny, you know, a two-page brochure, a postcard announcement show, a section about an artist from the *Tecolote* or whatever, and I'd put them in folders and began developing then an archive, an archive of Chicano art primarily.

Then Shifra Goldman and I had worked on this massive bibliography of Chicano art. And we had gone through all the community newspapers, so I had a lot of—both because we had a lot of the early Chicano newspapers, but also photocopies of things that we didn't have, from all over the country, to write this bibliography.

And I knew how important these postcards and these little pieces of paper were when we were writing the introduction to that bibliography, which is about 50 pages about the themes of Chicano art and whatever. You know, we referred constantly to her's and my archive of ephemeral and material, which were postcards, little brochures, little exhibition catalogs, some homemade, cutouts from newspapers, folded folders, letters from artists in which they gave us information about their trajectory. And we had just put them in files.

So this is the beginning of this—and then, of course, I had all this—when we finished the project, when I finished the project with Shifra, she and I had all this accumulated bank of information. And so I had on my own sort of, like, been reading books about archives and archiving and realized, you know, that this is the basis, the archives are the basis for any kind of larger study about themes and movements and individual artists and so on, that they were rich in basic material.

So I said, well, where am I going to house them? By this time, there were several major archives of American-Latino art, particularly Chicano art. One was in Santa Barbara, which became the locus—Santa Barbara started actively collecting archives from individual artists. And artists knew about this, and so pretty soon they, the artists, gave their own collections to Santa Barbara—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Or sold.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —or sold their collections to Santa Barbara. Many gave to Santa Barbara. And so Santa Barbara began acquiring a reputation, and some collectives, like the RCAF, people like the Artesanos from New Mexico, you know, the early groups in New Mexico. A lot of them gave their particular archives that they had, and they began really assiduously collecting archives.

And then larger places, like Stanford, begin buying and acquiring archives of individual artists and collections.

So I decided, well, I would like to give my archive someplace, because by this time I was carrying around all these boxes of little pieces of paper. And I decided, well, when I was in New York City, you know, I had been carrying, you know, 40 or 30 boxes of paper all over and, you know, I just can't handle it anymore, so I'll find a place for it. And I felt—

[... –TYF]

Okay, we're recording again. This is Gilberto Cardenas interviewing Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. We're doing the interview on January 2, 2015 in San Antonio at Tomás and Dudley's house, at the condo,

in San Antonio.

We are going to continue with the chronology of Tomás's life. And we have coming back to San Antonio by way of New York City, which I think I'll just turn it to Tomás to talk about the move back to San Antonio, about five years ago, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay. We came back to San Antonio five years ago. It was, like, 2010. It was kind of a serendipitous event. I came to a meeting at the old Alameda Museum, and it was about the continuing work with the Alameda, but now mainly the Alameda Theater. And I was in a meeting and Dudley walked down the street, he had been looking at apartments because we were thinking of coming back to San Antonio, and after the meeting was over he said, well, I found an apartment that I want you to look at. And it was on Commerce Street about a block up from the Alameda, across the street from what used to be the Hotel Continental, right at the center of what I remembered was the epicenter of my growing up in San Antonio in the 1940s and '50s when I was a young person in San Antonio.

This was the downtown. This was the Mexican downtown. This was the mercado, this was the Teatro Nacional, this was the Teatro Zaragoza, this was the cathedral, this was the Plaza de Armas, this is where all the Mexican cultural, bohemian clubs, and restaurants, and the whole sort of, like, downtown, Mexicano downtown. So I was very, very thrilled when we walked up the apartment, 331 West Commerce.

We walked up to the apartment. And it's just an ordinary building with a number over a door. And we walked upstairs, and then it was this huge loft, it was a beautiful loft. It had 15-foot-high ceilings and about, I don't know, 14 windows overlooking Commerce Street. And it had a video room, and it had a lot of space. And it was just like a New York City—a fancy New York City [loft –TYF].

And I was just flabbergasted that we would come all the way to San Antonio to find a New York City loft. And so I said this is it, this is really what I was looking for, because it was right, right in the heart—this is, for me, as a native of San Antonio, this was coming back home to the very, very core of the Mexicano culture in San Antonio with, as I said, the theaters that I used to go to, the Spanish-speaking theaters, the Hotel Continental, which is where all the [artists –TYF] that came from Mexico, when they came to perform, musicians and actors and actresses, stayed. It was a place near the cathedral, near city hall, near the mercado. So it became sort of like a dream space. And I said, well, we have to have a name for it. So we called it Casa Cariño.

And we then brought an artist, the artist who did the mural at Mi Tierra, to do a little—the transom, over the transom, to paint a Casa Cariño sign. And he did a very beautiful job. It was two little doves holding up, like, a piece of [ribbon –TYF] with flowers that said "Casa Cariño."

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Who was that, Tomás, that painted it?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Robert] Ytuarte, the artist who does the painting for the murals in Mi Tierra.

So it became a dream house. We brought—we waited and waited, installed—the main thing was to install bookcases for all my collection of books on Chicano culture, Chicano art, history. And slowly we began creating this very beautiful loft on West Commerce Street.

Coming to San Antonio was based on three really basic reasons. One was money, one was health, and one was family. So the three reasons came together at this loft. One was family, because my

brother, who is the only person that I have now from my family, he has two daughters and they each have two children. So they're my grand-nephews and grand-nieces. So I have four grand-nieces and grand-nephews, my brother and his two daughters, my two nieces, and his wife. And that's my immediate family. So that's the family that received me in San Antonio. And then, of course, all our old, old friends, people that have been—that I've grown up with. One was Antonia Castañeda, the historian, the Chicano historian, feminist historian, and Arturo Madrid, who was a distinguished professor at Trinity University.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Tomás, can I just interrupt you and ask you to name your brother's name and his wife?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, yeah. So Arturo and Antonia were the oldest friends. And of course, my family, my family consists of my brother, his name is Hector Ybarra, and his wife, Alicia Ybarra, and his daughters. His oldest daughter is Laura and his younger daughter is Leslie. And Laura has two children. She has a boy named—he's, like, maybe, like, 3 years old and his name is Rocco, and she has a little girl who's now 3 years old and her name is Sloane. And my other niece, Leslie, has two children. Her daughter is 9 years old and her name is Isabella, and she has a little brother named Giovanni. So my two nieces, Laura and Leslie, and their four children, each has two. So that's my immediate family.

So that was the family that I came to. So that was one of the reasons to really come back to San Antonio, to really, in my elder years, to sort of, like, reconnect with the real meaning of where I come from, which is the families, the traditions, the language, the food, the atmosphere, the meaning of being Chicano, a Tejano, from San Antonio.

The other reason was financial. Now that I was on a set income, I had to reduce my circumstances. So in that sense, I actually went the other way. It cost a little bit more or equivalent to what we were paying in New York City, for the loft on West Commerce Street. But it was a wonderful, wonderful loft.

And the third was health. I came back to San Antonio because I was getting older and I wanted a place to retire where I was comfortable and where we thought the climate is much better, and so on.

So those three reasons, money, health, and family, were the three driving missions that brought me to San Antonio.

When I came here, of course, I found the community of San Antonio, my community, was not only, the immediate community, old friends, like Antonia [Castañeda –TYF] and Arturo [Madrid –TYF] and many other friends from academia that lived in San Antonio, San Antonio has some major academic institutions. The University of Texas in San Antonio, whose president, Ricardo Romo, and I grew up together. When we were young, his parents had a grocery store where my parents shopped. So I knew Romo since he was a little boy and had met him when he was at UCLA and kept sort of a friendship with him.

And so people like him, people that were old, old friends, coming to San Antonio, and people like Henry Muñoz, whom I had met when I had written this essay called *Rasquachismo*. And he had—he's a designer and has an architectural firm in San Antonio. And he wrote a very interesting paper called *Mestizo Regionalism* which he [states –TYF] that the architecture of the Southwest, of Tejas, should reflect this mestizo ambiance and that he was going to propose that it's the regional architecture of the United States, that each region should reflect that particular style and form of

building that is related to the climate and to the [culture –TYF] and to the history of that region. So he became rather important in San Antonio, designing buildings that had this aesthetic which he called mestizo regionalism.

So when I came to San Antonio, one of the memorable moments for me was when I came once and Henry, who was at that time—he was also a very significant political mover and shaker here in San Antonio and at that time was running the Alameda complex which was the museum, the theater, and the whole Alameda complex. And he was in charge of that. And so he was a significant person in the cultural life of San Antonio.

So he picked me up at the airport and we drove [downtown –TYF]. He said, I know that you're very interested in the Alameda, one of the major historical theaters in San Antonio, which is as important to me and to Chicanos, I think, as the Apollo is to the African-American community. It's a beautiful theater in the art-deco style, and it had some artwork [by early Chicano artists –TYF]. In the entrance way, it has a large sculptor called the *Spirit of the Dance* by Teran who was a 1920s, 1930s San Antonio artist. And [also –TYF] it has some murals on both sides inside. So anyway, it's a very historic theater and a [building –TYF] that meant a lot to me.

So when Henry picked me up at the airport, he drove me by the theater, and I was very excited because they had just restored the Alameda sign that blinked, you know, on the outside, a huge, important sign. And so we drove by and I was very excited to see the Alameda, but I was totally surprised when he stopped the car right in front of the Alameda. We got out of the car, across the street he parked, we walked over to the front of the Alameda and he reached in his pocket and gave me the keys to the Alameda, to the front door.

And I said, we're going inside? He said, yes, we're going inside. And it was, like, really a thrilling moment when I opened the door. But when I—

[END SD5 TR04.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. We can go on.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I opened the door, and I was just thrilled because, as I opened the door and started walking up the front level to the first floor of the theater, the stage lit up. And on the stage was this banquet table all laid out. And there was a mariachi band playing. And all the people stood up, were applauding. And I was walking up to the stage and I was crying, you know. It was the whole excitement of coming back to San Antonio.

The band that was playing was my high school band. It was a mariachi band. And it just showed, you know, when I had left there was no mariachi bands and folkloricos and so on, and now the Mexicano culture was alive in San Antonio. And all the people around the table on the stage of the Alameda were many of my old friends from high school, and so on. So it was one of the really, really thrilling moments.

We, of course—Henry had made it all possible. He had contacted all the people. Had arranged the staging, had created, you know, the ambience, had brought in the cooks from Mi Tierra to cook on the stage. And it was a wonderful, wonderful sense, in a way my homecoming to San Antonio.

And that feeling of comunidad, of a community that was welcoming me back was really very, very powerful and helped me to understand that no matter where we go and how we travel the world, it's our own community, our own small space, wherever it might be, in our own region of the country

that really, really is home.

So not only was I coming back to San Antonio, but I was feeling that I was being very, very welcomed. It was particularly important for me to connect with Henry Muñoz, because I had given a lecture about his work at the Louvre in Paris that had a big exhibition of immigrants, you know, all the different kinds of immigrants that came to Paris. And in relation to that, at the Louvre itself, they had a symposium and an exhibition of immigrant art of all the kinds of immigrants that came to Paris. And they had invited several of us from the United States to talk about this.

And so I had chosen to talk about Chicano art and the fact not that we were immigrants, but the fact that there was a new stream of younger immigrants coming and that the United States, of course, is an immigrant country. So this notion of immigration and the art produced by immigrants and what they bring, their values and their customs and their traditions and their folklore and their music, was very appropriate to talk about Henry Muñoz's architecture, because I feel, and I still feel, that he hasn't gotten his due as a creator, that people really don't see his work or know his work as [a designer –TYF].

He has very significant buildings in San Antonio, like the convention center and the Mexican cultural center, the Mexican government cultural center, that he's designed. And inflected in his designs are his notions of mestizo regionalism, which is to use the colors and the building materials, like caliche stone or the different forms of clay in Tejas that they make adobe from, and the different [artisanal –TYF] traditions into the buildings.

For example, he has designed a school in south Tejas that's in the shape of a guitarron. And the high school students composed a corrido for their high school. And the building, when you see it from the air, looks like a Corbusier, you know, modernist building, but it's shaped in the form of a guitarron.

In the civic center in San Antonio, there's a beautiful bridge that was inspired by the accordion. When you open up the accordion all the way out, the form of it is very, very lyrical. And [Muñoz –TYF] built a bridge that's in this form of this open accordion. So very subtly, he's incorporated notions [of mestizaje –TYF]. A lot of times in his building, he uses the colors that low-riders, people that work on low-rider cars use these sort of flecks of bright red or blue or silver sparkling [paint –TYF]—in the cars. He's used a lot of that and tiles and mosaics. The plazas, the way that every [Mexican –TYF] city has a plaza with a cúpula for the musicians.

[Muñoz –TYF] incorporated many of these notions of mestizo regionalism and has given them a sort of, like, a fresh, new twist. He [built –TYF] a wall full of molcajetes that's really quite wonderful. The molcajetes, as an object, when you have, like, 300 of them inserted in a wall and the light comes through makes a very beautiful and arresting, modernist statement. This molcajete wall is at a restaurant that he designed called Acenar, which is on Houston Street in San Antonio.

So throughout the city, the presence of Henry [Muñoz's –TYF] architectural style and meaning is incorporated into this modernist architecture. And I still think that people have not really woken up to his very important contribution of looking at his Tejano roots and creating a sort of mestizo regionalism, as he calls it.

And of course, [Muñoz –TYF] was very interested in terms of my notion of *Rasquachismo* and the use of color and the use of accumulation of detail and the incorporation of ordinary things in [a bricolage –TYF] that he's incorporated into the design of his buildings.

So we hit it off very well and became deep friends from my coming to San Antonio. So I began feeling that coming to San Antonio was both—it was an epiphany that turned out to be a marvelous example of how rich all our communities are, with all kinds of underground ideas and visual and historic and cultural notions that the artists, the Chicano artists, were incorporating into their work.

Of course, San Antonio not only was a space where some of the earliest Chicano art, like the Con Safos group, with Mel Casas and many of the other artists of his generation created. And it was in Tejas, where some of the early Chicano exhibitions, like *Dale Gas* and *Capirotada* [happened – TYF]. And of course, some of the senior artists were still around, Kathy Vargas, and a lot of the muralists, the first branch of muralists, they were still here, they were still creating. Al Rendon, the photographer, Kathy Vargas, a photographer. They remembered when they had an important group of photography called *Ladrones de la Luz*. [Members of the group – TYF] went on then to become significant photographers all over [... – TYF].

And of course, San Antonio was also the cradle of a lot of the—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Tomás, let's just stop for a second. Okay. Okay. You can continue now, sorry.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Huh?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You're good, Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So all these artists, many, many whose names escape me, people like César Martínez, [Santa Barraza – TYF], and Jesse Treviño, all these artists were creating a lot of work based on all this—the things that surrounded them.

But not only the visual artists, San Antonio was also the cradle of a really significant literary renaissance. Some of the earliest Chicano newspapers and actually journals in San Antonio were created and very significant poets, and particularly, I think, women poets, like Carmen Tafolla and [Rosmarie Catacolos – TYF], but there was a whole cadre of very important women poets and writers, [including Angela de Hoyos – TYF], that created, you know, this renaissance. And this, of course, was also a place where a lot of the cantos were literary—the first sort of examples of massive literary gatherings. *Canto al Pueblo* was in San Antonio. It had literary journals, it had [bilingual – TYF] newspapers.

Of course, it had a great tradition of newspapers in Spanish. One of the most important ones was *La Prensa* which has been publishing—started out by Mexican exiles that came after the Mexican Revolution, since 1920, '30 and '40, in that period. And it had a whole history of theater.

And so the carpas, the Vaudeville, legitimate theater, three-act [dramas – TYF], all of this theater, visual arts, were all part of what had been here that I had dipped in and out as I was growing up and as I would come from New York City to meet some of the artists, to see them and their exhibitions. But now coming back home, I really began getting to know them in a deeper way, visiting their studios and talking to them and feeling ["en casa" – TYF].

For example, working with community-based organizations, like the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center and San Anto [Cultural] Arts, organizations that, like in many other places, had devoted their whole being and existence to the nurturing of young Chicano artists of all sorts, dancers and musicians and so on, but also the visual arts were very significant in these organizations.

So immediately, of course, I not only joined the major—major in the sense that they were the mainline organizations, like the San Antonio Museum of Art, which was beginning to buy and recognize Chicano artists for their collection, the McNay Art Institute where I first sort of—if you remember when I talked about how I got into art at the McNay, but also the Chicano-based, community-based cultural institutions, like the San Anto Cultural Arts and the Guadalupe and the Esperanza, [SAY Sí –TYF], and NALAC, National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, that were all situated here in San Antonio.

So slowly I began meeting the artists, meeting the organizations, begin helping them to—begin supporting them and trying to be of assistance in their projects. And particularly, I remember once the Esperanza had a Dia de Muertos celebration. They have a little house called La Casa de Cuentos, which is on the West Side, the near-West Side. And in the Casa de Cuentos, they're trying to recuperate the oral histories of the communities of San Antonio.

One of their projects is to just talk to the old folks, record them, do videos of them, videos of the old community members and [their memories –TYF], and also have a visual archive. They have one of the great photographic archives in which they have scanned many of the photographs of community events, starting back to the 1920s and '30s, holidays, [festivals –TYF], and so on.

So they created this Casa de Cuentos, which is an old house where people gather on Saturdays, and then they do this, they actually—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where is that located, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: On the west side, [on Guadalupe and Colorado streets –TYF].

And so going there, that's where they have a lot of community [events –TYF]. Esperanza Peace & Justice Center has this major building on San Pedro Avenue, where they do their major productions and exhibitions. They have exhibitions for visual art. And they have musical programs, and they have a lot of community, political and cultural events.

But the Casa de Cuentos is an old house in the community that they restored, it's a beautiful restoration, an old house in the community that people are very comfortable in. And on Saturdays—they have different programs there, but this archival project is on Saturdays, where they have people come and tell their stories, bring their pictures, they're scanned, and they're creating one of the most important archives of community-based culture and arts in the country.

They also have another area which is called Mujer Artes, another old house near the Guadalupe, another old house that they have converted into a space where they bring artisans from Mexico to teach women in San Antonio how to work with clay and embroidery and different women's crafts, Mujer Artes they call it. And Mujer Artes every year has a sale.

And so they're all community-based organizations that are keeping the Mexicano, Tejano, Chicano, and Latino culture [alive –TYF].

I mention all this because the elements that they use to talk about are all these elements that comprise our community at the moment. Obviously, the Mexicano culture—for example, in Mujer Artes, the figural ceramics from a lot of states, in Michoacán, and so on, where they make little figurines that are—that are figurines that portray the types, you know, an old man selling wood, a lady making tortillas, so on, those kinds of figurines, but also ritual objects, like candelabras and censers, to put in church and things like that. And then, of course, all the embroidery, all the

different women's crafts. So they do all of that at the Mujer Artes.

And the Casa de Cuentos has a cultural side where they're trying to recuperate the visual and audio and oral traditions of the community. Well, at the Casa de Cuentos they had a Día de Muertos. And again, although Día de Muertos in many, many communities was reactivated in the '60s, particularly in California by artists who took this old tradition and started making altars and community-based altars and so on, in San Antonio you have that in many of the organizations. They have community-based altars and artists make altars, even in front of the cathedral they make altares para Día de Muertos.

But the tradition of the home altars, of the really intimate altars made by people that are actually doing a ritual for their ancestors or for their loved ones that died during the last year, that is not as much done as the sort of public spectacle of Día de Muertos.

So at Casa de Cuentos, they had this Día de Muertos. And it's a house, so they invited different families to make altares. And that's a big difference because these are more intimate. They're where people really are—it's a ritual, it's not a public ceremony. The community comes and views them, but it's very much a community-focused event.

And so I went to one, I did an altar, and that was a year where some very significant Chicano art historians had died. That was the year soon after the death of Shifra Goldman and of [Olivier Debroise –TYF]. And so I did an altar for art historians that had died this year. And I did an altar based on Chucho Reyes, the Mexican—probably the dean of altaristas in Mexico. He didn't do Day of the Dead altars, but he did altares [de Dolores –TYF]. But he was very [influential –TYF] because Chucho Reyes, if anybody in Mexico—they say if anybody knows about the real meaning of what Mexican culture, the essence of Mexican [aesthetics –TYF], it's Chucho Reyes, not only because he decorated his home and—he was an antiquarian. He had an antiques store in Mexico City and sold a lot of the santos and bultos and the esferas, those wonderful esferas that he—the colors that he used. So he's recognized as an esthete who really incorporated what the true [aesthetic –TYF] of Mexico was all about.

So I used one of his—a poster that I had bought in Mexico City of his work as a basis to do an altar for the [art historians –TYF]—and of course, part of all the altares is the teaching. When you stand in front of the altar on opening night, they have a member from that family, who made the altar, tell you about how, well, you notice that we have a picture here, but one side, one member of the picture, the photograph, is covered in cloth, in black cloth, and that's because that person is still alive. And so the altares for the other, the person that's deceased, but we only had one where they were together, so in order not—he's still alive or she's still alive, so they clothed it in black crepe. And things like that that tell you how things are done.

Or somebody would tell you, well, the reason that we put a seashell on the altar is because, and then they tell you why, you know, the seashell. In many African religions, they have a goddess of the sea, very significant, actually, goddess in terms of feminism. So you begin learning how in the tradition there's a lot of elements from different cultures, the Mexican culture, but also the cultures that have been incorporated. So it's sort of like a Pan-Latino knowledge that people are building. And so you learn how different families do the altares and the meaning of why they put, you know, these kind of cigarettes or that kind of tequila, and you hear the stories of the person that died. And it's very warm [conversation –TYF].

And then outside, they have a yard dance. And they did it just like I remembered when I was growing up. It's dirt, but they dampen it with water and they stomp on it two or three days before, a

week before. Every night they go over for a couple of hours and dampen it, stomp on it, dampen it, stomp on it, so by the time the day of the dance, the dirt is really packed and you can dance on it. It's like a dance floor.

So they have conjunto, Tejano conjunto music, and they dance. And when I went in there, I really felt—this was the Day of the Dead, my first Day of the Dead in San Antonio, that I was really back home. I had been to Day of the Dead when I lived in San Francisco, I had been to Day of the Dead in New York City. But this Day of the Dead in San Antonio was a particular Day of the Dead because it was very Tejano, the music, the food, the ambiente, el habla, the way the people spoke—I felt this is home, this is where I belong. I am from this place and this place is very [special –TYF] and I'm very, very happy to be here.

So those were some instances where I, in very specific ways, I began feeling that I was back home in the place where I came from, San Antonio. So that was my experience coming back to San Antonio.

The other [element –TYF], of course, was my immediate family. It's been great to have a young—my grand-nephews and grand-nieces. Each one of them has a particular personality. Each one of them is—and you can really see the dreams their parents have for them, going to university. They already know that they're going to be going to the university. They're, you know, 9 and 6 and they're already, they already are learning that they're going to have, you know, the wherewithal to go to school and be whatever it is that they want, to contribute, and to learn about being a citizen and so on.

And so in all the organizations here in San Antonio, the San Anto Cultural Arts is another organization that's very important. It's very much situated right in the barrio. And what they do is they have a journalistic program. They do a lot of programs [... –TYF]—they have two that are very important.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And where are they based, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: They're based, again, on the West Side. I can't remember, it's Colima or one of the West Side streets, right in the barrio, old, old barrio.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And the name of the organization again?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: San Anto Cultural Arts. And they do two very important programs. One is a journalistic program where they do a newspaper called *El Placazo*. Placas, of course, are the graffiti tags that people have. So rather than just tagging, they want the students to learn how to write, how to really write [journalistic –TYF] stories.

So they have college students and journalists from the newspapers come and work with the students, and they learn how to write stories about la tiendita. They go to la tiendita. They also bring a photographer, like a newspaper, a photo journalist, and they take pictures of la tiendita, and they interview the old man or the old lady who runs the tiendita. And then they write up a story, and they correct it, [the story –TYF], and then they do an edition and they publish the newspaper.

And it's a really [community-centered –TYF] newspaper. They've done a wonderful [job –TYF]—of course, a lot of the artists, the visual artists, the graphic artists help them with design, and so they learn, they're learning about design, journalism, and the history and the culture of the community in a one-to-one transgenerational thing. So that's a very interesting and significant project.

The other, probably their best known, is that they do all—they're the ones that do all the murals on the west side, San Anto Cultural Arts. They have a team of lead artists, all the way from Manny [Castillo –TYF], who was the person who originated, who was a graphic and back in the early, I think, '80s.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What's his name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Manuel—Manny—[Castillo –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But he was the one that started [the organization –TYF]. He was one of the [artists –TYF] that started doing the west side murals. And when he died tragically at a very young age of cancer, it was a very big loss. And the community kept the [space that he created –TYF], and now it's a major, important, community-based organization.

So they invite senior artists or artists that have been around for a while to be the lead artists. And they have teams of young people. And they're the ones that do all the West Side murals in housing units, community housing units, on the walls of grocery stores, and empty walls. You know, they get the walls, they learn how to mix the paints, they learn how to do the murals.

And some important artists, you know, all the way from Vincent Valdez to a lot of important artists help them to design and to learn what a mural is all about, and then they paint murals on the West Side.

They have many other drug rehabilitation programs for, you know, drug addicts in the community. And they do—they're really involved with a real core of the working-class community, [they examine –TYF] the problems the community through the arts, but particularly through journalism and through the visual arts.

So again, there are a lot, all over the country, there are a lot of different forums that community cultural organizations have found. [Some –TYF] of them, of course, are very high tech, they all really know. They have computer classes, they have computers that they do a lot of their printing and so on through computer based [genres –TYF]. And they even do computer animation and computer-based art and so on.

So all of these organizations—those are just a few. There's many, many others, like SAY Sí, which is another very important organization. [It's –TYF] a state-of-the-art school for young people from all groups, but particularly the Mexican-American community.

So San Antonio is very [blessed –TYF] in these culturally-based [organizations –TYF] and the old, the traditional organizations, like the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center continues to flourish. And they, of course, have not only a visual arts program, but also a literary program. And they also have a very [established –TYF] dance program, one of the strongest ones in the state of Texas.

And [the Guadalupe programs were –TYF] started by Pedro Rodriguez way back in the early '60s. And Pedro had the idea that San Antonio was a gateway city. It was a city that was right next to Mexico and Latin America, and so that it should be the conduit to bring and send artists from Tejas to Mexico and to Latin America and vice versa, to bring artists from Latin America and Mexico.

And back in the early ['80s –TYF], he did a lot of projects that were transnational before that word was really—for example, he had one of the earliest meetings of artists, neomexicanistas, Mexican

artists in Mexico City that had been inspired by [Chicano art –TYF]. At that time in the late [70s and early '80s –TYF], Mexican art in Mexico City and throughout the republic was so international, they were into all the international trends. And they had sort of forgotten the—many, many artists were so into the new avant-garde international movements that they tended not to focus on the symbols of, let's say, the symbols of the Mexican Revolution and the heroes and the heroines and the myths and so on of the revolution. And the Chicano artists were doing all of this.

So there was a group of younger artists in Mexico that said, well, hey, the Chicanos are doing something that we should be doing. They're actually reactivating Mexican culture, reactivating it in new ways. They're having the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, but it's not our *Virgen de Guadalupe*, it's a *Virgen de Guadalupe* that has high heels and a short skirt. And that's something new. And boy, that's scandalous.

They're taking—there's a person in Chicago who does, you know, posters, and he is taking, you know, the Day of the Dead, la calaca, and putting it in ways that have to do with what's going on in Chicago. His name is Carlos Cortez, and we should learn from him.

So there was a lot of knowledge that underground had gone on to Mexico from Chicano art, and yet that wasn't much discussed in the United States. So Pedro organized one of the early transnational Chicano-Mexicano symposiums at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. And so many of these artists in Mexico, that were actually using Chicano iconography, came and spoke with [their Chicano counterparts –TYF], so it was a good exchange, it was a good cultural exchange.

So not only did they do it, he did it also with music, particularly northern Mexican music and Tejano music and how they, in many ways, had cross-fertilized. The accordion had gone to northern Mexico and had come from northern Mexico. And so all these cross-border traditions and how artists were experimenting with them, it was a really—in a way, it was avant-garde, because for either side it was how a tradition had been extended musically or visually on either side of the border. So Pedro organized that.

So the Guadalupe has a long history of working, particularly in Pedro's administration with the transnational idea of a gateway city, that San Antonio was a gateway city. And so they also had—the dance program [headed by Belinda Menchaca –TYF] was really very interesting. It's still growing. And they did back in the '80s a wonderful performance called *Rio Bravo*. And *Rio Bravo* was to take all the dance traditions away, the dance traditions on both sides of the Rio [Bravo del Norte –TYF], of the border, and put them together in an evening performance. And it was a historical [dance drama –TYF] that went from pre-Columbian, but not only the pre-Columbian [culture –TYF] of Mexico, but the indígena people from Tejas and the early—how they danced and the early [indigenous –TYF] ways in Tejas.

And then, you know, during the Mexican Revolution, the people that came and brought the dances from high society to Tejas. And then, of course, the Revolution. And then all the way up to now, Tejano music. It's a [fantastic –TYF] performance. It was choreographed. They brought one of the choreographers from Mexico because it was part of this transnational period. He learned about all the dance forms in Tejas and they learned about the folklórico and the dance forms from Mexico.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Do you remember his name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The choreographer? [Sr. Felipe Zamarripa –TYF]. They just did an anniversary performance this year, 2014 of *Rio Bravo*. It was sold out. And some of the original dancers from the original company are now professors of dance and so on. So it was a [joyful –TYF]

experience.

So I guess I'm just saying that in San Antonio, like every place in the Chicano-Latino communities, the cultural-based organizations are the ones that keep the specificity of the local culture alive. And the local culture has elements of, in this case specifically, of Mexico as Mexican American. But it also has elements, you know, from all the other cultures, in San Antonio particularly, because, you know, Texas was under seven flags, the German, the French, [the Mexican, the Confederacy –TYF], the, you know—all these influences were felt.

And there were immigrant groups, and San Antonio itself has a huge German [community –TYF], and Tejas itself, you know. In other words, it's a cosmopolitan area with a lot of [ethnicities –TYF]. And all the local community organizations sort of have—because the West Side, which is predominantly now Mexican American, at one time was an Italian, you know, it had a lot of Italian immigrants. So there were Italian restaurants. There's still a couple of them left on the West Side.

So those traditions were incorporated. And the Italians, [Belgians, Germans, etc., –TYF] when they did their fiestas, borrowed from the Mexican tradition. And so that then intermixing of cultures is very much alive in San Antonio. But the West Side [now –TYF] is predominantly and particularly Mexican American.

And so what I'm saying is that even though many of the artists that are now teaching have gone on to universities, and are very in tune with all the idioms of international art, [...–TYF] they have not forgotten the specificity of the culture that they come from, whether it be the barrio in Albuquerque or the barrio in El Paso or the barrio in San Antonio. And that was what was so [especially –TYF] refreshing for me to come back and see how the artists were using the very local elements in a global context, in an international, global way. And these were artists that were very much at home and knew the Guggenheim Bilbao and the Reina Sofia in Madrid and the Tamayo Museum in Mexico, and yet they were also very much attuned to the Calle Guadalupe and the abuelita who cooked this particular way or the dance of the pachucos that they remember from their grandparents, or they would bring photos and discuss.

So I began learning how [layered the community is –TYF]. We're learning how some of the elders, like myself, my role [is to be sort of a broker –TYF], a cultural informant to the community, because I had been one of the early [activists –TYF] that had straddled both worlds or the multiple worlds that the younger artists were now beginning to straddle. I had been to the Prado and I had been to the Louvre and I had been to the Tamayo, 30 years before they had. And so they wanted to learn, well, what was it like to be an avant-garde artist in Mexico in the 1960s? Or what was going on in San Antonio when you were growing up and the only Mexican artists were so-and-so?

So I became sort of a cultural [bearer –TYF]—and that became [significant –TYF]. I also became a student. Because in going away from Tejas and living in California and living in New York City and going to Europe a lot and going to Latin America through my work, I had forgotten the kind of specificity and the very small, little things. I remembered my mother once telling me a story that I always tell about los nombres de los panes, when you forget the names of the breads, the pan dulce, you forget your culture.

So I had forgotten a lot of the real nuances, the [basic –TYF], you know, precise ways of naming and calling and feeling and smelling and tasting of traditions. Not that I had [totally –TYF] forgotten, but they were not as vivid, and now everything became vivid. And now, at Christmas everybody has pecans and pecans are very [traditional –TYF], and then you realize that pecans were very important for the indígenas and almost everybody has a pecan tree in their backyard. And people

tell stories of how they would go as kids and get pecans. And they would take you to the park and the kids would [gather pecans –TYF]—so little things like that, and art, and writers are writing about these things. And so it's been a wonderful blessing.

And I'm seeing it now how also in a real sense, the main thing that I'm learning is how difficult it had been for our parents to maintain our culture and our traditions in a culture that wanted to eradicate and erase them. Because even though now we have bilingual education and we have mariachis in the schools and we have folkloricos and we have all these community centers, still many of our community, my own nieces, live in gringolandia, they live in suburbs. And there are other Chicanos that live there, but they don't have a community center there, they have to come all the way downtown. So it's very, very difficult for them to be bicultural and bilingual.

And it's something that we all would want, or multilingual or multicultural, but it's very, very difficult. And I'm learning how hard it is, even with my [grandnephews and grandnieces –TYF], to try and speak Spanish to them, although I'm not too worried because I know that they'll at least have the safety net of an economic base. So at one time they'll want to learn [Spanish –TYF] and we can send them to Mexico City for a summer or to Spain or to Caracas or even to Los Angeles to learn, relearn, their Mexican traditions.

But it's very, very difficult. And so that's been my goal. One is to be this interlocutor between the younger generation of artists and to tell them that some of us have already been there and here is what we learned, and the younger artists that want to learn for the first time. And every once in a while they ask me, well, we're doing an homanaje to Eva Garza, [a Chicana singer –TYF]. And I said, oh, I remember her, and I had books about her, so I helped them do the program, whatever it is, through readings and through here's some books about that, or helping them read the books and then discussing them.

So I feel very—I am no longer a teacher in a formal sense, but I'm a teacher in an informal sense, and I'm also a student because I'm learning a lot of things that I had forgotten about my own culture. And that's very exciting.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: How do you see the schools? Are they aligned with this, are they moving anywhere?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I think Tejas has been, is one of the—I don't know if—I don't know what number it is in terms of [education –TYF]—but it's very, very poor, they have very, very poor schools. The kids, those that go on to higher education, have not been well trained. From all I hear and from all I know, it's still, not only the school, but can you imagine, Gil, that one of the things that I thought, for all the energy and all that we can send a man to the moon and all that we can do, there's still many people in San Antonio that are illiterate, that don't know how to read or write, in English or in Spanish, you know, that haven't gone to school or that came as children or as immigrants and went [only –TYF] to the second grade.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so there's all kinds of programs to deal with that, and people getting, you know, their GEDs, but also just getting their certificates so that they can read and write. And so there's a lot of poverty. There's a lot of really difficult situations for many, many people. But the struggles that our generation did to create a safety net of some sort is still there and is very powerful.

So there are a lot of [socioeconomic –TYF] problems, but now, aside from the problems, we have people who can answer and address those problems, and that's what we didn't have when I was growing up.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Before. Now, NALAC is here, too. Do you want to talk a little bit about NALAC?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: NALAC is one of the [indispensible –TYF] organizations in San Antonio, the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture. It's located on Buena Vista Street. Again, they're all clustered together, so NALAC is very close to the Guadalupe Cultural Center, which is very close to San Anto Arts, which is very close to Casa de Cuentos, which is very close to [the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center –TYF]—they're all in a cluster, serving all different elements of the community.

NALAC is a national organization, and so a lot of its programs are not as directly related to San Antonio except that every year they have this [Leadership –TYF] Institute, which is one of the major, I think, significant institutes to train people who are devoting their lives to work in community-based cultural organizations, by bringing them to San Antonio for a week [during –TYF] which they learn from experts in their particular fields, what it is to work in these cultural organizations, how to, if you're the program officer that does all the programs for your organization, how to plan a season, how many tickets you need to sell to break even, what are the people that support dance, drama, and so on.

They bring in [teachers that teach –TYF] how you build a board. They bring in lawyers to talk to them about the legal things on the board. So really expert people in very specific, detailed, very precise program that they have every year that teaches these young people. And every year I'm part of the faculty. I've been part of the faculty for, like, six years. [The institute has been active for more than 15 years. –TYF]

But every year, the crowd, the crop of students keep getting better and better. They're just outstanding young people. So I like to do it because it gives you such a lift. The rest of the year you can go on. The one week that you spend with these young people who are going to be the next generation of community-based cultural workers and directors of cultural centers [is very inspiring –TYF].

And NALAC has developed a strong connection, a network of all these people over 15 years. So scattered throughout the country are what they call themselves, Nalaqueros and the Nalaqueros are very active as an association, through [social –TYF] media and through YouTube and through Skype, and so they're very connected, so they're very much attuned. And so if anything, if a problem comes up in Washington, D.C., that crowd immediately gets in and they can gather or whatever it is that they're working on, not only informational, but sharing and best practices to whatever [situation –TYF] comes up.

They meet every year, so I've been blessed to be part of the faculty [... for their sessions –TYF]. And so every year they have this [Leadership Institute –TYF].

And of course, it's very, very significant because [NALAC also has –TYF] all kinds of programs, grant programs. They're a re-granting organization. They get grants from major organizations, like Ford or Mellon, and then they re-grant them to artists to do work in the different [genres –TYF] of art. They have different re-granting programs. One is a transnational program that has to do with Central America and Mexico and the United States, bringing and sending artists and artisans in that region.

They have one for visual arts. They have, you know, different kinds of programs, re-granting programs.

And Maria, the head of NALAC, is part of the National Council of the Arts in D.C.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: This is María De León?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: María De León. And so María De León is really an outstanding cultural worker in the community. And since she has access to all the networks from throughout the United States, she is also very much a part of seeing whenever—there's a consortium of all these cultural organizations in San Antonio, they meet together and they strategize together in terms of funding equity and cultural equity and all the different [needs –TYF] that they have.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Do they have a name?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No. I don't know what they call themselves, coalition for something or equity coalition or something. But it's very important because they're all working together. And of course, María with all her national contacts, if this groups needs all of a sudden to see what are the statistics about—or how did San Antonio, the Latino community here—where are they on the scale of support, let's say, let's pick a place like Philadelphia? Well, she knows all the people in Philadelphia and the people that have been part of the NALAC institute, so she can get all their information. And they can do comparative things and they can say, well, look, in Philadelphia they have this kind of program and they get this kind of money, why don't we do it in San Antonio, what's the matter?

And so she's very, very [wise –TYF] in terms of not only idea based from all the ideas of all the young ideas that she has from all the Nalaqueros, but also being a part of the local scene in bringing the national perspective.

And you know, the white papers—they've done a paper on Chicano aesthetics. They've done a paper on funding. They've done [a historical survey –TYF], and so then they can spread out that [information through the local centers –TYF]. So it's a very important organization for San Antonio.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Now, you've helped them with their archives, you and Dudley?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. We have been helping them sort of organize their archives because, again, all these organizations, the Guadalupe, the Esperanza, SAY Sí, San Anto Cultural Arts, NALAC, all these organizations, one of the things they all have is incredible archives, meaning everything that they do they have archived. [The archives are incredible in terms of the material; however, they are not professionally organized and they're not accessible –TYF].

But slowly, they're coming to realize how important these archives are. The Esperanza, for example, has just hired an archivist, a person who is working with archives and has gone to archival school and is now putting their archives together. SAY Sí—they all have somebody or they've designated people to take care of the archives.

They need to really work on this because it's an area that [...–TYF] even though now we have archives, you know, particularly at universities, majors in Latino studies, Chicano studies, and Latino studies organized at universities that have archives of Latinos, there's still the community-based cultural work still based in the community and those archives are still in the community.

And so I think this is one of the holes in the fabric that we need to really pay attention to.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, where would the archives go? In one central place, does that make sense?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Most of them—I think what I'm finding out is that they want them to be located where they are, I mean, in their [local –TYF] space.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Space.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Which means getting money and getting a room that's particularly outfitted for archives.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Isn't that risky, I mean, there's times some will do it, some will not do it, some will get lost?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The main thing, I think, the first step is just to have them archived in archival—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —boxes and archival folders—and to get rid of all the things that work against the paper. You know, very basic things. The question of where they're going to wind up, I think, is still up in the air. Some have already begun the process. For example, Guadalupe has decided that their archives will go to UTSA, San Antonio. And so there's a special Guadalupe archive in the rare books area of the archives at UTSA.

Now they've decided that they need some archives at their local space because they're going to do—they're trying to [create –TYF] a very local historical room or museum at the Guadalupe and their archive's going to be there so people can have access to it there.

The Esperanza is at the beginning process of putting their [archive –TYF] together. I don't think they've dealt with the question of where they're going to go yet. But it is an important question because not only where they're going to have to be—there's all—I mean, that's a whole other question about access and how people can go and a place where it has four or five [computers –TYF] rather than just one and all that.

But the main thing that I'm concerned about is the first step, which is to gather the archives, save them—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —keep them, have somebody responsible for them, know what is there with all the teams. And there are all kinds of grants or summer programs or stuff that they can do with young kids. High school kids can [be interns –TYF] in the archive, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Usually the difficulty there is just sustaining it.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You know, they may get it one year, but then not have it the year after or you can have a change of director. You have all sorts of different variables and all the different organizations.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: That's right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you'd think, you know, hopefully, UT San Antonio would create a program where they would reach out and work with [the Guadalupe –TYF] so they could keep the key material, have electronic stuff there, too, objects there, but then also have a centralized place to maintain it, and then use the archivist or whoever is responsible for it to go to these community centers and help them maintain what they have as well.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, I think, in terms of Chicano art, the next phases of its development [is to focus on archives at –TYF] the yearly meetings, like Latino Art Now!, that there need to be very specific sessions on archiving and get people that are doing this to come and talk about the problems and so on.

So archives, I think, loom very big in the next phase of Chicano art and Chicano culture. So that's been my experience up to now in San Antonio.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you talk about your health? Is that something you're comfortable with, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, I'm getting older.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And I'm having to deal with a lot of the aches of old age. And I'm trying to learn how to do things that I never learned how to do, which is to take care of myself, and also to learn that, for those of us that have spent all our lives, sort of, working outside of ourselves with our community, that we need to turn inside of ourselves as well. And the inner spirit and the inner spirituality and the inner psychology and the inner energy has to be recalibrated so that we can continue going. Because less and less I'm being less external. I travel much less, very little, almost.

I feel very comfortable because I no longer have to go to conferences. At one time I felt I had to be there to get my voice in—but I feel very comfortable to know that there are other people that I trained or that many of my colleagues trained that carry on our ideas in their own way, and that they're discussing what has to happen, and I don't have to be there.

And now with Skype and stuff, there's all kinds of ways that you can be there without being there. And so I'm turning now more inward. I'm reading books on life passages. And I know that there are many passages in life. And sometimes what you're supposed to do or what you think you did or what you want to do at one point is neither important, nor do you have to do it at another stage.

So I'm at the passage of the internal where you now turn inward and deal with your mortality and your legacy and your, your internal for you, not so much in terms of the community or externally. That somebody else will do.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so I'm actually I'm in a good space. I'm dealing with some heavy stuff, but you know, that's what life is all about.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. Is there anything else about San Antonio, Tomás, that you—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Probably, but I can't—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Your friends, do you have—your neighbors now?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, one of the things that I want to talk about was the Westside Preservation Alliance.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. What is that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: What do you call it? WPA, the Westside Preservation Alliance.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. And who heads that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: We don't—it's a—we work together.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: It's a collective?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And when was that formed, Tomás?

[... –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Approximately?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: About five years ago.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, it was already here when I came. That was five, so maybe—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Five years plus?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And who's involved with it?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, there's Antonia [Castañeda –TYF], people from Esperanza, people from the preservation society, [activists from the community –TYF]—university people from UTSA, mainly—well, all Chicanos [and allies –TYF]. I mean, mainly Chicanos.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Was Guadalupe, are they involved or not?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Guadalupe? No.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [WPA is an organization of –TYF] individuals.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

[... –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And what do they do? What's your goal or what's—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Preservation of the West Side in terms of gentrification. Preservation of the built environment.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It's a very big issue in San Antonio with a lot of historic buildings and so on.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Do you meet regularly, quarterly?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, we meet twice a month. And we've lost major, major [historic – TYF] buildings in San Antonio, like the La Gloria, which was a dance hall and [social space, and Univision – TYF]—the early Spanish-language TV that was here, the structure [where Spanish language television was born – TYF], to try and save that, Casa Maldonado, which was a [gathering – TYF] place for social and political meetings and right next to the Guadalupe.

And many, many of the casitas are historic, you know. They've been here for a hundred years. And there's quite a few of them.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And where do you meet, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Where do we meet? At the Esperanza and the Casa de Cuentos. [... –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Who is the director of Esperanza?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Graciela Sánchez.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Did I send you the letter we wrote about Tobin Center?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No. I don't think I got a copy. So, Tomás, I mean, what's the politics here? How has that happened? Has it changed? Is it—do you have more Latino elected officials, Chicano elected officials? Has that made a structural difference? Is it identity? What's your thoughts on that and its impact on the arts, too, and culture? Is that something that concerns you or you have an interest in?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Yes, of course –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Are you going to comment about that at all? Yeah?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So I know there's a cultural arts director for the city.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, Felix Padrón.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What does that office do and what—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Oh, they have a lot of programs—they have public art programs where a lot of artists do public arts.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: They give grants now?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, they give grants. They have all kinds of [projects –TYF]. The big division or [their big agenda includes –TYF] economic development.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Have you ever fallen in with them or do you work with them directly?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The WPA is the one that questions a lot of the [official institutions –TYF], whenever there's anything—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right, it's through that organization. So, Tomás, after you moved back here, you were called in—

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: One of the things that I have been really involved in that has also been quite [powerful –TYF] is me being a member of the WPA, the Westside Preservation Alliance. And it's a group of community-based—not community-based, but people from the community as well as scholars who are very concerned with the built environment and the historical environment of San Antonio, particularly the West Side, that's why it's the Westside Preservation Alliance.

We've seen in many, many cities how particular ethnic communities have been razed at one time for urban development. Now, in terms of gentrification, artists come in and totally change the character of the community. And we feel that a lot of money has been spent on so-called economic development, but people have not figured out how economic development works hand-in-hand with cultural development. And so we are concerned with the cultural part of that economic development in the community, not being against development, obviously we want jobs, we want people to have places to work and to live, but we want the places where they work and live to be reflective of their culture as much as possible.

And we want—we are working for—San Antonio is a particularly important place for some of these questions because of its historic nature. The city bills itself as a colonial city, and I agree, but I think it's not only colonial in the sense of the historic, but also colonial in terms of [cultural –TYF] apartheid and keeping one group sort of keeping the other group at bay and building a colonial society in that sense.

But anyway, San Antonio prides itself with five historic missions, including the Alamo, with a River Walk that's one of the jewels of the city, with many, many historic buildings, as a place that's different from many places in the country, which is true. But a lot of the thinking is based on false assumptions.

The real culture of San Antonio is not this overlay of [a historical past –TYF]. It's a living community, the living culture. San Antonio has a living culture. It's over 60 percent Mexican American. And the culture, the living culture of San Antonio is Mexican, Mexican American. There are people here from many, many groups. You have groups here coming from all over, from Ethiopia now, from Asia, certainly from Central America, from the Caribbean. All in all they come, but the largest and sustaining group is still the Mexican-American community. And that has not really been central.

It's been the sort of, like, what many, many nation states do. You begin thinking, you know, like, even in Mexico, for all that they have worked to maintain, it's the pre-Columbian civilizations and the pre-Columbian indigenous, forgetting that all these [indigenous –TYF] people are still alive and that they're speaking their language and maintaining their culture. It's the same thing in San Antonio.

It's the colonial period, and yes, we're proud of our Spanish conquistadores and we're proud of the Canary Islanders and we're proud of the people that came during the [Mexican –TYF] revolution, but the working-class community in San Antonio [is central –TYF]. So this is an attempt by most of us who are working class, although many of us have gone on and are economically better off, but still mainly our culture and where we came from is working-class culture.

So it's an attempt to say working class is the defining culture of San Antonio. And so all these questions that the city has to do with economic development has to pay attention to the real culture, which is the working-class culture of San Antonio.

And so that means that the museums should have exhibitions of this culture, not only contemporaneous because this—the culture of the working class extends way back. And it's also not, we're not only working class, we have a lot of middle-class folks, we have an elite. So all the members should be reflected in the art.

The Tobin Center just opened, which is sort of like a crown jewel of San Antonio.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where is that at?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It used to be the old—downtown, the old municipal auditorium. It's sort of, like, touted like a first-tier city, just like the UTSA now is trying to be a first-tier university. It's a first-tier cultural center for a first-tier city.

Well, that's fine as hoopla. But when you look at the program, this is their first season in this new space. We wrote a letter, because when you look at it, exactly what happened at the Kennedy Center, for 30 years they didn't have any Latino presence, so now in this first year, the Latino presence is very, very meager. You know, they have maybe the mariachi from Mexico. They have some of the local singers. But you know, the major talents, whether it's classical or popular, it's not there.

You know, here we have a Mexican culture that has some of the most important contemporary dance, you know, and right in Monterrey they have one of the most important dance movements in the whole of Latin America right across [the border –TYF]. They couldn't bring that company. They couldn't bring one of the productions from the theater, the Spanish-speaking theater in New York City. They couldn't bring, like, the Ballet Hispanico from New York City. They couldn't bring—well, on and on and on.

So it was to call them, you know, to call them to the fact of the real culture of San Antonio and how in this premier center we won't stand for them not having our culture. Anyway, we wrote [an op page article in the *San Antonio Express-News* –TYF] and the CEO answered back and has invited us now to have some further conversations, we hope, about that.

But we said, you know, it's not having a committee. We've all had committees up the wazoo. It's about you, they hired you because you're supposed to know about the culture. Well, show us that you know about it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: They pay you 24, whatever, \$60,000 a year and we're doing this work for you, telling you names and telling you all these [companies –TYF]. So how can we work it out so that you do it? Or hire one of the younger people that has gone to learn about [Mexican culture –TYF], that we have—anyway, so I'm just saying that here is our premier cultural center that still has a feeling that the real culture of San Antonio, the living culture of San Antonio in art, music, dance, food, traditions, culture, folklore, is a working-class, Mexican-American tradition.

We're not opposed. We want them to bring a zarzuela. We want them, we want every one of us to learn about, you know, classical guitar music. And we want the symphony to play classical, Mexican classical composers or Cuban classical composers. That's what we want them to do. It's not being anti-classical or anti-[avant garde –TYF]. We want them—we want the community, the non-Mexican community to learn also that it's part of their culture that they haven't gotten.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So that's the WPA, the Westside Preservation Alliance, it's to try and preserve the historical basis and the working-class ambiente of particularly the West Side of San Antonio, which is [a historical Mexican-American "barrio" –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Were a lot of people involved, a handful of people? How many—I know it varies, but—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Oh, in the—no, in the—it's about maybe a dozen.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, that's good.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And we had people that are historians, museum people, people that work in different forms of culture and in conservation, in preservation.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: You know, the National Parks Service, we had [... –TYF] a series of meetings about what are some of the sites that should be preserved, you know, for Latinos, in San Antonio specifically, like the Alameda, which is a [historic –TYF] theater that's now in process of reconstruction, how to preserve it and how to get money to maintain it, et cetera. The Lerma's Night Club which is one of the really important spaces for Tejano music.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where is that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: On Zarzamora Street.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Downtown, the West Side?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The West Side. We're particularly interested in the West Side, because the West Side is now, we feel, the prime target for urban development in the old style. And we want it to be developed in the new style where cultural—this is where shotgun houses, you know, Mexican shotgun houses [... –TYF] in the city are situated. We want them to be preserved. [... –TYF]

People are afraid that once they become a historic district their taxes will go up, that they will be told you can only paint this color or you can only do this. But it has nothing to do with that. It has to do with preserving the authenticity. And so the group works to change the [rules –TYF]—because

everything has to do with the structures, the basis for cultural preservation in the city or in the nation. [The Preservation Society has –TYF] very little to do with working-class communities.

So they have a thing, like, for example, the kinds of architecture in San Antonio that they want to preserve. And we know that this is [not –TYF] vernacular architecture. It's [only –TYF] architecture designed by a famous architect.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It's architecture that came from the people themselves and somebody who—a carpenter with a mason or whatever drew plans and they did it. It's vernacular, but vernacular architecture is very important. So they have a category called German vernacular. So we said, well, why shouldn't they have a category called Mexican-American vernacular? Because a lot of our houses don't fit into the German category, they fit into the Mexican-American category and we have to define what that is and [change preservation guidelines and policies –TYF].

And we changed that. And now they have in the city's charter, [... –TYF] they have a category that people can apply. And we [changed –TYF] all that so people can get monies to do these kinds of [renovations –TYF] within their own culture. And so that's one [goal –TYF], to maintain the ambiente of a community so that all the things that are working together to hold and build this sense of community remains in the way that people want it to be, not an imposition.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So other organizations, institutions, Tomás, would be, like, the McNay Museum, the San Antonio Art Museum?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The Witte Museum.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The Witte—that you have downtown just north of the convention center, what's—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The Briscoe.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Briscoe?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Which is a new museum of Western art.

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I don't know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: UTSA is involved with it, too.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Oh, the Institute of Texan Cultures.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. So can you comment about any of those? And have you had any dealings with the—let's start with the San Antonio Art Museum.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. Yeah. All the institutions, San Antonio Art Museum, have been very lukewarm, I would say, in terms of understanding and embracing the Mexican-American culture. They all have a history of having individuals within the museum who have worked with the community to try to enhance it. They've all, at one time, tried to do things, like having Mexican-Americans on their boards. Because what we're arguing is that it's not only about having exhibitions

or bringing in exhibitions, but also their board has to change, their structures have to change, their policies have to change, so that it's not only about having an exhibition of Chicano art that [draws – TYF] the biggest number of people.

We know from experience that whenever they have an exhibition of Latino or Chicano art, they have a resounding success. Not only do their numbers of people who come to visit the exhibition triple or quadruple, but they also get a lot of people to sign up to become members, which is all good, and [get Mexican-American docents –TYF]—but they do that because they want more of this to happen, not just once every eight months or, I mean, eight years or every whatever.

[... –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What about Latino curators? Are they hiring people?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, they're not. They all have one or two people that work, usually in community-based liaison, or—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Outreach.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —outreach. They have had, we have had directors of museums. Mimi Quintanilla was the director of the Witte Museum for a long time. She's still in San Antonio. She's no longer the director. She's still a consultant.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: She's consulting now.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: She's still working with a lot of cultural organizations. And they have had curators. It's not as if they haven't tried, but they don't try hard enough or in a sustained way. And so all of them, whether it's the San Antonio Museum of Art or whether it's, you know, the McNay—when the McNay had the Romo collection, they had an overwhelming success of thousands of people that came. They got many, many people to sign up. I mean, there's an economic base.

There's a lot of Chicanos that want to belong if there's something for them there, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And they'll sign up for a membership, and that's what they want. And what we want is for them to show. So it's a win-win if we work together, you know.

But in all cases, I would say my assessment is that all of [the mainline art institutions –TYF] have been lukewarm. They've all tried different kinds of things, but none of them, not one [mainstream –TYF] institution, has done it in a sustained, comprehensive and all-embracing way. They bring in scholars, they bring in people here and there, there's an exhibition or a local exhibition or they have a local artist that has an exhibition, and they—but do they buy two or three of their works that become part of their collection? Well, very rarely. They do, but very rarely. So the whole structure [needs to change –TYF].

And the major exhibitions that come, that are designed at the Smithsonian, like the *Latino Presence in American Art* now, which is a major exhibition that they should have—a city like San Antonio, for it not to have a place to have that exhibition tells you exactly what the situation is. You know, no matter what, if it was a [matter –TYF] of scheduling, the exhibition was not going to end for two years, it was going to travel for a while if they could not schedule it the first year of its travel,

[how about –TYF] the second year or the third year.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so they said, well, they probably had—I was here when we went to visit with the director for that exhibition. And the answer was, well, we'd love to, it's a wonderful exhibition. Unfortunately, we can't work it within our schedule. And we said, well, the schedule is a long one, and probably as it goes on other people will be added, so it can be added onto the end. We don't really care whether it comes this year or two years from now, we want the people to find out, you know, how American art is changing by now having the largest group of ethnic communities in the country, which are the Latinos showcasing what they have done historically and contemporaneously. And isn't that what you want? Because American art is that.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Exactly.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And here is an exhibition. With all the—it's got a catalog. It's got a program. It's got educational [programs –TYF]. They couldn't fit it in. That's an excuse.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So it's an example of multiple—and not only that exhibition, I mean, the Getty is now planning all kinds of exhibitions that have to do with Latino culture. They still are, just like San Antonio itself, my feeling is that they have a preterite view of what Mexican culture is. The preterite is okay—the art of the Mexican Revolution and the murals of the Mexican Revolution are wonderful.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But contemporary stuff in Mexico and contemporary Mexican-American [art –TYF], we don't know what it's all about.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And if they have a curator that is beginning to work on that, they immediately put up the quality question. Well, it's not up to par, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Because they don't understand where it comes from. But aside from that, I don't understand a lot of contemporary art, but I want to learn. I want to read. I want to see an exhibition so I can judge for myself what it's like.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Inaudible.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. And [their –TYF] kind of attitude that is what I call a colonial attitude, not only because they think of San Antonio as a colonial city in the historic sense and a cultural sense, but also, I think, in a political sense.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you came from New York City—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —and you're here in San Antonio, you grew up here in San Antonio. Being

in New York City, not talking about San Antonio, does the same thing apply to New York City?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: It's a big city, but still, there's a lot of resources.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. Yeah. I still—I mean, the basic thing is that the Latino consciousness or the Latino—the meaning of Latino culture for all—I mean, the mere fact, starting out with the mere fact that the first European language spoken in what is now the United States was Spanish, people don't get that. And that the Spanish, Hispanic base has roots, the roots, you know, were planted and planted before Plymouth Rock was [established –TYF], before Plymouth Rock.

So the presence of this community antedates all that. And yet that hasn't permeated the consciousness. And so what that means is not only that historical fact, but everything that flows from that. It has to do with all kinds of—all the way back, as we've all talked and we all know, all the way back from the Black Legend of Spain, that [Euro Americans –TYF] have built about Spain, all the way to the contemporary legend, you know, about foreigners in our own land kind of thing. That somehow we refuse to be American and we refuse to speak English and we refuse to [assimilate –TYF].

So I think that San Antonio is still, you know—like the United States, has not grasped that fact, that we are part and parcel of the country. And everything runs from that. They don't understand it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Inaudible]—too, you know.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Have to re-center.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. And so the WPA is an attempt at a local level in terms of the built environment to work with, re-changing those ideas. So we have to work with codes, too, so that—for example, now that there is a vernacular [style –TYF], that vernacular architecture is important, now we can then make a case for the vernacular houses. The color, you know, now that Sandra [Cisneros's –TYF] case made the fact that you can paint a house purple and pink because [Mexicanos –TYF] liked color, that that's also part.

And so changing the aesthetics, changing the norms of the basis for cultural preservation and maintenance. And it's very important in many cities, but certainly in San Antonio where there are a lot of interesting, significant vernacular not only architecture, but cityscapes and the way people build their gardens and the way they build their fences and so on. And a lot of writers, you know, Areola, a lot of people have talked about, in Los Angeles, for example, particularly in Los Angeles, and other Mexican-American cities how—or Cuban-like in Miami, how [their –TYF] presence there has created an ambiente of architecture and art and so on. And that's what's now to be preserved in the future.

And in San Antonio, we have buildings. I mean, we've lost a lot of important buildings. We have a building like Case Maldonado which we saved because it was a place—[the Mexican Americans –TYF] called it a pink building. It wasn't architecturally [significant –TYF], it doesn't have any grand—no president lived there or George Washington spent the night there or anything like that, but it was a place where a lot of early politicians in the '40s and '50s and '60s met and where a lot of the organizations that became the Latino civil rights organizations would meet and discuss. So

historically, it's a place of meeting of people and it was very [historical –TYF] for that sense. And they wanted to tear it down.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh. Is that downtown or where is it?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It's right next to the Guadalupe Theater. The community got up and the WPA, and signs and letters to the editor. And unfortunately, we were struggling against a Chicano [organization –TYF], the West Side Alliance, which is an economic development [entity –TYF] that wanted to tear it down and build a building to get new jobs for kids. And we said we're not against that, we're not against that. I mean, I went to city council meetings and so on. So I spent a lot of time.

We've lost, you know, we've lost significant buildings, not only the Spanish-language theaters, you know, the built theater itself, you know, with all the [historic interior –TYF]. The first, you know, Spanish-language television and radio station, which just went under this year in San Antonio. Now Lerma's, which is one of the really—it's like the, you know, one of the important ballrooms for people that would go [to hear and dance –TYF] especially to Tejano music. Most everybody [in Tejano music –TYF] has played there. It's a building, it's a sort of modern 1920s building. And it's got its own vibe. [... –TYF].

So [we are –TYF] trying to preserve this and—and—ordinary houses, ordinary people, meeting with people and seeing how they can get a grant to make their house, to build, refurbish their house in a way that's consistent with [a particular style –TYF]. And teaching people about preservation itself. A lot of people are very, very scared, because for most historic districts in San Antonio, they feel that the rich man's ideas and that you have to—your windows will have to look the same and—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —you have to pay this much for it to be done, and a lot of stuff. And in some cases, they're absolutely true. You have to—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Or you can't change it?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. Or they don't have the money to do it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So is the city then going to provide grants to help us do this, which they did when they did all these other [neighborhoods –TYF]—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and all these other historic things? Well, that means being on committees of the city and it means bringing in architects and bringing in people that know this, too. So that's what the—but important issues, like, La Villita which is one of the early [settlements –TYF], you know, right by the San Antonio River, one of the early sites of historic artisanal—they decided during Maury Maverick's tenure as mayor to make it into an artisanal village where they would bring people from Mexico to—and it was a lot of high school, many Mexicano high school kids that worked there, learning how to weave and how to do pottery and so on. It didn't work. But a lot of people worked there, and then it became a tourist [site –TYF] where they sell a lot of [art –TYF], you know, right by the river.

A whole [village –TYF]—and it's still there. And it's slowing becoming decrepit and so on. And it has a lot to do with the early history, the real history of San Antonio. And so, again, now the city put out calls. They took away everyone that was there and they're going to revive it. And so here's a chance to make it a significant part of the real history of San Antonio, tell the real story of the people that work there and make the artisanal [objects –TYF], you know.

There's all kinds of very interesting—for me, intellectually it's been very interesting because I've had to read and I'm reading a lot about community and cultural development and economic development and historic [preservation –TYF]—like, for example, La Villita [developed –TYF] at the historic moment of the Good Neighbor policy, when the U.S. and [Mexico, with San Antonio seen as a gateway –TYF].

The Casa de Mexico was Mexico, [part of the Alameda Theater was –TYF], a place to have Mexican doctors and Mexican lawyers and so on because the upward mobility of the Mexican-American community. So there was the Good Neighbor policy established La Villita, but so, we were doing it with Latin America without thinking that Latin America was right here. So you have a statue of, you know, Simón Bolívar. Well, that's fine, but people see—Chicanos go in there and say, well, who was he and why is he here, you know? And why don't we have a statute of the vaquero, you know?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: That's a real Tejano, you know. And so what do you do? The statue is already there. Well, what you do is to try to show how important the ideas that [Bolívar –TYF] had have to do with the ideas that were [discussed in the newspapers of the period –TYF] and so on. That kind of translation, you know, hasn't been done. And that, there's a lot of interesting things like that that we can help [with –TYF].

I'm on—and we'll stop here. I'm on another committee called the West Side—well, it's called actually the Zona Cultural, which is to take Commerce Street, where my loft was, from the Aztec Theatre to what used to be the Alameda Museum, and to make it into a zona cultural that would attract younger artisans to come and live there. That means to change the zoning so that it would be work-live spaces for a new generation of artists to come and live and work and reestablish the [arts –TYF] community, bring commerce into the [zona –TYF], get the tourists out of the river and up into the [cityscape –TYF].

And it means closing the street, making it into a pedestrian mall, making it [walk-friendly –TYF], having new signage, having bilingual signage, having rest rooms and seating areas. Now, the San Pedro Creek—San Antonio now has [re-directed the San Antonio River that –TYF] has reached all the way to the missions and it's beautiful.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: You know, there's all kinds of beautiful places and artists.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you boat all the way down there?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, you can walk and also—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You can boat?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, you can boat. And up on the other side, which is the museum,

reach up to the museum. Now there's all sorts of condos all the way around the river. And then now it's—that's sort of economic development. But I don't know that it's really cultural development.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So anyway, Commerce Street, we hope the San Pedro Creek is another thing, they're going to redevelop the creek that runs right there by Penners, right next to where we lived, you know, the creek.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, I know that place.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And that was—to make it a green space and to have park and to have plants all the way down, to really rethink. This is, again, the core, the Spanish governor's palace, the cathedral, you know, the house of one of the signers of the declaration of the Texas independence, Navarro house is there, that whole [historic corridor –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So there's been a committee that I've been a part of to work, again, free time, five or six hours twice a week. It's very interesting because you get to do—you read. For example, [I have been reading all about –TYF] what they call heritage, a heritage cantina. Well, it was a heritage cantina because it's been there since the 1940s and it's still open, it's still a cantina, you know, and it should be preserved. It's very significant, you know. And it's in an old building.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I think I've been in there.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, right off Flores Street.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, there's a lot of places like that, all the way down. And if we're not careful they're gone. And then, all that [history disappears –TYF], destroyed and cut away, you know.

So I've been working with that Zona Cultural. We've just now put a grant to get monies to sort of, like, begin the next phase, which is really begin the work. So I'm working to revitalize our city and bring it to its knowledge of its sense of it being a Mexican-American cultural capital, you know, and historic in a cultural sense.

And in order to do that, we have a lot of work to do, particularly the people that want the development and the economics and the, still, the core of the white man that economically control the city, you know. And so in terms of politics, yes, we had a Chicano mayor, we now have a black mayor, an African-American mayor. There will be a mayoral race this year. We have a lot of city council seats that are vacant, that are turning over. Many, many Latinos are running for those seats.

[The candidates –TYF] all come to the Esperanza and to the different [Chicano –TYF] cultural organizations to talk about what they want to do. And we're seeing which are the ones that would better serve the interests of the community and ourselves before we vote. There's early voting today, as a matter of fact.

Anyway, so I've been involved and I keep seeing some changes—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You're really busy.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —you know, some changes [have occurred –TYF] in the community. But overall, I must say that there is still a great deal to be done in a city that derives its income from tourism, in a city where you would think that they would be open to tell the true story. There's too much invested in a romantic idea, just like Olvera Street [in Los Angeles –TYF], you know. To tell the real story and to [say –TYF] here's where Afro Americans and Indians and Mexicans came and they started the city, and then this thing happened, and blah, blah, blah, but we shouldn't forget that.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right, right, the foundational culture for San Antonio.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. And so that building of a foundational culture and a foundational sense. The one great thing is, again, all of these—I mean, when we're talking about the Westside Preservation Alliance, yes, they're community people and they're invaluable. They remember the stories. They remember how that little store opened and what it would look like. Well, we record it and tape [them –TYF], but there's also a lot of people [academically trained who have gone, who studied cultural preservation –TYF]. You know, they're younger scholars, at the Center for Sustainability at UTSA center for doing this kind of work. People with Ph.D.s in economic development and in sustainability and in architectural design, and they're part of the committee. So I'm learning a lot and meeting a lot of really terrific people. So San Antonio continues to be really exciting intellectually, a culturally stimulating city.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Is it growing, Tomás? Is San Antonio growing?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Oh, by leaps and bounds.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But it's growing, you know, the downtown. That's why now there's a push, you know. Ex-Mayor Castro had this idea of a decade of downtown. Well, the decade soon will be over and the downtown is still as derelict as it ever was.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So we have to really work hard. Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So it was like played out and not really developing the downtown?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It's dead downtown. So little things like that [Mexican –TYF] restaurant that just opened.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: There's a new Mexican restaurant called Heritage Cocina, which two young sisters from the interior of Mexico opened.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Hole in the wall, and slowly they're beginning to get a reputation and people are beginning to go there.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Authentic, you know. They're beginning to be part of the community. There's a lot of effort and a lot of young minds and a lot of first-rate, intellectual people that have gone and, you know, done things from London to Paris to [wherever ...-TYF]—so we can learn from them.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [... -TYF] The committee that I was working on the Zona Cultural [project -TYF] had a Chicano architect, has a Chicano historian, young Chicano historian that has specialized on, like, old houses in San Antonio. There's people that have done oral histories with all these heritage centers. So I'm learning. And it's all being now processed.

And in order to do this, we have to submit here's how the downtown looked and here's this building and that building and that building, and there was a dance theater here and there was this and that. And each one, you know, has done research on. And so I'm learning a lot.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Because you know, when I'm reading this, I knew some [history -TYF] just by being here, but now I'm learning from [primary -TYF] research.

And then the public library has now a very—you know, I gave all my books to them. And I'm proud to say that my collection I've given them has awakened interest and other people are donating.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And they're now going to move it downstairs and they're going to build sort of a center with carrels for scholars and things like that.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Really?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Is this the downtown public library?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, downtown.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Fantastic.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And somebody has donated old, you know, colonial doors that they're going to make tables.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It's going to [have -TYF], you know, el ambiente of Mexican San Antonio.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: All right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so it's—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, with that in mind, you've also donated to the Archives of American Art and to the American History Museum, have you not?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And to the National Museum of Mexican Art.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where else have you donated? [Inaudible]—here?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: UT [Austin –TYF]. Those—all my personal archives are going to UT Austin.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Austin, okay. And can we talk a little bit about the Smithsonian now?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Sure.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, just to wrap that up there, and it'll be the last part of this interview today. It's long, but I hate to stop because we're going right now. Back in 1992, the Smithsonian started a program or initiative to try to kind of reinvent itself or to be more inclusive of the Latino presence in America and have it reflected in its collections and other areas. And I know, Tomás, you've been involved. I did some work, too. And actually, that has kind of led to, not directly, but in an indirect way, a lot of the same people and a lot of the same initiative to the calling for the establishment of a Latino museum. And I don't know if you want to just go back to that or just start with the museum and then we can reflect back. Whichever way you feel more comfortable talking about some of the things at a national institution in Washington, D.C. and our nation's capital.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. Well, I think that you are certainly one of the pioneers of all of this, so we can talk about it together. But I don't know. I think that it's another major step. And like all major steps, particularly in the political climate that we now have, it will take a while to realize it.

But I think that the fundamentals have been established. They can be tweaked, they can be changed. But I think that some very strong, important fundamentals have been created in terms of the idea of having—as you know, I was not a member of the commission that was a bipartisan commission of Democrats and Republicans. I was asked to be a senior [cultural –TYF] adviser to the committee. And I did travel to the meetings of the committee, to most of the meetings that the committee had. And I think that it was a fundamental stage to, to elevate an idea, and to bring the notion, and to do it in terms that it came from a base rather than a [top-down –TYF] group. Meaning the open forums that the committee had throughout the country, in Los Angeles, in Austin, in Miami, were very, very significant, because I think that every single place that we went, if I remember correctly, every single place we went, the people were very encouraging. They said now is the time, this has to happen.

So number one, the populace, the American public, gave us the go-ahead by saying we need this, now is the time to do it.

Secondly, they said that it was—what I remember is that they said this is not about Republicans or Democrats, this is about a future generation of our own children, of our own, you know, everybody's children, American kids, to learn what America—how America is not complete yet, and this is part of the completion of the picture, of the puzzle of what the United States is.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So there was, I think, there was also a very important acknowledgment that we had to—that all the notions of what we had thought had to be rethought and continually rethought. Like, for example—and I feel very pleased that the notions that the committee brought to the sessions were notions not only that were, in most cases, espoused and sort of under-girded, but also the notion that they all mentioned that this was a living thing that could be changed if circumstances changed, and not a set-in-stone thing.

And the notions that I remember or some of the key notions were, like, the notions of, what is national? If we have a national museum, what is the national museum? Does it have to be in Washington, D.C. to be national? And the whole array of possibilities of centering it and de-centering it simultaneously so that it would be in Washington, but also in L.A. or in San Antonio, or how to work that in a way with technology, all kinds of interesting ways to not be rigid about what that meant, and ways to engage particularly the Latino community which is so significantly different geographically and culturally by region. And how to get—and by ethnicity, you know, how to get that richness without sort of saying it's all like this or it should be that.

And I think that those are all questions that need to be worked out as the plan develops. But I like that notion that people want this, this is a good idea, now's the time to begin doing it, but all these notions that you bring, we still need to talk, which is good—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You say it outright.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —which is sort of, like, development. The collections, what kind of collections? What is a national collection? How does it include, you know, elements from high culture and popular culture and new culture? Which is another important question that needs to be continually, you know, revised.

Technology, how can technology make us—how can we now—it's such an enriching thing that we can have films and videos and all kinds of [media –TYF] about whatever historical event, so it's not just a label on a wall, but it's an actual screen that tells you or you can move. All kinds of ways in which technology could activate and how we can learn from what has gone before, particularly the Afro American and the Native American Museum [on the Mall –TYF], both the cons and the pros, which they both have—both, you know.

For now, the Native American Museum has been open for, you know, a decade or more. What are some of the things that didn't work, that didn't go right, for all the good intentions? They had some very good ideas.

Now that Afro Am is coming on, what are the things already that they're finding that are not working? And the fact that the committee worked hand-in-hand with people from these others, [Mall museums –TYF], as consultants or as helpers or whatever, I think, was—I think we've built a good—just like we are as a community, like Latinos, an open, integrated, evolving community, that all those, I think, were important.

In other words, I think you can read the report [on the Latino Museum –TYF], which is very, very important, which has a lot of this specificity. But I think that the basic [questions –TYF], one, what is national, what is a national collection, what are the elements of a national [museum –TYF], how can technology work, in making all of this, a museum of whatever century it's going to be when its gets opened, how can we continue discussing and debating all these questions with all these different

[constituents –TYF] and how we can make this more inclusive than even we think now.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you have—at the Smithsonian, for example, they voted to have the collection, they have it at the Smithsonian. And the Smithsonian is a very broad institution with multiplicity of units. And there was concern about, you know, potential conflict between the museum specifically focusing on Latinos and what the other museums do or don't do or what they should be done. And how do you see that, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I think that we should not give up one for the other.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: That we should continue the fight, because each museum sees its purview in a particular way. And our culture should be seen in that particular way at that museum. And the other museum sees their purview in another particular way. All cultures should be seen in that particular way.

And us, who see our culture in our own way, should certainly show our culture in our particular way. So you have, like, three particular ways rather than just one.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And we shouldn't give up, you know—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Which is probably true for everybody else, too. I mean, there are so many multiplicity of American art museums—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Exactly.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —there's not just one.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. And because we didn't make those divisions, I mean, we didn't decide that one museum would be contemporaneous art and another one historical art, you know, but now that they're both there, we certainly don't want to just be in one and not the other, we want to be in both, you know. So it just makes sense that the structures that were set, we want to be within those structures, but we also want to have a structure in which all those structures come together from our own viewpoint and with our own essence and with our own aesthetics and in our own way. That's exactly [what –TYF] I think, even in terms of the building itself.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Then you have the multiplicity of Latino origin groups in the U.S. I know there was a lot of discussion about that concern. Any thoughts about that, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Just the fact that all the groups—that in a way, every single group has a subgroup that we also have to—now that we have lost, you know, Juan Flores who struggled so hard to build the Afro-Latino component—all the groups and some groups have affirmed that in a much stronger way than other groups, and yet—so those are the kind of, like, second-tier questions, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You know, by the way, Tomás, we had—he was at Notre Dame at the Latino conference we had—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —two weeks before he passed.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Really?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I had no clue he was ill.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. So what I'm saying is that, yes, I'm very, very proud that we started out with a commission that saw itself having components, limited as it were, from multiple groups in the Latino community, but that each one of those multiple groups, as we now dig deeper into it, has subgroups that still have to be brought into that particular group and then into the larger group, and the Afro part being one of them, the Asian part being another part, the indigenous part being another one.

Each one of us celebrates one or the other because that has been the dominant from our particular group. But all those elements, I think, will make it even richer in terms—and we must be affirming, that for all that we're doing this, this is—that I think, from my perspective, it's the American part that is the core. This is an American museum and this is about all the expressions as they've evolved in America, in the U.S., which should be more than America because America is not just the U.S.. And that the U.S. Latinos are multiple and are complex and are the future.

I remember that when we were in Spain, you know, Spain, as one of our mother countries, you know, had a meeting of a lot of Latinos from New York City. And so the meeting in Spain, in Madrid, was with people from the business sector and the arts sector and the cultural sector, the economic sector. And so they, the people from the U.S., were Latinos who worked, you know, in newspapers, in the arts, in culture, writers, poets. And so we spent some glorious—I think it was three days in Madrid, talking about this saga of the Spanish coming to the New World.

And I remember what I said at the very end. I said, that marvelous, that grand saga, that grand [epic –TYF] that you began with the explorations and the settlements and the cultural beginnings of Nueva España in the land that is now the United States, if you want to know how that [enterprise –TYF], the chapters in that saga and particularly the ending of that [story –TYF], ask us because we have the answer. We are the inheritors. We are the legacy of that grand experiment that crossed the ocean from the Old World into the New. And now the New World is not only the terrestrial, but also all the other things that technology will bring it into this sort of, like, new, fantastic, phantasmagorical, [era –TYF].

But that's how I feel, that we are the ones that have many of the answers for what will be the new America.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, also, you know, there's always a thing about history and contemporary and, you know, what to do with it in terms of the space and how to use it. And I'll just give you my kind of thought real quick and just get your reaction. Is that it seems to me in those kinds of discussions how people bring up their ideas, what eventually might happen is it just falls back to, like, a historical thing because that's, like, the safest, to just kind of just—we tend to do it more, but it pretty much will stay there because the contemporary is a little more problematic, a little more typical, we can agree because we know about it. What's your thought on that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, my thought about that, Gil, is that it's almost like the present and the future are the toughest rather than the historical. But I don't see how you can not have all three bundled together, you know. You have to bundle them all together because that's the way it is.

The difficulty with the future is that it's a promise or an idea or an aspiration or a thought, and it hasn't been quite [born –TYF]—but those, whatever those aspirations or those thoughts or those ideas, should be at least expressed, you know, if not yet worked out. And certainly the present is complex because it has the past woven into it.

So I don't see any tug-of-war between the past and the present and the even the future. The future, I think, is more difficult to project in an art museum, you know, because it can just be your vision of what that might be like. But I think—and you cannot in any way, when you talk about the present, escape the past. It's embedded in the very act of being contemporaneous, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I don't see, you know, a push-and-pull.

[... –TYF]

[END SD5 TR05.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: We're in San Antonio with Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. And this is Gilberto Cardenas. Today is May 24. We're at Tomás's condo in San Antonio. And we're continuing with the interviews.

So, Tomás, I think we ended going back to San Antonio and the work that you're doing here. And we were talking about the generations, I think, when we last took off. And I just wanted to just hear your kind of comments about the present situation and how you are viewing Latino art. You are still working, working on a manuscript on Amalia Mesa-Bains, you're doing various other projects here in San Antonio. Maybe you could just quickly update us on your current projects and what you're working on, and then we'll get into the—let's see—this is Gilberto Cardenas interviewing Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. We're in San Antonio. And today is May 24, 2015. And we're continuing the interviews with Tomás, focusing on the current situation.

Tomás is retired, but continues to work, working on a manuscript for the *A Ver* series, edited by Chon Noriega. And it's on Amalia Mesa-Bains. He's doing a lot of work here in San Antonio, volunteer work and involved with organizations here and projects.

So I'm going to turn it over to Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, Gil, I think that one of the areas that I'm working in that's new to me is sort of like cultural preservation. I belong to a group called the Westside Preservation Alliance, the WPA. And it has to do with many of the social questions revolved around place and space and the cultural creation around that place and space.

And San Antonio, as you know, is a very historic city, so I've been working with several volunteer committees that are rethinking, you know, the traditional downtown. One committee I'm working on is the Commerce Street Zona Cultural. The idea is that in order to make the downtown, like in many other downtowns throughout the country, where people after they went out to the suburbs, to rehabilitate the downtown to encourage newer residents, particularly artists and creative types to move back into the downtown and make it livable and affordable for creators.

So this involves rethinking a lot of the history of the downtown, particularly West Commerce Street, which is, you know, the area where I would call it the heart of San Antonio, corazón de San Antonio, where the cathedral is, the Plaza de Armas, the Spanish governor's palace, the market, el mercado,

and where all the old theaters and bookstores, and the whole cultural revitalization.

So it involves questions of gentrification and how to work with people so that they can afford to stay, at the same time open it up for—it's the eternal sort of balance between maintenance of cultural traditions and new forms of people to make a living. Sort of like making a living and making a life again. You know, how can you make a living, how can you make a life, in a place that's saturated with history, and yet make it renewable and affordable and enticing for a whole new generation?

So there's right now in San Antonio there's a rethinking of revitalizing the downtown. Another important project that I've been sort of on the periphery, but talking with a lot of people, is the San Pedro Creek project. San Pedro Creek was the origin of San Antonio, San Pedro Park. And so now there's a kind of linear park, sort of like the High Line in New York City.

Right now, Gil, I'm veering away strictly from the visual art and more in terms of working with—in San Antonio at the moment, there's a rethinking of the downtown, you know. The downtown has, like in many other American cities, you know, as people went out into the suburbs, the suburbanization of the city, you know, the downtown is pretty empty and needs revitalization. So right now is a moment of rethinking the historical meaning of the downtown and how to make it attractive to a new generation of creators and thinkers and activists to move and live, make a living and make a life downtown.

So one area is this Commerce Street, called the Zona Cultural, a new cultural zone at the very heart of downtown, which is what I remember as the corazón de San Antonio, the area where the cathedral is, the Plaza de Armas, the Spanish governor's palace, the mercado, and where all the old theaters and Spanish-language newspapers and theaters, and where all the artists and bohemians used to gather. Through this corridor, how to revitalize this corridor to make it walkable, bikeable, hospitable to a newer generation, and how to make affordable housing, and how to keep the people that are living there now without sort of, like, moving them out.

So those are some of the questions. At the same time this cultural corridor, the Commerce cultural corridor, there's another very important project with San Pedro Creek. Which as you remember, in San Antonio, San Pedro Park was the origin of San Antonio. This is where the indigenous people—because of the springs, it had spring water. Yanaguana, the name of the original spot where the native peoples settled in San Antonio, is San Pedro Park and San Pedro Creek.

And so it runs through all the way down through a huge segment of downtown, including crossing some of the commercial areas of downtown. So right now there's a revitalization effort, more or less like they did the linear park in New York City, the High Line, which is up going across the old railroad tracks. This one is going to be a high line. It isn't railroad tracks, but it's to revitalize the pathway to the creek, to open it up and make it more viable for and rethink the whole running of the creek, like a ribbon through the city, and how to reconnect that in terms of making the city, you know, a greener, more environmentally friendly place, more walkable place again. So all the project are a revitalization of downtown.

Another project is revitalizing the western part of downtown. This is all very important because this is the gateway to the West Side, which is a traditional Mexicano community in San Antonio. And so this area of revitalization is—you know, I've been working a lot with to make sure that the artistic, cultural and historical practices of the community get embedded in the new, working with artists that are going to create the bridges and create the public art that's going to be situated throughout this area.

So that's the volunteer work that I've been doing. And it's posing a lot of the questions that have been traditional questions in Chicano and Latino art.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So are you working with organizations, you're working with individuals, committees? How are you doing the work, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: They're organizations that are subcontracted to different areas of the city, city offices that include the tourism bureau and include economic development bureau. So it's working with all the stakeholders from economics to developers, to make sure that the community voice is put in there.

And so I'm one of the stakeholders, a community from San Antonio, to make sure that the meaning of the kind of, like—to articulate what the meaning of these spaces are as they get revitalized, so that they will have some integrity in relation to the real culture, which is the working-class Mexicano culture of San Antonio.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you name a few of the individuals you're working with that are kind of key to what you're doing?

Well, Mimi Quintanilla is one of the people that's working in terms of the [Zona Cultural –TYF]—Claudia Guerra, who is [the cultural historian –TYF] for the city, and people from the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, from the WPA, local architects, designers. It's huge groups of people, and working particularly to make sure that the community, making sure that whenever there's going to be a design, that that design is presented to the community so the community can have their input in terms of what they want to see and how they want to valorize it. So it involves both academicians, historians, theoreticians, and community activists.

And so this is a really important moment for San Antonio because it's rethinking itself. And so a lot of the historical, how to maintain the historical integrity and the contemporaneous expression of that. And so some of the major questions are that culture is not static, but it's fluid and changing, and yet there are some elements that are the anchor, historical elements that are the anchor, and yet opening up to new ways of defining those so that it's not a static, dead culture, but a living culture that has many of the elements of the new forms of interventions, digital and so on, so that artists—it's not just, like, about getting statues and placing them on street corners, but it's about maybe using technology in different kinds of ways to invigorate or to have people find their place or to put little historical vignettes in some sort of, like, digital way that people at a corner can hear a story of that building as they stand right in front of it. Things like that. How to make things new, but still keep the historical basis for it.

But it's bringing up a lot of the questions, to me anyway, that I think are very much a part of the whole process of Chicano and Latino art. One is relation to place, that I still think, for example, coming to San Antonio has really shown me that the books about Latino-Chicano art particularly are really—have a focus on Texas, California and other places, but not really focused on—meaning that American art, I think, is still segmented in a regional way. And so we need a regional [survey –TYF], just like the Midwest, we need one from the Southwest and particularly one that has something to do with Texas.

So working with San Antonio, which is an intersection—San Antonio, you know, prides itself as being this sort of gateway city to Mexico in a way, how culture flows both ways, south-north and north-south and also east-west, you know, and how all of San Antonio is a module in the middle. And yet, I think very little has been done about Tejano artists and to define Tejano artists and

Tejano art even in relation to American art, which is, I think, still very much an open question. That American art—that Latino art is American art and American art is Latino art, but American art itself is, I think, regionally based.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right. And so right now you have big things happening on the West Coast, it's supported by the Getty Foundation and, you know, other entities there. And you have things on the East Coast, the Whitney, you know. Can you comment a little bit about those and, again, referencing Tejanos and San Antonio?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, yeah. I think the attempts made to recalibrate and rethink the meaning of American art I think are very powerful and really felt in San Antonio. Obviously the ethnic or racial politics are still sort of very much a black-and-white dichotomy. And so even to think of the Latin presence in American art, well, a lot has been done and [much –TYF] new scholarship is being created and younger scholars are really opening up new frontiers, it still has not penetrated, you know, the fundamental, bifocal way of looking at American art.

So this is one of the things that I think is really crucial for Latino art at this point, to make it a part, a central part of American art, and then to segment it among all the different Latino groups, and yet each of those Latino groups is usually based in some sort of geographic location. So how geography, ethnicity and American art work out and intertwine and differentiate, and how to begin mapping and creating stories about the intersections of all these dynamic, fluid, changing parts of American art. So how to recalibrate.

And so, again, the Whitney Museum, the new show, which attempts to redefine American art is all, I think, an attempt to do that and at the same time, as we have to remember, that when we say American art, it's also the Americas, so how to recalibrate U.S. art, U.S. art and also U.S.-American art, and then the art of the Americas.

And so, again, it begs the question of, what is American art? Is it delineated in a national kind of way or in a hemispheric kind of way, or more and more in a global kind of way? But before we get into all those extensions, my feeling is that we have to really begin focusing on the local and the regional and then the national and then the global before we all get globalized and haven't done enough work on the national and the regional.

And for me, particularly in Texas, I see when we talk about Chicano art that Tejano art is very significant, but it hasn't gotten its due historically. A lot of the 19th-century Chicano artists or the early 20th-century Chicano artists are not yet in the canon. It's only the Movimiento artists.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So the Whitney right now, there's a few Latino artists, Harry Gamboa for sure, you mentioned another woman artist, but are there any from Tejas, do you know?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I don't think so.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Latino?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I don't think so. And you know, it's not that I'm talking about kind of ethnic signifiers. I mean, artists make art in all kinds of ways. It's not about the 19s identity art, it's about artists that in some significant way are expressing themselves as American artists, but with a distinct tinge or a distinct element that really has to do, I think, with the geography where they come from.

So those are some of the questions that I think, for example, the LAN, the Latino Art Now!

conference that's coming up next year in Chicago is very keen on. I just got a list. And I think that a lot of the questions that they're dealing with, the city and the sites of creation, you know, the comparative art histories of all the Latinos, the emergent Latino groups that are just coming in, too, all of these, and seeing all of this in a globalized perspective. But I'm also arguing for the local perspective that needs to really be enhanced so that we don't all become homogenized. And how to maintain that balance, the global, the national, the regional, and the local, all going at the same time.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right. Now, you worked a lot with Shifra Goldman on many projects. And you just mentioned a new book that's out on Shifra, Tomás. Can you comment about that, in this context?

[... –TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: One of the recent publications that I've been looking at, has just come to my knowledge, was a new edition of Shifra Goldman's early collected essays. It's called *Tradition and Transformation: Chicana/o Art from the 1970s through the 1990s*. And it's edited by Charlene Villaseñor-Black from UCLA. And reading a lot or re-reading or looking at, browsing through all the essays that Shifra wrote really inspires me to think that a lot of the current questions were already embedded in some of the ideas that she had back in the 1970s.

So her legacy, Shifra Goldman's legacy, is very significant in theorizing, you know, particularly this notion of tradition and transformation, and how Latino-Chicano art in the U.S., like in Latin America, has this incredible basis in tradition and in the transformation of that tradition.

So I think a lot of these questions embedded in her essays are the beginning of the questions that are now very forcefully [discussed by –TYF] the new generation of artists and the new global perspective. She talks about the Chicano movement and its legacies. And I think that this notion of the movement of the legacy, the various kinds of legacies, are very, very significant.

So anyway, I just want to say that I think that more and more, the two or three people from that period, myself included, in a way pointed out some signposts or created some notions that are still worthy of looking at. And I like the notion of these edited collections because a lot of the essays were written in catalogs that are hard to find. So students, people still have to do, like, put together readers for their classes because of the essays have been dispersed or [published in –TYF] limited editions when they first came out. So I really like this notion of, not only in Chicano [art –TYF], but in many of the other [disciplines –TYF], the original essays from the Chicano movement.

But I'm saying that what I see as a big laguna is going backward in time, before the Chicano movement, and begin really encouraging scholars to work from the early 19th century on.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. Actually, this book has a foreword by Chon, a preface by the author, and then a little memoriam that's Terezita Romo, Mari Carmen Ramirez, and Karen Mary Davalos and Carol Wells. It's a reflection, but for the most part this is written by Charlene Villaseñor-Black. It's really—an edited volume, Tomás, but I think it just has some insertions.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: It looks very good. I'm glad you mentioned this. And it's making a connection to the past, to the present, as you talked about.

We've also lost a lot of artists from a while back that are just, we're losing them, we have Magu, we

just recently lost a printmaker from Los Angeles Richard Duardo, Luis Jiménez was in the book there, images, a lot of artists are now passing, Tomás. And you know, we've got their artwork as a legacy, we've got the people who know them. We have hopefully some oral histories of this work and some work in the archives.

Do you want to comment about any of the artists, Tomás? There's some artists here in San Antonio that—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Mel Casas certainly.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Mel Casas. Where do you see—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, I mean, Gil, I think that it's inevitable. It's a generational shift in many, many ways. It's a very optimistic moment. I think from all I see, many of the younger artists, art historians, curators, thinkers about art and writers about art have certainly learned from our generation and are pushing forward some of the notions in different kinds of ways. I think that a lot of them remain engaged politically in making sure that art—maybe on two counts, both in terms of creating art that has a social conscience and creates consciousness, but also using new technologies.

And so aside from murals, Carmen Lomas Garza makes papel picado now with computers, computer now becomes, you know, cutouts, iron cutouts, with laser computers. So there's a lot of technology used in murals.

At the same time, there's a big need to restore, you know, historical murals in communities that are decaying or are being whitewashed or decaying. There's just a need to recover and maintain a lot of the murals.

So it's a two-pronged [agenda –TYF]. On the one hand, I feel very optimistic that a lot of the younger artists that I see here in San Antonio remain politically engaged with their community in ways that are different from the massive kinds of ways that our generation did. I'm talking about generally in the arts, not only the visual arts, but poetry is very much alive. A lot of the poets go to schools and read at school assemblies. And they also work in the community. There's a lot of poetry readings. They don't travel as much in terms of [gatherings –TYF], the way the floriculto [did –TYF], but there's a lot of activity going on in the poetic world.

The visual arts, I think, are very [alive –TYF], there's a lot of work being done. So I'm very optimistic. The artists that I see now in San Antonio, there's still a lot of lagunas, there's a lot of production, but still very little buying [of artworks –TYF] by the mainline museums and making sure that they have Latino art in their permanent collections and other things to make sure that they exhibit the Latino art that they have in their permanent collections. Slowly in San Antonio, both McNay and the SAMA have, I think, a significant amount of Chicano art, but a lot more should be acquired and certainly a lot more should be exhibited.

There should also be or what I find also very much needed is monographs, smaller monographs on artists before [they –TYF] get major catalogs of major exhibitions. But even a small monograph on an artist is very important for teachers. And again, the teaching materials are very scarce on Chicano art, for high school, for example, or even for college. Shorter monographic—the *A Ver* series, I think, is [a good example –TYF]. It's, I think, a really major and a significant attempt, but I also think lesser, lesser meaning smaller, essays about artists, many, many smaller essays about different kinds of [art and artists –TYF]—before they can be put into a larger monograph.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So Eduardo Díaz at the Smithsonian, which is in the Boston area or New Jersey, I can't remember where, they have a show there now, John Valadez, a San Antonio-based artist, he had a small catalog. I don't know if you've seen that, Tomás. That just came out and it's in English and Spanish. I don't recall the college, I'm sorry. But there's attention to John, it's in a catalog. So that's—we don't know what form in which somebody's essays are appearing, about the meaning of the work and the importance of these artists and what their intention is and what their impact is on the audiences.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, you know, there's still a lot of lagunas, we can go on and on. But it's like in all the art forms, there's a lot more attention needed in terms of the younger women artists. When I look at the monographs or whatever, there are our senior artists, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Carmen Lomas Garza, you know, Patssi Valdez, et cetera, according to the different regions. But the younger, the younger women artists have yet to be in smaller monographs.

And so there's a lot of lagunas, but overall I'm very, very optimistic because I see that people are struggling like we struggled to articulate the meaning of Chicano art in the 21st century, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you tell the listener, Tomás, about the *A Ver* series? You mentioned it, but I think you should describe it.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The *A Ver* series that Chon Noriega at UCLA is [spearheading –TYF] are very serious, almost authoritative, I would say, monographs of individual artists mainly from the Chicano Movimiento that span the different Latino groups. So they're the artists from the Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican-American communities of the period of the Movimiento, the '70s and '80s. And they take the artists, they're biographical, and they also explicate the artworks within the frameworks that whoever wrote it, mainly art historians are writing them, talk about them. And many of them talk about them in relation to American art, which I think to try and situate and begin saying that these artists are part of American art, even though they're related as well to a cultural origin which is a Latin-American or Latino culture of origin.

So I think that the *A Ver* series is certainly at the moment probably the premier scholarly enterprise about Chicano art, Chicano-Latino art, because it includes, as I said, artists from other Latino communities. And they have, I think, six or seven at the moment already published. And I'm sure that there's a list, an expanding list. And I know many of my colleagues are working on one or another artists from one of these different groups. And some books are in process, other books are almost finished, some books are just beginning.

So I think when the full—and I don't know whether there is even an end date, but when this accumulation or this grouping of the *A Ver* series, I think it'll be probably the most important reference source for Latino art, U.S. Latino art.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: This is published by the University of Minnesota Press.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay. And you're on the advisory committee for that, too, or editorial committee?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I'm unsure.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No? Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I don't think so.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: All right. So, Tomás, can you—we're just kind of bouncing around here, picking up on some things that you discussed earlier about the contemporary times and its relationship to the historical past. And there are some really fantastic artists that are working, artists from San Antonio that went to New York City, he's still in New York City. He does a lot of graphic art. He was at the show in Los Angeles *Letters*. I'm sorry, I can't recall his name right now. Getting senile. I'm sorry, I'll come back to that when I recall his name, Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: We have a lot of things happening at the Smithsonian, including an exhibition by Carmen Ramos. It's been controversial, at least from the editor from the—who wrote the—not editor, the author. But the *Washington Post* was very critical of it and, you know, a lot of this stuff he didn't understand what it meant and why it was put together. It's very hard for any one exhibition to be everything to everybody.

I believe we talked about it earlier, but I don't know if you want to have any more reflections on—it's touring the country now. There's a fine, beautiful book. There's a new catalog on Gaspar Enriquez as well, which is an exhibition that's due to tour Texas, but open up at the El Paso Art Museum. So there's a publication related to that.

Some artists are publishing their own catalogs, Tomás. The glass artist Guerrero in Los Angeles, a number of other artists who are getting their work out pretty much on their own, they don't have a whole lot of editorial assistance or publishing houses that are taking responsibility for publishing their work.

And one hand, I'm glad it's getting published. But on the other side, I just want to know what your thought is about publishing houses and coming off the *A Ver* project.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, Gil, I just think that we've stated over and over, and some of this we'll probably have to take out because of repetition time and time again, but still, the canon or the publishing houses look at American art in a bifocal way, so it's black and white. And so the Latino imagination and imaginaries are rarely considered part of American art, even now as Latinos are positioned as the largest ethnic group in the United States.

So I think part of it has to do with a real historical amnesia of publishers and of the society in the United States. And secondly, because it is very complicated to articulate this art form or this artwork that comes from people that come from more than 20 distinct Latin-American cultures, all of whom have had relations or interconnected through immigration or through being born or through living for extended periods of time in the United States.

So it poses a lot of questions about nomenclature and about movements and about—usually, the mainline museums, you can see it in their labeling. It says "American art, born Buenos Aires," or "American artist, born Poland." And so if they do that, you know, then, in many ways we have Latino artists that are both born in the U.S., so it would say, you know, "Mexican-American artist, born Los Angeles" and others that say, you know, "Mexican-American artist, born Mexico."

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so, you know, the complications for publishers that are used to sort of, like, a very linear or definition of movements. For example, obviously, much work needs to be

done in terms of pop art, and the Latino artists use—and the difference between Latino pop art and Anglo pop art. They're both pop art. For example, Mel Casas is a good example, from Texas, many of his paintings are American pop art, but yet, they're much more socially conscious and politically conscious. And the metaphors that he uses are based on political activism, like *Brownies of the Southwest*.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Which is not the same as Andy Warhol using the [Campbell soup – TYF] cans. So in many ways, they're both pop artists. They both—in every sort of formal way, you can analyze Mel Casas and you can analyze Andy Warhol in the same way, and yet, you know, content-wise there is an added element in Mel Casas that is not in—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Somewhere else.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. They both use consumer [culture – TYF], you know. So I guess I'm just saying that, again, the Latino artists and the artwork they produce is related to a lot of the isms of contemporary American art. But the difference is to be articulated yet. They are, like Mel and Andy, they're both pop artists, but they are significantly different as pop artists.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So that difference is the thing that I think younger art historians are going to need to articulate, the same with all the other isms, you know.

So it's not that Latino art or Chicano artists, in many ways, are not, in terms of their work, related or part of the isms, but they are and they're not. And so they are and are not part, the not part needs to be articulated.

For example, Claudio Dicochea here in San Antonio, who works a lot with colonial casta paintings, there are the basis, the Mexican casta paintings, which again are part of American art, but not a part of U.S.-American art, so already you have to distinguish that the casta paintings are American art, but they come from Mexico. And then he takes them and uses contemporary iconography that he [surfs from the net and mixed media – TYF], and with a kind of—particular kind of humor. And so, again, you could call them casta paintings, but they're not Mexican casta paintings, they're American casta paintings and they're a part of American art.

So already, in one artist you have this complicated fusion, is and isn't, plus and minus, you know. And so those are the [issues – TYF] that I think still need to be articulated in terms of the explanation of Latino artists. And I think people are beginning to do that.

The artists themselves have done that, but I think, so far, the scholarship is very simplistic. For example, [Enrique – TYF] Chagoya, the Met has some of his work, Enrique Chagoya from San Francisco, where he mixes not only the formal elements of pre-Columbian and comic books and all kinds of U.S. heroes and Mexican heroes in a style that is very much [canonically graphic in style – TYF].

But there's something else when you compare it to a similar style done by an Anglo-American artist in the same way. And so those are, I think, the lagunas that still need to be, you know, articulated in the essays about all these artists.

In other words, Latino art is American art plus, and the plus can be all these other things that need

to be articulated.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, I just recalled the artist's name from New York City that used to live here in San Antonio, Alejandro Diaz—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —who does the graphic work and things. And is he still in New York City, do you know?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes, he's still in New York City.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Alejandro Diaz is having—he's another good example. He's having a show right now here in San Antonio.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, really?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And it's a very interesting show. Again, he uses American pop art forms, in this case British pop art, but he [makes sculptures –TYF] in the context of a contemporary, farm-working milieu so that [they reference –TYF] the British pop artist who made [sculptural –TYF] furniture. There were three pieces of furniture he was very famous [for –TYF]. They're women, sort of, like, very misogynist, they have black stockings, they're nude, and they're kneeling down [on all fours –TYF], and one's a table, and the other one's a coat rack, a woman with breasts and, like, black tights, and another one is another table. So [Alejandro Diaz –TYF] converts them into a farm worker. So the table is a [male –TYF] farm worker leaning down [in the form of –TYF] a table, and the woman is a farm worker woman who looks like a Madonna, you know, beautiful, beautiful.

So again, it's playing with and reinterpreting the canon in this way, in this kind of way, in a way that's very sincere and very ironical at the same time. And so a lot of his work is irony, but it's [also –TYF] very sincere. And so people don't know how to take it, you know. Is he pulling my leg? His work, I guess, is another one of those ways in which Latino artists are very much a part of whatever idiom that he's using from American art. In this case, there's certain things that have to do with surrealism, there's certain things that have to do with all kinds of [art movements –TYF].

So he's quoting all kinds of artists, but doing it from a Chicano standpoint, referencing humor. And it's all very, very sincere, so you don't really—most people either are offended or they don't like it or they don't know how to [interpret it –TYF]—there's a queasiness about it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So Linda Vallejo is doing something similar, too. *Make Us All Mexican*, have you seen any of the catalogs?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, it's more than just a game or more than just a metaphorical [jest –TYF]—it's a way of saying that they're part of this larger historical and cultural enterprise, but they are part of it in a slightly different way. And that difference is in their artwork. You know, I don't know quite how to explain it except that it's that plus factor that I keep saying, the plus factor that needs to be articulated.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right. So what's the last exhibit you saw here in San Antonio, Tomás? You want to just reflect on that, too, since we're doing some reflections right now?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The last exhibit was a small exhibit of Jesse Amado, who is a conceptual artist. It's at the Patricia Healy gallery, and I just saw it last week. And Jesse Amado is very important. His work is in *The Latino Presence in American Art* now, a show that's traveling throughout the country. And he has, for a long time, been a major artist in San Antonio that has been relatively unrecognized. You know, again, he, for a while, was living, like, half a year in San Antonio, half a year in New York City. And it's very cerebral, formal, edgy art. But it also has a lot of autobiography in it.

So that's interesting because a lot of times people make a line—I think it's a, like, a red herring, but a lot of people make a line between purity and contamination. So art that is just about itself, line, form, color, is pure, and art that has content is contaminated. And so here is an artist that is very pure because he does works with color and line and form, especially, and yet this exhibition is about his recent illness in which he took a lot of pills from the pharmaceutical companies and so on, so it had a lot to do with that. That inspired the work, you know.

And so there has to be autobiography in it. But because he is a conceptual artist, people find it very difficult to add that autobiographical, you know, elements because it would contaminate the purity, so called, of it. So he's another one of these artists, another example of an artist who uses, is very much a part of—and he has studied Carl Andre, he has studied, you know, all the American conceptual artists, Donald Judd. He knows them all, he knows their work, and he chooses to work with some of the same ideas in terms of the formal qualities, but he also adds another plus factor, which is his, I think, you know, which is his—this is my own idea, but I think he added this autobiographical elements into the forms.

And a lot of people either only look at it as a formal exercise or don't want to deal with the autobiography because it contaminates the purity of the work. And I don't think so. I think it enhances it and makes it even tougher because it has both.

But artists have been doing this, you know, for a long time. Picasso, you know, is a good example. [*Guernica* –TYF], his famous modernist masterpiece which is about the civil war, the Spanish Civil War, and the atrocities committed, and yet it's a cubist work. And so it's cubist, but it has a lot of [social –TYF] content in it and it has a lot of his own story in it, and yet it's very formal. It's about this particular strike in Spain, this air, you know, strike.

[... –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yes.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: You know that—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: *Guernica*.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So we have—Adriana Corral is going to give an exhibit, San Antonio-based artist. She's with John—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Vincent Valdez –TYF]?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And she is going to do a thing called the *Counter-Archives to the Narco City* about the feminist side, about women who have disappeared, who have been—violence on women, the border. And she's doing an exhibit concurrently with Alma Leiva, I

think she's from Honduras originally, and Tatiana Reinoza is curating the show. It will be traveling. NALAC supported them and we're going to have a show at the Snite Museum and we're going to do an installation also in the Notre Dame Center for Arts & Culture. So this is part of that new generation of artists, Tomás. She got her degree at the University of Texas at Austin. And I know you know her and I know you know her partner, [Vincent –TYF]. Can you comment about their work? And they're both here in San Antonio.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, again, they're major artists. He, in particular, has really become an internationally known artist. His—the latest exhibition here was about lynching, Mexican lynchings. And again, very adroit, wonderful craftsman, drawings that are superb, paintings that are magnificent, sort of social-realist paintings, but at the same time that they're [formalist –TYF], they're very poetic, they're very poetic renderings [...–TYF]. They're like athletic figures, but they also refer to the lynchings of Mexicanos in Texas.

And so, again, he is [Vincent Valdez –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Valdeto [ph]?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [It's Vincent Valdez –TYF]. He is another, you know, very, very important American artist. I think he also does a theme which is not very much appreciated in the mainline, which is to talk about masculinity. Almost all his paintings have to do with male figures and male bonding, war, soldiers, athletes. It has to do with this thing that a lot of people find sort of embarrassing, which is, like, homosocial relations among men—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Vincent Valdez.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —Vincent Valdez—you know, homosocial relations among men in a very poetic way, the kind of love that your comrades have for each other in war, the kind of deep fellowship, the kind of deep companionship. And again, nobody that I've read, in terms of his work, has talked about that.

But it's also very much rooted in Latino culture, you know, the affection and the warmth of males towards each other. So again, it's a sort of, like, an area that's sort of, like, I don't know, difficult for a lot of people to talk about. [... –TYF] You know, very few people have used the male figure as consistent as he has.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so there's very little written about from that angle, yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: That aspect, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And I think that it's another—again, he's an American artist, we put him with a, you know, kind of a poetic social realism or a poetic realism, but he has a little extra plus, which is that comradeship and that feeling that comes from cultural norms in the Mexicano community or in the Latino community, Italian or French or Mexican, you know. So it's a global—I mean, it's an international kind of [comradeship –TYF], but it's very much related to a non-Nordic culture. And it's in there, it's in the work, at least I feel that it's in the work.

Corral, his companion—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Adriana.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —Adriana Corral, is also, you know, using very conceptual forms in a very poetic way, poetic because it's almost the absence of something that makes you look at the thing, the absence of the women.

Here in San Antonio, she did an absolutely beautiful piece that had to do—she did the story of many of the women that had been lost to femicide on the border, and then she burned all the stories and used the ashes to create this map of the area in which they had been killed. So when you see it, you see only the—that's what I meant about the absence—the ashes, or the remains of their story is only now ashes. And then when those are gone, you'll see, like, on the floor, a circle that their sort of memory. And it's sort of like the presence of their absence or the absence of their memory. And again, it's a very conceptual piece, meaning that it's based on form and, in this case, [ephemeral –TYF], materials and so on. And yet, the content is there in a very poetic way, you know, and it's very, very strong. So it's a very political content.

And so, again, this is what I mean, that all these [dictums –TYF] about you can be poetic, but not political, you can be political, but not conceptual, or you can be conceptual, but not [realist –TYF]—Latino artists are finding ways to make their work be both things. You know, the conceptual plus and this plus is this poetic, you know, element—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Very deep, very deep.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —very deep, philosophical and poetic element that they use. And so a lot—that's, I think, why a lot of times people are put in little boxes, you know. You're a political artist or you're a non-political artist or you're a feminist artist or you're this [formalist –TYF] artist. And so many of the younger generation, maybe I think they've learned that they don't want to be boxed in by those strict boxes.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And on that point, Tomás, let's go back to Asco because, you know, they were kind of, like, a generation that really, in terms of performance art, really tried to make a different kind of statement, but yet not really separated, but in their own way of doing it. And they're still present today. They get a lot of attention today, maybe more so than they got at least internationally, than when they were doing the work on the streets.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, I think that, again, I think that one—all of this has been commented upon, it's nothing new. But I think that's where the regional [rules –TYF]—it's hard for me to think of Asco in El Paso, Tejas, because a lot of their work derives from the movies and from Hollywood. It's that Hollywood ambience, the California urban city ambience that's part of their work, inflected with a Mexican love of [glitz –TYF] and glitter and Baroque and all the Mexican parts of it put together, with also, you could call it conceptual or arte povera. They didn't have enough money to make movies, so they made a *No Movie*, they took pictures.

And so those are all the things. So the categorization of them and placing them in this box or that box, I think that's what a lot of Latino artists have evaded or are seeking to evade or have sought to evade, consciously or unconsciously have done that. And so there's a lot of room for explicating them, but a lot of things have been missed, as you say, about Asco.

But, again, that's why I keep thinking the region and the space and the place where the artists are is very important to their work. So I can't imagine, like I said, an Asco group coming, doing the work they did in El Paso [Texas –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right. But they are getting attention in Europe. They're getting attention in

New York City. Is it more of a spectator kind of attention? Or is it really in terms of the aesthetic? Because, like, you know, at the Whitney, Gamboa was there, but they were in Europe as well in terms of showing their work and things of that sort. So to these audiences, what do you think it means to them?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, I think what it means to them is it's very good art. I mean, they get a lot—again, audiences a lot of times go beyond whatever it is that [gallery –TYF]—when you go to an art exhibit and the person says this is a very significant artwork and you read and find whatever it says, in many cases if it says it's this it helps sometimes, but sometimes it doesn't really matter in terms of your appreciation of the work.

They're part of an international avant-garde, and the avant-garde has always—it's not about ethnic labeling or anything. It's just that the artists, in whatever group, whatever ethnic group or non-ethnic group you belong to, are pushing the frontiers and the boundaries of whatever ism or envelope that they try to put you in and sometimes much later on.

This happens, I mean, this is part of art history. Yoko Ono is having a show right now at MoMA, you know, and, what is it, 40 years after she did her first work. Now all of a sudden, they're finding out that she was really a pioneer in a lot of the things that a lot of later artists have done. And so they're giving her a one-person show.

But I also think that I'm continuing to think that place and space really matters in the kind of production that you make. And the reason that, again, if you're urban from Los Angeles and you go to Paris, of course they understand it because Paris and Los Angeles now are connected in a global [network –TYF], but they're also very urban, very—I don't know, it's a good question, in terms of audiences.

The same thing happens with artists that are local. Let's say a santero artist from New Mexico going to New York City, yes, the New Yorkers probably will, or New York City critics or New York City will probably relate to the religious symbolism of the work, but the whole historical and what that means and [who –TYF] the person is—and that's why santeros, contemporary santeros are doing, like, putting [new images –TYF], making—people want to make [changes –TYF]—people find it difficult to think of a contemporary santero because they want to put them back in the old tradition of carving three dimensional or painting or whatever, retablo, whatever. And if they open that [tradition –TYF] up into another one, they are no longer santeros.

Well, they are, but—in the region, they would be considered santeros, but in New York City they're something else. They want to keep them in the space as primitive or as—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Folk art.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —folk art, yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. Victor Zamudio-Taylor, he passed last year. His work on *Aztlan*, that big volume that he co-authored, I can't remember who else authored that with him, can you talk about him, Tomás? You knew him very well. And certainly, we all miss him, but he was also concerned, too, with those connections with the prehistoric past and contemporary.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes, Victor Zamudio-Taylor, I think, was a key person in terms of leveraging Mexico, particularly Mexico and Mexican-American, because he had connections in Mexico and worked for the Jumex Foundation of contemporary art. He, in many ways, was useful in

bridging or helping promote. Jumex, of course, also had a space in Los Angeles, and lived in Los Angeles for a long time, the director, and so he was very concerned with American art and could see the beginnings [of interconnections –TYF].

I don't know that they bought. I don't know that the Jumex bought any Chicano art for their collection either in Los Angeles or in Mexico City. But Victor himself was one of the really key, younger curators who could articulate particularly the breadth of Mexican art history and show how a lot of it was reemergent in contemporary Chicano art. Particularly he himself was an expert on—he studied at Princeton—of colonial and Mexican art. And so the Baroque was very much a part of his vocabulary. And he did a couple of shows, *Beyond Baroque* and other exhibitions, on the Baroque. And so he helped American artists, like Amalia Mesa-Bains, understand and use some of the characteristics and norms of the Baroque in terms of their work.

So yeah, so he was, like many other Chicano or many other people like him that were sort of cosmopolitan and traversed different cultures, [they –TYF] helped to position Chicano art in a more ample way, but especially in showing how Chicano artists rearticulated or recharged Mexican traditions, whether it was folk art or pre-Columbian art or especially colonial art.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Chon Noriega, former student of yours at Stanford, a colleague. I mean, given his job and his work over the years running the *A Ver* project, starting it, leading it, leading the UCLA Chicano Research Center, can you comment about Chon? You knew him when he was very young before he was famous.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, Chon Noriega is, I think, a key person in [the development of –TYF] Chicano art. I think that anybody who, in many ways, many of the first generation, of whom he is, first-generation articulators or curators or writers about Chicano art actually were from a different discipline. And that always helps, helps in terms of broadening your perspective.

He's a film scholar, and particularly a media scholar. And so he was very, very, initially, very much interested in terms of Chicano artists who were working in media, which is another area that really needs attention. A lot of people that have made art media that, at one time was very strong, but now as technology changes, some of the early media works of filmmakers, but also artists, has not really been captured in any kind of exhibition that I know of.

Chon comes from that tradition. That's how he started as a media critic and a media artist, and then on worked with Chicano film. His work with Chicano film is really groundbreaking because he was the one that articulated how barrio Chicano artists, like Ephraim Gutierrez, and many of the people that were not connected to Hollywood, made a distinct contribution to American film by making films that were about the barrio and about the community and were not documentary films necessarily, but were aesthetic films and cinema, Chicano cinema.

Remember, at that point there were whole meetings of Cine Acción in San Francisco, a lot of cine festivales, and there was always a [Chicano segment in those festivals –TYF]. They had documentary films, they had full-length films, but they also had art films, and they also had video works [... –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so that's an area that very few scholars that I know of—there have been exhibitions of Chicano—I know at the Reina Sofía in Madrid and other places, but it's not an area that has been very much commented on, which is a fruitful area for further research.

Chon began there and came from there and then branched out and particularly in avant-garde. I think coming from that media, you know, the media concerns with evanescence and fleetingness and performance and the performative. And so the people that he's been particularly concerned with have been people that work in performance art, which is another area in Chicano art or Latino art that has gotten attention, but much more needs to be [done –TYF].

Asco is—the performing group par excellence—and then, like, there's nothing, but there's a lot of artists that work in that area. And so he began articulating, worked with Carmelita Tropicana and with Chola con Cello and, you know, a lot of the early [performance artists –TYF], many, many other avant-garde, performative, community, particularly Day of the Dead, performative, processions and performative. So he articulated all kinds of, in a way, public art forms that were very much avant-garde and in avant-garde traditions. I would say that that's his milieu, you know, the avant-garde traditions and the avant-garde elements of starting from media through performance through visual arts.

And the other has been the historical, that he has been very concerned with giving a base to Chicano art through the work, through the exhibitions that they funded, not only the real beginnings of Chicano art and the different community organizations in Los Angeles, but also the artists. Because, again, UCLA was so significant in the '40s, after the Second World War when many of the GIs came because of the GI Bill and went to the university in art departments, and so they were the parents, as it were, of the Chicano generation.

But he's also been concerned with the grandparents, the people that came before the GI generation, particularly in Los Angeles. And I think that—in a historical breadth, he goes the gamut, from the early beginnings and trying always to push back [the historical clock –TYF].

We had Chicano artists [... –TYF] in the 19th century? [Chon –TYF] was the one that got me interested in the early 19th century [artists –TYF] in California and all the sticky questions that that articulates in terms of citizenship versus living in the country for a long time, blah, blah, blah.

But he was—if you ask me, I think that those are the three domains [where –TYF] he's been a master. And one is the media and performance art, the other has been the avant-garde generally, and thirdly, the historical breadth and trying to push back the beginnings of Chicano art [prior –TYF] to the Chicano movement and then the early part of the 20th century and then the latter part of the 19th century.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Now, you knew him first at Stanford, is that correct?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did he take a class with you or did you work together?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, he was in, I can't even remember the area that it was called, world consciousness, something like that. Mary Pratt and Renato Rosaldo were in that area. I knew him actually through [my –TYF] work in Chicano literature.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And you know, we became friends and there's a whole art thing. And of course, with Shifra and so on I got to know him very well.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So what are you reading now, Tomás, in terms of Chicano art or Latino art?

What's your—have you been looking at recently?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, you know, I try to keep up with the catalogs. I gave all my books to the San Antonio Public Library, so I have lot of empty spaces that I'm trying to fill up, for books. So I'm reading, you know, many of the catalogs. I'm trying to—I need to do that in order to write about Amalia because she participated or is part of American art and all the isms that happened.

And so a lot of the current works, you know, right now the last book I read is called *33 Artists in 3 Acts* which is all about the contemporary world art. And it's interesting because it's artists themselves talking about their art and who they are and what they are trying to do and has a lot to do with market and, you know, values. And so that's been very interesting.

And locally, you know, any catalog that I can read of contemporary artists. And now there's a [fresh new wave –TYF]—so I read locally and I read globally and I try to read the catalogs. I haven't gotten the catalog for the Whitney show and I'm looking forward very much to reading that. I'm reading a lot on Miguel Covarrubias because there's going to be a major show and I'm going to be on a panel about him.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where at?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Here in San Antonio in, I guess, September, October. It starts in July at SAMA, the San Antonio Museum of Art. So that's—I mean, it's not about explicating, but I read a lot.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And I read all the current—I'm still a New Yorker, I get the *New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *New Yorker*, all the kind of magazines about art in New York City. And you know, people send me books. So I think I'm up on what's going on in the art world.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you're not living in New York City anymore, but you still have some interests in kind of the world of New York City.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Of course –TYF]. Texas is very rich, but I don't travel much. If I can go to Austin, Dallas, and Fort Worth, Houston, I mean, all the major shows.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So all the museums [in Texas –TYF] have all the shows that come through [from –TYF] New York City. I mean, maybe a couple of months [later –TYF]—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Later, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —but I don't travel. So mainly it's through the catalogs, I'm reading a lot of catalogs and rereading, you know, some of the others. And then conversations, some very wonderful conversations, particularly with Claudio Dicochea, we're always sharing, you know, books. And he's teaching for the first time Chicano art history.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Where?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: At our Lady of the Lake [University –TYF]. And so just all about his classes and how he organized it and which artists he talked about and why and, you know, the kind

of collateral reading that he had for his courses.

And of course, now I'm very privileged that Amelia Malagamba is in San Antonio. And she and I constantly talking. And you know, she's a very witty, knowledgeable person about the art world. And she knew and has worked with a lot of the Chicano artists, so we have a lot of interesting conversations about critiques, personal critiques, private critiques as we go to an exhibition, and then we talk about the work. She's been really terrific to have. And her critical acumen is just delightful.

And so, you know, I'm learning a lot.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Particularly in the areas that she specializes in, particularly in women's art and in photography. So we've had a lot of discussions about Chicano photography. And again, another area that we don't have any book on the historical development of Chicano photography. And we have smaller monographs [about –TYF] two or three photographers, but even, like, a major [photographer –TYF], Carlos Bernal, for example, the catalogs and the essays. That's why I think a book like the one that just came out from the UCLA Research Studies Center and actually published by the University of Washington Press—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —this one.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The title and author?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The *Tradition and Transformation: Chicana/o Art from the 1970s through the 1990s*, Shifra Goldman, edited by Charlene Villaseñor Black, I think this is a wonderful example of the kind of looking and revising and adding to, from an art historical perspective, the work that was done and putting it in context, because she does a wonderful job. I kept reading it and I thought it was, at one time, it was Shifra's essays. And there are sort of, like, segments of her essays, but it's Charlene's larger context for those works, which makes it really very interesting.

This chapter called "Hidden Histories" about the Chicano experience, in which she takes a lot of critics and uses their formulations to look at the work that Shifra has done.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So there's a lot to be done. Like I said, media, very little work in media art, Chicano media art. Performance art a little more, but still nowhere near how they are part of American performance art. Photography, very little. Like I was saying [about Luis Bernal –TYF], there are catalogs and important first, early work, but if you aren't there or if you don't have a copy of that from, you know, like, the Center for Photographic Studies in Arizona, you know, you don't know. And now they're unavailable or they're sold out—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —or you know, you can find one or two copies.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Rare books.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Rare books, you know. And so students, how can they know if they're not accessible? So there's—I think right now we've reached the point where people are just concerned with new, the new works, but less concerned with—and I think it's equally significant to republish whole essays. Chon [Noriega –TYF], I think, is very aware of that. For example, UCLA did some of the, one of those [reprints –TYF]. At one time, there were whole [essays –TYF], like, on the Chicano experience, that people would write, like, maybe six or seven essays, like, Arturo Madrid wrote one on the pachuco, one on the pocho, one on the [immigrant –TYF], so all four of those essays would make a nice, little handbook.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Or the same thing with photography, for essays about it. So I guess I think it's just that people haven't put them together in that way because they, like, usually want the new, you know, like the *A Ver* series which is critical analysis, but it isn't necessarily a republishing form. The republishing of essays of particular [artists –TYF]—and the art, I think, is particularly important because they are very hard to come by. And even if the—and particularly those that were self-published or that artists did, you know, for themselves.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I mean, so there's a great deal to be done and maybe even sessions to be held, like at the Latino Art Now! conference, about these lagunas.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Tell us what you mean by lagunas.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, lagunas, you know, areas that need to be filled.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Addressed, yeah. You might just do that for the record.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. Tomás, let me just go back again. We were—and I just like this reflection period here. And in New York City, you had a beautiful place, a very lovely area, St. Marks Street. And you had a lot of people visit you over the years. Could you just mention some of the people that—because you had wonderful dinners, nice drinks, great conversations. And I have great memories of having, you know, been privileged to go to your house and Dudley cooking. Who was at your house over the years? Can you just tell? I know, it's—just out loud.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [... –TYF]. Well, yes, I think that I've always felt that intimate dinners—we had a small table that always had six chairs, so that's about right, six people having a wonderful meal. And I've always been—Dudley and I, you know, have different ideas. He's very spontaneous and I'm very sort of formalized, formulaic. So we always started with drinks. And then we had a full-course dinner which consisted of salad and entree and dessert. And then we'd go from the table to [the terrace or study –TYF] and have coffee and dessert. So it was a full evening.

And I always—I was just very concerned with ambience, so I remember I was always very excited about setting the table because I used different table settings. And I remember one time I came to San Antonio and bought these little bottles of Virgen de Guadalupe that you could fill up with colored water, so we had, like, 20 Virgens de Guadalupe that became a centerpiece, and so that activated—and candles in between each one in a different color, and it activated a whole discussion. Or we always had flowers, we always had candles, we always had music. And so it was—those were wonderful evenings.

And we always tried to have good wine. We were learning about wine and we wanted to try out different [vintages –TYF]. And so those were soirees, little, intimate [cenitas –TYF], a lot of really [profound conversations –TYF]. I wish I had somehow kept a little notebook about some sort of [journal –TYF], because there were a lot of interesting [creators –TYF]—mainly the political, social, cultural, and specifically I was always interested in the people that were there, the work that they were doing. So it was, we went around the table, and what are your current projects. And then people questioned each other about their projects and made suggestions about books that they had read that had something to do with that project.

So there was, I think, a lot of knowledge and learning.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Because you have a lot of people there who were different backgrounds.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [Absolutely—dance, music, theater folk –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: You had me as an art collector, a sociologist, you had people from theater, people—at other times artists, a mix of folks.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes, that was always [different kind of perspectives –TYF]—I felt that, you know, cross-pollination was very important. And there were some wonderful [guests –TYF]—Amalia Mesa-Bains when she came would always bring interesting people, that she was coming to a conference or give a lecture and she was particularly impressed by this or that young artist and would bring him over for dinner—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —all the artists that I wanted to meet, because remember, this is New York City and there were always artists visiting. And you know, my work with the Rockefeller Foundation opened me up to a lot of artists [in many genres –TYF].

So just as a typical example, I remember one night we had somebody from the Espigas Foundation in Buenos Aires, who was a great collector, well, a collector of books and material about Buenos Aires. He had a foundation. And George Helft, who was a great curator of Latin-American art, who had a private museum in Buenos Aires. So there was the Espigas guy who was collecting historical material and there was George Helft who was a contemporary, a great connoisseur of contemporary, and had one of the great [contemporary art collections –TYF] and has one of the world's probably greatest libraries of Jorge Luis Borges, collects them and has put it in his house, together with, let's say, at the same dinner together with a person from the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños and maybe somebody from San Antonio who was visiting.

So yeah, there were always people. Tina Ramirez from the Ballet Hispanico, the directors of the Repertorio Español in New York City, certainly a lot of the curators from the Museo del Barrio, people from the Puerto Rican Taller Boricua, and then scholars, like Mary Pratt and [Renato –TYF] Rosaldo.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Rosaldo—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Renato Rosaldo and Juan Flores certainly. And through time, you know, community activists. Lilian Jimenez, who I have not kept up with her, who was very important as a media—she was a film and media person with Chon, she worked a lot with Chon. And you know, theater people, you know, the director of the—Míriam Colón, a great actress and a wonderful—impressive sort of personalities. A lot of Mexican artists that were passing through, so yeah, it

was [spectacular –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So your house, when I used to go, and I've been there multiple times for these kinds of dinners, and I know a lot of other people have, too, so, you know, your circles there it was just interesting and it was a place of destination. I know I used to joke with you about when you left that the mayor, you know, was—you've said they're losing revenue in New York because you guys aren't there. But you know, it reminded me of the two women that were together that went to Paris from the United States in the 19th century, late 19th century, good friends with Picasso.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Because they used to have some wonderful sessions at their house, and that's what it reminded me of, Tomás, is these circles of people that interacted and you guys just knew how to, you know, negotiate that and work at it.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, they were—it was—they were wonderful. But again, it was like theater. And like theater, you know, you see it and it vanishes and you can't capture it. You remember it in your mind, you see what was happening in the stage, but it's gone, it's not replicable.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But there were many [movers and shakers –TYF]. And then there were people that had lived in the areas, you know, like she's still there, the woman who was the director of the Blue Star art space that now lives in SoHo and worked a lot with Mexican art. And it's still there, you know, she—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Stella?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Carla Stellweg, and people like her, you know. So she would bring somebody from Mexico City that was just coming in from wherever and would talk about their work and was very excited about meeting one of the curators from MoMA. And so that each one—as, you know, the Colombian director of textiles at the Metropolitan Museum was a good friend of ours, Emilia Cortes, and so she would bring people from the Met who was the curator of, you know, antiquities or the curator of this [or that –TYF].

And so there was—and it was not only about art and culture, it was about gossip and about, you know, the New York City scene, what was going on in music and in dance and in art and food and what new restaurants were coming up. The Colorado sisters, Elvira and Hortensia Colorado who were Chicana performance artists from Tejas, who were two unmarried sisters that were there from the very, very beginning of the Mexicanos coming to New York City back in the early, you know, '60s and have always lived in New York City, and they were very much a part of the street theater, particularly indigenous, so they would bring people from the Indian pow-wows and Aztec dancers. So the early Mexicano—Maria Hinojosa when she was first starting to work in media and her friends, when they were really doing the first archives of Mexicanos in New York City and interviewing the early parishioners of La Asociación de Guadalupe Church, which was the gathering place [of newly-arrived Mexicanos –TYF].

So yeah, there were—it was New York City. It was a microcosm of New York City, but related to particularly the Chicano. It was a—one thing was how many Chicanos were passing through—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —you know, for whatever reason, their work, there were a lot of academicians who, you know, just like in San Antonio. That's why coming to San Antonio, in some ways, is like being in New York City because the American Anthropological Association or the Latinos in Higher Education conference is in San Antonio, the same way it was in New York City, so a lot of those folks that you had met, you know.

And then, of course, there was at one time—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: A lot of foundation people, too.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. When I was there, you know, there were a lot of—the beginning of Latinos and major foundations, Ford, Rockefeller, you know, and so all the Latino officers from those foundations. We had a Latinos in philanthropy group and so we got to know one another. And they were people from them, because they each had their networks, and we'd invite one, they'd say, oh, yeah, but I have so-and-so visiting from—well, bring them over. So there was always [room for extras –TYF], you know, we always—but we always were—I guess I'm this way.

Dudley and I have a tension because he's very spontaneous. He, you know, no matter what, will just [invite you in –TYF]—and I was very [selective –TYF]—because I wanted everybody to have a real experience and I wanted to make sure that nobody had less than everybody else. So I always to make sure, well, let me know who it is so I can read up about who it is you're bringing so we can have something to talk about and make sure that we have a place for them. And so because we were so spontaneous that you'd invite one person and he'd bring six others.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And then, you know, Dudley's okay. And when we had just, like, an open house, because we did that occasionally, it just a bring everyone else. But when we had seated dinners, I preferred just to have the six at the table, maybe add one more if somebody really wanted to bring somebody, but no more than that because then it becomes diffused.

So yeah, it was a—they were very intimate, intellectual, social gatherings where a lot of commentary and ideas and enriching, you know, conversation about people's plans. And you know, after, you know, two or three bottles of wine, people got very—it was very sentimental and very homey and very [delightful –TYF]—and I have a lot of letters, you know, a lot of thank you notes that are really quite wonderful [remembrances –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Or, you know, people met, they were at least—we were cupid to two or three couples, you know, that met at the dinner.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Is that right?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, that got married, and some that broke up immediately—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and some that have lasted up to now. So it was—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, it was a real place of destination.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, it was. A lot of people remember 70 St. Marks Place. And when we came, you know, today, I saw the sign [from our San Antonio loft –TYF], I thought about bringing it and putting up here. Then I said no, it's getting too much, the Casa Cariño, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, it was wonderful. It was a wonderful place, but every place is wonderful, Gil. San Antonio—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did you have Christina Cuevas there?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Christina Cuevas.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Ford Foundation, John Phillip Santos, Ford Foundation.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: There for a number of years. Raymund—what was—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Paredes.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Parades was there, and Rockefeller.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Trying to think of some of the other foundation people.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: But you also had visitors from Europe, too, and other parts of the world, did you not, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I don't recall who they would have been. I imagine from the museum world or—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, when I was—when we were working with the [idea of global art –TYF], at one time we were very concerned with the Venice Biennale and other biennales, the proliferation of art biennales, including Havana Biennale. And we started wondering about the efficacy of art biennales that are structured around a national grouping or a national ideology. As we were, at that point even in the '90s, beginning to be more global, does it make any more sense? And particularly because it was just such an uneven playing field so that the big powers, like France and Germany and United States, had big pavilions, and then smaller countries from Africa or Latin America had little, tiny houses, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And then it was such a disparity of power and the people that got all the attention were these huge [sites –TYF] and not the small. In many cases, some of the smaller countries had brought in their really best artists, did even a more wonderful job and they were very important.

But there was also this hierarchy, you know. So other forums of international art exhibitions, like *Documenta*, who took a theme and then invited artists and people from wherever to focus on that theme, eradicated this big/small [dichotomy –TYF]. And so a small country could have a very interesting thematic thing that a lot of people went to because of the theme, not because of the size of the country—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —or their economic means to be able to build a pavilion or whatever. Some of them didn't even have pavilions, they just used an existing, you know, space to do their [presentation –TYF], you know.

And so, again, a lot of the people from that group, [... –TYF] they were already thinking. For example—that was the beginning of what is now the art fair Frieze. I remember I went with Victor Zamudio to the art fair in Madrid. I can't remember what it's called now, but it was, like, that was first, and then Frieze in London, and then Art Basel in Miami Beach. So those [art fairs –TYF] substituted for—well, the Venice Biennale and some of those—the biennales were still going on, but there were other things that broke off to do other kinds of things. And so a lot of the people that were part of that would, like, through friends—Victor was a very important person because he knew all the Spanish [curators –TYF]. So again, they would bring a curator from the Reina Sofía or even from Venice.

And then, we worked with people from MoMA and the Met. And I was part of the international art circuit. Whenever there was a thing about Latino art, I spoke at the first conference on Latino art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and at a conference at the Louvre when they had a session on immigrant [art –TYF], all the different immigrants in Paris. They had a whole week on immigrant art, and they had a session on Latino art and I spoke there. And of course, in Mexico City.

So yeah, and through all those people met people that were passing through New York City. And they came, and I said we're having dinner, why don't you come, and they added to the flavor of the discussion. And people made a lot of connections. They always traded [business –TYF] cards. And I'm sure that there were a lot of—well, I know that there were some connections. And as I said, some—at least three marriages that I know of.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Well, in my opinion, you know, it was like an art center in a way, you know, not in terms of the formal, because you always had artwork and you had a mix of different kinds of artists or people in the cultural worlds or scholars in other fields, but it was really very meaningful for everybody who used to visit. And people talk about it still, we talk about the memories—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —there on St. Marks Place.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, it was very memorable, but so has been every place that we've lived in. You know, it's different, but we do much less of it here in San Antonio, but we still continue it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, you do have a lot of circles here, too, people visiting from local as well as national.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. And there's a lot of dinners and a lot of [socializing –TYF]—and I keep constantly meeting people that I knew in the past, like last week there was a wonderful

—I got invited to lunch with Carlota Cárdenas Dwyer.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Really? How is she doing?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: She's doing very, very well.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: She used to teach at UT Austin.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, she used to teach at UT Austin, unfortunately didn't get tenure there. So then she came—she moved to San Antonio and taught at a high school, Churchill High School for many, many years, and became really one of the [legends –TYF]—she showed me one wall full of awards that her students had won, because she became very interested in debate. And I didn't know this, but in Texas they have these contests where students present papers. And it was in literary criticism, lit crit, and so her students won all these awards. You know, they had sections in literary criticism of poetry and literature. And of course, that's what she taught, Chicano literature and criticism. And so her students won all kinds of national awards. And so she says that, you know, leaving Texas at first, that first time, she was very disappointed and angry and so on. And then soon this other whirlwind came—and so now she has students come to visit her from all over.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: She's back in San Antonio? She's here.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: She's also been here.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, all this time. Wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Her husband is a [scientist –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, we did a project at IBM years and years and years ago, you know, that's talking, like, the mid '70s together.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, well, she was another pioneer. So, you know, because when we did *Literatura Chicana: Texto y Contexto* in 1972, about that time she started doing her own anthologies. And so it was very [influential –TYF]—and she has opened up a lot of the MLA [sessions –TYF], when they didn't have Chicano caucuses or Latino, I mean, Latino literature, Chicano literature caucuses.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So MLA is—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes, the MLA, the Modern Language Association meetings in New York City and all over the country—but opening up and struggling to [legitimize Chicano literature –TYF]—and she was one of the, really, pioneers in opening the field of Chicano literature at those MLA conferences early, early on.

And so she was talking and reminiscing about remembrance—or I didn't remember because I wasn't in that part of it—but she said one time this happened. And again, some of the older scholars, friends of ours, were part of that whole group.

So it was a discussion about institutional [incorporation –TYF]—the creation of institutions, not only in the barrio, but opening up the mainline institutions, whether it was the professional organizations, whether it was the MLA or the Anthropological Association or the higher education [association –TYF], and how people began making caucuses and demanding that a speaker or that [scholars –

TYF] be put in the main program and all that kind of [struggle –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did you see the CAA, the College Arts Association?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Very rarely, but I did go several times.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, the same thing, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And, again, some of our colleagues were part of opening up and even creating one or two sessions [on mainline institutions –TYF]. [Carlota Dwyer –TYF]—and she's one of the elders now. And she travels a lot.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: How did you reconnect?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Through another friend that I met here in San Antonio, a friend of [Tino –TYF] Villanueva, Juanita Luna-Lawhn.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And how do you—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Juanita Luna[-Lawhn –TYF] was very important in Chicano literature because she started writing about women artists in San Antonio in the early [1920s –TYF], you know, sort of self-published or women that published, you know, and she found this particularly one major [writer –TYF], Lorelei, who signed herself as "Lorelei" from San Antonio, who was part of the 1920s sort of, like, renaissance of writers in San Antonio. [Juanita –TYF] wrote a lot about her and other women from that period, Chicanas.

And so she's a good friend of Tino.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: How's Tino doing?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Tino is doing great. As usual, he's about to take off for his summer [trip –TYF] in Europe, which he usually does, weeks in Paris, weeks in Rome, weeks in London, and then comes back.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: I feel sorry for him. [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: He's retiring. He's retiring now. I think this is—or he has retired or this is his last year. And anyway, yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Will he move back to San Antonio or stay out there?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No. We went to his alma mater [in San Marcos who –TYF] honored three distinguished alumni and he was one of them, about three weeks ago, and so Dudley and Juanita and I went to the reception, a beautiful reception. And they did a video of him and his work and [career –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, how nice.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It was very nice. And I think that he's thinking about, I think, giving

them his archive. So they're courting him for the archive.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And this was part of it, you know, the distinguished alumnus thing. And so anyway, Juanita and him have been friends and writing partners for many, many years. And so—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Is she still here?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, she's here. She teaches at San Antonio College. And so through her, and she's a very good friend with Carlota.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And we've been trying to do this for a long time; finally last week it happened.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Well, if you see Carlota, give her my regards.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I will.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, please.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: She's very feisty.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. She was really a nice colleague. Yeah, we got along very well. I vaguely remember her husband, but I did meet them.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, they have a very beautiful house in San Antonio. And I don't think they have children. But she has a lot of either siblings that have kids, so she talks a lot about all the nephews and nieces and [friends –TYF] that she has.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Well, you've got your circles in New York City, you have your circles here in San Antonio, you had your place in Seattle. Did you have a lot of visitors in Seattle, too, Tomás? And then you—where else did you live?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, mainly that, mainly those three.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah. But I think you've got circles with organizations. You know, obviously the foundation world, but the university world, but then, like, with Mari Carmen Ramírez at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Have you seen Mari Carmen? Do you talk to her?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I haven't seen Mari Carmen at all.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Or heard?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, not at all.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Since you last published that volume together?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. I don't even know. The thing went online. And Victor Sorell was in charge of the second volume.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And I think at one time I had heard it was progressing very well or almost done. I haven't—I lost contact with him. Chon is also part of that project. So I don't know where the project is. I think it's ongoing. I mean, I think they're going to get at least the second volume out.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And I think it's in process, probably very much towards the end of it. But beyond that I haven't—like I said, because of illness and other things, we just haven't been going. Dudley doesn't drive a lot anymore, so—even [going –TYF] to Houston. I'd love to go to Houston. So I'm thinking that now in the short run, now that it's getting warm and stuff, I may just take the bus.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Because they have this new bus that goes —

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And I know people that can pick me up and spend the day with them and they'd take me back to the bus and come back to San Antonio—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —because you can do it in a day. Houston—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you're just absolutely against flying? Like you—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, I'm not absolutely against flying, I just haven't had the courage to do it.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Well, if you do get the courage, I'd be happy to get you tickets, or you and Dudley, to go to the conference of Latino Art Now! next April or—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. Well, actually [... –TYF] I said—because I have little stabs of this and that that could easily be—the things that I've done before, but put in a new way to again say this is a kind of a work that I think needs to be done, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Well, I know that your name came up in our meeting. And I told them that you're not traveling. And I'd like to go back and say that you might consider—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, I think, you know—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —being a guest.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —you know, I think that what we're talking about is a week or 10-day kind of thing, but a three-day thing I don't think is—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —even to New York City, to Washington, you know.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I'm strong now. I mean, and I still have all these achaques, you know. But again, like I said, every three months you go [to the doctors –TYF] and they say it's okay for the next three months. But you know, I have to do Amalia, I have to do the Amalia [book –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But even there, doing something about her would be great, too.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, that would be wonderful.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: You know, because I have all this [writing –TYF] about her—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and she is going to be—she's going to have a major show in Albuquerque.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Really? Oh. National Hispanic Cultural Center?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, it might—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Or with the—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It would probably be at the university art gallery—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —with Holly.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So Holly's doing it. It's called *Las Cuatro Grandes*.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And it's Amalia, Judy, and [perhaps Esther Hernandez –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Amalia—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Judy Baca.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Judy, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I think Ester Hernández—Ester Hernández, Judy Baca, Amalia—it's either Patssi or someone else.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so she's already—they're already, like, you know, setting up scholars to write their essays and all that [preparation –TYF]. It's going to be a major show. It's Holly's sort of, like, major show before she retires.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Did she say when, or this year, or next year?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, it's set up. Her book [is done –TYF]—Holly's book on the murals of East L.A. is coming out. I wrote a preface for it or an introduction.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: It was very interesting. You know, I read the—it's, well, it's a very important book. And it's finished.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: They're doing it now.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Are they doing it with—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Tim Drescher.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Tim Drescher, yes.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, Tim Drescher. And her—and it's the University of New Mexico Press. And I think they're in the editing and beginning to push it through this year. And I think it's going to be coinciding with the exhibition. So I think it must be 216, the *Las Cuatro Grandes*.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So I was thinking, well, even that about Amalia and maybe the last chapter that I'm working on about Amalia and the *Cabinets of Curiosity*, the *Wunderkammer* and showing how the *Wunderkammer* [relates to her art –TYF]. So that may be interesting. You know, it's a wonderful topic because it's all about the enlightenment and all the [topics –TYF], how she deals with—well, like the show she did at UCLA, the last show.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The Chicano art or—no?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, Amalia.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, Amalia.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Amalia's show at the—it's at the museum.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: SPARC? No, not SPARC.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No, at the museum at UCLA. The museum that used to be the ethnography museum, but now it's got another name. [... –TYF]—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right, yeah, yeah. Fowler, the Fowler.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Fowler, the Fowler Museum, yeah. [Amalia –TYF] did a *Wunderkammer* there. That was the last one. But she's done that all the way through.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, you've given artwork to a lot of places. I know at the National Museum of Mexican Art they have a significant body of work. What kind of work did you give them?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Who?

GILBERTO CARDENAS: The National Museum of Mexican Art, Carlos Totolero.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Oh, Carlos and the curator came and they basically wanted Mexican folk art. So we had most of our Mexican folk art, I don't know, 120-some-what pieces, I think, they took. So it was folk art in all the genres, pottery, straw, paper, a lot of children's [toys –TYF], beautiful things that, in many ways, are not being made anymore that we had acquired over the years, a wonderful Ferris wheel with little muertitos sitting in all the little chairs.

Yeah, and I'm now again thinking that a lot of the museums don't have Tejano art, so I was thinking I have quite a few [Tejano artists –TYF]—what I have now, Gil, as I'm sort of deaccessioning or giving away a lot to museums, I have some wonderful photographs from Kathy Vargas, who I think is another major Chicana artist, and I don't think the Mexican Museum in San Francisco has any. Again, they have California, mainly California [Chicano artists –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO:—and it's not that they're not interested, but they just don't—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: They don't have access, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Or even some of my photography collection. That little collection [of photographs –TYF], six or eight pieces looking for a home. Turok—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Antonio Turok?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, Antonio Turok, all the great Mexican photographers, at least one or two pieces by each.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So that's eight [photographs –TYF] that would be a nice little [collection –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And you have papers at the national—Archives of American Art?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. And, like, I have a lot more [materials ... –TYF]. Just like I did before, [materials on –TYF] individual artists, organizations, exhibitions, and now writings about Chicano art. So that's another [archive However –TYF], I don't know what they mean by primary sources.

[END SD6 TR01.]

[Blank track SD6 TR02. –Ed.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: I have a lot of the ephemeral [material –TYF], the exhibitions, the invitations, all [that kind of matter –TYF], and then the local [information –TYF] that have come out of the papers that I clip, much more from Tejas [... –TYF].

[... –TYF]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Oh, okay. You also have given, let me just mention here, to the public library. Are there things at Stanford—I can't recall if you mentioned Stanford.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: No.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: No.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: The [San Antonio –TYF] public library has actually all the [books –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah, the books.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Sorry, all the books on Chicano and Mexican art, and the catalogs. Because at one time, I asked Liza and she said, no, we make a distinction, and they didn't want catalogs—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —or so many pages. They could take a smaller thing, but they wouldn't take, you know, a monograph—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —because those are books.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And those went to another library or something.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So you know, I've given most of it away, but there's little skimpy this or that, and all the ephemeral stuff still.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And you have, for example, the—you just showed me today the boxes on San Antonio.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Can you comment about that, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, since I came back five years ago, immediately the first week I started clipping [articles –TYF] from the local paper, but what I mean by the local paper is not only the local paper, but all the little [handouts from exhibits –TYF]. Unlike you, we pick up the paper wherever we go—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: [Laughs.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and then the Current and other alternative papers. So I would go through them and cut out all the articles about artists, musicians, art, music, and literature, and start filing them. And so now I have an archive. And I call it the *San Quilmas* archive. And San Quilmas is

what they call San Antonio, the prisoners in the country jail. And I think there's an old corrido about San Quilmas.

So I thought, well, that's very San Antonio. [... –TYF] So I call it the *San Quilmas Collection*, since this is a San Quilmas archive and it's an archive of ephemeral material having to do with organizations, cultural organizations, art and people, places, and things that have to do with Chicanos in San Antonio. And a lot of them are historical, like the *Express [News –TYF]* is running a series on all the landmarks in San Antonio. And they're one page, but in there there's a lot of information, so I've clipped all those. I've put them in. And now that I belong—that I'm working with a lot of these [organizations –TYF] rethinking of the downtown, that means we've done a lot of research on buildings, historical buildings and [sites –TYF] and stories about the buildings. And the Esperanza has a really significant photographic archive.

So we're doing a book on the West Side of San Antonio—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: All right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: A lot of the photographs [document –TYF] the historical development of the community—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —and then the organizations within the community and some stories of people from the community. So far, our idea is to organize [the book –TYF] around the old sort of Catholic calendar, so Easter and all the things that went on, the cooking and [rituals –TYF] that went on around Easter, Christmas, and then the stories of people with a lot of photographs. So it will be mainly photographic with the [context of –TYF] a historic how the west side developed, who the developers were, the different segments of the community, the richer people lived [on Prospect Hill –TYF] and why it was called that and stories [about –TYF] that.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So the opposite of "remember the Alamo." This will be a different, remember San Antonio—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, right, right, right.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: —but another lens.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Right. It doesn't have a title yet. So that's where I thought, well, the *San Quilmas Collection* will be for people working on that, it will be very useful—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —because it's about the development of the city, of the Cassiano Park and when people celebrated the Cinco de Mayo at Elmendorf Lake and all that kind of [context –TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So, Tomás, that whole thing, what—if you were to be asked, what will people remember you for? You're a scholar, you're a historian in many ways, art historian, you're a philosopher in some ways, at least in the Chicano community. You don't present yourself that way, but your vision, your wisdom, your knowledge and how you share it across generations, I think, puts you in a very unique place. And I'm sure later generations who hear your voice through here and other ways, who read your work, what would you want them to remember you most? Do you have

anything special in your mind that you think is really important?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, I think that I would love to be remembered as a storyteller. I think that, as I said, I've come to the conclusion that culture is really the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, who we are, where we came from, where we're going. And embedded in those questions, I think, are all the artwork and all the literary work and all the [culture –TYF]—so if I'm remembered as a storyteller, I think that that's what I would like to be remembered as, a storyteller, a person who told the stories, the pain, the agony, the good times, the resilience, the perseverance, the humor that enabled people to survive all the atrocities of segregation and of being erased, and how they survived and surmounted them [through –TYF] all the things that they created, thought of and acted upon to make their lives worthwhile.

And I think those are the stories that our literature tells or the story that [art depicts –TYF]—so if I can be remembered as a storyteller, that's what I'd like.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Fantastic. I'm going to stop here, Tomás, because I'm not sure what's going on here. But I don't want to erase it, so I'm going to just stop. I don't know if we went through the whole thing or—

[END SD6 TR02.]

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay, Tomás, we have our session today. Today is May 26. We're in San Antonio. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, this is Gilberto Cardenas conducting the interview. I think this will be our sixth interview since we began. We've covered a big part of Tomás's biography and history and stories, his philosophy, intellectual contributions. So I think at this point what I'd like to do is have a few ideas of how we might proceed with the interview, Tomás, and that would be maybe reflect a little bit on collecting, collectors, collections, the whole idea of Latino art, both in public and private, and maybe starting with your own collection, Tomás, and what you've collected and what you've been proud of collecting and what you have in your holdings today, and maybe some comments about some of the artists or about some of the approach to collecting, your thoughts about that. I thought that might be a nice way to just kind of be in a conversation.

And then we can—I'm going to ask you to also think as you're talking of areas that we haven't covered that you feel might be very important for the interview. So we can maybe begin with asking you about your own collection, Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Okay. Well, I don't consider myself a collector. I guess I'm an accumulator. I've accumulated art pieces mainly as gifts from artists that I've known, usually when they're starting out. And they're very meaningful to me because they're gifts. And then I've bought some of artists at different points in their careers.

So I started out with collecting graphic art. Personally, when I was living in New York City, you know, money was spare, so I started collecting Mexican graphic art, actually not only Mexican, but I started collecting art, graphic art by artists that pictured the New World. I was interested in how Europeans looked at the New World. So there's been a lot of important lithographs and engravings and drawings.

It started out when I realized that probably the first vision of many of the places when I was living in Washington were by Mexican artists that came with the Malaspina Expedition. They were artists that came from Mexico, that were trained at La Esmeralda or in Mexico. And so every Spanish intrusion had a—they always had artists that came with them. So the Malaspina Expedition came

to what is now the Pacific Northwest.

And so they—in the Malaspina Expedition, they had an artist that had been trained in Mexico, Tomás Suría. So I was very interested in how he pictured the Northwest. They went all the way up to Alaska, picture the Eskimos and so on. I was living in the Northwest at that time, so I was very interested in essentially how the first visions of this space were done by a Mexican artist.

And so I started thinking it's very interesting how artists, particularly European artists who came to the New World, couldn't really imagine the reality of the New World, they superimposed their [European –TYF] vision of the New World. So I got very interested in European travelers and their vision of the New World.

For example, even now as we're sitting and looking at a picture that's a lithograph of a European that pictured Mexico City, and as you look at it it has all the European—it looks like Venice. It's got the water and the boats, but it's a vision supposedly of Mexico City. And so I found it very striking how Europeans couldn't really imagine what they found except to cover it with their own vision, the gaze, the European gaze on American civilizations. So I got very interested in that.

And then I was very [fascinated –TYF] because they captured the flora and the fauna and the people and the architecture. So it was very interesting, the depiction. They were almost like costumbrista [artworks –TYF], the costumes. I got very interested in the depiction of New World types by European travelers.

So in New York City I started buying and I started learning. For example, 19th century, both European and Mexican lithographers, and so I started collecting, for example Casimiro Castro who did a suite of lithographs of Mexico City the types the architecture, the celebrations embedded in his lithographs, and they were hand-painted lithographs that I still think are quite beautiful, so—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: His name again, Tomás?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Casimiro Castro.

[...–TYF]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: [...–TYF] Casimiro Castro. And he [created –TYF] a, well, it's a suite called *Mexico Y Sus Alrededores* which were the buildings, the types, the architecture, the costumes, the celebrations of Mexicans. And so you can learn a lot from the kind of folkloric traditions of the community.

So then, of course, there were a lot of particularly French lithographers who came to Peru and to [Latin America –TYF]—and so I have a series of lithographs of French depictions of Peruvian scenes or Colombia or Venezuela, and then [... –TYF] Englishmen, who pictured Mexican types going to market and so on. They're famous lithographers, and I knew very little of lithography.

So my collection, my first collection was a Chicano collection of posters, which is graphic art, which then led to my really first collection of European travelers and their depiction of New World types. I would go to on Third Avenue in New York City where a lot of print shops were, and slowly I began discovering and reading about European lithographers who had pictured New World types and started [buying them –TYF]. So that's my first sort of real collecting as a body, as a group.

And I still like [them –TYF]—and then, of course, I started reading about—it's a very big tradition in Latin America, there's a lot of books on costumbrismo and the types and the particular artists.

Fierro is a very important artist, you know. And so I started to learn [about –TYF] Casimiro Castro, and I started collecting books to help me understand and to read and learn about the technique. And so my first really collection is a collection of European visions of the New World.

And so then I started, when I traveled throughout the Southwest I met artists. I was living in [San Francisco –TYF]. So the first group of Chicano [art –TYF] were, again, graphic art by Rupert Garcia and Carmen Lomas Garza and Esther Hernández. I was living in San Francisco at that time and so these were the artists that were the first generation of Chicano graphic artists, Juan Fuentes, Malaquias Montoya. And so this collection I mainly gave to the Smithsonian, to the Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian.

My own personal collection was European travelers and the New World. And then I picked up pieces here and there that I liked, [such as –TYF] Carmen Lomas Garza, [art –TYF] from *Los Four*—and then a lot of folk art, Mexican folk art and Latin American folk art.

I had a big collection, a rather large collection of books on folk art from the Americas. So began [my interest in –TYF] Peruvian, Colombian, and certainly Mexican folk art because I think that folk art is another very important influence on Chicano art. So for example, Archuleta in New Mexico and many of the artists that do folk art, Chicano folk artists, were indebted to a lot of sculptors. Chicano sculptors were indebted to Mexican folk pottery traditions. You know, there's a great tradition of pottery, of figural pottery, sculptures, but they're in clay, smaller. And then the artist, you know, borrowed types and so on from Chicano artists that were very much influenced by Mexican folk art.

So I collected, I had, particularly books, a very good collection. We're talking about maybe, I don't know, 3,000 to 5,000 books on strictly Latin American folk art.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And so the collection as a whole went to a dealer in Canada. And now I wish I had it together.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: How did it go to the dealer? What happened?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, he was very interested in—he's a bookseller.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: And his interest was international folk art. And so when he saw my collection he wanted to buy the whole thing, so I sold it to him. [... –TYF]

I kept a lot pieces, this was just the books, but I kept a lot of pieces. So I've always been interested in folk art. Every time I went to Mexico I brought back a piece.

I was particularly interested in toys, children's toys. Mexico, as you know, is one of the great toy-making regions, together with India, for toys for children. So there are all kinds of whimsical toys made from straw, from paper, from clay, from wood, articulated, wonderful calaveras, a Ferris wheel with little calaveras sitting, going up and—you know, they move, they articulate. Wonderful dolls, wonderful little orchestras.

The other area that I was very interested was miniatures. You know, Mexicans have what they call a micromanía, micromanía, they're interested in tiny things. And it takes a lot for a craftsman to make a tiny, very detailed, little toy, a little, like, a tea set with all the little [dishes –TYF]—the server

and the little, tiny spoons and the little, tiny [forks –TYF]—and I've always been fascinated by this world, this micro world of artists—that's one of the things that artists always try to do is to capture the world in their painting. And so miniaturists, artists that do tiny work, is very interesting, because in a way they do capture, they can create a whole, little, tiny world of little, tiny figurines.

And you know, Mexico and Mexicans have this, as they call it, a manía, a micromanía, for micro. And there are shops in Mexico City that only sell miniatures. A tiny, little, 30-piece orchestra made out of palm leaves, and you can imagine the skill to make, you know, the conductor and each of the little instruments, tiny, tiny, tiny, you know.

There's also a great tradition of tin, tin soldiers and tin, beautiful furniture. You know, little clocks, little—all kinds of little, tiny, miniature imagery. So I was always very interested in this aspect of folk art, the miniatures, the micro world. Those are the two—I guess the thing that I was interested in, this whole notion of wonder.

You know, as a child you look at these tiny things and you imagine, how can people make these tiny things? And again, to spend hours to carve and to paint and to draw these tiny, true-to-life, little figurines, you know, a little grandpa and a little grandma in little, tiny rocking chairs, you know. It's pretty sort of, like, wonderful. It sort of, like, it makes your imagination run wild. And so I was very interested in it and I've always continued to be interested in miniatures, tiny, little depictions of the world.

The other, of course, is the gigantic. There's wonderful book called *The Miniature and the Gigantic*. And so even today, the idea of wonder is very important, I think, for artists and Chicano artists. A lot of times when they depict a barrio tradition, it's wonderful because people outside the tradition can't quite conceive the same way that Europeans when they came to the New World couldn't quite conceive what was here. And so I'm very much interested in how artists depict their own world, the world that they live in, for themselves, but also for others, because it's a problem with so-called ethnic art that the people outside that ethnic community don't understand what is being pictured. Carmen Lomas Garza is a wonderful example because she's universal in the sense that the things that she talks about, community, family, togetherness, all these are universal ideas, but she does it in a particular idiom which is of southwest Texas.

And so somebody in New York City seeing an exhibit of Carmen Lomas Garza's work really can't get into it because they don't understand the meaning of piñata, they don't understand the meaning of a lot of the real—and yet they're universal because the person watching in New York City, from whatever ethnicity, maybe a Jewish tradition, would have other similar things in her or his culture. And so there's a connection, but it has to be explained.

And so one of the things that—and all of my collecting revolves around this notion of the internal and the external. There are things that are around us that we understand because it's part of our heritage, but there are things outside of our traditions that we also understand in a different way, that are also part of our heritage.

And so Mexican American means a combination of the Mexican and the American, and so how to deal with the—how to put those two things together went way back to, like, when I was interested in the European gaze of the New World, and then their gaze about themselves, the costumbrismo paintings and so on. So that push-and-pull between the world that's familiar because I live it and the world that's external, that I learn about.

And I'm always [concerned –TYF] because if you're multicultural you have to learn all these other

traditions to understand European art. And we're taught that in school and it's supposed to be universal, and so you read and learn all about the symbology of all of these things.

But the same is true of your internal culture, the symbols, the very particular mythical [structures – TYF], all these things that are embedded in the art. So I'm [focused – TYF] in that interplay about the internal and the external and how they fuse or are separated. So my collecting, in some ways, if it has a base is about that question of who I am and trying to understand that who I am is both my internal world, my Mexican-American world, and my external world, which is the world itself, your [global reality – TYF], and how those things interplay.

So collecting, my collecting of folk art, is, in that way, part of that, a very specific way of defining, because all the miniatures are the community seeing themselves and depicting themselves. And so that's one gaze.

But then when you have a lot, for example, in Mexican art in the '30s when Mexico—when a lot of American tourists went to Mexico, you see a lot of Mexican graphic art and Mexican art, fine art, done by Americans, you know, who were in Mexico. And it's very, it's very typical, it's very, in a way, authentic. But the question remains, are they part of the Mexican, you know, tradition, or are they part of the American tradition, or both?

And the [same thing – TYF] happens with some very important [artists – TYF], like Miguel Covarrubias who was in New York City for a long time and did all the caricatures for *Vanity Fair* and for *The New Yorker*. And he was Mexican, but was talking and picturing, depicting all these American types and American, you know, institutions. And of course, he's Mexican, but all that work is, you know, part of the American canon as well as part of the Mexican canon.

And so we understand that, but somehow that idea hasn't been transferred to, like, Latino-U.S. art, that Latino-U.S. art is all the things in the United States, but also all [the mixtures – TYF], like Covarrubias, you know, the technique. And in many ways, he uses a lot of—like, his caricatures have a lot to do with Mexican humor and the way that Mexicans use humor to depict, for example everybody has a name, so el narizón, if you have a big nose, and so he pictures the big nose. And so you're very much—it's very much a Mexican pictorial tradition, but also American cultural tradition, but he did it in the United States and people here understand it because caricature all over the world uses those same ideas, exaggeration.

And so that's what I'm—the bridging of the local and the global is everywhere and everyone does it. So all of a sudden it's not a problem, but in art history it always [is problematic – TYF], when they deal with American ethnic art, it becomes a problem. But in American art, you can see that a lot of American artists bring their own traditions and depict it with a U.S. spin, as it were.

And so those are the kinds of problems, in some ways, I guess, that are underneath my collecting, trying to understand how artists have manipulated and negotiated the multiple traditions without declaring that one little slice is their only part. And so all of it is who they are.

So I see that in graphic art. I see it in folk art. I see it in the lithography. And so those are the questions. So that's my collection.

The other part that I've been very interested in is folk art and miniatures within folk art, and the other is textiles. I'm very, very much interested in American textiles, meaning textiles from Guatemala, textiles from Peru, and certainly textiles from the great textile tradition in Mexico. Not only the sarapes but the indigenous textile tradition is one of the great traditions in the world,

rivalled only, I think, by the Chinese with embroidery and with wonderful textiles of all sorts.

So I've always collected and had a collection of American textiles from Peru, from Guatemala, from Mexico, certainly.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: What about the United States? Any folk art, textile work? Have you collected—

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, in terms of the—I mean, again, all those traditions are part of the Chicano-U.S. Experience. And you know, Mexico has a great textile tradition, very much related to northern Mexican sarapes, for example. The Saltillo sarapes were very, very much important with New Mexican indigenous, and New Mexican Hispano, the Rio Grande weaving, is very much a part of northern Mexican textile traditions. And northern Mexican designs have crept into Navajo designs and Navajo—so that, again, that interplay about here and there and how artists have always [negotiated them –TYF]—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: —you know, crossed borders both ways.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So in your collection, have you incorporated some of those materials?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, you know, almost all the textiles are part of that [tradition–TYF].

GILBERTO CARDENAS: But from the U.S.? I guess that's my question.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, the sarapes is, you know, I have quite a few New Mexican sarapes and New Mexican textiles that are, again, the question is the same question. You take an indigenous Navajo weaving and the designs are partly indigenous and partly Spanish. The same way with jewelry. You know, Navajo jewelry, the squash blossom, is, you know, ultimately a Spanish-Moorish design. And it's been incorporated into New Mexico.

So in everyday life, all the traditions for all of us have that enriching negotiation of cultures, you know. If it's indigenous in the U.S. and the indígenas live right next door to the Hispanics, obviously there's an Indo-Hispano tradition that's a combination of both, whether it's in jewelry, in all the crafts, in furniture-making, in whatever. So contemporaneously, New Mexican artists depict that, you know, there work is both, Indo-Hispano.

And then obviously, the Anglo-American part, for example landscape painting. So, I mean, I don't want to go on, but I'm just saying that in all the fine art or the folk art there is this [fusion –TYF]. And then I've been interested because I'm continually seeing how artists in their work this is not a question, this is not a problem. You know, they negotiate it, they mix, they borrow, they reinvent, they make a new thing out of the old or sometimes they have the old in a new way. So it's that richness of the multiple cultures and any select part therein.

So my collection tries to reflect that kind of richness. I don't have a separation. But all the work that I have are from [creators –TYF] that are within that tradition. And it's also because, I guess, I learned early on that if you're talking or writing about art, it becomes very easy to want to have art, you know. You go to a museum and you want a piece. And you go to another museum, seeing another kind of artist, and you want a piece. And pretty soon you would have a huge collection, if you could afford it, of all these traditions.

And so I said, no, I've got to just focus on one, you know, one or two things. And so the focus is those artists mainly that are dealing with the American, Anglo-American, and the traditions of their ancestral culture, their ancestral heritage, mainly from Latin America. So it's sort of, I guess, an Anglo-Mexican tradition.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So you have a beautiful collection, too, Tomás, of art. I know we have a Carlos Almaraz here. Could you comment about the drawing and when you purchased it or—mas o menos—and just your thoughts about that and other works like that?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, you know, I'm surrounded by a lot of things that came from Mexico, by artists that lived for a while in the United States, or American artists that almost of the American artists have gone to Mexico, indigenous art. R.C. Gorman, the drawing that's right in front of me right there, is a very famous Native American artist from the Southwest, but obviously he studied in Mexico, so you can really see a kind of a Mexican influence in his beautiful drawing of a Mexican indigenous woman. And so, again, it's a mixture of when he's a Native American from New Mexico, studied in Mexico for a while, and then came back.

And obviously, it's a confluence. I guess that's the word, where art that is a confluence of multiple traditions and in the work itself, in the material, in the style, in the content, it sort of deals with that confluence of cultures and confluence of traditions and confluence of materials and confluence of ideas. And so it's always, whenever I look at one of these [pieces –TYF], I get reminded of, I see a line that says, oh, that line seems to be related to the drawings of a Mexican artist, or this photograph, these three photographs that I'm looking at have something to do with American conceptualism, but it also has a lot to do with Mexican art, blah, blah, blah.

So the end result is that I have a very small collection because I've also given a lot [away –TYF]—I'm at the age of dispersal. So a lot of my folk art collection went to the Mexican Fine Arts Center in Chicago. A lot of my graphic collection went to the Smithsonian in Washington. Now I'm beginning to think that the art that I have by Tejano artists should go to museums, like, maybe the Mexican Museum in San Francisco where they don't have a lot of Tejano art. Because I guess the museums really have focused on the artists from their region. And yet, as Latinos, we are more than regional, and so I'm trying to disperse what I have to places that will enhance the collection of the same group of artists doing the same kind of work, but within another local tradition.

I guess if you're asking about collections, probably the biggest collection has been my books. I've got a—I had a rather large collection of books on Latino art, meaning American art from the U.S. and from throughout the Americas. And I gave all of that, donated all of that to the San Antonio Public Library.

So I guess I see, as I travel, I see a lot of Latinos collecting in terms of collections. And I keep being amazed how ordinary people—these are people that are not artists or art historians, but that somehow were part of the Movimiento in some way. They began getting a consciousness and they began going to the early floricultos and the early exhibitions of Chicano art and they bought early on.

So in San Antonio, it's very usual to go to somebody's house for dinner and you have six or eight early Chicano graphic arts or, you know, fine art, drawings or paintings or sculpture, that they bought and they still have it. So I'm beginning to think there's a lot more collectors than the big collectors, people that, you know, have huge collections of Latino art, that are the ones like Gil Cardenas and [Armando] Duron in Los Angeles and, of course, some other people, another guy here from San Antonio—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Joe Diaz?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Joe Diaz from San Antonio and [Juan Sandoval –TYF] in El Paso. But in San Antonio—and I find this, when I used to travel, I found this also true in New Mexico or in California, particularly in California. They're not—they don't define themselves as collectors, but almost all the friends that I know who were part of the Movimiento in some way that are now professionals, whether doctors or lawyers or academicians, usually in their home they have five or four or three or more pieces by Chicano artists. So there's a cadre of collectors that don't consider themselves collectors. And I think this is important because a lot of times as curators, when they're looking for early work by certain artists, they go to the defined collectors.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: But I've been to many homes that have very early work by a lot of these artists because that's another sort of interesting problem. A lot of artists didn't keep records of where their work went. So they know, the major collectors that bought 10 paintings, they know who owns those 10 paintings. But they'll always tell you, oh, that painting is based on another painting that I did and I think it was at that small gallery that is no longer there, that was in, you know, Wellspring, Texas and somebody bought it. And then you go to somebody's house and there it is. So curators, I think, when they're trying to do exhibitions, particularly Movimiento art of the Movimiento, still will find a lot of the pieces, important, significant, particularly if they're doing an exhibition of a one-person show and they have to have early pieces and mid-career pieces and then later pieces.

A lot of those early and mid-career [works –TYF] are in private homes and private collections of people that don't consider themselves collectors.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Collectors, yeah.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: So that's I think—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Good point.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO:—one of the things that I've been finding. And I think it's still very significant. As we talked about some of the things that need to be done, we constantly find ourselves saying that Latino art has had a lot of production. There's every single genre has a Latino artist from one of the groups, whether it's Cuban American or Puerto Rican or Chicano or, you know, Caribbean. There's all productions very, very wide and very, very deep in all the genres and all the isms. There's Cubism and there's abstraction and there's performing and there's media art and there's [work –TYF]—in all the mediums, artists have been present and have been creating.

But there's still a need to, one, to—the lagunas as we talked about yesterday, to have exhibitions about some of these genres, that are not just painting and sculpture, but media and performance and photography and folk, artisanal production, in all areas I think those need to be [researched –TYF].

So aside from the creation and the making of the art, there's also the whole infrastructural, the whole ecology of Latino art that I think needs attention. That is, the art historians, the curators, the conservators, the, all of the group of [experts –TYF] that it takes to enhance and to protect and to conserve and to show and to collect the art. We need more and more people in those areas.

It helps a lot, I think, because the Chicano, let's say, preparator in a museum, doing an exhibition,

has some sort of feeling of how it should be placed that may be significantly different than somebody who grew up in the white cube space, trained in how to show in a white cube, because he remembers how that art, how it was placed in a home or how it was placed in a community-based organization, that had something to do with the idea of making art accessible to a community.

And a curator that comes from that background might have a different stance of how to present the written text rather than the kind of texts that you learn or how to present the texts from a white cube perspective.

So I think that those kinds of elements, they're the sort of things that make curators—when you're a curator for a specific area, let's say you're a curator of photography, still, when you want to mount that show, the mounting of the show is just as important as the research that goes into talking about the artist and the context of it, how you display it and method of display. For example, are you going to paint the walls, or is it all going to be white? If you paint the walls, what color? What resonates with all of that is important in terms—and so I think curators that come from all these multiple traditions have really important ways to bring to the—this is not to say that there's, again, it's a struggle in all of these things, whether it's to have painted walls or not painted walls, whether to have salon-style hanging or individual hanging, whether to have texts, wall texts or little texts, how much, whether it should be bilingual or not.

All of these are questions that have to do with that ecological part beyond the making of the art, even the framing of the art. So I'm just saying that artists are people that are concerned with all these things from these multiple communities. We still need to sort of, like, enhance that and build that, because I think that there's a lot of conceptual questions to be asked and have been asked when they do an exhibition of [Latino –TYF] art. And particularly now that we're moving—and I think this, to me, is, like, the major difference between the making, the exhibiting, the conserving, the production of art from the Movimiento in which many of it was seen as identity-related and identity-defined in the 20th century, let's say, to the 21st century in which we are now saying it's no longer an add-on to the periphery, it's central to that [core –TYF].

And so all these questions that we're talking about, the color of the wall, the labeling, all this, are very important, particularly now as we're claiming this as American art because American art, for example, already has a way of dealing with that. It's an Anglo-European way of dealing with all these questions.

Now that Latinos are coming into that sphere, all these questions have to be renegotiated again. Because as I say, all of these questions have something to do with the actual—the visitor's reaction and the visitor's understanding and the visitor's acknowledgment of all these questions beyond the paintings on the wall. So I think that that's an area that we need to really pay more attention to.

And I think to enhance that, the collecting, collectors, we need to sort of, like, help people begin developing collections. And if you go to somebody's house and they have three or four paintings or three or four, you know, art objects, to keep saying, this artist now has, or this newer artist, or have you gone to an exhibition, and maybe you should buy this person, and have people—and I think museums do a lot of [outreach –TYF]—that was part of the legacy of my generation, you know, where we had committees in museums that were specific committees, a committee that was for Afro-American art, a committee that was for Asian-American art, and they among themselves decided what art to buy for the museum. Now I think we have to help our community, particularly the Latino community, do that because let's say you're in Los Angeles, and yet whatever, let's say, the L.A. County Museum may have, you know, a fairly good representation of Mexican-American art,

but doesn't have quite as much, I would think, of Central American art, the newer artists or the newer Latino communities.

Well, if they had that committee now with the Chicanos and Central Americanos and Salvadoreños and Nicaragüenses to buy from their art community, they could then enhance it. But also within our own community, if we really are building a Latino legacy rather than a Cuban-American or Mexican-American or whatever, then we have to encourage that person that's already interested in buying Chicano art to buy, you know, Cuban-American art, to buy, you know, Latino art.

And I think that comes not from necessarily the collectors who already are doing that but the conversations where you say the consciousness that we are really a Latino community and that if you were in San Antonio and you have a Cuban-American artist on your wall, when you talk about it or when people ask you questions, you're developing that consciousness of being Latino as well as [the ethnic –TYF] community that you know.

And the same way it happens in New York City. If you go to an apartment, a dinner in somebody's apartment in New York City and they're very proud of their Puerto Rican collection, if they buy a Mexican-American [art piece –TYF] from one of the Mexicans and now Mexican American [artists –TYF] living in New York City, that enhances them on a very ordinary plane, they themselves begin understanding that they're part of a larger, American tradition.

So those are the kinds of [projects –TYF] that, theoretically, a lot of us are doing this in our work, creating avenues and connections and bridges towards these multiple communities and for them to know one another and enhance one another. But I guess, at the people level, we also have a very rich, a much smaller, but much richer, I mean, equally rich tradition of having people, when they add to their small collection, a part of the Latino grouping, but [art from another Latino –TYF] ethnic group, they enhance their knowledge, they read about that artist, and pretty soon they become aware, much more aware.

So that's, I think, really interesting at the conversational level. I'm talking about this conversational level because I think a lot of my generation of Latino artists worked in a specific group, so Latinos, Mexican Americans, Chicanos wanted museums to buy Mexican-American art and collectors to collect Mexican-American art. And so now the next step, the 21st-century step, is this movement of crossing across Latino groups and also in terms of it's okay, you know, we're also part of the Anglo-American tradition and, certainly, all the other ethnic groups.

It's wonderful to have Mexican American, having Afro-American artists that he really connected with, that really spoke to him, certain traditions. So I think that—and that happens at the local level more than at the high-end, collecting and collectors and academicians and theoretical. It happens at the people level.

I know here in San Antonio, the Puerto Rican community and, let's say, the Afro-American community, there's exhibits and so on. And it would be nice to encourage all of us, including myself, to buy a work from a young Afro-American [artist –TYF], designer or sculptor or whatever, to enhance this larger part.

Because as I'm thinking right now, in New York City, you have right now at MoMA that big exhibition of Jacob Lawrence, the *Migration Series* that he did about the great migration of blacks.

We're finding out that the experiences of all of us are very similar. So to have a print from that *Migration Series* is to have a Chicano migration series because we also migrated, we also went

from field to factory. And Jacob Lawrence, here's, again, you see many, many—particularly Jacob Lawrence studied in Mexico for a while. So you go to see Jacob Lawrence's private collection and you see Elizabeth Catlett and other Afro-Mexicans in his collection, his private collection.

So you begin seeing that we're all interconnected and our experiences are multiple and interconnected. And more and more that's what I'm about, to have people make these interconnections beyond their kith and kin because that's where you begin seeing the universality of your own and you begin destroying this notion that the universal is outside of you, because you begin understanding that the universal experiences have been shared by all people, the civil wars, the dispossession of their land, the great droughts, the perseverance, the way they organized themselves. All of those are American experiences that all the different ethnic groups have gone through.

And this, I think, is what I'm—I guess my 21st-century ideal is to make more bridges, always with a caveat that you have to maintain both commonality and difference. And that how you do that, how my generation maintained commonality and difference, is significantly different from what the 21st-century generation is doing. And again, that combination of commonality and difference is now on a global scale. And so they're finding many points of connection from their local and their regional and their national, but also many points of difference. Oh, they do it this way and we do it this way, and I want to maintain that difference because that's the way we don't all get homogenized with this attempt to make a global order.

You know, the global order has to leave room for variation and difference, otherwise we'll all become a commodified, mono culture, and that's what I don't want to happen.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Right. Very good. Can you comment about collections, Tomás, that you think are very significant in the U.S. in terms of Latino art and given the kind of reflections you just made about collecting?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, Gil, I don't know. I guess the—I can't comment on many, many collections, because I have visited a lot of museums. I think, as a general statement, I feel free and positive to say that most major American institutions have not woken up to the fact that Latino art is part of the American tradition, in the same way that they have woken up in terms of specifically the Afro-American tradition.

So in every single way, the ethnic part of American art is defined still as Afro or black, and the Latino, as we talked about it, the complications because there are Latinos that are black, there are Latinos that are white, there are Latinos that are mestizos, there are Latinos that are brown, there are Latinos that are Asian, you know, makes it much more complex for even buying the work of all these multiple mestizo peoples.

So I would say as a rule that I think that most American institutions are deficient in their collecting of Latino art from whatever group, in whatever area they're in. And so that still remains a big void in their collecting and in their affirming of programs and in everything that it entails, to teach us all about another major group, the largest group now in the country, ethnic group, still as being a part of the core American tradition. And so that's one thing that I think still is lagging behind.

And the other thing is that in the art, the definition of America, to include a hemispheric definition. So it's interesting how museums are now dealing with that question, you know, like, for example, the Boston museum who has now redefined the Americas as part of their major, you know, area of concern. But the Americas—and they're beginning to understand that the Americas is also not only

Latin America, but also Latinos in the U.S. And so now the Latinos in the U.S., I would say, they're still very deficient on that because they're still focusing on the heritage rather than the actual living tradition. And so that question of defining what is American art in a continental sense is what a lot of museums are now coping with.

And they tend to define it in terms of the there rather than in terms of the here. And it's the here that I think needs to be augmented in every single way in major American collections of Latino art. So that's what I see in Texas, that's what I see in California and New York City.

And so, again, all the questions of Latinos within the U.S., the cultural contributions of the Latinos within the U.S., but how all these Latinos within the U.S. have maintained and continue to affirm their connection with their culture of origin and their heritage is a problem when people claim that in the U.S. people came from everywhere, because they recognize that the U.S. is an immigrant community, but through the third generation they've become American. And all these other groups that we're talking about, through the fourth and fifth and sixth generation, are claiming to be U.S., but also part of their ancestral culture.

And that's, I think, the question and what that means in terms of collecting and collections and programming and everything, that it's still open and will be, I think, for the 21st century for the U.S., within the U.S., questions to be answered.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Very good. So, Tomás, then, just to ask you, do you think there are some things that have not been covered that you'd like to discuss?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, no, we were talking about, you know—no, except, you know, that in all of my efforts, both educationally and collecting, I've been, you know, very blessed because my partner, Dudley Brooks, and I have been together 46 years.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Forty-six, wow.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah. And as, you know, he himself is part of all this Movimiento, Chicano Movimiento, and so I couldn't be where I am if it hadn't been for this terrific partnership that I've had with him. He's been my compañero, and so I always want to make sure that—

GILBERTO CARDENAS: And all your friends are his friend, too.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yeah, yeah. And my family is, you know, he's part of my family or our family.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: So he also collects, but he collects tools, right?

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Yes.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: That's his really beautiful part of the house here.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Well, but again, like, say, Dudley's collection of tools, it's very interesting. They're humble objects, they're made, they're not art objects, but they're beautifully crafted and they were made to create a lot of artwork. And so in many ways, tools are—and when you look at it, all the things that are made by humans, his collection of tools reflect multiple traditions and multiple ways of looking at the world and multiple ways of enhancing how you open a can or how you build a shoe. And it's part of ingenuity, part of the imagination—and they're very, very beautiful and they all have stories.

And so it's another way of saying that the most humble piece of everyday-life use, embedded in there is this sense that I continue to come back upon, because I think that's one of the essence of art, is this sense of wonder. All of a sudden, you look at something and it causes you to—your imagination to blossom. And art, whether it's a little tool for a shoemaker, a shoemaking tool, or whether it's a painting, when you stand in front of it or hold it in your hand, you begin sensing that this is something to be very human and that it's, you know, this wonderful world that you belong to and that this is part of that.

It elevates you and brings in your corazón, your heart, your imaginación, your imagination, so that's what art is all about. So I think that's why I just think that art is really so crucial, because it is the—it opens, whether it's a painting or a tool or a cup made by some ceramicist, it opens your world, it opens you to wonder. And the wonder, you begin asking all the essential questions. And I think that is what art is all about, the sense of wonder and that the world you live in is multifarious and has all these magical elements which artists try to capture in whatever it is they make.

GILBERTO CARDENAS: Okay, so this will be the end today. Thanks very much, Tomás.

TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO: Thank you, Gil, very much. It's been a pleasure. [...-TYF]

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]