

Contemporary Project 10

Terry Allen: MemWars



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This gallery guide accompanies the exhibition *Terry Allen: MemWars* (December 18, 2021–July 10, 2022) at the Blanton Museum of Art.

Terry Allen: MemWars is organized by Carter E. Foster, Chief Curator and Deputy Director of Collections, Blanton Museum of Art.

Funding for this exhibition is provided in part by Suzanne Deal Booth.

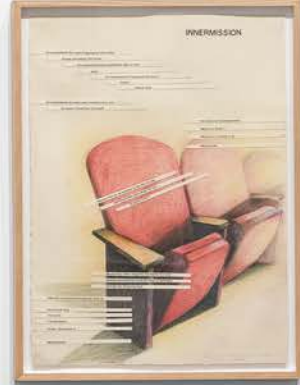
This exhibition reflects Terry Allen's interest in a genre of theater known as *sintesi* (the Italian word for "synthesis"): very brief, evocative pieces developed by some of the artists and writers of the Futurist movement in the early twentieth century. Allen has described them as "little stabs of memory." Through performance, song, writing, and drawing, Allen explores how some of his own stabs of memory are connected to his songwriting and expressed across the multiple mediums and modes in which he works. In the three-channel video installation *MemWars*, Allen and his wife and frequent collaborator, the artist and actress Jo Harvey Allen, perform short "autobiographical" dialogues with one another across the space, in nine sections that introduce Allen performing a related song.

The featured drawings are also part of his *MemWars* series. Some relate directly to the song introductions in the video. All of them combine images and a related text. The text may simply be the title of the work, but some are prose passages illustrated with drawings. Others function as scripts for theater pieces, with lighting and sound cues, as well as prop and set descriptions enhanced by the artist's imagery. Allen's punning title for the series suggests the slippery nature of memory itself: one might set out to write a memoir, but if memory is at war, what form would that take? Memories cannot but change over time as our lived present influences how we recall the past. Renowned for his songwriting, Allen's storytelling in that form is fueled by his memory but may also slip into the realm of mythology and lore. Metamorphosis—a classic trope of mythology in general—is a recurring theme in these drawings (especially of humans into animals). And memory, by definition, morphs constantly.





From left: Terry Allen, *Civilization (MemWars)*, *Orphan (MemWars)*, *Interlude: Three Coins in a Fountain (MemWars)*, *Storm on the Ghost of Jimmy Reed, Clouds, Garden of Eden (MemWars)*, *Headlight Woman (MemWars)*, (top) *Wolfman of Del Rio (MemWars)*, (bottom) *Longing, Innermission, and Little Men (MemWars)*.



From left: Terry Allen, *Garden of Eden (MemWars)*, *Headlight Woman (MemWars)*, (top) *Wolfman of Del Rio (MemWars)*, (bottom) *Longing*, *Innermission*, and *Little Men (MemWars)*.



From left: Terry Allen, *Proximity* (diptych), *The Burn Couple* (MemWars), (top) *Study for "Song for Kippy"*, (bottom) *The Gorilla Girl* (MemWars), *Monkey Man* (MemWars), *Road Runner* (MemWars), *Song for Mary Oliver*, *Wichita* (MemWars), (top) *Duet* (MemWars), and (bottom) *Empty House*.



Terry Allen
Wichita, Kansas, 1943–Santa Fe,
New Mexico, present
MemWars, 2016
Three-channel video projection
with sound, 1:22:28
Dimensions variable



Terry Allen
Wichita, Kansas, 1943–Santa Fe, New Mexico, present
MemWars, 2016
Three-channel video projection with sound, 1:22:28
Dimensions variable



Terry Allen
Wichita, Kansas, 1943–Santa Fe, New Mexico, present
MemWars, 2016
Three-channel video projection with sound, 1:22:28
Dimensions variable

Checklist of the Exhibition

Terry Allen
Wichita, Kansas, 1943–Santa Fe, New Mexico,
present

MemWars, 2016
Three-channel video projection with sound, 1:22:28
Dimensions variable

Headlight Woman (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Road Runner (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Little Men (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
Framed: 32 3/4 × 24 3/4 × 2 in. (83.2 × 62.9 × 5.1 cm)
Sheet: 30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Orphan (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Civilization (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Interlude: Three Coins in a Fountain (MemWars),
2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Garden of Eden (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

The Burn Couple (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

The Gorilla Girl (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)
Collection of Michael & Liana Krupp

Monkey Man (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Wolfman of Del Rio (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)
Private Collection

Wichita (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Duet (MemWars), 2018–2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
22 × 30 in. (55.9 × 76.2 cm)

Clouds, 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Innermission, 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Storm on the Ghost of Jimmy Reed, 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm)

Empty House, 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
22 × 30 in. (55.9 × 76.2 cm)

Longing, 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
22 × 30 in. (55.9 × 76.2 cm)

Song for Mary Oliver, 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
22 × 30 in. (55.9 × 76.2 cm)

Study for "Song for Kippy", 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
22 × 30 in. (55.9 × 76.2 cm)

Proximity (diptych), 2019
Graphite, pastel, gouache, colored pencil, press type,
collage on paper
Framed: 32 3/4 × 57 1/2 × 1 1/2 in. (83.2 × 146.1 × 3.8
cm)

All works courtesy of the artist & LA Louver Gallery,
unless otherwise noted

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Design:
IN-FO.CO (Adam Michaels, V. E. Chen)

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