

VIDEOGRAMS (1980-1981), script excerpts

SO

THE CONVERSATIONALIST PRESSED FOR THE FACTS. CATAS-
TROPHE WAS INEVITABLE. A PRIMAL SOUND HERMETICALLY SEAL-
IN ITS SKULL WAS MASKED BY CHOREOGRAPHIES AT PLAY BE-
TWEEN BRAIN AND TONGUE. THE LINGUIST EXPERIENCED A SEP-
ARATION OF PRESENT TENSE AND LOST ALL MOTOR SKILLS, LAPS-
ED INTO NONSENSE. THE SOUND RUSHING FROM ITS MOUTH DU-
PLICATED THAT OF A STREAM NEARING A LARGE BODY OF WATER.

manipulate sync signals, providing an enormous amount of flexibility in altering a video input, or in generating new images by using other inputs, such as waveforms. The images produced are always black and white, and cannot be recorded directly; they must be recorded by pointing a camera at the display monitor.]

The Rut/Etra is interesting. Conceptually a lot more is possible on it than with commercial digital effects. It's a powerful machine, and relatively unexplored. It probably never will be because it's hard to find access to them, and people tend to bypass black and white like it's—well, you know, black and white is black and white, man, it's not color. And you have to re-scan it. And that's primitive. It's not state-of-the-art.

LF: What's nice about the *Videograms* is that they're so spare

the text, which is constructed entirely from idiomatic expressions.]

GH: It's a general reference, an idiom of television. To me, it becomes a kind of social frame. The tape has a very superficial layer to it, which I love, in that the whole thing is constructed from idioms. It's curious, when someone says something using an idiomatic expression, it's taken with a grain of salt [laughs]. And yet, idioms are the heart of the matter, expressions that originally put a thought or feeling in a nutshell [laughs]. I really constructed the text. It wasn't like writing. When I was doing the text, I thought of Matisse's cut-outs, these re-energized primal shapes. Idioms seem like language cut-outs. Once you get inside of idioms, they're incredibly rich. Television is the most advanced communication system and yet it's one big idiom. Everything that's spewed

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sages are variously concrete and abstract, descriptive and metaphoric, the images alternately become illustrations and counterpoints.]

GH: So far, the texts have been written beforehand. However, when I actually combine them with the video, a phrase or a word or the ordering might change here or there. Little details might change, but in essence, the text is written beforehand.

LF: What do you use to produce the abstract images in *Videograms*?

GH: A Rutt/Etra Scan Processor. [The Rutt/Etra, invented by Steve Rutt and Bill Etra in the early 1970s, allows one to manipulate the video image or raster. According to "The Electronic Image," an unpublished paper by the Experimental Television Center, Owego, N.Y., the raster can be described as the visible rectangle of light emanating from a cathode ray tube, and is normally constructed by a beam of electrons focused to a fine point. This point is moved around in an orderly and continuous manner—horizontally from left to right and vertically from top to bottom—so that the raster, or image, is described. The rate at which the raster is drawn is determined by a timing pulse called sync. The Rutt/Etra allows one to

spare.

GH: Some of the *Videograms* are more successful than others. Some are too literal, others I'll probably redo because the image isn't quite right. I'm working on a new work, *Happenance*, which has similarities to *Videograms*, but it's not a series. It's continuous, and it uses sound and character-generated text in addition to the voiceover. The images are more developed, also.

LF: Something more like *Processual Video*? [In *Processual Video*, a single white line revolves clockwise in the center of the monitor. Its movement is synchronized to a text read by Hill, so that the mental images conjured up by the text are often reinforced by the location of the line. For instance, when a line is in a horizontal or vertical position, there are references to surfing and skiing, the ocean and mountains. Into these visually suggestive sentences, Hill interweaves seemingly random, but highly self-conscious musings, about the text and the line.]

GH: Actually, I did a performance out of *Processual Video* for the "Video Viewpoints" series at the Museum of Modern Art. In fact, the piece was written as my lecture for the series.

LF: How did it work?

GH: There was a large monitor facing the audience, and the text was scored on paper. I watched a small monitor so I knew approximately where the bar was in relation to what I was reading. In different readings, there would be slight variations, but it all remained pretty close to the score. In that tape, there are references to me, references to the audience sitting in chairs, but it's more allegorical than *Around and About* and *Primarily Speaking*. In those tapes, the address is acutely direct. *Primarily Speaking* is probably the most complex work I've done. It still isn't finished. Its complexity gets subverted by the use of idiomatic expressions. I still haven't unwound it because it exists on so many different levels.

LF: In *Primarily Speaking*, why did you use color bars as a background for the two boxes? Was it a reference to broadcast television? [In the single-channel piece, the screen is divided into two boxes which are framed top and bottom by vertical bars of color—a standard test pattern for adjusting the color video signal. Inside the boxes, two sets of images are rapidly edited—like *Around and About*—to the syllables of

system and yet it's one big idiom. Everything that's spewed out is an idiom—the corporate world takes on how life should be.

LF: Did you divide the screen into two boxes to designate one box as the speaker and the other as the viewer?

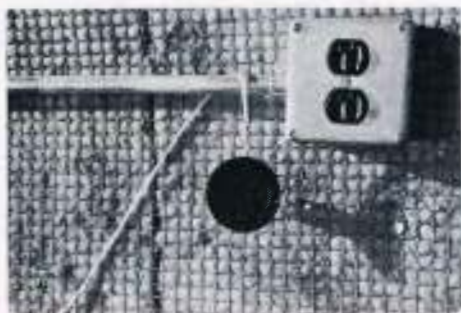
GH: Not specifically, but to set up the idea of oscillating relationships.

LF: You establish some very literal connections between the images and what your voice is saying in that tape. For example, when you say, "So," an image of a pig flashes by; when you say "Listen," there's a conch shell. But the tape doesn't operate just on that level. Most of the word-image connections are impossible to pin down, and I found myself reading into the tape, trying to figure out what the nonliteral connections meant. At one point, I was convinced that the tape was a comment on industrial pollution, because there were all these images of pipes and industrial waste, and you say: "They've done it again." At another point, I thought you were talking about the inability of two people to communicate. Finally, I felt that that was what the tape was designed to do—bring me to this process of making associations. But I also felt that it didn't matter if the associations I was making were the "right" ones, because there really could be no "correct" interpretation. On the one hand, the tape seemed extremely tight and structured, and on the other, the relationships were completely ambiguous.

GH: All those things are there, they exist, a lot are intentional. But then again, all those things—the images, the puns—are to me distractions from the heart of the work, which is the text. Consequently, *Primarily Speaking*. It's like a spear, and everything else is outside that. At the same time, it's an internal dialogue and a monologue addressing someone: who is talking to whom? There's a section where the images are just black and white rectangles—I thought of this process as standing in front of a mirror for a long time, of the way you can separate the reflection from yourself and kind of have a conversation.

When you're trying to focus an idea, you're always in the context of everything else. All the external distractions are still going to exist, and they're going to affect that honed-in moment you're having. But the text is the heart of it. Language

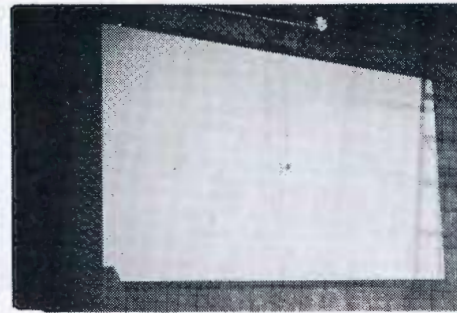




RECEPTACLE



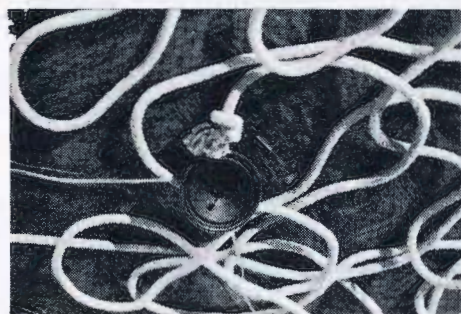
HOUSE



SCREEN



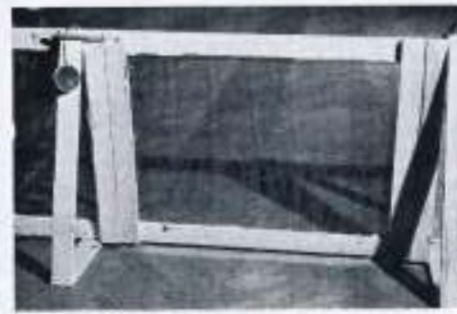
DOLLY



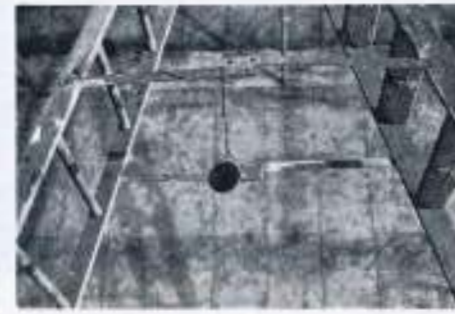
ROPE



BROOM



GATE



LADDER

can be this incredibly forceful material—there's something about it where if you can strip away its history, get to the materiality of it, it can rip into you like claws, whereas images sometimes just slide off the edge of your mind, as if you were looking out a car window.

LF: Well, one always has an ongoing mental dialogue. One thing you seem to be doing to make that apparent is editing the video to the pace of the audio. The video becomes subservient. The images pass by faster than you can assimilate them.

GH: That gives a contradictory feeling. It makes the text-image construct, the syntax, the way it's coming at you, seem very purposeful. They're one unit, yet so much of the time they're disparate; they're pulled apart. The video is forcing associations—you could easily wander off—but the text continues straight ahead, getting larger than life, almost. At certain times, I try to second guess the viewer, fill in their mind with their own thoughts.

LF: Are the images completely arbitrary then?

GH: Yes and no. If I went out and did that tape right now, I could take the text, erase all the images, and put in a whole new set. The work would be archetypically the same; it would be a variation on a theme.

LF: In *Primarily Speaking*, the rapidly edited images in the boxes are interrupted a number of times by short breaks or in-

speakers on that side only. As in the tape, the video is edited to each syllable, as if Hill's voice were activating the movement of the images. The other wall functions as a "listening" wall, in that no sound emanates from its audio speakers while the other wall is "speaking." The video on the "listening" wall is also activated by the audio, but rather than being edited to the beat of every syllable, the image actually rotates from one monitor to the next at a pace slower than the rapid video edits of the "speaking" wall. During the breaks, the images on all the monitors are rapidly sequenced, so that they ripple up and down the bank of monitors in a fixed relationship to the

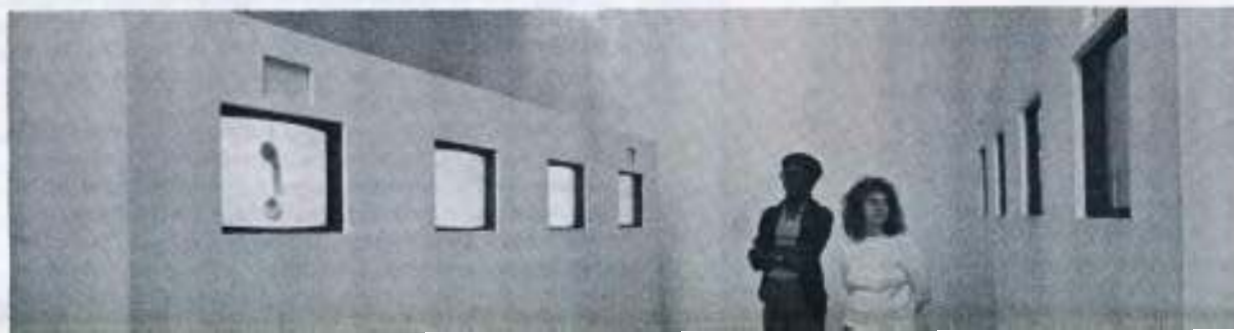
LF: Do you have a preference for installations over tapes?

GH: Installations. I like the complexity of working spatially, combining materials and media in different ways. I generally have ambiguous feelings about the experience of watching tapes on television.

LF: You mean sitting in a gallery and watching tapes?

GH: Yes, even more so with seeing video work on television. But it's more that the tape, the images, don't have a surface. They're encased behind glass. Yet at the same time, I really like the quality of emitted light.

LF: In the pieces that exist both as tapes and installations,



boxes are interrupted a number of times by short periods or interludes in which your voice says or sings a puzzling rhyme. One of them is "Time on our hands is blood on our hands." Your voice sounds like it's been processed—it has a very eerie tone, especially in the break where you have two dangling telephones.

GH: It's vocoded speech [a Vocoder breaks down an audio input into 16 different frequency bands, then imposes those frequencies onto another carrier frequency]. I was trying to come up with almost idiomatic, harmonic sounds analogous to what's being said. The telephone is a rather pessimistic reference to communication. I remember that when I shot it I wanted the dangling phone to turn around so that the ITT on it could be read. The receiver hanging there conjures up, to me, images of something that happened to someone while they were on the telephone, or they simply left, or the telephone's dead.

LF: What about the rhyme that goes with it?

GH: In that section, I say: "Blue, green, red, cyan, magenta, yellow, food, feed, fed, I have the time of dayglow." It's a way of saying that television feeds us constantly. It even gives us the time of day. In the section, "Time on our hands is blood on our hands," when the two GASLAND signs appear, that's probably the most synchronous segment in the tape. First of all, you have the rhyme, the political implications of blood and gas. Then you have the actual sign being in language—words—on a sign that's designed to look like a TV set, which coincides with the frame of the monitor TV.

LF: I don't know that I would have made those connections, but I read them as general references to communication. You also made an installation from *Primarily Speaking*, and there the interludes work very differently. [In the installation, two walls of four monitors face one another, forming a corridor about the width of outstretched arms. The images which appear inside the two boxes in the single channel tape are two separate tapes in the installation: one rectangle fills up the entire screen. On one end of each side of the corridor, the two videotapes are played on monitors facing each other. On the other three monitors are solid fields of color: one set of monitors displays red, green, blue; the other set displays cyan, magenta, and yellow. Each wall of monitors alternately functions as a "speaking" wall, in that the text emanates from the



Above: installation view of *Primarily Speaking* at the Kitchen, October 1981. (Photo: Richard Gummere.) Bottom: frames from single channels of the installation.

another.]

How do you think the tape differs from the installation in terms of how each is experienced?

GH: The tape is very linear. You sit in front of it; it locks you in—your eyes fix on two squares that are almost like horse blinders, spatially. The installation expands the idea of the images being an element that distracts from the text. In the tape, you're on the outside—watching. In the installation, you're inside. It's as if the two walls are speaking to each other; there's much more of a sense not only of talking back and forth, but on the images relating back and forth. You're constantly looking over your shoulder, walking up and down in a thoroughfare of images. The movement constantly distracts. The solid fields of color soften this, wash the space in a kind of sensuality, another distraction.

you always change them in the process of going from one to the other, don't you?

GH: Definitely. A lot of times, in the middle of making a tape, I'll be thinking of an installation. It's not an afterthought. Some people think that one compromises the other, but for me, it's all raw material, even the texts. It's not pristine—this text belongs to this tape, and anything that's done outside of its original context compromises it.

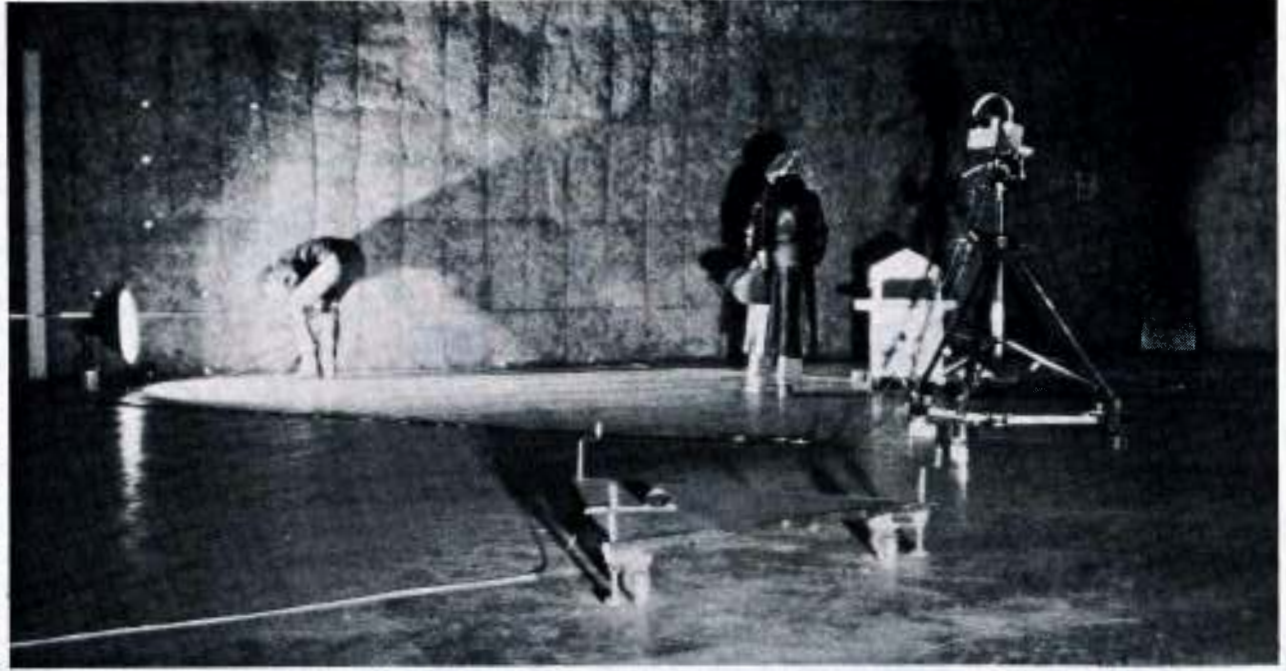
LF: It really depends on how it's realized as an installation or as a tape. Some people show tapes from installations as unaltered tapes, and it often doesn't translate.

GH: Yeah. For instance, there isn't a *Mesh* tape, and there's not a *War Zone* [a 1980 installation at Media Study, Buffalo, N.Y.] tape, although I do have a tape documenting it. But I don't show it as a "tape."

ORGAN

THICK OF THINGS LIKE STICKS IN THE MUD





Facing page: objects associated with speakers in *War Zone*, a 1980 installation at Media Study, Buffalo. Left, this page: "machine gun" camera. Right: installation view. (All photos: Skip Arnold.)

LF: You've called *War Zone* a metaphor for the empty mind thinking to itself. That seems very similar to the "internal dialogue" in *Primarily Speaking*.

GH: There's a similarity in dealing with image and language, but *War Zone* deals with it more directly. The scenario was image and language being at war. It also refers to the left and right sides of the brain, the perceptual and conceptual faculties battling for control. It's definitely a battle within myself, but the experience of the two pieces is very different.

The original idea for *War Zone* was to have many speakers

How did you choose the objects you used?

GH: A lot was determined by what I found around Media Study. Once I got a few things, it gave me the idea of using objects that would become analogous to thought processes, psychologically symbolic. For instance, a ladder represented a kind of hierarchy of thought; the dolly represented a stable thought, moving horizontally in any direction, but never shaken; a mirror represented reflection; and various things, such as a rope hanging from the ceiling, represented escape. There were 16 objects identified with speakers. These refer-

sists of four concentric rectangles. In the outermost layer are four monitors; in each of the next two layers are four audio speakers; in the center is a single monitor displaying a tape of an image of a black and white rectangle which was constructed from video feedback. The central monitor and the speakers all lie on the floor facing up. Pointing down from the ceiling is a camera with an automated zoom lens: when zoomed all the way in, it frames the single monitor; when zoomed all the way out, it frames the outermost rectangle of monitors. This undulating image is displayed on the outer monitors. It is also altered whenever a person enters the space, because their image is picked up by the camera. The rate at which the rectangle shrinks and expands—or the rate at which the lens zooms in and out—is determined by the sound track, which is measured by the enunciation of the three syllables: rec-tan-gle. Based on the rhythm of these syllables, a mathematical structure of enunciation is set up for the entire text: one phrase overlaps another at a certain rate, mimicking and thereby describing the process of video feedback.]

GH: I did *Glass Onion* right after *Black/White/Text* [1980, the single-channel work that *Processual Video* is based on]. They're similar in that both take a very basic image and try to question image versus language—what happens when you use a very simple image with a text that gets very complex. *Glass Onion* is much more anchored to the original tape than

PRIMARILY SPEAKING, text excerpts

WAIT LET'S TRY TO BE OBJECTIVE THERE'S NO SENSE IN RUNNING OURSELVES INTO A DITCH IN THE MIDST OF IT ALL LET'S TRY TO BE OBJECTIVE FOR A MOMENT POINT BLANK WHO ARE YOU? I MEAN IT JUST THIS ONE TIME WE DON'T HAVE TO SPLIT HAIRS OR ANYTHING WITHIN REASON WHO ARE YOU? COME ON SHIFT GEARS FOR A MINUTE TAKE A DEEP BREATH YOU KNOW THE ROPES YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE IN THEIR RIGHT MIND TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND FACE THE MUSIC START NOW AND WORK BACKWARDS START IN THE MIDDLE AND

DOUBLE TALKING WILL GET US NOWHERE AND SECOND GUESSING IS A LOST ART QUITE SIMPLY WE ARE AN ACT OF FAITH THERE'S NO REASON WE CAN'T WALK OUT OF THIS TOGETHER FACE FACTS THE CONTROLLING FACTORS OF OUR LITTLE MISE EN SCENE ARE UNTOUCHABLE TAKE MY WORD FOR IT PUT ME ABOVE SUSPICION FOR A MOMENT ACCEPT IT YOU ARE ON THE RECEIVING END THE DISTANCES WE IMAGINE ARE NEXT TO CLOSE BY AT ARMS LENGTH EASILY PENETRATABLE NEEDLESS TO SAY WE ARE AT EACH OTHERS DISPOSAL WE CAN CONCENTRATE ON OUR DISCREPANCIES OR WE CAN

DREAM THINK IT OVER RATTLE OFF A LIST IF THAT'S ALL THAT'S LEFT NEVER MIND THE IMAGES THEY ALWAYS RETURN IF NOT NEW ONES WILL REPLACE THE OLD ONES IT'S THEIR DESTINY EVEN THOSE PERMANENTLY LODGED SOONER OR LATER LOSE THEIR GRASP ONLY TO TURN UP DOWNSTREAM IT'S THE NATURE OF THE BEAST FOOD, FEED, FED BLUE, GREEN, RED, CYAN, MAGENTA YELLOW WHERE DID YOU LEAVE OFF? DID YOU TAKE THE PLUNGE? WHAT WAS THE CUT OFF POINT? MAYBE YOU NEED MORE LEAD TIME THERE'S A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE HITTING ROCK BOTTOM COME ON PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD MOVE ON IT COVER SOME GROUND GET THE FEEL OF IT RE-ENTER YOU'RE NOT A BACKSEAT DRIVER ARE YOU? I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING IT'S NOT IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS THAT YOU TAKE ME FOR A RIDE AFTER ALL I'M YOUR MONKEY BUSINESS I CAN NEVER REALLY TOUCH YOU I CAN ONLY LEAVE WORD STILL THERE'S NOT MUCH SEPARATING US WE'RE LIKE MINDED I ASKED THE SAME QUESTIONS YOU GIVE THE SAME ANSWERS YOU CAN'T TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS OR CAN YOU?

CONCENTRATE ON OUR DISCREPANCIES OR WE CAN SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE THAT WHICH TAKES THE EDGE OFF IN ANY EVENT IT IS ON OUR CONSCIENCES THE FIXATION MOVES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT AS TIME GOES ON IT BECOMES CLOCKWORK YOU WILL HAVE YOUR WAY AND I WILL MAKE DO IN THE END WE CAN DOUBLE BACK OR PLAY THE FIELD I DON'T WANT TO DENY YOU YOUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD WHO AM I BUT A FIGURE OF SPEECH FREE STANDING IN ADVANCE OF A BROKEN ARM THESE THINGS CAN HAPPEN WHEN ONE GETS AHEAD OF THEMSELVES I'M JUST GOING TO SIT TIGHT TAKE REFUGE IN THE PICTURESQUE THINGS TRAVEL FAST BY WORD OF MOUTH I CAN BE LONG WINDED AT TIMES AS WELL AS DRAG MY FEET THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION I'M ALWAYS PUTTING MY FOOT IN MY MOUTH OF COURSE YOU UNDERSTAND THIS IS ALL IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING I DON'T WANT TO UNDERSCORE MY PLACE HERE THAT WOULD BE MISLEADING AFTER ALL IT'S NOT AN OPEN DOOR POLICY NEVERTHELESS IT'S VERY TOUCH AND GO HERE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN AT ANYTIME AND NO ONE'S PRIVY TO THAT BIT OF INFORMATION I DON'T WANT TO MAKE A PRODUCTION OUT OF IT THOUGH ALL I WANT IS TO WALK THROUGH IT WITH YOU

Glass Onion is much more anchored to the original tape than my other installations. It uses a known image and process as a foundation.

The curious thing about feedback is that it's about delay—that's what makes the squares within the squares—but you see it all at once. You don't experience the time until you know what it is, and then you can conceptualize the delay. The problem with any feedback is that it just keeps feeding on itself, and you're pulled into it without any kind of external check. It's like two people who begin by having a conversation and get into an argument. If you listen to it later, it oscillates into oblivion. That's what I think of when I watch video feedback—it's meaningless after awhile.

The text provides a check, a kind of third party. It isolates segments of time, so that you don't fall into the feedback. The experience of text is perceived as time passing; with the image, the parts, are not separated. There is no isolation of the individual loops or segments of time that construct the image.

LF: In other words, the video feedback flows continuously, whereas the text is composed of discrete syllables and words that provide an overall structure?

GH: It's more specific than that. It's the way the description is structured. The idea was to try to isolate the individual rings in the feedback, and to have an analog in language, something that would be comparable to video feedback, but without actually using audio feedback. The text literally describes feedback, and is structured as a process of feedback. It is read backwards so that the phrases pile up on one another until they invert and you actually hear it from beginning to end. The end of the sentence is said first, and then each phrase is repeated, overlaps with the phrase before it, until the whole paragraph is constructed. Each phrase is twice as long as the one before it, and so there's a mathematical relationship almost like a pyramid. The installation itself is laid out like a pyramid, topographically.

LF: So you layered the phrases in order to create an experience similar to looking at video feedback?

GH: Yes, you don't follow the words linearly; it's a kind of linguistic maze that one gets lost in and every once in a while,

in a room whispering single words, so that the experience would be walking through a room of white noise. As you walked around, individual words naming the objects would become audible. In the end, this became the basic texture of the piece. The large sound-space [at Media Study] determined certain details. It's insulated for sound recording, and feels quite raw, with exposed fiberglass on all the walls and ceiling. The pink of the fiberglass and the deadness of the sound changed my thinking about it, and I constructed the piece much more literally, picturing the space as "inside the mind."

LF: In using the metaphor of fighting, the camera represents a machine gun, the audio speakers function as mines in a mine field, the panning lights become surveillance lights.

ences were not intended to be perceived exactly the way I described them, but rather as a kind of map or diagram for constructing the piece.

LF: What about the white rabbit?

GH: That rabbit was the only live element; it represented illusion. When I think of the way rabbits dart around, it represents to me the creative aspects of the mind. Among the identified objects in the space, it served as the unidentified, non-verbal, unconscious element.

LF: Your other installations, *Glass Onion* [1981] and *Equal Time* [1982] also seem to set up physical spaces in which language and image play off of one another. In *Glass Onion*, you used a rectangle constructed from video feedback as the only image. What was the thinking behind that? [*Glass Onion* con-

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(vocoded speech)

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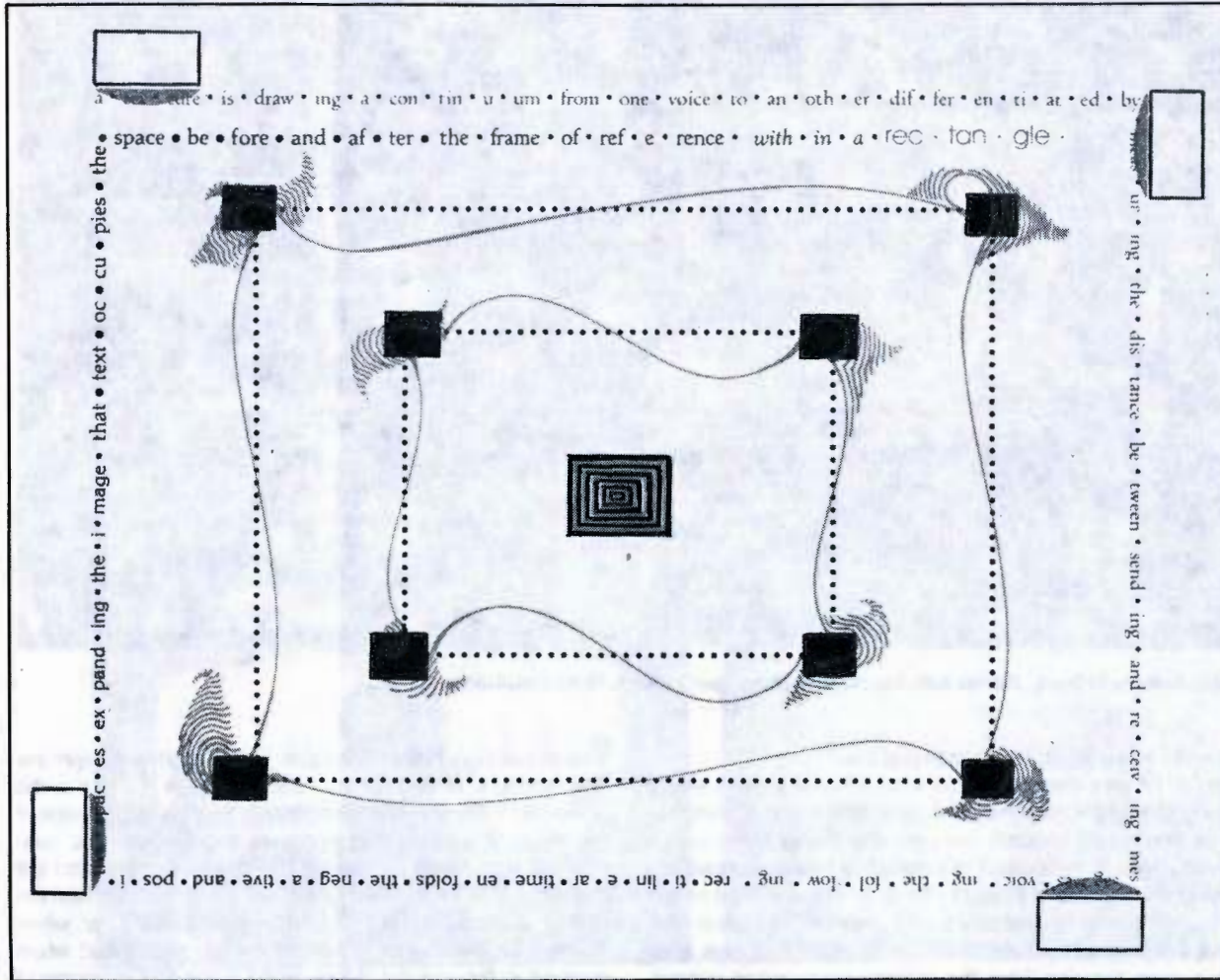
THE

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OF

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Time. It functions similarly to *Black/White/Text*, somewhat diagrammatically, mirroring the movement of the sound/text. There are also a lot of textural, abstract references to the text. Because of the location of those inner monitors becomes so narrow, you almost have to turn sideways to get through. It became a kind of synoptical point, where all four monitors pointed towards each other. It was the "hot spot," especially when there were several people in the space. It was the ambiguous zone, where one asked where one space met another.

LF: Given that you're literally saying in *Equal Time* that people in the art world are all wet—covered with paint—I'm interested in what you think about video being plugged into that world.

GH: I think that essentially it's not.

LF: No?

GH: Peripherally, but not really, basically because it's not marketable.

LF: They said that about photography, too.

GH: It may be in the future, but right now it's not. Video as an art form proving itself ... for me the whole idea of the singularity of an art form is backwards, dead, reactionary. So much is manipulated and defined by the market.

LF: Don't you think that there's an imperative to intellectualize, institutionalize, and legitimize video?

GH: Sure. The Paik show ["Nam June Paik," a retrospective originating at the Whitney Museum of American Art, April 30-June 27, 1982]. It was still a great show though. I don't know. I could see some point—not necessarily far away—where I wouldn't be doing video, but something else. I don't see myself as a video artist. Anytime I feel like I'm falling into "this is what I do," I don't like it, and I want to push it away. I worked in sculpture longer than video. I could see working with just about anything, working with nothing, not doing anything for two years. Just thinking.



tured in this field of simultaneity. I considered having other pairs of texts, which would change every other time I crossed the hall and entered the room opposite me. I felt this would have made it unnecessarily complicated, giving the impression of rooms with many scenes. The repetition of just the two texts reinforces the static quality of being inside an object and figuring out how it's constructed.

In the installation, there are two adjacent rooms connected by a narrow passage. In the center of each room there are monitors facing the passageway, and each other. The monitors display separate tapes which consist of the same images, images which refer to the text. The only difference is that on one monitor the images corresponding to, say, text A are prioritized, or keyed over, the images of text B. The oppo-

SELECTED VIDEOGRAPHY

- The Fall* (1973, 11 min., black and white, sound)
- Air Raid* (1974, 6 min., color, sound)
- Rock City Road* (1974-75, 12 min., color, silent)
- Earth Pulse* (1975, 6 min., color, sound)
- Embryonics II* (1976, 12 min., color, silent)
- Improvisations with Bluestone* (1976, 7 min., color, sound)
- Mirror Road* (1976, 6 min., color, silent)
- Bathing* (1977)
- Electronic Linguistics* (1978, 3:25 min., black and white, sound)
- Windows* (1978, 8 min., color, silent)
- Sums & Differences* (1978, 8 min., black and white, sound)
- Mouth Piece* (1978, 1 min., color, sound)
- Ring Modulation* (1978, 3:25 min., color, sound)
- Primary* (1978, 1:40 min., color, sound)
- Elements* (1978, 2 min., black and white, sound)

Top: installation diagram of *Glass Onion* (1981). Bottom: installation view. (Photo: Nori Sato.)

when the individual phrases double up on each other, "objects of meaning" appear.

LF: What do you mean by "objects of meaning"?

GH: That term is a little obtuse, isn't it? The text literally defines the outer parameter of the space as a character-generated image that crawls along the bottom of each monitor. This outlining is again reinforced by the quadrature movement of the sound (speech) between each set of four speakers, which mark the corners of concentric rectangles. The character-generated text consists of the individual phrases or units that make up the text you're hearing, but in linear order. The first barrier is the "reading" of the text. This describes what you're entering. With each successive barrier or rectangle, the "description" gets more complex—that is to say, it's no longer a word-for-word interpretation. Experientially, something else is taking place. The sound of the text feeding back on itself is becoming that object of meaning, which finally leads us to go to the central monitor, the image "tomb," and there it is, in living black and white—this graphic image of where you're standing. One tends to retrace one's steps, to feedback on one's own movement, and construct this "object of meaning."

LF: How does this installation compare to *Equal Time*?

GH: *Glass Onion* is autonomous in the sense that the installation defines its own space. In fact, the height of the overhead camera and the focal length of the lens are the determining factors. When the camera is zoomed out to the widest view, that becomes the outer rectangle. *Equal Time* was set up in a given, almost symmetrical space, with all the components set up as oscillating pairs, everything in a kind of reciprocal relationship, all trying to cancel each other out. This cancelling relationship is prevented by the viewer's own participation, because of the nature of perception when seeing and/or hearing two or more things simultaneously. This idea was the structuring principle of the work.

In the original tape, there are two texts. Each is a long paragraph. One describes the opening of a fictional art show. It's kind of a joke: one gallery wall is painted white, but it's still wet. That's the exhibit. People are at the opening, drinking and talking, and at the end, they notice that they have paint all over them. The other text is a description of a private performance, very solitary. Both texts are very image-oriented and descriptive—except one's public and one's private. Both texts are the same length, and the last part of each is the same: "I left the room, exiting to a hallway. It was long enough to form extreme perspective looking in either direction with doors to other rooms on both sides. I crossed the hall and entered the room opposite me."

This is another instance where the text could be replaced with other texts, and the piece would still be the "same." The content would be different, but *Equal Time* isn't about the content. It's about how content is experienced when struc-

are prioritized, or keyed over, the images or text B. The opposite exists on the other monitor.

LF: So while you can always hear both texts, one text always dominates, depending on where you are. And in the room where one text dominates, its accompanying video also dominates?

GH: Right. At the end of both tapes, one hears the same last sentence, and then the two audio tracks are reversed, along with the images, and repeated in opposite rooms. Inside the passageway there are two more monitors, also facing each other, displaying another videotape. In that tape, there's an abstract image of two shiny, grid-like panels that slowly move until they overlap each other. They overlap at the point where the two texts overlap, creating a moiré pattern; and then, when the texts start up again, the panels start to move again.

LF: What was the reasoning behind using the abstract imagery in the small space?

GH: The abstract imagery was the original tape for *Equal*

Primary (1978, 1:40 min., color, sound)
Elements (1978, 2 min., black and white, sound)
Objects with Destinations (1979, 3:40 min., color, silent)
Equal Time (1979, 4 min., color, stereo sound)
Picture Story (1979, 7 min., color, sound)
Soundings (1979, 17 min., color, sound)
Processual Video (1980, 11 min., black and white, sound)
Black/White/Text (1980, 7 min., black and white, stereo sound)
Commentary (1980, 0:40 min., color, sound)
Around & About (1980, 4:45 min., color, sound)
Videograms (1980-81, 13:25 min., black and white, sound)
Primarily Speaking (1981-83, 20 min., color, stereo sound)
Happenstance (in progress, black and white, stereo sound)

INSTALLATIONS

Hole in the Wall (1974)
Mesh (1979)
War Zone (1980)
Glass Onion (1981)
Primarily Speaking (1981)
Equal Time (1982)

Left: view of *Equal Time*, a 1982 installation at the Long Beach Museum of Art. (Photo: Kira Perov.) Right: simultaneous images from the installation. (Photos: Lucinda Furlong.)

