GARY HILL

VANISHING POINTS

A LINE OF REASON
Title: Happenstance (part one of many parts)

Date: 1982-83
**Media:** Video (black-and-white; stereo sound); 6:30 min.

**Video Link:** https://vimeo.com/5509624

**Description:**

The opening sequence of this black-and-white work shows the square, circle and triangle as the basic elements of the formal repertoire. They are joined by letters and words, whose configuration suggests the shape of the triangle. Simultaneously sounds are linked to the visual elements: a bass drum to the square, crash cymbal to the circle and a kind of ‘twang’ sound to the triangle. After first concretizing themselves, amorphous electronic forms (almost like reading the stars, a bird, a fish, a snake and a frog seem to appear if for only moments) become lost in abstract structures as individual words and sentences play counter point. The interplay between language and image builds to a text filled page: “vanishing points” which shifts down the page into “points vanishing.” The letters, which initially morph to a pyramid, now turn into the humus from which grows a letter tree whose leaves fall to the ground as characters, partially forming words there. Hill is creating a kind of choreography of thought, which as already seen in *Videograms* (GHCR 43) – gives rise to an area of tension between the images and the spoken or written texts. At the textual level, he addresses the ephemerality of linguistic meanings inside the ‘nature’ of language. Musical and sound elements underscore the character of the individual passages and the complex intertextuality of the work.


**Spoken Text:**

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This, that and the other thing. Things. Things are going to happen. Happenstance. Standing in the thick of things like sticks in the mud.

Cross my heart, hope to die, I never dreamed the likes of this. That’s beside the point, the issues at hand are other things. This is not going to be a song and dance, that’s entertainment, another thing altogether.

This is something I came upon while walking in the woods, that’s ground for thinking through other things.

Vanishing points.

Things. Things are going to happen. Happenstance. Standing in a mummy’s tomb, thought provoked, dumbstruck by the momentum of a tree. The gnarled character of its being, the way it visits the temples and the groin teaching the body/mind to be taut – to talk with your mouth open.

The words are coming, listen to them. Nothing surrounds them. They are open, they speak of nothing but themselves with perfect reason. I am talking, I am talking them out into the open.
They sit like deer in a field, if I approach them too quickly they fade into the quick of things. Silence is always there – there is silence when I stop to take a breath, when I see breathtaking things.

Written text:

(in triangle) The sound of one hand clapping in one man’s mind. (bottom of screen) Not to be mistaken for the different drummer number….1, 2, 3, 4, so, on, and, so, forth.

(in triangle) One man’s mind clapping in the sound of a closed hand.

(bottom of screen) At a certain point another point is noticed. At a certain other point a line of reasoning is drawn upon other things. Therefore, the other point is this….That the raison d’etre draws from things on the wayside of vanishing points of view.

Nothing Talking Silence There

Bibliography:


Video 84 – International Video Conferences, Montreal. Program notes. Montreal, 1984, pp. 61, 64.


*Tokyo International Video Biennale.* Program notes. Tokyo: Video Biennale Secretariat, 1985, unpaginated. (See notes below.)

“Video as Art.” *Pia*, Japan (February 22, 1985).


Gary Hill: *DISTURBANCE (among the jars).* Villeneuve d'Ascq, France: Musée d'Art Moderne, 1988, unpaginated.


*XII Salso Film & TV Festival.* Parma: Comune di Salsomaggiore Terme, 1989, p. 82.


Sarrazin, Stephen. *Chimaera Monographe No. 10 (Gary Hill).* Montbéliard, France: Centre International de Création Vidéo Montbéliard, Belfort, 1992, pp. 8, 25, 75. (Including a preface by Gary Hill.)


Gary Hill en Argentina: textos, ensayos, dialogos. Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural Recoleta,
2000, pp. 10, 14 (transcription of text), 23, 24, 36.


Copeland, Colette. “Rooted in the Experiential: A Conversation with Gary Hill.” *Afterimage*, 37,


Exhibition History:

Solo screening. Boston Film/Video Foundation, Boston, Massachusetts, March 24, 1983.


Videoart: IV Festival International d’Art Video de Locarno, Locarno-Ascona, Switzerland, August 1 – 5, 1983.


Thomas A. Edison/Black Maria Film & Video Festival, West Orange, New Jersey, 1983.


International House of Japan, Tokyo, Japan, April 18, 1985.


“Video Art: Stockholm International Festival ‘85,” Kulturhuset, Stockholm, Sweden, November
Solo screening. 911 Arts Center, Seattle, Washington, November 9, 1985.


1989 Salsomaggiore Film and TV Festival, Salsomaggiore, Italy, April 19 – 25, 1989.


“Gary Hill: O lugar do outro/where the other takes place,” Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 1 – 6, 1997 (not the full run of the exhibition); Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil, October 3 – November 2, 1997.


“Visual Utterance: The Works of Gary Hill,” Pacific Film Archive, University of California,
Berkeley, California, February 11, 18, 1998.


Solo exhibition. Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, Denmark, January 17 – April 5, 1999.


“Hill(scape),” Extra Microwave Media Art Festival (organized by Videotage), Hong Kong Space Museum Lecture Hall, Hong Kong, January 14 – 31, 2001 (January 20 screening).


“Black Maria Film Festival 25th Anniversary Gallery Retrospective,” Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, June 17 – 24, 2006.

“Signal Channel,” Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha, Nebraska, June 9 – August 12, 2006.


Seoul International NewMedia Festival, Seoul, Korea, August 4 – 14, 2011.


“SCHRIFTFILME: Schrift als Bild Bewegung (TYPEMOTION: Type as image in motion,” FACT, Karlsruhe, Germany and Liverpool, Great Britain, November 13, 2014 – February 8, 2015.

"Gary Hill," 37 Moscow International Film Festival/Media Forum, Cinema October, June 21, 2015.

Notes:

Excerpting the Tree, 1985, is an excerpt from Happenstance (part one of many parts) that was exhibited at the First Tokyo International Video Biennale, March 29 – 31, 1985. The festival imposed a time limit of three minutes on each entry, thus the title was an ironic response to the structure of the biennale.