
GARY HILL









Title:Primarily Speaking

Date:1981-83

Media:Two-channel video/sound installation

Video Link :

Description:

Two-monitor version:

Two 20-inch color video monitors, two mirrors (of equal size to the monitors' displays), three painted (or formica-laminated) MDF board cabinets, two speakers, two-channel synchronizer, two DVD players and two DVDs (color; stereo sound)

Dimensions: Monitor cabinet is 66 h. x 22 w. 96 l. inches (167 x 56 x 243 cm.), and two mirror cabinets are 66 x 22 x 16 inches each (167 x 56 x 41 cm.)

Eight-monitor version:

Eight 20-inch color LCD monitors, two painted (or formica-laminated) MDF board cabinets, four speakers, video switcher/color field generator, computer with controlling software written in DOS, time code reader, two-channel synchronizer, two laserdisc players and two laserdiscs (color; stereo sound)

Dimensions: Each of the two monitor cabinets is 84 h. x 24 w. x 144 l. inches (213 x 61 x 254 cm.); positioned approx. 6 ft. apart.

The two-monitor version (dated 1981 – 83 / 1990) of this work exists in an edition of two and one artist's proof.

The eight-monitor version (dated 1981 – 83) of this work exists in an edition of two and one artist's proof.

In the two-monitor version of this work, two monitors are positioned facing outward from the ends of a long cabinet. Two additional pedestals, appearing to have split off the ends of the cabinet, have mirrors that reflect the monitors at each end of the cabinet. The long cabinet structure in the middle is slightly rotated relative to the alignment of the three structures. This allows viewers at either end to see one monitor directly and the other monitored image in the mirror at the other end and vice-versa. The audio and video components are described below.

In the eight-monitor version of this work, two identically constructed cabinets, each housing four monitors (mounted horizontally and flush with the cabinet's surface) and two speakers, face one another about six feet apart, forming a corridor. Images and color fields (blue, green, red, cyan, magenta, and yellow) move back and forth along the monitors to the rhythm of a spoken text constructed from idiomatic expressions. At any one time, each wall contains one image and three color fields. These cycle back and forth along the four monitors alternately to the rhythm of the opposing wall's spoken phrase. The work is segmented by idiomatic sing-song like rhymes during which time the images and colors reset to the initial position in which an image and its mirror (reverse) image are across from one another, as are the colors and their opposites. During this time the images and colors ripple back and forth along the corridor for the duration of the "song," maintaining their reciprocal relationships.

Spoken Text:

well

you know what they say

we've all heard it before

it never ceases to amaze me

this time

it's more than just a change in the weather

they've really outdone themselves

how they ever got it past us I don't know

in many circles it's considered the unspeakable

these types of goings-on surface every so often

statistically

one of us is probably involved

there's always someone willing to run the risk

at this point though

there are no tell tale signs to speak of

I wonder if the better thing to do is refrain from speculation

hang in there but hold back

not get caught up in the missing link syndrome

of course there's an ulterior motive

when is there ever not

that it's been dropped in our laps I'm sure is no accident

we can't just stand around though

where to go from here is the question

do you have any ideas

one thing's for certain

they don't know we'll go to any length to do what has to be done

for the time being

if we can hold our own
we're bound to come across something in that near future
Blue Green Red Cyan Magenta Yellow
Food Feed Fed I have the time of Day-Glo
there's no way in the world I'm going to get framed this time around
chances are you're thinking along similar lines
stick close to me and remember
I'll be calling the shots from now on
if at any time I drop back
you pick up where I left off
if we find ourselves losing touch here's a little piece of advice
there can never be an eye for an eye
there will always be a middle man
who will whisper in your ear at every turn
something to the effect of
"we can go by the book or you can eat my words"
no reason to go to such extremes
think little or nothing of it
then again
just to be on the safe side
better file it away for future reference
so
let's get on with the business at hand
we can cover a lot of ground in the time we've allotted ourselves
we have our choice

living in suspended animation
or under the auspices of supply and demand
when you buy and we sell we both trade
I've swallowed a good many hook line and sinker
in light of the fact
I've been a fish out of water for a long time
it's pretty safe to assume you're in the same position
sure
I know that you know that I know that you know
so on and so forth
you've got it all staked out
I know you were playing for keeps from the beginning
why do I sense a note of skepticism
listen
we can part company anytime
in case you've forgotten
this is all at your convenience
still
it's necessary if not by design that we cross paths in some way shape or form
Blue Green Red Cyan Magenta Yellow
Food Feed Fed I have the time of Day-Glo
off the record
this is somewhat out of character for me as I imagine being closed mouth is for you
if it all seems a bit too high and dry
take comfort in the fact

that coming up face to face would eliminate our time for reflection

look

on the surface

what do we have to lose

aesthetic persuasion

leisure time

what is it

why has it come to this

I've never turned on you before

or vice versa

have our shortcomings finally met

one of us must accept the other

if not the two of us accept each other

the remaining possibility is out of the question

objects in the mirror are closer than they appear

in light of the situation maybe it's wrong to carry on like this

we've been on delicate ground before

should one of us back off

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 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
it's the nature of the beast

Food Feed Fed I have the time of Day-Glo

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 ask the same questions

you give the same answers

you can't teach an old dog new tricks

or can you

I don't know

you tell me

what's what

maybe you prefer sightseeing and I'm better off leaving well enough alone

time on our hands is blood on our hands

I think we're off the track

I know we're off the track

I never for one moment thought I could railroad this through

I knew it was coming

this is the diminishing return I failed to negotiate

sad but true

less is more

more or less

more and more of the time

oh well

such as it is

Blue Green Red Cyan Magenta Yellow

Food Feed Fed I have the time of Day-Glo

in the meantime

let's not lose sight of the facts

they do not need reiterating

there's a time and place for everything

I hope we haven't come here under false pretenses

there are things that should be said and things that should be done

you've been around
and I've been around
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 scène 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 arm's length
easily penetrable
we are at each other's disposal
we can concentrate on our discrepancies or we can split the difference
that which takes the edge off
in any event
it is on our consciences
don't don't block block the the box box
a a void void grid grid lock lock
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

by the same token

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

we don't have to go to the four corners of the earth to discover we speak the same language

savvy

the place is here

the time is now

zero hour

and so on

Blue Green Red Cyan Magenta Yellow

Food Feed Fed I have the time of Day-Glo

I want to come to terms with where we began and let the rest fall into place

granted

there are many simultaneities

that goes without saying

but for practical purposes

we should respect our limits

so

take a good long hard look at yourself

never mind me

I'll just go in one ear and out the other

complications can arise in the simplest of forms

and should be played out

watch it

perhaps the most we can do is try and remain true to form

however short-lived these moments may be we can never return to the killer instinct

listen

the floor has been mine now for longer than I care to remember

do you want to talk

do you want to talk it over

do you want to talk about it

feed it intravenously
and have it be over with as soon as possible
I know the position you're in
if you can pull it off
more power to you
it's never clear cut and you'd be wasting your time with the clean break idea
I'll bend over backwards to meet you halfway
in view of where you stand where does that put me
where does that leave us
in the mercenary position
perpendicular
but right side up
no
we can't go by rote memory
there's nothing tying you down and there's nothing letting you go
make up your mind
get a grip on things
your modus operandi
square off and break ground
put your head on the table tangent to your ear
talk to yourself and smile know that you are still here
on the level
perhaps I'm not coming across
I know it's difficult in these close quarters
I've tried to make it as easy as possible

I assure you
one can adapt to this neck of the woods
I'm not out of bounds
you know it and I know it
I'm not going to walk off with it
and you're not going to let it get away
when I'm through
you are going to know what I am talking about
word for word
let's face it
we are too few and far between to let generalities get the best of us
up to this point
when all is said and done
so far so good
when it gets down to the wire perhaps it will be a different story
again
let's not get ahead of ourselves
we're bound to end up in the red that way
you might think the grass is greener on the other side
but it's once in a blue moon a situation the likes of this can occur
in all seriousness
you're dead center in the sightlines of a tour de force
etcetera
etcetera
etcetera

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Exhibition History:

Exhibition history of two-monitor version:

“Le temps des machines,” Centre de recherche et d'action culturelle (CRAC), Valence, France, November 13 – December 30, 1990.

World Wide Video Festival, Kijkhuis, The Hague, The Netherlands [dates unknown].

“Anos 80,” Culturgest – Gestão de Espaços Culturais, Lisbon, Portugal, May 12 – August 31, 1998.

“Zero Visibility – Exhibition and Festival of Electronic and Multi-media Arts,” Colonna Castle, Genazzano, Italy, March 14 – April 13, 2003.

Exhibition history of eight-monitor version:

An example of this work was first shown as a work-in-progress at The Kitchen Center for Video and Music, New York, New York, October 8 – 31, 1981.

Galerie H at ORF, Steirischer Herbst '82, Graz, Austria, November 6 – 10, 1982 (exhibited as a work-in-progress).

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“Gary Hill,” (travelling exhibition organized by the Musée national d’art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France) Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, August 28 – October 10, 1993.

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“Primera generación: Arte e imagen en movimiento (1963 – 1986),” Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain, November 7, 2006 – April 2, 2007.

“Scenes and Traces – From the Collection: Design, Photography and Video,” Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands, April 7 – November 25, 2007.

“Gary Hill: Momentombs,” Suwon Art Museum, Suwon, Korea, November 26, 2019 — March 6, 2020.

Notes: