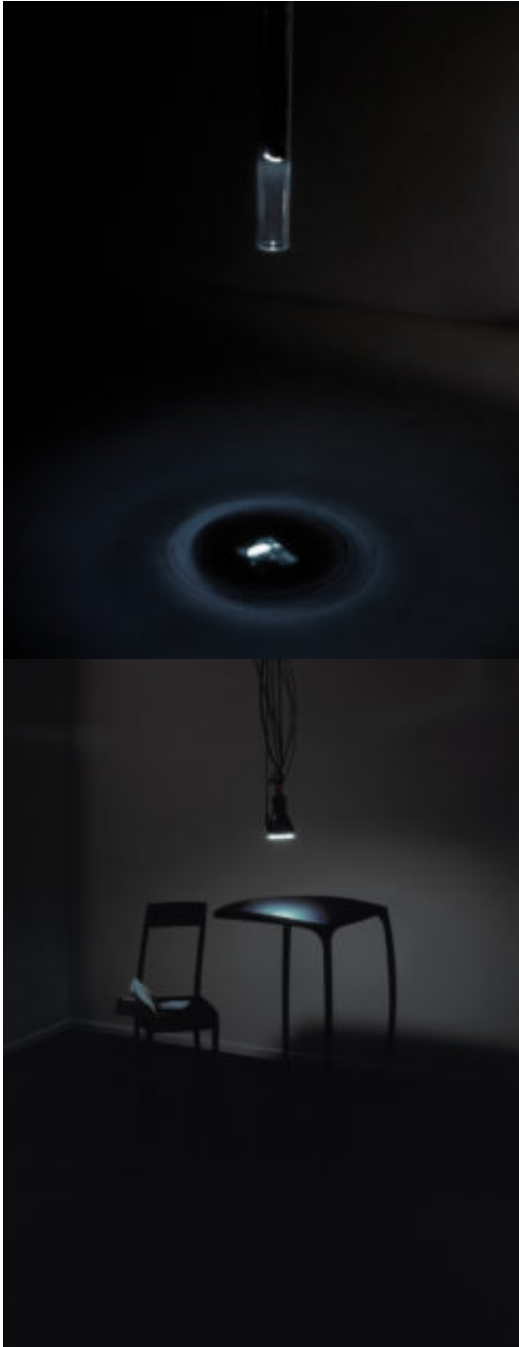


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GARY HILL







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**Title:**And Sat Down Beside Her

**Date:**1990

**Media:**Mixed media installation

**Description:**

Work consisting of three parts:

1. Modified 4-inch black-and-white video monitor (cathode ray tube removed from chassis), three-legged table and chair construction (formed as if seen through a wide-angle lens), one glass lens, modified book, one speaker, one laserdisc player and one laserdisc (black-and-white; mono sound);
2. One glass tube with enclosed modified 1 ½-inch black-and-white video monitor (cathode ray tube removed from portable video camera), one glass lens, text applied on floor, one bare 1 ½-inch speaker, one laserdisc player and one laserdisc (black-and-white; mono sound);
3. Two modified 1 ½-inch black-and-white video monitors (cathode ray tubes removed from portable video cameras), hanging and coiled exposed wire, four glass lenses, two laserdisc players and two laserdiscs (black-and-white; silent)

Dimensions variable

Edition of two and one artist's proof (Number 1/2: French language version; Number 2/2: English language version)

The title of this three-part mixed media installation was derived from the nursery rhyme "Little Miss Muffet" ( "...along came a spider and sat down beside her"), and each of the three components is a kind of sculptural analogy to the form of arachnids:

A table and chair with a spidery appearance were constructed to look as if they are viewed through a fish eye lens. One of the legs of the table has been replaced with a small glass lens. Hanging from the ceiling is 4-inch monitor stripped from its housing and overhanging the table like a lamp. In the English language version of the work, a man (the artist) is heard reading an excerpt from Maurice Blanchot's *Thomas the Obscure*, and an image of his face is refracted through the lens in the table and projected onto an open book that sits on the chair. He appears to be looking through the text from the other side as he reads. (In the French language version, the voice and face of a woman reading the same excerpt replace the artist's image and voice.) The book has been modified and bound in bright red, suggesting the underbelly of a black widow spider.

A second component (also referred to as the "arachnid chamber") consists of a hanging glass tube approximately twenty-four inches long with a diameter of two and a half inches. Inside the tube is a modified 1 1/2-inch monitor dangling from black wires. The monitor displays an image of a typing electric typewriter ball. A text that reflexively speaks about the connection of the coming and going of thought and the movement of the typewriter ball—the way it reveals and obscures the words on the page—is applied to the floor. The light of the changing typewriter ball

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image illuminates different parts of the text on the floor as it changes. The sound of the typing is insect-like and heard from a 1 1/2-inch bare speaker hanging near the top of the tube.

The third component consists of two modified 1 1/2-inch monitors lying on the floor and directed towards the corner of the space. Extending from the bare picture tubes are long black wires coiled behind them that run up to the ceiling. Four small magnifying lenses are positioned in front of the monitors making eight projected images – the number of eyes of a spider – that vary in size up to about twelve inches. The images are close-ups of white text on a black background taken from Maurice Blanchot's "The Writing of the Disaster."

## **Spoken Text:**

### **Spoken text in Part 1:**

English translation: *Thomas the Obscure* by Maurice Blanchot, translated by Robert Lamberton (New York: David Lewis, 1973), pp. 41 – 44:

.....Nevertheless, that day (as if a corpse borne from one bed to another were really changing place) she arose, walked before Thomas and drew him toward the little woods nearby, along a road on which those who came from the other direction saw him recede, or thought he was motionless. In fact, he was really walking and, with a body like the others, though three-quarters consumed, he penetrated a region where, if he himself disappeared, he immediately saw the others fall into another nothingness which placed them further from him than if they had continued to live. On this road, each man he met died. Each man, if Thomas turned away his eyes, died with him a death which was not announced by a single cry. He looked at them, and already he saw them lose all resemblance beneath his glance, with a tiny wound in the forehead through which their face escaped. They did not disappear, but they did not appear again. As far away as they became visible, they were shapeless and mute. Nearer, if he touched them, if he directed toward them not his glance, but the glance of this dazzling and invisible eye which he was, every moment, completely...and nearer yet, almost blending with them, taking them either for his shadow or for dead souls, breathing them, licking them, coating himself with their bodies, he received not the slightest sensation, not the slightest image, as empty of them as they were empty of him. Finally they passed by. They went away, definitively. They slipped down a vertiginous slope toward a country whence nothing was any longer visible, except perhaps, like a great trail of light, their last phosphorescent stare on the horizon. It was a terrible and mysterious blast. Behind him there were no more works, no silence, no backward and no forward. The space surrounding him was the opposite of space, infinite thought in which those who entered, their heads veiled, existed only for nothing.

In this abyss Anne alone resisted. Dead, dissolved in the closest thing to the void, she yet found there the debris of beings with whom she maintained, in the midst of the holocaust, a sort of familial resemblance in her features. If he came straight up to her, brutally, to surprise her, she always presented him a face. She changed without ceasing to be Anne. She was Anne, having no longer the slightest resemblance to Anne. In her face and in all her features, while she was completely identical to another, she remained the same, Anne, Anne complete and undeniable. On his path, he saw her coming like a spider which was identical to the girl and, among the vanished corpses, the emptied....last descendant of a fabulous race. She walked with eight enormous legs as if on two delicate ones. Her black body, her ferocious look which

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made one think she was about to bite when she was about to flee, were not different from the clothed body of Anne, from the delicate air she had when one tried to see her close up. She came forward jerkily, now devouring space in a few bounds, now lying down on the path, brooding it, drawing it from herself like an invisible thread. Without even drawing in her limbs, she entered the space surrounding Thomas. She approached irresistibly. She stopped before him. Then, that day, seized by this incredible bravery and perseverance, recognizing in her something carefree which could not disappear in the midst of trials and which resounded like a memory of freedom, seeing her get up on her long legs, hold herself at the level of his face to communicate with him, secreting a whirlwind of nuances, of odors and thoughts, he turned and looked bitterly behind him, like a traveler who, having taken a wrong turn, moves away, then draws within himself and finally disappears in the thought of his journey. Yes, this woods, he recognized it. And this declining sun, he recognized that, and these trees drying out and these green leaves turning black. He tried to shake the enormous weight of his body, a missing body whose illusion he bore like a borrowed body. He needed to feel the factitious warmth which radiated from himself as from an alien sun, to hear the breath flowing from a false source, to listen to the beating of a false heart. And her, did he recognize her, this dead person on guard behind a hideous resemblance, ready to appear as she was, in the atmosphere studded with little mirrors where every one of her features survived? "It's you?" he asked. Immediately he saw a flame in a pair of eyes, a sad, cold flame on a face. He shuddered in this unknown body while Anne, feeling a sad spirit entering into her, a funereal youthfulness she was sworn to love, believed she was again becoming herself.

### **Written text in Part 2: (© Gary Hill 1990)**

This has always been it, a bewildering object in my path collecting more and more of whatever collecting tends to collect; when nothing clicks; when things just couple becoming twos instead of ones. And then it stops. Stops dead in its tracks. Backlogs. Rolls back on one of its many convoluted surfaces and sits there perfecting stillness. My gaze thickens before a black spherical object laden with dull silvery characters, symbols and numbers that, now and then, jolts forth and back, each time to rotate its discrete distance. The movement is quick, animated...like certain walking arachnids.

### **Written text in Part 3:**

Highly fragmented excerpts of text, which are seen more as textual webs of the work, from Maurice Blanchot's *Écriture du désastre/The Writing of the Disaster*.

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## **Exhibition History:**

An example of this work was exhibited for the first time in a solo exhibition at Galerie des

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Archives, Paris, France, March 17 – April 14, 1990.

“L’Amour de Berlin: Installations Video,” Centre Culturel de Cavaillon, Cavaillon, France, July 6 – August 26, 1990.

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“Gary Hill: I Believe It Is an Image,” WATARI-UM, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan, May 20 – August 12, 1992.

“Gary Hill,” Le Creux de l’Enfer, Centre d’art contemporain, Thiers, France, July 4 – September 13, 1992.

“Métamorphoses,” Saint-Gervais, Genève, Switzerland, November 10 – December 12, 1992.

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“Beeld/Beeld,” Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, Belgium, March 5 – April 17, 1994.

“Immagini in Prospettive,” Cinema “Verdi,” Serre de Rapolano, Italy, April 17 – June 12, 1995.

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“Gary Hill: Installations, vidéos,” Centre d’art contemporain de Castres, Castres, France, June 26 – August 29, 1996.

“Sans commune mesure,” Le Fresnoy Studio national des arts contemporains, Tourcoing, France, September 21 – December 8, 2002.

## Notes:

This was the first work in which Hill used surplus lenses and small monitors taken from video viewfinders to “project” images onto objects - in this case, a book, which led to the making of *I Believe It Is An Image in Light of the Other*, 1991-92.

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Voice (French version): Anne Angelini