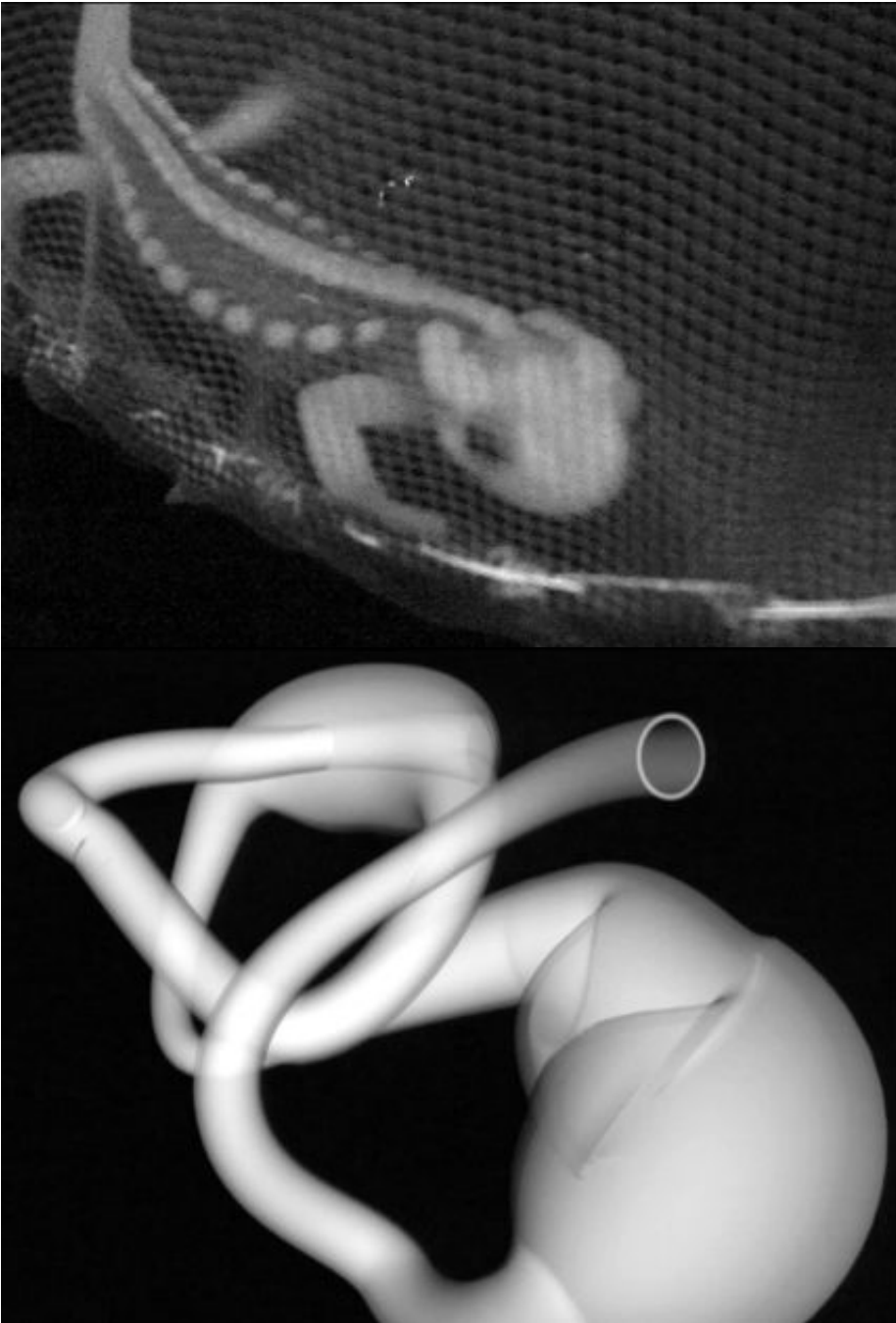**Title:**Black Performance

 Date:2000/2001/2003

Media:

Description:

With Paulina Wallenberg-Olsson

Intermedia performance for infrared video camera, two video projectors, two projection screens,

digital video player, pre-recorded digital video cassette, variable sound system, microphones, laptop computer, Reaktor software synthesizer, strobe lights, costuming, pump organ, live salamanders

Black Performance explores thresholds of light/darkness, silence/sound/song, presence/absence, viewed/viewing, real time and recorded time, and performance versus installation. Rather than seen as a set of dualities, these "resonating membranes" develop an open field wherein performer(s), audience, sound, and images begin to pass through one another. A sense of extreme pasts and futures manifests in the work with shades of the Victorian, the Gothic, and science fiction.

This performance consists exclusively of video projections and sound and takes place in a darkened space, with the performers—Gary Hill ("operator") and Paulina Wallenberg-Olsson ("protagonist")—remaining outside the space, never directly seen by the audience, yet heard behind the walls and crawl spaces. The projections consist of real-time infrared images of the protagonist recorded live by the operator. Whistles have been handed out to people working in the space (guards, technicians, etc.) with instructions to blow them at various times during the performance.

The performance opens with a ten-minute sequence of computer-generated images of dense lattice structures—seeming architectures in deep space or an internal skeletal web of organs or cocoons, perhaps a connective circulatory system. The sequence ends with a fragment of zeppelin-like craft glimpsed as the screen goes black. Scratchy animal utterances are heard from the "backstage" protagonist., She wears an elaborate black dress with many layers of embroidery and lace. Two open bamboo cages with live salamanders and covered with fine black mesh are attached to her hips (reminiscent of the bustle of a Victorian dress). Using an infrared camera, the operator explores the protagonist with extreme close-ups of the textures of her dress, the cages and salamanders, and finally her face—all projected in the audience's space. The protagonist's deep, labored breaths and low vocal expressions are heard as the camera travels over her. Following further projections of Kleinform-like vessels within which the camera travels their inner structures, the protagonist is now re-positioned at one end of a long, narrow corridor in complete darkness; at the opposite end is the operator. She begins to sing various ballads *a cappella*, while the operator "seeks" her with the infrared camera, moving slowly down the corridor until she—and the source of the songs—is found. The projection switches to a live image of the protagonist's profile as she makes a series of very loud "calls" or screams and then slips back into the hidden spaces of the building. The space is now completely dark and empty of images. The operator reads fragments of a text, each punctuated with a single strobe flash. A few sounds of whistles.

Quasha, George and Charles Stein. *An Art of Limina: Gary Hill's Works and Writings*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2008, p. 570.

Spoken Text:

Bibliography:

Hill (scape): Gary Hill's video screening, performance and installation exhibition. Program notes. Hong Kong: Videotage, 2001, pp. 2, 9.

Quasha, George and Charles Stein. *La performance elle-même* in *Gary Hill: Around & About: A Performative View.* Paris: Éditions du Regard, 2001, pp. 40, 102 – 103.

Gary Hill: The Performative Image. Tokyo: Gary Hill Exhibition Committee, 2001, unpaginated.

Rowlands, Penelope. "Gary Hill's Hall of Mirrors." *ARTnews* 100, 5 (May 2001), p. 179.

Gary Hill: Selected Works and catalogue raisonné. Wolfsburg: Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2002, GHCR 125, p. 242.

Unfolding Vision: Gary Hill, Selected Works 1976 – 2003. Taipei: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003, pp. 18 – 19, 58 – 63.

Quasha, George and Charles Stein. *An Art of Limina: Gary Hill's Works and Writings*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2008, pp. 525, 570, 614.

Exhibition History:

"City Space – Net Space – Theatre Space" 3rd International Summer Academy, Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt, Germany, August 4, 2000.

WATARI-UM, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan, August 31 - September 1, 2000 (opening exhibition performances).

"Soirées Nomades [Nomadic Nights Series]," Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France, October 26, 2000.

Meiji Shrine, Tokyo, Japan, December 9, 2000.

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Studio Theatre, Hong Kong, January 30 – 31, 2001, as part of "Hill(scape)," organized by Videotage.

Centre Nationale de la Photographie (CNP), Paris, France, October 14, 2002.

Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan, on August 21 and August 23, 2003.

Notes: