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GARY HILL





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**Title:** Circular Breathing

**Date:** 1994

**Media:** Five-channel video/sound installation

**Video Link :**

**Description:**

Five video projectors, two speakers, video switcher utilizing one input and five outputs,

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computer with controlling software, one laserdisc player and one laserdisc (black-and-white; stereo sound)

Dimensions: projections approx. 128 x 480 in. (330 x 220 cm.) each

Edition of two and one artist's proof

The title of *Circular Breathing* comes from a technique that horn and reed instrument players use to play a continuous note, seemingly without taking a breath. This notion is drawn upon with the visualization of long sequences composed of five discreet scenes that migrate onto the projection field with mathematical precision.

Five large scale black-and-white projections (each 128 x 96 inches) oriented vertically and adjacent to one another, span a projection field of 40 feet from corner to corner. The structure of *Circular Breathing* was derived from a segment in Hill's earlier installation, *Between Cinema and a Hard Place*, 1991. As each of the five scenes/images sequentially switches from left to right onto the field, they in a sense share time. The first scene slides out from the corner of the wall and at some point after becoming a full image begins to flicker with the addition of a second scene/image. This flickering is the time being shared by the two scenes; since all five of these images emanate from a single source, only one can be on at a time. Consequently, two scenes slow down to half speed; three screens to a third of the speed and so on. Once the field of five scenes is complete, the images begin to approach photographic stillness. The process then continues with the first scene (on the left) disappearing, thus making the remaining scenes gather speed. The process continues until the fifth or last scene on the far right appears in real time. It then slides off the wall seeming to disappear into the corner, and the process begins again with a new set of scenes. In *Circular Breathing*, there is the sense of a disturbing narrative accumulating and dissipating through each successive set of scenes. Images from the streets of Tangier, a ship on the open sea and the interior of a mosque juxtapose with a man chopping wood and a cigarette burning slowly in an ashtray. An older woman reading and large thick hands loading a pistol unfold next to bladed stems and a close-up of an insect dragging its prey. Throughout all the segments there is the recurring image of a woman's hands playing a piano. The music, however, distorted by the changes of speed, can be identified as *Vexations* by Eric Satie.

### **Spoken Text:**

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*Seeing Time: Selections from the Pamela and Richard Kramlich Collection of Media Art*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999, pp. 46 – 47, 120 – 123.

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### **Exhibition History:**

An example of this work was first exhibited at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D. C. from February 17 – May 8, 1994 as part of "Gary Hill," a traveling exhibition organized by the Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. Travelled to: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California, December 19, 1994 – March 12, 1995; Guggenheim Museum SoHo, New York, New York, May 11 – August 20, 1995; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Kansas City, Missouri, October 14, 1995 – January 14, 1996.

"Gary Hill," Musée d'art contemporain, Lyon, France, May 26 – September 19, 1994.

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"Imagining the Brain Closer than the Eyes," Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Basel, Switzerland, October 29, 1994 – January 29, 1995.

"MultiMediale 4," Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, Germany, May 12 – 21, 1995.

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"Seeing Time: Selections from the Richard and Pamela Kramlich Collection of Media Art," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California, October 15, 1999 – January 9, 2000; Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM), Karlsruhe, Germany, November 29, 2000 – April 22, 2001.

"Gary Hill: Selected Works." Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany, November 10, 2001 – March 10, 2002. Travelled to: Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, Portugal, October 10, 2002 – January 12, 2003.

"Image, Body, Text: Selected Works by Gary Hill," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, March 24 – May 30, 2005.

"Gary Hill: glossodelic attractors (part two)," Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA, August 20 – September 16, 2012.

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

"Gary Hill: Circular breathing," LUMA foundation, Arles, France, September 23, 2022 — March 5, 2023

"Out of the Box," Schaulager, Basel, Switzerland, June 10 — November 19, 2023

## **Notes:**