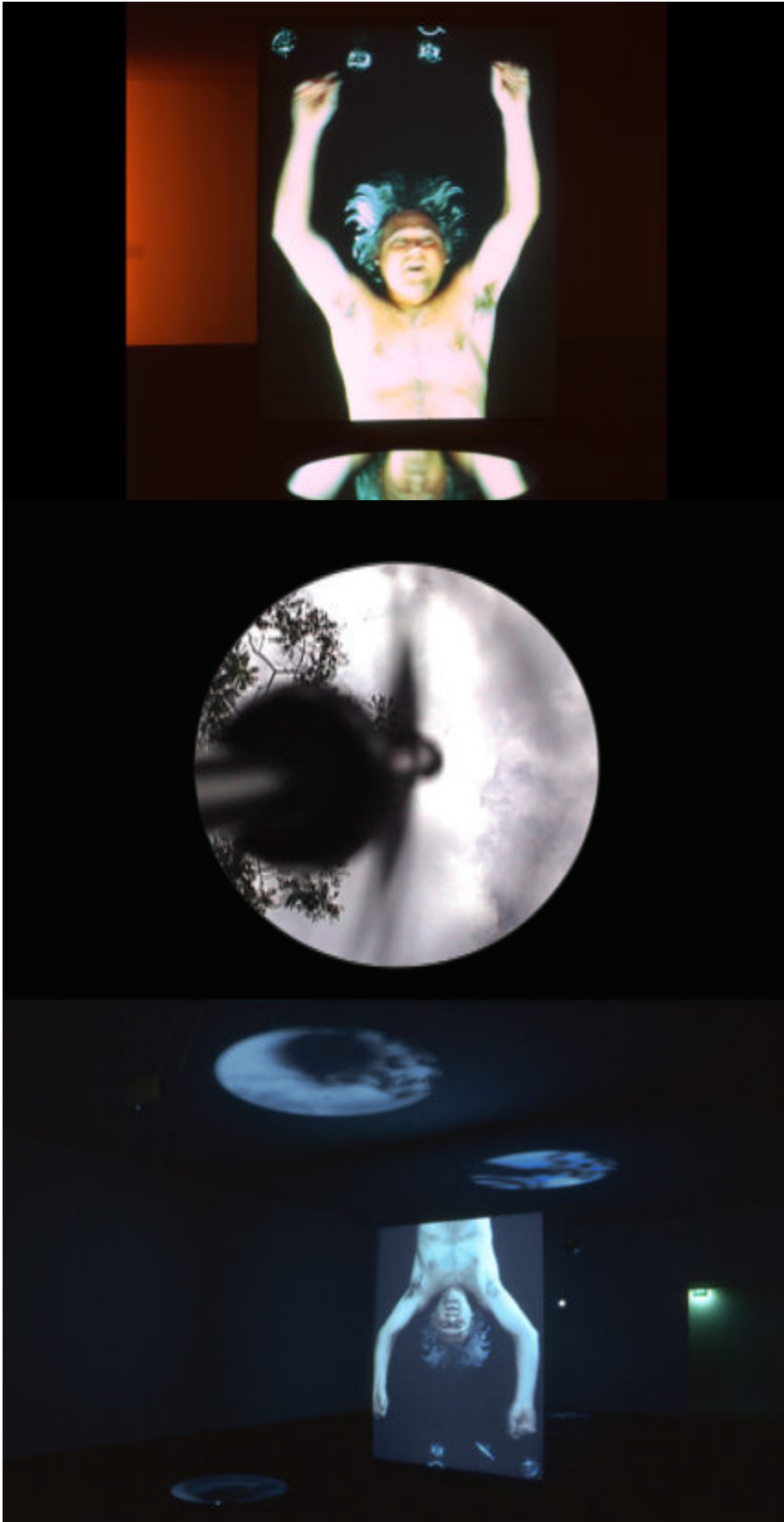

GARY HILL





Title: Impressions d'Afrique

Date: 2003

Media: Mixed media installation

Description:

Four video projectors, double-sided projection screen, two motorized 34-inch diameter (86 cm.) mirrors with metal floor mounts, four speakers, four-channel synchronizer, four DVD players and four DVDs (color; stereo sound)

Dimensions: Variable; projection screens approx. 9 h. x 6.69 w. ft. (2.73 x 2.04 meters)

Edition of two and one artist's proof

Note: This work was commissioned by the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, for the exhibition "Yanomami, l'esprit de la Forêt," 2003.

In the middle of the space is a two-sided projection screen hanging vertically. On one side, the viewer sees a projection of the artist from the waist up, bare-chested and suspended upside-down; he recites a series of texts backwards, and at the start of each new text, spins a gyroscope into motion. On the opposite side, the projection has been flipped vertically 180 degrees and the audio has been reversed, so that the text is heard "corrected" to be forward, though at times, it is difficult to comprehend. Positioned flat on the floor – one on either side of the central projection screen – are two round, 34-inch diameter mirrors mounted to motorized stands. An image of a spinning gyroscope is projected on to and reflected off the surface of the mirrors and onto the ceiling. As the projection begins, the mirrors are triggered to vibrate and move, creating an agitated surface and image. All four projections are also synchronized, so that each time the artist spins a gyroscope into motion on the central screen, the image of the gyroscope projects off the mirrored surface and the mirrors begin to move.

Spoken Text:

Note: The text is spoken backwards phonetically from the end to the beginning.

I sit on my heels, feet firmly planted on the earth. I fall back on a bed of colorless sky, perhaps many skies, and with ears to hear I listen to a cloud of sound: A thousand celestial flies celebrate the death of my eyes. Illuminated by white darkness, objects roll over in complex ways – compromising their secret identities. I'm vaguely aware of an ominous shape, a sheer cliff, it could just as well be fungi protruding from a nearby tree – the one I fell out of – extending into an upside down sky. The back of space engulfs my collarbone and lifts me gently a hair's width above the ground – therein the dust sings.

I hit the ground. I wait for the earth to quake; starfish hands suck a grip from tiny crushed rocks. There I am eye-level with a dead lizard annihilated by invention. Its body made abstract, unrecognizable save for the eyes, glazed over with the last shutter of life, singled out by the giant movements of coincidence. I remember I'm blind. I speak instead...but cutting the corners

just creates more sides, more words and mere words warping into ecstatic sounds. Verbal cocoons ready for metamorphosis are about to burst.

I am backing into language itself. Words co-mingle and separate from the very thoughts that gave them life. I have the desire to be one with a single word and know it inside and out—to hear its infinite meaning reverberate among the rocks and trees. Flashlights puncture the dark and the fabric of life before me. Projecting the mind from one point to another gives way to the notion of going somewhere. The halfway point rears its ugly head and whispers, “The possibility of recursive destruction lingers on.”

I’m on the back of language holding on for dear life. The sky seems to hesitate before throwing the light of the day. The horizon absorbs loose vertices with meaningless coordinates looking for home. I’m walking towards a monumental spoon; my reflection refuses to flip. Returning to the semblance of a body, I have a strange anxiety. Capillaries of animal blood draw patterns over my skin. The last time this happened...never mind, never mind, NEVER MIND. Coincidences cast long shadows.

I can’t close my eyes. I’m terrified to blink for fear I’ll be blind when they open again. I will live that last image (always and forever in the past) for the remainder of life. Willing myself past the minutes and hours of burning, I look for a flower to ignite my retina.

I dream of waking with two chevron-shaped scars just above my knees. A feeling of something having been removed or implanted permeates my body. I sit on a miniature labyrinthine structure made of cotton and framed in beautiful wood. An Indian man sits across the way looking down with the same bewildered expression as I. His chest is hairless with a thin layer of perspiration. A single jaguar tooth sways from his neck like a metronome touching his sternum repeatedly.

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Exhibition History:

An example of this work was first exhibited in the exhibition "Yanomami: l'esprit de la forêt," Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France, May 13 – September 28, 2003; travelled to: Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, April 19 – June 20, 2004.

"Videofomes 2005: XXth Manifestation Internationale d'Art Vidéo et Médias," Galerie de l'art du temps, Clermont-Ferrand, France, March 14 – April 4, 2005.

"Dieux, mode d'emploi. L'expérience religieuse aujourd'hui," Musée de l'Europe, Brussels, Belgium, October 26, 2006 – May 2007; Centro Cultural de la Villa, Madrid, Spain, September 14, 2007 - January 6, 2008.

Notes:

This piece, *Impressions d'Afrique*, was titled after the 1910 text of the same name by Raymond Roussel, in which the title of Roussel's book bears no reference to the actual content. In the same spirit as Roussel's book, while the title seemingly describes an ethnographic work, the piece itself rejects - or contradicts - an anthropological view of the Yanomami.