A MANNER OF SPEAKING

AN INTERVIEW WITH GARY HILL

LUCINDA FURLONG

Although he is better known for his videotapes and installations, Gary Hill has also been prolific as a sculptor. Born in Santa Monica, Calif. in 1951, Hill moved east in 1969, and in the early '70s began making videotapes at Woodstock (N.Y.) Community Video. Like many artists in the late '60s and early '70s, Hill's earliest tapes reflected a highly experimental approach in which the capabilities of various electronic imaging tools were explored. For the most part, this kind of video was visual in orientation, and Hill's work was no exception, drawing as it did on conventions of abstract expressionist painting. Eventually dissatisfied with the limitations of such an approach, Hill began to make tapes that integrated the audio and video components so tightly that sound became almost visually apprehensible. This concern—in which the immaterial is somehow made physical—is central to all of Hill's video installations and tapes, and to some extent, is derived from his background as a sculptor.

In his most recent work, however, language and thought—rather than electronics—are the immaterial entities that are given form. Hill's tapes since 1980 are of two types: short, descriptive, often convoluted passages which are sparely "illustrated" by abstract black and white imagery; and extended monologues that directly address the viewer, to which video is rapidly edited to the beat of Hill's voice. Though they differ greatly in tone, these tapes reveal Hill's exacting—almost obsessive—weighing of image and language as carriers of meaning. At the same time, they are richly evocative pieces that variously resemble poems, stories, and soliloquies. Hill's *installations*, too, bespeak his interest in setting up dichotomies between sight and sound, language and image.

Hill has received production grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and PBS-station WNET in New York. In 1981, he was awarded a video artists' fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation. A 1982 recipient of the United States/Japan Exchange fellowship, Hill will travel to Japan next fall. This summer he will be teaching video at Bard College's recently established M.F.A. program in video.

The following interview was edited from transcripts of two meetings in Barrytown, N.Y. on Oct. 28, 1982 and Jan. 5, 1983. The interview incorporates Hill's additions and revisions.

—*Lucinda Furlong*

Lucinda Furlong: You worked in sculpture for a long time before you became interested in video.
Gary Hill: I got into sculpture in 1969, when I was 15, while I was still in high school in Redondo Beach. I had always been interested in art, and the brother of a friend of mine—Tony Parks—was a sculptor. He welded. I saw him working and was immediately drawn to the process. I had a summer job at a hamburger stand on the beach—a surfer's dream—so I saved money to buy welding tanks and started welding. Soon after that I was set up making sculpture in all my spare time, except for a little surfing. It's not that easy to give up.

Even though I had vague notions about the avant-garde, I really wasn't aware of American art. I was looking at Giacometti and Picasso. Picasso was a god to me.

I had lots of support from my friends and parents, in particular my high-school teacher, Mr. Pelster, who just let me do my thing. He was a big reason why I even finished high school. I didn't see much point in it, and almost quit. When I got out, I saw a pamphlet for the Art Students' League in Woodstock, N.Y., which described it as an idyllic artists' colony. I came out for a month on a scholarship, but I didn't do sculpture. I just drew and painted, made thousands of drawings. Then I went back to California to go to a community college—partially for a draft deferment—but decided I would get out *another* way, and college definitely was not for me. I quit in about two weeks.

My teacher at the League—Bruce Dorfman—had invited me to work independently with him. So I packed my belongings and hopped in a driveaway car. I experienced my first fall, first snow, first being cold-as-shit, first super struggle. I didn't stay in that situation very long, though. I got jobs. Actually, I've been pretty lucky in terms of being able to do my work with very little struggle.

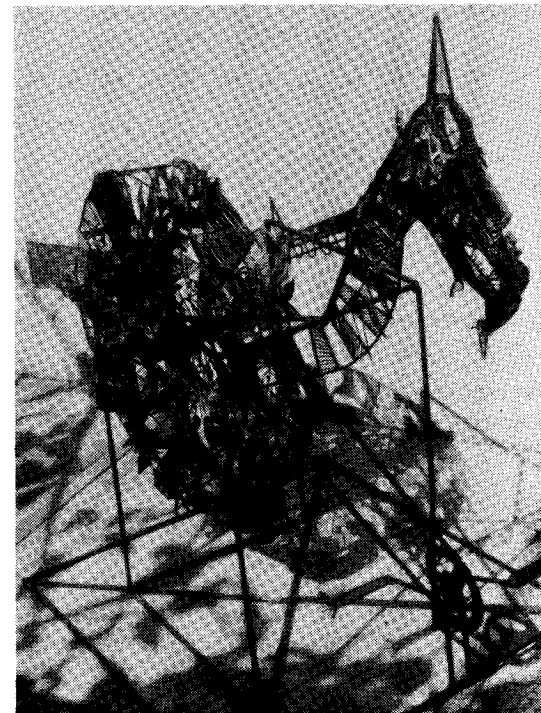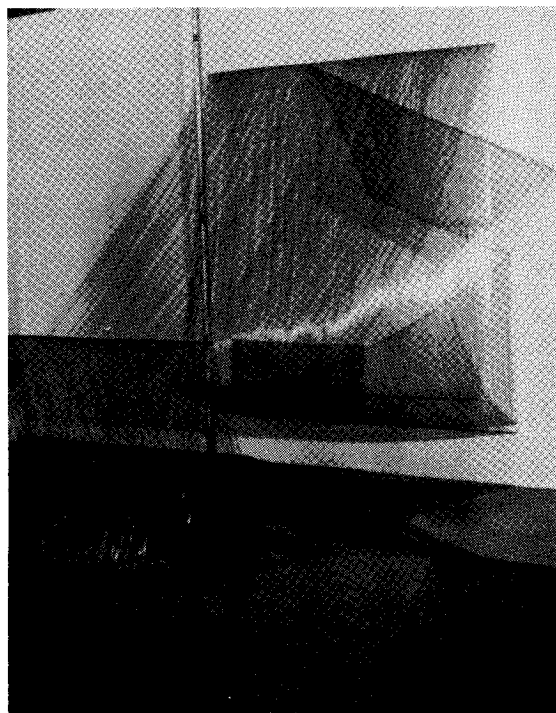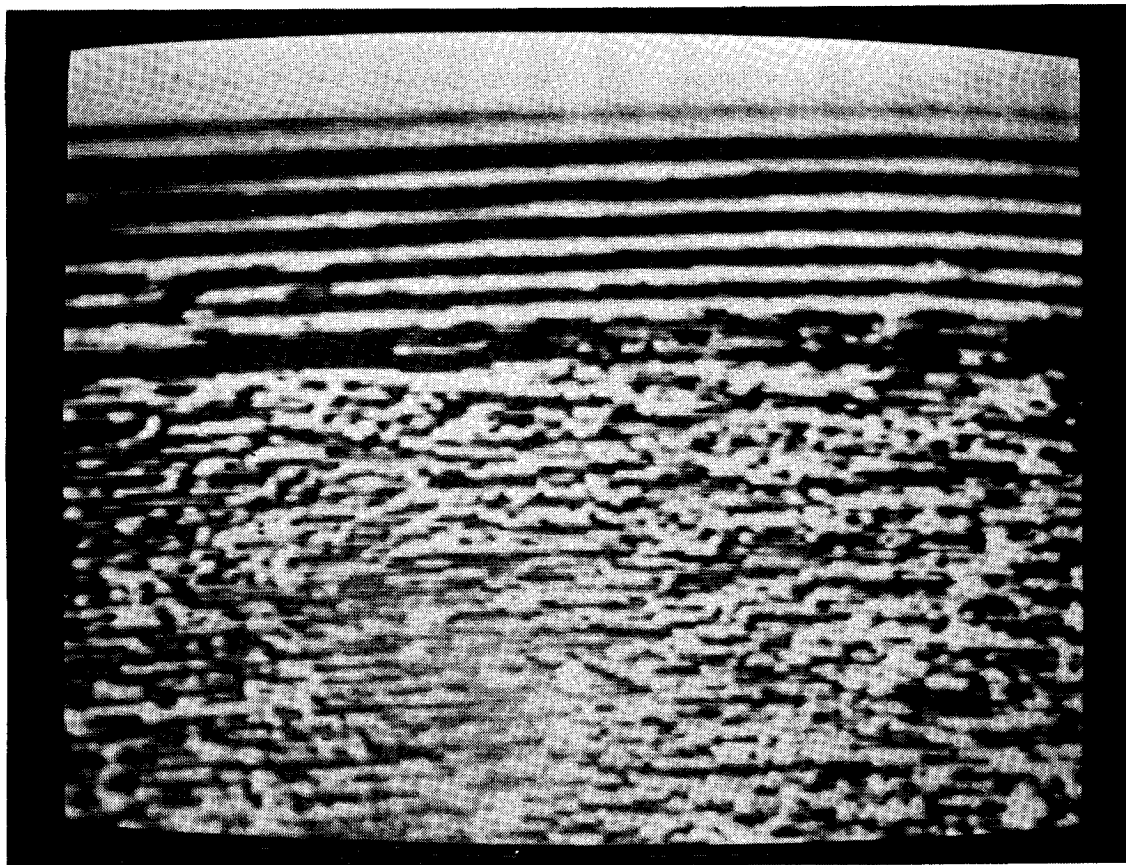About that time, I began to see art in New York, and the

thing that really overwhelmed me was a show at the Met called "1940-1970." It was the New York School. I was knocked out, and went through a lot of different attitudes in my own work. I still used the same materials, but I went from making cage-like structures with human forms—almost Bosch-like—to abstract biomorphic shapes mixed with geometric shapes. Pretty soon it was all geometric. I started using wire mesh, spray paint, welding armatures for shaped canvases which were incorporated into the work. I would make shapes, pile them into a corner, and then work with them later. It was like being my own factory. I went through a complete cycle of color. I slowly started to add color to the metal. I got very extreme using fluorescents, and later I toned down to metallics, essentially monochromatic, and finally back to the natural color of the material—copper-coated steel welding rods. I started improvising large constructions in the exhibition space, usually working off a wall and down to the floor into a kind of sprawl. I was working a lot with moiré patterns, and the sheer density of layers and shapes. Experimenting, burying myself in the process, working *all* the time. It wasn't intellectual. It was more like—how far can I take this material as a worker?
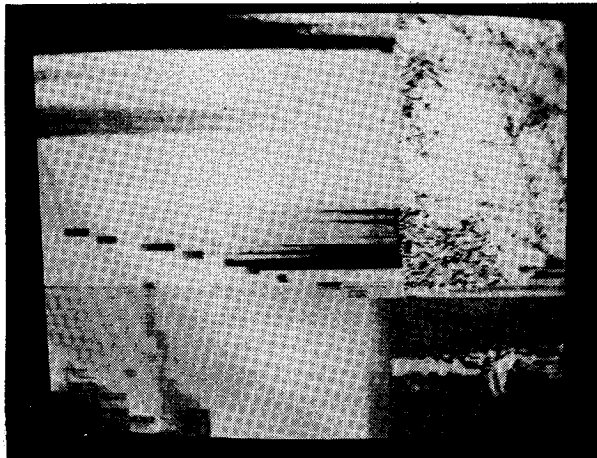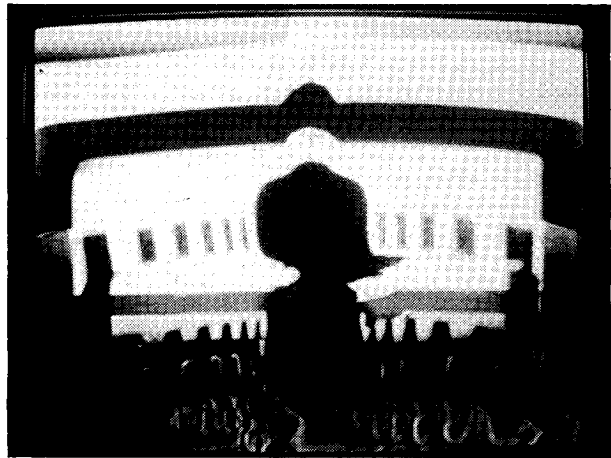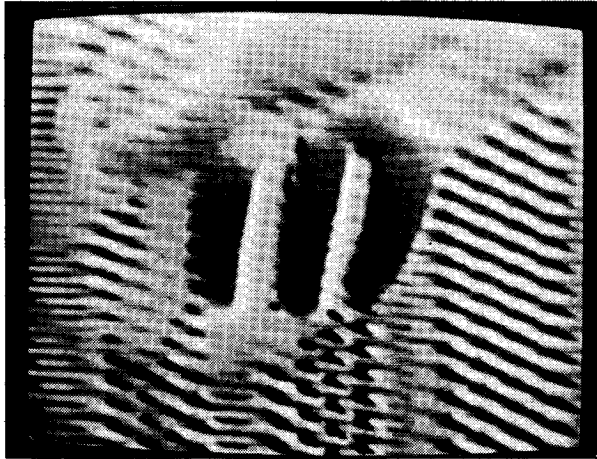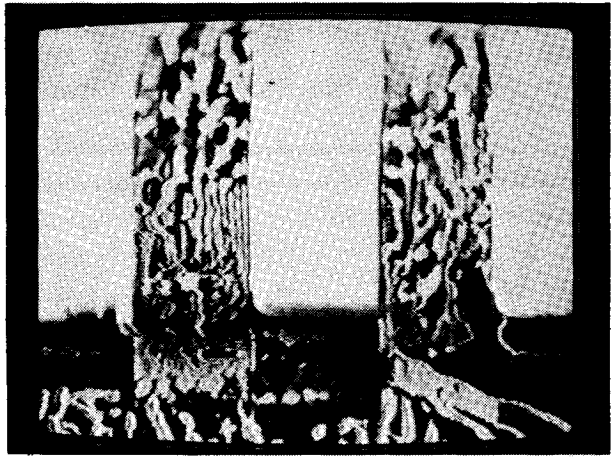**LF:** How did you get involved with video?

GH: I got into sound first. I discovered the sculptures generated interesting sounds, lots of different timbres. The overall texture seemed to mirror what I was seeing. I worked a lot with loops and multi-track audio tapes, which later became an integral part of the sculpture.

Getting into video isn't so smooth in retrospect. I think at the time I was getting frustrated with sculpture. I needed a change. I was drawn more and more into working with sound. Around that time, Woodstock Community Video had been established.' I walked up the stairs, knocked on the door, and said, "Gee, I'd like to try that. Can I take out a Portapak?" So I did a performance/environment piece with a friend, Jim Collins. For four or five nights in a row, we painted colored rectangles in the town of Woodstock—all over everything, stores, private property, public property. They slowly appeared,'til we got caught. I did a little—not really a documentary ... I just went out and talked about it with people, about what they thought. Should there be more colored rectangles? Should they go away? I really enjoyed the whole process, the experiential aspect of that little thing up there next to my eye. It seemed like there was a high energy connection to whatever I was looking at. I guess I became obsessed with that electronic buzz [laughs]. It was like a synapse with the rest of

Top: frame from *Rock City Road* (1974-75), a videotape by Gary Hill. Bottom left: *Untitled* (1973); bottom right: *Untitled* (1967), both sculptures by Hill.

LUCINDA FURLONG, a videomaker and video critic, is currently working on a history of image-processed video.

Frames from videotapes by Gary Hill. Top left: *Oriental Culture* (1975); top right: *Air Raid* (1974); bottom left: *Earth Pulse* (1975); bottom right: *Windows* (1978).

the world in a removed way, yet attached at the same time.

So I exchanged work at Woodstock Community Video—recording town board meetings, or whatever Ken Marsh [the former director] wanted—in exchange for using the equipment. Sooner or later I got a job there, because NYSCA [the New York State Council on the Arts], which had been heavily oriented toward community video, switched to the art route—in video at least.

LF: When was that?

GH: Around 1973-74. I was given a salaried position as the TV lab coordinator, helping people to use the equipment. They had a few devices—a broken genlock unit and a keyer—put away because they didn't really work. So I asked Ken Marsh if I could come in late at night and see what I could make them do.

I totally got into that. Everything half worked. The keyers would put out really harsh, broken edges. I don't know *what* the genlock put out, but there was always something. I had monitors all over this little studio—rescanning everything, starting and stopping the tape, manipulating it with my hands. Everything was open. It was a very free feeling. Discovering how to manipulate this material was amazing.

I can remember being totally naked, lying on the floor with a tripod over my head pointing a camera down on my mouth and another camera lying on my stomach. I would make kind of a primal sound with my breathing, raising the camera on my stomach so that it would reveal my head from the bottom view, making this sound. This was all somehow mixed through a special effects generator. In a manner of speaking, I was practically fucking the equipment. Some time around then I made *Rock City Road* [1974-75].

LF: Were you colorizing the tapes?

GH: There was no colorizer there at first, but Ken was friends with Eric Siegel, and he got a Siegel colorizer fairly soon. About the same time, I found out about the Experimental Television Center [now in Owego, N.Y.]. I didn't know about the equipment there; I just had heard that they had all these possibilities. With the tools I was using in Woodstock I saw an infinity of image-making possibilities, and they had a whole set that was much more sophisticated.... So I went up there and met Walter Wright [artist-in-residence at the Experimental Television Center from 1973-75], and became very good friends with him. We did some multi-media performances together called "Synergism" [1975-6], with Sara Cook, a dancer in Woodstock. Then we started fantasizing about having our own machines, but it didn't really happen until 1976. Ken thought that Woodstock Community Video was going to be a media-organization-in-residence at Bard College. Everyone involved moved over to Rhinebeck, but it fell through at the last minute. So for a short time Barbara Buckner, Steven Colpan, and me all lived together as artists-in-residence. There we were in this big house and we weren't using all the rooms. I made Ken a deal—I asked if I could have David Jones come down to build some equipment, and I would pay extra rent [Jones, a video tool designer and builder, is now affiliated with the Experimental Television Center].

LF: What did he build?

GH: First we put together four input amps and an output amplifier. The main thing Walter and I wanted was a multi-channel colorizer. Ironically enough, we never got to that. David had designed an analog-to-digital converter, which led to other things, culminating in a small frame buffer with a resolution of 64 by 64. One day I came home and David was gone. He had left the equipment on, and there was this digitally stored image on the screen of him smiling and waving. Suddenly colorizing seemed superficial, next to having access and control over the architecture of the frame in real time.

LF: Is that around the time you made *Windows*?

GH: No, the first tape I made using any digital processing was *Bathing* [1977], which was all done through the analog-to-digital converter. [In *Bathing*, a color tape shot in real time is intercut with stills rescanned with a color camera and digitized. Different placements of color and gray level are derived from rearranging the digital-to-analog output.] I'd record something, take the circuit board out, resolder the wires, and try it again until I got the images I wanted. It's just another way of working. It's like when I started at Woodstock Community Video: you mess around with the innards, where all this stuff really happens. It was a process of trial and error. Since I wasn't working so much with preconceived images, "control" wasn't a problem. There were always surprises—images that happened outside of control, things you wouldn't dream or think of.

LF: How did the converter change the image visually?

GH: Radically. It remaps the gray levels of an image and it also remaps the color you're mixing with it.

If it had any imposed framework, *Bathing* was centered around vague ideas of painting, taking traditional subject matter—a bather—and exploring it with the notion that any one frame could be a painting. *Windows* [1978] was the first tape in which I explored the idea of mixing analog and digital images together. I did it as a study for an installation that would have been similar in nature—dense, layered images, structured compositionally, but on several monitors. The images would pass between monitors, all under automated con-

Frame from *Sums and Differences* (1978).

trol. No tapes. I was still working intuitively, feeding off the images, seeing an image, liking it, working with it.

In those early tapes, though, I was distracted by the phenomena of electronics—several tapes were really part of that learning process. I'm glad I went through it—to have the knowledge and to feel free to do what I want within the medium. But if I never do something strictly imagistic again, it wouldn't matter. The knowledge of how things work is embedded now; it applies itself to whatever I'm doing.

LF: Those early tapes seem to fit what has become a genre of video art—image processing.

GH: I think there's a big problem even with the term. What does "image processing" refer to? Any tape that has processed an image electronically?

LF: It is too broad. It can mean video put through a time-base corrector or something that's been colorized.

GH: Yeah, but when someone says "image processing," what automatically comes to mind is a heavily mixed collage, like *Windows* [laughs], that I can't possibly decode—in fact I can't even see the point of using color. When you look at a painting, you can't always verbalize why the artist used a color or shape, but you feel some kind of visual tension, something getting at you. So much that I see that falls under "image processing" I can't even fathom.

When I first started working with machines, and exploring images—around the time I was working with Walter Wright—I remember him calling tapes *Processed Video I, Processed Video II,* etc. But process had no reference to machines. It had to do with the process of working, an improvisational situation in which devices could be patched in a number of different ways. Image processing suggests taking known or fixed images and processing them, sort of like food processing. I think for *some* people who are put in this category, it was an open method of working—dialoguing with the tools in search of images.

LF: Did others think of it this way, too?

GH: I don't know. The Vasulkas had to be among the first to experiment with the properties inherent to video. They were certainly more methodical than anyone else. Whatever machine they had, they expored it to the nth degree. When I think of their work chronologically, the development is razor-sharp, didactic, yet mysteriously powerful, especially Woody's. Steina, I think, became more idiosyncratic, and that's probably why they present themselves as two separate artists now. Between the two of them they've covered a lot of ground.

This experimental notion of dialoguing with tools has its tradition, though. It's like what filmmakers did. That's why—in the end—it was no longer interesting *for me*. OK, it's video, it's electronic, it functions differently, it has different properties—but it's the same approach that *photographers and filmmakers already applied.* I started to see it as a dead end. I wanted to dialogue with my mental processes, consciously, self-consciously.

LF: How important do you think it is for viewers to know the technical circumstances under which a tape was produced?

GH: It's an element, part of the information that's valuable. But I think that for anything to work, it has somehow to translate that. Some works do and some don't; all the explaining in the world and all the complex electronics and knowing the insides of the machine won't do anything. It's a difficult question. You can't sidestep the mechanics of the medium, but it's not what makes something. A whole different shift occurs in putting a work together—materializing it—and perceiving it. If a piece really works for you, your response goes beyond a
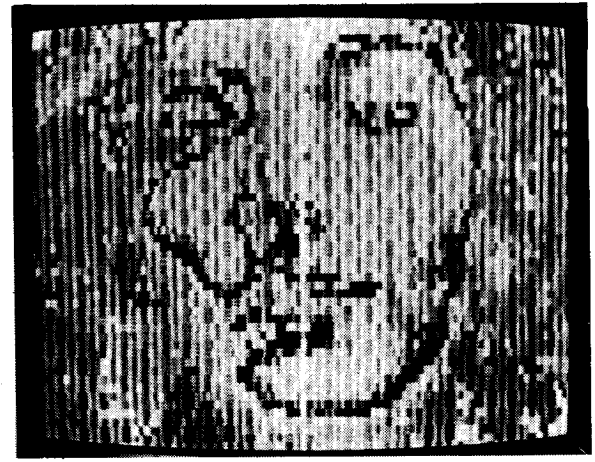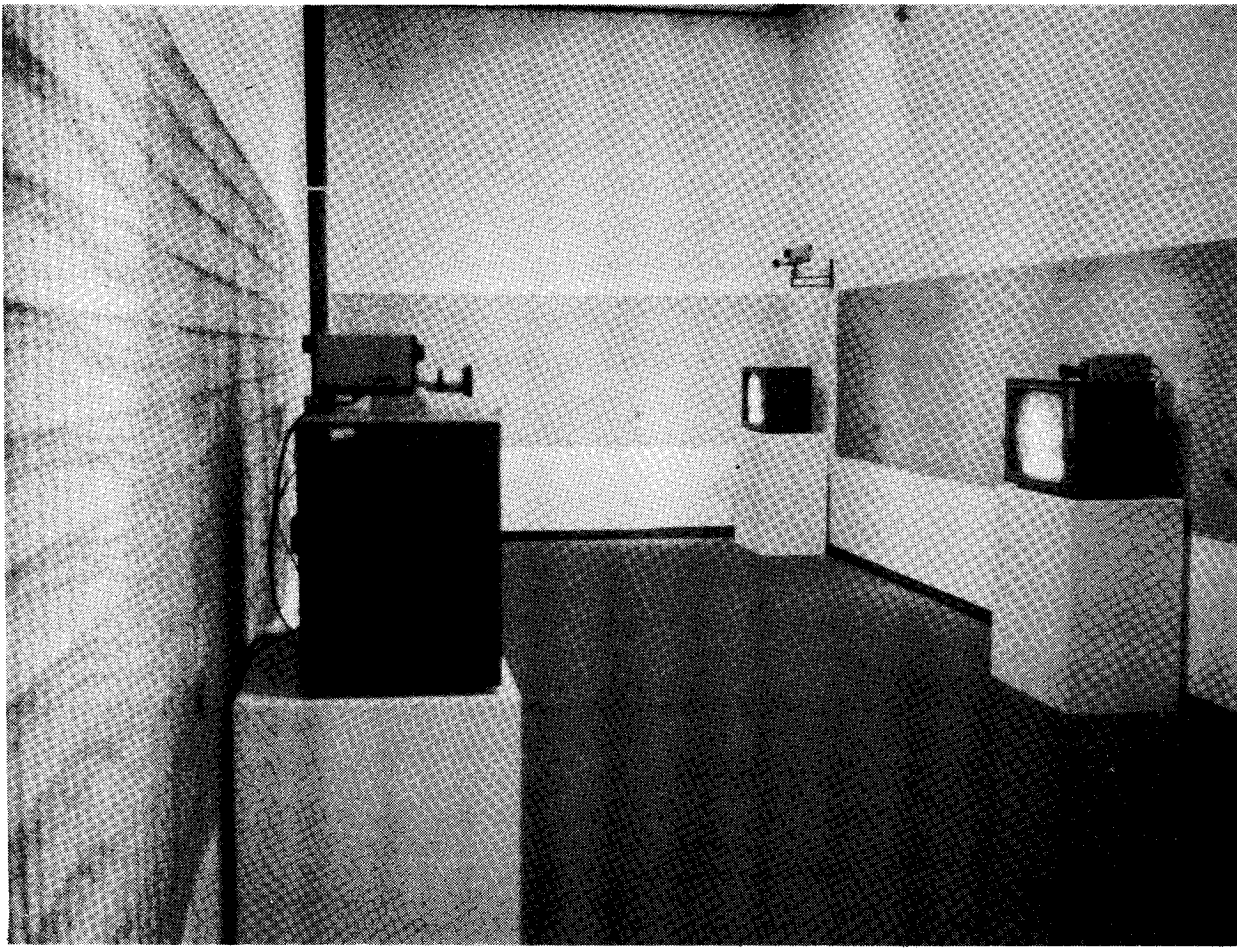
Installation view of *Mesh*, a 1979 installation at the Everson Museum, Syracuse, N.Y. Right: frames from individual channels.

question about how it was made, though it might come up later as extra information.

LF: I agree, but it's something I think a lot about when I look at tapes that are exhausting or investigating the properties of video. They stop at a certain point. I "get it"—I understand what that tape is "about," and it ends there. It seems that *Primary, Elements, Mouth Piece, Sums and Differences* [all 1978], and *Objects with Destinations* [1979] not only investigate the properties of video, but how video and audio function both separately and as an integrated unit. They illustrate well how the two can operate on one another.

GH: But how video and audio function separately and together *are* the properties of video. What I was getting at is something else, granted a little more difficult to talk about. I think *Sums and Differences* really works in terms of sound and image actually becoming one another. [In this tape, four separate video images of four musical instruments and their corresponding sounds are sequenced together at a continuously increasing rate. Normally, a video image is scanned on the video raster at 60 cycles per second. As the rates of change increase, starting at about one cycle per second, switching becomes faster than the time it takes to scan the complete image. This produces an effect whereby all four images appear simultaneously on the screen in four, 8, 12, etc. horizontal bars. When the switching rate is at higher frequencies, the different sounds, including the switching frequencies, become blurred into one, just as the different images become one image.] In that tape, audio and video can't be separated. There's a simultaneity of seeing and hearing.

If I were only investigating the "properties," I wouldn't have digitized the images, electronically generated the instrumental sounds, or used additional frequencies slightly out of phase with sync that slowly roll through the picture. These were also digitized, which created thin horizontal lines on the edges, that at certain times I associate with "strings." There's an overall energy constructed from a lot of subtle modulation. The question here becomes—Did I *add* things that weren't there, circumvent my own concept, seduce you, the viewer, into believing something that wasn't there? I think from this tape on a basic theme in my work became physicality. I no longer wanted to be behind the glass, playing jazz with my friends. I wanted to, you know, communicate—reach out and touch someone.

LF: *Picture Story* [1979] seems to represent a shift to how language is used to construct meaning. [In this tape, Hill's didactic voiceover describes a quality shared by four letters of the alphabet—H, I, O, and X. Whether they are written upside down or backwards, their readability, and meaning, is essentially unchanged. As we hear this description, rectangles containing words referring not only to video, but to narrative and pictorial representation, randomly collapse into horizontal and vertical lines and points, whereupon a hand traces them. At the end of the tape, the four letters are used to draw an image of an ox. The letters thus form not only the basis of a story, but a picture as well.]

GH: It really wasn't a shift. Language simply became fair game, too. What I discovered in doing that piece was that there are these invisible properties—properties of language—that I could work with, rather than essentially mechanical or electronic properties. Structurally, perhaps even organically, in some way linguistics seemed related to electronic phenomena. I remember calling it "electronic linguistics." I really began to think of the mind as a kind of muscle, and wanted to physicalize its workings in some way. But I don't feel there was a jump from working with the elements of video to a plateau where I said, "Gee, I'm working with ideas now." I don't have any hard-and-fast rules about how I work.

LF: I'm not trying to impose any final categories on the development of your work, but as an observer of your tapes, I think that while your working process may have been the same, the end result isn't.

GH: In terms of development, *Ring Modulation* [1978] was just as pivotal as *Picture Story*. [In *Ring Modulation*, the video screen is divided into three sections. In the bottom portion, there's a close-up of hands holding a welding rod, attempting to bend it into a circle. As this happens, Hill's mouth vocalizes an "Ah" sound, which becomes distorted by the effort of bending the rod. In the upper portion of the screen, one box contains a full image of Hill bending the rod. The other contains a wavering circular image from an oscilloscope, generated by mixing Hill's unsteady voice with a steady electronic signal. If, instead of the voice, the second sound was a cosine of the first electronic signal, a circle would be produced.]

In *Ring Modulation*, there's a paradoxical struggle: trying to sculpt physical material into a circle and simultaneously trying to form a circle electronically with non-physical material—waveforms. It's impossible to do. I did it as a kind of alchemical ritual, trying to change this "material." In this light, the copper coating of the welding rod took on other meanings in relation to the phosphorus green of the oscilloscope. When copper rusts, it turns green. *Ring Modulation* was, again, returning to working more physically, using sculptural concerns, getting back to things I had left hanging.

The installation *Mesh*, which I worked on during the same period, had similar concerns—trying to merge physical material and concepts into some sort of unifying tactile resonance. It was a fairly complex installation, in some ways a culmination of burying myself in circuit building. [In the installation, layers of wire mesh were mounted on walls; each layer contained one oscillator which generated a certain pitch depending on the size of the mesh. The pitch generated would pan between four speakers mounted on each layer of mesh. Hill used small (3-in.) speakers to give a metallic quality to the sound and to give the effect of the sound being "woven" into the mesh. Upon entering the space, the viewer-participant activated the piece, became "meshed" into it when a camera

Top row: frames from *Picture Story* (1979, photo: Lucinda Furlong). Bottom row: Sequence from *Ring Modulation* (1978).
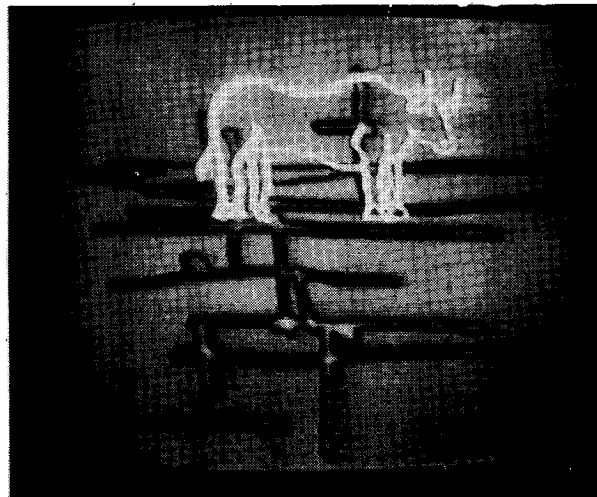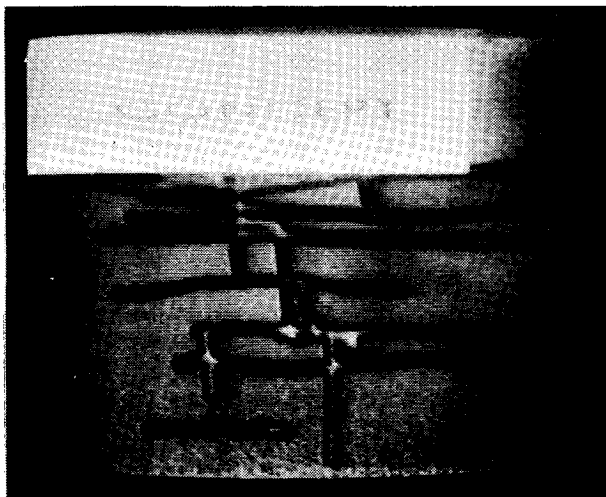
AROUND AND ABOUT (1980), scored frames from the opening sequence

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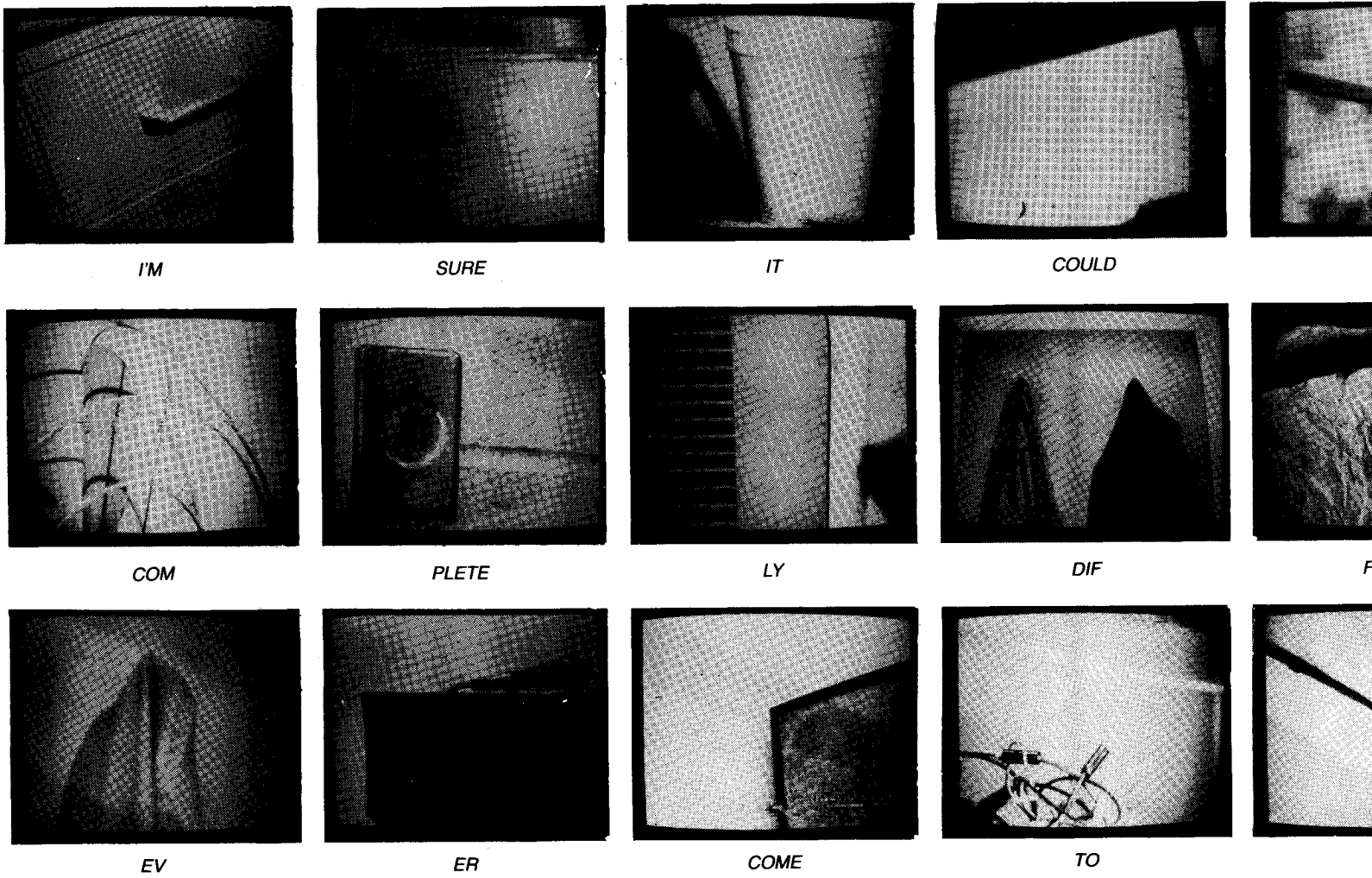
picked up their image. This image was digitally encoded, producing a grid effect, and was then displayed on the first of four monitors. Each person who entered the space generated a new image, which, when, displayed on monitor one, cycled the previous image to monitor two, and so on.]

I didn't use discrete multiple channels in that piece—or *Primarily Speaking* and even *Glass Onion.* It's all dynamically controlled and inter-related, so that you're taking information and moving it in space, which is really interesting. I want to take this idea a lot further.

LF: You mean a kind of layering? I'm remembering *Soundings* [1979], where you put sand on an audio speaker, and it vibrates as the sound comes through. Then you go through variations—water, burning the speaker.

GH: I meant taking one or more images from cameras or tape and directing them out into different spaces, different monitors. Moving images in space. The work came about because I'd used a lot of mesh in my sculpture, and was interested in overlapping things to make a third element or pattern. Literally, the title refers not only to the material—the mesh—but compressing sound and image together. What was different about both *Mesh* and *Ring Modulation* was not only this preoccupation with physicality, but that an underlying concept was becoming increasingly more important. In the earlier works, there was much more of a visual orientation.

LF: Was *Mesh* your first video installation?

GH: Actually, the first was *Hole in the Wall,* done in 1974 at the Woodstock Art Association. Unfortunately, the only remaining element of the piece—a tape—was destroyed by accident. You have to see it in light of the political-social context of the Woodstock Art Association, where there's an old guard, and there are always new people around who want to get in. When I was involved with it, it was always a hotbed of controversy.

I set up a camera and zoomed in on a wall, framing an area approximately actual size when displayed on a 23-in. monitor. On the video screen, you saw a hand with a ruler drawing a frame on the edge of the screen. A matte knife entered the frame, cut the muslin surface on the wall, and then various tools were used to cut through a number of layers—plasterboard, fiberglass, etc.—to the wall outside. At one point, we reached structural beams. The camera zoomed in and framed a smaller frame. Then that was cut through to the outside. At the opening, a monitor was fitted into the hole, and played back the tape performing the action. When the camera zoomed in, I took the big monitor out, put a smaller one in, and then at the end of the tape, when you see outdoors, I took the monitor away.

Besides the fighting between the older, established artists and the younger ones trying to break into the scene, the Woodstock Art Association didn't consider video an art form. It wasn't until the mid-'70s that they accepted photography! So the political implications are obvious, and formally the

piece contained reverberations of drawing, painting, sculpture, video, and conceptual art. What made it even more interesting at the time was that an art critic, Irwin Touster, mentioned the piece in the local paper, *The Woodstock Times,* with a statement like "Hill's *Hole* is a monumental act of hostility in the guise of art." I sent a letter to the editor which simply read: "Re: Irwin Touster's review ... a rebuttal," with a large photograph, taken in the gallery, of my ass sticking through the hole.

So that was my first installation.

LF: Getting back to how your work changed, *Around and About* seems like a big leap.

GH: It was. I was talking in the first person directly to the viewer. When I was making *Windows,* for example, I never dreamed—it was the farthest thing from my mind—that I would use language. Now language seems like it will never go away. It's like a monkey on my back.

In the summer of 1979, I just started writing. I wrote the texts that ended up in *Equal Time* [the tape was done in 1979; an installation of the same title was shown at the Long Beach Museum of Art in March 1982], *Picture Story,* and a few of the *Videograms* texts. In the first month of 1980, I made *Processual Video, Black/White/Text,* and then, shortly after, I made *Around and About.* That was a very prolific time for me.

LF: Someone told me *Around and About* came from your frustration with your class at the State University of New York at Buffalo—that you couldn't communicate with the students.

GH: That's not true. I had to move suddenly, and I was also going through some heavy changes in a relationship. I had to move all my things, my studio, into my office at SUNY. Those two things coinciding put me on the edge. I had a lot of anxiety, and was paralyzed in terms of what to do. I sat down and wrote the text very quickly, as if I were talking out loud. I think the idea of editing the images to the syllables of my speech came out of this frustrating situation. It was almost as if I wanted to abuse the images, push them around, manipulate them with words. Maybe I was trying to expand this tiny little space, persuade the woman I lived with of the art-life paradox in plain English. On both accounts, I failed. I did the whole thing in my office, and each shot was set up and edited as I went along.

LF: So you wrote the text, laid it down as an audio track, and then plugged in images as you were shooting?

GH: Right. Even the concrete wall—where there's one layer of wall over another? I had two cameras. I would set up the matte, then zoom in the camera, then set it up again for each edit. And I edited it by hand. I didn't use a controller.

LF: That's amazing, because it looks like you used sophisticated equipment.

GH: People ask me if I used a Quantel. It's great to tell people how it actually was made—especially students—because then they don't feel intimidated about equipment.

The thing about *Around and About* is that I was able to use the image and the text as a single unit. Suddenly I began to
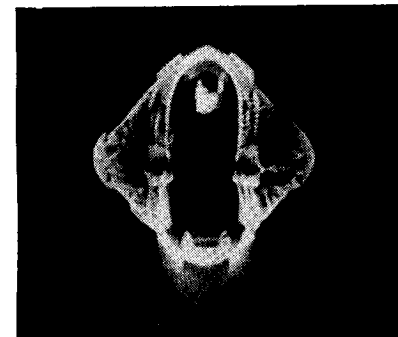

Photo: Richard Gummere.
#70

SPACE WAS DEFINED BY CENTRIFUGAL LIGHT. A HOL BARELY PERCEPTIBLE DISTANCES FROM THE CIRCUL OUSLY KEEPING THE RELATIONSHIP CONSTANT. GL SCRAPING THE LIGHT. THE PIERCING SOUND IT CAUS ENCLOSURE OF LIGHT ALLOWING THE DISCS TO GLIN THE DISCS OUT THROUGH THE OPEN SHAPES CREATE TRACTED DISCS USED FOR EXTERNALISM WERE EXCI MOTION.

#33

ASKED TO KISS, COULDN'T ENGAGE, TO OPEN MOUTI LIPS, AN AMPHIBIAN, DIRECTED BY EVOLUTION TO LIVE EXPOSING AN INTERNAL NETWORK WHERE THE GUTS

think about how far the images could get from what I was saying and still have the tape work. The images could be whatever I had at hand. Of course, the tape was also determined by the frustration of being in this closed space—stuff was everywhere. I couldn't have done anything else anyway.

LF: There seem to be two different strains in your most recent tapes. While they all are made from texts with non-synchronous video, some—like *Around and About* and *Primarily Speaking* [1981-83]—make use of direct address. You establish an I/you relationship, and it's very confrontational. On the other hand, *Videograms* and *Processual Video* [1980] are much slower, descriptive, and you use the third person.

GH: There's an urgency in *Around and About* and *Primarily Speaking,* whereas the others are much more timeless, almost about beauty. *Videograms* and *Processual Video* are much more object-oriented—"Here, look at this." There's a relationship between these words and this image.

LF: When you make the *Videograms,* do you write the text first, and then sit down and figure out images? [In *Videograms,* abstract black and white images undergo subtle transformations as Hill recites short passages whose simplicity and compression resemble Haiku poetry. Because the pas-

	BASS DRUM	CYMBAL				HAND CL/
(voiceover)	THIS	THAT	AND	THE	OTHER	
(character-generated text)						

HAPPENSTANCE (work in progress, scored excerpt)

VE	GONE	A	NO	THER	WAY
ENT	WAY	A	WAY	THAT	HAS
ND	BUT	THAT'S	A	GIV	EN
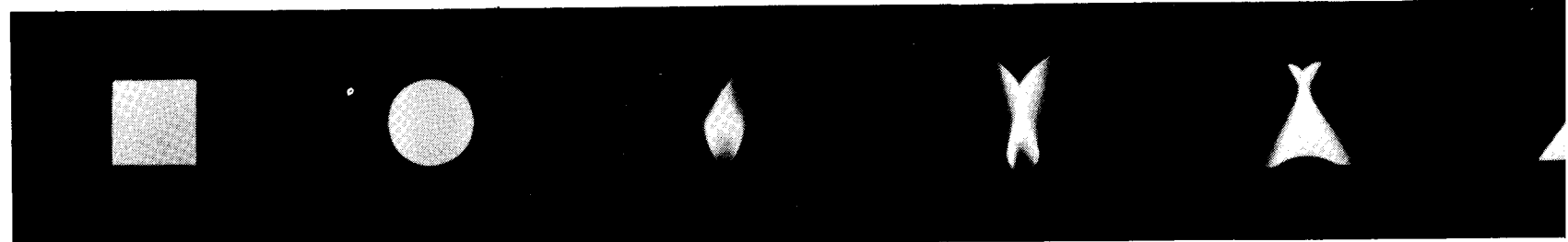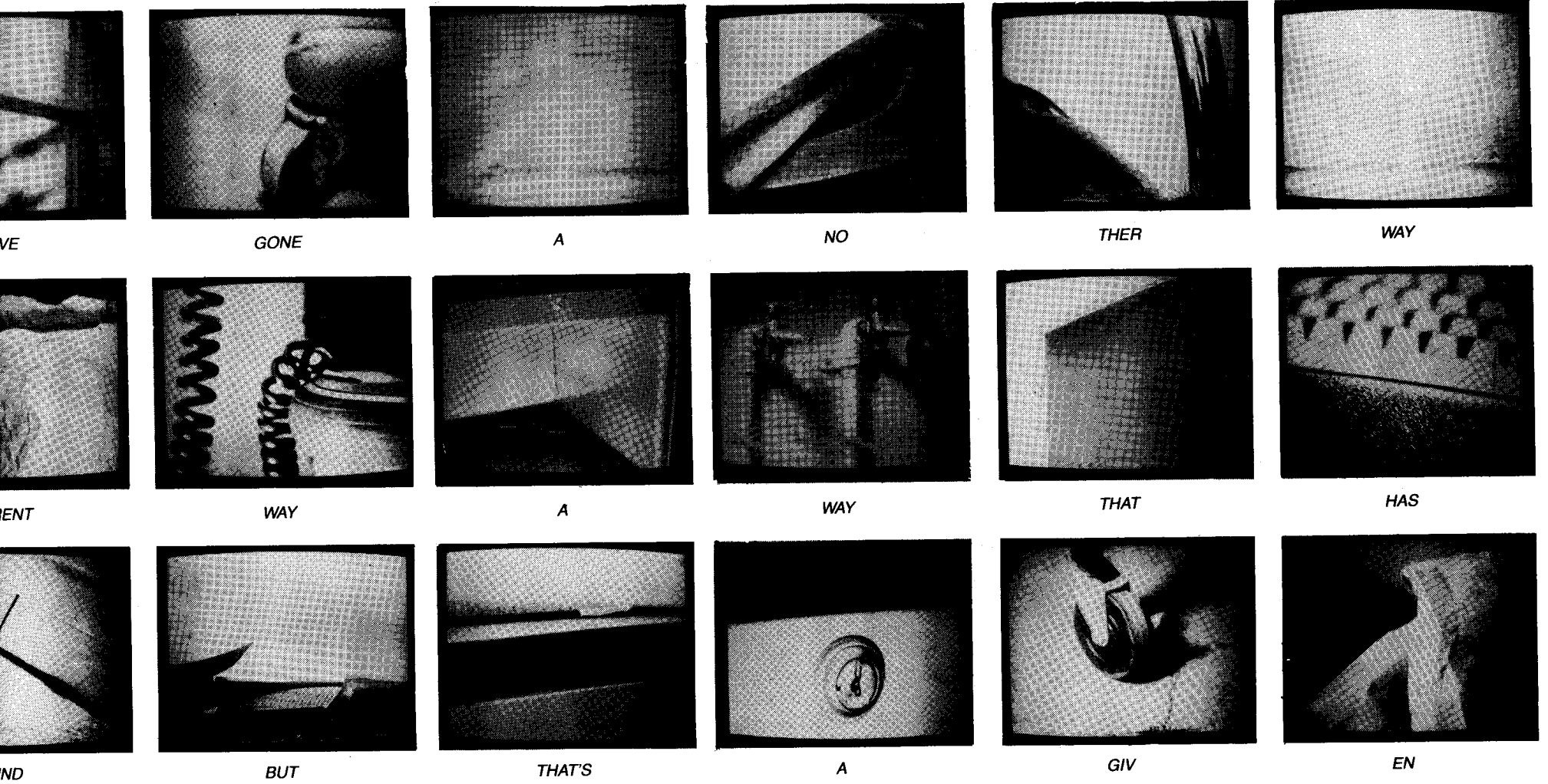
**:OGRAMS (1980-1981),
t excerpts**

*CONVERSATIONALIST PRESSED FOR THE FACTS. CATAS-
HE WAS INEVITABLE. A PRIMAL SOUND HERMETICALLY SEAL-
ITS SKULL WAS MASKED BY CHOREOGRAPHIES AT PLAY BE-
N BRAIN AND TONGUE. THE LINGUIST EXPERIENCED A SEP-
ION OF PRESENT TENSE AND LOST ALL MOTOR SKILLS, LAPS-
NTO NONSENSE. THE SOUND RUSHING FROM ITS MOUTH DU-
TED THAT OF A STREAM NEARING A LARGE BODY OF WATER.*

*OW COLUMN ROTATED HORIZONTALLY WITHIN. ITS ENDS, AT
DEFINED PARAMETER, EXTENDED AND RECEDED CONTINU-
S DISCS, MENTAL CONDENSATION, FORMED ON THE ENDS
TRANSLATED EXACTNESS. THE CUT GLASS REFRACTED THE
SE THE EXTERNAL. THE ROTATION OF THE COLUMN FORCED
BY THEIR REFRACTIONS, RE-ENCLOSING THE SPACE. THE EX-
NGED FOR INFORMATION NEEDED TO KEEP THE COLUMN IN*

*WAS A DECISION TOO OVERBEARING FOR THE MOMENT. THE
N THE FACE. EACH KISS SLICING ITS BELLY OPEN, GUTTING IT,
F A PARTNERS AMPHIBIAN ARE DEVOURED.*

sages are variously concrete and abstract, descriptive and metaphoric, the images alternately become illustrations and counterpoints.]

GH: So far, the texts have been written beforehand. However, when I actually combine them with the video, a phrase or a word or the ordering might change here or there. Little details might change, but in essence, the text is written beforehand.

LF: What do you use to produce the abstract images in *Videograms*?

GH: A Rutt/Etra Scan Processor. [The Rutt/Etra, invented by Steve Rutt and Bill Etra in the early 1970s, allows one to manipulate the video image or raster. According to "The Electronic Image," an unpublished paper by the Experimental Television Center, Owego, N.Y., the raster can be described as the visible rectangle of light emanating from a cathode ray tube, and is normally constructed by a beam of electrons focused to a fine point. This point is moved around in an orderly and continuous manner—horizontally from left to right and vertically from top to bottom—so that the raster, or image, is described. The rate at which the raster is drawn is determined by a timing pulse called sync. The Rutt/Etra allows one to manipulate sync signals, providing an enormous amount of flexibility in altering a video input, or in generating new images by using other inputs, such as waveforms. The images produced are always black and white, and cannot be recorded directly; they must be recorded by pointing a camera at the display monitor.]

The Rutt/Etra is interesting. Conceptually a lot more is possible on it than with commercial digital effects. It's a powerful machine, and relatively unexplored. It probably never will be because it's hard to find access to them, and people tend to bypass black and white like it's—well, you know, black and white is black and white, man, it's not color. And you have to re-scan it. And that's primitive. It's not state-of-the-art.

LF: What's nice about the *Videograms* is that they're so spare.

GH: Some of the *Videograms* are more successful than others. Some are too literal, others I'll probably redo because the image isn't quite right. I'm working on a new work, *Happenstance*, which has similarities to *Videograms*, but it's not a series. It's continuous, and it uses sound and character-generated text in addition to the voiceover. The images are more developed, also.

LF: Something more like *Processual Video?* [In *Processual Video*, a single white line revolves clockwise in the center of the monitor. Its movement is synchronized to a text read by Hill, so that the mental images conjured up by the text are often reinforced by the location of the line. For instance, when a line is in a horizontal or vertical position, there are references to surfing and skiing, the ocean and mountains. Into these visually suggestive sentences, Hill interweaves seemingly random, but highly self-conscious musings, about the text and the line.]

GH: Actually, I did a performance out of *Processual Video* for the "Video Viewpoints" series at the Museum of Modern Art. In fact, the piece was written as my lecture for the series.

LF: How did it work?

GH: There was a large monitor facing the audience, and the text was scored on paper. I watched a small monitor so I knew approximately where the bar was in relation to what I was reading. In different readings, there would be slight variations, but it all remained pretty close to the score. In that tape, there are references to me, references to the audience sitting in chairs, but it's more allegorical than *Around and About* and *Primarily Speaking*. In those tapes, the address is acutely direct. *Primarily Speaking* is probably the most complex work I've done. It still isn't finished. Its complexity gets subverted by the use of idiomatic expressions. I still haven't unwound it because it exists on so many different levels.

LF: In *Primarily Speaking*, why did you use color bars as a background for the two boxes? Was it a reference to broadcast television? [In the single-channel piece, the screen is divided into two boxes which are framed top and bottom by vertical bars of color—a standard test pattern for adjusting the color video signal. Inside the boxes, two sets of images are rapidly edited—like *Around and About*—to the syllables of the text, which is constructed entirely from idiomatic expressions.]

GH: It's a general reference, an idiom of television. To me, it becomes a kind of social frame. The tape has a very superficial layer to it, which I love, in that the whole thing is constructed from idioms. It's curious, when someone says something using an idiomatic expression, it's taken with a grain of salt [laughs]. And yet, idioms are the heart of the matter, expressions that originally put a thought or feeling in a nutshell [laughs]. I really constructed the text. It wasn't like writing. When I was doing the text, I thought of Matisse's cut-outs, these re-energized primal shapes. Idioms seem like language cut-outs. Once you get inside of idioms, they're incredibly rich. Television is the most advanced communication system and yet it's one big idiom. Everything that's spewed out is an idiom—the corporate world takes on how life should be.

LF: Did you divide the screen into two boxes to designate one box as the speaker and the other as the viewer?

GH: Not specifically, but to set up the idea of oscillating relationships.

LF: You establish some very literal connections between the images and what your voice is saying in that tape. For example, when you say, "So," an image of a pig flashes by; when you say "Listen," there's a conch shell. But the tape doesn't operate just on that level. Most of the word-image connections are impossible to pin down, and I found myself reading into the tape, trying to figure out what the nonliteral connections meant. At one point, I was convinced that the tape was a comment on industrial pollution, because there were all these images of pipes and industrial waste, and you say: "They've done it again." At another point, I thought you were talking about the inability of two people to communicate. Finally, I felt that that was what the tape was designed to do—bring me to this process of making associations. But I also felt that it didn't matter if the associations I was making were the "right" ones, because there really could be no "correct" interpretation. On the one hand, the tape seemed extremely tight and structured, and on the other, the relationships were completely ambiguous.

GH: All those things are there, they exist, a lot are intentional. But then again, all those things—the images, the puns—are to me distractions from the heart of the work, which is the text. Consequently, *Primarily Speaking*. It's like a spear, and everything else is outside that. At the same time, it's an internal dialogue and a monologue addressing someone: who is talking to whom? There's a section where the images are just black and white rectangles—I thought of this process as standing in front of a mirror for a long time, of the way you can separate the reflection from yourself and kind of have a conversation.

When you're trying to focus an idea, you're always in the context of everything else. All the external distractions are still going to exist, and they're going to affect that honed-in moment you're having. But the text is the heart of it. Language

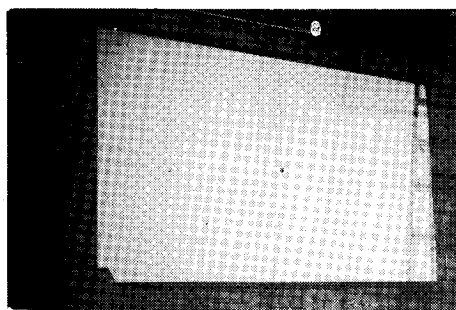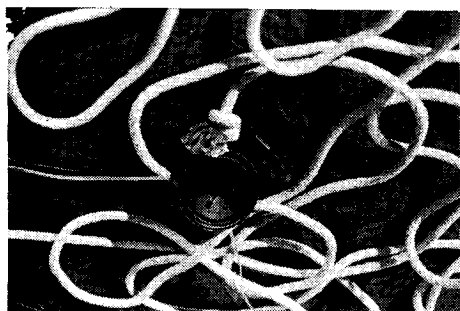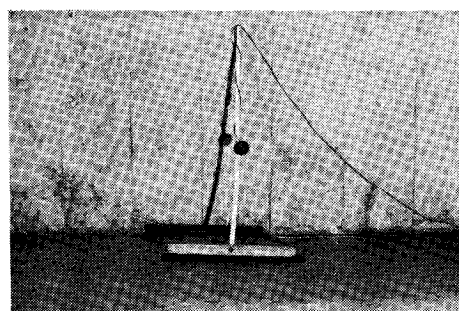| VELECTRONICS →		DRUM ENSEMBLE					→ ELECTRONIC INSTRUMENTATION	ORGAN CHORDS	
ING	THINGS	THINGS	ARE	GOING	TO	HAPPEN	HAPPENSTANCE	STANDING	IN THE
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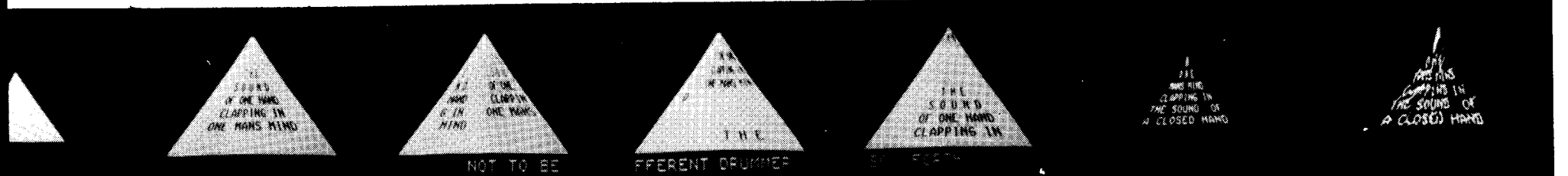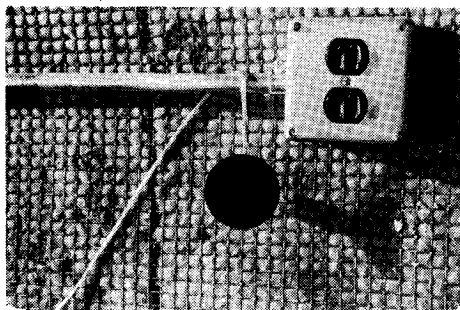
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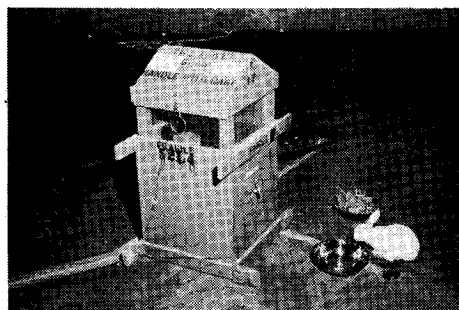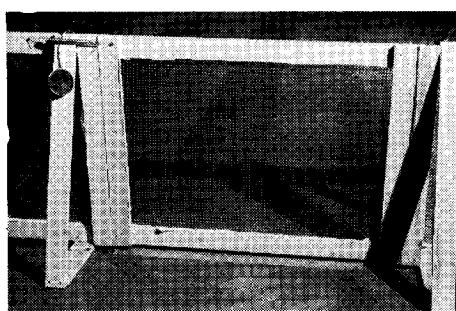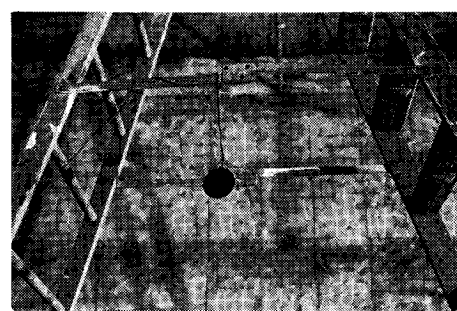

HOUSE

SCREEN

DOLLY

ROPE

BROOM

GATE

LADDER

can be this incredibly forceful material—there's something about it where if you can strip away its history, get to the materiality of it, it can rip into you like claws, whereas images sometimes just slide off the edge of your mind, as if you were looking out a car window.

LF: Well, one always has an ongoing mental dialogue. One thing you seem to be doing to make that apparent is editing the video to the pace of the audio. The video becomes subservient. The images pass by faster than you can assimilate them.

GH: That gives a contradictory feeling. It makes the text-image construct, the syntax, the way it's coming at you, seem very purposeful. They're one unit, yet so much of the time they're disparate; they're pulled apart. The video is forcing associations—you could easily wander off—but the text continues straight ahead, getting larger than life, almost. At certain times, I try to second guess the viewer, fill in their mind with their own thoughts.

LF: Are the images completely arbitrary then?

GH: Yes and no. If I went out and did that tape right now, I could take the text, erase all the images, and put in a whole new set. The work would be archetypically the same; it would be a variation on a theme.

LF: In *Primarily Speaking,* the rapidly edited images in the boxes are interrupted a number of times by short breaks or interludes in which your voice says or sings a puzzling rhyme. One of them is "Time on our hands is blood on our hands." Your voice sounds like it's been processed—it has a very eerie tone, especially in the break where you have two dangling telephones.

GH: It's vocoded speech [a Vocoder breaks down an audio input into 16 different frequency bands, then imposes those frequencies onto another carrier frequency]. I was trying to come up with almost idiomatic, harmonic sounds analogous to what's being said. The telephone is a rather pessimistic reference to communication. I remember that when I shot it I wanted the dangling phone to turn around so that the ITT on it could be read. The receiver hanging there conjures up, to me, images of something that happened to someone while they were on the telephone, or they simply left, or the telephone's dead.

LF: What about the rhyme that goes with it?

GH: In that section, I say: "Blue, green, red, cyan, magenta, yellow, food, feed, fed, I have the time of dayglow." It's a way of saying that television feeds us constantly. It even gives us the time of day. In the section, "Time on our hands is blood on our hands," when the two GASLAND signs appear, that's probably the most synchronous segment in the tape. First of all, you have the rhyme, the political implications of blood and gas. Then you have the actual sign being in language—words—on a sign that's designed to look like a TV set, which coincides with the frame of the monitor TV.

LF: I don't know that I would have made those connections, but I read them as general references to communication. You also made an installation from *Primarily Speaking,* and there the interludes work very differently. [In the installation, two walls of four monitors face one another, forming a corridor about the width of outstretched arms. The images which appear inside the two boxes in the single channel tape are two separate tapes in the installation: one rectangle fills up the entire screen. On one end of each side of the corridor, the two videotapes are played on monitors facing each other. On the other three monitors are solid fields of color: one set of monitors displays red, green, blue; the other set displays cyan, magenta, and yellow. Each wall of monitors alternately functions as a "speaking" wall, in that the text emanates from the

speakers on that side only. As in the tape, the video is edited to each syllable, as if Hill's voice were activating the movement of the images. The other wall functions as a "listening" wall, in that no sound emanates from its audio speakers while the other wall is "speaking." The video on the "listening" wall is also activated by the audio, but rather than being edited to the beat of every syllable, the image actually rotates from one monitor to the next at a pace slower than the rapid video edits of the "speaking" wall. During the breaks, the images on all the monitors are rapidly sequenced, so that they ripple up and down the bank of monitors in a fixed relationship to one another.]
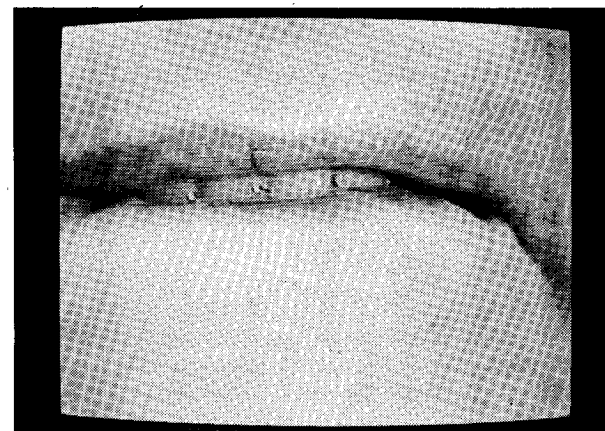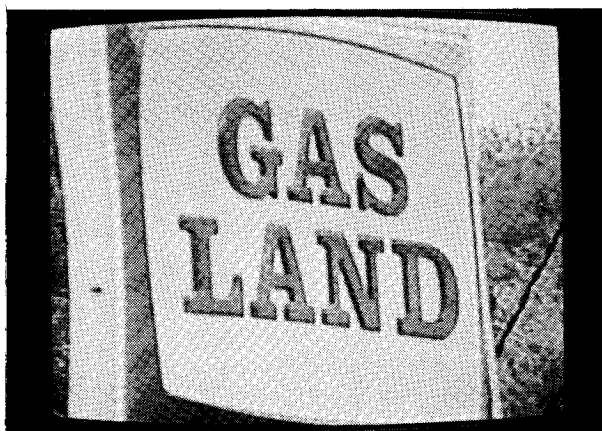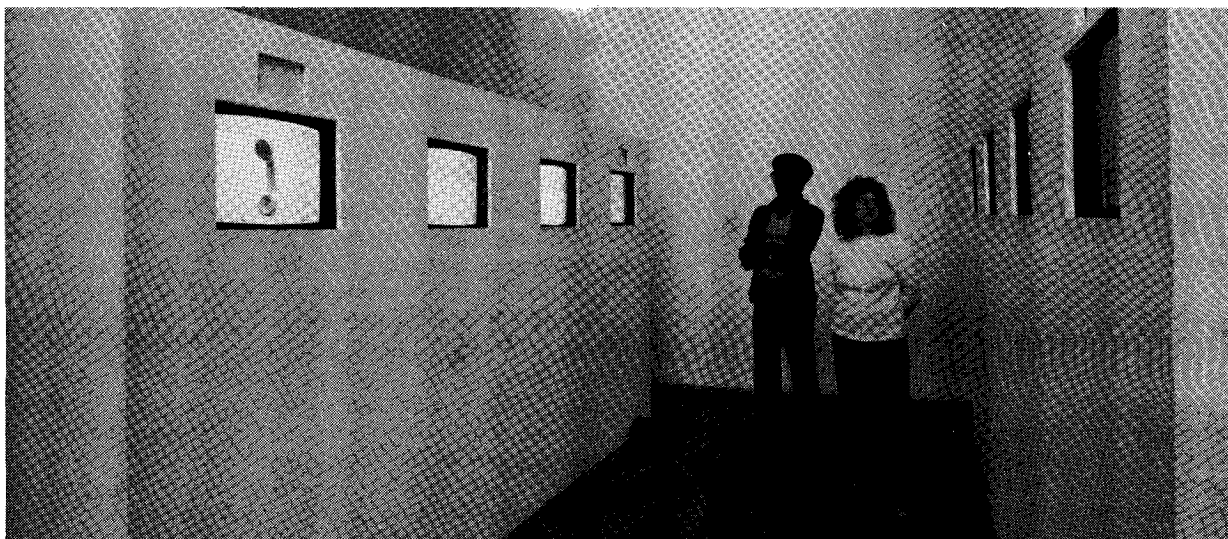
How do you think the tape differs from the installation in terms of how each is experienced?

GH: The tape is very linear. You sit in front of it; it locks you in—your eyes fix on two squares that are almost like horse blinders, spatially. The installation expands the idea of the images being an element that distracts from the text. In the tape, you're on the outside—watching. In the installation, you're inside. It's as if the two walls are speaking to each other; there's much more of a sense not only of talking back and forth, but on the images relating back and forth. You're constantly looking over your shoulder, walking up and down in a thoroughfare of images. The movement constantly distracts. The solid fields of color soften this, wash the space in a kind of sensuality, another distraction.

LF: Do you have a preference for installations over tapes?

GH: Installations. I like the complexity of working spatially, combining materials and media in different ways. I generally have ambiguous feelings about the experience of watching tapes on television.

LF: You mean sitting in a gallery and watching tapes?

GH: Yes, even more so with seeing video work on television. But it's more that the tape, the images, don't have a surface. They're encased behind glass. Yet at the same time, I really like the quality of emitted light.

LF: In the pieces that exist both as tapes and installations,

Above: installation view of *Primarily Speaking* at the Kitchen, October 1981. (Photo: Richard Gummere.) Bottom: frames from single channels of the installation.

you always change them in the process of going from one to the other, don't you?

GH: Definitely. A lot of times, in the middle of making a tape, I'll be thinking of an installation. It's not an afterthought. Some people think that one compromises the other, but for me, it's all raw material, even the texts. It's not pristine—this text belongs to this tape, and anything that's done outside of its original context compromises it.

LF: It really depends on how it's realized as an installation or as a tape. Some people show tapes from installations as unaltered tapes, and it often doesn't translate.

GH: Yeah. For instance, there isn't a *Mesh* tape, and there's not a *War Zone* [a 1980 installation at Media Study, Buffalo, N.Y.] tape, although I do have a tape documenting it. But I don't show it as a "tape."

ORGAN

THICK OF THINGS   LIKE   STICKS   IN   THE   MUD
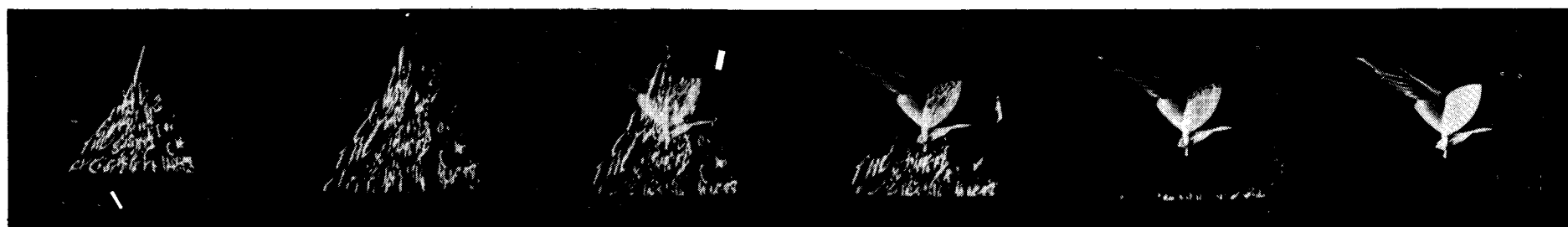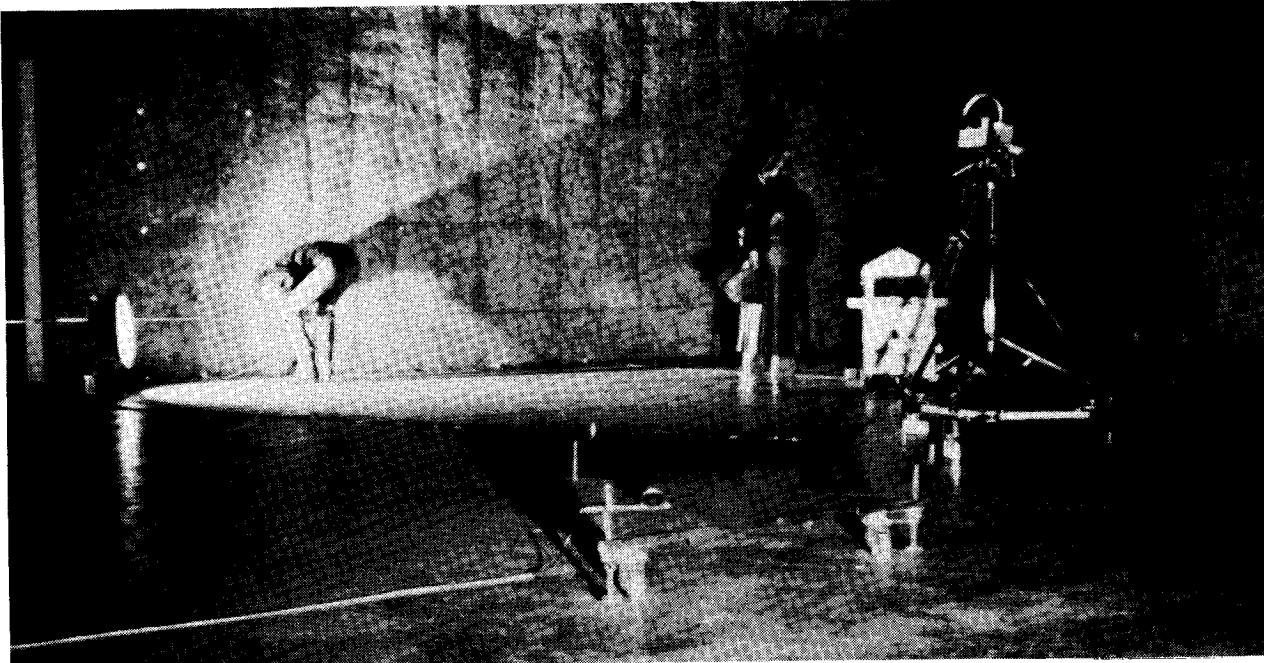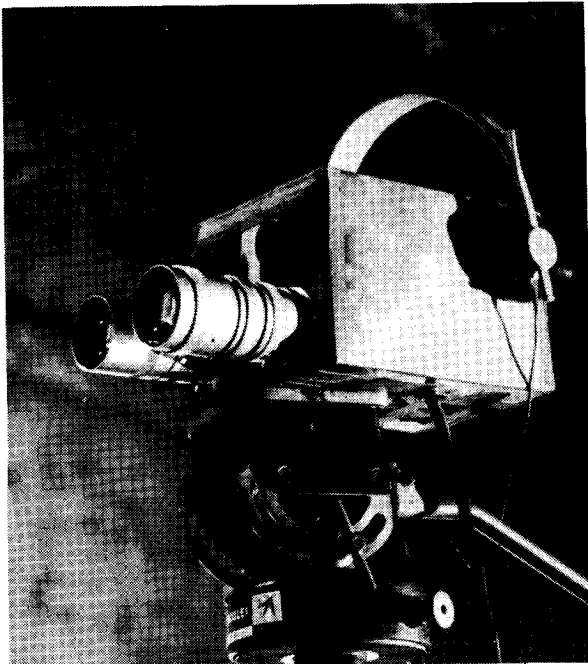
Facing page: objects associated with speakers in *War Zone,* a 1980 installation at Media Study, Buffalo. Left, this page: "machine gun" camera. Right: installation view. (All photos: Skip Arnold.)

LF: You've called *War Zone* a metaphor for the empty mind thinking to itself. That seems very similar to the "internal dialogue" in *Primarily Speaking.*
GH: There's a similarity in dealing with image and language, but *War Zone* deals with it more directly. The scenario was image and language being at war. It also refers to the left and right sides of the brain, the perceptual and conceptual faculties battling for control. It's definitely a battle within myself, but the experience of the two pieces is very different.

The original idea for *War Zone* was to have many speakers

How did you choose the objects you used?
GH: A lot was determined by what I found around Media Study. Once I got a few things, it gave me the idea of using objects that would become analogous to thought processes, psychologically symbolic. For instance, a ladder represented a kind of hierarchy of thought; the dolly represented a stable thought, moving horizontally in any direction, but never shaken; a mirror represented reflection; and various things, such as a rope hanging from the ceiling, represented escape. There were 16 objects identified with speakers. These refer-

sists of four concentric rectangles. In the outermost layer are four monitors; in each of the next two layers are four audio speakers; in the center is a single monitor displaying a tape of an image of a black and white rectangle which was constructed from video feedback. The central monitor and the speakers all lie on the floor facing up. Pointing down from the ceiling is a camera with an automated zoom lens: when zoomed all the way in, it frames the single monitor; when zoomed all the way out, it frames the outermost rectangle of monitors. This undulating image is displayed on the outer monitors. It is also altered whenever a person enters the space, because their image is picked up by the camera. The rate at which the rectangle shrinks and expands—or the rate at which the lens zooms in and out—is determined by the sound track, which is measured by the enunciation of the three syllables: rec·tan·gle. Based on the rhythm of these syllables, a mathematical structure of enunciation is set up for the entire text: one phrase overlaps another at a certain rate, mimicking and thereby describing the process of video feedback.]
GH: I did *Glass Onion* right after *Black/White/Text* [1980, the single-channel work that *Processual Video* is based on]. They're similar in that both take a very basic image and try to question image versus language—what happens when you use a very simple image with a text that gets very complex. *Glass Onion* is much more anchored to the original tape than my other installations. It uses a known image and process as a foundation.

The curious thing about feedback is that it's about delay—that's what makes the squares within the squares—but you see it all at once. You don't experience the time until you know what it is, and then you can conceptualize the delay. The problem with any feedback is that it just keeps feeding on itself, and you're pulled into it without any kind of external check. It's like two people who begin by having a conversation and get into an argument. If you listen to it later, it oscillates into oblivion. That's what I think of when I watch video feedback—it's meaningless after awhile.

The text provides a check, a kind of third party. It isolates segments of time, so that you don't fall into the feedback. The experience of text is perceived as time passing; with the image, the parts, are not separated. There is no isolation of the individual loops or segments of time that construct the image.
LF: In other words, the video feedback flows continuously, whereas the text is composed of discrete syllables and words that provide an overall structure?
GH: It's more specific than that. It's the way the description is structured. The idea was to try to isolate the individual rings in the feedback, and to have an analog in language, something that would be comparable to video feedback, but without actually using audio feedback. The text literally describes feedback, and is structured as a process of feedback. It is read backwards so that the phrases pile up on one another until they invert and you actually hear it from beginning to end. The end of the sentence is said first, and then each phrase is repeated, overlaps with the phrase before it, until the whole paragraph is constructed. Each phrase is twice as long as the one before it, and so there's a mathematical relationship almost like a pyramid. The installation itself is laid out like a pyramid, topographically.
LF: So you layered the phrases in order to create an experience similar to looking at video feedback?
GH: Yes, you don't follow the words linearly; it's a kind of linguistic maze that one gets lost in and every once in a while,

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PRIMARILY SPEAKING, text excerpts

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 ONLY TO TURN UP DOWNSTREAM IT'S THE NATURE OF THE BEAST FOOD, FEED, FED BLUE, GREEN, RED, CYAN, MAGENTA YELLOW 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 ASKED THE SAME QUESTIONS YOU GIVE THE SAME ANSWERS YOU CAN'T TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS OR CAN YOU?

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 SCENE 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 ARMS LENGTH EASILY PENETRATABLE NEEDLESS TO SAY WE ARE AT EACH OTHERS 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 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 NEVERTHELESS 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

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in a room whispering single words, so that the experience would be walking through a room of white noise. As you walked around, individual words naming the objects would become audible. In the end, this became the basic texture of the piece. The large sound-space [at Media Study] determined certain details. It's insulated for sound recording, and feels quite raw, with exposed fiberglass on all the walls and ceiling. The pink of the fiberglass and the deadness of the sound changed my thinking about it, and I constructed the piece much more literally, picturing the space as "inside the mind."
LF: In using the metaphor of fighting, the camera represents a machine gun, the audio speakers function as mines in a mine field, the panning lights become surveillance lights.

ences were not intended to be perceived exactly the way I described them, but rather as a kind of map or diagram for constructing the piece.
LF: What about the white rabbit?
GH: That rabbit was the only live element; it represented illusion. When I think of the way rabbits dart around, it represents to me the creative aspects of the mind. Among the identified objects in the space, it served as the unidentified, non-verbal, unconscious element.
LF: Your other installations, *Glass Onion* [1981] and *Equal Time* [1982] also seem to set up physical spaces in which language and image play off of one another. In *Glass Onion,* you used a rectangle constructed from video feedback as the only image. What was the thinking behind that? [*Glass Onion* con-

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ORGAN ——————————————→ ORGAN FADES ——————————————→ BASS DRUM

(vocoded speech) | CROSS | MY | HEART | HOPE | TO | D | I | E
| | | | I | NEVER | DREAMED | THE | LIKES | OF | THIS ——————

a • fec • ture • is • draw • ing • a • con • tin • u • um • from • one • voice • to • an • oth • er • dif • fer • en • ti • at • ed • by • space • be • fore • and • af • ter • the • frame • of • ref • e • rence • *with • in • a • rec • tan • gle •*

Time. It functions similarly to *Black/White/Text,* somewhat diagrammatically, mirroring the movement of the sound/text. There are also a lot of textural, abstract references to the text. Because of the location of those inner monitors becomes so narrow, you almost have to turn sideways to get through. It became a kind of synaptical point, where all four monitors pointed towards each other. It was the "hot spot," especially when there were several people in the space. It was the ambiguous zone, where one asked where one space met another.

LF: Given that you're literally saying in *Equal Time* that people in the art world are all wet—covered with paint—I'm interested in what you think about video being plugged into that world.

GH: I think that essentially it's not.

LF: No?

GH: Peripherally, but not really, basically because it's not marketable.

LF: They said that about photography, too.

GH: It may be in the future, but right now it's not. Video as an art form proving itself … for me the whole idea of the singularity of an art form is backwards, dead, reactionary. So much is manipulated and defined by the market.

LF: Don't you think that there's an imperative to intellectualize, institutionalize, and legitimize video?

GH: Sure. The Paik show ["Nam June Paik," a retrospective originating at the Whitney Museum of American Art, April 30-June 27, 1982]. It was still a great show though. I don't know. I could see some point—not necessarily far away—where I wouldn't be doing video, but something else. I don't see myself as a video artist. Anytime I feel like I'm falling into "this is what I do," I don't like it, and I want to push it away. I worked in sculpture longer than video. I could see working with just about anything, working with nothing, not doing anything for two years. Just thinking.

SELECTED VIDEOGRAPHY

The Fall (1973, 11 min., black and white, sound)
Air Raid (1974, 6 min., color, sound)
Rock City Road (1974-75, 12 min., color, silent)
Earth Pulse (1975, 6 min., color, sound)
Embryonics II (1976, 12 min., color, silent)
Improvisations with Bluestone (1976, 7 min., color, sound)
Mirror Road (1976, 6 min., color, silent)
Bathing (1977)
Electronic Linguistics (1978, 3:25 min., black and white, sound)
Windows (1978, 8 min., color, silent)
Sums & Differences (1978, 8 min., black and white, sound)
Mouth Piece (1978, 1 min., color, sound)
Ring Modulation (1978, 3:25 min., color, sound)
Primary (1978, 1:40 min., color, sound)
Elements (1978, 2 min., black and white, sound)
Objects with Destinations (1979, 3:40 min., color, silent)
Equal Time (1979, 4 min., color, stereo sound)
Picture Story (1979, 7 min., color, sound)
Soundings (1979, 17 min., color, sound)
Processual Video (1980, 11 min., black and white, sound)
Black/White/Text (1980, 7 min., black and white, stereo sound)
Commentary (1980, 0:40 min., color, sound)
Around & About (1980, 4:45 min., color, sound)
Videograms (1980-81, 13:25 min., black and white, sound)
Primarily Speaking (1981-83, 20 min., color, stereo sound)
Happenstance (in progress, black and white, stereo sound)

INSTALLATIONS

Hole in the Wall (1974)
Mesh (1979)
War Zone (1980)
Glass Onion (1981)
Primarily Speaking (1981)
Equal Time (1982)
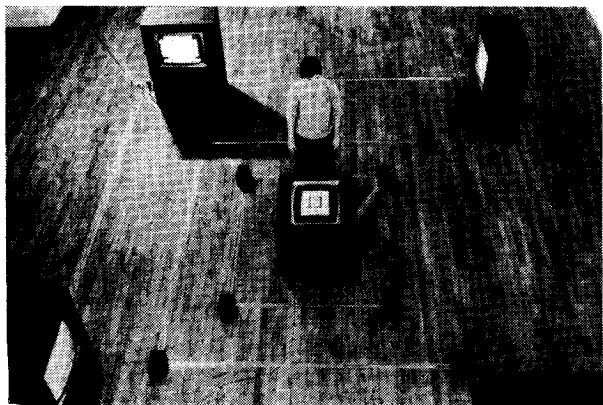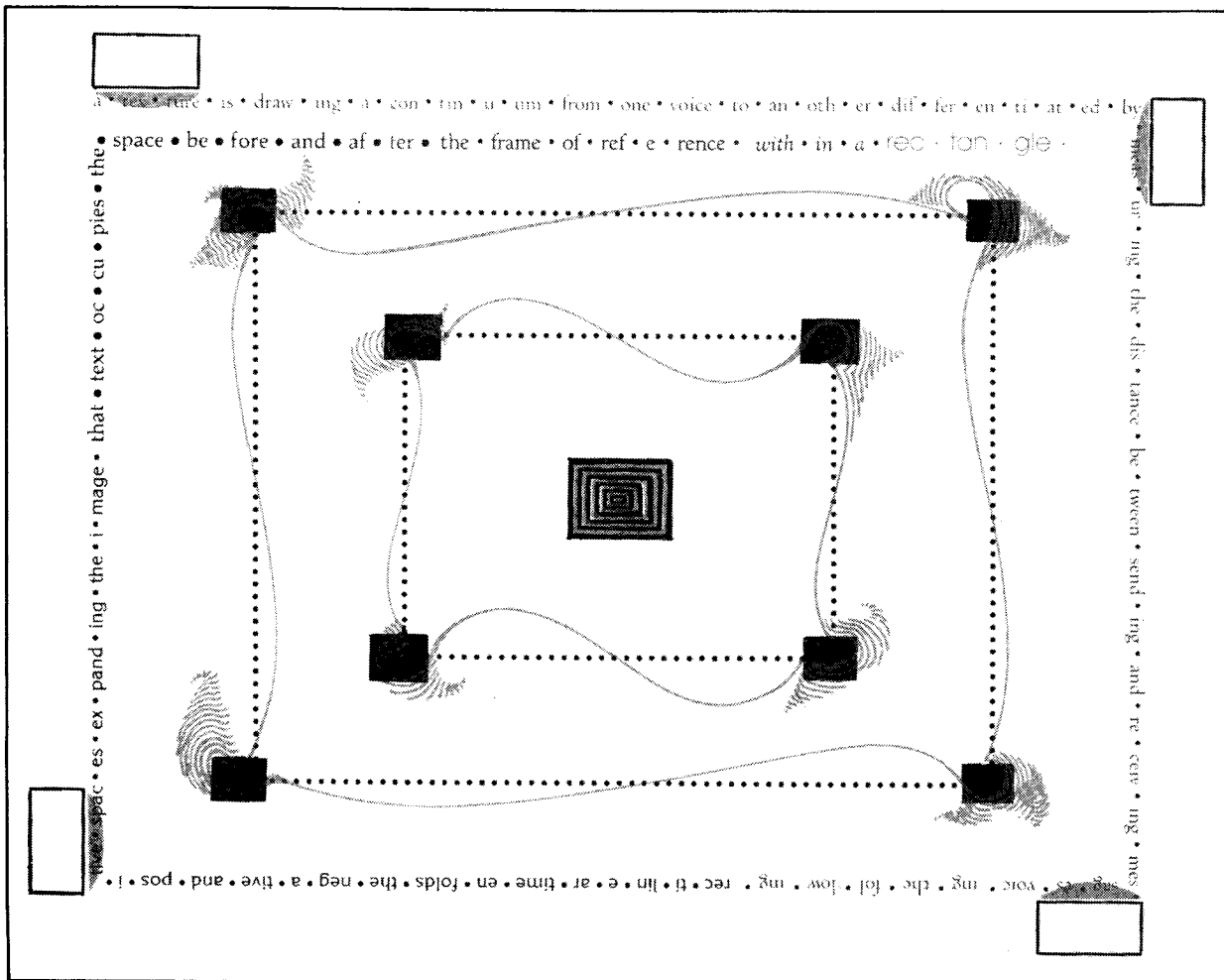

Top: installation diagram of *Glass Onion* (1981). Bottom: installation view. (Photo: Nori Sato.)

when the individual phrases double up on each other, "objects of meaning" appear.

LF: What do you mean by "objects of meaning"?

GH: That term is a little obtuse, isn't it? The text literally defines the outer parameter of the space as a character-generated image that crawls along the bottom of each monitor. This outlining is again reinforced by the quadrature movement of the sound (speech) between each set of four speakers, which mark the corners of concentric rectangles. The character-generated text consists of the individual phrases or units that make up the text you're hearing, but in linear order. The first barrier is the "reading" of the text. This describes what you're entering. With each successive barrier or rectangle, the "description" gets more complex—that is to say, it's no longer a word-for-word interpretation. Experientially, something else is taking place. The sound of the text feeding back on itself is becoming that object of meaning, which finally leads us to go to the central monitor, the image "tomb," and there it is, in living black and white—this graphic image of where you're standing. One tends to retrace one's steps, to feedback on one's own movement, and construct this "object of meaning."

LF: How does this installation compare to *Equal Time*?

GH: *Glass Onion* is autonomous in the sense that the installation defines its own space. In fact, the height of the overhead camera and the focal length of the lens are the determining factors. When the camera is zoomed out to the widest view, that becomes the outer rectangle. *Equal Time* was set up in a given, almost symmetrical space, with all the components set up as oscillating pairs, everything in a kind of reciprocal relationship, all trying to cancel each other out. This cancelling relatioship is prevented by the viewer's own participation, because of the nature of perception when seeing and/or hearing two or more things simultaneously. This idea was the structuring principle of the work.

In the original tape, there are two texts. Each is a long paragraph. One describes the opening of a fictional art show. It's kind of a joke: one gallery wall is painted white, but it's still wet. That's the exhibit. People are at the opening, drinking and talking, and at the end, they notice that they have paint all over them. The other text is a description of a private performance, very solitary. Both texts are very image-oriented and descriptive—except one's public and one's private. Both texts are the same length, and the last part of each is the same: "I left the room, exiting to a hallway. It was long enough to form extreme perspective looking in either direction with doors to other rooms on both sides. I crossed the hall and entered the room opposite me."

This is another instance where the text could be replaced with other texts, and the piece would still be the "same." The content would be different, but *Equal Time* isn't about *the* content. It's about how content is experienced when struc-

tured in this field of simultaneity. I considered having other pairs of texts, which would change every other time I crossed the hall and entered the room opposite me. I felt this would have made it unnecessarily complicated, giving the impression of rooms with many scenes. The repetition of just the two texts reinforces the static quality of being inside an object and figuring out how it's constructed.

In the installation, there are two adjacent rooms connected by a narrow passage. In the center of each room there are monitors facing the passageway, and each other. The monitors display separate tapes which consist of the same images, images which refer to the text. The only difference is that on one monitor the images corresponding to, say, text A are prioritized, or keyed over, the images of text B. The opposite exists on the other monitor.
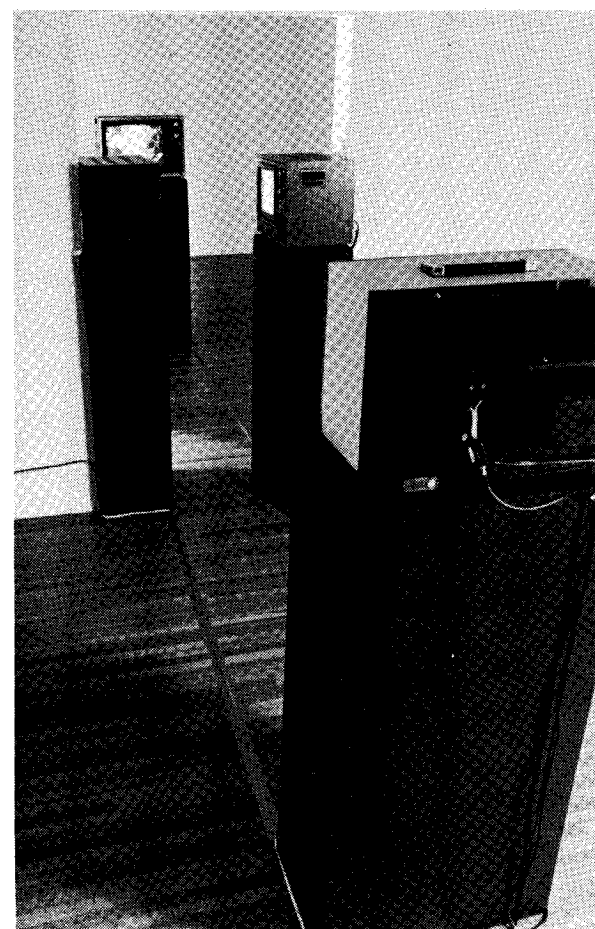
LF: So while you can always hear both texts, one text always dominates, depending on where you are. And in the room where one text dominates, its accompanying video also dominates?

GH: Right. At the end of both tapes, one hears the same last sentence, and then the two audio tracks are reversed, along with the images, and repeated in opposite rooms. Inside the passageway there are two more monitors, also facing each other, displaying another videotape. In that tape, there's an abstract image of two shiny, grid-like panels that slowly move until they overlap each other. They overlap at the point where the two texts overlap, creating a moiré pattern; and then, when the texts start up again, the panels start to move again.

LF: What was the reasoning behind using the abstract imagery in the small space?

GH: The abstract imagery was the original tape for *Equal*

Left: view of *Equal Time,* a 1982 installation at the Long Beach Museum of Art. (Photo: Kira Perov.) Right: simultaneous images from the installation. (Photos: Lucinda Furlong.)