

THE PSYCHEDELIC
GEDANKENEXPERIMENT

Charles Stein

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I am taking the liberty, as artists do, to declare Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) as the art experience par excellence. Although, originally discovered (somewhat accidentally) and then synthesized by the scientist Albert Hoffman, I'm claiming the psychoactive event itself as a work of art in the tradition of the 'found object' à la Marcel Duchamp. In this case, it's perhaps closer to a 'found performance' with variable qualities and dimensions.

Granted, there are problematic questions regarding what exactly defines the claim. Categorically, it is not the physical properties of capsules, windowpane, blotter paper or sugar cubes that constitute the work – they are the transporters or carriers – something like the way light carries a painting to its viewer. It's more akin to the synaptical space, a kind of smear, between the stereoisometric drawings coupled with the chemical procedures and more definitively, the trip itself. Rather than set boundaries of time or place for initiation, I leave that open to the individual viewer or practitioner. As a point of departure, a minimum dose of 250 micrograms is necessary for the work to be 'shown'.

There is considerable suspicion around art that exists primarily through intention and declarative language. And, indeed, there are worthy questions – where is the artist's hand, his fingerprint and what is the evidence of something having been created? As with many works of art this remains open and perhaps unanswerable – a conundrum for some, a complete joke for others.

Further to the claim, I consider the work to be the most powerful and in time the most influential work of art throughout all of history. Laughable right? Perhaps. But let's take a closer look. Assuming that art could possibly be judged at all, what would be the criteria, what do we demand and want from art? For comparison's sake, let's ponder on some of the characteristics of The Psychedelic Gedankenexperiment.

It is experiential and acutely phenomenological – no supporting context necessary whatsoever at all

It is fully Immersive and interactive providing a complete epistemological reset

The spectator experiences lush Sensorial awakenings woven with spectacular auditory and visual phenomena

Waves of therapeutic psychological reflection ripple through thoughts

One has overwhelming experiences of 'spirituality', 'love' and the 'inter-connectedness of all things'

There is the desire to ponder the big questions – a kind of ontological carnival of mind takes place

Concepts of body, space and time are thrown out the window

Notions of the status quo become comical

It is awe-inspiring and forever memorable

It is to the art world what gold is to the central bank

There is the sense that contacts with extraterrestrial beings are possible

Deep primordial sensations are visited

It is transformative and life-changing

It is finally profoundly beautiful

The above is a transcription of the text for Gary Hill's installation, *The Psychedelic Gedankenexperiment*. The installation is an intervention in the ontology of art, the nature of psychedelia, and indeed, our relation to Being itself, by means of an 'uncanny' and complex artistic 'operation' for which we will attempt an exposition.

THE SECRET

Consider existence on the scale of a chemical experiment, neurochemistry, or chemistry quite generally. Molecules in their great complexity combine, break up, and recombine to facilitate a world that, on the scale of human consciousness, constitutes the theater of phenomena. As Gary Hill has the speaker say in *Site Recite*: ‘This is the turf.’

On the scale of chemical phenomena, consciousness itself appears to be the supertext of chemical processes: its presence in the nervous system communes with information produced by the human organism and the information coming in from the external world along electro-chemical channels of the body’s neuro-networks. The contents and qualities of consciousness thus seem to be functions of molecular possibilities, and among these possibilities are the interventions of psycho-pharmacological substances that allow sensations, perceptions, intuitions, and cognitions to take hold of themselves or wildly let themselves go. The bite of such an interface between chemistry and consciousness is ontological: the way the human being disposes of reality is intensively at stake and at play.

That the experience of hallucinogenic substances has been a part of Gary Hill’s work, and indeed of many artists of his generation, is no secret, but until recently psychedelia has rarely been taken seriously as a factor in modern and post-modern artistic practice. ‘Psychedelic art’ is something of a minor genre, often dismissed for its triviality, certainly not granted the dignity of, say, Surrealism, with which it shares certain qualities and from which it perhaps requires differentiation. Be that as it may, the idea that, over the past fifty years, hallucinogens or ‘entheogens’ may not only have affected psychedelic art but worked upon art’s deepest ground is indeed a ‘secret’ which would bear divulging and investigation.

In *The Psychedelic Gedankenexperiment*, Gary Hill makes a breast of it, and not only that; he proposes, in a form that escapes irony and confessional realism alike, that the psychedelic experience typifies the experience of art most broadly. And in what must indeed appear to be an extremely bizarre ‘conceptual’ move, he proposes to explore the psychedelic realm as a quasi-scientific ‘thought experiment’ – using the German term for such a thing – yoking together the tradition of ready-mades (and found objects) originating with Duchamp, with a practice most famously conducted by Albert Einstein. What if, as Gary Hill’s text does proclaim, an artist were to declare an acid trip – any acid trip – his acid trip, your acid trip, or indeed, the acid trip – a found ‘performance’? What are the implications of such a declaration? What are the characteristics that the trip shares with the experience

of art? And how does appropriating the acid trip for art as such relate to the ontological exigencies of science, psychedelia, and art brought to a single focus? The only difficulty here is that, in this work, the divulging of the secret itself is under occultation. The text is allowed to appear in a strange and baffling manner that itself allows the enigmatic aspects of the situation to remain enigmatic in essence, while literally being revealed.

THE INSTALLATION AND ITS TEXT

The Psychedelic Gedankenexperiment is, or at least seems to be, an installation. It includes a textual proposal (the text presented above) in two versions: an audio presentation of it spoken backwards, and a simultaneous audio presentation spoken double-reversed. Both versions are performed by a personage played by the artist, one of them the audio aspect of a video projection. In the video – also double-reversed – this figure manipulates a model of the lysergic acid molecule and performs other odd activities in a computer-animation simulation of an anechoic chamber. Thus, if one attended the installation and succeeded in understanding the text, the text of the proposal would both contextualize and be contextualized by the installation and would vibrate through it. Our interest here is not only in how the installation fulfills the assertions proffered in the text, but what the enigmatic presentation of the text might signify. The printed version given above does not communicate the double manner of its presence in the installation. The version of the text given without reversal in Gary Hill’s naturally recorded voice is incomprehensible, for that version is being read syllable by syllable, back to front. The doubly-reversed version pronounced by the Gary Hill video figure sounds very odd; and even the written text, written out as an odd score for recitation, de-emphasizes its purely textual character. In the installation it reads as something like a museum placard whose relation to the art it describes is optional, or a hieratic Egyptian or Assyrian wall inscription, rendering the text imperious and performative.

The performativity of the text – the way the text conditions our experience of the installation – provokes this question: How does the taking up of a proposition about the nature of art, offered in the presence of a given work, affect the way that art is experienced? Or more generally: How does the declaration of an object as falling under a certain concept, if made in proximity to that object, affect the experience or indeed the being of it? But with that generalization, we are in the middle of ontological questions pertinent to psychedelia, the psycho-physiology of consciousness, and the nature of art in the modern, post-modern and contemporary contexts, as

well, perhaps, as the questions that vexed the relationship between Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr regarding quantum reality.

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Gary Hill's proposal, 'deciphered' in part or in full at the installation site, seems to be an invitation to participate in a familiar species of conceptual art, where notions pertinent to an exhibit, presented somehow within it or proximal to it, orient, qualify, determine, or mystify it. But here it isn't transparent that the piece to which one is being oriented is in fact the one in the gallery. We are invited, it would seem, to undergo an acid trip of our own and to treat it as a work of art. If one were to elect to participate in this work or this experiment, it would be in one's own venue, not necessarily at the installation site. And yet...

As one enters the installation chamber, equipped with a pair of 3-D glasses to view what in fact is a 3-D video projected on a wall of the chamber, one listens to something of a strange oration, recitation, or simply a monologue, that sets the viewer directly into a scene that quickly assumes the appearance of something quite 'trippy.' There are for instance the two simultaneous audio presentations – one the reversed 'translation' of the other; but the text is being enunciated by the figure played by Gary Hill himself. The invitation to take a certain attitude toward an acid trip of one's own, or even to think of acid trips in general, is tendered as a strange and insidious or insinuating recitation – strange primarily because spoken double-backwards, as in *Why Do Things Get in a Muddle* and other Gary Hill videos; insidious and insinuating because the style of the recitation is both menacing and inviting.

For anyone familiar with Gary Hill's single-channel video work, the double reversal of language reprises these affects from *Muddles*; but their familiarity does nothing to dull the dark hilarity, the 'ontological carnival' that the specifics of the optical, aural, and actional phenomena induce and in a sense celebrate.

In *Muddles* the reversals interact with ideas about entropy from the Batesonian 'Metalogue' that is the 'script' of *Muddles*. In the *Gedankenexperiment* the text about LSD plays this role and spectacularly contextualizes the bizarreness. At every point the video mimes an acid trip, and not merely the trip's optical phenomena but its cognitive and ontological conditions.

Though the mention of the *Gedankenexperiment* in the title seems, as I say, to bring the work into the realm of conceptual art, the relation between the effects of the video and the ideas of the text are not limited to the level of

concept; that is, the intellectual material does not simply define the trip-like drama or ritual theater enacted in the installation but serves to complicate it. Concept plays two roles here: concepts-received and concepts-in-formation. The notions received through the text certainly contextualize what one sees; but as one watches the video, spontaneous ideas will no doubt arise in us as we try to make sense of what is happening before us and perhaps within us. These will of course be influenced by the concepts we are given by the text as we, with difficulty and with interrupted attention, hear it 'go by' or recall the thoughts that we might have had while 'decoding' it reading. But in any case the concepts must do their work concretely and spontaneously. They happen in the time of our viewing, as opposed, say, to the abstract time of textual discourse; and they have their own velocity that works together with the time of the video as it unfolds, so that our participation in the installation at every point suffers dissonances, harmonies, interactions, disjunctions – between the concepts we hold (given by the text or otherwise) and the concepts in spontaneous formation that inhabit our perception.

This is getting a bit complicated, but try it this way: A common understanding of the relation between cognitive process and immediate perception might run as follows: Ordinary consciousness is embedded in the time of its occurrence. We form cognitions about what we perceive as we perceive it. These cognitions are informed by concepts we already possess and others that form spontaneously in the process of perception. Cognitions haunt and determine the transition from instantaneous sensations, which rise and vanish, to a relatively stable sense of a relatively coherent world. What we are able to cognize spontaneously about what we perceive is also conditioned by the vast plethora of temporal patterns and sequences that ordinary behavior, language, and objects fall under the aegis of.

Under LSD, the velocity with which sensations are taken up cognitively (as well as the thresholds at which sensory stimulation awakens awareness) are so radically altered that cognition fails to align in an ordinary manner with sensations as they occur. Cognition detaches from sensation or influences it wildly. Sensation is refreshed (or alarmed) by being diverted from the image traces that normally mediate sensation to cognition; and the sense of reality is open to fresh (or terrifying) syntheses, untoward takes on what the panoply of phenomena amount to – an 'ontological carnival' as Gary Hill's text says, affording 'complete epistemological reset.'

Further, in Gary Hill's 'experiment,' the double reversal of language heard and actions observed disrupt cognition in a manner parallel to the disruptions of a trip. Though one can make out what the strange 'mad scientist'

in the person of Gary Hill is saying, the bottom has fallen out of the ordinary conditions of language recognition. Words are mispronounced or overpronounced; emphases are strangely articulated. Since the actions the character performs are also doubly-reversed, they seem strangely unnatural, or strangely deliberate but with unreadable intentions. And a whole world of weird possibilities insists upon itself as the speaker unfolds an origami-like table and performs peculiar operations on a tinker toy model of what one realizes is the lysergic acid molecule itself.

Again, the backwards version of the recitation of the text is presented simultaneously with its double-reversed 'translation.' Two modes of perceptual and cognitive reception, two registers of possible comprehension, saturate the cognitive field. One thinks of that moment in the 'Don Juan' books of Carlos Castaneda where Castaneda's two sorcerer instructors speak simultaneously into his two ears, literally splitting open his mind-head and allowing another reality to combust in the space opened by the fissure.

The text as spoken by Gary Hill's natural (unreversed) voice is of the incomprehensible backwards version, not the corrected, doubly-reversed one. In one audio, that is, you hear a natural human voice saying incomprehensible things; in the other you hear a very unnatural human voice, speaking what you recognize as distorted English. The direct expression of the human voice issues in an incomprehensible stream of verbiage; while the more or less comprehensible version sounds tricky, manipulated, weirdly off – with preternatural emphases. But then in both versions something in excess of the common communicability of language is asserted. Language is more and less than itself. The familiar and the strange exchange some of their cognizable properties. The very context of intelligibility – thought as expressed through speech – threatens the intelligible from within its most native orders. In this, a certain register of an acid trip is not only mimicked but produced: the uncanny dislocation of the intelligible as such. Speech as the site in experience where we stabilize our sense of what is real no longer performs such stabilization; it is at best a little off somewhere, or at worst jolted from availability altogether. For the intelligibility of speech depends upon a certain proportionality between the rate of the articulation of the spoken words and the rate of sensory cognitions which it serves to organize and mediate. Derange that proportionality, and the verisimilitudinous pretension of language to properly house our sense of Being loses its confidence, or we lose confidence in it. We are cast out from the House of Being (If language is 'The House of Being', as Heidegger has it) and must fend for

'ourselves' – whatever 'we' 'are', once banished from language's domestic ontological arrangements – to negotiate the real.

The figure of Gary Hill itself – or our cognition of the figure – morphs continuously from mad professor, mad scientist – possibly a cartoon of Albert Hoffman himself – to stage magician, REAL magician, or even a TV actor promoting some peculiar product. And the model of the LSD molecule undergoes an impossible choreography of floatations and distortions, submitting itself to its own recombinatorial hijinks in being broken down and reassembled.

Meanwhile the set – a chamber that looks like it has been walled up with regular inside-out egg crates (and which we are told is a computer animation simulation of an anechoic chamber) – might remind one of the strange room in Harry Smith's *Magic Feature* in which alchemical and other transmutations of objects, persons, minds, and worlds are allowed their re-enframements; or even of Thorpe Feidt's *Gehirngespinstgemach*, where a mysterious room reincarnates through history. In any case, the room itself becomes the interior of the psycho-physical condition under which the trip and its advocate are in fact manifesting. But we are seeing this room through 3-D glasses, so in being in the installation, we are in that room.

The strangeness of the room is indeed exacerbated by the fact that one is viewing it with 3-D glasses. There are minute differences between ordinary stereoptic perception – which constitutes, according to Merleau-Ponty, the essence of our ontological confidence in the visual world – and the stereoptic effect produced by 3-D animation; and these differences simply undermine that confidence. That the image of the room appears in depth does not enhance its verisimilitude but renders it as a very strange image. The quality of the third dimension feels produced, anything but natural. The entire panoply of consciousness exhibits its artificiality, perhaps its chemical and psycho-pharmacological basis. But just such a basis (presumably) underlies consciousness itself.

THE THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

Now, since in the above sense we are in the room, what exactly is the 'thought experiment'? The term itself is probably familiar to most viewers (if at all) from the various *Gedankenexperimenten* of Albert Einstein: his imagination while still in his teens of what one would see traveling parallel to a luminous beam at light speed – a thought experiment that played a role in the development of Special Relativity; his later imagination of free fall that gave rise to his famous 'happiest thought' – the equivalence of gravitation

and acceleration; and the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen thought experiment that was intended to prove to Niels Bohr the absurdity of quantum theory but which backfired and ended up leading to the demonstration of quantum non-locality.

Now the point of these thought experiments was precisely that they could be conducted in imagination alone without technical apparatus of any kind. So it would seem that one sense of the 'thought experiment' is to frame the work in such a way that the actual conduction of an LSD trip would be unnecessary! The entire experiment would really be a consideration of the thought itself: what if one conceived of 'LSD', its invention and its use, as a found object, or a ready-made in the sense of Duchamp? One could in a sense think this through without a trip, as in fact, I am doing here. But the text does specify an actual acid trip, an experiment whose thoughts occur during a trip or during the trip's simulacrum in the video installation; thoughts whose provenance is not intellectual discourse but an immediacy wound into the neurochemistry on which they travel.

Under both senses of the term 'thought experiment', an intense scrutiny is encouraged regarding the relationship between art (the present post-Duchampian, and in a sense post-Einsteinian sense of what art could be) and science, cognition, and Being; but through the imagery in the video, to stage magic or parlor prestidigitation, to various forms of magical charlatanism, but also to 'real magic', which here would be the entire territory by which reality itself is subjected to machination, manipulation, cognition, imagination. The ontological situation of art, of science, and magic are all put into question through conceptual framing and concrete intervention upon our cognitive/ontological activity.

The uncanny atmosphere that prevails through the video, as I say, constitutes an operation upon the viewer's practical, cognitive powers, and this operation furthers a procedure that is rather constant through Gary Hill's work: that the artist's and participant's experience with the particular, mind-interfering medium of each work, involves the way a sense of the real is constituted in us, through us, for us.

THE CONFIGURATIVE ESSENTIALISM OF THE MEDIUM

Gary Hill's career-long concern with mind-altering phenomena has been conducted with an ever-expanding armamentarium of mediums, but what exactly is the medium of an acid trip taken as an art work? For this thought experiment plays havoc with every question of what an art medium can possibly be.

The understanding that art works can be categorized by their mediums governs much art-critical writing and curatorial practice since early in the twentieth century, and exists today as a kind of default material or even materialist ontology. Art is first and foremost a modification of the material medium. By 'Essentialism' I mean the belief that such materials have essential or scientifically determinate properties that are brought out, manifested, 'materialized,' in the work.

'Configurative' in this context means that though one in fact does not necessarily believe in such essential properties, or that science actually determines them with ontological ultimacy, nevertheless one works with the medium in relation to its experienced material properties: one solicits meanings, manifestations, appearances from the medium with which one is working as if to draw out inherent potentialities. It is a matter of an attitude – a configurative attitude, as opposed to a positive attitude. Under the positive attitude toward the medium, the material properties are given in advance, not by what they come to appear to be in the work, but by the scientific propositions and theories that index them. This would be a 'non-configurative' essentialism of the medium: the idea that the ontology of the medium is fixed by what materials science (cum physiology) has to say about them. The configurative attitude in contrast entertains what materials science has to say about the medium as in fact part of the configurative stance: one uses that information as part of a project to allow properties to emerge.

So the question now becomes: in *The Psychedelic Gedankenexperiment* – given that the medium is the psycho-pharmacological underpinnings of consciousness and the thoughts that play upon them – how is the configurative attitude established?

I think the answer should be as follows: The piece's conceptual terms are spelled out within it in so bizarre a fashion that our interest in the materiality those concepts define – the pharmacology or neurochemistry, say, – is undercut and projected beyond any positivity those terms might suggest. The presence of the model of the molecule, the lab coat of the Gary Hill character, the reference to Hoffman, even the strange imagery of the anechoic chamber as the interior-cyber-techno space in which consciousness and its fields are wired-up or spaced-out – all suggest that the material bases of the acid trip and its history are indeed in play. But at the same time, there is no way that these bases are taken literally or positively. The Uncanny pervades and disrupts without annihilating the concepts. The chemical model is subjected to the re-ontologizing of the space it is situated in and that the

mode of presentation allows. The model – that is to say – the molecule – in its materiality is submitted to the ontological volatility it is presumed to be the cause of.

But then the ‘thought’ in the ‘thought experiment’ is as much the object as the subject of it. The experiment returns upon the participant so that the cognitive ground that the ‘thought’ was presented to prepare, is wildly volatilized, as indeed the lysergic acid molecule volatilizes the thought-flesh of the tripper. If the medium is the trip itself, the entire problematic of the relations between consciousness, cognition, nervous system, neurochemistry, text and language, are involved. The entire interplay of factors in the real are not only the subject of conceptual interest, but the medium on which the work is constructed.

THE ROOM

Again, what exactly is this ‘room,’ this computer-generated simulacrum of an anechoic chamber? In a famous passage in his *Silence*, John Cage tells us that even in a space from which all sound has been eliminated true silence does not occur, because in such a room the susurrations and buzzings of the vascular and nervous systems break into the domain of the audible. The chamber thus becomes a site at which material operations of the body are impossible to evade. The room, that is, becomes the body-mind, whose contents are forced into cognitive space, but where cognition itself has lost its moorings in and through the very science that has forced it into consciousness. We have been brought into the interior of the ‘mind brain’ that is proposing the experiment, conducting it, and undergoing it; and the Gary Hill character, as ‘in’ such a room, is something like the personification of the mind itself. The uncannily distorted quality of his speech dislodges the sense that a mind indeed may manifest itself as a speaking voice. Its speaking about the acid trip and the trip’s similarity to an art experience seems less a contextualization of the premises of an art piece within that art piece, than an intervention upon the ontological condition under which art, concept, science and psychedelia perform themselves as worldly phenomena and practices. As our thoughts arise in our contiguity with that room, our ‘trip’ with this work of art becomes the trip that is itself the ready-made object that the thought experiment, which we are being invited to perform, makes its object. The room that is ‘the mind of the experiment’ becomes a laboratory in which the experiment is being performed, or performs itself. And we, as well as the Gary Hill figure, are performing the experiment on our own mind, our own trip, our own experience as found

object/ready-made/acid trip/thought (or mind) experiment qua work of art.

Again, though we may not be on acid as we view the installation, the cognitive labyrinth or epistemological carnival that participation in the work subjects us to, is so ‘acid-like’ that though the piece takes ‘the acid trip’ as a ‘ready-made,’ the piece just as much turns itself into an acid trip; thus the correspondence between trip experience and art experience is established performatively. One might say that the acid trip in itself is already a *Gedankenexperiment*; and that the attitude of the tripper to the trippy quality of experience is already an ontologizing of the trip as involving art-like consciousness or activity. Gary Hill’s work, then, simply serves to acknowledge or demonstrate these conditions – by creating the conditions for cognizing them as such.

THE OTHER-WHERE OF THE MIND

In the idea of the Mind as a Room, the egg-box protuberances seem contact points to other fields contiguous to the confined room-space that is metaphorically a context for consciousness. As a scientific laboratory – a wired-up box suggesting a 3-dimensional space whose geometrical coordinates would be given by the strange but regular arrays of protuberances – as a scientific laboratory, the Room suggests the discreteness, the determinacy, the definiteness, of that which requires such discreteness to become manifest at all; i.e., the materialist/scientific world of measurably determinable things. But the mad scientist that inhabits that space, renders all that as being in excess of any concrete determinacy. And the wired-up walls and the egregiously self-modifying molecule draw attention to an ontological elsewhere, that by refusing determinacy and presence, render that otherness palpable, inescapable, pervasive. The very aim of science – determinate knowledge, prediction, control – is inverted in its own lair.

THE VISITOR

The Psychedelic *Gedankenexperiment*, as we have seen, brings together three things: The Duchampian Ready-Made, the Einsteinian *Gedankenexperiment*, and the acid trip. The three aspects of the work contextualize each other in an intransitive, hyperdimensional looping that parallels the cognitive looping often experienced within an acid trip itself. The thought experiment takes the acid trip as a ready-made. But then, though the experiment itself is contained in an installation that is anything but ready-made (it is meticulously constructed both as an installation and as a complex conceptual ‘experiment’), the content of the installation represents in various ways an

acid trip and induces its art equivalent. And the content of the acid trip – what the character says – in various ways expresses general claims of the artist regarding the relations between art and psychedelic consciousness.

If the lab is the body/mind of the tripper, the Gary Hill 'scientist' the speaker of and in that mind, the installation itself an induction of a trip, and, through the 3-D aspect of the installation, the tripper/viewer brought cognitively into that Room, then the tripper/viewer is peculiarly split into an inhabitator of that mind and a visitor witnessing an alien consciousness. Reality is revisited or turned into the object of a 'visitation'; not only that reality as such is a 'vision,' but that we ourselves are 'visitors' – to a scene for which the very term 'reality' has been estranged. Not 'real,' not even 'surreal,' but perhaps 'irreal.' The question of reality has been so displaced that it is as if the answer to a consummate ontological question exists without the question; or as if the molecular underpinnings of the questions themselves are looking you in the eye, staring you in the face, staring you down. In a trip, we know the oddness of our experience is chemically induced, but here the oddness is introduced by the technique of the installation and the intervention in our cognition by the *Gedankenexperiment* with which willy-nilly we find ourselves participants. For reality itself is torn from itself and reintroduced as a factor in cognition while cognition spreads its orders or disorders over that which we would now perforce take as real, unreal, or most strangely, that to which the very term or terms of reality have become only problematically, or as we say, configuratively relevant. The reality with which we would inform ourselves is informed by the terms of our desire, our need to understand where we are.

Various attempts in philosophy – Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, in one of its moods, or more recently, Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology – have sought to reinstate a primacy to an order of experience that is anterior to the hermeneutics of conceptual thought, but these are unable to accomplish this at the level of cognition itself. For stripped of cognition's verisimilitudinous pretension, we have nowhere to turn for an anchoring in the real. We perforce must raise anchor and set sail on the still uncharted (and perhaps, except by art, unchartable) waters of Being itself.

This publication appears on the occasion of the exhibition:

GARY HILL: ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

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Locations: West Museumkwartier, Lange Voorhout 34 and West, Groenewegje 136 Den Haag

Text: Charles Stein

Charles Stein's work comprises a complexly integrated field of poems, prose reflections, translations, drawings, photographs, lectures, conversations, and performances.

Born in 1944 in New York City, he is the author of thirteen books of poetry including *Views from Tornado Island* (Lunar Chandelier), *From Mimir's Head* (Station Hill Press), a verse translation of *The Odyssey* (North Atlantic Books), a forthcoming translation of *The Iliad* (Station Hill Press), and *The Hat Rack Tree* (Station Hill Press). His prose writings include a vision of the Eleusinian Mysteries, *Persephone Unveiled* (North Atlantic Books), a critical study of poet Charles Olson's use of the writing of C.G. Jung, *The Secret of the Black Chrysanthemum* (Station Hill Press), and a collaborative study with George Quasha of the work of Gary Hill, *An Art of Limina: Gary Hill's Works & Writings*, Ediciones Poligrafa. He holds a Ph.D. in literature from the University of Connecticut at Storrs and lives with guitarist, choral director, and research historian, Megan Hastie in Barrytown New York.

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