

## Bill Viola

Bill Viola is internationally recognised as one of the leading artists of our time, an acknowledged pioneer in the medium of video art. For over 40 years he has been making work that explores a series of humanistic and spiritual issues. His works include room-size video installations, sound environments, electronic music performances and flat panel video pieces, as well as works for television broadcast, concerts, opera, and sacred spaces. In 2017 alone he was the subject of several major museum retrospectives including Palazzo Strozzi, Florence; The Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; and Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Viola's video installations – total environments that envelop the viewer in image and sound – employ state-of-the-art technologies and are distinguished by their precision and direct simplicity. They are shown in museums and galleries worldwide and are found in many distinguished collections. His single-channel videotapes have been widely broadcast and presented cinematically, while his writings have been extensively published and translated for international readers. Viola uses video to explore the phenomena of sense perception as an avenue to self-knowledge.

Bill Viola received his BFA in Experimental Studios from Syracuse University in 1973. During the 1970s he lived for 18 months in Florence, Italy, as technical director of production for art/tapes/22, one of the first video art studios in Europe, and then traveled widely to study and record traditional performing arts in the Solomon Islands, Java, Bali, and Japan. Viola was invited to be artist-in-residence at the WNET Channel 13 Television Laboratory in New York from 1976-1980, where he created a series of works that were premiered on television. In 1977 Viola was invited to show his videotapes at La Trobe University (Melbourne, Australia) by cultural arts director Kira Perov who, a year later, joined him in New York. They married in 1980 and began a lifelong collaboration working and traveling together.

Viola represented the US at the Venice Biennale in 1995. Other key solo exhibitions include; *Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey* organised by the Whitney Museum of American Art, US (1997); *The Passions* at the J.Paul Getty Museum, US (2003); *Hatsu-Yume (First Dream)* at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, JP (2006); *Bill Viola, visioni interiori* at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, IT (2008); *Bill Viola*, Grand Palais, Paris, FR (2014); and in 2017, three major exhibitions: *Bill Viola. Electronic Renaissance*, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, IT; *Bill Viola: Installations*, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, DE; *Bill Viola: Retrospective*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain, ES and *Bill Viola: Selected Work 1977–2014*, Redtory Museum of Contemporary Art, Guangzhou, CN. *Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire, Water)*, the first of two permanent works created for St Paul's Cathedral, London, was inaugurated in 2014, followed by *Mary* in 2016. In 2004 Viola created a four-hour long video for Peter Sellars' production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, presented in project form by the Los Angeles Philharmonic in December 2004. The complete opera received its world premiere at the Opéra National de Paris, Bastille in April 2005 and has had many performances in the US, Canada, Europe and Japan.

Viola holds honorary doctorates from Syracuse University (1995), The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1997), California Institute of the Arts (2000), and Royal College of Art, London (2004), among

others. He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors including a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1989). He was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000 and in 2006 he was awarded Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Government. In 2009 he received the XXI Catalonia International Prize in Barcelona, Spain and was awarded the Japan Art Association's Praemium Imperiale art award in the category of painting in 2011. Viola was made a National Academician of the New York-based National Academy in June 2012 and elected an Honorary Royal Academician in 2017.

Bill Viola and Kira Perov, his wife, long-time collaborator and executive director of Bill Viola Studio, live and work in Long Beach, California.