

Bill Viola

Intimate Works

2 April — 4 May 2019

Blain|Southern London



Bill Viola, *Unspoken (Silver and Gold)*, 2001
Courtesy the artist and Blain|Southern, Photo: Mike Bruce

Bill Viola's new exhibition at Blain|Southern presents small-screen works in an intimate context to reflect on the complex details of human relations and our attachment to the material world. Known for exploring the artistic potential of video since the seventies, here Viola employs a number of formats and techniques of filming and projection in works made within the last two decades.

In a triptych on adjoining flat screen panels, *Poem B (The Guest House)*, 2006; we witness the residue of a life through the objects and structures that surround a solitary older woman. In *Small Saints*, 2008; six separate OLED screens depict six individuals appearing from the darkness, in footage that transitions between grainy black-and-white images from a surveillance camera, to the extreme clarity of high-definition digital video.

Viola makes direct classical references in his choice of materials and formats. *Unspoken (Silver & Gold)*, 2001; is a projected diptych of a man and woman, which connects with historical use of precious metals in art, with the optical properties of these highly textured surfaces altering the appearance of images in dramatic ways. *Dolorosa*, 2000; shows looping portraits of two figures representing the cycle of human suffering. This diptych of small LCD screens draws from the medieval uses of portable folding panel paintings.

Self Portrait, Submerged, 2013, depicts the artist lying on the bed of a stream. In this alternate physical realm he lies with eyes closed, breathing out slowly, appearing to be completely at peace. It rounds off this focused selection of work that encapsulates an important aspect of Bill Viola's wider preoccupation with the dynamics between spiritual and physical realm.

Notes to Editors

The exhibition runs concurrent to Joan Snyder *Rosebuds & Rivers*.

About the artist

Bill Viola (b. 1951) 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 oeuvre includes architectural video installations, sound environments, electronic music performances, flat panel video pieces, as well as works for television broadcast, concerts, opera, and sacred spaces.

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 where he studied visual art with Jack Nelson and electronic music with Franklin Morris. 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.

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery based in London and Berlin. The gallery represents an expanding roster of international artists and is the exclusive representative of the estates of Lynn Chadwick and Avigdor Arikha. Recent exhibitions include Bosco Sodi, Chiharu Shiota, Jonas Burgert, Mat Collishaw, Henning Strassburger, Sean Scully, Ali Banisadr, Moshekwa Langa and Edward Kienholz.

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4 Hanover Square
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Saturday: 10am - 5pm

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