

BILL VIOLA (°1951)

The role of the artist is to describe the human soul; this is a very important contribution in trying to figure out who we are.'

— Bill Viola, to discuss the appeal of his work, the processes behind his films and a pervading sense of spirituality as quoted in Wallpaper* 21 OCT 2015 by NICK COMPTON

'We have to reclaim time itself, wrenching it from the "time is money" maximum efficiency, and make room for it to flow the other way – towards us. We must take time back into ourselves to let our conscious'ness breathe and our cluttered minds be still and silent. This is what art can do and what museums can be in today's world.'

— Bill Viola, as quoted in Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art, Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 254

'Humanity consists of three things: the unborn, the dead and the living. The human condition is so powerful and so necessary. The most important thing human beings can do in their lives is to leave something behind. People who came before have left behind something that gives us knowledge. Creativity exists in all human beings; it transcends time and place and it arises from the practice of making something new from something old. Art is the universal language of mankind. I firmly believe that it is especially needed in this day and age of conflict, strife and misunderstanding. It is kept alive by the human presence within all material creations, including video and computers. All art is contemporary art and is born in radical new ideas. And right now for artists out there, we are living in an extraordinary time unprecedented in the history of art. Right now you have the widest range of media styles, techniques and languages to express your inner vision that has ever existed in the history of art-making on this planet. But you still have to tear down something to build something up. It's what you risk, what you put in to, what you sacrifice from yourself to get that deep. And all the great artists go to that edge.'

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/yjeanmundelsalle/2015/01/01/american-video-artist-bill-viola-has-been-reinventing-reality-for-the-past-40-years/?sh=497ed8d34805>

Bill Viola was born in New York City in 1951 and has used video to make works of art since 1970, soon after the portable video camera became available. He is internationally recognized as one of today's leading artists and has been instrumental in the establishment of video as one of the leading forms of contemporary art. Since the 1980s Viola has been best known for museum installations with video projections, sound and, at times, physical objects (he has also been a musician and audio/video engineer). Viola lives and works in Long Beach, California.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/spiritofthings/bill-violas-spiritual-art-rpt/2962224>

Bill Viola (b. 1951) began experimenting with video as an undergraduate in the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University in 1970. As a young artist he worked at the Everson Museum in Syracuse as a technical consultant and video preparator. During this time, he participated in the staging of groundbreaking exhibitions of video artists Peter Campus, Nam June Paik, among many other early video artists. An equally important influence was his involvement in the “Rainforest” group, in which he explored experimental music and sonic sculpture under the guidance and direction of the pioneering composer David Tudor.

Viola has taken a humanist approach to new media, using video to delve into the phenomenon of sense perception as a language of the body and an avenue to self-knowledge. His works depict a range of profound, yet elemental human experiences and themes that have engaged artists throughout history. The works synthesize many disciplines and philosophies to present a broad view of contemporary art’s relevance to the modern world, a view that has firm roots in the history of both Western and Eastern art, world religion, mysticism, poetry, philosophy, and the natural world.

<https://artdaily.cc/news/11741/Bill-Viola-s-Five-Angels-For-The-Millennium#.YF9UTq9KiUk>

'One of the most important artists in the world today.' – David Sefton

In conversation, though, he has none of the affectation that might come with being the subject of such lofty praise.

Instead, he retains the same sense of wonder that first struck him floating on a lake as a six-year-old during a deeply formative experience.

'I was on a raft with my cousin and I didn't have a [safety] tube around my waist,' says Viola.

'I dove in, but I forgot to let go and I went right to the bottom like a stone.

'I saw probably the most beautiful image I have ever seen in my life, which was a blue world, filled with things moving, little things on the bottom.'

His vivid recollections of that moment speak to just how much it has informed his life's work as a video artist.

'I saw these beautiful shafts of light. I wanted to stay there.

'My uncle realised I was down there and then I started pushing him away.

'Finally, he grabbed me and pulled me out. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be here.

'The thing that happened was so brief, but it stuck right in, deep inside me. It was really quite powerful.'

Viola's works casts light on fundamental human themes and experiences such as birth, death, love, anger, ecstasy, suffering and fear, and almost reflect Renaissance paintings in their scale and intensity.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/booksandarts/bill-viola/6261696>

Kijk naar:

BILL VIOLA: EYE OF THE HEART

A FILM ABOUT THE LIFE AND WORK OF ONE OF THE LEADING VIDEO ARTISTS OF OUR TIME

Bill Viola has been exploring video art since its beginnings in the 1970's, and is increasingly recognized as one of the most important visual artists working today. His works includes single-channel pieces as well as large scale sound and image installations.

Bill Viola: The Eye of the Heart is the first portrait to have been made of this crucial artist. The film features Viola at work, extracts from some of his major works, and in-depth interviews with Viola himself.

Producer and Director Mark Kidel, one of the world's leading makers of arts documentaries, was granted unprecedented access to Bill Viola and his personal archives.

The film traces Viola's development of video art from his more conceptual beginnings to an increasingly narrative approach, using actors and exploiting the meditative aspects of extreme slow motion. With roots in Buddhist, Sufi and Christian mysticism, Viola's work became increasingly influenced by images from the great spiritual traditions, reconnecting with his own Catholic roots. The recurrence of images of bodies floating in water is related to a near-death experience by drowning as a child. The film includes a visit to the monumental Giotto murals in Assisi and the Californian desert, both major sources of inspiration for Bill, as well as contemplations on birth, death and consciousness.

Calliope Media, BBC, ARTE France, 2003 - Running time: 60 mins

<https://www.calliopemedia.co.uk/bill-viola-eye-of-the-heart>

BILL VIOLA: THE EYE OF THE HEART (EXTRACT)

klik op: <https://vimeo.com/100647903>

BILL VIOLA AT WORK: MAKING THE PASSIONS VIDEOS

THE EYE OF THE HEART (EXTRACT)

Emergence was commissioned by the Getty Museum as part of Bill Viola: The Passions exhibition organized by the Museum in 2003. The video was inspired by a fresco from the 1400s by Masolino da Panicale, in which the dead Christ is shown at the moment of Resurrection.

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQuSYsFMMt4>

Kijk naar: ICONIC TURN: BILL VIOLA - VIDEO ART, SENSE PERCEPTION AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Große Aula der LMU München, 30.06.2003

Moderator: Chris Dercon

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY13ZocVePU>



The Crossing, 1996

two-channel color video installation, four channels of sound, 10 min 57 sec, performer: Phil Esposito, 4.9 x 8.4 x 17.4 m, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Rich in metaphor and based on common spiritual beliefs of the East and West, *The Crossing* poetically reveals the cycles and dualities of life through the universal symbols of fire and water. This canonical work is indicative of Viola's ability to convey extraordinary complexity via simple action and expert use of scale and sound—characteristics that have established him as a leading figure in video and new media art for more than three decades. <https://www.scadmoa.org/exhibitions/2011/the-crossing>

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bg6wW3EOY94>

Silent Mountain, 2001

Color video diptych on two plasma displays mounted side-by-side on wall, 101.5 × 61 × 10.8 cm/each, (2x) 15 min, (looped), edition 1 of 5

Most of my works have no words, nor do they have music. This is not a deliberate attempt to be 'accessible' but that is one of the positive byproducts of working in this way. I explore universal

themes with images that everyone can recognise and because these images are moving, they draw the viewer in, resulting in a personal experience of the piece. Moving images take time, and that is what I hope I can give to the viewer; time for reflection and most importantly, for self-reflection.

<https://www.wallpaper.com/art/bill-viola-unveils-new-show-the-trial-at-yorkshire-sculpture-gallery>

Observance, 2002

Part of 'The Passions' series.

Color high-definition video on flat panel display mounted vertically on wall, 120.7 x 72.4 x 10.2 cm, 10:14 min

Based on Albrecht Dürer's *Four Apostles* (1526) where a community of feeling is created through the shared ritual of grief. In Viola's interpretation the actors form a narrow row and are asked to step forward to look at 'something they would rather not see... to say goodbye to someone who'd left them'. As each person moves to the front of the row they pause, as if overcome with emotion. Their shared mourning creates a solemn public event that gains added poignancy in the context of contemporary world events. The clothes worn by the actors are overtly contemporary, but their saturated colours pay homage to Dürer's original scheme, and the traditional colours worn by the Apostles.

<https://www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/art-weve-helped-buy/artwork/9200/observance>



Nantes triptych, 1992

Video/sound installation 460 × 970 × 1680 cm, room dimensions. ree-channels of color video projection; central panel front-projected onto 320 × 420 cm translucent scrim, two side panels rear-projected onto 320 × 270 cm screens; mounted into wall in large, dark room; amplified stereo sound; two channels of amplified mono sound, Duration: 29 min., 46 sec., Tate London

On the left screen, a young woman is in the process of giving birth, while on the right video we see an old woman in the process of dying. In the central video, a fully-clothed man is slowly moving underwater like between birth and death.

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vz312dtUP5s>

Five Angels for the Millennium, 2001, Departing Angel

Video, 5 projections, colour and sound (stereo), Tate London

Five Angels for the Millennium is an installation comprising five videos projected at a large scale directly onto the walls of a dark gallery space. The videos are individually titled Departing Angel, Birth Angel, Fire Angel, Ascending Angel and Creation Angel. Each video features a clothed male figure rising out of and plunging into a pool of water at irregular intervals, as well as hovering over it in between these movements. In all five films the action is presented in slow motion, and in each one the man and the water are shown in a single colour that changes over time in each film between a range of blue and green tones and a dark, blood red. These hues are accentuated by contrasting areas of bright white and pitch black. The five videos play simultaneously, but they are not synchronised and each is repeated on a continuous loop, so that the figures are seen repeatedly moving in and out of the water. Each projection is accompanied by an individual audio track featuring underwater noises that gradually reach a crescendo that culminates in 'a sudden explosion of light and sound' as the figure emerges from the water (Viola in J. Paul Getty Museum 2003, p.146).

'I guess the connection ultimately ... has to do with an acknowledgement or awareness or recognition that there is something above, beyond, below, beneath what's in front of our eyes, what our daily life is focused on. There's another dimension that you just know is there, that can be a source of real knowledge, and the quest for connecting with that and identifying that is the whole impetus for me to cultivate these experiences and to make my work. And, on a larger scale, it is also the driving force behind all religious endeavors. There is an unseen world out there and we are living in it.'

(Quoted in Bill Viola, exhibition catalogue, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York 2000, p.143.)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/viola-five-angels-for-the-millennium-t11805>

Kijk naar: FIVE ANGELS BY BILL VIOLA

A film by Ralph Goertz

Institut für Kunstdokumentation und Szenografie

in cooperation with Ruhrtriennale

In 2003 he installed his "five angels for the millennium" at the Gasometer in Oberhausen where he was part of the new founded festival Ruhrtriennale. The filmmaker (original duration: 15 min.) was following Bill Viola during his set up. The FIVE ANGELS are one of the most impressive video installations and about one million people has watched this installation while it was at the Gasometer.

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQi1yOnGEvs>

Kijk naar: SALON | ARTIST TALK | BILL VIOLA: LIBER INSULARUM

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8EyG7Oer0>

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ananda_Coomaraswamy

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) was one of the great art historians of the twentieth century whose multifaceted writings deal primarily with visual art, aesthetics, literature and language, folklore, mythology, religion, and metaphysics. His most mature works adeptly expound the perspective of the perennial philosophy by drawing on a detailed knowledge of the arts, crafts, mythologies, cultures, folklores, symbolisms, and religions of both the East and the West. Along with René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon, Ananda Coomaraswamy is considered as a leading member of the Traditionalist or Perennialist school of comparative religious thought.

<http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/authors/Ananda-K-Coomaraswamy.aspx>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA IN CONVERSATION

Bill Viola talks with Rachael Kohn for the 2010 Melbourne Festival.

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMOHreCX3Co>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA INTERVIEW: CAMERAS ARE KEEPERS OF THE SOULS

Bill Viola was interviewed by Christian Lund, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, in London, 2011.

'The real things are under the surface.' When video artist Bill Viola was 6 years old he fell into a lake, all the way to the bottom, to a place which seemed like paradise. *'There's more than just the surface of life,'* Viola explains.

American Bill Viola (born 1951) is a pioneer in video art. In this interview, Viola talks about his development as an artist and his most important breakthroughs. As a child, Bill Viola felt that the world inside his head was more real than the outside world. Viola discovered video in 1969. The blue light from the first camera he experienced reminded him of the water in that beautiful lake he almost died in when he was 6 years old.

The first video piece Viola did on his own was "Tape I" from 1972 when he was still at university. Viola replaced the university art theories with his own secret underground path, through Islamic mystics, to Buddhism, to Christianity and finally to St John of the Cross. It was a very liberating experience for him when he first started calling his artworks what they actually were to him.

Viola once felt that home videos should be kept separate to his artwork, but the sorrow of his mother's death, and the difficulty of understanding this transition from life to "disappearance", slowly changed his point of view. He realized that things could not be kept separate. Viola now sees the cameras as keepers of the soul, he explains. The medium holds onto life, a kind of understanding of feelings, keeping them alive.

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3VfWlkuRI>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA THE TONE OF BEING

Bill Viola was interviewed by Christian Lund in London, 2011.

Louisiana Channel, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2013

Aside from a magical visual side, Bill Viola's videos are always accompanied by marvelous sound. In this interview Viola talks about the importance of sound in his work and how he is guided by a kind of 'undersound'. Read less ...

When American artist Bill Viola (b.1951) was a child, his grandfather introduced him to the distant hum of cars and the wind in the trees – a kind of sound of nothing, which is in fact the sound of the world of movement, which is a constant, invisible sound. Viola calls it an “undersound” or a tone of being. He also explains that his choices are in fact “guided by tones.”

klik op: <https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/bill-viola-tone-being>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA – OCEAN WITHOUT A SHORE - TATESHOTS

“The Self is an ocean without a shore. Gazing upon it has no beginning or end, in this world and the next”. These words by the Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) served as Bill Viola's inspiration for his work *Ocean without a Shore*, which he presented at the Venice Biennale in 2007, and which was the origin for his series *Transfigurations*.

As the artist himself explained, the title *Transfigurations* refers to the rare process by which the substance and essence of an entity changes form. It is a transformation that comes from within, and it is based on a revelation, or an overwhelming sensation of clarity. The outcome is a crossing-over from the physical to the metaphysical, a transition that is linked to the most profound human experiences; those in which life seems to darken, and in which people's own limits are put to the test, and often pushed beyond.

The Arrangement (2007), *Incarnation* (2008) and *Three Women* (2008) show us, over and over again, people we see coming towards us out of the dark, crossing over towards the light through a wall of water – water and light are two highly symbolic elements – and then returning back into the shadows.

To create these High Definition videos, Viola gave the performers minimum instructions, leaving them free to react as they crossed the wall of water: for some, it represented a personal struggle, for others an exorcism or a rebirth, a loss of innocence, or simply a desire to go back. As the artist points out, 'All of us, crew and performers alike, were transformed by this experience, or perhaps I should say, transfigured. I would like to believe that the experience continues with those who are able to see these pieces in the exhibition'.

<https://www.museopicassomalaga.org/en/temporary-exhibitions/bill-viola%3Afigurative-works>

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cg1yxEW-ZFE>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA INTERVIEW (1995)

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1Tz8TG5gGk>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA - THE INSPIRATION BEHIND TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

Video artist Bill Viola, who worked on our 2013 production of Tristan und Isolde, is interviewed by Heidi McKenzie about the inspiration behind the imagery he created for the opera. Viola discusses his own childhood influences, and his and Wagner's experiences with Eastern culture.

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWZHngix6Q8>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA | FRUSTRATED ACTIONS AND FUTILE GESTURES

Film and interview with Bill Viola and partner Kira Perov about the artist's major 2013 exhibition at Blain|Southern 'Frustrated Actions and Futile Gestures'.

Produced by Clear Island. Copyright Blain|Southern, 2013.

klik op: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hV_yTp0MLk

Kijk naar: "THE QUESTION WHY" SEGMENT - INTERVIEW WITH BILL VIOLA

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7P9ltmwFOE>

Kijk naar: BILL VIOLA - THE ROAD TO ST. PAUL'S | Documentary: Gerald Fox | ARTHAUS MUSIK

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riz8Npsl7-Y>

Kijk naar: ART & SOUL AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

HENI Talks

'Art, for me, is a process of trying to wake up the soul... because we live in an industrialized, fast-paced world that prefers that the soul remain asleep.' — Bill Viola, artist.

How does art 'wake up the soul'? There is perhaps no better place to explore this theme than St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London. Art historian Sandy Nairne walks through the architecture of Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece, pointing out how artists have responded to the sanctity of this historic space. He describes how early commissions by the Cathedral aimed to sustain belief in Christian worshippers, and how modern and contemporary artists including Henry Moore, Bill Viola and Mark Wallinger, have tried to express spirituality in a more secular age. In a building which receives international visitors of many faiths, the art of St Paul's has the capacity to stir emotions in whoever takes a moment to look.

klik op: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYOEeBIXEaM>

'I have come to realise that the most important place where my work exists is not in the museum gallery, or in the screening room, or on television, and not even on the video screen itself.'

– Bill Viola, 1989

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www.billviola.com