

Biography of Bill Viola

Bill Viola is a seminal figure in the field of video art. His works have received international recognition in major museums and galleries and are included in distinguished public and private collections worldwide. For over forty years he has created architectural video installations, video films, sound environments, electronic music performances, as well as works for concerts, opera, and sacred spaces. Wide-ranging in his scope of ideas and aided by his virtuosic control of technology, Viola explores video's temporal and optical systems to metaphorically examine modes of perception and cognition, and ultimately chart a symbolic quest for the self.

Graduating from Syracuse University (NY) in 1973 at a time when all art forms were experiencing seismic shifts and when the Fluxus movement was still in full swing, Viola was fortunate to work first hand with composer/musician David Tudor, and media artists Nam June Paik and Peter Campus. The medium of video had become an essential part of these new experimental forms, and Viola, one of its pioneers.

Viola and his wife Kira Perov have traveled extensively to record and collect a vast range of images, from the dry deserts of Tunisia, to the mountains and volcanoes of the west coast of the US, to Dharamsala, India, to visit the Dalai Lama. They studied Zen Buddhism in Japan where they lived for eighteen months in the early 1980s and journeyed to remote areas of the main island of Honshu for a project when Viola was artist in residence at the Sony Corporation of Japan. They spent five months in the southwest deserts of the USA exploring archeological sites and its vast geological formations, and flew to the island of Fiji to record a Hindu fire-walking ceremony.

Viola represented the US at the Venice Biennale in 1995 and other key solo exhibitions include; Bill Viola: *A 25-Year Survey* at The Whitney Museum of American Art (1997) and *The Passions* at the J.Paul Getty Museum (2003). His exhibition, *Hatsu-Yume (First Dream)* drew over 340,000 visitors to the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in 2006. In 2004 Viola created a four-hour long video for Peter Sellars' production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* that has had many performances in the US, Canada, Europe and Japan. Viola has received numerous awards for his achievements, including the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1989), XXI Catalonia International Prize (2009), and the Praemium Imperiale from the Japan Art Association (2011).

Australian-born Kira Perov is executive director of Bill Viola Studio. She has worked closely with Viola since 1978, managing, creatively guiding and assisting with the production of all of his videotapes and installations. With her knowledge of photography, she has also documented their working process on location and in the studio and amassed a large archive of images from their experiences together, as well as images of the videotapes and installations. She edits all Bill Viola publications and organizes and coordinates exhibitions of the work worldwide.