

Bill Viola , Yorkshire Sculpture Park,



Bill Viola To Present Important New Exhibition At Yorkshire Sculpture Park

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The Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is to present an important exhibition by pioneering American video and installation artist, Bill Viola, this Autumn. The show was developed in collaboration with Viola, Kira Perov, Executive Director, Bill Viola Studio and Clare Lilley, Director of Programme, YSP, it is the most extensive exhibition in the UK by the artist for over 10 years. The immersive exhibition in YSP's Chapel and Underground Gallery features installations from the last 20 years of Viola's career and premieres a new work, The Trial.

Considering universal themes of life, death, love and spirituality, Viola gives tangible visual form to abstract psychological and metaphysical experiences. He explores facets of the human condition and

holds a stark and intimate mirror to our strength, fragility, and the impulses and inevitabilities that unite us.

The eight works installed in the Underground Gallery continue Viola's investigations of the unseeable, the unknowable, and the place between birth and death. His new work, *The Trial* (2015), depicts, in Viola's words, "five stages of awakening through a series of violent transformations." A young woman and a young man, both bare-chested and on separate screens, are each doused with a sudden and unexpected succession of different coloured liquids. Their ordeal intensifies then wanes as the cycle progresses and changes, from despair to fear to relief and then purification.

The exhibition also features three works from the *Transfigurations* series, which reflect on the passage of time and the process by which a person's inner being is transformed. In *Three Women* (2008), a mother and her two daughters slowly approach an invisible boundary through which they pass and eventually return. Viola combines images recorded in grainy analogue video from an old surveillance camera with those shot in High-Definition video to bring the viewer to the intersection of obscurity and clarity – from death to life – and back again. Two other related works, *The Return* and *The Innocents* (both 2007), use the same device of an unseen wall of water to render visible the momentary threshold between life and death.

The earliest work in the exhibition, *The Veiling* (1995), was created for the US Pavilion at the 46th Venice Biennale. Nine large parallel scrims catch the light from video projectors at opposite sides of the room. Images of a man and a woman moving through a series of nocturnal landscapes are projected through the layers of loosely suspended translucent material. Viola notes, "recorded independently, the images of the man and the woman never coexist in the same video frame. It is only the light from their images that intermingles in the fabric of the hanging cloth."

Inside the 18th century Chapel, a short walk across YSP's historic deer park, *Fire Woman* and *Tristan's Ascension (The Sound of a Mountain Under a Waterfall)* (both 2005), draw on the ancient story of lovers gripped by a passion that is blind to duty, honour and social obligation and which can only be consummated beyond the grave. Originally created, together with *Night Vigil*, as part of a four-hour video for theatre director Peter Sellars' production of Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, the two works are shown one after another in a continuous loop, and combine to make a visual and aural experience that extends Viola's lifelong engagement with mortality and transcendence.

For four decades, Viola (b. 1951) has created a profound portfolio of emotionally charged works with which audiences connect worldwide through subjects that investigate fundamental human experience. He has been instrumental in the establishment of video as an important form of contemporary art, and his installations, total environments that envelop the viewer in image and sound, employ state-of-the-art technologies.

Bill Viola at Yorkshire Sculpture Park Chapel and Underground Gallery 10 October 2015 - 10 April 2016

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