

EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Hilliard University Art Museum

University of Louisiana at Lafayette
710 East Saint Mary Blvd.
Lafayette, LA 70503

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Bill Viola: The Raft

Exhibition Dates: Feb 3 – May 12, 2018

Reception: Fri, Feb 23, 6:00-8:00 PM

The Hilliard University Art Museum's spring 2018 season features two new exhibitions by artists who explore themes of spirituality, memory and the human form. It pairs the works of Breaux Bridge based photographer Lynda Frese with an immersive video installation by Bill Viola, who is based in Long Beach, California.



Bill Viola. *The Raft*, 2004. Color High-Definition video projection with sound. 10 minutes, 33 seconds. Image courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

The Raft by Bill Viola is part of a special exhibition series on the museum's second floor that is focused on historically significant film and video artists. Offering an opportunity to carefully study the medium, each work in this series is presented over the course of many months in a dedicated black box. This programming is internationally diverse, and over the course of one year it features three artworks produced for the single-channel video format.

Active since the early 1970s as a pioneer of the genre, Bill Viola has been instrumental in the establishment of video as a vital form of contemporary art. For 45 years he has created videotapes, architectural video installations, sound environments, electronic music performances, flat panel video pieces, and works for television broadcast. 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. 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. His works focus on universal human experiences—birth, death, the unfolding of consciousness—and have roots in both Eastern and Western art as well as spiritual traditions, including Zen Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, and Christian mysticism. Using the inner language of subjective thoughts and collective memories, his videos communicate to a wide audience, allowing viewers to experience the work directly, and in their own personal way.

The Raft was created by Viola in 2004 as a commission for the Athens Olympics. In this work, a group of 19 people are dramatically subjected to physical forces of nature. The 10-minute piece visually represents a moment of disaster and its aftermath, as experienced by a cross-section of humanity. Created on-set with actors and stunt people, the action is described by the artist as follows: *A group of 19 men and women from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds are suddenly struck by a massive onslaught of water from a high-pressure hose. Some are immediately knocked over and others brace themselves against the unprovoked deluge. Water flies everywhere, clothing and bodies are pummeled, faces and limbs contort in stress and agony against the cold, hard force. People in the group cling to each other for survival, as the act of simply remaining upright becomes an intense physical struggle. Then, as suddenly as it arrived, the water stops, leaving behind a band of suffering, bewildered, and battered individuals. The group slowly recovers.* Viola comments, "I wanted to make a piece for our time in which nobody gets killed; people withstand the onslaught, and they get back on their feet and they go at it again."

Viola's work has been the subject of multiple solo exhibitions across Europe over the last year, including retrospectives at three museums: Deichtorhallen Hamburg in Germany, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, Italy, and Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain. *The Raft* was most recently featured in summer 2017 at the Fridericianum in Kassel, Germany, for Documenta 14.

1 minute interview with Bill Viola about *The Raft*:

<http://www.inframe.tv/people/bill-viola.html?v=230>

7 minute interview Bill Viola about his studio practices:

<https://vimeo.com/234690695>

For more information on Bill Viola's work, please visit:

<https://eai.org/artists/bill-viola/titles>

<http://www.billviola.com>

<http://jamescohan.com/artists/bill-viola>

Biography

Bill Viola (b.1951, Queens NY) is internationally recognized as one of today's leading artists. He received a BFA in Experimental Studios from Syracuse University in 1973 where he studied visual art with Jack Nelson and electronic music with Franklin Morris. Since then he has created over 200 works that have been shown in museums, galleries, film festivals, and on public television worldwide. During the 1970s he lived for 18 months in Florence, Italy, as technical director of production in 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 represented the U.S. at the 46th Venice Biennale in 1995, premiering an ensemble of five new installation works titled *Buried Secrets*. In 1997 the Whitney Museum of American Art organized "Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey," an exhibition that traveled for two years to six museums in the United States and Europe. He was invited to be a Scholar-in-Residence at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 1998, and later that year created a suite of three new video pieces for the rock group Nine Inch Nails' world tour. Music has always been an important part of Viola's life and work. From 1973-1980 he performed with avant-garde composer David Tudor as a member of his Rainforest ensemble, later called Composers Inside Electronics. His 1994 videofilm "Déserts," created to accompany the music composition of the same name by Edgard Varèse, received its American premiere at the Hollywood Bowl in August 1999 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

In 2002, Viola completed his most ambitious project, "Going Forth By Day," a five part projected digital "fresco" cycle in High Definition video, which was on view in "Bill Viola: Visions" at the ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum in Denmark in 2005. Following the completion of a four-month exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in early 2003, "Bill Viola: The Passions" travelled to the National Gallery London later that fall and to the Fundación "La Caixa" in Madrid and the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. In 2004 Viola began collaborating with director Peter Sellars and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen to create a new production of Richard Wagner's opera, "Tristan and Isolde," which was presented in project form by the Los Angeles Philharmonic in December 2004. The production of the complete opera received its world premiere at the L'Opéra National de Paris, Bastille in April 2005. It was later presented in 2007 at the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York, and continues to be reprised at major venues internationally.

Viola has received numerous awards including the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1989), Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the French government (2006), XXI Catalonia International Prize (2009), the Praemium Imperiale from the Japan Art Association (2011), and was elected an Honorary member to the Royal Academy, London in 2017. Bill Viola and Kira Perov, his wife and long-time collaborator, live and work in Long Beach, California.

Upon request, press and media kits are available that include high resolution images and selected literature on the artist.

Museum Hours, Admission & General Information

The Hilliard University Art Museum is located at 710 East Saint Mary Boulevard, on the campus of University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Museum Hours are: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm; Wednesday, 9:00 am to 8:00 pm; Saturday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; closed Sunday and Monday. General Admission: \$5 Adults, \$4 Seniors (62+), \$3 Students (5-17). FREE for Members, UL Students/Staff/Faculty with identification, and visitors under 5. Guided tours of the galleries are available Friday & Saturday at 2 PM, complimentary with admission. For general information, please visit hilliardmuseum.org or call (337) 482-2278.

About the Hilliard Museum

The Hilliard University Art Museum operates on the campus of University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and was originally founded in 1964 as the Art Center for Southwest Louisiana. Featuring a state-of-the-art modern facility

that was erected in 2004, the museum houses more than 2,200 objects in its permanent collection, and is the largest art exhibition space between New Orleans and Houston. The Hilliard serves a wide range of educational and cultural needs by fostering cross-disciplinary intellectual discourse on campus and throughout the region. At the core of the Hilliard's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit the art of our time while celebrating the great diversity of Louisiana's heritage.

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