



Bill Viola

David A. Ross, Bill Viola, Lewis Hyde, Kira Perov

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Bill Viola (b. 1951) is widely acknowledged as the leading video artist on the international scene. His video installations--total environments that envelop the viewer in image and sound--employ sophisticated state-of-the-art technologies and are distinguished by their precision and direct simplicity. Viola's single-channel videotapes have been distributed and broadcast around the world, while his writings have been published and anthologized for international readers.

Since the early 1970s, Viola has used video to explore the phenomena of sense perception as an avenue to self-knowledge. Clearly at odds with the cynicism of his age, his works focus on universal human experiences--birth, death, the unfolding of consciousness--and have roots in Eastern and Western art as well as Sufism, Christian mysticism, and Zen Buddhism. Viola's achievement is that of an artist who began in a new field, unbounded by tradition and dogma, and who arrived, twenty-five years later, deeply enmeshed in a series of intersecting spiritual traditions, both ancient and contemporary.

This catalogue has been published in conjunction with "Bill Viola," the first major survey of the artist's work and the largest exhibition ever devoted to an individual video artist, organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art and curated by David A. Ross and Peter Sellars.

The book features a dynamic and visually rich selection of works from 1972 to 1996, in a presentation compiled by Kira Perov and Bill Viola, with written descriptions by the artist, and a conversation between Viola and poet/scholar Lewis Hyde on the spiritual roots and cultural traditions underlying Viola's art. There is also an overview of the artist's achievement by David A. Ross, Whitney Museum director, who has been involved with Viola's work since its beginning and, as the first museum curator of video art, has played a major role in the history and development of the field.

An extensive catalogue of works, exhibition history, bibliography, and chronology is also included. 272 illustrations, 198 in full-color.

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