

**BILL VIOLA: THE MOST IMPORTANT
EXHIBITION OF VIDEO INSTALLATION
PRESENTED AT THE MUSÉE D'ART
CONTEMPORAIN, STARTING JANUARY 22**

Montréal, January 12, 1993. The Musée d'art contemporain presents from January 22 to March 14, the **BILL VIOLA** exhibition. Six video installations as well as videos by one of the most important artists in the video field who, in a twenty-year career, has had over forty solo exhibitions and as many international group exhibitions. Almost half the Musée's exhibition space has been set aside in order to show the largest video exhibit in its history.

Throughout his career, Bill Viola has gained international recognition for his mastery of video, for his virtuosity and the sheer beauty of his work, his participation this year at the Documenta of Kassel in Germany having made an outstanding impression. Since the 1970's, this American artist has created installations and videos that deal with the mystery of human consciousness through images that are familiar though often misleading. Essentially, the artist is examining the broken link between man and nature.

An invitation to explore one's inner world

Much like Bill Viola's videos, his installations invite the viewer to search for different levels of consciousness and push the limits of his perception of reality. His works are very often associated with sleep and dreams much like the installation, *The Sleepers*, which Montrealers had the opportunity to see last May on the occasion of the inaugural exhibition *Pour la suite du Monde*, and which is now a part of the Musée's collection. The artist shows in his work a marked interest for the myths of other cultures exploring distant places, rites and traditions practiced by aboriginal peoples.

According to Josée Bélisle, the curator responsible for the exhibition, Bill Viola is "a geographer/radiographer of physical and psychological terrains... Whether taken in an urban setting or among primitive tribes, near oceans, in the African desert or on the North American prairies, whether drawn from the clinical coldness of a hospital or the wild bliss of a zoo, all these images constitute moving, lasting reminders of the fragility of being, of individual alienation. "

The technology involved in the six installations of the exhibition is often quite complex. One of Bill Viola's objectives is, however, to make technology invisible in his works. But beyond this, the artist provides the viewer with a strong inner experience: a knowledge of oneself taken from the images of the world that sleep within him. This is what the viewer will find himself thinking about in *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House*, 1982; *Science of the Heart*, 1983; *Passage*, 1987; *The Sleep of Reason*, 1988; *Slowing Turning Narrative*, 1992 and *Heaven and Earth*, 1992.

Heaven and Earth, 1992, is a work dedicated to Bill Viola's mother who passed away in 1991 and to his second son born nine months later. The images on the two monitors face each other without touching. The monitor on top shows a wide angle shot of an old woman nearing death while the lower one focuses on a newborn baby. The images are silent and suggest how life and death simultaneously reflect and contain one another.

Science of the Heart, 1983 is an installation in which a brass bed is placed in a large, dark room. The video image of a human heart beating is projected near the headrest. It accelerates to attain greater intensity, slowing down to a normal rhythm, then becoming extremely slow and eventually resting in silence as a still image. The bed refers to birth, sex, sleep and dreaming, sickness and death. The heart, on the one hand, represents the rhythm of life and on the other, stillness, suggesting pre-birth and death.

In addition to the six installations, six videos will be shown in the Video Gallery of the Musée. Bill Viola will comment on his latest work, *The Passing*, 1991, at a special presentation in the Multimedia Room on January 22 at 5 p.m.

This exhibit is accompanied by an 80-page catalogue with some 36 colour illustrations.

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Organized by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, the *Bill Viola* exhibition includes the video installation, *Slowly Turning Narrative*, 1992, a work co-commissioned by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, in Richmond, thanks to the financial support of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal organization, and the Circuit City Stores.

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