



## PRESS RELEASE

COPENHAGEN CONTEMPORARY PRESENTS

# BILL VIOLA

*Inverted Birth* (2014)  
29.08.2017–26.11.17

Copenhagen Contemporary (CC) is pleased to present American artist Bill Viola's latest large scale work *Inverted Birth* (2014) for the first time in Denmark. Bill Viola is recognised as a pioneer in the medium of video art, known for his iconic, large-scale, slow-motion immersive video works produced over a 40-year career. *Inverted Birth* is a prime example of how Viola's technically innovative installations have transcended the video genre. Towering to a monumental height of 5 meters, *Inverted Birth* explores the power of human emotions and the very nature of our existence; life, death, birth and rebirth. "Birth is not a beginning, death is not an end," as Viola has remarked, quoting from Chuang Tzu (370–287 BC).

### INVERTED BIRTH

Bill Viola's installations depict human beings under extreme pressure, ascending and descending, in water and fire, in motion and at rest. His images are strikingly beautiful, composed by the hand of a master in control of a wide range of tools and a rich palette, creating a direct emotional appeal to the heart of the viewer.

Viola writes about his latest work: " ...*Inverted Birth* depicts five stages of awakening through a series of violent transformations. A man stands in the darkness, drenched in black fluid, the sound of drips punctuating the hollow sound of an empty space. Gradually the fluid begins to rise and as the movement escalates, the flow upward becomes a roaring deluge. The dark despair of black turns to fear as the liquid changes to red but the man remains strong. With the flow of white liquid comes relief and nurturing, followed by the purification of cleansing water. Finally, a soft mist brings acceptance, awakening, and birth. The fluids represent the essence of human life: earth, blood, milk, water, and air, and the life cycle from birth to death, here inverted into a transformation from darkness to light."

CC's Project Director Jens Erik Sørensen, who has a long professional friendship with Bill Viola, comments:

*"For many years I have been a big admirer of Bill Viola's amazing and unique video art. It is therefore a great honour to be able to present Inverted Birth here at CC, right in the centre of the Danish capital. For Denmark and Danish art museums it was an important step forward, when ARoS Museum in collaboration with the New Carlsberg Foundation, back in 2001, acquired Bill Viola's five screen installation: Five Angels for the Millennium (2001). It was Bill Viola's first representation in Denmark, and with Inverted Birth we are now able to present one of his latest big scale video works."*

## ABOUT BILL VIOLA

Bill Viola was born in New York in 1951 and graduated from Syracuse University in 1973. A seminal figure in the field of video art, he has been creating installations, films, sound environments, flat panel video pieces and works for concerts, opera and sacred spaces for over four decades. Viola represented the US at the Venice Biennale in 1995. Other key solo exhibitions include: *Bill Viola. Electronic Renaissance*, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence; *Bill Viola. Installations*, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; *Bill Viola. Retrospective*, Guggenheim Bilbao (all 2017); *Bill Viola*, Grand Palais, Paris (2014); *Bill Viola, visioni interior*, Palazzo delle Esposizioni (2008); *Hatsu-Yume (First Dream)*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2006); *Bill Viola – Visions*, ARoS, Aarhus (2005); *The Passions*, J.Paul Getty Museum (2003) and *Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey*, The Whitney Museum of American Art (1997).

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 including XXI Catalonia International Prize (2009), the Praemium Imperiale from the Japan Art Association (2011), and was elected as an Honorary member to the Royal Academy, London in 2017.

## ABOUT KIRA PEROV

Kira Perov is Executive Director of Bill Viola Studio. She has worked closely with Bill Viola since 1979, managing, creatively guiding and assisting with the production of his video works and installations. She edits all Bill Viola publications and organizes and coordinates exhibitions of the work worldwide. Kira Perov earned her BA (Honors) in languages and literature from Melbourne University, Australia in 1973.

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**The exhibition will be open to members of the press Monday 28 August from 11.30–13.00.**

The press viewing will be followed by lunch in La Halle at Copenhagen Contemporary.

The artist will not be present, however his partner and collaborator Kira Perov (Bill Viola Studio director) will attend.

The official opening is Monday 28 August from 17.00–21.00.

Speeches by CC's Project Director Jens Erik Sørensen and Kira Perov.

Press kit and images are available for download from the CC <http://cphco.org/presse/>

**For attendance at press preview and lunch or interview request please contact no later than Tuesday 22 August:**

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