GETTY MUSEUM UNVEILS MAJOR EXHIBITION OF RECENT WORKS BY VIDEO ARTIST BILL VIOLA

International Tour of Bill Viola: The Passions will debut at the Getty Museum

January 24–April 27, 2003

NOTE: NEW OPENING DATE

Bill Viola
Silent Mountain (2001)
Video installation
Diptych: 40 3/16” (h) x 48” (w) x 3 1/2” (d)

LOS ANGELES—A large-scale exhibition of recent work by the pioneering video artist Bill Viola will premiere at the J. Paul Getty Museum on January 24, 2003 (note: new opening date) and remain on view until April 27 before embarking on an international tour. Bill Viola: The Passions will feature the debut of two new works, one of them jointly commissioned by the Getty Museum and the Getty Research Institute.

Never publicly displayed in Los Angeles, the 13 works in the exhibition include large projection pieces and smaller LCD and plasma flat panel displays exploring the human condition and its expansive range of emotions. Organized by the Getty Museum, Bill Viola: The Passions will travel to the National Gallery, London, from October 22, 2003 to January 4, 2004, and the Munich State Paintings Collection in the spring of 2004.

“We are proud to have collaborated with Bill Viola on this project,” said Deborah Gribbon, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum and vice president of the J. Paul Getty Trust. “Over the years Viola has used video to expand the concept of art as it’s presented by museums. Lately he’s done so using older art

—more—
as an inspiration, including paintings at the Getty. These new works will be an exciting discovery for everybody, even people who know Viola’s work.”

Based in Long Beach, California, Bill Viola (American, born 1951) is one of the most celebrated video artists working today. He has been producing influential art using film and video for 30 years, exploring themes of time, consciousness, and self-perception in works that are rooted in both Eastern and Western art and mystical traditions. Viola participated in the 1997–1998 Scholar Year at the Getty Research Institute on the theme “Representing the Passions.” Participants studied the ways in which strong emotions have been represented and classified in the past—one of the richest topics in the history of art and drama. Viola not only immersed himself in the literature, he frequented the Getty Museum’s galleries to study paintings in the collection. He later began to make new works, inspired by medieval and Renaissance devotional paintings, which he called The Passions (2000–2002), exploring ways in which the face and body can express an endless range of emotional states.

The exhibition at the Getty brings together for the first time the key works of The Passions and presents two new works in the series, including the latest, the Getty commission, Emergence (2002). The piece is based on a fresco painting of the Pietà by the 15th-century Italian artist Masolino that represents Christ half-length in the sarcophagus, being supported on either side by his mother and St. John. Emergence shows two women seated by a well from which a pale young man slowly rises to the surface; with increasing effort, they lift him from the water and lay him out on the ground. Shot in 35mm film, transferred to High-Definition video and greatly slowed, the image has a dazzling clarity that reinforces the poignancy of the act. A short film by Mark Kidel, commissioned by the Getty and titled Bill Viola and Emergence, will be shown at the Museum in connection with the exhibition. The film portrays the key stages of the making of Viola’s new piece and explores his sources and influences.

The second new work, Observance (2002), shows 18 performers moving forward one by one, reacting to a distressing sight, and retreating. Tightly framed and hypnotically paced, it is a moving study of individual expressions of mourning and loss within a community.

Other works featured in Bill Viola: The Passions include Silent Mountain (2001), a study of the onset and aftermath of an explosive emotional outburst that is also a moving visual record of the human capacity for pain and renewal, and Six Heads (2000), which examines six different emotional states—joy, sorrow, anger, fear, awe, and sleep or dream—expressed by the same actor on a single screen. In addition, one of Viola’s most ambitious installations to date, Five Angels for the Millennium (2001), fills a large gallery with video projections of a man plunging into water and floating, angel-like, accompanied by a mysterious and expansive landscape of sound.

—more—
Also in the exhibition is *The Quintet of the Astonished* (2000), commissioned by the National Gallery in London, which was inspired by its Hieronymus Bosch painting *Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns)*. A related work, *The Quintet of Remembrance* (2000), was acquired in 2001 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is the first major video installation in its collection.

“One great thing about Bill’s work is the personal response it elicits from people who don’t think they like contemporary art,” according to John Walsh, curator of the exhibition and director emeritus of the Getty Museum. “These pieces make a visceral and often spiritual connection. In looking at them, you have time to test and explore your own ways of feeling and responding to others.”

In 1995, Viola represented the United States at the 46th Venice Biennale with his critically acclaimed installation *Buried Secrets*, and he was also featured in the 2001 Biennale. In 1997, a mid-career retrospective *Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey* was shown at six museums including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Museum für Moderne Kunst and Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and The Art Institute of Chicago.


**Catalogue and Related Programming:** The short film, titled *Bill Viola and Emergence*, directed by award-winning British filmmaker Mark Kidel, will be shown in the Museum Lecture Hall daily, January 24 through April 27, every 15 minutes beginning on the hour, unless otherwise noted. The Museum will also offer a range of related programs including “conversation” lectures, Point-of-View Talks, a video festival, and a concert. Two books related to the exhibition will also be published. The Getty Museum’s book, also called *Bill Viola: The Passions*, is edited by John Walsh, with essays by Peter Sellars and Walsh, a conversation between Hans Belting and Bill Viola, sources and notes on the works by Viola, and visual documentation by Kira Perov. The Getty Research Institute will offer a separate publication based on the Scholar Year theme *Representing the Passions: Histories, Bodies, Visions*. Edited by Richard Meyer, the book will feature 13 essays, including a visual essay by Viola. The publications will be available in the Museum Bookstore, online at www.getty.edu, or by calling 800–223–3431.
Note to editors: color images available upon request.
For more information, call 310−440−7300 or visit www.getty.edu.

The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that features the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Grant Program. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs are based at the Getty Center in Los Angeles.

The J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center features European paintings, drawings, illuminated manuscripts, sculpture, decorative arts, and American and European photographs; changing exhibitions; and a wide range of programs for visitors of every age to enjoy including gallery talks, lectures, film screenings, concerts, and family activities, many offered in both English and Spanish.

Visiting the Getty Center:
The Getty Center is open Tuesday through Thursday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Mondays and major holidays.

Admission to the Getty Center is always free. Parking is $5 per car. No parking reservations needed on Saturdays and Sundays or after 4 p.m. on weekdays. College students with current school I.D. and those arriving by taxi, shuttle, motorcycle, bicycle, or bus (MTA #561) can visit without parking reservations at any time. Parking is based on availability. During peak holiday and vacation times, visitors may be directed to a free parking lot and shuttle service located nearby at Constitution Avenue and Sepulveda Boulevard.

Reservations are required for weekday parking before 4 p.m., event seating, and groups of 15 or more. Reservations are recommended for the Restaurant. Parking on surrounding streets is restricted. Please call 310−440−7300 (English or Spanish) for reservations and information. The TTY line for callers who are deaf or hearing impaired is 310−440−7305. Additional information is available on the Getty Web site at www.getty.edu.

Contact: Getty Communications Dept.
310−440−7360
communications@getty.edu