

UP NOW

Bill Viola

Grand Palais

Paris

Through July 21

This exhibition is the first significant survey show of Bill Viola's work since the Whitney Museum's 25-year retrospective in 1997. The show reveals a brilliant, mature artist still challenging himself and his viewers. Curator Jérôme Neutres, working with Viola's wife and collaborator, Kira Perov, chose 20 key pieces from 1977 to 2013.

More than any artist of his generation, Viola moved video beyond the limitations of a single-channel monitor and unwieldy sound. He works in video as if it were the equivalent of painting (in the way he manages light and color), or sculpture (in his much-imitated manner of incorporating monumentality into the medium). Exhibited in a dark room, each piece in the show, whether displayed on a screen 20 feet high or on a laptop, has equal impact.

Viola's early interest in music, and years spent playing with pianist and composer David Tudor after graduating from Syracuse University, contribute to his exquisite sense of timing, one that enables his works to sustain a viewer's attention through prolonged periods of relative inactivity. From the mesmerizing 1979 *Chott el-Djerid* (*A Portrait in Light and Heat*), shot in the Sahara desert and the Saskatchewan snow, to *Catherine's Room* (2001), a meditative picture of domestic activity reminiscent of Vermeer, to the 2005 *Tristan's Ascension*, conceived for the Wagner opera *Tristan and Isolde*, Viola's installations reward our patience and attention.

Viola's work appeals unapologetically



Bill Viola, *Going Forth By Day* (detail) from "The Deluge" (Panel 3), 2002, video/sound installation, 36 minutes. Grand Palais.

to our higher selves. Devoted for decades to the lessons of Zen masters, Sufi poets, and Gnostic Christians, he has never wavered from his faith in an art with its roots in the human desire for transcendence. At times, this has put him at odds with the contemporary mainstream. By embracing video as opposed to more traditional mediums, Viola challenges critics who consider spiritual art to be atavistic—even reactionary. In the cascades of water and towering walls of flame that have become identifiable features of Viola's work, it is almost impossible not to feel its potency. Viola operates with exalted aspirations and without cynicism—a very particular challenge to viewers, but one that is entirely welcome.

—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

Amos Gitai

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Pantin

Paris

This exhibition brought together two short films from the early 1970s by renowned Israeli artist and filmmaker Amos Gitai, juxtaposing them with a series of photo stills from the films. In it, snippets of textures, colors, and shapes substituted for linear narrative, evoking a mysterious and unspecified trauma.

Born in Haifa, Israel, in 1950, Gitai began making experimental works as an architecture student, using a Super 8 camera. He had it with him, later, while serving in the military during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, using film to weave together his memories and the complex of history of the Middle East.

Filed in Haifa, late at night, *Black & White* (1972) is a melange of impressions of fire, light, and movement. But the true heart of the show is *Before & After* (1974), which combines shots from both before and after the war. Fuzzy images of children at play are intercut with, among other images, the silhouette of a helicopter crossing overhead; the close-up, out-of-focus face of a handsome young soldier; and details emblematic of strife, like a torn, blood-stained jacket sleeve. Through these images, Gitai conjures an event that changed his life: a helicopter crash that nearly killed him and which he has often said inspired him to become a director.

The large-scale photographs, almost all 40 by 28 inches, are nearly abstract images in which one might detect a shadow, or the coat hanger holding Gitai's military



Amos Gitai, *After VII*, 1974/2014, pigment print on paper, 39 3/8" x 27 1/8". Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Pantin.

jacket in *Before & After*. Together, these evocative works create something like a haunting, stream-of-consciousness narrative, blurred and fragmentary memories distilling the essence of that life-transforming moment more than 40 years ago.

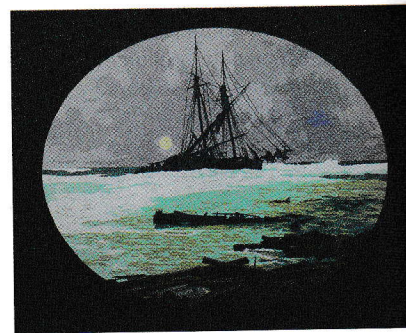
—Laurie Hurwitz

Matthew Benedict

Mai 36

Zurich

Thirteen paintings by Matthew Benedict capture the lives and myths of those New England seafarers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who faced the ocean's wrath. The genesis of this allegorical exhibition, titled "The Lost Island," was the story of Billingsgate Island, a once-thriving community of whalers off the coast of Cape Cod that fell prey to coastal erosion and "disappeared." Its mythical demise, attributed in folklore to a sea serpent, is depicted in *The Ghost and the Serpent* (*Billingsgate Light*, 1906).



Matthew Benedict, *Wreck at Wellfleet*, 2013, gouache, latex on wood image, 48" x 60". Mai 36.

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