

Art Museum exhibition to travel to Venice Biennale

By Dianne Cripe

The U.S. Information Agency has announced that "Bill Viola: Buried Secrets," curated by ASU Art Museum Director Marilyn Zeitlin, will represent the United States at the 1995 Venice Biennale in Italy.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for an international audience to take notice of Phoenix and the kind of art coming from the West," Zeitlin said. Viola resides in Long Beach, Calif.

"It is a significant honor for the museum and the university to serve as the organizer on behalf of the United States at an arts festival of this stature," said ASU President Lattie Coor. "It pleases us that Marilyn Zeitlin and her colleagues have been recognized in this manner and points to the quality of exhibitions organized by the ASU Art Museum."

Viola will create five new video-sound installation works for the five spaces of the United States Pavilion at the international art exposition.

Although each work is an independent unit, together they describe a journey, both physical and conceptual. Their themes are darkness-light, internal-external, past-present and matter-immaterial.

"Bill is one of the most important artists today," Zeitlin said. "The profundity of his content and the beauty of his work affect the viewer on an emotional and visceral level."

The content of Viola's work is drawn from ancient iconography and examines ritual practices from all over the world. In addition, his work is personal, describing in sound and image his experiences with and insights into birth and death.

"This exhibition deals with life passage issues rather than specific current events," Zeitlin said. "It seems particularly appropriate for an international exposition because it doesn't rely upon language. The cultural references are comprehensible and reverberate for everyone."

In "Veiling," parallel layers of scrim (translucent fabric) hang across the space of a white-walled gallery. Two projectors at opposite ends of the room project images into the loosely woven fabric. The images of human figures plunge into a illuminated pool at night, as viewed from underwater. The layers of fabric diffuse the light and the images dissipate in intensity and lose focus as they penetrate into the layers. The images eventually intersect as gossamer presences in the middle layers. Viewers passing by stir the fabric layers, moving the images.

"It is important that the U.S. be represented by work that uses a vocabulary that addresses large themes," Zeitlin said. "Bill uses the tools of new technology in a powerfully eloquent way."

Following its presentation at the Biennale, "Bill Viola: Buried Secrets" will be exhibited at the ASU Art Museum.

"I am very pleased to have had the support of the university in a project of this magnitude. The museum has a talented and ambitious staff that can meet this tremendous challenge," Zeitlin said. "I am also gratified that significant financial support has come from local sources as well as national foundations."

Viola's installation works have been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and numerous other American and European museums.

The Venice Biennale is the oldest international arts festival, celebrating its centennial in 1995. Twenty-seven freestanding pavilions represent countries from Europe, North and South America, Japan and several geographic regions. Although no schedule has been established, the festival is expected to run from June to October.

The Biennale is a public-private enterprise that raises funds from the private sector as well as receiving sizable contributions from the Commune of Venice.

Among the artists who have represented the United States are Louise Bourgeois (1993), Jenny Holzer (1990), Jasper Johns (1988) and Robert Rauschenberg (1965).

ASU Art Museum, in the Nelson Fine Arts Center, is on the corner of Mill Avenue and 10th Street in Tempe. Admission is free. Hours are 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday; and 1-5 p.m. Sunday.



Viola