

Espace Louis Vuitton Venezia presents

RENAISSANCE

**Carpaccio
Bill Viola**

24 January - 25 May 2014

Designed by the art historian Adrien Goetz and the exhibition curator Hervé Mikaeloff, *Renaissance* is the second exhibition at Espace Louis Vuitton Venezia. Following *Where Should Othello Go?* by Pompeo Molmenti & Tony Oursler, this unexpected confrontation between Vittore Carpaccio (c. 1465/1470-1525/1526), a great master of Venetian art, and Bill Viola, a video artist internationally renowned (born in 1951), offers a new opportunity to bring contemporary art face to face with the artistic heritage of La Serenissima, to reveal evocative connections and to celebrate the extraordinary vitality and contemporary relevance of classical art through the rediscovery of two masterpieces of Venetian art.

Separated by more than five hundred years, Vittore Carpaccio's paintings and Bill Viola's videos show similar questions and preoccupations: the meaning of life, the paradoxical resemblance of birth and death, the importance of movement and the expression of emotions, suspended time, ever-shifting colour –motifs and similar points of interest that are invitations to grapple with these magnificent works in a novel way, with their common theme of "renaissance".

Or rather "renaissances" since this term is to be understood in manifold senses: religious resurrection, spiritual renewal, miraculous reappearances and spectacular restorations of paintings believed lost or non-existent, a glittering period in the history of art, and, perhaps a final significance, a feeling of intense regeneration experienced by the viewer faced with these masterpieces of past and present...

The presentation of Carpaccio's paintings is all the more exceptional and moving in that they have only very recently been definitively attributed to Carpaccio (2012 for the *Madonna and Child* and 2013 for the *Pietà*) made possible after meticulous restoration work funded by Louis Vuitton as part of its partnership with the Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia (MUVE).

Vittore Carpaccio

Born in Venice then at the height of its golden age, a child of the first Renaissance, a pupil of Antonello da Messina and of the brothers Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, open to the inspiration of Flemish painting, Vittore Carpaccio established himself as a major figure of the Venetian school through the expressive realism of his touch, his gift for narrative (as in the series devoted to the lives of Saint Ursula and Saint George) and the intensity of his colour tones.

Moreover, the paintings exhibited here show the advent of this distinctive style. Only two years separate the *Madonna and Child* (1487) from the *Pietà* (1489), but one can clearly note the development of the young painter's style (he was less than 30 years old), his mastery of the expression of movement and the subtlety of emotions together with his increasingly sustained attention to nuances of colour. In both works, despite the religious nature of the subjects, there is a sense of the same humanist questioning about the meaning of life, through painting its great events: birth and death.

Bill Viola

Separated by more than five hundred years, similar questions motivate the work of contemporary artist Bill Viola (born in the United States in 1951). A pioneer and genius of video art, he explores the themes of birth and death from the angle of their **reversibility and continuous passage from one to the other**. The videos shown illustrate this underlying perspective through a cyclical conception of time. *Eternal Return* (2000) presents on two screens a figure diving upside down who enters the water with all the explosive violence of an initiation rite or a spiritual transformation. In *Emergence* (2002), we believe to assist to the miracle of the Resurrection (Viola is inspired by a fresco of the Pre-Renaissance Italian artist Masolino da Panicale), but the body of the naked man who looks like the Christ collapses finally died.

The technique of extreme slow motion – a veritable signature of Viola's work – allows the viewer to understand something he does not usually perceive: the tiniest nuances of movement and emotions. By this means the video artist makes himself a painter too, for, by the infinitesimal cutting of scenes that in reality last no more than a minute, he offers thousands of different pictures to contemplate. The water itself is a vital metaphor for Bill Viola who as a child, almost drowned: *"I sank to the bottom like a stone, opened my eyes and saw the most beautiful world I had ever seen. (...) Suddenly, a large hand grabbed me and dragged me out of the water. I realised what had happened and cried."* Undoubtedly the aquatic reverberations in his work will find new echos in Venice.

Adrien Goetz is a writer and art historian and the author of many published works and novels including *Intrigue à Venise* (Grasset-Le Livre de Poche) published in 2012.

Hervé Mikaeloff is a contemporary art adviser and exhibition curator.

La Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia (MUVE), was founded in 2008 to administer and highlight the immense cultural and artistic heritage of the Civic Museums of Venice. It manages the following eleven museums: Palais des Doges, Museo Correr, Clock Tower, Ca'Rezzonico, Palazzo Mocenigo museum, Carlo Goldoni's House, Ca' Pesaro, Palazzo Fortuny, the Glass museum, the Lace museum and the natural history museum.

A committed and passionate sponsorship scheme and local cultural action leads Louis Vuitton to fund each year the restoration of works belonging to the museums managed by the Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia (MUVE). Once restored, they can again be presented to the public.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Espace Louis Vuitton Venezia, Calle del Ridotto 1353, 30124 Venezia.

***Renaissance* Exhibition**

January 23rd 2014: private views for journalists only.

From January 24th to May 25th 2014: exhibition.

Open 10.00 am to 7.30 pm Monday to Saturday and 10.00 am to 7.30 pm Sunday.