



For Immediate Release

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BILL VIOLA DONATES SELF PORTRAIT TO THE UFFIZI GALLERY

Artist continues tradition that dates back to the 16th century

PALM BEACH, FL (December 27, 2013) – Contemporary artist Bill Viola has donated his video work, “Self Portrait, Submerged,” created earlier this year, to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy. The donation was made possible through the efforts of the Amici degli Uffizi in Florence, sister organization to the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery, based in Palm Beach, Florida.

Viola presented the work to the Uffizi Gallery during a ceremony that took place at the former Church of San Pier Scheraggio on December 17, 2013. Alongside Viola during the ceremony were Antonio Natali, director of the Uffizi Gallery and Countess Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti, president of both Friends of the Uffizi Gallery and Amici degli Uffizi. The work remained there until December 22, 2013 and will now be mounted in its permanent location in the Vasari Corridor of the Uffizi Gallery.

“Self Portrait, Submerged,” 2013, is part of Viola’s Water Portraits series and is an exploration of the theme of water and its interaction with the human body, a continuance of his long exploration of the water element. It depicts the artist relaxed, immersed in water, only the movement and noise of the waterfall animate its movements. The New York-based artist does not move and keeps his eyes closed while time passes slowly.

In his statement about the work, Viola writes, “Water represents change, the passage of time (ever flowing), eternity, and is a metaphor for the unborn, for birth and rebirth, baptism, and reflection. Water is a powerful force that can never be contained.”

Viola is the most recent in a long line of historically significant artists that have donated their self-portraits to the Uffizi Gallery, beginning in the 16th century and including masters such as Filippo Lippi, Rembrandt, Velazquez, Delacroix and Ensor, as well as contemporary artists, including Jan Fabre.

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Friends of the Uffizi Gallery was founded in Palm Beach, Florida in 2006 as the sister organization to Italy's *Amici degli Uffizi*. That organization was created in 1993 in Florence, Italy to raise funds to aid the museum after a terrorist bombing caused significant structural damage to the building and badly damaged or destroyed a number of irreplaceable artworks. Today, under the direction of president Countess Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti, the two organizations together raise awareness about the Uffizi's historical significance and raise funds for restorations through educational outreach and special events. In 2013, the Uffizi Gallery was named the, "world's greatest gallery" by *The Times of London* and is listed as one of the world's top 10 museums in *National Geographic*. For more, please visit:

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