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Who is Aros - who is Bill...

by [Asbjorn Lonvig](#)

Yesterday I visited Aros.

Who is Aros?

What is Aros?

An operating system to an Amiga computer?

The best of Scottish Music, Books, Culture and Heritage?

A golf club in Västerås in Sweden?

An Amsterdam based sextet playing rhythmically compelling blend of jazz, classical and new music ideas?

A Danish insurance company?

Or?

Yes, all of the above.

But.

Aros is also the ancient name of the capital of a peninsula called Jutland, which is a province of Denmark.

Today the city is called Aarhus.

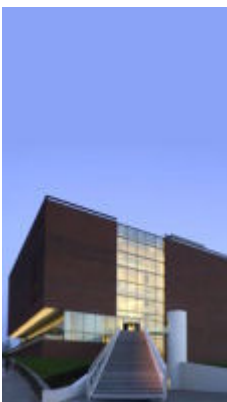
And Aros is an art museum.

I live near by.

According to the chairman of the board, Neil Kzokoss, Chicago Athenaeum, Museum of Architecture and Design, who visited me once, my house is located "in the middle of nowhere".

Well, your expectations to an art museum in the middle of nowhere in a province of Denmark might not be high.

However, stay tuned.



And when you look at this art museum from outside it is nothing but a huge cube.

A huge box.

A huge brick.

Ok, there are a few architectural goodies when you look closer.

A ramp from the street to the lounge.

A lift in a tube.

Huge windows.

And according to well informed sources there is some very expensive but unfortunately invisible masonry.

But.



At the moment you enter the lounge, your breath is taken away.

Where am I?

I'm totally confused.

Suddenly I am indeed not in the middle of nowhere.

I'm in New York.

And the architect is renowned Frank Lloyd Wright.

I'm at 1071 Fifth Avenue at 89th Street in New York.

1071 Fifth Avenue at 89th Street in New York is of course the address of Guggenheim Museum.

Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece on Fifth Avenue was

built in 1959.

Amazing how Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture is contemporary.

In Chicago I saw several of his houses that looked as if they were built yesterday.

One was from 1909.

Frank Lloyd Wright had a rare gift, sure.

Divinity?

If you did not know that Frank Lloyd Wright had passed away

and if you did not know that the architects of Aros were Morten Schmidt, Bjarne Hammer og John Lassen

you surely had any reason to assume that Aros was a Frank Lloyd Wright creation.



In my memory, Guggenheim Museum New York is white. And the sky above is blue, blue, blue.

That's how I remember it from my visits there.

But I saw a picture of the museum recently. It was sadly yellowish and the sky above was smoggy.

To the left: "blue sky" by Asbjorn Lonvig
Acrylic on canvas
79.2 x 54.8 inches
US\$ 12,000
Edition 5

advertisement

Who is Bill?

Bill is not the most successful police drama on British television.
Bill is not he who is known from Microsoft with the surname Gates.
Bill is not Bill of Rights. Amendment I.
Bill is not the former president of the United States.



Bill is [Bill Viola](#).
Bill is a video artist.
Bill was born in New York.
He studied at the College of Visual and Performing Arts of Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, graduating with a B.F.A.
After that he worked with various projects.
For example he worked with an avant-garde music group.
The National Endowment for the Arts awarded Bill a Visual Artist Fellowship for his work in video. He received a Video Artist Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation. The

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation presented Bill with a video stipend.....And his biography goes on like this.....of course he has exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Guggenheim Museum in New York, Berlin and Bilbao have shown his works.

This world artist exhibits at Aros.

The exhibition is called [Bill Viola's Visions](#) and it takes place right now at [ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum](#) in collaboration with [Guggenheim Bilbao](#), [Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York](#) and [Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin](#).

On beforehand I read this in the catalog (....which actually is a book):

The five pieces comprising Bill Violas Visions strike up certain fundamental themes that characterize Viola's art, such as his fascination with birth, life, death an rebirth. Inspired particularly by Buddhism's concept of reincarnation, Viola treats existence as a cycle where the human being is born, lives, dies, and is born anew.....

The next sentence I did not quit understand but it might be explained here.....
Bill Viola generates visions. He does so with visually intense images, that wagger our physically concrete reality with an underlying metaphysical world.....

Or in short deep Bill.

I was ready to see deep Bill's art.
I too had seen an interview with a curator from Aros in TV, she was fascinated by the technical aspects of Bill's exhibition: Huge screens, high stereo sounds etc.

1. - Crossing



I entered the room.
No light at all.
With a screen in the middle of the room.
A screen that was not as huge as I was told
in TV.
I forgot everything about technical aspects as
a man began walking in slow motion far away.
Slow, slow motion.
I just stirred - totally forgetting how long the man's crossing lasted.
As the man came close he stood still.
A tiny flame appeared.
It grew and grew and grew.
High sounds of thundering fire.
The man burns.
To ashes.
Silence.
Nothing left.

2. - Going Forth by Day

Five huge projections in one room each showing a video film.
Stereo sounds from the 5 video films.
Watching 5 deep Bill video films in one time was a tremendous challenge.



The deluge.

At the wall facing you as you enter the room.
The images are shown on the wall, like a fresco.
A door and 4 windows.
A beggar.
Furniture are being removed from the house.
Pedestrians walk faster and faster.
Noise from the street.

Panic. People hurry out of the door. Some do not manage

to get out before cascades of water catch them and rush them out on the street, dead. Cascades of water from the windows.
High sounds of water.



The voyage.

A dollhouse like house at the top of a hill. A dying man is in a bed. Two relatives are mourning. A watch sits outside. Removers and a bargeman are loading a barge.

The barge is at the lake shore.

The lake is calm. No wind. It seems artificial.

The two relative leave the dollhouse. The watch leaves the

hose. The relatives return back to the hose. The door is locked. The man in the hose has died.

Two elderly people say good by to each other on the lake shore. And they both enters the barge and sail across the lake.



First light.

Rocks and a pond.

Exhausted rescuers load an ambulance with stuff.

The ambulance leaves.

(I have forgotten the chronology)

It rains cats and dogs.

A woman is offered a blanket.

Three men and a woman go to sleep.

A woman comes out of the pond and flies into the sky.



The path.

People are passing by. In slow motion, all of them in the same direction. Going to or

coming from a picnic.

Bringing things.

This goes on and on. The image is huge, it is on the long side of the room, from one end to another.

Fire Birth

The 5th projection was on fire every time I looked.

Contours of a figure emerged now and then.

A baby?

But only to fade away.

By the way - Bill was inspired by the renaissance master Luca Signorelli's Judgment Day frescoes

in Ovate in Italy. Giotto's has been of great inspiration to Bill, too. Giotto's greatest masterpiece is a giant 3-dimentional image, which you phisically enter like Going Forth by Day.

Going Forth by Day lasted for half an hour.

Afterwards I had a feeling that I had to watch every single video film for half an hour, but sure that's not Bill Viola's intention.

One half hour, period.

I had to take break.

Why?

It was too much.

Of what?

Can't say.

Alertness maybe.

Emotional bombardment probably.

I went to the nice Italian like Art Café and had a salad and two bread, a mineral water and a cup of coffee.

3. - Surrender



A single screen work.

A man in red.

His face is distorted with pain.

A woman in blue.

Her face is distorted with pain.

The man and the woman are reflected in the surface of a pool of water.

Now and then they bend forward and plunge.

The water runs off their faces.

Tears?

Their expressions become more and more painful.

And.

They dissolve.

4. - The Messenger



More water.

A naked man in the water.

He is submerged in water.

He comes to the surface.

Again.

And again.

And again.

Bill has told us about a boyhood incident in which he nearly drowned.

Bill recalls the episode as a peace filled, poetic experience.

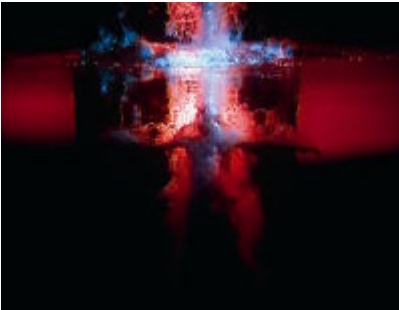
To suggest itself as a metaphor for human existence?

Messenger?

The man assumes the role of a messenger between the concrete reality and a reality

beyond?

5. - Five Angels for the Millennium



Aros's own installation.

5 projections.

Water, water, water, water and water.

Things, humans descend and ascend.

I can't say so much about these 5 works.

Mentally closed down.

No more emotional bombardment for this day.

Some other day maybe.

After Exhibition

I was tired.

Totally exhausted from concentration and impressions.

I went to the information desk and introduced myself:

I have an appointment - I want to talk to the Communication Manager.

We had a cup of coffee in the Italian like Art Café.

We talked about Bill's exhibition.

About Bill's exhibition being exhausting.

We talked about Aros.

About Aros being a wonderful place.

People call it Aros.

I call it "**Little Guggenheim**".

Boy



Before I finish this story about Aros and Bill, I want to show you something you will not see anywhere else.

It's the [Aros Aarhus Kunstmuseum landmark](#)

"boy" by Ron Mueck

Height: 5 meters, that's 16.4 feet

photos by Poul Ib Henriksen and ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum in collaboration with Guggenheim Bilbao, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York and Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin

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