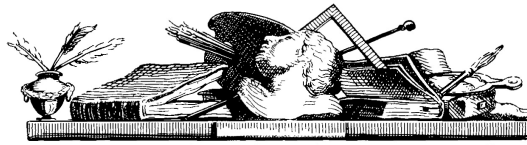


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Moving images hard to shift

Good to watch: but collectors are reluctant to buy video art

To judge by art fairs and biennials, video is the hottest medium of our times. Bill Viola's three-screen *Ocean Without a Shore*, 2007, is currently dominating Venice's church of San Gallo at the city's biennial, courtesy of Haunch of Venison, and at this year's Art Basel there are a plethora of plasmas, as well as Art Unlimited's curated video show.

Yet in the secondary market, video remains on the periphery. Viola does modestly at auction: only five of his works have passed the \$100,000 mark, a low sum in today's heated market. At the recent record-breaking auctions in New York, pieces by Viola and video-artist Paul Pfeiffer were bought in at Phillips de Pury. At Art Basel, Viola's *Silent Mountain*, 2001, a diptych at González gallery (R2), is selling on the secondary market for \$500,000 and has yet to find a buyer.

Compared with traditional art purchases—reassuringly silent and still—video art presents immediate challenges. Not least because the works are often set in the alienating context of a dark, curtained room.

Jane Corkin of the Corkin gallery (U7) admits there is a resistance to video art but compares this to initial reluctance in the photography market: "People have always been put off by new technology at first, but the barriers are beginning to break down for



Scene 6: *A New Song*, 2006, from Sharon Switzer's "Falling from Grace" series

video too," she says. As if to illustrate her point, she has hung the work of Canadian video artist Sharon Switzer ("Falling from Grace" series, \$4,500 per film, illustrated) directly above a Moholy-Nagy 1926 untitled photograph (an image that exposes objects to light rather than using a camera), viewed as too experimental in its time but selling today for \$175,000.

Nevertheless, buyers of video art are still primarily museums, who have more space for installations and are probably in part attracted to the lower pricing points. Gelink Gallery has sold David Maljkovic's transfixing *Scene*

for *New Heritage III*, 2006 (Art Unlimited, C5) to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam for €40,000 (\$52,000).

Deitch gallery (M5) has a work (*My Old Piano*, 2006) that could, arguably, ease the transition from still to moving art. A piano, each key of which initiates a different film by Michel Gondry—director of the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*—is on sale for €35,000 (\$45,500). "The piece is immediately interactive, offering a context for video art that moves away from the dark room," says gallery director Suzanne Geiss.

Melanie Gerlis