

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a white, textured, long-sleeved dress with a square neckline. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a solid teal color with a faint, blurred image of a church spire and greenery in the lower-left corner.

ROBERT WILSON

VIDEO PORTRAITS

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A STILL LIFE IS A REAL LIFE

By Robert Willson

The video portraits can be seen in the three traditional ways that artists construct space.

If I hold my hand in front of my face, I can say it is a portrait. If I see my hand at a distance, I can say it is part of a still life, and if I see it from across the street, I can say that it is part of a landscape.

In constructing these spaces, we see an image which can be thought of as a portrait. If we look carefully, this still life is a real life. And in a way, if we think about it and look at them long enough, the mental spaces become mental landscapes.

These portraits stem from a work I did in the 1970s, VIDEO 50. I made various portraits, including surrealist writer Louis Aragon, socialite Helene Rochas, a duck, a priest I met in a bar, museum director Pontus Hulten, Sony CEO Akito Morita and France's Minister of Culture Michel Guy. Those portraits could be seen on TV, in galleries, museums, subways, hotel lobbies, airports, or even on the face of a wristwatch.

I imagine the video portraits being seen in public spaces, as well as at home. At home, they are a kind of window in the room or a fire in the fireplace.

Often people ask me, "What are the ideas behind the images?" I do not interpret my work. Interpretation is for others. To fix a meaning to a work limits its poetry and the possibility of other ideas. They are personal, poetic statements of different personalities.

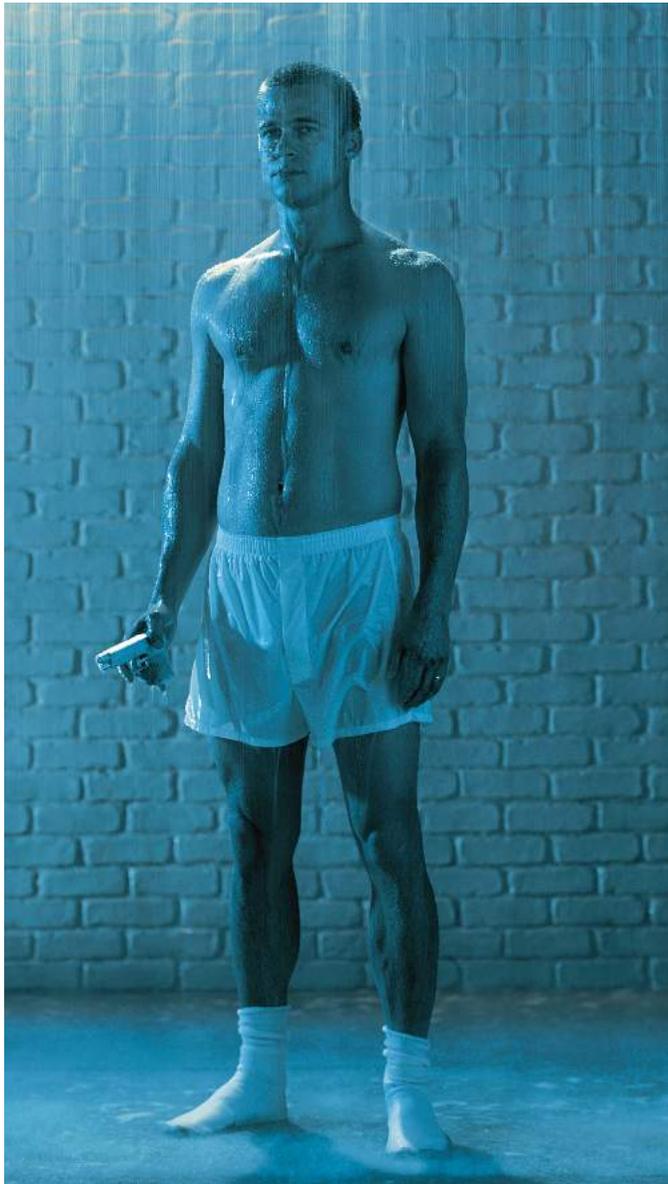
A man from the street, an animal, a child, superstars, gods of our time.



*Her Imperial Majesty
Empress Farah Pahlavi*
HD video seamless loop
2006
Music by Popul Vuh



Lady Gaga:
Mlle. Caroline Rivière
HD video seamless loop
2013
Music by Michael Galasso



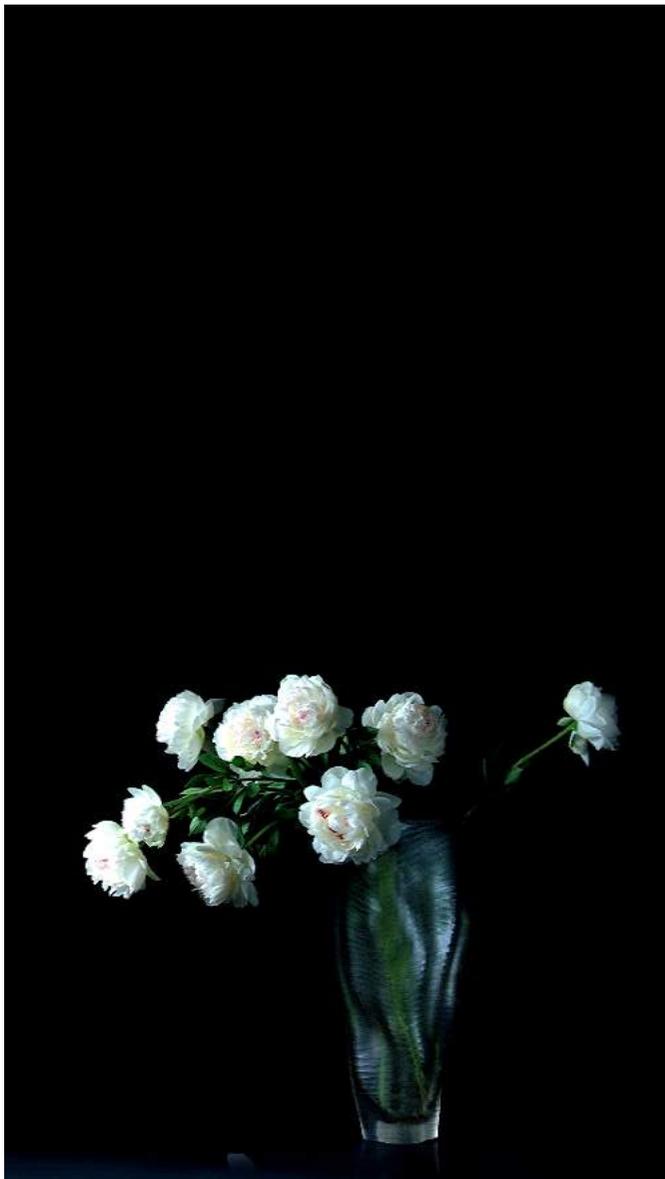
Brad Pitt
HD video seamless loop
2004
Music by Michael Galasso
Voice & Text by Christopher Knowles



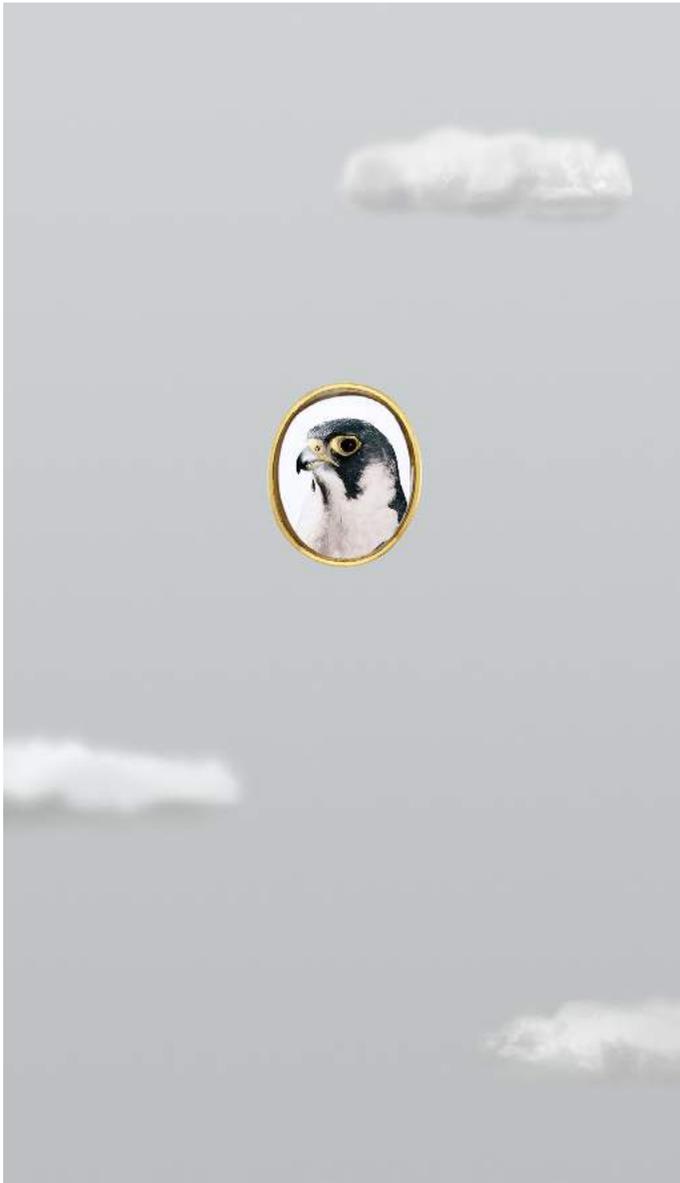
Johnny Depp
HD video seamless loop
2006
Music by Hans Peter Kuhn
Voice by Robert Wilson
Text by T.S. Eliot and Heiner Mueller



Wouter (Finch)
UHD video seamless loop
2017
Music by Johann Sebastian Bach
Commissioned by Hermès



Azaleas
HD video seamless loop
2010
Music by Tai Timbers
Vase by Massimo Micheluzzi



Guinevere (Peregrine Falcon)
UHD video seamless loop 2017
Music by Johann Sebastian Bach
Commissioned by Hermès



KOOL
HD video seamless loop
2006
Music by Weber
Arranged by Peter Cerone



Elk
UHD video seamless loop
2018
Score by Bear Kirkpatrick

The only way to truly experience theater is to be physically on one side of the proscenium or the other, or be a part of the more participatory theater where the proscenium has been dispensed with altogether. If these statements are true then what kind of legacy does a theater artist leave for future audiences? Video, film and photography are offered as documents of a performance but rarely come close to the three-dimensional experience; the sounds as they radiate through the theater, lighting as it frames a hand, the anticipation of the audience, the subtle gesture of the individual actor.

Robert Wilson is one of the rare artists who works across artistic media without being buoyed by one method of making. The process of creation transcends a single medium and instead finds outlet within the archetype of an opera, the architecture of a building, the stains in a watercolor, the design of a chair, the choreography of a dance, the rhythm of a sonnet, or the multiple dynamics revealed in a Video Portrait.

By incorporating a multitude of creative elements; lighting, costumes, make up, choreography, gesture, text, voice, set design, and narrative – the video portraits act as a complete synthesis of all the media in the realm of Wilson's art making. The medium is high-definition video but the form blurs time-based cinematography with the frozen moment of still photography. As in the layering nature of Wilson's creative process, the video portraits infuse references found in the histories of painting, sculpture, design, architecture, dance, theater, photography, television, film and contemporary culture. The final result on the screen resembles a photograph, but on closer inspection reveals Wilson's highly developed theatrical language in conjunction with the startling clarity and precision of the new video technology.

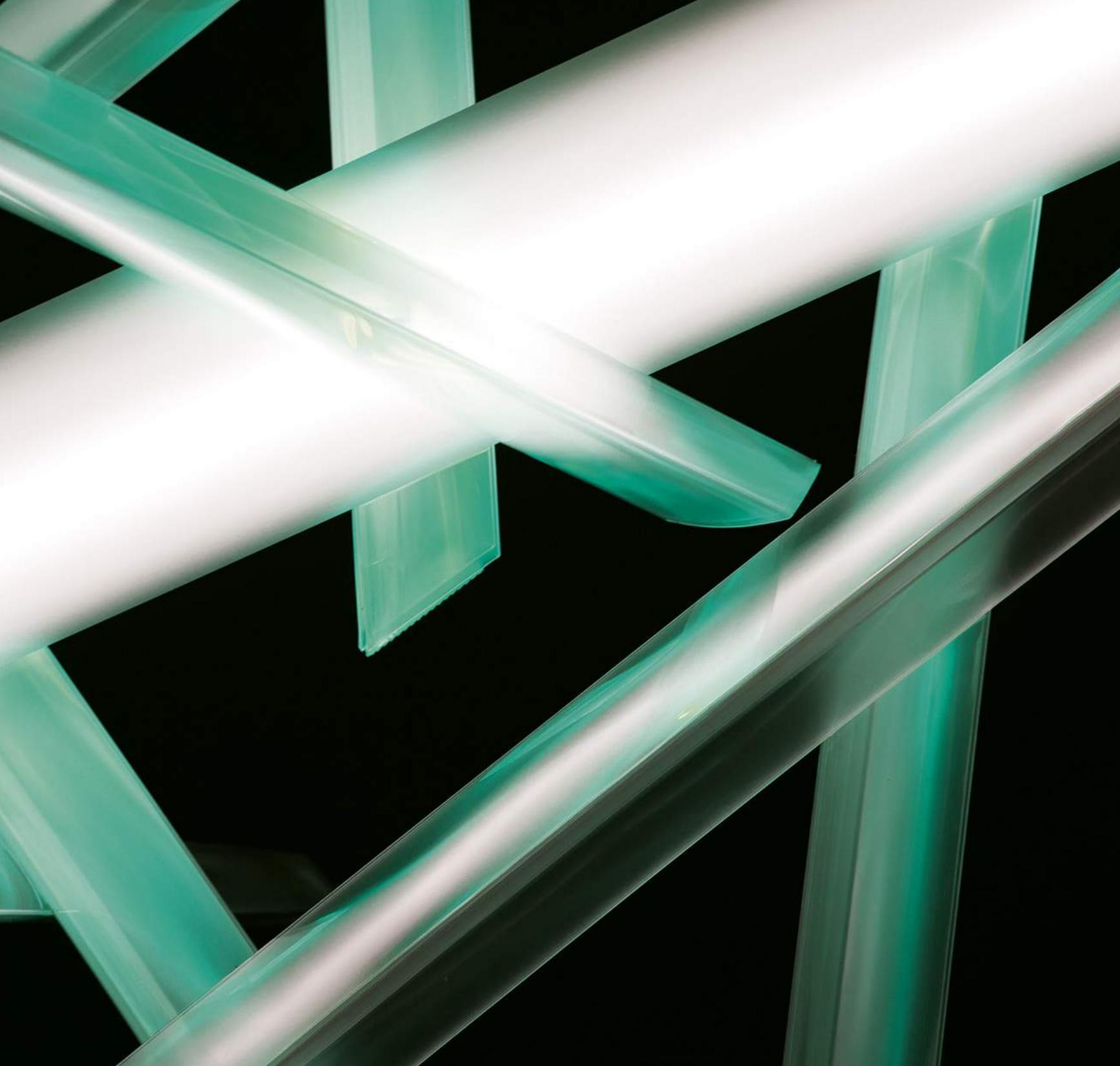
The positive response to the video portraits is owed to portraits captivating originality but also to the more populist nature the exhibition exudes – the child can experience a portrait just as thoughtfully as the academic, the patient can take away just as much as the impatient.

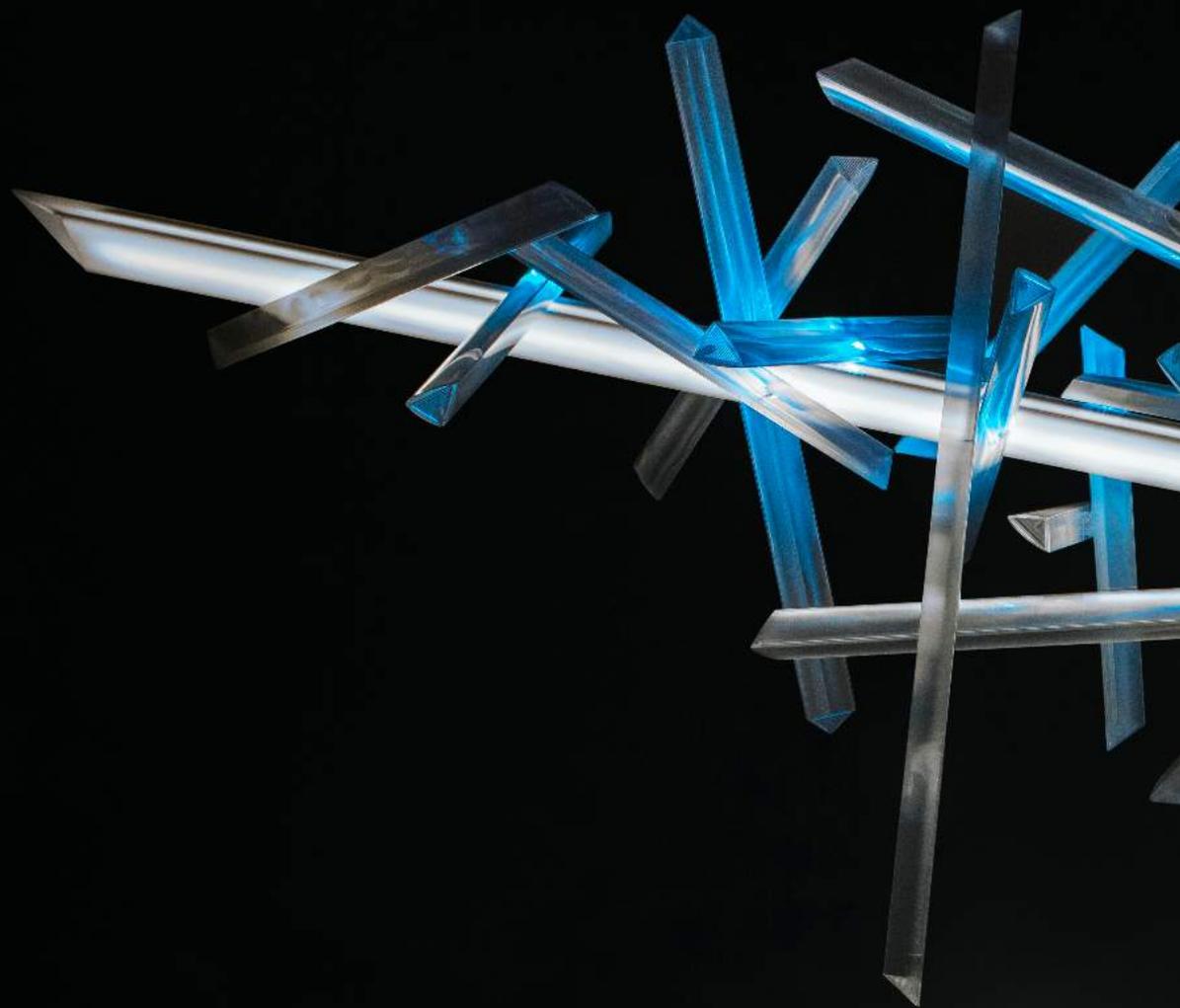
By Noah Khoshbin, Curator, RW Work and The Watermill Center

LA TRAVIATA

robert WILSON

La Traviata is a complete work of art: it is architecture, light, poetry, dance and movement. It is an imaginary scene that allows the observer to contemplate; the light evokes a calm that enhances the senses, making it easier to hear and perceive one's surroundings. Wilson designed the product on stage with the same approach he uses in all of his expressive vehicles: the work is the fruit of "the reduction of the languages of words, gestures and behaviors to their basic grammars, to the minimal structure of their complexity" (Achille Bonito Oliva, "Space Time" - SilvanaEditoriale, 2014). The result is completely abstract and non-interpretive, leaving the onlooker the chance to freely associate their own, imaginative universe. Light is space, and without it, nothing would have the same dimension.



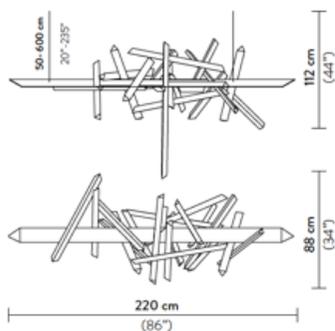


In the foreground, *La Traviata 220*, and in the background, *La Traviata 180*.
The central structure is made of contoured methacrylate and illuminated by LEDs.
The diffused, chromatic effects are created by LED RGB micro-sources spread throughout the center. Both of the light sources can be dimmed.



LA TRAVIATA

DIMENSIONS



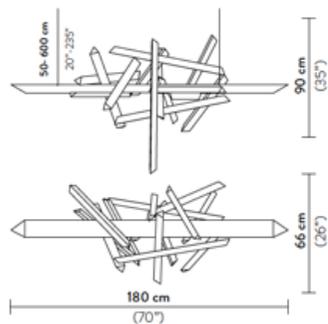
TITLE

LA TRAVIATA
SUSPENSION 220
DMX - PRISMA

PRODUCT

LIGHT SCULPTURE 220

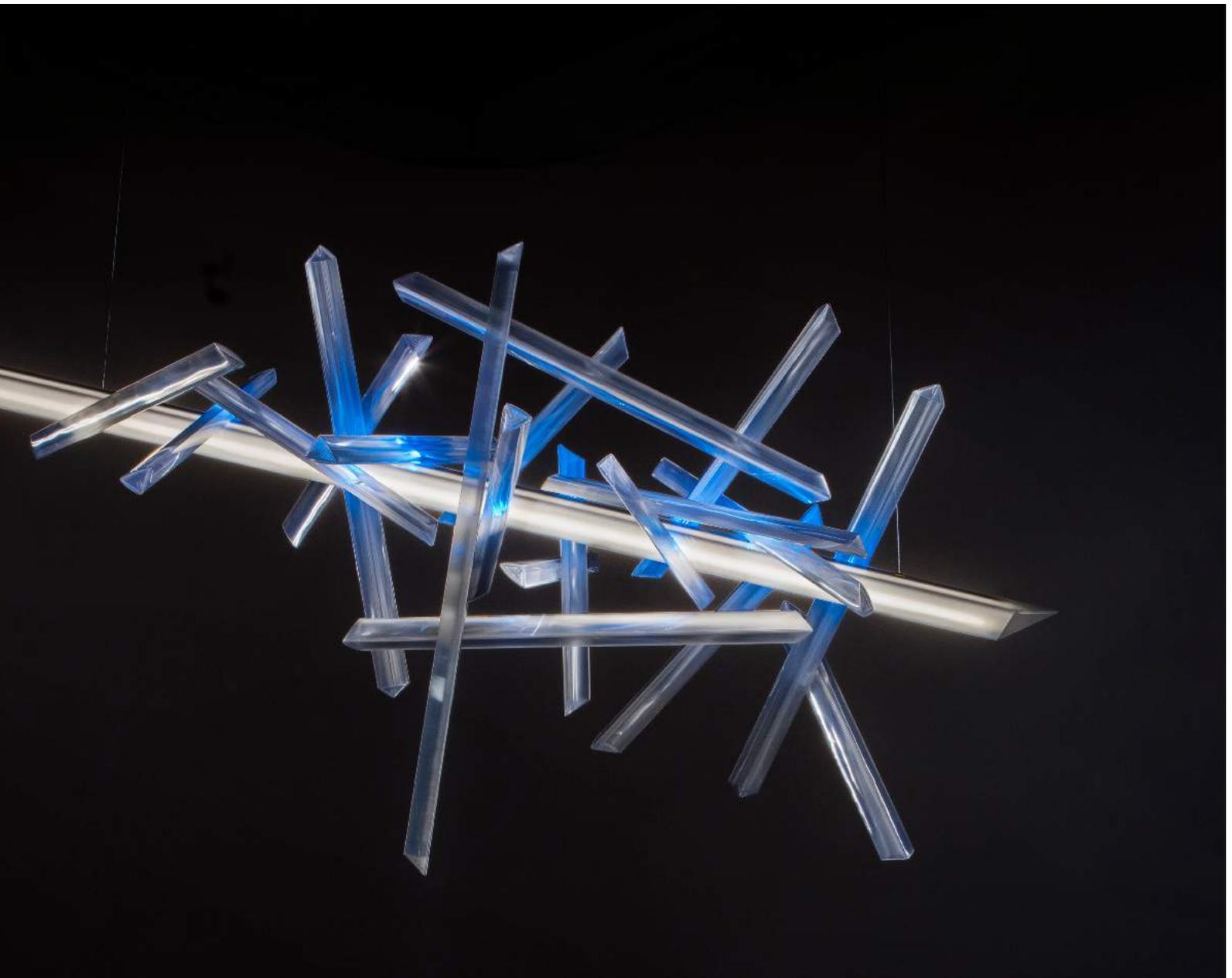
LED: 13 individually dimmable RGB
+ 1 MAIN LED: 100W - 100~240V
7500 Lumen - 2700 Kelvin
Dimmable with: Control System
Made of: Lentiflex®/ Methacrilate
With: DMX control included
Weight: net 20 kg - gross 77,50 kg
Package: 222 x 63 x 82 cm



LA TRAVIATA
SUSPENSION 180
DMX - PRISMA

LIGHT SCULPTURE 180

LED: 9 individually dimmable RGB
+ 1 MAIN LED: 75W - 100~240V
6000 Lumen - 2700 Kelvin
Dimmable with: Control System
Made of: Lentiflex®/ Methacrilate
With: DMX control included
Weight: net 19,5 kg - gross 78 kg
Package: 222 x 63 x 82 cm

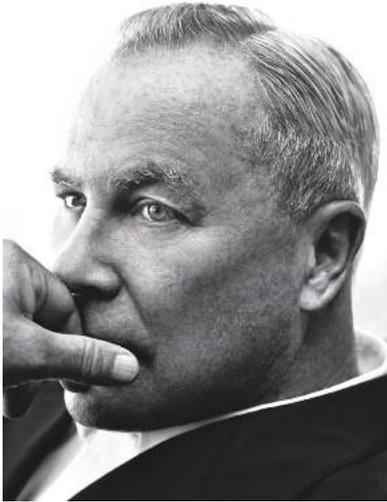


La Traviata 220
Designed by Robert Wilson

La Traviata
Directed by Robert Wilson
Linz Opera House, Austria, 2015
Act 1: The Salon In Violetta's House
Myung Joo Lee (Violetta Valéry)
Photograph: Lucie Jansch







“Robert Wilson is a towering figure in the world of experimental theater and an explorer in the uses of time and space on stage.”

—The New York Times

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Waco, Texas, Wilson is among the world’s foremost theater and visual artists. His works for the stage unconventionally integrate a wide variety of artistic media, including dance, movement, lighting, sculpture, music and text. His images are aesthetically striking and emotionally charged, and his productions have earned the acclaim of audiences and critics worldwide.

After being educated at the University of Texas and Brooklyn’s Pratt Institute, Wilson founded the New York-based performance collective “The Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds” in the mid-1960s, and developed his first signature works, including *Deafman Glance* (1970) and *A Letter for Queen Victoria* (1974-1975). With Philip Glass he wrote the seminal opera *Einstein on the Beach* (1976).

Wilson’s artistic collaborators include many writers and musicians such as Heiner Muller, Tom Waits, Susan Sontag, Laurie Anderson, William Burroughs, Lou Reed, Jessye Norman and Anna Calvi. He has also left his imprint on masterworks such as Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*, Brecht/Weill’s *Threepenny Opera*, Debussy’s *Pelleas et Melisande*, Goethe’s *Faust*, Homer’s *Odyssey*, Jean de la Fontaine’s *Fables*, Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, Verdi’s *La Traviata* and several of Shakespeare’s works.

Wilson’s drawings, paintings and sculptures have been presented around the world in hundreds of solo and group showings, and his works are held in private collections and museums throughout the world.

Wilson has been honored with numerous awards for excellence, including a Pulitzer Prize nomination, two Premio Ubu awards, the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale, and an Olivier Award. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, as well as the German Academy of the Arts, and holds 8 Honorary Doctorate degrees. France pronounced him Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters (2003) and Officer of the Legion of Honor (2014); Germany awarded him the Officer’s Cross of the Order of Merit (2014).

Wilson is the founder and Artistic Director of The Watermill Center, a laboratory for the Arts in Water Mill, New York.

SELECTED RECENT EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 “Moving portraits”, Art Gallery Of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
“Black and White - Tribal Art Meets Drawings”, Galerie Dogon, Berlin, Germany
“A Bird And A Fox”, Josh Pazda and Hiram Butler Gallery, Huston, USA
- 2021 “A Boy From Texas”, Scad Museum Of Art, Savannah, USA
“Transforming Archives”, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Germany
“KOOL Snowy Owl”, Crystal Bridges Museum Of American Art, Bentonville, USA
- 2020 “Videos and Drawings”, Bernier Eliades Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
“Der Messias”, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, France
- 2019 “Noah’s Ark”, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China
“A Boy From Texas”, Cristina Grajales Gallery, Miami, USA
- 2018 “Power and Beauty in China's Last Dynasty”, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, USA
“Noah's Ark”, Dongdaemun Design Plaza, Seoul, South Korea
“Balthus Unfinished”, Museum of Fine Arts in Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland
- 2017 “SLAMP Installation”, Acropolis Museum, Athens, Greece
“Black and White”, Galerie Breckner, Dusseldorf, Germany
- 2015 “Einstein on the Beach”, BACKLIT Gallery, Nottingham, UK
- 2014 “Video Portraits of Lady Gaga”, The Watermill Center, NY, USA

SELECTED AWARDS

- 2014 Goethe Medal: Lifetime Achievement Award from the Goethe-Institut Germany
- 2013 Paez Medal of Art, awarded by the Venezuelan American Endowment for the Arts
Olivier Award: Best New Opera for Einstein on the Beach
- 2005 Pratt Legends Honoree, Pratt Institute
Texas Medal of Arts
- 2002 Thomas Jefferson Award, American Institute of Architects, Houston, Texas
- 2001 National Design Award, Smithsonian Institution
- 2000 American Academy of Arts and Letters: elected American Honorary Member
- 1997 Tadeusz Kantor Prize
- 1996 Premio Europa per il Teatro
- 1993 Golden Lion (First Prize in Sculpture), 45th Venice Biennale for Memory/Loss

**Robert Wilson's works have received many awards from theater festivals, visual arts academies and organizations worldwide. Robert Wilson holds several honorary doctorate degrees, including from Pratt Institute (New York), La Sorbonne (Paris), and The City University of New York.*

Published on the occasion of the exhibition of
"Video Portraits"

Robert Wilson

November 14, 2022

Leila Heller Gallery Would like to thank HH Sheikha Paula Al Sabah, Luziah Hennessy, Christof Belka, Noah Khoshbin, Luca Mazza, Chris Green and Bear Kirkpatrick for all their efforts to make this show a huge success.

Images courtesy of the artist
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Back Cover Image: *Johny Depp, 2006*

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