

Werner Herzog
HEARSAY OF THE SOUL

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MEDIA CONTACT
Alexandria Sivak
Getty Communications
(310) 440-6473
asivak@getty.edu

GETTY PRESENTS WERNER HERZOG'S *HEARSAY OF THE SOUL*
Video installation by noted filmmaker newly acquired by the Getty Museum



Stills from *Hearsay of the Soul*, 2012, Werner Herzog. © Werner Herzog

July 23, 2013–January 19, 2014

At the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center

LOS ANGELES—Filmmaker **Werner Herzog's** five-channel video installation *Hearsay of the Soul* will be on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center from July 23, 2013 through January 19, 2014. Created for the 2012 Whitney Biennial, the work was recently acquired by the Getty Museum, and represents a growing interest in time-based media.

Installed in a single gallery in the Museum's North Pavilion, *Hearsay of the Soul* dramatically fuses images from the distant past with contemporary experimental music. An enveloping choral chant opens the work as the screens slowly sweep over magnified details of small landscape etchings by Hercules Segers (about 1589–about 1638), one of the great masters of printmaking from the Dutch Golden Age. These lush and expressive prints were not widely known during the artist's lifetime, but exercised a formidable influence on printmaking, notably in the work of Rembrandt van Rijn.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust
Communications Department

1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 403
Los Angeles, CA 90049-1681

Tel 310 440 7360
Fax 310 440 7722

www.getty.edu

The video also features a performance by the composer and musician Ernst Reijseger (Dutch, b. 1954) playing the cello and Harmen Fraanje (Dutch, b. 1976) playing the organ in a Lutheran church in Haarlem, the Netherlands. Recorded with a handheld camera, this scene presents impassioned performances of an original composition by Reijseger; a recording of this music was included in Herzog's 2010 film *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*. The work concludes with a slideshow of Segers's prints, accompanied by an aria originally composed by George Frideric Handel and adapted by Reijseger.

About the work, Herzog has written:

Segers's images are hearsay of the soul. They are like flashlights held in our uncertain hands, a frightened light that opens breaches into the recesses of a place that seems somewhat known to us: our selves. We morph with these images.

Hercules Segers's images and my films do not speak to each other, but for a brief moment, I hope, they might dance with each other.

"This new acquisition joins works of video art already in the Getty Museum's collection by artists Bill Viola and Judy Fiskin," notes Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "Its reference to seventeenth-century Dutch art, one of the great strengths of the Getty's collection, provides a bridge within this assertively contemporary work to a poetic vision of landscapes from four centuries ago. It is a compelling lyrical work and I am sure will be greatly appreciated by our visitors."

The video echoes Herzog's approach in both his documentary work and narrative films, which often employ rudimentary equipment and deceptively basic techniques to achieve powerful visual and emotional effects. Herzog's intense devotion to the source material moves between homage and appropriation, creating a complex relationship of imagery to music.

"Juxtaposing prints by innovative seventeenth-century artist Hercules Segers with the avant-garde music of contemporary composer and cellist Ernst Reijseger, Herzog reveals unexpected parallels in the techniques employed by two figures from very different moments in history," said Arpad Kovacs, assistant curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

"The immersive experience of the installation reveals a connection between the intricate surface details of these etchings delicately overlaid with thin layers of pigment and

the music woven together from diverse sources of influence, resulting in a work that unites the intimate with the epic."

Werner Herzog was born in Munich in 1942, briefly studied history and literature at the University of Munich before leaving to pursue film projects. He is the internationally renowned director of such masterpieces of the New German Cinema as *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), as well as the innovative documentaries *Grizzly Man* (2005) and *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010). Interested in both documentary and fictional narratives, he has moved seamlessly between the two genres and managed to create a diverse body of work that has become a major influence for many contemporary filmmakers and artists. Herzog is based in Los Angeles.

Werner Herzog: Hearsay of the Soul will be on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center from July 23, 2013–January 19, 2014.

Related Event

Hearsay of the Soul: Images, Music, and Ecstasies

Filmmaker Werner Herzog and composer/cellist Ernst Reijseger discuss their collaboration on *Hearsay of the Soul* and other projects, exploring the relationship between images and music.

Saturday, August 3, 5:00 p.m.

Harold M. Williams Auditorium, Getty Center

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The J. Paul Getty Museum collects in seven distinct areas, including Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts, and photographs gathered internationally. The Museum's mission is to make the collection meaningful and attractive to a broad audience by presenting and interpreting the works of art through educational programs, special exhibitions, publications, conservation, and research.

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