



Council for the Arts at MIT
Room E15-205
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA 02139

For Immediate Release

**Artist Bill Viola Named Recipient
of the \$75,000 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts
by the Council for the Arts at MIT**

Prize Includes a Weeklong Collaboration with Students and Faculty at MIT

**Award to be Received at a Public Presentation
by the Artist on March 10, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.**

New York, NY, February 16, 2009- The Council for the Arts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) announced the selection of artist Bill Viola as the recipient of the \$75,000 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts, which recognizes the highest standard of creative achievement on a national level. In addition to receiving the cash prize, Viola will spend one week at MIT working with students, offering them an unparalleled opportunity to collaborate with this pioneering artist. Viola will arrive at MIT on March 9, 2009 to begin a residency-like week, which is designed to enhance creative life on the campus. On March 10 at 6:30 p.m., Viola will be presented with the award and offer a presentation of his work to the broader campus community and the general public in Room 10-250, (MIT students and faculty will be given seating priority for this event). A committee of Council Members, Arts Faculty, and guests select the Eugene McDermott Award recipient, whose work represents the highest level of achievement in his/her fields, and whose presence would represent a significant enhancement to the creative life of the MIT community.

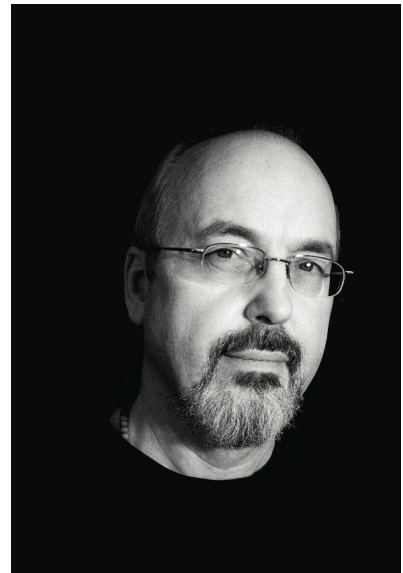


Photo credit: Wouter Vandenbrink

Viola is internationally recognized as one of today's leading artists and has been instrumental in the establishment of video as a vital medium of contemporary art. His use of video explores the human phenomena of sense perception as a path that leads to self-knowledge. His works focus on universal human experiences—birth, death, the unfolding of consciousness—and have roots in both Eastern and Western art as well as spiritual traditions, including Zen Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, and Christian mysticism. As a result of the inner language of subjective thoughts and collective memories, Viola's videos have the ability to communicate with a wide audience, allowing viewers to experience his work directly and personally.

"The weeklong residency component of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts provides a rare opportunity for our students," said MIT Associate Provost and Ford International Professor of History Philip S. Khoury. "Thanks to the generosity of Margaret McDermott, MIT

undergraduate and graduate students will have the chance to meet Mr. Viola in an intimate setting, not only to learn about his innovative and pioneering work, but to share their creative work and research with him."

About the Prize Recipient

Viola received his BFA in Experimental Studios from Syracuse University in New York in 1973 and currently lives and works in Long Beach, California with Kira Perov, his wife and long-time collaborator. Throughout his life, he has traveled extensively, living in Florence, Italy for 18 months and in the Solomon Islands, Java, Bali, and Japan where he studied and recorded traditional performing arts. In 1980, Viola and Perov lived in Japan for a year and a half on a cultural exchange fellowship where they studied Buddhism with Zen Master Daien Tanaka. Most recently they traveled to Dharamsala, India to record a prayer blessing with the Dalai Lama.

Viola has exhibited works and established relationships with some of the world's most prestigious museums and institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art which in 1997 organized an exhibition entitled *Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey*; the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin and Guggenheim Museum, New York; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; the National Gallery, London; the Fundación "La Caixa," Madrid; the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; the Opéra National de Paris, Bastille; the Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles; and the Avery Fisher Hall at the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts in New York. Viola is the recipient of numerous prestigious national and international awards and honors, including a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1989 and the first Medienkunstpreis in 1993. He holds honorary doctorates from Syracuse University (1995), The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1997), California Institute of the Arts (2000), Royal College of Art, London (2004) among others, and was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000.

About the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts

One of the country's most generous and unique arts awards, the Eugene McDermott Award recognizes an individual for his/her innovation and contribution to the arts while reinforcing MIT's commitment to risk-taking, problem-solving and connecting creative minds across disciplines. Past recipients include playwright Suzan-Lori Parks, architect Santiago Calatrava, artist Isaac Julian, author Junot Diaz, and architect I.M. Pei.

The Council for the Arts at MIT established the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts in 1974 to honor Eugene McDermott, cofounder of Texas Instruments and long-time friend and benefactor to the Institute in education and the arts. The award has been further endowed by Eugene's wife, Margaret, and now includes a \$75,000 cash prize. Honorees are also invited to stay on campus for a one-week residency-like program during which they make a public presentation on their work and have the opportunity to work directly with students and faculty.

About the Council for the Arts at MIT

The Council for the Arts at MIT is a volunteer group of alumni and friends who support the visual, literary, and performing arts at MIT. Since its founding in 1972 by MIT President Jerome B. Wiesner, the Council for the Arts at MIT has bestowed the award upon 32 individuals who

work in performing, visual, and media arts, as well as authors, art historians, and patrons of the arts. Appointed by the President of MIT to three-year terms, Council members serve as advocates and advisors to MIT's Associate Provost.

For more information on the Eugene McDermott Award, please visit web.mit.edu/arts/about/awards/mcdermott.html or contact Susan Cohen at (617) 253-4005 or cohen@media.mit.edu

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