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**THE VILCEK PRIZE, A MAJOR NEW NATIONAL AWARD,  
GOES TO CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE**

**The Vilcek Foundation Honors Foreign-Born  
Visionaries and Innovators in the U.S.**

NEW YORK, NY --- Today The Vilcek Foundation announced the winners of a major new awards program designed to honor foreign-born Americans who have made extraordinary contributions to society in the arts and biomedical research since immigrating to these shores.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, the husband and wife team who have captured the imagination of the world and broadened the popular conception of art with their large-scale works, will receive the first annual Vilcek Prize in the Arts. Dr. Joan Massagué, Chairman, Cancer Biology and Genetics, Sloan-Kettering Institute, will receive the inaugural Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Research.

Accompanied by a \$50,000 cash award and a commemorative object created by noted designer Stefan Sagmeister, the Vilcek Prizes are the only national awards that honor outstanding creative achievement by new Americans.

Dr. Vilcek, a professor and research scientist at the New York University School of Medicine, and Mrs. Vilcek, an art historian, established The Vilcek Foundation in 2000 as a way to honor achievement in their respective fields and to show appreciation for the opportunities they received as newcomers to the United States. The Vilceks came to the United States as refugees from former communist Czechoslovakia.

Next year The Vilcek Foundation will establish a public gallery and headquarters in a former carriage house on East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street. There the Foundation will showcase the work of innovative artists, designers, filmmakers, and others, many of them immigrants, who have yet to achieve critical or financial success.

“In launching the Vilcek Prize program, we hope to raise public awareness of a very positive side of immigration: the way in which the intelligence, talent, and drive of immigrants helps this country to maintain its position of world leader in science and culture,” says Dr. Vilcek.

“When we came to this country, we were unknown. We started here with no references or guarantees, and this country gave us the opportunity to succeed,” adds Mrs. Vilcek. “It is important that this country continues to make good on its historic promise as a land of opportunity.”

The first Vilcek Prizes will be bestowed on Tuesday, March 21, 2006 in a gala ceremony at The Mandarin-Oriental on Columbus Circle.

### *Christo and Jeanne-Claude*

Christo and Jeanne-Claude have been turning rural and urban sites into sculpture for some 45 years now. Christo came to this country as a Bulgarian refugee artist; Jeanne-Claude, as a young wife and mother who was born in Casablanca to a French military family and educated in France and Switzerland. Since establishing a permanent residence in Lower Manhattan in 1964, they have conceived and realized one provocative public project after another, including *Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin* (1971-1995), for which they enveloped the entire German parliament headquarters in a shimmering silver fabric; *The Umbrellas, Japan-USA* (1984-1991), which deployed 3,100 20-foot-tall umbrellas in Japan and California; and, most recently, *The Gates, Central Park, New York City* (1979-2005), which adorned a 23-mile pathway in Central Park with now famous, flowing saffron-colored fabric panels. The artists are currently at work on their next project, *Over the River: Project for The Arkansas River in Colorado*, which they began in 1992.

### *The Vilcek Foundation*

The Vilcek Foundation was established in 2000. During the first years of its existence the Foundation focused mainly on the support of research in the field of autoimmune diseases. In 2005 The Vilcek Foundation added a new focus -- this program of annual prizes given to foreign-born individuals living permanently in the US who have made outstanding contributions to society in biomedical sciences and the arts and humanities.

The Foundation was established with a portion of the royalties generated from the sale of a medicine, Remicade<sup>®</sup>, used for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's

disease, and other inflammatory disorders. This therapeutic drug was developed in part through groundbreaking research led by Dr. Vilcek at NYU.

Jan and Marica Vilcek arrived to New York in 1965, having left communist Czechoslovakia with all their possessions packed inside a pair of suitcases. That year Dr. Vilcek accepted a teaching position at the New York University School of Medicine, where he remains until today, and Mrs. Vilcek joined the staff of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, an institution to which she eventually devoted 32 years, primarily in collections management.

The inaugural prize-winners were chosen by the Board of Directors of The Vilcek Foundation. In succeeding award cycles, honorees will be nominated by independent panels of experts.

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