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Vilcek Foundation Names 2011 Vilcek Prize Recipients

Rockefeller University biomedical researcher Titia de Lange and distinguished poet Charles Simic to receive \$100,000 prizes for outstanding lifetime achievement

Cancer researcher Yibin Kang and novelist Dinaw Mengestu awarded \$25,000 Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise

New York, NY, February 22, 2011 — The Vilcek Foundation is pleased to announce the 2011 winners of its annual prizes, given in biomedical science and the arts and humanities.

Titia de Lange, PhD, has been chosen to receive the Vilcek Prize for Biomedical Science in recognition of her groundbreaking research on mechanisms that help maintain genome stability and protect cells from becoming cancerous. Born in the Netherlands, Dr. de Lange is the Leon Hess Professor of Biology at the Rockefeller University in New York City. Her many previous awards and honors include the 2010 Clowes Memorial Award, the 2001 Paul Marks Prize for Cancer Research and membership in the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. Yugoslavian-born Charles Simic is awarded the Vilcek Prize for the Arts, this year given in the field of literature. Appointed the fifteenth United States Poet Laureate in 2007, Mr. Simic's poetry is widely recognized as among the most strikingly original of our time. Earlier this year, he was presented with the Robert Frost Medal, by the Poetry Society of America; his previous awards include a MacArthur Foundation fellowship and the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. The Vilcek Prizes are accompanied by a \$100,000 cash award and a trophy created by designer Stefan Sagmeister.

The Vilcek Prizes are the highlight of the Foundation's year-round programs to honor and publicize the accomplishments of foreign-born scientists and artists. "Every year, the Vilcek Prizes bring to light the many ways that immigrants contribute to American society," said Jan T. Vilcek, President of the Foundation. "These contributions are instrumental in maintaining the leadership position of the United States in scientific research and the arts."

The 2011 Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise recognize the achievements of Yibin Kang in biomedical science and Dinaw Mengestu in literature. Born in China, Dr. Kang's research has contributed to the understanding of the molecular basis of cancer metastasis. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Molecular Biology at Princeton University. Ethiopian-born Dinaw Mengestu is an award-winning novelist, whose writing explores the themes of alienation and human connection among immigrants in America. Also a journalist, he has reported on conflicts in Africa for *Rolling Stone*, *Granta*, and other publications. The Creative Promise prizes were inaugurated in 2009 to acknowledge the accomplishments of a younger generation of immigrants in the early stages of their professional careers. These winners each receive a \$25,000 cash award and a commemorative plaque.

All the prizewinners were selected by panels of experts after months of research and deliberation. The biomedical juries included noted scientists from New York University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Salk Institute and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. On the literature jury were eminent literary professionals from *The New Yorker*, the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, and *The Best American* anthology series.

The juries also selected four finalists for the Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise. In the literary category,

they are Ilya Kaminsky, Téa Obreht , Vu Tran, and Simon Van Booy; in biomedical science, Katherine Fitzgerald, Ekaterina Heldwein, Galit Lahav, and Elina Zuniga. Each finalist will receive a \$5,000 prize.

The prizewinners and finalists will be honored at the Vilcek Foundation's annual awards presentation dinner in New York City this April. Maria Freire, President of the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation, will present the Vilcek Prizes for Biomedical Science. Francine Prose, author and former president of the PEN American Center will present the Vilcek Prizes for Literature.

For more information about the Vilcek Foundation and the Vilcek Prize winners, please visit www.vilcek.org.

THE VILCEK FOUNDATION

The Vilcek Foundation aims to raise public awareness of the contributions of immigrants to the sciences, arts, and culture in the United States. The Foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the Foundation was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history, as well as their personal experiences and appreciation for the opportunities offered them as newcomers to the United States. In addition to awarding annual prizes in the biomedical sciences and the arts, the Vilcek Foundation showcases the work of immigrant artists, performers, and others at its headquarters at 167 East 73rd Street, New York City.