

VILCEK FOUNDATION

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Immigrant Architects Honored with 2018 Vilcek Prizes

*Architect and urban researcher
Teddy Cruz receives \$100,000 Vilcek Prize*

*Mona Ghandi, James Leng, and Jing Liu
win \$50,000 Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise*

New York, NY, February 1, 2018 — The Vilcek Foundation is pleased to announce the winners of the 2018 Vilcek Prizes in the Arts and Humanities, this year recognizing the field of architecture. Awarded annually, the prizes call attention to the breadth of immigrant contributions to the American arts and sciences.

“The social, political, and cultural landscape of America has been shaped by generations of immigrant contributions,” says Marica Vilcek, cofounder and vice chairman of the Vilcek Foundation. “With the Vilcek Prizes in Architecture, we are pleased to recognize the many ways in which they have shaped its physical landscape as well—through bold, original designs, and through research that challenges the status quo, both in the building arts and in society.”

The Vilcek Prize in Architecture, which comes with a \$100,000 cash prize, is awarded to architect and urban researcher **Teddy Cruz**, professor at University of California, San Diego, and director of design at Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman. Born in Guatemala, his work is deeply informed by his childhood there and his subsequent immigration to America. Arriving in California at the age of 20, he was struck by the many ways that the cities and communities of San Diego and Tijuana were both united and divided. This sparked a lifelong interest in using the tools and framework of architecture and urban planning to redefine the concepts of borders, citizenship, and community. Most recently, this has taken the form of designing, with his partner Fonna Forman, cross-border community spaces that host a variety of arts and educational programming. Created in tandem with local governments, universities, activists, and nonprofit groups, the spaces emphasize the shared values, peoples, and ecology on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Cruz’s writing has been published widely, including features in the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Harvard Design Magazine*. He has received the prestigious Rome Prize in Architecture, and the work of Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman will be included in the American Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale.

The Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise are given to younger immigrants who have demonstrated exceptional promise early in their careers. Each prize includes a \$50,000 cash award. The winners in architecture are the following:

Mona Ghandi is interested in an emerging field known as computational design, a data-driven approach to architecture that aims to make buildings better tailored and more responsive to environmental cues. She has applied this approach in correlation with biofeedback data,

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aspiring to make buildings more attuned to the psychology of their occupants. By customizing architecture to take into account the wellness of those who use it, she hopes to make what she calls “compassionate spaces.” Her work has been published widely and exhibited internationally, including at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2012. Born in Iran, she is currently an assistant professor of architecture at Washington State University.

James Leng is a Los Angeles-based architect working in independent practice. He has worked for an impressive roster of prominent architecture firms, including OMA, UNStudio, Renzo Piano Building Workshop, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and, most recently, Michael Maltzan Architecture, where he was a senior designer focusing on large-scale housing and mixed-use projects. A recipient of the prestigious SOM Prize, Leng is conducting an independent research project, “Useless Architectures: A Search for New Meanings after Obsolescence,” an analysis of buildings that have outlived the purpose for which they were designed. This project, which is set to be published, brought him to all corners of the globe to document different sites of what he calls “now-defunct architecture.” Leng was born in China.

Jing Liu is a principal of the Brooklyn-based architecture studio SO-IL. Since founding the firm with her partner, Florian Idenburg, in 2008, she has gone on to design many high-profile and award-winning projects around the world, including the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at the University of California, Davis; the New York venue for Frieze Art Fair; and *Pole Dance*, an installation at MoMA PS1. The firm is known for its work in the arts as well as for its innovative approaches to housing. Liu is an associate professor of architecture at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, where her research focuses on new forms of urban housing—what she calls “productive living.” Liu is originally from China.

The Vilcek Prize in the Arts is awarded in rotating disciplines, this year honoring the field of architecture. Previous disciplines include music, film, culinary arts, literature, dance, contemporary music, design, fashion, theatre, and fine arts. The Vilcek Foundation also awards corresponding prizes in the field of biomedical science each year.

The prizewinners were selected by panels of experts in each field; they will be honored at an awards gala in New York City in April 2018. For more information about the Vilcek Prizes, prizewinners, and jurors, please visit vilcek.org.

The Vilcek Foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the foundation, to honor the contributions of immigrants to the United States and to foster appreciation of the arts and sciences, was inspired by the couple’s respective careers in biomedical science and art history, as well as their personal experiences and appreciation of the opportunities they received as newcomers to this country. The foundation awards annual prizes to prominent immigrant biomedical scientists and artists, and manages the Vilcek Foundation Art Collections.

To learn more about the Vilcek Foundation, please visit vilcek.org.