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Vilcek Foundation Awards \$250,000 in Prizes to Immigrant Artists

Guadalupe Maravilla, Selva Aparicio, Felipe Baeza, and Jeffrey Meris honored by the Vilcek Foundation

New York, NY, February 3, 2025 — The Vilcek Foundation announces the recipients of the 2025 Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Visual Arts. The prizes, totaling \$250,000, are part of the foundation’s mission to build awareness of the vital role immigration plays in enriching the arts, culture, and society in the United States and to foster an appreciation for the arts and sciences more broadly. In 2025, the foundation awards four prizes to artists: The Vilcek Prize and three Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise.

The Vilcek Prize in Visual Arts recognizes artistic excellence in practice and in the presentation of powerful and original works. The honor—which includes a \$100,000 cash award and a commemorative trophy—is bestowed on an artist whose work has a profound impact not only on the arts but also on culture and discourse more broadly.

Guadalupe Maravilla receives the Vilcek Prize in Visual Arts for his sculptures, installations, and performances that combine symbol, sound, and ritual. His immersive and evocative works explore migration, transcendence, and the human condition. Born in El Salvador, Maravilla came to the United States as an undocumented, unaccompanied child at the age of 8 in 1984. His work focuses on the power of art to heal and transform both the creator and the viewer.

“Maravilla stood out not just for the quality of his artwork but for his commitment in all areas of practice to support individuals and communities impacted by immigration and migration,” says Vilcek Foundation President Rick Kinsel. “From his collaborations with El Salvadoran and Mexican artists and communities for his sculptures and installations, to his commitment to use his performances as a platform for mutual aid. Maravilla anneals vulnerability into strength: His transparency about his journey from trauma to healing opens a conduit for viewers to connect and process their own experiences.”

The Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Visual Arts honor young immigrant artists whose work demonstrates exceptional creativity and outstanding potential. Immigrant artists under the age of 40 working in painting, ceramics, sculpture, installation, drawing, printmaking, and fiber arts were eligible to apply for one of three prizes; the recipients were selected by a jury of experts appointed by the Vilcek Foundation. Prizewinners each receive an unrestricted cash award of \$50,000 and a commemorative trophy. The Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Visual Arts are awarded to Selva Aparicio, Felipe Baeza, and Jeffrey Meris.

Aparicio, born in Barcelona, Spain, receives the Creative Promise Prize for her sculptures and installations, which incorporate organic materials and ritualistic imagery to explore themes of death, mourning, memory, and temporality. She studied at the Escola Massana, earning a Superior Technician in Plastic Arts and Design in Sculptural Techniques degree; she earned her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her MFA from the Yale University School of Art.

Baeza receives the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Visual Arts for his studio practice and poetic style that engages multiple mediums and traditions to explore spirituality, otherness, and regeneration. Born in

Mexico and based in the United States, Baeza's work is informed by his experiences as an adolescent, navigating the structures and institutions that often marginalize those they purport to protect. Baeza earned his BFA from the Cooper Union and holds an MFA from Yale University.

Meris receives the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Visual Arts for his body of work engaging materiality, installation, and performance to explore the power of ecology and embodiment to liberate and heal from individual and historical trauma. Born in Haiti, he grew up in the Bahamas, where he began his artistic practice. Meris completed his BFA in sculpture at the Tyler School of Art, and earned his MFA at Columbia University.

In 2025, the Vilcek Foundation will award \$950,000 in prizes in alignment with its mission. The Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Visual Arts, Curatorial Work, and Biomedical Science recognize and raise awareness of exceptional immigrant professionals whose work has profoundly impacted science and society. These honors are awarded alongside the Vilcek Prize for Excellence, awarded to Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., and the Marica Vilcek Prize in Art History, awarded to Francesca Du Brock.

The Vilcek Foundation

The Vilcek Foundation raises awareness of immigrant contributions in the United States and fosters appreciation for the arts and sciences. The foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The foundation's mission was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history. Since 2000, the foundation has awarded over \$15 million in prizes and grants.

The Vilcek Foundation is a private operating foundation, a federally tax-exempt nonprofit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3). To learn more, please visit vilcek.org.