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Vilcek Foundation Awards \$950,000 in Prizes to Immigrants and Cultural Leaders

The foundation awards 14 prizes in alignment with its mission: to recognize immigrant contributions in the United States, and foster appreciation for the arts and sciences

New York, NY, February 3, 2025 — [The Vilcek Foundation](#) announces its largest-ever cohort of prizewinners with the 2025 Vilcek Foundation Prizes. This year, the foundation honors 14 prizewinners with a total of \$950,000 in awards.

Awarded annually since 2006, the Vilcek Foundation's prizes are an important part of how the foundation accomplishes its mission: to raise awareness of the importance of immigrant contributions in the United States, and to foster appreciation for the arts and sciences more broadly.

The 2025 Vilcek Foundation Prizes comprise the Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Biomedical Science, the Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Visual Arts, the Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Curatorial Work, the Vilcek Prize for Excellence in Literary Scholarship, and the Marica Vilcek Prize in Art History.

"The United States was founded with a vision of being a beacon for intrepid individuals to live and work free from tyranny," says Vilcek Foundation President Rick Kinsel. "Immigration has been vital to the United States' industrial and technological development over the past 250 years, and immigrant professionals have made profound contributions to scientific research, medicine, arts, and culture. With these prizes we honor outstanding immigrant professionals, and intellectual leaders whose work champions diversity in the United States."

The Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Biomedical Science

The Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Biomedical Science are awarded in recognition of immigrant scientists at the forefront of biomedical research in the United States. The prizes are a tribute to Vilcek Foundation co-founder Jan Vilcek's career as a research scientist at New York University, where he pioneered the development of Remicade® (Infliximab). Four prizes are awarded in biomedical science in 2025: The Vilcek Prize, and three Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise. The Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Science includes a \$100,000 cash award. Each recipient of the Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science receives a \$50,000 cash award.

Marianne Bronner receives the Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Science for her career research on neural crest stem cells and their role in the development of the peripheral nervous system, heart, and craniofacial skeleton in vertebrate organisms. Born in Hungary, Bronner emigrated to the United States with her family as a young child. She is the director of the Beckman Institute and a professor at Caltech, and an advocate for gender equity in science.

The three recipients of the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science are Elham Azizi, Maayan Levy, and Guosong Hong.

Azizi receives the Creative Promise prize for her research engaging machine learning, statistics, genomics, and bioengineering to derive principles of cancer initiation, progression, and response to immunotherapies in cancer patients. Born in Iran, Azizi is an alumna of Sharif University of Technology and of Boston University, where she earned her MS and PhD. She is an associate professor of cancer data research and biomedical engineering at Columbia University.

Levy receives the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science for her immunological research studying the potential therapeutic applications of metabolites as vehicles and targets to prevent and treat diseases, including cancer. Born in Israel, Levy earned her BSc at Tel Aviv University and holds a PhD from the Weizmann Institute of Science. She recently joined the Stanford University School of Medicine as an assistant professor of pathology.

Hong receives the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science for the development of novel neuroengineering tools combining materials science and biology that engage ultrasound, light, and radio-frequency-based interfaces to study the brain. Born in China, Hong is an alumnus of Peking University; he earned his PhD in chemistry from Stanford University, where he is now an assistant professor of materials science and engineering.

The Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Visual Arts

The Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Visual Arts recognize immigrant artists working across a range of visual media. In 2025, the foundation awards four prizes in this category: The Vilcek Prize, and three Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise. The Vilcek Prize in Visual Arts includes a \$100,000 cash award; recipients of the Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Visual Arts each receive a \$50,000 cash award.

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 concepts of 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.

The three recipients of the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Visual Arts are Selva Aparicio, Felipe Baeza, and Jeffrey Meris.

Aparicio 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. Born in Barcelona, Spain, she studied at the Escola Massana, where she earned a Superior Technician in Plastic Arts and Design in Sculptural Techniques degree; and also earned a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and an 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.

The Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Curatorial Work

In 2025, the Vilcek Foundation made the decision to double the number of prizes it awards in the arts and humanities, awarding prizes in two categories: Visual Arts and Curatorial Work. The goal is to expand the

foundation's awards to support individuals in fields in the arts and humanities that are under-recognized. The Vilcek Foundation Prizes in Curatorial Work recognize immigrant art professionals and curators whose work has a profound impact on their institutions, and on contemporary art history more broadly. Four prizes are awarded in curatorial work in 2025: the Vilcek Prize in Curatorial Work, a \$100,000 award, and three \$50,000 Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Curatorial Work.

Oluremi C. Onabanjo is The Peter Schub Curator in The Robert B. Menschel Department of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. She receives the Vilcek Prize in Curatorial Work for her work to examine the power, position, and production of Blackness in relation to the ongoing global history of the photographic medium. Born in the United Kingdom to Nigerian parents, she is an alumna of Oxford University and Columbia University.

Recipients of the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Curatorial Work are Donna Honarpisheh, Aimé Iglesias Lukin, and Bernardo Mosqueira.

Honarpisheh receives the Creative Promise prize for her multidisciplinary approach to address the historic and ongoing omissions of global artists and movements in Western art history and institutions. Born in Canada to Iranian immigrants, Honarpisheh is the Knight Foundation Associate Curator of Art and Research at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami. She earned her PhD in Comparative Literature and Critical Theory from the University of California, Berkeley in 2022.

Iglesias Lukin receives the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Curatorial Work for her leadership promoting the art of the Americas, and her focused initiatives to achieve recognition for historically underrepresented migrant and women artists. Born in Argentina, Lukin is director and chief curator of art at the Americas Society. She holds an MA in Art History and Archaeology from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and a PhD from Rutgers University.

Mosqueira receives the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Curatorial Work for his commitment to building institutions, frameworks, and platforms for emerging and radical artists, especially those from the Global South, Latin America, and diasporic communities. Born in Brazil, he is chief curator of the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) in New York; and artistic director of Solar dos Abacaxis in Rio de Janeiro.

The Vilcek Prize for Excellence in Literary Scholarship

The Vilcek Prize for Excellence is awarded at the discretion of the Vilcek Foundation's president and board of directors. The \$100,000 prize recognizes an outstanding intellectual and cultural leader whose work has had a profound impact on their field of work or study, and on culture and society in the United States more broadly. In 2025, the Vilcek Foundation awards the Vilcek Prize for Excellence in Literary Scholarship to Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr.

"Dr. Henry Louis Gates's scholarship and criticism connects the past to the present, illuminating how the darkest parts of U.S. history have shaped the cultural and political divides in our country today," says Jan Vilcek. "In celebrating Dr. Gates with this award, the Vilcek Foundation acknowledges and shows support for his career and legacy as a literary historian and cultural authority."

Henry Louis Gates Jr. is an African American literary scholar, professor, historian, and filmmaker, and the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and the director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. He receives the Vilcek Prize for Excellence in recognition of his contributions as a scholar of African American history; for his leadership in contemporary discourse on race, literature, and immigration; and for his commitment to excellence in public education.

The Marica Vilcek Prize in Art History

The Marica Vilcek Prize in Art History was developed to recognize and honor Vilcek Foundation co-founder Marica Vilcek's career leadership and legacy as an art historian and museum professional in

the United States. The \$100,000 prize acknowledges arts professionals whose work is of critical importance in shaping museums and cultural institutions' impact on culture and society.

Francesca Du Brock is chief curator at the Anchorage Museum and a public speaker and educator. She receives the Marica Vilcek Prize in Art History for her holistic and comprehensive approach to exhibition curation and to public education and engagement with art through museum programming.

"Francesca Du Brock is redefining the role of a curator for our time," says Vilcek Foundation President Rick Kinsel. "Her philosophy is simple: that a curator should not only care for objects, but also for people and community. She excels in creating platforms to place and center voices, communities, and histories that have for far too long been ignored by museum institutions."

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.