*PRESS RELEASE*

**MIT Art-Science Project Makes $2 Million Diamond "Disappear" at the NY Stock Exchange**

**Cambridge, MA and New York, NY, August 29, 2019** -- The MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) and the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) will present *The Redemption of Vanity*, created by artist Diemut Strebe in collaboration with MIT scientist Brian Wardle and his lab, on view at the New York Stock Exchange September 13, 2019 - November 25, 2019. For the work, a 16.78 carat natural yellow diamond valued at $2 million from L.J.West was coated using a new procedure of generating carbon nanotubes (CNTs), recently measured to be the blackest black ever created, which makes the diamond seem to disappear into an invisible void. The patented carbon nanotube technology (CNT) absorbs more than 99.96% of light and was developed by Professor Wardle and his necstlab lab at MIT.

"Any object covered with this CNT material loses all its plasticity and appears entirely flat, abbreviated/reduced to a black silhouette. In outright contradiction to this we see that a diamond, while made of the very same element (carbon) performs the most intense reflection of light on earth. Because of the extremely high light absorbtive qualities of the CNTs, any object, in this case a large diamond coated with CNT's, becomes a kind of black hole absent of shadows," explains Strebe. "The unification of extreme opposites in one object and the particular aesthetic features of the CNTs caught my imagination for this art project."

"Strebe's art-science collaboration caused us to look at the optical properties of our new CNT growth, and we discovered that these particular CNTs are blacker than all other reported materials by an order of magnitude across the visible spectrum", says Wardle. The MIT team is offering the process for any artist to use. "We do not believe in exclusive ownership of any material or idea for any artwork and have opened our method to any artist," say Strebe and Wardle.

"The project explores material and immaterial value attached to objects and concepts in reference to luxury, society and to art. We are presenting the literal devaluation of a diamond, which is highly symbolic and of high economic value. It presents a challenge to art market mechanisms on the one hand, while expressing at the same time questions of the value of art in a broader way. In this sense it manifests an inquiry into the significance of the value of objects of art and the art market," says Strebe. "We are honored to present this work at The New York Stock Exchange, which I believe to be a most fitting location to consider the ideas embedded in *The Redemption of Vanity*."

"The New York Stock Exchange, a center of financial and technological innovation for 227 years, is the perfect venue to display Diemut Strebe and Professor Brian Wardle's collaboration. Their work brings together cutting-edge nanotube technology and a natural diamond, which is a symbol of both value and longevity," said John Tuttle, NYSE Group Vice Chairman & Chief Commercial Officer.

"We welcome all scientists and artists to venture into the world of natural color diamonds. *The Redemption of Vanity* exemplifies the bond between art, science, and luxury. The 16-carat vivid yellow diamond in the exhibit spent millions of years in complete darkness, deep below the earth's surface. It was only recently unearthed — a once-in-a-lifetime discovery of exquisite size and color. Now the diamond will relive its journey to darkness as it is covered in the blackest of materials. Once again, it will become a reminder that something rare and beautiful can exist even in darkness," said Larry West.

The "disappearing" diamond in *The Redemption of Vanity* is a $2 Million Fancy Vivid Yellow SI1 (GIA), Radiant shape, from color diamond specialist, L.J. West Diamonds Inc. of New York.

*The Redemption of Vanity,* conceived by Diemut Strebe, has been realized with Brian L. Wardle, Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics and Director of necstlab and Nano-Engineered Composite aerospace STructures (NECST) Consortium and his team Drs. Luiz Acauan and Estelle Cohen, in conjunction with Strebe's residency at MIT supported by the Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST).

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Diemut Strebe is a conceptual artist based in Boston, MA and a MIT CAST Visiting Artist. She has collaborated with several MIT faculty, including Noam Chomsky and Robert Langer on *Sugababe* (2014), *Litmus* (2014) and *Yeast Expression* (2015); Seth Lloyd and Dirk Englund on *Wigner's Friends* (2014); Alan Guth on *Plötzlich!* (2018); researchers in William Tisdale's Lab on *The Origin of the Works of Art* (2018); Regina Barzilay and Elchanan Mossel on *The Prayer* (2019); and Ken Kamrin and John Brisson on *The Gymnast* (2019). Strebe is represented by the Ronald Feldman Gallery.

Brian L. Wardle is a Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics at MIT and the director of the necstlab research group and MIT's Nano-Engineered Composite aerospace STructures (NECST) Consortium. Wardle previously worked with CAST Visiting Artist Trevor Paglen on *The Last Pictures* project (2012).

**ABOUT THE MIT CENTER FOR ART, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

A major cross-school initiative, the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) creates new opportunities for art, science and technology to thrive as interrelated, mutually informing modes of exploration, knowledge and discovery. CAST's multidisciplinary platform presents performing and visual arts programs, supports research projects for artists working with science and engineering labs, and sponsors symposia, classes, workshops, design studios, lectures and publications. The Center is funded in part by a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Evan Ziporyn is the Faculty Director and Leila W. Kinney is the Executive Director.

Since its inception in 2012, CAST has been the catalyst for more than 150 artist residencies and collaborative projects with MIT faculty and students, including numerous cross-disciplinary courses, workshops, concert series, multimedia projects, lectures and symposia. The visiting

artists program is a cornerstone of CAST's activities, which encourages cross-fertilization among disciplines and intensive interaction with MIT's faculty and students. More info at https://arts.mit.edu/cast/ .

**HISTORY OF VISITING ARTISTS AT MIT**

Since the late 1960s, MIT has been a leader in integrating the arts and pioneering a model for collaboration among artists, scientists and engineers in a research setting. CAST's Visiting Artists Program brings internationally acclaimed artists to engage with MIT's creative community in ways that are mutually enlightening for the artists and for faculty, students and research staff at the Institute. Artists who have worked extensively at MIT include Mel Chin, Olafur Eliasson, Rick Lowe, Vik Muniz, Trevor Paglen, Tomás Saraceno, Maya Beiser, Agnieszka Kurant, and Anicka Yi.

**ABOUT L.J. WEST DIAMONDS**

L.J. West Diamonds is a three generation natural color diamond wholesaler founded in the late 1970's by Larry J. West and based in New York City. L.J. West has established itself as one of the world's prominent houses for some of the most rare and important exotic natural fancy color diamonds to have ever been unearthed. This collection includes a vast color spectrum of rare pink, blue, yellow, green, orange and red diamonds.

L.J. West is an expert in every phase of the jewelry process – from sourcing to the cutting, polishing and final design. Each exceptional jewel is carefully set to become a unique work of art.

The Redemption of Vanity is on view at the New York Stock Exchange by appointment only.
**Press viewing: September 13, 2019 at 3pm**
New York Stock Exchange, 11 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005
*RSVP required. Please check-in at the blue tent at **2 Broad Street** (at the corner of Wall and Broad Streets).*
*All guests are required to show a government issued photo ID and go through airport-like security upon entering the NYSE. NYSE follows a business casual dress code - jeans & sneakers are not permitted.*

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