



THE EUGENE MCDERMOTT AWARD IN THE ARTS AT MIT
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
77 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, BUILDING 10-183
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

PRESS RELEASE

THOMAS HEATHERWICK AT MIT FOR 2020 EUGENE MCDERMOTT AWARD IN THE ARTS AT MIT

“Togetherness: How can the physical make us come together?”
Public Lecture on April 25, 2020 / 5:00pm / MIT Huntington Hall 10-250

Award includes artist residency, student design challenge, public lecture, \$100,000 prize, and gala

Cambridge, MA, USA, February 28, 2020 – Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is pleased to announce that designer Thomas Heatherwick, 2020 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT recipient, will be at MIT on April 25, 2020 to accept the prestigious honor. In addition to the \$100,000 prize, a series of campus visits are a distinctive feature of the award, in which the artist interacts with MIT students, faculty and staff in a range of academic disciplines on campus. Heatherwick has posed a design challenge for students in the design minor and design major at MIT--to create “hyper-physical” environments as a corrective to the decline in public space and experience of connectedness ushered in by the digital revolution. Heatherwick will present a public lecture about this theme, entitled “Togetherness: How can the physical make us come together?” April 25 at 5pm in MIT lecture hall 10-250, [tickets](#) and more information available at arts.mit.edu/mcdermott.

During his lecture and in his interactions with the MIT community, Thomas Heatherwick will describe his studio’s approach to embodying emotional response and avoiding cliché in built form. Demonstrating how urban interventions can unlock a neighborhood’s potential, Heatherwick will present the ideation behind recent work, including London’s Coal Drops Yard, Singapore’s Learning Hub, Cape Town’s Zeitz MOCAA, Shanghai’s 1000 Trees, Tokyo’s Toranomom-Azabudai, and New York’s Vessel. He will address the questions: How can cities respond to the contemporary phenomenon of increased loneliness that has accompanied increased reliance upon online interactions? What does it take to create meaningful spaces that inspire people to leave the digital realm and directly engage with others in real life?

Heatherwick and his studio will mentor students in the studio Design Techniques and Technologies: Thinking through Making, taught by MIT instructor Jeremy Jih. Their challenge will be to address issues of loneliness and create thriving, sociable, and rich sensory experiences in urban environments. Heatherwick’s presence at MIT will culminate in formal critiques of the work students create over the course of the Spring semester, 2020.

About Thomas Heatherwick

Thomas Heatherwick is a British designer whose prolific and varied work over two decades is characterized by its ingenuity, inventiveness, and originality. Defying the conventional classification of design disciplines, he founded Heatherwick Studio in 1994 to bring the practices of design, architecture, and urban planning together in a single workspace.

Thomas leads the design of all Heatherwick Studio projects, working in collaboration with a team of 200 highly-skilled architects, designers, and makers. Thomas' unusual approach applies artistic thinking to the needs of each project, resulting in some of the most acclaimed designs of our time. Based in London, Heatherwick Studio is currently working in four continents.

Following the success of the UK Pavilion for the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, Heatherwick Studio has gone on to win exciting design briefs including the Learning Hub at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, the new Google campuses in London and California in collaboration with BIG (currently under construction), and a new terminal for Singapore's Changi Airport in partnership with KPF. Heatherwick has been appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, a Royal Academician, and in 2004 became the youngest Royal Designer for Industry.



About the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts

[The Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT](#) was established in 1974 by the Council for the Arts at MIT and Margaret McDermott in honor of her husband, a co-founder of Texas Instruments. The award reflects MIT's commitment to risk-taking, problem solving, and to the idea of connecting creative minds across disciplines. The award may be given to an artist working in any field or cross-disciplinary activity and is considered an investment in the recipient's future creative work, rather than a prize for a particular project or lifetime of achievement.

About the Council for the Arts at MIT

The Council for the Arts at MIT is a volunteer group of alumni and friends who support the arts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Since its founding in 1972 by MIT President Jerome B. Wiesner, the Council for the Arts at MIT has bestowed the award upon 37 individuals who work in performing, visual, and media arts, as well as authors, art historians, and patrons of the arts. Appointed by the President of MIT to three-year terms, Council members continuously fulfill their mission "to foster the arts at MIT and to act as a catalyst for the development of a broadly based, highly participatory program in the arts." Hyun-A Park is the current Chair of CAMIT.

Past Recipients

2018: Audra McDonald, actress and singer
2016: David Adjaye, architect
2014: Olafur Eliasson, visual artist
2011: Robert Lepage, performance and media artist
2010: Gustavo Dudamel, conductor
2009: Bill Viola, visual artist
2006: Suzan Lori Parks, playwright/novelist
2005: Santiago Calatrava, engineer/architect
2004: Libby Larsen, composer
2003: Vinie Burrows, activist/actress/writer
2001: Isaac Julien, filmmaker
2000: CORE Ensemble
1999: Diller + Scofidio, architects
1998: Junot Díaz, author
1997: Toni Dove, video artist
1996: Kenny Leon, theater director
1995: Jeff Wall, photographer
1994: Tan Dun, composer
1993: Thomas Hanrahan & Victoria Meyers, architects
1992: Richard Preston, author
1991: Rebecca Purdum, artist
1990: Agnes Denes, artist
1989: Ida Ely Rubin, art historian
1988: Yulla Lipchitz, photographer
1986: Richard Leacock, filmmaker
1985: Harold E. Edgerton, photographer
1984: I.M. Pei, architect
1983: Albert R. Gurney, Jr., playwright
1982: Roy Lamson, arts administrator
1981: Henry Moore, sculptor
1980: Luis A. Ferre, arts patron
1979: Jerome B. Wiesner, President of MIT, arts patron
1978: Catherine N. Stratton, Founder, Council for the Arts, arts patron
1977: James R. Killian, Jr., President Emeritus, MIT
1976: Paul Tishman, Founder, Council for the Arts, arts patron
1975: Klaus Liepmann, conductor, founder of the music program at MIT
1974: György Kepes, artist, founder of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT (CAVS)

**For more information on the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT,
please visit arts.mit.edu/mcdermott/**

*Image credits: Learning Hub, Singapore. View from the atrium at level one upwards. Photo by Hufton and Crow.
Photo of Thomas Heatherwick by Elena Heatherwick*

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