

VILCEK FOUNDATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Joyce Li

The Vilcek Foundation

[(212) 472-2500] or [\[joyce.li@vilcek.org\]](mailto:joyce.li@vilcek.org)

Vilcek Foundation Prizes Uphold American Welcome for Immigrants

**\$600,000 in prizes awarded to chef Marcus Samuelsson,
biologist Angelika Amon, art historian Carmen C. Bambach,
and other immigrant artists and scientists**

New York, NY, February 4, 2019 — The Vilcek Foundation is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2019 Vilcek Foundation Prizes, awarded to foreign-born artists, scholars, and scientists for significant contributions to society. This year, the prizes recognize immigrant accomplishments in the fields of culinary arts, biomedical science, and art history.

“The United States has a long tradition of welcoming newcomers and an equally long history of politicized antagonism,” says Rick Kinsel, president of the Vilcek Foundation. “The vantage point afforded by history, however, proves that immigrants are invaluable to American progress in all fields, and we are proud to uphold our national legacy of welcoming immigrants.”

The Vilcek Prize in the Arts and Humanities, this year awarded in culinary arts, is bestowed to **Marcus Samuelsson**. Born in Ethiopia and raised in Sweden, Samuelsson first made waves as the youngest chef to receive a three-star *New York Times* review while helming Aquavit. He is now the owner of several restaurants, including Red Rooster Harlem and Streetbird Rotisserie, as well as the author of cookbooks such as *The Soul of a New Cuisine* and *Street Food*. Chef Samuelsson is the host of *No Passport Required*, a PBS television show exploring the wide range of immigrant traditions that shaped American culinary culture in cities across the U.S. The Vilcek Prize in Culinary Arts includes a cash prize of \$100,000.

The recipient of the Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Science is Austrian-born molecular and cell biologist **Angelika Amon**. The Kathleen and Curtis Marble Professor of cancer research and a Howard Hughes Medical Investigator at MIT, Dr. Amon studies cell growth and division, and how errors in these processes contribute to birth defects and cancer; her research has shed light on the cellular origins of cancer, miscarriage, and other disorders, and may form the basis for new treatments capable of selectively targeting cancer cells. Among other honors, Dr. Amon is a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the European Molecular Biology Organization, and has received the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences and the Ernst Jung Prize for Medicine. The Vilcek Prize for Biomedical Science includes a prize of \$100,000.

This year also introduces the Vilcek Prize for Excellence, awarded to an immigrant whose contributions have profound impact on society. The inaugural prize recognizes accomplishments in art history and museum work, and is awarded to Chilean-born **Carmen C. Bambach**, curator of Italian and Spanish drawings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A specialist in Italian Renaissance art, Dr. Bambach is the author of award-winning books, over 70 scholarly articles, and 10 exhibition catalogues, including *Leonardo da Vinci: Master Draftsman*. She was the organizer and curator of the Met’s 2017-18 exhibition, *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer*, which brought together never-before exhibited drawings

VILCEK FOUNDATION

alongside known masterpieces in a once-in-a-lifetime viewing opportunity. The prize includes a cash award of \$100,000.

The Vilcek Foundation also awards the Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise, presented to emerging immigrant artists and scientists who have shown exceptional promise early in their career. Each Creative Promise Prize includes an unrestricted cash award of \$50,000.

The recipients of the Creative Promise Prize in Culinary Arts are the following:

- **Tejal Rao**, born in the U.K. to parents from Kenya and India, is the *New York Times*' California restaurant critic. Her food journalism tells stories about politics, culture, science, and history, centering on people whose work often goes unseen. She has received two James Beard Foundation awards for her writing, among other honors.
- **Fabián von Hauske Valtierra**, born in Mexico, is the co-chef and owner of Contra, Wildair, Una Pizza Napoletana, and a forthcoming wine bar, all in New York City. The young chef has received several honors, including a Michelin star in 2017, and 2018, and has been named an *Eater* Young Gun, a *Zagat* 30 Under 30, and a *Forbes* 30 Under 30.
- **Nite Yun**, born in Thailand to Cambodian parents, is the chef and owner of Oakland's Nyum Bai. The restaurant, an homage to her parents, gained national renown within months of opening for its masterful, authentic Cambodian cuisine. She is an *Eater* Young Gun and a *San Francisco Chronicle* Rising Chef.

The recipients for the Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science are the following:

- **Amit Choudhary**, born in India, identified a fundamental force integral to the structures of biomolecules like proteins and nucleic acids, opening up potential for new modes of drug design and delivery. He refined controls for the genome-editing enzyme CRISPR-Cas9, which could transform treatment of genetic disorders and curb vector-borne diseases. He is an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, a member of the Renal Division faculty at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and an associate member of Broad Institute.
- **Jeanne T. Paz**, born in Georgia (then part of the Soviet Union), uses optogenetics to understand the brain mechanisms underlying epileptic seizures in rodent models, revealing possible methods of arresting and predicting seizures, and other therapeutic approaches for intractable epilepsy. She is an assistant investigator at the Gladstone Institutes and assistant professor at the University of California, San Francisco.
- **Mikhail G. Shapiro**, born in the former Soviet Union (now Russia), created new classes of imaging tools, using magnetic fields and sound waves, to visualize molecules and structures in living organisms at high resolution, with implications for a range of medical applications, such as cancer immunotherapy and engineered microbial drugs. He is a professor of chemical engineering at the California Institute of Technology.

The prizewinners will be honored at a gala ceremony at the Mandarin Oriental in New York in April 2019. The Vilcek Prizes in Culinary Arts and Biomedical Science were judged by panels of experts from each field, while the recipient of the Vilcek Prize for Excellence was nominated by our founders. For more information, 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 careers in biomedical science and art history, as well as their appreciation for the opportunities they received as newcomers to this country. The foundation awards annual prizes to immigrant biomedical scientists and artists, sponsors cultural programs, and manages the Vilcek Foundation Art Collections. To learn more about the Vilcek Foundation, please visit Vilcek.org.