

# MCDERMOTT

THE EUGENE MCDERMOTT AWARD IN THE ARTS AT MIT  
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
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BUILDING E15-205  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139-4307

## PRESS RELEASE

### INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTIST PAMELA Z AWARDED 2022 EUGENE MCDERMOTT AWARD IN THE ARTS AT MIT

*Award includes \$100K prize, artist residency, gala, concert, and lecture/demo at MIT*



Image: Pamela Z performing at MIT in the CAST Marathon Concert, Cambridge, MA.  
Photo credit: L. Barry Hetherington/MIT available for press use with credit

Cambridge, MA, USA, September 30, 2022 -- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is pleased to announce that interdisciplinary artist Pamela Z is the recipient of the [2022 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT](#). The \$100K prize awarded at a gala in her honor also includes an artist residency at MIT in spring 2023, during which Pamela Z will perform selections from her work in a concert open to the public on April 19, 2023, then will present a public lecture/demonstration on April 20, 2023. A pioneering composer, performer, and interdisciplinary artist for more than four decades, Pamela Z has toured to major festivals and venues worldwide. She works with voice, live electronic processing,

sampled sound, and video, and is known for using custom music technology, activated by physical gesture, to explore deeply personal themes. This McDermott residency builds on her prior visits to MIT in 2013 and 2016, during which she worked with students, fellow visiting artists, and other members of the campus community.

Pamela Z's remarks upon receiving the award:

"It's a tremendous honor to receive the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT. As an artist whose work crosses disciplines and relies on integrating new technologies, I'm delighted by this kind of recognition from such a prestigious and innovative institution. I've had the privilege of visiting MIT in the past and interacting with their Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST), and I'm thrilled to be invited back to accept this distinguished Award."

The Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT recognizes innovative talents and is awarded to artists working in any field or cross-disciplinary activity. The \$100,000 prize represents an investment in the recipient's future creative work, rather than a prize for a particular project or lifetime of achievement. The official announcement was made at the Council for the Arts at MIT's 49th annual meeting at MIT on September 30, 2022, and Pamela Z will be presented with the award at a gala in her honor on April 20, 2023. Past recipients include Thomas Heatherwick, Audra McDonald, David Adjaye, Olafur Eliasson, Robert Lepage, Gustavo Dudamel, Bill Viola, Suzan Lori Parks, and Santiago Calatrava, among others.

From MIT Associate Provost and Ford International Professor of History Philip S. Khoury:

"We look forward to welcoming Pamela Z and presenting her with MIT's highest award in the arts. More than 1,700 students participate in our music classes and ensembles each year. Her pioneering work will be an inspiration, especially for the large number of students interested in electronic music and digital instrument design. Their creativity is supported by the Voxel Lab for digital music and visual arts innovation and the new music building under construction."

## CAMPUS RESIDENCY AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

A distinctive feature of the Award is a short residency at MIT, which includes a public presentation of the artist's work, substantial interaction with students and faculty, and a gala that convenes national and international leaders in the arts. The goal of the residency is to provide the recipient with unparalleled access to the creative energy and cutting-edge research at the Institute and to develop mutually enlightening relationships in the MIT community.

## **2022 Public Programs by Pamela Z at MIT**

Pamela Z will present two Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT public programs:

Concert: April 19, 2023

Artist lecture/demonstration: April 20, 2023

Further information about the public programs will be posted at [arts.mit.edu/mcdermott](https://arts.mit.edu/mcdermott)

### **About Pamela Z**

Pamela Z's signature instruments are her classically trained bel canto voice and bespoke, gesture-activated audio controllers. Throughout a long and innovative career, she has pioneered the use of interactive technology in solo performance, layering and transforming her vocalizations into a wide variety of sounds and images. Her projects resist classification, blending elements of music, spoken word, dance, theater, and visual art.

Once described by a fellow artist in the *New York Times* as a “wild virtuoso,” she has invented her own artistic path. Since putting down roots in the 1980s in the San Francisco Bay Area contemporary art and performance scene, she has brought her work to venues and festivals including New York's Bang on a Can, Japan's Interlink, San Francisco's Other Minds, Italy's Venice Biennale, and Senegal's Dakar Biennale. In addition to solo and collaborative performances, she has composed scores for dance, film, and chamber ensembles (including Kronos Quartet and Eighth Blackbird). Her sound-and-video installations have appeared at major exhibition spaces around the world.

Pamela Z's affinity for technology manifests not only in her creative tools but as a recurring theme in her work—from the parallels between how humans and computers save information (*Memory Trace*, 2015) to scientific data about ecological changes (*Carbon Song Cycle*, 2013). Other works throughout her career have drawn on her experiences as a traveling artist (*Baggage Allowance*, 2010; *Gaijin*, 2001) and delved into the nature of language and communication (*Voci*, 2003; *Parts of Speech*, 1998).

### **About the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts**

The Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT was established in 1974 by Margaret McDermott (1912-2018) in honor of her husband, Eugene McDermott (1899-1973), a co-founder of Texas Instruments and long-time friend and benefactor of MIT. The award is presented by the Council for the Arts at MIT.

The award is bestowed upon individuals whose artistic trajectory and body of work have achieved the highest distinction in their field and indicate they will remain leaders for years to come. The award recognizes innovative talents in any arts discipline and offers its recipient a \$100,000 cash prize and a campus residency. The McDermott Award reflects MIT's commitment to risk-taking, problem solving, and connecting creative minds across disciplines.

### **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. 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. Since it was established in 1974, the award has been bestowed upon 38 individuals who work in performing, visual, and media arts, as well as authors, art historians, and patrons of the arts.

### **Past Recipients**

2020: Thomas Heatherwick, designer  
2018: Audra McDonald, actress and singer  
2016: David Adjaye, architect  
2014: Olafur Eliasson, visual artist  
2012: 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

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For more information on the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT,  
[arts.mit.edu/mcdermott](https://arts.mit.edu/mcdermott)

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