

For immediate release / November 26, 2007 (updated December 13, 2007)

SPIKE LEE TO RECEIVE 13TH WEXNER PRIZE

***FILMMAKER TO COME TO COLUMBUS IN FEBRUARY TO RECEIVE \$50,000 AWARD
AND TO PARTICIPATE IN A VARIETY OF EVENTS***



Spike Lee (photo by Seth Kushner); at right, the Wexner Prize sculpture, designed by Jim Dine



Columbus, OH—The Wexner Center for the Arts announced today that the 13th **Wexner Prize** will be awarded to groundbreaking filmmaker **Spike Lee**, who will come to Columbus in February to accept the award and participate in events for the community. The \$50,000 Prize is given to a contemporary artist in any field who has been consistently original, influential, and challenging to convention, with artists nominated by the Wexner Center's International Arts Advisory Council. This marks the first award in Lee's career from a multidisciplinary arts center. He will be at the Wexner Center **February 11 and 12, 2008** for the private ceremony, and to participate in a variety of events for Wexner Center members, Ohio State students, area teens, and the general public (see page 2 for details of confirmed events).

Notes Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin, "Since bursting on the scene in 1986 with his quirky and irreverent movie *She's Gotta Have It*, Spike Lee has been among the most significant voices in American film. With a fierce commitment to capturing and conveying the lived experiences of African Americans, he brings to all his projects a unique and independent vision combined with an unerring 'street savvy.' With this Prize—his first from a multidisciplinary arts center—we honor Lee's work in feature film, documentaries, television movies, music video, and even commercials."

Leslie H. Wexner, chair of the Wexner Center Foundation Board of Trustees, commented, "Spike Lee exemplifies what the Wexner Prize was created to celebrate: a bold creative spirit who is unafraid to provoke and challenge us. He tests the American mind, and its attitudes, assumptions and values, and in doing so has advanced American cinema in remarkable ways. We are thrilled to award the 13th Wexner Prize to Spike Lee."

In the past two decades, Lee has worked in a variety of film genres, from coming-of-age (1994's *Crooklyn*) to biopics (1992's *Malcolm X*) to documentaries (2006's *When the Levees Broke*, a devastating look at the effects of Hurricane Katrina) to musicals (1988's *School Daze*), and infused

each with his inimitable style and vibrant, electric filmmaking technique. In 1989 Lee was nominated for a Best Screenplay Academy Award for his landmark *Do the Right Thing*. Currently, he is working on a film based on James McBride's novel *Miracle of St. Anna* about black soldiers who fought in World War II. Lee will also be making his Broadway directorial debut in the spring with an adaptation of Billy Wilder's *Stalag 17*.

PRIZE EVENTS

Among the events surrounding the Wexner Prize:

- **Wexner Prize Presentation Ceremony. Monday, February 11.** Invited guests include major donors and key civic and cultural leaders.
- **A Conversation with Spike Lee**, with author **James McBride. Tuesday, February 12 at 7 pm** in Mershon Auditorium at the Wexner Center. Tickets are \$12 general public, \$6 for members. Member presale continues through February 3; public ticket sales begin February 4, subject to availability. The public can visit wexarts.org/join for information on becoming a Wexner Center member, or call 614 292-3535.
- A **film series** devoted to Lee's films will be held in February. The schedule: ***Do the Right Thing***, February 9; ***25th Hour***, February 16; ***Malcolm X***, February 17; ***She's Gotta Have It***, February 22; ***He Got Game***, February 23; and ***Crooklyn***, February 29. All films will be held in the Wexner Center's Film/Video Theater. With the exception of the *Malcolm X* screening (which is a free screening at 2 pm), all are at 7 pm unless otherwise noted (tickets \$7 per night general public, \$5 members/students/senior citizens).
- A **Wexner Prize display** will be on view in the Wexner Center's lower lobby the month of February.
- Lee's ***When the Levees Broke*** (a documentary about Hurricane Katrina) will screen continually in The Box video space in the lower level of the Wexner Center during February. Admission is free.
- In addition, **Lee will participate in sessions with select groups of Ohio State students as well as select groups of local teens** as part of the Wexner Center Education Department's teen symposium that week, "Art Involved: Where Creative Minds Contemplate Community Activism and Social Change," kicking off with a screening of Lee's *When the Levees Broke* and post-film conversation. This week of events includes programs for teachers as well, and is being held in partnership with Transit Arts, a program for Columbus youth.

ABOUT THE WEXNER PRIZE

The Wexner Prize is awarded annually to a major contemporary artist in any artistic field who has been consistently original, influential, and challenging to convention. The \$50,000 prize is funded by the Wexner Center Foundation through a gift from Abigail and Leslie H. Wexner, chairman of the Wexner Center Foundation and chairman and founder of Limited Brands. As with past Prize recipients, Spike Lee was nominated by the Wexner Center's cross-disciplinary International Arts Advisory Council and selected to receive the Prize by the trustees of the Wexner Center Foundation. A commemorative sculpture designed by artist Jim Dine accompanies the award. In accepting the Prize, **Spike Lee** joins this distinguished group of past recipients:

PAST WEXNER PRIZE RECIPIENTS

Peter Brook, theater director (1992)
John Cage, composer/musician, with **Merce Cunningham**, choreographer (1993)
Bruce Nauman, visual artist (1994)
Yvonne Rainer, choreographer and filmmaker (1995)
Martin Scorsese, filmmaker (1996–1997)
Gerhard Richter, painter (1998)
Louise Bourgeois, visual artist (1999)
Robert Rauschenberg, visual artist (2000)
Renzo Piano, architect (2001)
William Forsythe, choreographer (2002)
Issey Miyake, designer (2004)
Bill T. Jones, choreographer (2005)

INTERNATIONAL ARTS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Kutlug Ataman, video and installation artist, Istanbul
Petra Blaisse, landscape and interior designer, Amsterdam
Iwona Blazwick, director, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
Anne Bogart, artistic director and founder, The SITi Company (Saratoga International Theater Institute), New York
Ken Brecher, executive director, Sundance Institute, Los Angeles
Ian Buruma, Henry R. Luce Professor in Human Rights, Democracy, and New Media, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
Maria de Corral, independent curator and art critic; director, 51st Venice Biennale, Madrid
Peter Gelb, general manager, The Metropolitan Opera, New York
Susanne Ghez, director, The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago
Yuko Hasegawa, chief curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo
Philip Kaufman, film director, San Francisco
Barbara Kruger, artist and writer specializing in media and contemporary visual culture, New York
Phillip Lopate, writer and critic; professor, Hofstra University, New York
Bruce Mau, graphic designer, Bruce Mau Design, Toronto
Josiah McElheny, visual artist, New York
Joseph Melillo, executive producer, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn
Bebe Miller, choreographer, Bebe Miller Company, New York; professor, Ohio State Department of Dance
Michael Morris, co-director, Artangel, and director, Cultural Industry, London
Jonathan Sehring, president, IFC Entertainment, New York
Catharine R. Stimpson, dean, New York University Graduate School of Arts and Science; former director, MacArthur Fellows Program, New York
Lynne Tillman, novelist, short story writer, and critic, New York
Billie Tsien, principal, Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, New York
John Vinci, architect and installation designer, Chicago
John Waters, filmmaker, Baltimore and New York
Lawrence Weschler, writer; director, New York University Institute for Humanities, New York

Media contacts for more information: Karen Simonian, 614 292-9923 or ksimonian@wexarts.org; or Erik Pepple, 614 688-3261 or epepple@wexarts.org