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NEWS RELEASE

The Media Test Wall Presents

Players (Hráči), 1982

Written and animated by Peter Sis; directed by John Halas

Color film transferred to DVD, 7 min.

On View: July 21–September 5, 2008

Viewing Hours: Daily 24 Hours

Cambridge, MA – June 2008. The MIT List Visual Arts Center's Media Test Wall presents *Players*, an animated short film by award-winning children's book author/illustrator Peter Sis. Although Sis is best known for his acclaimed children's books and illustrations, the Czech born artist began his career making animated films in 1975. Blending the real and imaginary Sis's animated works reflect an exquisite and finely detailed draftsmanship. In *Players* each image and frame is drawn entirely by hand.

Players is a pre-[perestroika](#) animated satire about human aggression. In it, Sis mixes popular culture with iconic images of war, choosing 1980s tennis-star rivals Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe as his belligerent protagonists. As their match gets underway, the tennis ball turns into a variety of weapons ranging from a club to battleships and fighter planes, and the court becomes a vast battlefield. Hostilities escalate in the second half of the match. The players and the ball morph into Tarzan, King Kong, a caveman, a Visigoths, Roman charioteers, warriors on elephants, medieval knights on horseback, artillery men with cannons, French revolutionaries, Bonaparte and his army, and finally nuclear weaponry. The musical score for Sis's humorous but deadly serious reflections on war is by noted Czech composer Jiri Stivin

About the Artist

Peter Sis was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1949 and attended the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague as well as the Royal College of Art in London. He began his career producing animated films. In 1982, the Czech government sent him to Los Angeles to make a film celebrating the human spirit at the Olympic games. At that time, Sis was also collaborating with Bob Dylan on *You Got to Serve Somebody*, an animated

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film for MTV. When the Soviet Union boycotted the 1984 Olympics, Sis was ordered to return home but he overstayed his visa and sought refugee status to remain in the United States. With help from Maurice Sendak, the renowned author of children's books, Sis also began to produce books for children, becoming the first author of this genre to win the prestigious MacArthur "genius" award (2003). He has received other numerous awards for his books, including the *Boston-Globe Horn Book Award*, the *Caldecott Honor*, and the *Society of Illustrators Gold Medal*, and is a seven-time winner for the *New York Times Book Review's Best Illustrated Book of the Year*.

Beyond writing and illustrating, Sis has contributed editorial illustrations to *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, and has published close to 1,000 drawings in the *New York Time Book Review*. His most recent book *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), tells the story of Sis's struggle growing up in Communist Prague and his pursuit of freedom and eventual liberation through art.

The Media Test Wall, an ongoing series of contemporary video exhibitions, is located in the Whitaker Building (21 Ames St., Building 56) on the MIT campus.

This presentation of the Media Test Wall is generously supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Council For the Arts at MIT, the Robert and Maurine Rothschild Fund, and the de Florez Fund for Humor, MIT School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Peter Sis is represented by Mary Ryan Gallery, New York.



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