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MILLENIUM PARK PREMIERES NEW SOUNDSCAPE ARTWORK BY SAIC DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR AT SAIC COMMENCEMENT, SUNDAY, MAY 13

Chicago, IL—World-famous Millennium Park in downtown Chicago is about to receive another exciting new public art installation courtesy of an internationally renowned artist affiliated with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Soaring Echoes, by SAIC William and Stephanie Sick Distinguished Professor Bill Fontana, will make its public debut in Millennium Park during SAIC Commencement, held in the park’s Jay Pritzker Pavilion on Sunday, May 13.

An internationally renowned pioneer of sound art, Bill Fontana has previously realized site-specific installations at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, Madison Square Garden in New York City, and Trafalgar Square in London, and his work has been exhibited at such institutions as SFMoMA, Tate Modern, and the Whitney Museum, as well as the 48th Venice Biennale. He is the 2009 recipient of the Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica Lifetime Achievement Award in Digital Musics.

Fontana’s works engage the human and natural environment as a living source of musical information, interacting with and transforming perceptions of visual and architectural spaces. Created for the multi-channel loudspeaker system permanently installed in the Pritzker Pavilion and the trellis over the Great Lawn of Millennium Park, Soaring Echoes employs sounds made from field recordings in natural, urban, marine, and historical environs of Chicago and its surroundings. Fontana edits and mixes the field recordings into a unique matrix that can play from a schedule or be manually selected, making Soaring Echoes a kinetic, evocative overlay of sounds that interact with the physical scale of the Pavilion, the trellis, and the urban context of Millennium Park. As the project unfolds, the artist will develop new mixes to respond to seasonal changes and current events in Millennium Park and Chicago.

Soaring Echoes was developed in partnership between Millennium Park, Inc. and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), led by Cary McMillan, Chairman of the SAIC Board of Governors. Audio control hardware is generously provided by Meyer Sound Labs.

“Bill Fontana moves sound from one context to another, creating surprising moments of unexpected delight,” says Donna LaPietra, Co-Chair of Millennium Park, Inc. “His project will be a fitting, stimulating addition to the works of public art at the heart of the experience of visiting Millennium Park.” SAIC President Dr. Walter E. Massey adds, “SAIC’s commencement ceremony, the single largest and most important gathering of the SAIC community, will be a fitting occasion to present such a significant and high-profile work as Soaring Echoes.”

An international destination that showcases the city of Chicago to the world, the 24.5-acre Millennium Park is located downtown on Michigan Avenue just north of The Art Institute of Chicago and alongside the SAIC campus. The Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the most sophisticated outdoor concert venue of its kind in the United States, is a 120-foot...
high music pavilion with a proscenium surrounded by billowing curves of stainless steel and a huge steel trellis, which spans the entire audience. At this year’s SAIC Commencement, internationally acclaimed American painter and sculptor Eric Fischl will deliver the commencement address to the 2012 graduating class, and receive an honorary doctorate from SAIC along with philanthropist and civil rights activist Beatrice “Buddy” Mayer and world-renowned cartoonist Gahan Wilson (SAIC BFA 1952).

Established in 2006 by a generous gift from William and Stephanie Sick of Winnetka, the William and Stephanie Sick Distinguished Professorship enables internationally renowned artists and designers to visit and teach at SAIC. This Spring term on the SAIC campus Fontana has been teaching a course called “Soundsculpture” with SAIC faculty members Eric Leonardson (Sound) and Carolyn Ottmers (Chair, Sculpture). Fourteen participating students selected through an application and portfolio review process explored the work of key artists, visited selected sites, and participated in technical exercises while developing highly articulated public art proposals. The resulting projects will be published in a catalog accompanied by a DVD.

Previous William and Stephanie Sick Distinguished Professors include Bruce Mau and Jaume Plensa, the Spanish sculptor who created in 2004 Millennium Park’s Crown Fountain with assistance from SAIC’s Department of Art and Technology Studies, and realized the project Public Light & Space with 11 SAIC students in the Spring of 2010. Along with the Crown Fountain, members of the SAIC community have been involved in other significant creative enterprises in Millennium Park. SAIC alumni Petra Bachmaier and Sean Gallero, known as Luftwerk, created Luminous Field February 10–20 in the park, enhancing Anish Kapoor’s world-renowned sculpture Cloud Gate with dramatic images and color patterns set to avant-garde classical music composed in Chicago. The project was the first site-specific work involving Cloud Gate since its construction in 2004, and welcomed 65,000 visitors during its ten-day run.

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About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from around the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC’s resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit [saic.edu](http://saic.edu).