press release

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WAM
weisman art museum

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for immediate release

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digital images available upon request
(see last page of release)

Transgenic petunia is featured in Weisman exhibition

Eduardo Kac: Natural History of the Enigma

Exhibition dates: April 17–June 21, 2009

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (March 15, 2009)—A genetically-modified petunia is the centerpiece of *Eduardo Kac: Natural History of the Enigma*, a new exhibition opening April 17 at the Weisman Art Museum. The exhibition runs through June 21, 2009. The public is invited to meet the artist at an opening reception from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 17 at the Weisman.

The exhibition is the result of a three-year collaboration between artist Eduardo Kac and University of Minnesota scientist Neil Olszewski. Kac and Olszewski have created and propagated a new life form—a transgenic petunia—by fusing proteins from both a plant and from Kac himself. Kac's DNA is expressed only in the flower's red veins. The Weisman exhibition features the transgenic plant and prints based on the seeds produced for the project.

As part of the project, the University of Minnesota commissioned Kac to create a large, three-dimensional fiberglass and steel sculpture based on a protein from the plant. Starting April 17, the sculpture will be on permanent view outside the University's new Cargill Center for Microbial and Plant Genomics (1500 Gortner Avenue on the University's St. Paul campus). It joins more than 35 other pieces of public art in the Weisman's collection.

"Eduardo Kac is a groundbreaking artist in terms of the intersections of technology and art," said Weisman curator Diane Mullin. "His work with genetics and biological material is innovative. With this project, he worked with University faculty and scientists and so we're especially happy to show the work at the Weisman."

Eduardo Kac is internationally recognized for his interactive net installations and bio-art. His work uses biotechnology and genetics to create provocative works that both explore and critique established scientific theories. He is arguably best known for his work Alba, in which he implanted a rabbit with a GFP (Green Fluorescent Protein) gene from a jellyfish. Kac is professor of art and technology studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has published and lectured worldwide about art, science, and culture. His work is represented in museum collections all over the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Holography Museum, Chicago; and the Modern Art Museum, Rio de Janeiro. In 2003 he was asked to exhibit his work at the internationally known Sao Paulo Biennial.

Neil Olszewski, professor of plant biology at the University of Minnesota, coordinated the fabrication of the transgenic plant. In doing so, he also sourced the protein that determined the public artwork's form.

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ABOUT THE WEISMAN

The Weisman Art Museum is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Admission to exhibition galleries is always free. For more information on museum hours, driving directions, and parking options, visit weisman.umn.edu

EDUARDO KAC: NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ENIGMA

April 17–June 21, 2009
Digital images available upon request. Email Christopher James at james052@umn.edu or call 612-625-9685.
REPRESENTATIVE IMAGES:

IMAGE CREDITS

left: Eduardo Kac, *Natural History of the Enigma*, transgenic work, 2003/08. Edunia, a plantimal with the artist's DNA expressed only in the red veins of the flower.
right: Eduardo Kac's steel and fiberglass sculpture, located outside the University of Mnnesota's Cargill Center for Microbial and Plant Genomics.