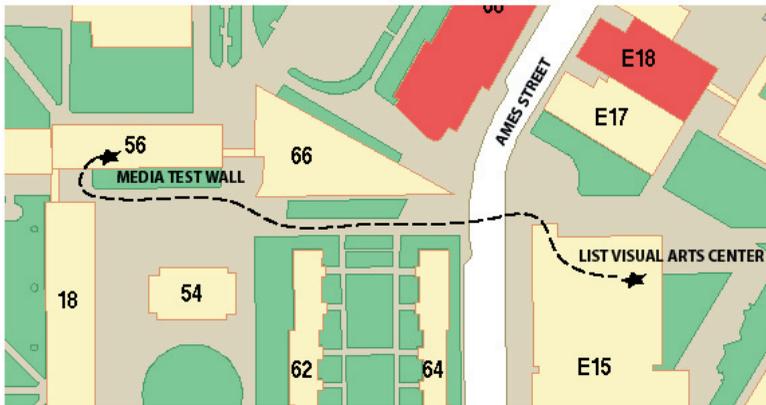


The Media Test Wall, an ongoing series of contemporary video, is located on the ground floor of the Whitaker Building (21 Ames St., Bldg. 56) on the MIT campus.

Viewing Hours: Daily 24 hrs.



This presentation of the Media Test Wall is generously supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Council for the Arts at MIT, and the Robert and Maurine Rothschild Fund.



MIT List Visual Arts Center  
E15, 20 Ames Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
617 253 4680  
<http://web.mit.edu/lvac>



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# Peter Sis

**July 21–September 5, 2008**

**Media Test Wall  
MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER**

**Peter Sis**

***Players*, 1982**

**Written and animated by Peter Sis;**

**Directed by John Halas**

**Color film transferred to DVD, 7 min.**

Peter Sis made the film *Players* in 1982 when 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 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 (1993).

Peter Sis's *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 Visigoth, 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 was written 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 making animated films in 1975, drawing each image and frame entirely by hand. His 1977 film *Island for 6,000 Alarms Clocks, A Modern Fairy Tale* was banned in Czechoslovakia. Both *Heads* (1980) and *Players* (1982) won awards at the West Berlin Film Festival and Toronto Film Festival, respectively. In 1982 the Czech government sent Sis to Los Angeles to produce a film for the 1984 winter Olympics, but when the project was cancelled and the government ordered him to return home, he decided to stay in the United States and was granted asylum.

In 1984 Sis moved to New York and began his career as a children's book author/illustrator. 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*. Sis won the prestigious MacArthur "genius" award for his work in 2003.

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 Times 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.

Peter Sis is represented by Mary Ryan Gallery, New York.