

Arts Initiatives

Leila Kinney, the executive director of [Arts Initiatives](#), works with associate provost Philip Khoury on strategic planning, communications, development, and cross-school coordination for the arts. She directs the Office of the Arts, which includes Arts Communication, administration of programs for the [Council for the Arts at MIT](#) (CAMIT), Student Programs, the Student Art Association (SAA), and the Visiting Artists Program. She chairs the Arts Communication and Visiting Artists committees and is a member of the Creative Arts Council, the CAMIT executive committee, and the advisory boards of the Catalyst Collaborative at MIT (CC@MIT), the List Visual Arts Center, and the MIT Museum. The executive director of Arts Initiatives also serves as the executive director of the [Center for Art, Science & Technology](#) (CAST).

Current Goals

- Establish CAST and program the first year's events in collaboration with faculty director and Kenan Sahin distinguished professor of music Evan Ziporyn
- With a task force of the Creative Arts Council, write a case for the arts in the upcoming development campaign
- Program events for the 40th anniversary of the Council for the Arts in October of 2012 in collaboration with chair of the 40th anniversary celebration Karen Arenson '70 and CAMIT director Susan Cohen

Accomplishments

The Artist-in-Residence Programs in the Office of the Arts were relaunched in the 2011–2012 academic year in a new configuration, with the goals of maximizing their impact, increasing faculty involvement, and spreading opportunities among a greater number of departments and programs. Essential components of the redesigned residencies include cross-disciplinary collaborations among departments, significant contact with students, and public presentations. The endowments offer funds to bring artists to MIT for short exploratory visits or for longer periods during the academic year. Exploratory visits are encouraged to seed projects and familiarize artists with the Institute and potential collaborators. The program is not designed for academic appointments or long-term residencies; thus, the name was changed from Artist-in-Residence Programs to [Visiting Artists Program](#).

We have aimed to create residencies that are embedded in existing or new collaborations with MIT faculty or research groups and that expose students to the experimental or developmental phase of an artist's production. The research phase in an artist's process can be extremely enlightening for all parties, as the creative process becomes an unfolding phenomenon for artists, faculty, and students alike. A larger objective of the program is to make it widely known that MIT is a place where new art is made on a regular basis; thus, individual visiting artists are presented and organized as an annual series.

2011–2012 Series

Jason Moran, jazz pianist. The season was launched with a series of programs featuring pianist Jason Moran, 2010 MacArthur Fellow and the Kennedy Center’s artistic advisor for jazz. He collaborated with Joan Jonas, professor in the MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT) and performance art pioneer, to create and present a new performance work, *Reanimation*, at MIT. Now featured in *DOCUMENTA 13*, a high-profile exhibition of modern and contemporary art in Kassel, Germany (June–September 2012), the artwork was created during open rehearsals that engaged students in its making. The residency also included Jonas’ multimedia exhibition *My New Theater: Reading Dante III*, an installation of music, performance, and video on view at the MIT Media Lab complex during the fall semester.



*Visiting Artist Jason Moran.
Photo by L. Barry Hetherington*

Trevor Paglen, multimedia artist (cosponsored with the List Visual Arts Center and Creative Time, New York). Paglen researched and developed an artwork that would explain its origins to future civilizations, designed to be attached to a satellite and placed in geosynchronous orbit. The artist considered his project as a postcard to the future, or a message in a bottle that instead of moving out into the ocean, travels into space and time. Meetings with Karl K. Berggren, associate professor of electrical engineering in the Quantum Nanostructure and Nanofabrication Group, and Brian L. Wardle, associate professor of aeronautics and astronautics, led him to work closely with MIT graduate student Adam McCaughan. Together they worked to develop a lightweight, encodable, ultra-durable material with which to fabricate the artwork. Using specialized equipment from the Quantum Nanostructure and Nanofabrication Group, they produced a silicon artifact that could be embedded with images. Paglen’s artwork will be launched on a satellite in the fall of 2012 by Creative Time, a major commissioner of public artworks. [Paglen discussed his project on MIT TechTV.](#)

Ascoli Ensemble, research-based medieval music ensemble (cosponsored with associate professor Michael Cuthbert and the Music and Theater Arts Section). This Netherlands-based vocal ensemble focuses on bringing to light rare and unknown pieces of medieval music, with a particular emphasis on music from the years 1350 to 1450. Each singer is both a specialist on early music performance and a scholar, contributing to the ensemble’s musicological work of deciphering, transcribing, and interpreting medieval manuscript sources. The Ascoli Ensemble contributed guest lectures and performances in two music classes and performed two concerts during its residency at MIT, one on October 12 in the thoroughfare of MIT’s Lobby 7 and one on October 13 in MIT’s chapel.

Robert Wilson, theater director (cosponsored with the MIT Museum, Music and Theater Arts, ACT, and ACT-affiliated artist Elizabeth Goldring). Under Wilson's direction, 15 students and staff from MIT created new scenes for a dramatic work-in-progress, *My New Friend SU: The Moon's Other Side*. Goldring and her interdisciplinary team have developed technologies that address issues of blindness and partial sight using robotics, and they collaborated with Wilson to adapt these technologies to the stage. Scenes were developed using Goldring's poetry and the Eye Robot, designed to help visually impaired people see, which was operated by students during the workshop. During the workshop students learned about blocking, set design, and costuming from Wilson and contributed new technologies for the stage that sonify light, enhance robotic movement, and amplify vision.



*Visiting Artist Robert Wilson with students.
Photo by Meg Rotzel*

Bang on a Can, experimental music ensemble (cosponsored with Kenan Sahin distinguished professor of music Evan Ziporyn and with Music and Theater Arts). MIT hosted the Bang on a Can All-Stars from October–April in monthly visits to the campus for a wide range of artistic, educational, and performance activities, including rehearsals, master classes, individual coaching, and composer's forums. The residency also included two landmark concerts at Kresge Auditorium. The fall concert featured the Bang on a Can All-Stars with Boston premieres of Julia Wolfe's *Steel Hammer* (with Trio Mediaeval) and Michael Gordon's *Timber* (with Mantra Percussion). In the spring, Bang on a Can celebrated its 25th anniversary by featuring the Boston-area premiere of Steve Reich's *2x5*, along with *Clapping Music* (performed by Reich) and *Electric Counterpoint*. The sold-out concert also included a special preview performance of Bang on a Can's *Field Recordings*, with music and video by Tyondai Braxton, Floren Ghys, Nick Zammuto, Christian Marclay, Mira Calix, Michael Gordon, David Lang, Julia Wolf, and Evan Ziporyn.

Florian Hecker, sound artist (cosponsored with ACT and Stefan Helmreich, Elting E. Morison chair and professor of anthropology in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences [SHASS]). Hecker created a new sound piece based on the concept of the "auditory chimera" as his point of departure. Originally developed at MIT by Bertrand Delgutte, senior research scientist in the MIT Research Laboratory of Electronics, the concept inspired Hecker to explore the relationship between pitch perception and sound localization. Working in an anechoic chamber generously made available by the Bose Corporation, Hecker probed the experiential nature of psychoacoustic practice and produced a sound piece with text read by MIT faculty and others. Attracting a sold-out audience, the project was copresented with the Goethe Institut Boston in MIT's chapel designed by Eero Saarinen.

The project was developed with a wide group of collaborators: Ute Meta Bauer, ACT director and associate professor; Professor Helmreich; Reza Negarestani, writer and philosopher; Charlotte Reed, senior research scientist in the Research Laboratory of Electronics; Louis Braid, Henry Ellis Warren professor of electrical engineering; Jayaganesh Swaminathan of the Sensory Communications Group in the Research Laboratory of Electronics; Laurel Pardue, graduate student, responsive environments, MIT Media Lab; Joan Jonas, professor of art emerita, ACT; Javier Phipps Anguera, research fellow, ACT; Anna Kohler, senior lecturer, Music and Theater Arts; Antonio Torralba, associate professor, Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory; Stephen Prina, professor, Department of Visual and Environmental Studies, Harvard University; Bertrand Delgutte; Ben Jordan, doctoral student, Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, Harvard University; Rick Bostick, Bose Corporation; Izotope Inc.; Prosoniq Products Software GmbH; and DPA Microphones. *Chimerization*, Hecker's project developed at MIT, is also included in the *dOCUMENTA 13* exhibition in Germany.



Visiting Artist Florian Hecker performs at the MIT Chapel. Photo by L. Barry Hetherington

Ben Houge, composer for orchestra and video games (cosponsored with associate professor Joseph Paradiso, Responsive Environments, MIT Media Lab). During his residency at MIT, Houge worked with researchers in the Responsive Environments group to sonify networked sensor data for the DoppelLab project. During MIT's Independent Activities Period, he led a workshop about designing audio for video games while exploring how game audio design techniques can be applied to other real-time digital experiences. He also led the panel "[Sound and Real-Time Systems](#)," a discussion about the overlap among such disparate disciplines as video games, digital media, and music composition, with Joseph Paradiso, who presented his modular synthesizer, temporarily installed at the MIT Museum; Evan Ziporyn and David Cossin of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, who described their experiences in composition and technologically mediated performance; and associate professor Nick Montfort, who read selections from his computer-generated poetry.

Jamshied Sharifi '83, composer (cosponsored with Frederick Harris Jr., lecturer in Music and Theater Arts and music director, MIT Wind Ensemble). Sharifi was commissioned by the MIT Wind Ensemble to create a composition that recognizes the Arab Spring, a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests occurring in the Arab world that began in December 2010. The piece uses Arabic maqam as source material. As composer-in-residence at MIT, Sharifi worked with the Wind Ensemble to prepare the world premiere of the piece in March at MIT. *Awakening* has three movements:

I. Maghreb/Bouazizi/The Uprisings;
 II. Reflection: Let Each One Hear Her Own Thoughts; and III. Ahead: The Real Transformation Has Barely Begun. Sharifi also participated in an interdisciplinary panel discussion, "Awakening the Arab Spring," with Philip S. Khoury, associate provost and Ford international professor of history; Obaidah Abuhashem '12 (electrical engineering and computer science), president of the MIT Arab Students' Organization; and Emily Jackson '12 (chemical engineering), president of the MIT Wind Ensemble.



*Visiting Artist Jamshied Sharifi introduces the world premiere of Awakening performed by the MIT Wind Ensemble, directed by Frederick Harris Jr.
 Photo by L. Barry Hetherington*

Program Structure

Calls for proposals are considered twice a year by the Visiting Artists Committee, appointed by Philip Khoury, associate provost, and chaired by Leila Kinney, executive director of Arts Initiatives.

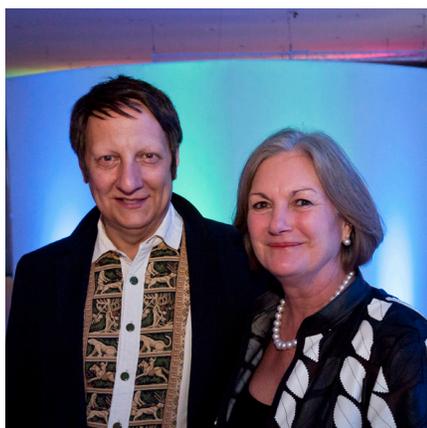
The 2011–2012 Visiting Artists Committee included Renée Green, director, Program in Art, Culture and Technology; John Durant, director, MIT Museum; Paul Ha, director, List Visual Arts Center; Leila W. Kinney, executive director of Arts Initiatives, chair; Nick Montfort, associate professor of digital media, Comparative Media Studies; Meg Rotzel, producer of Artists in Residence and Public Programs, Office of the Arts; Rebecca Uchill, graduate student, history, theory, and criticism of architecture and art; and Evan Ziporyn, Kenan Sahin distinguished professor of music.

Sponsoring units collaborate with Meg Rotzel to create visits that take advantage of MIT's distinctive culture of creativity, experimentation, and research.

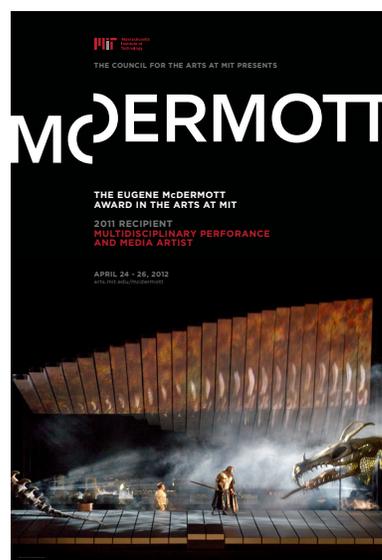
Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT Residency and Gala

The 2012 recipient of the McDermott Award was multidisciplinary performance and media artist [Robert Lepage](#). Renowned as a director, filmmaker, playwright, and actor, Lepage has created a diverse and expansive body of work that defies categorization. He and his creative team Ex Machina have made dazzlingly original contributions to theater, opera, film, stagecraft, circus performance, and public art. In his most recent work, Lepage transformed Wagner’s four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* with an adventurous and technically sophisticated set in a groundbreaking production for the Metropolitan Opera in New York—the most ambitious the Met has ever attempted. Lepage also has created two Cirque du Soleil productions and The Image Mill™, a spectacular architectural illumination and urban projection.

Residency



*McDermott Award recipient Robert Lepage with Mary McDermott Cook.
Photo by L. Barry Hetherington*



McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT 2012 commemorative poster

Robert Lepage brought his talent and distinctive perspective on the creative process to MIT initially during a workshop for students conducted in February, which launched the special spring semester class in Music and Theater Arts, 21M.805 Performance and Design Practicum. During his campus residency April 24 to 26, Lepage revisited the students to continue their collaboration. Students from MIT, Harvard, and Emerson developed scenes between February and April and presented seven vignettes for Lepage, complete with lighting, set, and sound design. In addition, students were given exclusive access to Lepage during a special question and answer session moderated by Teresa Neff, lecturer from the Music and Theater Arts Section at MIT. During this session, Lepage spoke about the inspiration for the technologically dazzling set, dubbed “The Machine,” created for the *Ring* cycle and showed clips from *Das Rheingold* and *Wagner’s Dream*, a documentary about the making of *Ring* for the Met.

Two free public programs provided the public and the MIT community the opportunity to see and hear the McDermott Award winner. The first program, “The Science of Illusion,” was copresented by the Council for the Arts and the MIT Museum as part of the Cambridge Science Festival. The panelists, including Lepage, held a lively discussion about the relationship of illusion to human perception and offered insights into how magical thinking drives technological innovation and the human imagination. Participants were John Durant, director of the MIT Museum and adjunct professor in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society (moderator); George Barbastathis, Singapore research professor of optics and professor of mechanical engineering; Graham Jones, assistant professor of anthropology; and Seth Riskin, manager of Emerging Technologies and the Holography/Spatial Imaging Initiative at the MIT Museum.

The second program, “Technology in Stagecraft and Storytelling,” offered a fascinating glimpse into Lepage’s thinking as he discussed his work with Peter Gelb, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera. Although it began with a discussion of *Ring*, the program encompassed Lepage’s entire body of work—from film to one-man performances, Shakespeare to Peter Gabriel concerts, and Cirque du Soleil productions to spectacular architectural projections. The talk included a multimedia presentation showcasing the sophisticated sets for the *Ring* cycle and other productions and highlighted his versatility in a full range of theater craft.

Lepage and members of his company Ex Machina met extensively with faculty and researchers in the Media Lab and Theater Arts to exchange ideas. They attended the MIT Media Lab’s open house and viewed demonstrations of current projects in many areas, including the Opera of the Future lab (Muriel R. Cooper professor of music and media Tod Machover and his graduate student group) and the Cognitive Machines group (associate professor of media arts and sciences Deb Roy). A visit to Global Shakespeare with professors Peter Donaldson, Diana Henderson, and Shankar Raman revealed new digital tools for Ex Machina to draw upon for future presentations of Shakespeare.

Gala

The residency culminated when Lepage was presented with the 2012 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts by MIT president Susan Hockfield and Peter Wender ’71, chair of the McDermott Award Selection Committee, at a gala held in his honor. This private event had a distinguished list of honorary hosts, including Canadian diplomats and creative arts leaders from both Boston and Canada. Twenty-three members of the Council for the Arts at MIT and the MIT Corporation were sponsors of the gala, which was cochaired by Terry Stone ’76, retiring executive vice president and treasurer, and council member Rick Stone ’76; the gala was attended by their guests, MIT faculty, and Mary McDermott Cook, daughter of Eugene and Margaret McDermott, who traveled from Texas for the event.

Media Coverage

Lepage’s McDermott Award residency was covered by newspaper and radio outlets in the United States and Canada, including the *Boston Globe* and Radio Canada.

MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology



CAST inaugural director Evan Ziporyn performs with Bang on a Can.
Photo by Christine Southworth

The executive director of Arts Initiatives is working closely with the faculty director, Professor Ziporyn, to launch the new [MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology \(CAST\)](#). The formation of CAST, supported by a major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, was announced in April and was reported by more than 150 news outlets.

Activities of the center will include:

- Soliciting and supporting cross-disciplinary curricular initiatives that integrate the arts into the core curriculum and create new artistic work or materials, media, and technologies for artistic expression
- Spearheading a visiting artists program that emphasizes creative process; extensive interaction with MIT faculty, students, and researchers; and cross fertilization among disciplines
- Assisting in the presentation and curation of performing and visual arts or design relevant to the research of engineers, scientists, and the MIT community as a whole
- Disseminating the creative and intellectual production supported by the center to the public through performances, exhibitions, installations, and a biennial symposium
- Supporting graduate students and postdoctoral researchers whose work advances the mission of the center

Arts Communications

Through close collaboration with the News Office, the directors of communications in the School of Architecture and Planning and SHASS, and communications officers on the Arts Communications Committee, Arts Initiatives coordinates and facilitates internal and external promotion, raising awareness of and publicity for the arts at MIT. The new position of arts communications manager has made it possible to raise the profile of the

arts—within the MIT community, in the Boston area, nationally, and internationally—through sustained attention to media relations, advertising, grassroots outreach, print marketing, and online presence. Building loyalty from existing audiences and reaching new audiences are given equal priority.

Advertising

In the spring term, advertising was added to communications outreach through WBUR, Boston’s National Public Radio affiliate, as well as in *The Tech*. A joint advertisement with fellow members of the Cambridge Arts Council was also placed in the *Metro* newspaper. Print materials such as postcards and posters were produced and digital advertisements were presented in the Infinite Display video slideshows on campus.

Arts Portal

A new look to the homepage of the [Arts Portal](#) and a series of newly designed spotlights were implemented in spring 2012. The portal now features a news section where arts coverage, press releases, and campus news stories are posted on a regular basis.



The MIT Arts Portal

Campus News

Campus News articles and “Of Note” highlights published throughout AY2012 emphasized the Visiting Artists Program, the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts, the establishment of CAST, and events such as the MIT Museum exhibition of photographs by Berenice Abbott and the graduate arts soiree.

Media Relations

The new communications effort created overarching messaging for the arts. The unified message presented to the media resulted in an article in Artinfo.com about the increased profile of the arts at MIT, including the establishment of CAST and the new Kurtz Gallery for Photography at the MIT Museum and the dedication of a new Percent-for-Art work by Cai Guo-Qiang for the Sloan School of Management. Media outreach for the opening of the Kurtz Gallery produced two *Boston Globe* pieces and a forthcoming article in *Art New England* magazine. The CAST announcement produced articles in many other media outlets, including an Associated Press story published in more than 150 news outlets such as *US News and World Report*. The international press also covered arts news from MIT. The China Forum lecture by Cai Guo-Qiang and the dedication of *Ring Stone* were covered by newspaper, magazine, and television outlets from the United States and China, including the Chinese national news service Xinhua News Agency.

A relationship with the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and the Greater Boston Visitors Bureau brought two groups of international travel journalists to the MIT campus during press trips organized by these organizations.

Video

High-quality videos were produced for several visiting artists including [Trevor Paglen](#), [Jamshied Sharifi](#), and [Robert Lepage](#). The videos are posted on the Arts at MIT channel on YouTube, TechTV, and the Arts Portal and are also distributed through social media. Videos about Robert Lepage by our communications team were presented at the CAMIT annual meeting in October and during the McDermott Award gala in April.

Administrative Initiatives

The executive director of Arts Initiatives, Leila Kinney, cochaired the search committee that selected the new director of the List Visual Arts Center, Paul Ha.

Representing MIT, Kinney is one among 23 founding sponsors of the University of Michigan's ArtsEngine national network of university leaders committed to better integrating arts practice into research universities. She serves as a member of the initiative's strategic communications task force.

The associate provost and the deans of the School of Architecture and Planning and SHASS created a shared position in social media on a one-year, experimental basis and subscribed jointly to Vocus, a media relations database and software package for distribution of press releases.

Finances and Funding

The 2012 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts gala raised more than \$110,000 in support of future McDermott residencies and the Council for the Arts at MIT.

The \$1.5 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support CAST, which is housed in the Office of the Provost, will be administered by Arts Initiatives.

Future Plans

- Establish the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology as a leading force in creative work and curricular experimentation at the intersections of art, science, and technology.
- Continue to build the international prominence of the McDermott Award and the success of the gala in raising funds and visibility for the arts at MIT.
- Develop an overarching argument and strategy for raising funds for the arts across the administrative units in the Office of the Associate Provost, the School of Architecture and Planning, and SHASS.

Personnel

Stacy Pyron, senior administrative assistant and financial administrator, joined the Office of the Arts in July 2011, replacing Carla Seh bani. In spring 2012, she took on additional responsibilities for CAST and SAA. Heidi Erickson, assistant to the executive director, joined the Office of the Provost in September 2012, upon the departure of Pardis Parsa for graduate school; in spring 2012, Heidi added graphic design to her responsibilities. Leah Talatinian was appointed arts communications manager in the Office of the Arts in January 2012. Kristin Mattera was hired as communications assistant for social media in February 2012, a position shared with the Office of the Provost, the School of Architecture and Planning, and the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences.

Leila W. Kinney

Executive Director of Arts Initiatives