

Arts Initiatives

The 2021 academic year was circumscribed by the Covid-19 pandemic and its disproportionate effect on the creation, reception, and teaching of art, which altered the conduct of all programs in the Office of the Arts. In these unprecedented circumstances, the arts communication team became vital to maintaining a sense of community among the dispersed units of the arts at MIT and their remote audiences. The Arts from Anywhere page on the arts web portal fulfilled part of this function, as did the rapid mastery and delivery of online programming by the entire staff. The biennial Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT public lecture, gala, and award ceremony were converted into a streaming video with four chapters, featuring a short documentary about the design studio and a special challenge set by 2020 recipient Thomas Heatherwick. Also included were segments about the history and context of the award, a conversation between Heatherwick and dean of the School of Architecture and Planning, Hashim Sarkis, a review of key projects, and a special message to the MIT community created by Heatherwick's studio. The Center for Art, Science and Technology (CAST) symposium, "Unfolding Intelligence: The Art and Science of Contemporary Computation"; a remote art-making class in place of cancelled classes at the Student Art Association; and a successful virtual annual meeting of the Council on the Arts at MIT were among the highlights of this shift to all-online programming during the prolonged closure of campus.

MIT's renewed dedication to advancing previous commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion was the second overarching factor that influenced activities and programs in the arts at MIT, to which our sector added a fourth emphasis: accessibility. In response, CAST appointed three virtual visiting artists and launched a new fellowship in collaboration with MIT's Open Documentary Lab and Black Public Media, a New York-based organization that for 40 years has invested in training and educating visionary creators of stories about the Black experience. In addition, our analysis through a DEIA lens of grantmaking practices, previous recipients, and assessment criteria led to important changes in procedures and goals going forward.

MIT Center for Art, Science and Technology

The year proved remarkably productive for CAST, despite the unusually constrained circumstances and the limited presence of the MIT community on campus. In AY2021, CAST awarded \$292,500 in funding for 12 projects to commence (and 13 to continue) in AY2022 from a total of 13 full applications submitted for funding from the CAST grants program.

Visiting Artists in the Virtual Classroom

In response to the shift to remote teaching in April 2020, CAST launched a lightning round of grants to support the Visiting Artists in the Virtual Classroom program. This was successful beyond our expectations and continued throughout academic year 2021; as of this report, artists have made more than 88 classroom visits. Not only did these artists enliven the classroom at a time when faculty and students confronted a stressful and diminished learning experience, but the program also revealed some of the benefits of virtual visits. Artists from all over the world were able to participate, resulting in a

much more diverse pool. By lowering costs and widening availability, CAST was able to reach beyond the arts curriculum and introduce artists into a wide array of classes across the curriculum.

Virtual Visiting Artists

Amid a global pandemic, racial injustice, and the economic devastation of the cultural sector, CAST introduced Virtual Visiting Artists, a new category of appointment for AY2021. The three distinguished artists—Don Byron, Anat Cohen, and Luciana Souza—brought breadth, scope, and energy to MIT during a period when most learning was online and remote. The program drew upon wide-ranging facets of their artistry and cultural heritage and brought expertise in specific musical cultures that are currently underrepresented in MIT's curriculum.

Multifaceted clarinetist Don Byron guest-lectured in seven MIT classes, conducted masterclasses with the MIT Wind Ensemble and MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble, and gave private lessons on clarinet and saxophone to four MIT undergraduate students as a virtual visiting artist. His virtual residency also included the launch of a podcast featuring interviews hosted by Byron with pioneering performers and composers representing a diversity of musical genres.

Clarinetist Anat Cohen expanded on her previous MIT collaborations with presentations on developing a personal approach to sound and improvisation through classical, jazz, and various world musics. Cohen led class lectures, master classes, small group sessions, and individual lessons to students in jazz, world music, and ensemble performance. Cohen also gave public presentations, from *Sound Virtuosity*, a performance-demonstration exploring expression in sound, gesture, and intention; *Comprehensive Musicianship from the Page and Freedom From It!*, an interactive demonstration of creative and flexible approaches to written and improvised music; and *On Stage with the 3 Cohens*, a masterclass on improvisation, performance, and trust with her siblings Avishai and Yuval.

Luciana Souza led a yearlong exploration of the music of Antônio Carlos Jobim and delved into the rich history of cross-cultural exchange that has fueled Brazilian music across genres for generations. In addition to visiting classes to present on Brazilian rhythms and styles, composition, efficient vocal practice, and wordless singing, Souza developed a six-part seminar exploring the life, music, and legacy of Jobim. Souza also worked closely with the Vocal Jazz Ensemble to compose a new piece that will be premiered on campus in AY2022.

Black Public Media MIT Fellowship

MIT Open Documentary Lab, MIT CAST, and Black Public Media (BPM) joined forces to launch a four-month remote fellowship for Black filmmakers, journalists, creative technologists, and artists. The inaugural fellow was Carla Lyndale Bishop whose project was titled *Mapping Blackness*. The second fellowship went to Fabiano Mixo for his augmented reality project *Meshmemories*. Although all three organizations had assumed they would only be able to support one fellowship in AY2021, they were able to not only extend Lyndale Bishop's fellowship into spring semester but also offer a second fellowship to Mixo. Each fellow joined MIT OpenDocLab, received \$7,500 from MIT

CAST, and received production support from BPM to help them create a pitch package for their project.



Video still from Meshmemories by Black Public Media MIT Fellow Fabiano Mixo.

Public Programs

MIT Performing

2020–2021 was the third season of *MIT Performing*, a prototyping and presenting series programmed by Jay Scheib, Class of 1949 Professor of Theater. Events included:

Queer Futures (October 8–10): A co-presentation with *Lion's Jaw*, *Queer Futures* was a series of three discussions centered on reorientations for performance facilitated by Thomas F. DeFrantz. Using this virtual moment to expand its reach beyond the local Cambridge and MIT communities, the festival brought together educators, choreographers, and performers to share ideas about how to create supportive spaces for social change through and after the pandemic.

Blended Therapy (Winter 2020–2021): Ayesha Jordan and Justin Hicks's performance commission from The Shed had to be re-envisioned for a virtual audience when they returned as part of MIT Performing (their previous residency was with *Line by Line* at MIT in 2019). Jordan and Hicks researched existing online platforms and blog-style gathering spaces to aid in the development of a *Queer Futures* webspace that would allow further engagement with their work, the visual album, *Blended Therapy*, which presents a hypnotic audiovisual journey through the inner life of "glamazon hip-hop icon" Shasta Geaux Pop.

A Black History Month Celebration (February 22, 23, and 25): An MIT CAST partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital, the Front Porch Arts Collective, and the Greater Boston community, this mini-festival aimed to highlight our shared history as well as the importance of wellness, engage innovators, and display rich talent in the arts. The festival featured musical performances in *Soul Break with Front Porch and Fam*; a work-in-progress reading of Melinda Lopez's *Young Nerds of Color* followed by a panel discussion with Black, Indigenous and People of Color; researchers and medical professionals; and a performance of *Fabulation* or *The Re-Education of Undine* by Lynn Nottage.

Finding Connection Through Mediated Performance: A Conversation with Lisa Dwan (May 5): CAST Mellon Distinguished Visiting Artist Lisa Dwan discussed the limitations and opportunities inherent in developing performances for the camera, in both film and virtualized theater, and in exploring how she creates powerful recorded performances while finding ways to capture the intimacy and depth of connection inherent in live theater in a more hybridized format.

MIT Sounding

Due to Covid-19, concerts in the 2020–2021 season of MIT Sounding were suspended; research and development of a major new project was undertaken instead.

It Must Be Now!: Under the auspices of *MIT Sounding*, *It Must Be Now!* (IMBN!), led by Frederick Harris Jr. of MIT Music and Theater Arts, brought together three leading musicians—Terri Lyne Carrington, Braxton Cook, and Sean Jones—to collectively compose a large-scale work for MIT musicians on the overall theme of racial justice. Collaborating with multimedia artists, MIT students and community members, and others beyond MIT, this two-year project seeks to address racial and social injustices and their confluences. IMBN! explores institutional racism; environmental, economic, and health injustices; police brutality; and abolitionism.

During the spring 2021 semester, Carrington, Cook, and Jones workshopped their compositions and led virtual masterclasses and conversations with MIT students and the broader community. Jones spoke to music students about his teaching philosophies and the influences that most shaped his performance style; Cook worked with MIT saxophone players from the MIT Wind Ensemble and Festival Jazz Ensemble; Carrington gave a public talk—*An Artist Responding to Justice*—exploring her multi-faceted career, activism, and her recent 2021 Grammy-nominated album *Waiting Game*; and Carrington and Jones, with Virtual Visiting Artists Anat Cohen and Luciana Souza, joined a panel discussion on *Jazz and Gender: Moving Toward and Equitable Future*, moderated by Sarah Elizabeth Charles on March 4. They discussed how biases in jazz affect women and nonbinary musicians’ participation, how to address disparities, and how to improve conditions to create a nurturing environment in which musicians on all parts of the gender spectrum can be supported in their education and careers.

Mellon Faculty Grants

Professor of physics Richard Milner, Jefferson Lab’s Rolf Ent, Argonne Lab’s Rik Yoshida, animator James LaPlante of Sputnik Animation, and MIT video artists Chris Boebel and Joe McMaster are making a new animation of the proton. They will make the visualization itself a centerpiece of a short film that explores the debates and decisions involved in creating any representation of phenomena that are inherently abstract and invisible, which is aimed at grades 7–12 science students and the general public.

Associate professor of history Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, the Genevieve McMillan and Reba Stewart Professor of the Study of Women in the Developing World, is creating an online exhibition and digital archive: “Twelve Faces of Armenian Feminism.” The project involves an interactive multimedia exhibition that showcases a sample of the women’s published and unpublished work, letters, pictures, postcards, and various memorabilia

that Ekmekçioğlu and Melissa Bilal unearthed in archives around the world. The online exhibition includes video installations of oral history interviews with some of the women's descendants and animations of their life stories as well as performances of the women's poetry set to music and dramatic readings of selected texts.

The virtual exhibition looks to awaken the histories denied from school textbooks and popular national memory while inspiring viewers to rediscover voices reclaimed through the new wave of feminism in the Armenian homeland and diaspora.

Cross-disciplinary Class Development Grants

For the second time, lecturer in music Ian Hattwick offered 21M.370 Digital Instrument Design in spring 2021, a contribution to a burgeoning area of the curriculum in music technology. In this course, students receive hands-on experience in creating software systems, hardware interfaces, or interactive artworks and critically engage with technological development in aesthetics, social formations, and culture. The class sessions were virtual and the course featured guest lectures by four artists working in digital instrument design. In association with the class, Hattwick produced *Engineered Expression: Digital Instruments in Performance*, which included a virtual concert and a three-hour Zoom workshop on May 7 and 8.

Fay Chandler Creativity Grants

Cristina Parreño Alonso, lecturer in architecture, received a Fay Chandler Creativity Grant in support of her project *Tectonics of Wisdom: The Library, The Book, and Deep Time Material Events*, an art installation that aims to expand architecture's temporal sensibilities by examining the physical and material space of the library building. The project was exhibited at the Schusev Museum of Architecture in Moscow from January 31 to August 23, 2020, and as part of *TIME-SPACE-EXISTENCE*, a collateral event of the Venice Biennale of Architecture hosted by the European Cultural Center, on view from May 22 to November 21.

International Exhibition and Performance Grants

Professor and director of Art, Culture, and Technology Judith Barry's exhibition *All the Light That's Ours to See* (formerly *Something in Mind*) was on view from September 19 to November 22, 2020, at Lumiar Cité in Lisbon, Portugal, and was supported by an International Exhibition and Performance Grant. The project was originally scheduled to open at HOME in Manchester, England, in January 2019 but was unable to move forward there due to the venue's lack of funds.

Azra Akšamija, associate professor of Art, Culture, and Technology was awarded an International Exhibition and Performance Grant in support of *Displaced Empire*, a project across borders developed by Akšamija and collaborators and presented by the MIT Future Heritage Lab at the Co-habitats section of La Biennale di Venezia's 17th International Architecture Exhibition from May 22 to November 21. *Displaced Empire* is a 1:1 scale textile installation that questions the basic needs approach in humanitarian aid by foregrounding culture as an essential human need.



Displaced Empire by Azra Akšamija and the Future Heritage Lab, installation view from La Biennale di Venezia's 17th International Architecture Exhibition. Photo by Azra Akšamija.

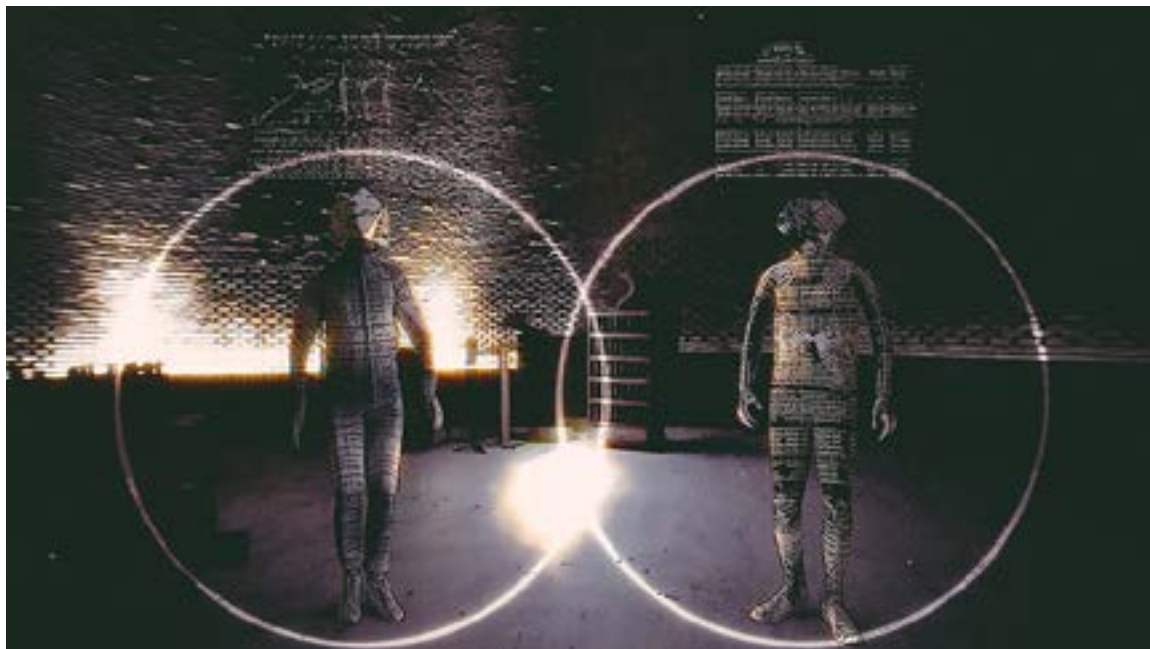
Associate professor of architecture and urbanism Rania Ghosn's *The Planet After Geoengineering*, supported by an International Exhibition and Performance Grant, was commissioned for the 17th International Architecture Exhibition and responds to the theme of "How will we live together?" In drawings and narratives, the project makes geoengineering and its controversies public, inviting the viewer to interrogate the expansion of engineering to the scale of the planet. In addition to the 25 drawings installed in the Biennale's *As One Planet* exhibition, the project includes an animation with music by Christine Southworth and Professor Evan Ziporyn, along with a graphic novel featuring essays by geographer Kathryn Yusoff, theorist Benjamin Bratton, and climate intervention researcher Holly Jean Buck.

Supported by an International Exhibition and Performance Grant, *Open Collectives* is an immersive installation featuring four digital and architectural platforms leveraging solidarity to strengthen economic sovereignty, housing affordability, communal self-determination, and mutual aid. On view at La Biennale di Venezia's 17th International

Architecture Exhibition The installation asks how new communities can be formed, organized, and strengthened through both the digital and the urban. *Open Collectives* was initiated by MIT's Future Urban Collectives Lab, founded and directed by Associate Professor of Architecture and Urbanism and architect Rafi Segal, in collaboration with MIT Civic Data Design Lab director Sarah Williams, artist and MIT lecturer in Art, Culture, and Technology Marisa Morán Jahn, and futurist Greg Lindsay.

Visiting Artists

As the 2018–21 Dasha Zhukova Distinguished Visiting Artist at MIT, Matthew Ritchie pivoted from virtual reality to film for his project in response to the closure of campus due to Covid-19. The capstone of his residency, a 20-minute film called *The Invisible College: Color Confinement*, premiered at the CAST “Unfolding Intelligence” symposium in April 2021 and was featured by the publishing platform e-flux. *The Invisible College: Color Confinement* was written and directed by Matthew Ritchie, with animation by Nick Roth and original music by Professor Evan Ziporyn and Shara Nova. MIT CAST provided production support. StyleGAN implementation was by Sarah Schwettmann and Matthew Ritchie, and CycleGAN implementation was by Chi-Hua Jonny Yu. Markus J. Buehler, Peter Fisher, Peter Galison, Caroline A. Jones, and Sarah Wolozin served as advisors on the project.



Film still from *The Invisible College: Color Confinement* by Matthew Ritchie. Image courtesy of the artist.

Mellon Distinguished Visiting Artist Lisa Dwan, an actor, producer and director, returned to MIT to work with faculty members across the Media Lab, Literature, and Theater Arts to further her explorations of the intersection of text, live performance, and technology. Dwan worked with Jay Scheib to explore possibilities for a prototype of a fully remote version of Veronique Olmi’s *Beside the Sea*. She gave a public talk on *Finding Connection Through Mediated Performance* in May, where she discussed the limitations and opportunities inherent in developing performances for camera in both film and virtualized theater.

Visiting Artist Jenna Sutela and McAfee Professor of Engineering Markus J. Buehler explored the sonification and visualization of emotional molecules such as oxytocin and neurotransmitters. Buehler and his team specialize in turning molecular structures and vibrations into sound while using neural networks to detect them in images.

Sutela and Buehler developed their project, *Wet-on-Wet* during AY2021. Commissioned by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and e-flux Architecture, *Wet-on-Wet* expands upon Sutela's work on sensing the world in ways beyond language and vision by, for example, giving a voice to gut bacteria or tuning into sounds from the organic and the machinic environment while seeking to move beyond the anthropocentric perspective. An interest in sonifying micro- or nanoscale phenomena is what brought Sutela and Buehler together. Buehler engages in the nanomechanical analysis of the vibrational signatures of materials and their atomistic microstructures—seeing the molecules and their internal structures as instruments vibrating at different frequencies that can be used to generate audible sound for observing the innate sonic qualities of matter, interacting with matter through sound, and generating new forms of matter through this process. The work was featured twice in the series *Survivance* by the Guggenheim and e-flux with an essay by Caroline Jones and the premiere of the video work *Wet-on-Wet*.

In April, Sutela participated in an Open Systems panel moderated by Caroline Jones, professor of history theory and criticism, and a breakout session with Buehler discussing *Wet-on-Wet* as part of this year's CAST symposium.

Sarnath Banerjee and Abhijit Banerjee, Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics (no relation) created a novel medium that bridges the gap between the social science discourse of academia and the loud, inchoate, but intuitive expressions of everyday life. They share a conviction that storytelling is essential to social science as a method to reexamine the key ideas—such as poverty and efficiency—used to justify policies that can have disastrous and far-reaching effects.

Drawing from Professor Banerjee's research on economic development, they are working to develop a form of storytelling that brings together scholarship, theater, drawing, and sound to explore themes of water, greed, and economic growth. "The Land of Good Intentions" will be presented as a series of animated episodes. The story is written in the form of a multi-character soap opera centered around the academic economist addressing various water-related intrigues of South Asia. Sarnath Banerjee and Abhijit Banerjee hope to re-enchant the subject of economic growth through this form of annotated lecture by showcasing the synergistic and creative outcomes of collaboration between social scientists and artists.

Rosa Colón Guerra collaborated with Mikael Jakobsson, research coordinator in the MIT Game Lab and lecturer in comparative media studies, to challenge colonialist ideologies through the development of counter-colonial board games, building on work done by Mary Flanagan, the Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor in Digital Humanities at Dartmouth College; Aziria Rodríguez Arce; and members of the MIT Game Lab and MIT CoLab. During AY2021, Guerra and Jakobsson designed and prototyped the board and other elements of the game. They distributed prototypes for Guerra and Game Lab affiliates to play-test and provide feedback before the game goes into final production.

Artist-scholar Adesola Akinleye’s residency explored how dance-based research and creative collaboration across disciplines can create new techniques, lexicons, and conversations within urban design. Working with Gediminas Urbonas, associate professor of art, culture, and technology, Akinleye collaborated with MIT faculty, researchers, and students, as well as external collaborators from *Theatrum Mundi*.

During fall 2020, Urbonas and Akinleye co-taught 4.314/5 online. Dancers from DancingStrong Movement Lab worked with students in a four-week artistic exploration using Zoom as a vehicle for exploring the relationship between body and city. Akinleye invited guest artists and scholars to participate in class discussions and “Morning Conversations” that replaced the Soma-salons planned for an on-campus residency. In spring 2021, they were developed into a podcast series published on the Program in Art, Culture, and Technology’s SoundCloud.

Diana Henderson, professor of literature, hosted theater maker and artistic director Karin Coonrod in 2019 to develop the music/text/chamber/hybrid/opera *Judith*. *Judith* builds on Coonrod’s breadth of experience and privileges a Hebrew/Old English modern heroine as a strong-hearted deliverer of her suffering people. Drawn from the Old English epic fragment of the same name, *Judith* investigates the psychology of the heroine in confrontation with the tyrant through the lens of the story of the English language. Coonrod created a text to be sung and spoken in Old English and in modern English, rooted in Old English. The opera’s composer and musical director is Paul Vasile. Coonrod, Henderson, Vasile, and the project team produced and edited a documentary film about *Judith* at MIT.

Lupe Fiasco and Nick Montfort, professor of digital media, came together to engage the MIT community at the intersection of rap, computing, and activism. Fiasco’s work as a Grammy-winning rapper and producer is informed by his interests in cognitive science, linguistics, semiotics, and computing. CAST launched the residency in February 2021 with an online presentation for the MIT community, “Lupe Fiasco: SOSA,” in which Fiasco shared insights from his work as an entrepreneur and community advocate, for instance working with the Society of Spoken Art (SOSA), an educational guild for aspiring and established rappers, of which he is a co-founder.

Skylar Tibbits, assistant professor of architecture and co-director of the Self-Assembly Lab, hosted London-based designer Chalayan to create active, transformable fashion. Together, Tibbits and Chalayan are developing innovative pieces that unite Tibbits’ self-assembling, programmable materials with Chalayan’s inventive designs. Tibbits and Chalayan continued to develop prototypes for programmable wearables, but fabrication was delayed due to limited factory production during Covid.

Carsten Höller, Pattie Maes, Professor of Media Technology, and Adam Haar, a research assistant in the Fluid Interfaces Lab, work together to explore experiences that cross the borders of wake and sleep. Höller, with both a scientific doctorate and an installation art practice, combines experiment design and experience design in his work. Höller, Maes, and Haar are designing experiential prototypes and environments approximating the circadian cycles of consciousness, lucidity, and dreams to provoke new kinds of

perceptual receptivity and disorientation. During spring 2021, they participated in the Dream X Engineering Workshop Series and CHI 2020 workshop “Do Cyborgs Dream of Electric Limbs” as well as a workshop with ArtMtr exploring methods for painting dreams with a robotic painter.

Unfolding Intelligence: The Art and Science of Contemporary Computation

The MIT Center for Art, Science and Technology presented “Unfolding Intelligence: The Art and Science of Contemporary Computation” online April 1–9, 2021. This was the third in a series of MIT CAST symposia that bring together artists, scientists, engineers, and humanists from a variety of disciplines to address topics of common concern in areas of rapidly evolving research and urgent social relevance. In the weeklong virtual gathering, participants explored how artificial intelligence (AI) might provide new models of the world, offer new forms of perception and creative expression, and create a more equitable and just future. In addition to the four panels—Unfolding Models, Open Systems, Bias in AI, and Deep Time and Intelligence—the virtual gathering included online exhibitions featuring *The Invisible College*, a new multi-platform artwork developed by CAST visiting artist Matthew Ritchie, and *Generative Unfoldings*, an online exhibition of generative software artworks, curated by Professor Nick Montfort. The symposium culminated in an interactive series of breakout sessions that explored hidden threads between the presentations, exhibitions, and panel discussions that occurred during the week.

Communications

The communications effort in the Office of the Arts is devoted to making the arts at MIT more widely known, regardless of discipline or department. During this pandemic year, communications were all digital and we expanded the use of short video clips and GIFs to create more engaging content, particularly for the McDermott Award, “Unfolding Intelligence” symposium, and student arts awards. The result was our most popular Instagram post of the year: an animated clip of one of Thomas Heatherwick’s buildings with overlaid information about the McDermott Award. We created shorter clips of the McDermott Award online program and created robust playlists on YouTube with content from the symposium, the McDermott Award, and virtual class visits by visiting artists. The newsletter and social media were relied on even more heavily to distribute multimedia content, news, and virtual event information from across the arts at MIT. Leah Talatinian, arts communications manager, spearheaded a series of working sessions to reinvigorate and create a space of professional development, community, and support for the arts communicators group members to share their successes and struggles on topics such as podcasts, web design, and accessibility. She also started a new communications advisory role with the Music and Theater Arts Section and increased collaboration with the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences in spring 2021.

Nineteen blog posts were published in AY2021 as we expanded subjects covered, continued to focus on alumni, and increased coverage of student artists. A new cross-departmental writing project with Architecture and the Program in Art, Culture, and Technology about student mask artwork resulted in a homepage feature on MIT.edu and MIT News, top feature in the MIT Daily email, posts on MIT social media, and a television segment on WHDH Channel 7 News. Two alumni articles commissioned for

the arts alumni newsletter were reposted by the alumni site Slice of MIT, featured on the alumni association's social media channels, and shared in the MIT Daily. The most popular blog posts on arts.mit.edu were *Behind the Artwork: Ben Bloomberg Creates Live Performance Systems for Virtuoso Multi-instrumentalist Jacob Collier* (originally posted in 2016, but remaining popular), and a new article about alumnus Daniel Chonde.

Media Coverage

Curated by Hashim Sarkis, the Venice Biennale for Architecture was covered in 750 articles from across the globe, including the Associated Press, who syndicated to hundreds of outlets. The spider sonification work of Markus Buehler, Tomas Saraceno, Isabelle Su, Christine Southworth, Ian Hattwick, and Evan Ziporyn—who were all brought together by CAST—received a new burst of extensive press coverage with over 200 articles, including from CNN and Reuters. Matthew Ritchie's *The Invisible College* was featured in the *International Journal for Digital Art History* and PBS. A feature in *Artnet* about Anicka Yi included a section about her work as a CAST visiting artist.

Website and Electronic Communications

The [Arts at MIT web portal](#) provides a comprehensive view of arts news, resources, stories, and events from across the Institute. The website reported 102,500 annual visitors, with our email newsletter circulating to 4,400 subscribers and 13,000 arts alumni. The @Arts at MIT social media accounts maintain over 81,000 combined followers via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

This year, we focused intently on the social media campaigns for the 2020 recipient of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT, Thomas Heatherwick, and the MIT CAST symposium “Unfolding Intelligence: The Art and Science of Contemporary Computation.” The #McDermottAward campaign reached an audience of 1,566 with a total of 59 engagements on Facebook; 21,420 impressions and 428 interactions on Instagram; and 50,860 impressions and 318 engagements on Twitter. The CAST symposium campaigns reached an audience of 11,064 with a total of 190 engagements on Facebook; 7,755 impressions and 613 engagements on Instagram; 254,831 impressions and 2,526 engagements on Twitter.

On Twitter, the most popular post was about CAST visiting artist Lupe Fiasco and Professor Nick Montfort's virtual talk. On Facebook, the most popular post was about the US Postal Service creating a new robotics category in a series celebrating innovation. On Instagram, the most popular post was about the McDermott Award with 5,387 views.

Arts at MIT and Music continued our weekend social media concert series, which was inaugurated in April 2020. This year we streamed 26 concerts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Council for the Arts at MIT

In AY2021 the focus of the Council for the Arts at MIT (CAMIT) was the adaptation of its programs, including the McDermott Award gala and the grants program, to meet the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and to respond to the challenges of remote instruction and the closing of the MIT campus.

Governance

Working closely with CAMIT's volunteer chair, Hyun-A Park, and treasurer, Nancy Lukitsh, as well as the entire executive committee, the council adopted a new charter that reaffirms CAMIT's mission and advisory role and updates CAMIT's governance structures in order to bring them into compliance with MIT's current policies and procedures. The new charter was unanimously approved by CAMIT's executive committee at its February 8 meeting and was presented to members at the council's May 7 business meeting.

McDermott Award Selection Committee (Susan Poduska, chair)

Thomas Heatherwick, 2020 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts recipient

British designer Thomas Heatherwick was the 2020 recipient of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT, which was established in 1974 by Margaret McDermott (1912–2018) in honor of her husband, Eugene McDermott (1899–1973), cofounder of Texas Instruments and longtime friend of MIT. The council presents the biennial award at a gala celebration. Chaired by Brit d'Arbeloff and originally planned for April, it was postponed due to Covid-19. The artist's residency, which has been a key component of the award since 2010, took place in spring 2020.

After the closure of campus in March 2020, the McDermott Gala was re-envisioned as an online capstone event, which took place on December 9. The program honored recipient Thomas Heatherwick and included a special address to MIT from Heatherwick. It also premiered a behind-the-scenes documentary telling the story of Heatherwick's design challenge for MIT students, interviews with Philip S. Khoury—associate provost with responsibility for the arts—and Susan Poduska and Marcel Botha—chair and vice-chair of the McDermott Selection Committee—and a Q&A session between Heatherwick and Hashim Sarkis.

Student Art Awards Committee (Tracy Taylor Wydra, chair)

The committee recognized nine MIT students for outstanding accomplishments in the arts:

Louis Sudler Prize in the Arts

- Sebastian Franjou '21 (Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and Music)

Laya and Jerome B. Wiesner Student Art Award

- Kevin Costello '21 (Mathematics and Music), Rian Flynn '21 (Physics and Theater Arts), Gabriel "Tony" Terrasa '21 (Mechanical Engineering and Music), Luisa Apolaya Torres '21 (Mechanical Engineering).

Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts

- Po-Hao Chi G (Program in Art, Science and Technology), first prize; Chucho Ocampo G (Program in Art, Science and Technology), second prize; Carolyn Tam G (Architecture), third prize; Nina Lutz (Program in Media Arts and Sciences), honorable mention.

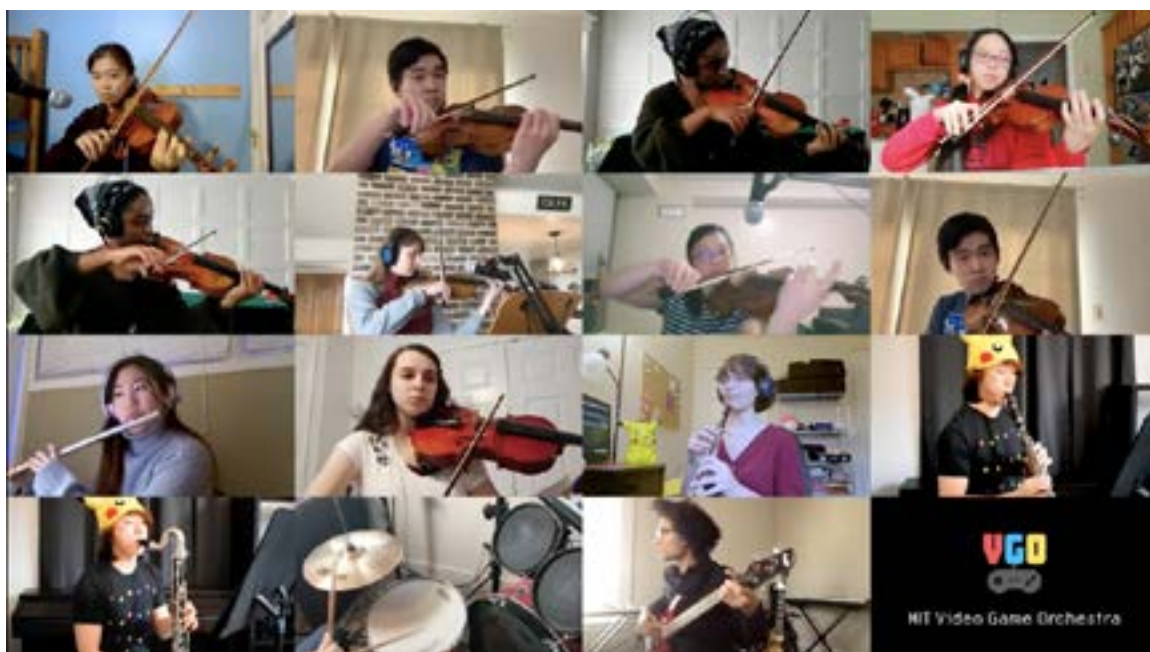
Annual Meeting Committee (Margaret Dunn, chair)

CAMIT's 48th annual meeting, held virtually May 6–7, was attended by 36 members. Highlights included a virtual social; keynote address from John Ochsendorf, Class of 1942 Professor of Architecture and professor of civil and environmental engineering; presentations by undergraduate and graduate student CAMIT grant recipients; a town hall discussion on the business and social responsibilities of arts nonprofits with CAMIT members Larisa Leventon, Nancy Lukitsh, and Anne Stark Locher; and a broadcast performance of *Three Pieces from the Saul Bass Project* by Don Byron, a new work commissioned by MIT CAST, originally performed by the MIT Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Evan Ziporyn in a virtual concert in 2020.

Grants Committee (Niels Cosman, chair)

The CAMIT Grants Committee awarded \$119,943 to support 34 projects by MIT students, faculty, and staff. Funding for projects was provided this year to 11 student groups, three undergraduate students, 15 graduate students, two faculty members, and three staff members. Six of these grants went to projects with a focus on MIT student community engagement and were awarded to student groups through a new program piloted during Independent Activities Period 2021. Outstanding projects included a film presented at the Venice Biennale, an artists' book press, a translation of a contemporary Québécois play, and a virtual concert by the Video Game Orchestra.

The council continued the Undergraduate Arts Project Mini-Grant program (formerly Director's Grants), which awarded \$11,368.78 to support 32 projects by undergraduate students and student groups. The council also continued supporting a seed fund for projects by graduate students in the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT).



Still from MIT Video Game Orchestra's virtual concert, recorded in January and February 2021. Credit: Courtesy of the artists.

Membership and Nominating Committee (Larisa Leventon and Robert Scalea, co-chairs)

At the end of FY2021, the council was made up of 73 full members, three *ex officio* members, two honorary members, and eight associate members. The council welcomed Philip Bobko and Hala Fadel as its newest members.

Annual Allocations and Ticket/Museum and Arts Access Programs

The council continued to provide annual support to ACT, CAST, the List Visual Arts Center, the MIT Museum, Student Arts Programs, and other important arts organizations on campus.

CAMIT continued to fund MIT's university memberships at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA), and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, providing free and discounted admission for MIT students, staff, and faculty, and promoting opportunities for virtual engagement with the arts through a monthly newsletter. In AY2021, CAMIT supported 2,455 museum visits for MIT students, faculty, and staff—811 students and 197 faculty/staff to the MFA, 852 visits to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and 595 visits to the ICA. CAMIT staff continued administering the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) College Card program for MIT students, funded by the Bobko BSO Ticket Fund. For the 2020–2021 season, the BSO pivoted to Virtual College Cards, providing access to online concerts; in AY2021, 145 MIT students reserved free cards. CAMIT's support of MIT student tickets for the Boston Ballet was put on hold due to the pandemic.

CAMIT's Tickets for Classes program was suspended in AY2021 due to the Covid-19 related closing of performing arts venues. CAMIT's Artist Guest Speaker program, which provides honoraria for artist guest speakers who visit classes, was transferred to MIT CAST.

Student Programs

Student arts programs include the Student Art Association, the MIT Arts Scholars (a program endowed by the Council for the Arts at MIT), the Grad Arts Forum, the Wiesner Student Art Gallery, the First Year Arts Seminar and Advising Program, and arts entrepreneurship programming, which includes the Creative Arts Competition and the START Studio.

Student Art Association

The Student Art Association (SAA) was unable to hold in-person classes due to Covid-19 and instead offered two art making pilot programs: (1) Remote Art Making Pilot, a six-week online art and community making collaboration with MIT startup Elements where we shipped a small group of students materials kits for weekly projects, and (2) Art Materials Grants, a program where pods or virtual groups of students could apply for grants up to \$250 to purchase art supplies to make art and to build community whether in person or virtual. Three hundred individual students from 70 pods or in-person groups were awarded funding.

Arts on the Radar

A joint event organized by the List Visual Arts Center, ACT, Music and Theater Arts, and the Office of the Arts, Arts on the Radar is an annual arts-focused kickoff event held at the beginning of September for MIT students. Activities at Arts on the Radar in 2020 (held virtually on Zoom) included student-led workshops on playing/recording music virtually, a workshop about Zoom event-hosting logistics, a workshop about virtual dance opportunities led by Dan Safer and student dance groups, several student panel discussions by “arts influencers” on campus, and virtual gallery tours of an ACT student virtual exhibition and a Wiesner Student Art Gallery exhibition.

Arts Scholars

The Arts Scholars’ outings this year included a slate of virtual and hybrid activities, spanning visits to the Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and screenings of programs by area organizations, such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Hybrid events included Zoom arts shares, where students were encouraged to share art that they created or that brought them comfort throughout the pandemic. Students were also invited to take advantage of art-making kits and subsequent discussion and sharing sessions.

Graduate Arts Forum

The MIT Graduate Arts Forum, now in its 18th year, is designed to build an interdisciplinary community of graduate students who admire or create art as part of their graduate studies or through independent practice. Our partnership with the Graduate Student Council allows us to reach a broad range of graduate students and to take advantage of cost sharing between departments. This year’s virtual offerings included a tour of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum’s *Boston’s Apollo* with a panel discussion including the exhibition’s curator, a custom performance by ImprovAsylum, a drawing class with Maker-in-Residence Sarah Hirzel, a tour of the MFA’s *Writing the Future* exhibition and discussion with local hip-hop artist Billy Dean Thomas, a history- and music-based program of tavern and alehouse songs with the Henry Purcell Society of Boston, and a similar program pairing wine and opera with wine expert and operatic baritone Matthew Burns.

Wiesner Student Art Gallery

The Wiesner Student Art Gallery on the second floor of the Stratton Student Center presents the work of MIT student artists representing the breadth of academic and extra-academic programs at MIT. In response to Covid-19, the gallery pivoted to a successful online program and an updated gallery website. Instead of in-person openings, the gallery hosted Zoom presentations and panels that allowed students to connect with their supporters and colleagues from around the world.

This year’s Schnitzer Award Winners were introduced on a website that demonstrates their work more comprehensively than was possible in person. Exhibitions included Dalma Földesi and Jung In Seo, who created a 3D web experience for their robotically fabricated ceramics; ACT artist Nancy Valladares, who re-imagined the botanical archive; and undergraduate Elaheh Ahmadi, who shared photographs demonstrating

the strength of MIT women. The gallery will continue to offer students the opportunity to share their work online through the Wiesner Gallery portal.



Misalignments by Dalma Földesi and Jung In Seo, 2020. Credit: Courtesy the artists.

Creative Arts Competition

Since 2013, the MIT Creative Arts Competition has grown from a single \$10,000 prize to a semester-long program offering mentorship, workshops, and entrepreneurial development. The 2021 competition included an expanded workshop series through the fall and an Independent Activities Period course about writing about entrepreneurial ventures. Following engagement by dozens of students and start-ups, the competition drew 10 teams who advanced to the next stage following their proposals in February. Teams then worked with arts industry mentors to develop a business plan and hone pitches throughout the spring, then the five finalist teams pitched their proposals to a panel of judges before a live audience at a virtual event.

The \$15,000 first prize was awarded to Rivet, an online platform that enables musicians to interact directly with their most dedicated fans and to market their music directly to those fans. Four additional prizes of \$1,000 in seed money were awarded to the following teams: Volar, a platform that empowers musicians in Latin America to monetize their work; Fermentation Heritage Project, an initiative and device designed to promote food fermentation in home kitchens and restaurants; Azeki Road, a technical support platform to provide African fashion brands direct access to consumers and markets; and Casso, an online marketplace that encourages and provides supplies to people who want to learn to paint.

START Programs

The START Studio is a makerspace for arts-focused student groups and arts entrepreneurship teams. Students from art-focused Undergraduate Association clubs, Student Art Association courses, Wiesner Gallery artists and Arts Entrepreneurship Teams usually have 24-hour access to the studio. We took the opportunity to plan for a renovated space with refreshed storage, tools, and work areas for digital arts, sewing, design, printmaking and other art techniques. The Maker-in-Residence is usually available in person; this year she supported students as part of the Remote Art Making Pilot and the Art Materials Grant program as well as other arts initiatives, offering technical and creative guidance and advice over Zoom.

First Year Arts Seminar and Advising Program

Through the First-Year Arts Seminar and Advising Program, Stacy DeBartolo and Shannon Rose McAuliffe introduced 18 first-year students and two upperclass associate advisors to the wealth and breadth of arts opportunities that are available at MIT. Activities included the following virtual events: a guided tour of MIT's public art, a tour of the Polaroid exhibition at the MIT Museum, a real-time drawing class with Maker-in-Residence Sarah Hirzel, a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert and discussion with MIT Symphony Orchestra director Adam Boyles, a tour of the MFA's *Writing the Future* exhibition and discussion with local hip-hop artist Billy Dean Thomas, a discussion about MIT's unique architecture with Class of 1942 Professor of Architecture John Ochsendorf, and a viewing of the Boston Ballet's *The Nutcracker*.

Leila W. Kinney
Executive Director