The Council for the Arts

The Council celebrated its 10th year of operation in 1981-82 and saw the ground-breaking for a new Arts and Media Technology Center at MIT. Begun as an experiment in the adaptation of an arts council to an academic setting, the Council has now become a nationally recognized organization attracting cultural and business leaders of international stature who support the belief that the arts have a significant contribution to make to the scientific and technical education offered at MIT, and that MIT has an equally significant contribution to make to the future of the arts.

With the announcement of the new Arts and Media Technology Center, the Council achieved its first major step in assisting MIT with long-range planning for arts programs at the Institute. By consolidating existing arts and media activities, and through access to research and teaching in modern information technologies, the Center will create vast new opportunities for the production, presentation, and dissemination of art. Activities to be housed in the new facility include basic research, experimentation, and advanced study in the areas of computer graphics and animation, computational video, man-machine systems, consumer electronics, experimental print media, photography, film/video, electronic music, and computers in education. A particularly important aspect of the new facility is that it will afford new disparate projects in the arts and media technology the opportunity to collaborate with existing Institute programs in computer science, cognitive science, human communications, and the use of modern information systems in education. This collaboration will, in turn, augment and strengthen MIT's overall efforts in the use of computers in the educational process. Ultimately, the Center will help produce not only new creative art forms and technical applications to the publishing, broadcasting, and computer industries, but also new modes of education and research, new industries, and new ways of addressing social concerns.

Continued and increased fund-raising efforts for the Center had direct repercussions on the Council's operating budget. With over one-third of the total construction cost of the new facility coming directly from Council members or through efforts of Council members, development plans for the Council's operating budget had to be re-oriented towards new sources of support. Although fund-raising deadlines for the new Center made it difficult to meet the requisites of the Council budget, careful planning combined with new fund-raising strategies were designed to alleviate this problem in the future.

Membership

The Nominations Committee, under the chairmanship of Nelson Lees, met throughout the year to generate and review proposals for new Council members. Considerations for membership included breadth of geographic representation, a record of active support for the arts, and congruency of interest or expertise with arts programs at the Institute.

Five new members were appointed to the Council for three-year terms by President Paul E. Gray.
They are: David Bakalar, Leonard Bezark, Jr., Edna Goodrich Brown, Edmund Carpenter, and Deedee Pharr. James A. Hester, Jr., concluded his term of membership with the end of the year. The Council was greatly saddened by the death of two of its members: in November 1981, Hilda de Rothschild, an ardent patron of the fine arts, and in May 1982, Archibald MacLeish, poet, playwright, man of letters, and source of inspiration for the Council since its founding.

At the year's end Council membership stood at 96, the highest in its 10-year history.

Grants Program

The Grants Committee, composed of 14 Council members and chaired by Lewis Cabot, met four times during the year to review a total of 42 grant applications. After individual site visits and careful review of each proposal, 29 grants were awarded to MIT students, faculty, and student organizations. Almost 42,000 was allocated, which in turn generated more than $70,000 in matching funds, including in-kind contributions. In response to increased competition for Council grants, the staff scheduled more time to work with applicants on the formulation of projects, proposal and budget presentation, and the location of matching support.

Among the more exceptional projects was a collaboration between Susan Brennan, a graduate student with the Architecture Machine Group, and Gyorgy Kepes, artist and Council member, to produce an optical videodisc which enables the viewer to explore the documentation of the creative process in a highly individualistic manner. As an innovative union between the visual arts and technology, this project offers a new mode of exhibition for museums and galleries. The Grants Committee also assisted with publication costs of *The Boston Composers Project*, the first major research project concerned with detailed documentation of contemporary American musical composition. Grant funds also supported a sold-out performance by "The Art of Black Dance and Music," public lectures by author V.S. Naipaul and jazz artist Frank Foster, a performance by visiting French playwright Raymond Cousse, and the Boston premier performance of John Harbison’s new composition *Variations*. Support also was given to two student publications in photography and literature, *Positive* and *Rune*. In addition, officer's grants provided smaller awards to 10 students for projects ranging from an internship in performance at the Circle in the Square Theatre in New York City to continued support of a collaborative project with the Joffrey Ballet Company.

Since the commencement of the grants program in 1974, just over $322,600 has been expended to support 185 projects, generating an additional $356,000 in matching gifts. During the past year, $41,127 was expended, which generated $70,850 in matching support.

Fund-raising Activities

The Facilities Sponsoring Committee, under the chairmanship of Vernon Alden and with leadership from Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner and Professor Nicholas Negroponte, raised sufficient funds to proceed with construction for the Arts and Media Technology Center. While fund-raising continued in an effort to meet the total project cost, construction began at the site on Ames Street. To date, the Institute has received commitments for more than $19 million of the estimated $25 million total project cost. Of the 76 gifts and pledges, 22 are from Council members, and $7 million are directly attributable to Council members and their efforts.

Under the chairmanship of Gregory Smith, the Development Committee attempted to meet the largest budget in the Council's history while simultaneously encouraging major donors to contribute to the new facility. Sixty-four percent of the Council membership made gifts to the Council's operating budget, which was supplemented by gifts from alumni and support from the Institute. Altogether, 75 percent of the Council membership made gifts to arts activities at MIT.

Additional funds of almost $40,000 were raised to support special projects within several academic programs, representing the largest contribution of this nature by the Council to date. Among these funds were gifts from the Karmazin Products Corporation to support a music project in the Research Laboratory of Electronics and from the Louis B. Mayer Foundation to support a weekly public screening series presented by the Film/Video Section. Council member Alan May established an endowment to cover framing costs and acquisition of pictures for the Student Loan Collection, and another donor agreed to double an existing endowed scholarship fund to provide scholarships for private music lessons.
Publications

The Council combined its monthly calendar and quarterly newsletter into one publication which appeared once a month during the academic year. "The Arts at MIT" is the only publication at the Institute which consolidates information about the full spectrum of MIT arts activities, curricular and extracurricular. Articles feature Council members, grants projects, and MIT artists, art programs, and art activities. Circulation is over 5,600 and includes Council members and friends, MIT faculty and administrators, local community organizations, and many alumni.

A third issue of "MIT Art in the News" was compiled for distribution as a special fall 1982 supplement in Tech Talk. As a sampler of national news clippings describing MIT art activities, it will serve to publicize the breadth and quality of MIT arts programs and artists within and beyond the MIT community.

Special Events

President Gray welcomed a record number of Council members and their spouses to the 10th annual meeting, held in Cambridge on November 20, 1981. He not only reflected on past accomplishments, but also looked ahead and charged the Council membership to strive in the coming decade to build a true partnership between the arts and education. MIT Professor Henry A. Millon, dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art, built on Dr. Gray's theme of a partnership between the arts and education in his ensuing address. Professor Millon argued that the visual and performing arts are languages equally valid and illuminating as our verbal, mathematical, and scientific languages. The implications of this notion mean "nothing less than restructuring educational curricula from pre-kindergarten through the university to ensure that identified languages are given equal emphasis."

Seven groups of Council members convened with faculty and students at luncheon/workshop sessions to explore MIT art activities in studios and laboratories throughout the Institute. The workshops included: Film/Video at MIT with Professor Richard Leacock; Theatre as a Living Laboratory with Professor Robert Scanlan; Large Format Portraiture with Professor Starr Ockenga; Graphic Design and Telecommunication with Professor Muriel Cooper and Bernd Kracke, fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies; Pastoralism and Modern Industrial Society with Professor Leo Marx; Figurative Sculpture at Hayden Gallery with Director of Exhibitions Kathy Halbreich; Dancing Images, an Interactive Theatre Set, with graduate students Ann Marion and Scott Fisher; and Building, Creating, and Making the Built World with Professor Jan Wampler.

During the afternoon session, the Council's theme of "The Many Disciplines, the One Imagination" was illustrated by three presentations on topics related to the arts. Professor Barry Vercoe spoke on performance and technology and presented examples of work from the Experimental Music Studio; Professor Heather Lechtman described her innovative research in autoradiography, a technique enabling art historians and conservators to reveal and examine the many layers of a painting, including preliminary sketches and work lost on re-used canvas. Professor Walle J. H. Nauta, a leading neuroanatomist, described the complex relationships of art, imagination, and the brain.

In the evening, the council met at the Faculty Club for the Annual McDermott Award Dinner. I.M. Pei accepted the eighth McDermott Award for its recipient, the sculptor Henry Moore. Art historian James Johnson Sweeney spoke of Moore's work and his connection to the Institute, followed by a short film, illustrating Moore's masterpieces in sculpture.

For its program of regional events, the Council initiated a series of "salons" this year, hosted by members in Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco. These occasions feature MIT artists and planners presenting current arts projects at the Institute. Twenty to 40 guests assemble for an informal program followed by dinner. At the opening salon on October 27 at the home of Council member Lewis Cabot, Sarah Caldwell and Professor Leacock discussed their recent collaborative efforts with the Boston Opera Company. Council member Ernest A. Grunsfeld hosted another salon at the Tavern Club in Chicago on March 23, with Dean John de Monchaux of the School of Architecture and Planning and Ms. Halbreich discussing MIT's innovative artist/architect collaboration on the new Arts and Media Technology facility. On March 30, Council member John O. Merrill, Jr., hosted a salon at San Francisco's Symphony Hall, with Professor Harbison introducing his opera Full Moon in March.
At the invitation of Council member Angus MacDonald, the new Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Francis Hodsoll, visited MIT on May 25. Following a press conference in Hayden Gallery, Howard Johnson, chairman of the MIT Corporation, and the Council hosted a dinner at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences for more than 75 Boston-area leaders in the arts and education. Following remarks by Dr. Wiesner, chairman of the Council for the Arts at MIT, Mr. Johnson introduced Mr. Hodsoll, who gave a formal address and responded to questions concerning Federal arts policy.

Academic Liaison Program

The administrative staff of the Council has been increasingly called upon to assist with long-range planning projects, policy issues, and arts management services. Most recently the staff has handled negotiations between MIT and Center Screen, Inc., and the University Film Study Center involving issues of Institute space, financial responsibilities, and program development.

Council efforts also ensured continued Institute participation in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' group membership program. All MIT students are thereby entitled to free admission and other Museum privileges. In the year since the Council initiated the program, more than 9,500 visits have been made to the Museum by MIT students.

Council staff are represented on a number of Institute committees, including the Committee for the Visual Arts, the Shakespeare Ensemble, the Lobby Seven Committee, and the Compton Gallery Committee.

During the Independent Activities Period, the Council sponsored a presentation entitled "Drawing as a Language" given by Donald Firth, executive vice president for technology development and application for TOSCO Corporation. Faculty, staff, and students attended from a broad spectrum of MIT departments and programs.

In an effort to recognize and celebrate art, artists, and art activities at MIT, the Council established the Jerome B. and Laya Wiesner Student Art Awards in 1979. The awards are given annually to individuals and organizations that have contributed significantly to the MIT community through the arts. At a ceremony on Convocation Day, May 12, Dr. and Mrs. Wiesner presented awards to Harry Newman, Class of 1982, for innovative talent in theatrical production, and to the Festival and Concert Jazz bands.

Staff Transitions

Peter Spackman announced his resignation as executive director of the Council, a position he has held since the Council's inception in 1971. Deputy Director Deborah A. Hoover was appointed as his successor. Stacia Zabusky became the Council's secretary and administrative assistant.

DEBORAH A. HOOVER