COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEES

Fiscal Year 2007 was a time of transition for the arts at MIT, as Philip Khoury settled in as Associate Provost, and the Office of the Arts experienced several staffing changes (the departure of Glenn Billingsley and Mary Haller, and the change of Lori Gross’s title to Director of Arts Initiatives and Advisor to the Associate Provost). The Council had a rather quiet year, and actually fell behind in fundraising for the first time since 1995. Regular Council programs continued at their usual pace, however, with Grants, Executive, Membership, Schnitzer Prize, Student Art Awards, McDermott Award and Kepes Prize committees meeting the normal number of times, but there was no Council trip this year, nor was the Council newsletter published. There were also fewer exhibitions at the Wiesner Student Art Gallery this year, due primarily to security and equipment issues. However, the collaboration with BMOP and the Graduate Student Office was an exciting new addition to the Council portfolio.

The great number of Council members who passed away in FY06 was a stark reminder that attracting younger members should be one of the organization’s highest priorities.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Annual Meeting (Ann Allen, chair). The 34th Annual Meeting began on the morning of Thursday October 26 with the official dedication of Mark DeSuvero’s Aesop’s Fables II (which was installed during last year’s Annual Meeting). Associate Provost Philip Khoury presided.

Back at the Wiesner Building, attendees were treated to a tour of the exhibition Sensorium I, led by List Visual Arts Center curator Bill Arning and Director Jane Farver.

Refreshed by a buffet lunch served in the atrium of the Wiesner Building, the group was greeted by Professor Tod Machover with an introduction to a tour of the Media Laboratory, followed by words from visual artist and Professor Chris Csikszentmihályi. With military precision, Media Lab staffers split the group into manageable numbers, and took them throughout the building to many of the individual labs that make up the Media Lab proper. This was the first CAMIT tour of the Lab in at least twenty years, and the Council Members enjoyed it immensely.

After a break at which attendees returned to their hotels, cocktails and dinner were served in both atria of the Wiesner Building. Originally scheduled to take place at the Broad Institute, the dinner location had to be switched on Thursday morning at short notice, due to a power outage at the Broad.

The Council mounted a tribute to Gyorgy Kepes as a tribute to the 100th anniversary of his birth. Kay Stratton, his children Julie Kepes Stone and Imre Kepes, and Otto Piene shared their personal reminiscences of the man, interspersed with quotes from Kepes himself, in the form of excerpts from a videotape of a 1983 interview. After the tribute, Larissa Harris, Associate Director of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, gave the assembled an update on the current happenings at the Center.

Finally, Patrick Wang ’98, chair of the Kepes Prize Committee and vice chair of the Council for the Arts at MIT, presented the 2006 Gyorgy Kepes Fellowship Prize to Kenan Sahin.
Distinguished Professor of Music Evan Ziporyn, who offered an eloquent and touching acceptance speech.

Friday morning's business meeting began at 9:00am in Killian Hall with remarks from MIT President Susan Hockfield, followed by Associate Provost Philip Khoury. Both Hockfield and Khoury spoke about the proposed Laboratory for the Performing Arts.

Steve Memishian '70 then took the floor, with his annual report on fundraising, grants highlights, and highlights of the year in general. Steve stepped down as chair at this time and Brit d'Arbeloff officially assumed the chairmanship.

In a gesture of thanks for Steve's service, the MIT a cappella group the Chorallaries performed songs about fast cars and undersea life, in honor of Steve's hobbies: he collects scrimshaw and classic hot rods.

After a brief refreshment break, the following members of the MIT arts community gave presentations:

John Durant, Director of the MIT Museum spoke of the developments at the Museum, such as the renovation and occupancy of the ground floor with its Mass Ave frontage, the Cambridge Science Festival, and the Catalyst Collaborative @ MIT.

He was followed by Lori Gross, who gave an overview of the Museum Loan Network, the program of which she was director since 1996.

Lori was followed by Director of Wind Ensembles and Lecturer Fred Harris, who told those assembled how much his students enjoy the Council-sponsored free ticket programs.

Finally, Clay Ward '97, Coordinator of the Student Art Association, gave an overview of current goings-on at the SAA, as well as the potential of its individual studios to thrive with proper funding.

Off to the MIT Museum for lunch, where we were joined by 2006 Eugene McDermott Award-winner the playwright Suzan-Lori Parks. McDermott Award Committee chair Dorothea Endicott presented the award to Ms. Parks, who delighted and charmed the Council members and guests with her acceptance remarks. The 34th Annual Meeting concluded with the end of lunch.

54 Council members attended the meeting, many with spouses or guests.

**Arts Scholars Committee** (Brit d'Arbeloff, chair) Brit d'Arbeloff stepped down as chair this year, as she became chair of the Council. Marjory Jacobson will succeed her. The Arts Scholars Committee meets once a year to review applicants to the program. The committee consists of members of the Council and MIT faculty. This year Council Member Ann Allen offered a tour of the Museum of Fine Arts for the group at one of their events.

**Communications** (Pepi Weis, chair) Council Currents was not published in fiscal year 2007

**Development** (Anne Street, chair) $322,590 was raised from 66 Council members (making an average gift of $4,887), and $17,330 from non-member donors. The grand total raised for FY2007 was $339,920.
Grants Program (Martin N. Rosen ’62, chair). A total of $110,420 in the form of 48 grants and 42 Director’s Grants was awarded to students, staff and faculty. Highlights included support for a retrospective exhibition of MIT photojournalist Donna Coveney’s work, a project to create the “world’s largest drawing” which will be visible only through satellite mapping, and a new dance floor for the immensely popular student organization Dance Troupe.

Membership (Bernard G. Palitz ’47, chair). As of this writing (7/11/07) Council membership stands at 101, with five ex officio members and 96 “regular” members. This year three longtime members passed away: Marianne Teuber, Kitty Carlisle Hart and Robert Greenes. Former member Ray Nasher also passed away this year.

The following new members have joined the Council since our last President’s Report: Sunny Dupree, Mary Jane Bezark, Barbara Barry ’00, and Donna Hieken. The following Council Members have resigned: Alex Dreyfoos, Patrick Wang, and Jan Fontein.

This year marked the first time a recent graduate (Barbara Barry) was sponsored for membership in the Council. Henry ’65 and Janine Lichstein have pledged to contribute $3,500 for the first three years of Barbara’s CAMIT service, as she is not in the position financially to do so herself. It is the hope of the author that this will become a regular practice for attracting new, younger, members to Council service.

Affiliated committees:
List Visual Arts Center (LVAC) Advisory Board (Jennifer Frutchy, chair) The List Visual Arts Center continues to provide the MIT community and the entire Boston area with the highest caliber contemporary art exhibitions. The List staff also oversees the percent for art program, in which a percentage of the budget for any new building or renovation on campus is put towards to purchase or commission of a work of art. The Council allocates $30,000 annually to the List Center, to be expended at the discretion of the Director.

MIT Museum Advisory Board (David Ellis, chair). In April 2007, the Museum spearheaded the first Cambridge-wide Science Festival in collaboration with Harvard University and some of the area biotech firms. By all reports (including the author’s) it was a splendid success. The Council allocates $30,000 annually to the MIT Museum, to be used (if possible) to support the operation of the Compton Gallery and the Friday After Thanksgiving Chain Reaction event. The Council also provided support for several of the arts related activities from the Science Festival through the Grants Program.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

At the Executive Committee meeting in June, the location for the next Council excursion was chosen: Prague. The trip will take place in September 2008. Before this event, a smaller-scale trip will be offered, somewhere in the United States.

This year the Council for the Arts received a grant from the Graduate Student Life Grants program to launch a new series of events directed at the MIT graduate student community. Three times over the course of the 2006-2007 academic year, MIT graduate students, their spouses or guests, and local MIT alumni/ae were invited to attend special concert evenings at the Club Café in Boston, presented by the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Despite having two of the events on some of the most bitterly cold evenings of the year, each evening proved very successful, attracting an average of forty attendees. The Council will apply for funding for a similar program for the upcoming 2007-2008 academic year. It is hoped that the audience members for these events can be cultivated as future Council members.
(Both BMOP photos here, both by Justin Knight)

The Council provides an annual allocation of $7,500 to the Artists Behind the Desk Program, a group of staff people who organize concerts, readings, performances, and a visual arts exhibition by staff people.

The Council also allocates $20,000 to the Office of Student and Artists-in-Residence Programs, $12,500 to the Office of Arts Communication, and $20,000 to the Student Art Association. In 2007 the Council allocated $15,000 to the Center for Advanced Visual Studies for general operating support and allocated $30,000 for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to the Catalyst Collaborative @ MIT.

Since 1980, the Council has underwritten MIT’s enrollment in the University Membership Program offered by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. This program provides free admission and discount benefits to all MIT undergraduate and graduate students, as well as ten day passes for the use of MIT faculty and staff.

The Council for the Arts also sponsors a student membership program with the Photographic Resource Center (PRC) at Boston University. The PRC provides a range of programs: exhibitions by national and international photographers and educational programs. MIT undergraduates and graduate students have free unlimited access to the PRC galleries and library and admission to lectures, workshops, and other special events at the discounted member price. They will also be able to enter their work into the Juried Members’ exhibition.

The Council underwrites MIT’s institutional membership with the Harvard Art Museums allowing all MIT graduate and undergraduate students free admission to the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, the Sackler, and the Agnes Mongan Center for the study of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs.

The free-ticket program with the Boston Symphony Orchestra continued this year. MIT students can obtain, with their student ID, free admittance to an average of twenty-four concerts per year. The Council also provided 50 free tickets for MIT students to three of the four concerts of the Boston Chamber Music Society’s season, the same proportion for the Boston Modern Orchestra Project’s season, and the concerts presented by the vocal ensemble Boston Secession.

The successful Student Performing Arts Excursions Series continued, offering free tickets to MIT students for many performing arts events, including: Miss Witherspoon at the Lyric Stage, Surviving the Nian presented by the Theater Offensive at the Boston Center for the Arts, the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra presenting Jazz in Film: Ellington and Beyond at the MFA, and the Bebe Miller dance troupe and the Ying Quartet, both at the new Boston Institute of Contemporary Art. Over 500 MIT students took advantage of this program.

The Gyorgy Kepes Fellowship Prize was presented this year at the Annual Meeting dinner to Evan Ziporyn. Since Patrick Wang has resigned from the Council, the Kepes Prize Committee will need to find a new chairman for this upcoming year.

The Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts was presented at the Annual meeting luncheon on Friday, October 27, 2006 to playwright-novelist Suzan-Lori Parks. Ms. Parks was back on campus from February 19-22, 2007 to complete her residency. Ms. Parks gave a public talk in the form of an interview, with MIT Theater faculty member Jay Scheib as the interviewer. The
event took place in the Broad Institute Auditorium and was followed by an intimate dinner for Council Members, faculty, staff and Ms. Parks. **Prior to the Suzan-Lori Parks event, Council members toured the Donna Coveney exhibition at the Compton Gallery. The following morning they gathered in the Bush Room for a wonderful series of presentations by the MIT Libraries. Committee chair Dorothea Endicott stepped down; Peter Wender ’71 has agreed to serve as the new McDermott Award chair.**

At the Institute Awards Convocation on Wednesday May 9, Provost Rafael Reif presented the **Laya and Jerome B. Wiesner Student Art Awards** to Architecture student Diana Nee ’07 (for architectural design), Christine Yu ’07 (Chemical Engineering) for music, and Hope Ginsburg (G Architecture) for visual arts. The **Louis Sudler Prize** was presented, by Provost Reif, to Lori Huberman ’07 (Biology) for her accomplishments in music. Each award-winner is presented with $1,250. The Student Art Awards winners are chosen by a committee made up of Boston-area Council Memebrs, chaired by Claude Brenner ’47.

(Photo of Yu and Huberman here)

The first-prize winner of the **Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize** was Visual Arts Program graduate student Hope Ginsburg. Second prize was a tie, with prizes going to Katherine James and Neri Oxman, both Architecture graduate students, and with one honorable mention to Architecture graduate student Stephanie Hsu for photography. The prizes were increased this year, with first prize at $3,500, and second prizes at $2,000 each. The honorable mention is $1,000. In the opinion of the author, this year’s Schnitzer exhibition was one of the very best. The Schnitzer Prize winners are chosen by a committee made up of Council Members, former Schnitzer winners, faculty and staff, led by Council Member Peter Athens ’52.

(Photo of Schnitzer group here Left to right: James, Oxman, Hsu, Ginsburg. Photo by Shaunalynn Duffy)

The Council also serves as the administrator of the Wiesner Student Art Gallery in the Stratton Student Center. **The fall season in the gallery opened with a wonderfully conceived and executed exhibition of models, drawings, and video from the undergraduate students in the School of Architecture and Planning.** Designed and installed by Jan Wampler and Chris Dewart, with student assistants, this show was one of the best-designed and most professional-looking exhibitions to have graced the Wiesner Gallery.

Other exhibitions appearing in the gallery this year: **Composing a Life** from the Experimental Study Group, **Amorous Intent**, the second-annual Valentine’s Day show, the Origami exhibition, and the Schnitzer Prize exhibition. The old, cumbersome display cases were donated to the Campus Activities Complex, and one new, built-in wall case was built by Chris Dewart. Two free-standing cases for the display of 3D work were purchased.

**As a result of working in the Wiesner, Jan Wampler, professor of Architecture, and two of his students, proposed and has undertaken** a study of the gallery space, for the purposes of a redesign that will better serve the MIT student population. The space currently cannot display video art in a secure fashion, and the artwork has to be locked into cases to be displayed.

Susan Cohen, director of the Council, attended the Grantmakers in the Arts conference in November in Boston, a Council for the Advancement and Support of Education conference in February in New York City, and the annual convention of the Americans for the Arts from May 31 - June 3 in Las Vegas. Cohen also arranged a farewell party for Mary Haller in March 2007,
at the Endicott World Music Center in Building N52. Lamine Touré and Rambax, and Evan Ziporyn offered brief performances, and speeches were given by Ellen Harris, Alan Brody, Barrie Gleason, Evan Ziporyn, and Lynn Heinemann. Philip Khoury was the host.

More information about the Council for the Arts can be found at the following URL: http://web.mit.edu/arts/about/office/council/index.html

Susan R. Cohen