Council for the Arts at MIT

Current Goals

The goals, objectives and priorities of Susan Cohen, director of the Council for the Arts at MIT (CAMIT) remain the recruiting of the next generation of leaders and members, increasing the diversity of membership, and keeping CAMIT programs up to date and relevant in service to the MIT community.

Accomplishments

Two of the high points of AY2013 for the Council for the Arts at MIT were the successful 40th Annual Meeting in October 2012, and the CAMIT excursion to Toronto in April of 2013.

On February 23, 2013, CAMIT member Marcel Botha ’06 and alumnus Ben Maron ’04 hosted a group of 27 CAMIT members and guests for a pre-opera reception in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn NY. Following the party, guests traveled by bus to the Brooklyn Academy of Music for the New York City Opera performance of Thomas Adès 1985 opera Powder Her Face, directed by MIT associate professor of theater Jay Scheib.

Thanks to the contacts provided by Michael Koerner ’49 and Ron Kurtz ’54, the CAMIT excursion to Toronto on April 25-28, 2013 was a rousing success. A group of 40 CAMIT members and spouses enjoyed a packed schedule that included private collections, museum visits, theater, opera, music, and architecture. Council trips are entirely funded by the trip attendees and take place approximately every 18 months, alternating between international and North American destinations.

Camit_fig1_2013.jpg

Annual Meeting Committee (Ann Allen, chair)

The 40th Annual Meeting of the Council for the Arts took place on Thursday and Friday, October 25 and 26, 2012, and was attended by 44 CAMIT members.

A short video overview of CAMIT’s history was directed and edited by Chris Boebel and Jean Dunoyer of Academic Media Production Services (AMPS) and included interviews with Associate Provost Philip Khoury, CAMIT member Martin Rosen ’62, ACT assistant professor Azra Aksamija and the director of MIT wind ensembles Frederick Harris.

Two panel discussions were held at the Thursday morning business meeting and featured MIT alumni who are either practicing artists or are involved in the business of the arts. Both were videotaped and can be seen here: video 1 and video 2.

The 40th Annual Meeting dinner was held at the MIT Museum, featuring remarks from President Rafael Reif during the cocktail hour, and the presentation of the Catherine N. Stratton Medal in
the Arts to Brit d’Arbeloff ’61. Also, CAMIT’s special 40th anniversary gift was announced: $40,000 to the List Visual Arts Center to support the Student Loan Art Program.

Friday morning began with breakfast and a visit to the newly renovated Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and the day concluded with lunch meetings of the newly formed Awards Committee, and an expanded version of the Membership Committee.

**Grants Committee (Colleen Messing, chair)**

Colleen Messing succeeded Martin Rosen as chair of the grants committee at the October 23 meeting. The CAMIT grants committee awarded 40 grants totaling $106,867 and 30 Director’s Grants totaling $10,936. A few of the exceptional projects this year were:

- **Ocean Stories: Synergy** – Whitney Bernstein, a PhD candidate in Earth Atmosphere and Planetary Science, conceived of a project that paired scientists with visual artists in an effort to make the scientific research more easily understood by the public. The very successful project resulted in a five-month exhibition at the Museum of Science in Boston and much attention from the press. Whitney Bernstein and her colleagues are hoping to keep the Synergy project going, and plan to focus on a different type of science for subsequent round.

- **UP: The Umbrella Project** was a collaboration between the MIT Distributed Robotics Lab in the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence and the modern performing arts troupe Pilobolus. Hundreds of MIT students, holding LED-light-equipped umbrellas that glowed in a number of colors, participated in a live performance that resulted in a choreographed light show.

- “MIT Jazz at 50” video: a short documentary film that was shown at the 50th Anniversary Gala concert on April 27, 2013. The film encapsulated the 50-year history of jazz at MIT, and was spearheaded by Frederick Harris, MIT director of wind ensembles, and AMPS.

**Membership and Nominating Committee (Marilyn Breslow, chair)**

As of this writing Council Membership stands at 99, with six *ex officio* members. The following individuals have joined the council since the last report: Marcia Kastner, Joyce Linde, Hyun-A Park ’83, and Christine Reif. The Associate Members Program continues to thrive, with 15 currently on board, and at least three in the “pipeline.”

Angus MacDonald ’46, a founding member of CAMIT, and Donna Hicken, a more recent addition, both passed away in July 2012. Former members Roger Blum ’41 and Bernard Palitz ’47 passed away in November and December 2012, respectively. Marian Marill resigned in June 2013. Fay Chandler was made a Life Member.
Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts Selection Committee (Rick Stone ‘76, chair)

Rick Stone ’76 succeeded Peter Wender ’71 as chair of the McDermott Award Selection Committee. The next McDermott Award will be presented in March 2014.

Awards Committee (Ann Allen, chair)

The Louis Sudler Prize is awarded each year to a graduating senior who has shown excellence or the highest level of proficiency in a given arts discipline. This year’s Sudler Prize winner is Emily Su ‘13, who won for her versatile musical ability and scholarship.

The Laya and Jerome B. Wiesner Student Art Awards were presented to Noah Arbesfeld ’13 for theater, Jean Sack ’13 for music, the MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble for music, and Senior House for visual art.

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The 17th annual exhibition of the winners of the Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts opened at the Wiesner Student Art Gallery in the Stratton Student Center on May 24, 2013 and was quite well-attended. The work of this year’s winners had a common thread – the blend of traditional craft with contemporary technology. The Schnitzer Prize is very generous, with first place at $5,000, second at $3,000, third at $2,000, and honorable mentions at $1,000.

This year’s first-prize winner is Jie Qi, a graduate student at the Media Lab, who blends traditional art-making methods such as brush painting and origami with electronics, resulting in works that are playful and profound. Rizal Muslimin, a graduate student in the School of Architecture and Planning, came in second with his modular building components inspired by abstracted views of ancient handicrafts. Third Place was a tie between Floor van de Velde from ACT, an installation artist who displays old technologies in novel ways, and Amit Zoran from the Media Lab, who combines basketry with 3-D printing. Xiao Xiao, another graduate student at the Media Lab, received an honorable mention for her video interpretation of the player piano.

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Ticket/Membership Programs

Since 1980, the council has underwritten MIT’s University Membership Program at the Museum of Fine Arts. This program provides free admission and discount benefits to all MIT undergraduate and graduate students, as well as 15 day passes for use by MIT faculty and staff. 14 of the day passes are now distributed at the Hayden Library circulation desk. One pass is sent to Lincoln Laboratory for its staff. MIT is ranked in the top ten in number of admissions to the MFA, and recorded 3,207 MIT students for fiscal year 2013, 972 staff entries, and 144 people who attended as part of a group visit, for a total of 4,323 who attended the MFA.

CAMIT’s sponsorship of an institutional membership with the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum has just completed its second year; attendance for 2012-2013 was 808.
The ICA Boston membership was renewed, and all MIT students, staff, and faculty are granted free admission with their MIT IDs. Discounts are also granted at the gift shop and café. As of June 2013, 936 MIT ID-holders gained free admission to the ICA.

The Photographic Resource Center (PRC) at Boston University membership continued. MIT undergraduates and graduate students have free unlimited access to the PRC galleries and library. They can also enter their work into the juried members’ exhibition. CAMIT underwrites MIT’s membership at the Harvard Art Museums, allowing all MIT graduate and undergraduate students free admission.

CAMIT tried an experiment this year with the already successful program with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO): charging $5 per College Card to MIT students, and selling them at the MIT Copy Tech Center in the basement of building 11. As a result, the number of College Cards distributed increased by almost 500. 1,118 cards were sold, resulting in an income of $5,643. Because the College Card provides free access to virtually every BSO concert, the number of tickets procured by MIT students can be estimated to have been up to 10,000.

CAMIT provides free tickets for MIT students to three concerts by the Boston Chamber Music Society. Similar arrangements provide tickets to four of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project’s concerts at Jordan Hall, along with tickets to three of its club concerts, and tickets to each of the Radius Ensemble’s concerts at the Longy School of Music at Bard College in Harvard Square.

The student performing arts ticket series continued, providing tickets to augment or support the curriculum of primarily the music and theater arts section (some tickets are provided at the request of faculty from other departments, but not as frequently). A total of $12,011 was spent on 708 tickets.

**Administrative Initiatives**

Inspired by comments made by panelists at the 40th annual meeting, the development of an online network for alumni, the Alumni Arts Exchange (AAx) is underway. Designed to engage MIT alumni who were involved in the arts at MIT while students, those who became involved following graduation, and those who are practicing artists, AAx will be sited on the Alumni Association’s Infinite Connection, and its online presence will be led by Associate Members of CAMIT (recent graduates who won arts awards or were Arts Scholars while students at MIT). AAx will lay the groundwork for live events tied to geographical clubs around America and the world. The program will be launched at the Alumni Leadership Conference on September 28, 2013. CAMIT will benefit from AAx as a way to identify and recruit likely new members from a younger demographic.

CAMIT subscribed to a program called Slideroom for the grants program and Schnitzer Prize this year, and it was by all accounts very successful. The implementation of the program is complementary to the increased use of the members-only site in making CAMIT comfortable with working online.
Finances and funding

The council raised a total of $437,103 from 71 members, making the average gift $6,156. $9,553 was raised from 17 non-member donors. The grand total raised was $446,656.

Expenses for fiscal year 2013 totaled $522,757. This figure includes $119,506 in non-recurring expenses as detailed below:

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CAMIT 40th Anniversary SLAP gift</td>
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More information about the Council for the Arts