

Center for Advanced Visual Studies

The Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS), an artist's fellowship program founded in 1967, produces new artworks and artistic research within the context of MIT. A laboratory for interdisciplinary art practice, CAVS facilitates exchanges between artists and MIT's faculty, students, and staff through public programs, the commissioning of major new collaborative artworks, and residencies for MIT students. The center's objective is to create high-quality collaborations between MIT initiatives, researchers, and faculty and MIT artists, students, and visiting cultural producers. The CAVS archive continues to serve artists, scholars, and the MIT community as a valuable resource of internationally important artist projects.

In 2008–2009, CAVS invited another strong roster of visiting artists to the center to present their projects to students, the MIT community, and the public. More than 2,500 people attended CAVS events that took the form of panels, artist lectures, symposia, workshops, and socials. Artists Martha Rosler and Dario Robleto presented their work in conversation with CAVS artists; Alan Abel, Hope Ginsburg, Shelly Bancroft, and Peter Nesbet presented lecture/performances and artworks. Also, CAVS artists presented their own work and produced symposia with the aid of center staff. All programs have been documented and reside online for easy access for future audiences, and they have been preserved within the CAVS archive for research purposes.

Within the past year, CAVS has mounted exhibitions at the MIT Museum, the St. Louis Contemporary Art Museum, and the Queens Museum in New York City. Addressing such topics as the mortgage crisis, climate change, the financial crisis, AIDS in Haiti, and disability, CAVS artists have collaborated with MIT scientists, engineers, and scholars to create programs for the public.

Additionally, CAVS has continued to renovate and organize the contents of its archive, welcoming over two dozen scholars in the past year, and has loaned artifacts from its collection for exhibitions and publications. Archivists from the Harvard Film Archive and the Simmons College of Library Science have assisted in organizing and writing recommendations for preserving the collection with an eye toward providing better accessibility and security its valuable historic content.

Public Programs

More than 2,500 people attended the center's 2008–2009 public programs, which increased the visibility of CAVS and the School of Architecture and Planning while providing opportunities for exchanges across disciplines and age groups.

Visitors included artists Alan Abel, Martha Rosler, Hope Ginsburg, Dario Robleto, and Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbet of Triple Candie. Visitors meet with undergraduates, graduate students, and professors in the Department of Architecture; the Media Lab; the Sloan School of Management; the doctoral programs in History, Anthropology, Science, Technology, and Society; and more.

Along with the visiting artists, CAVS ran programs that highlighted the work of our fellows. John Malpede performed *Paid Late* and his work in progress *Bright Futures: Financial Prospects*. Damon Rich visited Karl Seidman's 11.437 Financing Economic Development course and hosted a roundtable on the economic crisis at the MIT Museum. Visual Arts Program (VAP) graduate Hope Ginsburg presented *Center Sponge*; CAVS staff and artists performed *Definitely Maybe*, a toy theater show; John Bell delivered a lecture titled "Spectacle and the Street: Civic Rituals in Public Space" and directed a Dramashop production, *Antiretrovirals and Water Refugees*; and Wendy Jacob hosted a two-day symposium titled "Waves and Signs" with Gallaudet University.

CAVS and the MIT Museum presented Damon Rich's *Red Lines, Death Vows, Foreclosures, Risk Structures*, an exhibition about the history of home finance in the 20th century. It opened September 9 in the Compton Gallery and included five curricular and public programs. The exhibition, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Multi-Arts Production Fund (MAP Fund), the LEF Foundation, and the Graham Foundation, opened at the Queens Museum in New York City on May 31. The exhibition was well received in *Metropolis Magazine*, the *Boston Herald*, *Boston Architecture Magazine*, and *Banker Magazine*. A catalogue will be produced through the Queens Museum.

Center Fellowships

Artist fellows are the cornerstone of the center's program. As emerging or established contemporary artists working for a period of up to two years at MIT, fellows conduct significant new artistic research that provides opportunities for long-term graduate and undergraduate involvement and interdisciplinary work between artists, researchers, engineers, and scientists.

John Malpede is an eminent performer, director, and activist who often uses governmental, legal, and media sources as found texts. In 1985 he founded the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), an organization that engages the homeless population of Los Angeles through performance. LAPD's current touring project, *Agents and Assets*, re-creates a House of Representatives hearing on the importation of drugs into the United States in the 1980s by Nicaraguan contra rebels with the CIA's complicity. While at MIT, Malpede is researching free/open source software and related ideas of freedom, responsibility, and community in technology with his Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) student Cassandra Gibbs. As described above, he performed the work in progress *Bright Futures: Financial Prospects* as a participatory event at CAVS with a script based on a text by Sloan School economist Simon Johnson and a found text taken from an MIT Independent Activities Period (IAP) about Wall Street recruitment. In fall 2009 he will present a final public project to the MIT community. His residency at the center is made possible through grants from the MAP Fund and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Theater historian, puppeteer, and co-founder of Brooklyn-based avant-garde theater group Great Small Works, John Bell arrived at the center in the fall of 2007. He is the author of *Strings, Hands, Shadows: A Modern Puppet History* (Detroit Institute of Art) and editor of *Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects* (MIT Press). He finished a new book, *American Puppet Modernism*, during the first months of his fellowship as well as

organizing the annual Honk Festival in Cambridge. During his fellowship, Bell taught the Dramashop workshop in the Music and Theater Arts section. The group produced *Antiretrovirals and Water Refugees*, a new puppet, object, and music spectacle about the politics of global health care in Haiti. The show, designed, written, and performed by undergraduates and MIT community members, premiered at MIT's Kresge Little Theater for a two-week run from April 9 to 17. It looked at the past, present, and future of Haiti in terms of the politics of global health care as refracted through the work of Paul Farmer's Partners in Health organization and its fight against AIDS.

Jane Philbrick sculpts language to foreground the physical, tactile material properties of her immaterial medium. In previous projects, she has worked collaboratively with scientists and engineers at the Center for Spoken Language Understanding, Oregon Graduate Institute, and Honeywell Fire Solutions Group. Jane is preparing a solo exhibition at the Skissernas Museum in Lund, Sweden (December 2009), with UROP student Katherine Chu. The centerpiece of the exhibition is the re-creation of a 1961 floating sculpture by French artist Marta Pan. In collaboration with MIT community members, she will produce a catalogue with essays contributed by philosopher Agustin Rayo, Jim Livingston (Department of Materials Science and Engineering), Markus Zahn (Laboratory for Electromagnetic and Electronic Systems), Kerry Emanuel (Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences), Micah Kimo Johnson (Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences), Enno Lenzmann (Department of Mathematics), John Ochsendorf (Department of Architecture), Joe Dahmen (Department of Architecture), and others. In upcoming work, Jane will be working with experts at MIT to expand the technical possibilities of rammed earth construction for *The Reviary*, a spring 2010 art installation at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) funded by the LEF Foundation.

Wendy Jacob is an artist who makes sculptures and site-based installations that explore the interface between architecture and bodily experience. Jacob's work includes breathing walls and ceilings, warm rosettes, hugging chairs, and tightropes through living rooms. Jacob is also a member of the collaborative group Haha. At CAVS, she produced "Waves and Signs," a major two-day conference and workshop on low-frequency vibration with a performance and dance party. Acting as a silent speaker, she built a raised floor at CAVS to insert low-frequency vibrations into the space. The floor was used alternately as a platform, instrument, and stage for a three-part event. In the first part, the floor served as a platform on which to hold a dialogue (in speech and sign) among artists, designers, scientists, and students. In the second part, the floor was used as an instrument in a workshop on resonant vibrations. In the third part, the floor became a stage for performances and a silent dance party. Participants in the project included students and faculty from MIT's Departments of Architecture and Physics, the Program in Media Arts and Sciences, and Gallaudet University (Washington, DC). Gallaudet is the world's only university in which all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate Deaf and hard of hearing students.

Graduate Affiliates

Any MIT graduate student who considers himself or herself an artist may apply for studio space at the center, a small grant for materials, and studio visits from the center's

staff. In turn, he or she helps link the center and visiting artists to his or her home department or laboratory.

Laurel Braitman (PhD candidate, Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society) organized and developed a traveling contemporary art exhibition, *Human/Nature: Artists Respond to a Changing Planet*, for which she managed artist visits to UN-designated World Heritage sites to create work that addresses shifting conceptions of the human place in nature. The exhibition opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, and the University of California, Berkeley, Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Laurel hosted *Human/Nature* artist Dario Robleto at CAVS for their joint lecture on “The Common Denominator of Existence is Loss.”

Research Affiliates

A research affiliate is an artist who receives access to the center’s resources, including a studio; access to small grants for materials; and access to UROP students. This year CAVS affiliates produced works that have been exhibited both locally and nationally, and they have been working very closely with undergraduate students.

While serving as a resident at the Baryshnikov Art Center, Nell Breyer developed a new work, *The Disappearing Woman*, with shows at Marlboro College and Stonington Opera House in Maine. She co-curated the *CyberArts Ideas in Motion/Critical Moves* exhibition and performance, and she was a panelist for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts Science, Art & Technology event in March and the World Science Festival in June.

Elizabeth Goldring continues to work with her UROP student Yi Fe Wu to develop a portable nonlaser version of her “seeing machine” to present images to visually challenged people. Yi Fe Wu received an award in the IDEAS Competition related to her work with Elizabeth. National media coverage of the “seeing machine” has prompted Elizabeth to create a prototype for the marketplace.

Jessica Rylan, a well-known sound artist, investigated and experimented with chaotic approaches to sound synthesis and constructed a prototype chaotic oscillating instrument in an ongoing collaboration with MIT UROP students. She led an IAP event on creative electronics, made a custom synthesizer for *Definitely Maybe*, performed for Wendy Jacob’s *Music for the Hearing and the Deaf*, and performed at Pikel08 in Bergen, Norway.

Director emeritus Otto Piene continues to participate in overseas exhibitions and is working in ceramics in the US and abroad. His work is in the collections of more than 100 museums, and he has participated in a number of exhibitions this year, including a Group Zero show at Sperone and Westwater in New York City which has published a major catalogue with an introduction by Piene. At CAVS, he continues to work on *CenterBook*.

Publicity

The center’s work was covered in the preeminent contemporary art journal *Artforum International*. Performances and projects were covered in *Metropolis Magazine*, *Boston Architecture Magazine*, *Banker*, the *Boston Herald*, and the *Phoenix*.

Administrative Initiatives

In the next year, CAVS will be merging with the Visual Arts Program (VAP). Newly appointed CAVS associate director Michael Mittelman will support the directors of VAP and CAVS, implement the merger, and develop a unified organizational model.

Fundraising

CAVS received \$56,452 in external funding for artist projects: the LEF Foundation (\$10,000 for Jane Philbrick's *The Reviary*), the Multi-Arts Production Fund (\$20,000), the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (\$6,452), French Cultural Services (\$5,000), the Massachusetts Cultural Council (\$5,000), and the Graham Foundation (\$10,000). In addition, the center received \$15,000 from the MIT Council for the Arts to support individual fellowships and workshops.

Personnel

CAVS director Krzysztof Wodiczko represented Poland in the 53rd Venice Biennale with a new projection work titled *Guest*. His installation was highlighted in the *Boston Globe*, the *London Times*, the *New York Times*, and *Le Monde*. He also completed the design of the "War Veteran Vehicle" with the Interrogative Design Group at CAVS; the piece was exhibited near the Democratic National Convention in Denver, CO. A new work, *This World and Nearer Ones*, was developed for a June 2009 exhibition organized by New York-based Creative Time on Governors Island (New York). Professor Wodiczko gave lectures at George Mason University, the Warsaw University of Social Psychology, and the School of Visual Arts in New York. Additionally, he received the prestigious Gloria Artis Cultural Merit Award in Warsaw, Poland.

Associate director Larissa Harris, who spearheaded the redevelopment of the center when she arrived in 2004, left in the fall of 2008. Now a curator at the Queens Museum (New York), she worked closely with Meg Rotzel to transport *Red Lines*, *Death Vows*, *Foreclosures*, *Risk Structures* to the museum.

Michael Mittelman was hired as associate director in April 2009. He is an artist, educator, technologist, and founder of *ASPECT: The Chronicle of New Media Art*. *ASPECT* is working with the Visual Arts Program on a retrospective of the artists who have worked and studied at MIT for the last 20 years.

Program coordinator Meg Rotzel (part time) produced *Red Lines*, *Death Vows*, *Foreclosures*, *Risk Structures*, which was shown at the MIT Museum's Compton Gallery in the fall of 2008. She curated and presented the center's fall and spring visiting artist programming (13 events in all). She continues to coordinate all artist residencies and programs, with special attention to fellow projects. In spring 2009 she co-curated an exhibition at the John Nightingale-Brown House in Providence, RI, and she is currently working with Brown University's Art Council on opening the Diller+Scofidio-designed Creative Art Center while working toward her master's degree in public humanities in the Department of American Civilization at Brown.

Artistic production coordinator Joe Zane (part time) manages technical aspects of public programs, designs exhibitions, and provides support for CAVS affiliates. This year he was a finalist for the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (ICA) Foster Prize, with an exhibition at ICA during the fall of 2008. He was included in group shows at MASS MoCA in Northampton, MA; the Lora Reynolds Gallery in Austin, TX; Carroll & Sons in Boston, LaMontagne in Boston; and Artists Space in New York City. His work was recently added to the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Fogg Museum at Harvard, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Administrator Kamila Madry (part time) monitors CAVS accounts, maintains the director's calendar, and provides general office support. She has been at CAVS since the summer of 2008, when she worked on gathering materials for the *Red Lines, Death Vows, Foreclosures, Risk Structures* exhibition; she continues to work on the details of CAVS artist projects. She has a master's degree in psychology from the University of Wroclaw, Poland, and her work background includes negotiation, counseling, and administration. She came to MIT with her husband, who is a PhD candidate in the School of Engineering.

Meg Rotzel
Program Coordinator

More information about the Center for Advanced Visual Studies can be found at <http://cavs.mit.edu/>.