

MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology

The MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT) is an academic program and a research center. As an academic program, ACT resides within the Department of Architecture and reports to the head of that department. ACT as a whole reports directly to the dean of the School of Architecture and Planning (SAP).

Transitions and Visions

Subsequent to its formation in 2009 as a merger of the Visual Arts Program and the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS), ACT continues to redefine and reconfigure itself, with a consciousness of the recent past and with efforts to develop its contemporary role. With the hiring of two new permanent faculty members, granting of tenure to another permanent faculty member, and the hiring of an administrative officer and a manager of finances and facilities, ACT is currently poised to enter a generative phase.

Associate professor Ute Meta Bauer stepped down as head of ACT in January, and associate professor Renée Green stepped into that role. The search for a new faculty member to serve as program director was initiated but was suspended at the conclusion of the spring term, and Professor Green was asked to continue as program head.

The program's goals include strengthening its research dimension and its relation to pedagogy in terms of increasing theoretical and practical links to contemporary thinking and action. ACT seeks to achieve these goals via the program's lecture series, through more substantial research fellow appointments, and via specific events and projects. Also, partnerships are sought with other facets and discipline groups within SAP and more broadly throughout the Institute, as well as with local, national, and international partners. ACT is renewing links with the List Visual Arts Center by working with center director Paul Ha to cosponsor events. ACT continued to play an active role in the further development of the MIT Visiting Artists Program out of the Office of the Arts. ACT is also continuing to strengthen its graduate and undergraduate curriculum and to work toward establishing an ACT undergraduate major.

Academic Program

ACT is one of the five discipline groups in the Department of Architecture, and the department oversees the graduate program and faculty appointments and promotions.

At the graduate level, the program offers electives for master of architecture (MArch) students as well as graduate students from other disciplines. ACT also conducts a highly selective two-year graduate program. Effective AY2012, the program's master of science in visual studies (SMVisS) degree was renamed master of science in art, culture, and technology (SMACT). The SMACT degree requirements remain the same as those for the SMVisS. There were 12 students enrolled in the graduate program this academic year, six of whom graduated in June. Five of the 66 graduate program applicants in AY2013 were accepted.

At the undergraduate level, the program offers an ACT discipline stream for bachelor of science in architecture (BSA) majors. ACT also supports the General Institute Requirements, offering subjects that fulfill the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) Requirement as well as a HASS concentration and minor. In AY2012, two students were BSA majors in the ACT discipline stream, 15 students were ACT HASS concentrators (nine of whom graduated in June), and eight students were pursuing the new ACT HASS minor launched last year (five of whom graduated in June).

Of the 277 students enrolled in ACT subjects in AY2012, 107 (39%) were graduate students and 170 (61%) were undergraduates; 46% of students taking ACT subjects were majors within SAP.

This year, international travel was an integral component of three subjects, featuring trips to Japan and Iceland, both of which occurred in the spring. Support for these trips was received from the SAP dean's office, the Department of Architecture, and the Council for the Arts at MIT.

In addition, several classes took field trips to New York City, funded by the Department of Architecture.

This year ACT expanded its offerings to include a new subject for graduates and undergraduates: 4.320/4.321 Introduction to Sound Creations. The program also added undergraduate versions of existing graduate subjects:

- 4.304 Art, Architecture, and Urbanism in Dialogue (meets with 4.303)
- 4.344 Advanced Photography and Related Media (meets with 4.343)
- 4.361 Performance Art Workshop (meets with 4.360)

The program added 4.350 Introduction to Video and Related Media (meets with 4.351), a graduate version of a subject that had previously been open only to undergraduates.

4.S32 Special Subject: Art, Culture and Technology was co-taught in the spring by ACT assistant professor Azra Akšamija and Department of Architecture lecturer Joel Lamere; the theme was "Object Geographies: Dis-assembly/Re-assembly Workshop in Art and Architecture."

ACT requested and received HASS Arts status for two subjects: 4.332 Advanced Seminar in Networked Cultures and Participatory Media and 4.344 Advanced Photography and Related Media. This brought the total number of subjects with HASS status to 12.

Research

Professor Bauer and lecturer Jegan Vincent de Paul participated in the MIT Japan 3/11 Initiative to respond to the post-tsunami devastation in Minami Sanriku, Japan. The fall lecture series and two ACT subjects (one in the fall and one in the spring) were part of the response.

The *Disobedience Archive*, a collaboration initiated by professor Gediminas Urbonas between ACT and Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti Milano, was on display from December 9 to April 15. Students from two subjects taught by Urbonas helped conceptualize and execute the project.

Jazz musician Jason Moran created a collaborative performance with professor emerita Joan Jonas during his Visiting Artists Program residency.

The Visiting Artists Program collaborated with ACT to sponsor artist-writer Trevor Paglen's and sound artist Florian Hecker's residencies.

"Cinematic Migrations," a two-year research project initiated by Renée Green, received funding. The project will be carried out in collaboration with the Visiting Artists Program; projected partners include filmmaker John Akomfrah, the Center for Civic Media, the Center for Comparative Media, and New Arts of the Documentary.

The Contemporary Art Archipelago (CAA), Turku, Finland, established collaborative relationships with Professors Green and Urbonas, who are each developing projects with CAA.

Kepes Fellowship

ACT was awarded \$60,000 by the ERSTE Stiftung Foundation to fund the György Kepes Fellowship for Advanced Studies and Transdisciplinary Research in Art to sponsor two fellows from Eastern Europe. Márton Orosz was selected as the first fellow and was in residence at MIT during fall 2011. He devoted himself to an in-depth study on CAVS founder György Kepes, working on his monographical overview of Kepes and arranging a future traveling exhibition of Kepes' work. This spring, Tadej Pogacar was selected as the second Kepes Fellow for fall 2012.

Fellows, Affiliates, and Visiting Scholars

CAVS fellow Elizabeth Goldring continued artistic research on visualizing vision loss, inventing expressive tools for people who are sight impaired, and developing projects on blindness that also engage people who are sighted, including her "eye robot." Goldring collaborated with Robert Wilson in November during his residency with the MIT Visiting Artists Program.

Zenovia Toludi carried out research on light in space. She participated in *Garden Lab*, exhibitions at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, and worked on several publication projects.

Nomeda Urbonas participated in the creation of the *Disobedience Archive* exhibition at MIT and its subsequent documentation.

Florian Hecker conducted research on a new sound piece based on the concept of "auditory chimera." Hecker had a residency sponsored by the MIT Visiting Artists Program from October 19 to December 5 that included speaking in a panel discussion and performing at the MIT Chapel.

Wendy Jacob won the 2011 Maude Morgan Prize from the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, and was invited to install her works *Ice Flow* and *Explorers Club* from September 2011 to July 2012. Jacob also hosted a series of conversations at the MFA in spring 2012 about the perception of space.

Nonresident affiliates included John Bell, Amber Frid-Jimenez, Jae Rhim Lee, and Keiko Prince.

ACT hosted visiting scholars Sonia Matos (University of Edinburgh), Claudia Mareis (University of Basel), and Reinhard Wendler (Swiss National Science Foundation) in May and June.

Center for Advanced Visual Studies Special Collection

The CAVS archive contains materials concerning collaborative and time-based productions generated by or related to the tenure of nearly 100 internationally recognized artist-fellows over the past 45 years. ACT's goal is to ensure the sustained professional care and preservation of these materials while granting access to scholars and facilitating generative uses by MIT faculty and students. This academic year, the CAVS documentary *Centerbeam* was successfully restored through a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation and was screened for the public on December 8. Also this year, ACT engaged librarian Javier Anguera Phipps as a consultant to assess previous reports on the archive, review its materials, and develop a proposal for the collection. Anguera proposed a three-phase plan of action that would lead to the adoption of the materials as the CAVS Special Collection by the MIT Libraries. The first phase requires the hiring of a project archivist. An offer has been extended, and the archivist is expected to start work in AY2013.

Lecture Series and Public Events

The Monday night lecture series continued for its seventh year, attracting a broad range of speakers and sizable audiences. The program also hosted two special evenings examining the legacy of CAVS and its associated artists. These lively events intersected with ACT research and academic offerings as follows.

- “Zones of Emergency: Artistic Interventions—Creative Responses to Conflict & Crisis,” the fall lecture series (directed by Bauer), investigated how artistic or cultural initiatives might intervene in zones of conflict or crisis. Speakers included Tess Thackara, director, Survival International; curator Jack Persekian; Joichi Ito, director, MIT Media Lab; filmmaker Lucy Walker; Stella McGregor, director, Urbano Project; senior lecturer Shun Kanda along with professor James Wescoat; and filmmaker and artist Amar Kanwar.
- “Experiments in Thinking, Action, and Form,” the spring lecture series (directed by Green), explored the intersection of art, culture, and technology. Speakers included Michael Corris, professor and chair of studio art, Southern Methodist University; Bruce Yonemoto, professor of studio art in video, experimental media, and film theory, University of California, Irvine; Taru Elfving, artistic director, Contemporary Art Archipelago, Finland; Gloria Sutton, art historian

and curator and assistant professor, Northeastern University; Antoni Muntadas, ACT professor of the practice; and Michael Eng, assistant professor of philosophy, John Carroll University.

- “Intelligent Life,” a program honoring Maryanne Amacher and her legacy, was held on October 22. Amacher was a pioneering electroacoustic sound artist and CAVS fellow who died in 2010. Speakers and performers included Jana Winderen, Marina Rosenfeld, Christopher Bergevin, and Micah Silver.
- “Visions and Projections: An Evening Celebrating the Legacy of the CAVS” was held December 8. The event featured Kepes Fellow Orosz; Otto Piene, professor emeritus and former director of CAVS; and former CAVS fellows Elizabeth Goldring, Joan Brigham, Lowry Burgess, Alejandro Siña, and Aldo Tambellini. The program was moderated by List Visual Arts Center curator João Ribas. A screening of the restored *Centerbeam* documentary was also part of the event.

Faculty Accomplishments

Awards

Renée Green received an MIT HASS grant for the preparation of a book of her writings, under contract by Duke University Press. In May the Nam June Paik Award committee announced its short list of seven finalists for the 2012 NRW International Media Art Award, including Gediminas Urbonas and Florian Hecker. Urbonas was awarded MIT’s Mitsui career development professorship for AY2012. Joan Jonas was honored at the Kitchen Spring Gala in May. In October, lecturer Andrea Frank received the Brother Thomas Fellowship Award.

Exhibitions, Performances, and Commissions

Documenta 13 opened June 9 in Kassel, Germany, and is one of the most prestigious group exhibitions in the Western world. Jonas is one of the participants, as is Hecker. Also participating are two alumni of the MIT Visual Arts Program, Michael Rakowitz ’98 and Jennifer Allora ’03.

Ute Meta Bauer curated *The Future Archive*, which opened June 3 at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein in Berlin, Germany. The exhibition highlighted the CAVS artistic research projects of the 1970s and 1980s and recent creative works demonstrating CAVS’ legacy. The exhibition included works by more than a dozen artists with affiliations past or present to MIT. Several MIT faculty members also spoke in panel discussions associated with the exhibition.

Faculty exhibited at prestigious venues throughout the year in Texas, New York, California, Spain, Canada, Finland, Russia, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, England, France, and Italy.

Lectures and Symposia

Faculty participated in symposia and/or lectured widely in New York, Switzerland, Iceland, Belgium, Norway, Ukraine, Sweden, England, and Italy.

Publications

Intellectual Birdhouse—Artistic Practice as Research (Walther König, 2012), co-edited by Bauer, includes articles by Green, Hecker, and alumna Gina Badger '10.

The n.b.k. Berlin book series has announced that it will publish *Ute Meta Bauer. Kuratorische Praxis. Interviews und Gespräche* (*Ute Meta Bauer. Curatorial Practice. Interviews and Conversations*) (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König).

Green celebrated the publication of *Endless Dreams and Time-Based Streams* (Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 2011) with a book-signing reception hosted by the List Visual Arts Center on May 3.

Muntadas' work was presented in *Muntadas: Between the Frames: The Forum* (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2011). Also, he published three new catalogues: *Entre/Between* (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid), *Muntadas: Informação>>Espaço>>Controle* (Pinacoteca Arte e Cultura, São Paulo, Brazil), and *Warning: perception requires complicity* (National Centre for Contemporary Arts, Moscow).

Student Awards, Exhibitions, and Publications

Through the Lens: Growth, an exhibition featuring students from Andrea Frank's introductory and advanced photography classes, was held in the Maki Lobby of Building E14.

ACT graduate students held a group exhibition *Art, Culture, Technology, Salvation, Army* from May 25 through June 12.

ACT graduate students also received a number of awards, and two undergraduates associated with ACT received Student Art Awards.

Personnel

Renée Green and Azra Akšamija joined MIT and ACT as faculty July 1. The other permanent faculty are Ute Meta Bauer (on sabbatical, spring) and Gediminas Urbonas. This spring Urbonas was granted tenure effective AY2013. The instructional staff also included Joan Jonas (fall), Antoni Muntadas (spring), and Andrea Frank (spring), Angel Nevarez (spring), and Florian Hecker (spring).

Marion Cunningham joined the staff as administrative officer in July. Laura Chichisan oversees public programs, communications, admissions, and the ACT archive; she was promoted to administrative assistant II in December. Michael Enos was hired to oversee ACT's facilities and financial transactions.

Facility and Website Upgrades

This year ACT upgraded the audiovisual equipment in the Bartos Theater and the Cube. In the spring ACT launched a new dynamic website that can more easily be used to reflect its broad range of curricular and research activities. At the same time, the program began to integrate social media (Twitter and Facebook) into its outreach and marketing.

Renée Green

Director

Associate Professor of Architecture