

MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology

Academic Program

The MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT) is one of the five discipline groups in the Department of Architecture; the department oversees the graduate program and faculty appointments and promotions.

Master of Science in Art, Culture, and Technology

The Program in Art, Culture and Technology offers a highly selective two-year master of science in art, culture, and technology (SMACT) degree. There were 11 students enrolled in the graduate program at the beginning of the academic year. Two withdrew in the fall and five graduated in June; four students will enter their second year of study in fall 2013. Five of the 56 applicants to the graduate program in AY2014 were accepted, and one was waitlisted. ACT ultimately offered admission to the candidate on the waitlist; three of the six individuals who were offered admission accepted the offer.

Undergraduate and Graduate Enrollment

The program offers electives for master of architecture (MArch) students and graduate students from other disciplines.

At the undergraduate level, the program offers a discipline stream for bachelor of science in architecture majors and supports the General Institute Requirements, providing subjects that fulfill the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) Requirement as well as a HASS concentration and minor. In AY2013, 11 students were ACT HASS concentrators and two were ACT HASS minors.

Of the 227 students enrolled in ACT subjects in AY2013, 89 (39%) were graduate students and 138 (61%) were undergraduates; 41% of students taking ACT subjects were majors within the School of Architecture and Planning (SAP).

International travel was an integral component of two subjects. Students in 4.367/4.368 Studio Seminar in Public Art/Public Sphere—Spatial Cultural Identity traveled to Beijing, and students in 4.332/4.333 Networked Cultures and Participatory Media—Sustainable Communities, Radical Gardens and Techno-Ecologies collaborated with students at the Finnish Academy of Arts in Helsinki. Both trips occurred in the spring. The SAP dean's office, the Department of Architecture, the Council for the Arts at MIT, and ACT provided support for the travel. The introductory and advanced photography classes also took field trips to New York City, funded by ACT.

ACT expanded its offerings to include a new subject for graduates and undergraduates: 4.312/4.313 New Models and Modeling as Practice. Students enrolled in this class are working with students at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences and Arts to explore the concept of modeling across art, science, and architecture as a form of knowledge production.

As part of the two-year Visiting Artists Program residency of John Akomfrah and Lina Gopaul, ACT offered 4.314/4.315 Advanced Workshop in Artistic Practice and Transdisciplinary Research—Cinematic Migrations.

The 4.320/4.321 Introduction to Sound Creations course received HASS Arts and HASS Elective status in spring 2013.

Research

Two residencies by international filmmaker John Akomfrah and producer Lina Gopaul (Smoking Dogs Films) took place during the first year of Renée Green’s Cinematic Migrations research project. Migration and the present pragmatics of cinematic production and distribution were among the themes explored with lectures, screenings, and seminars during their first two residencies.

Professor Gediminas Urbonas established collaborations with a number of institutions. He initiated work with the Helsinki International Art Program in Finland using artistic practices to understand the consequences of global ecological changes and their local impact on European natural environments; he is working with Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom to address the environmental ecology and cultures of rivers; and he investigated the use of democratic games and their relationship to citizenship and participation in urban development in the Kista-Rinkeby area of Stockholm.

When Bosnia-Herzegovina’s National Museum closed in October 2012, Azra Akšamija responded by launching CULTURESHUTDOWN, an international initiative to protest the financial and political crisis affecting the museum and six other national cultural institutions. On March 4, 2013, over 275 museums and galleries expressed solidarity with threatened Bosnian institutions by symbolically “closing” exhibited objects with barricade tape.

In collaboration with Leila Kinney, executive director of Arts Initiatives, and Nasser Rabbat of the Aga Khan Program in Islamic Architecture, Akšamija is one of 15 shortlisted candidates for a \$200,000 grant from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters’ Building Bridges: Campus Community Engagement program. The goal of the program’s forthcoming project, Islamobile, is to expand awareness and understanding about Muslim societies.

Kepes Fellowship

Tadej Pogačar was the second Kepes Fellow and was in residence from September 2012 until February 2013. While here, Pogačar conducted research on the political and cultural context surrounding the project that Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) founder György Kepes planned for the São Paulo Biennale. His research subsequently expanded to include the nature of the relationship between the United States and Brazil and its impact on artistic production.

Fellows, Affiliates, and Visiting Scholars

During AY2013 research affiliate Javier Anguera continued the development of the Contemporary Culture Index (ccindex.info), an online, open-access bibliographical database that indexes international journals and periodicals. The index's focus includes art, architecture, literature, philosophy, and social science. Almost 1,000 records were added to the database.

Nomeda Urbonas participated in the creation of the exhibitions *School Politics* (Rotch Library), *Pro-Test Lab Archive* (National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, Lithuania), and *Karaoke* (Transmedia 2013, Berlin, Germany).

Florian Hecker was a research affiliate during the fall and a visiting scholar and lecturer in the spring. Over the year, Hecker had three solo exhibitions, participated in six group exhibitions, produced the book *Chimerizations*, lectured at MoMA PS1 and the Berklee College of Music, and gave five sound performances in the United States and Europe.

CAVS fellow Elizabeth Goldring continued to work on the video *Sketching the Blurr*, a book of poetry, and *Centerbook*, a history of the CAVS fellows program. Goldring donated her papers, video, seeing machines, and retina prints to the MIT Museum.

During Zenovia Toloudi's appointment in fall 2012, she assisted Gediminas Urbonas with his class 4.312/4.313 Advanced Studio in the Production of Space: New Models, Modeling as Practice. She also presented at the MIT Media Lab and the MIT Museum.

Affiliate and former ACT lecturer Andrea Frank worked with the Center for Bits and Atoms during the spring semester to create a large wall installation of 2,000 laser-cut taxidermied bees for the *Personal Structures* exhibition at Palazzo Bembo.

Sonia Matos, PhD, continued her research project, "Designing Food Cultures," while in residence as a visiting scholar in April. In addition to her research, Dr. Matos lectured in MIT's Anthropology program and in ACT's course 4.332/4.333 Networked Cultures and Participatory Media—Sustainable Communities, Radical Gardens and Techno-Ecologies.

CAVS Special Collection

In July, ACT hired Jeremy Grubman as archivist and librarian to assess the collection's preservation and digitization needs, create a finding aid, and identify and write grants for the development of a web-based digital repository. Over the course of the year, Grubman inventoried and assessed 70 boxes of documents, 3,000 photographs and slides, 250 posters, more than 500 videotapes, 36 film reels, and eight portfolios with 256 sides of information. He processed a gift of CAVS posters and CDs from the widow of noted electronic music composer, MIT faculty member, and CAVS fellow Paul Earls. In addition, he prepared two letters of interest to foundations; identified a dozen potential funding sources; met experts from the MIT Libraries in the areas of copyright, archives, digitization, and preservation and conservation; and responded to four to five reference requests per week.

Lecture Series and Public Events

The Monday night lecture series continued for its eighth year, attracting a broad range of speakers and sizable audiences. It was part of the Cinematic Migrations research project during AY2013 and will continue to be part of the project in AY2014. ACT faculty and students also hosted several other events examining the intersection of art, culture, and technology as part of faculty research and the program's academic offerings.

Experiments in Thinking, Action and Form: Cinematic Migrations

This two-year collaborative research project was initiated by Renée Green (Free Agent Media) and co-hosted by the MIT Visiting Artists Program and ACT. The work of John Akomfrah and Lina Gopaul, the founders of Smoking Dogs Films and founding members of the seminal UK-based Black Audio Film Collective, is one of the project's focal points of investigation.

Fall semester speakers were ACT lecturer Jesal Kapadia; Chip Lord, professor emeritus of film and digital media, University of California, Santa Cruz; Ros Gray, lecturer in critical studies, Goldsmiths University of London; and Krista Lynes, assistant professor in the Communication Studies Department at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. In the spring, speakers included Nora Alter, chair and professor of film and media arts at Temple University, and artists and filmmakers Arthur Jafa, Karim Aïnouz, Knut Åsdam, and Simin Farkhondeh.

Visiting Artists Program

As part of the Cinematic Migrations research project and in cooperation with the Visiting Artists Program, Akomfrah and Gopaul will visit MIT for a week each semester for two years. During their residencies, they will participate in public programs, seminars, and workshops and collaborate with MIT faculty, researchers, and students on a symposium that will conclude their residency in the spring of 2014. Their first visit, in October and November 2012, included both a lecture series event examining their 1986 documentary *Handsworth Songs* and a screening of their feature film *The Nine Muses*. The screenings were followed by lectures and a conversation among Akomfrah, Gopaul, and Professor Green. During their second weeklong visit in March, excerpts from their films *The Stuart Hall Project* and *The Unfinished Conversation* were shown as part of the lecture series, and the films' shared themes of identity and migration were compared and contrasted. Additional programming associated with their residency included discussions of their works *Peripeteia*, *The Call of Mists*, *The Genome Chronicles*, and *Memory Room 451*, as well as explorations of themes related to migration and the present pragmatics of cinematic production and distribution.

Making Space

ACT student Anne Callahan organized a panel to discuss the creation of shared creative spaces. The panel included Houston-based visiting artist Rick Lowe; Alec Resnick, founder of the Somerville hackerspace Sprout & Co.; Susan Fleischmann, director of Cambridge Community Television; and Phil Walsh, director of the Campus Activities Complex at MIT.

Art and Common Space

Professor Urbonas hosted a public lecture by professor Maaretta Jaukkuri of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in October. She discussed pedagogy and public space.

Kepes Fellow Lecture

Tadej Pogačar presented his research on Kepes' aborted 1969 São Paulo Biennale project and its relationship to the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute, a nonprofit cultural institution he founded in 1998 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He also discussed his recent publication *CODE:RED*. Professor Urbonas introduced the presentation.

Working Title: A Phill Niblock Book Launch

ACT and the List Visual Arts Center co-hosted this program, which included a performance by Berklee College of Music group Two Lips, videos of Niblock's work, and a presentation, book signing, and reception. ACT lecturer Florian Hecker introduced the program.

Sonic Practice, Discourse, and Auditory Experimentation

As part of the ACT subject 4.320/4.321 Introduction to Sound Creations, three public sound performances with lectures were presented in April and May with the financial support of the Council for the Arts at MIT. The featured speakers and performers were Cambridge-based musician Keith Fullerton Whitman, whose work focuses on electronic and acoustic music; Glasgow-based artist, filmmaker, and musician Luke Fowler; philosopher Guerino Mazzola, a professor of collaborative arts and music theory at the University of Minnesota's School of Music; and Reza Negarestani, an Iranian philosopher and writer.

Currency ~ Revolution: Spatial Strategies of Resistance

This panel discussion focused on the overlapping content of the spring 2013 issues of *Thresholds* and *Scapegoat*, two art and architectural journals. MIT PhD candidate Rebecca Uchill moderated the discussion between editors from each publication, and the program was introduced by Professor Urbonas and professor of the practice Antoni Muntadas.

Cambridge Open Archives

As part of Cambridge Archives' "Spaces: Sacred and Profane" open archives tour, archivist and librarian Jeremy Grubman provided an overview of the CAVS Special Collection to three groups in June.

Faculty Accomplishments

Awards

In November the Islamic Cemetery in Altach, Austria, designed by Bernardo Bader, received the International 2012 Piranesi Award. Professor Akšamija designed the Qibla wall-curtain and rugs for the prayer room. Akšamija was also awarded MIT's Class of '22 career development professorship for AY2014.

Professor Urbonas was appointed as a member of the advisory board of Media Art History's International Conference Series on the Histories of Media Art, Science and Technology.

Professor Green was awarded a grant from the New York art organization Art Matters in support of her film *Returning Kaleidoscopic Migration Constellations*. Green was also nominated for the Anonymous Was A Woman award.

Exhibitions, Performances, and Commissions

Renée Green's *Media Bichos*, a commission by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and part of her design of the MoMA Media Lounge, was unveiled in October 2012. In addition, she participated in the following group exhibitions: *NYC 1993* (New Museum, New York City), *Blues for Smoke* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City), *Make An Effort To Remember. Or, Failing That, Invent* (Bétonsalon, Paris, France), and *The Book Machine: The Imaginary Library Collection* (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France). Green was also commissioned to produce a new work for the group exhibition *Empire State* (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, Italy).

Gediminas Urbonas had multiple presentations including *Karaoke* (Transmediale 2013, Berlin, Germany), *Pro-Test Lab Archive* (National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, Lithuania), and *School Politics* (Rotch Library, Cambridge, MA).

Azra Akšamija participated in the group exhibitions *Cube or Dome* (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, Berlin, Germany), *Cross-Currents: Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Art of the Islamic World* (IDEA, Colorado Springs, CO), and *Treten Sie ein! Treten Sie aus! Warum Menschen ihre Religion wechseln* (Jewish Museum of Hohenems, Austria).

Joan Jonas performed and exhibited at multiple sites around the world: *Joan Jonas En Conversation avec Joan Simon* (Centre Pompidou, Paris, France), *Tate Live* (Tate Modern, London, England), *They Come To Us Without A Word* (Kitakyushu, Japan), and *Parallel Practices: Joan Jonas and Gina Pane* (Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX). Her works *Reanimation*, *Draw Without Looking*, and *Masks, Dolls and Baskets* were presented in various venues.

Antoni Muntadas had solo exhibitions in Italy and Canada (*Protocolii Veneziani I*, Venezia, Italy, and *About Academia*, Vancouver, Canada) and group exhibitions in France and Poland (*Le Pont*, Marseilles, France; *Economics On Art*, Cracovia, Poland; and *Stadium*, Bordeaux, France).

Florian Hecker had solo exhibitions in London, Lisbon, and Berlin and participated in group exhibitions in Tokyo, New York, Berlin, Nottingham, and Cambridge, MA.

Lecturer Angel Nevarez launched the record label Textual Records.

Lectures and Symposia

Faculty lectured widely in Austria, Canada, China, England, Finland, Germany, Kuwait, Lithuania, South Korea, Switzerland, and the United States.

Publications

Green's essay "Close Up, In Your Ear, and From a Distance: Musings on 'Our' Music via ECM" was published in *ECM: A Cultural Archaeology*. The book was edited by Okwui Enwezor and Markus Müller and published by Prestel.

Urbonas published essays on curation, archives, and his Hearsay House and Disobedience Archive projects in books from the NTNU Press, the Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig, and Torpedo Press as well as in issue number 41 of the journal *Thresholds* (Revolution!).

Hecker's *Chimerizations*, with a libretto by Reza Negarestani, an essay by MIT professor of anthropology Stefan Helmreich, and an introduction by Tate Modern curator Catherine Wood, was published in May 2013 by Primary Information.

Jesal Kapadia contributed essays to *Shifter Magazine* and *Tidal Magazine*.

Student Awards, Exhibitions, and Publications

In February, ACT graduate student YaeJin Shin's (Class of 2013) film, *The Mutes*, was screened as part of the College Art Association's Media Lounge.

From May 25 to June 10, ACT graduate students held a group exhibition, *Something Very Specific*, off campus in an MIT-owned property.

ACT graduate student Floor van de Velde was the third place honoree for the Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize for the Visual Arts in spring 2013.

In June, ACT graduate student Anne Callahan helped prepare the exhibition *Beginnings: Drawing Early Architecture* at the Department of Architecture's Keller Gallery.

Personnel

Ute Meta Bauer was on leave during the academic year to serve as dean of the School of Fine Art at the Royal College of Art in London.

Jesal Kapadia joined MIT and ACT as a lecturer in September. She taught the introductory and advanced photography classes. Howard Chen co-taught 4.314/4.315 Cinematic Migrations with Renée Green during the spring semester.

Jeremy Grubman was hired as the archivist/librarian for the CAVS Special Collection in July; Madeleine Gallagher started as the media assistant in August, replacing Chris Clepper; and Valerie Grimm became the academic assistant in September, replacing Lisa Hickler.

Renée Green

Director

Professor of Architecture