

## MIT Museum

As we prepare for the move to Kendall Square, the [MIT Museum](#) continues to thrive at its current site, with annual attendance holding steady at last year's record high. At the time of writing, attendance is up 2% year on year, which suggests another record year in prospect. Digitization of the collections has proceeded apace, and this year for the first time we launched an exhibition—*Lighter, Stronger, Faster: The Herreshoff Legacy*—that featured not only items from one of our premier collections but also a digital portal to the remainder. Plans proceed for the restructuring of the staff to meet the needs of the new MIT Museum in Kendall Square.

### Collections

The collections team continued to contribute to nearly all aspects of the museum's endeavors, including exhibitions, programs, research, and teaching. Particularly notable was the completion of the first phase of the new online collections portal that has begun to transform public access. More than 25,000 items from our nautical collections were made available online, including nearly 19,000 plans and drawings from the Herreshoff Collection.

The Herreshoff Collection was showcased in the award-winning *Lighter, Stronger, Faster: The Herreshoff Legacy*, while the architecture collections were featured in a special exhibition, *Drawing, Designing, Thinking: 150 Years of Teaching Architecture at MIT*. The exhibition was the stimulus for a special collaboration with the MIT Libraries' Distinctive Collections group to digitize 8,600 architecture student thesis drawings.

Finally, in preparation for the opening of the new museum and the 2022 conclusion of the lease for the museum's off-site facility, the team worked with the MIT Office of Campus Planning and consultants Schwartz-Silver to complete a master plan defining the museum's needs for collections processing, research, teaching, and storage over the next 20 years.

### MIT Museum Studio and Compton Gallery

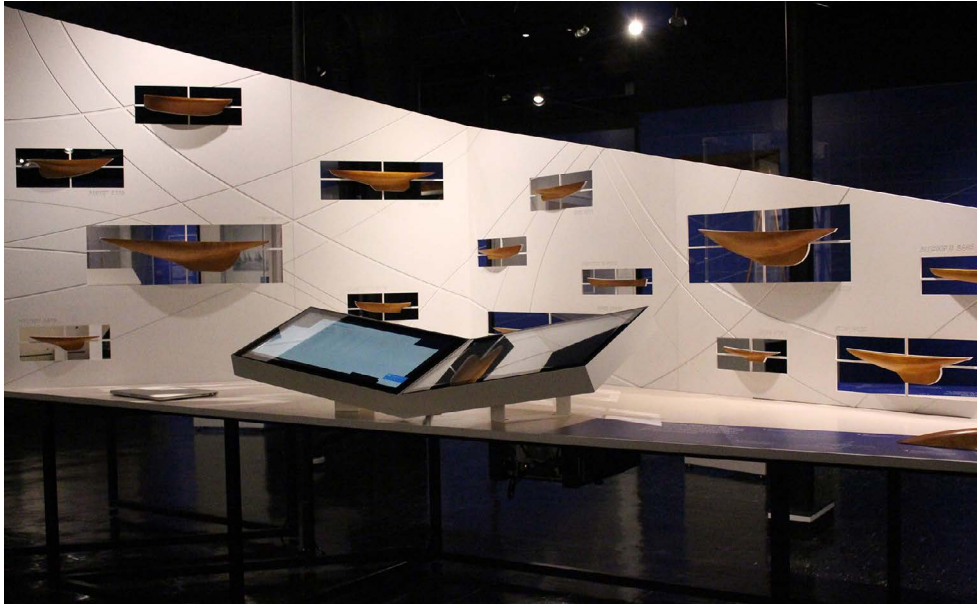
The MIT Museum Studio and Compton Gallery engaged undergraduate and graduate students in a broad range of hands-on communication learning opportunities, including the fall course 9.72 Vision in Art and Neuroscience, developed and taught by studio manager Seth Riskin, Vision and Computational Neuroscience Professor Pawan Sinha, and PhD student Sarah Schwettmann. The course, supported by an MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology Mellon Faculty Grant, is offered annually through the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences. Building on the two-year success of the course, the studio originated and hosted the Interstitial Illumination symposium in April 2019, focused on emerging opportunities for collaboration between visual art and vision neuroscience.

### Exhibitions

New exhibitions in a range of areas opened in nearly every gallery this year, offering a revived visitor experience.

Three years in the making, *Lighter, Stronger, Faster: The Herreshoff Legacy* opened on October 16, 2019. Featuring Nathanael Herreshoff's transformational designs and

representing the founding of an outstanding tradition of maritime and nautical innovation at MIT, the exhibition drew significantly from the museum's unique collection of plans and technical records.



*Ship models in Lighter, Stronger, Faster: The Herreshoff Legacy at the MIT Museum.*

Two exhibitions opened on February 14, 2019. A collaboration by the curatorial and exhibitions team of the museum and the Department of Architecture resulted in *Drawing, Designing, Thinking: 150 Years of Teaching Architecture at MIT*, while the museum's first floor was transformed by *In Motion*, bringing robots from our collection together with new motion research from two MIT laboratories to explore how motion can be harnessed and deployed in a variety of ways.



*Aerial assemblies by the MIT Self-Assembly Lab in Drawing, Designing, Thinking: 150 Years of Teaching Architecture at MIT at the MIT Museum. (Photo by Samara Vise)*

The Kurtz Gallery for Photography opened the year with *Imagined Communities*, a retrospective of the work of Mila Teshaieva, followed by the exhibition *Arresting Fragments: Object Photography at the Bauhaus*. The latter exhibit featured rarely seen photography from the Bauhaus in conjunction with the centennial anniversary of the legendary German school of art.



House of Kadjar by Mila Teshaieva in *Imagined Communities*: Photographs by Mila Teshaieva at the MIT Museum.

### Education and Public Programs

The museum offered an array of programs and educational experiences, many thematically designed to allow further exploration of exhibition subject matter. In conjunction with the exhibition *The Beautiful Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramon y Cajal*, programs included spotlight tours by visiting scientists and artists, the Cerebral Cinema Series, and Neuroscience Paint Night. Two program series designed to engage young adults with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) topics showed continued growth. Girls Day, held twice annually, attracted close to 2,000 attendees, while all four Teen Science Cafes were well attended. The museum held an educator open house in October to introduce the museum's educational programming to local teachers and offered teacher workshops during school vacation weeks. The museum also hosted MIT events such as Energy Night, the open house for graduate students, and the popular Bacterial Bonanza.

### Cambridge Science Festival and Science Festival Alliance

The 13th annual Cambridge Science Festival offered creative, engaging STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) experiences to the public in April 2019. Approximately 125,000 people participated in 225 events at 110 locations across Cambridge and greater Boston. More than 1,000 scientists and STEAM professionals

volunteered to lead events and activities, and MIT scientists were highly engaged with the public. Maria Zuber, MIT vice president of research, co-hosted opening night, exploring the viability and timeline of sending humans to Mars; the new MIT nano facility welcomed approximately 500 members of the general public for tours and activities; and student groups at MIT led family-oriented activities such as the Microbial Fair. Seeking to reach new audiences through whimsical, opportunistic public engagement, opening night kicked off with a solar system-themed block party in Harvard Square, the Cambridge City Hall front lawn featured a dynamic science-art installation, giant walk-in camera obscuras were on display at University Park, and 30,000 humorous coasters were distributed to local bars and restaurants.

Through its 63 members, the Science Festival Alliance (SFA) offered nearly 7,000 festivals and events reaching more than 2 million people in the United States and Canada. SFA received a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for three years of work on the Science Festival Accelerator project. It also concluded the first year of a three-year grant from the Simons Foundation for a multifaceted project called Science In Vivo, enabling the support of teams across the United States that are experimenting with the integration of science engagement experiences into non-science public settings.

The SFA staff served on five national advisory boards, represented MIT at 12 professional conferences, and produced the Science Events Summit, drawing 120 public science event professionals to San Diego in June 2019. SFA's work was featured in several professional publications including *The Public Face of Science*, published by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

### **Nord Anglia Collaboration**

The museum completed the third of its five-year collaboration with Nord Anglia Education, during which it launched three academic challenges featuring MIT professors and graduate students in Nord Anglia schools worldwide, welcomed 104 middle school students and teachers for a one-week visit to the MIT campus in May featuring workshops and tours, and hosted 75 teachers participating in a professional development program in June.

## **Administration**

### **New MIT Museum at Kendall Square**

In July 2018 the design development phase of the project was completed, and the construction documents phase began. The contract documents were completed by architects Howeler + Yoon in the winter. The architectural documents were issued for bidding, and the guaranteed maximum price is expected imminently. Concrete floor slabs for levels 1, 2, and 3 have been placed by the base building team for the museum space. Looking ahead, it is projected that on November 1, 2019, Turner Construction will start construction of the museum fit out, with a 12-month construction duration.

Content development planning for exhibitions was ongoing, with meetings convened in April 2019 that assembled diverse faculty and researchers to brainstorm approaches to two main topics: life sciences and computational sciences/artificial intelligence. These discussions were formative in continuing the work of in-house staff and selected consultants.

## Technology

The museum made continued improvements to its digital infrastructure. A study evaluating its capacity to use digital tools to develop ongoing relationships with its constituents was delivered in January, and ongoing work in preparing to implement a constituent relationship management system and workflow continues. An upgrade to our collections access platforms included the launch of a digital asset repository based on the International Image Interoperability Framework. The museum also premiered its online collections portal, a web-accessible gallery of artifacts from our collection. Our digital team developed exhibition infrastructure enhancements that facilitated efficient development of in-gallery digital experiences, including two collections portals, an interactive label system, and a holographic display to render a digital, three-dimensional animation.

## Development

Ninety-one donors made gifts totaling \$2,230,000, including \$70,000 for unrestricted use and \$2,160,000 for restricted purposes. Fundraising for the new museum continues, with generous gifts from MIT alumni that are reflected in the restricted gifts total. We received two new naming gifts for the Media Gallery and the Collections Workshop and Photography Study Center. We also received a gift to advance planning for the digital experience in the new museum.

## Retail and Functions

The MIT Museum Store continues to operate as a highly successful and profitable business, with year-over-year growth of 1%. The store achieved \$1,176,613 in sales for the fiscal year. Net profit reached a new high, having already surpassed projections, and totaled \$370,179 as of the close of the fiscal year.

Despite challenges with respect to available space, functions revenue remained steady with nearly \$160,000 earned from 63 clients, 75% of whom were MIT affiliated. The museum welcomed back long-time clients from Executive Education, as well as repeat clients from departments and groups such as the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, the Department of Chemistry, and Solve.

## Public Relations and Marketing

Successful targeted promotional campaigns were designed and executed for exhibitions and programs and to announce the launch of the online collections portal, resulting in increases in both physical and digital visitors. A visitor survey was conducted by People, Places & Design Research to gauge awareness of and interest in the museum at Kendall among local museum goers. The results will be used to help guide a planned re-branding exercise. Additional research was conducted in the galleries to gain useful insight from visitors on their opinions about exhibitions.

## Personnel

Dominic Vecchione was hired in August as project manager for the MIT Museum at Kendall; he will be the liaison to our MIT Facilities team, the architects, and the construction company.

The exhibitions team has an ambitious portfolio, with responsibility for planning all of the exhibitions for the new museum in addition to continuing the exhibition program for 265 Massachusetts Avenue, requiring additional staff. Caroline Klibanoff joined the team in August 2018 as project manager for exhibitions, and Bess Paupeck was hired in April as exhibit developer for art and science.

Our collaboration with Nord Anglia Education expanded this year, and in September P.A. d'Arbeloff transitioned from directing the Cambridge Science Festival to directing this five-year collaboration. In January we hired two curiosity correspondents, Fatima Husain and Rahi Patel, to produce videos in support of the curriculum. Although their focus is primarily on the collaboration initiatives, they also create videos for other MIT Museum projects including the Cambridge Science Festival.

MaryCat Boyett is serving as interim director of the Cambridge Science Festival.

Brindha Muniappan, director of education and public programs for eight years, resigned in April to join the staff of the Discovery Museum in Acton as director of the museum experience. Dora Bever recently began work as an educator for two years, thanks in part to funding from the McDermott Award Gala.

Joan Whitlow retired in April after 20 years of service as both registrar and collections manager. Given the volume of work associated with each of these roles, the registrar and collections manager positions have been separated. Katie Porter was promoted to the position of registrar on May 1, and Gloria Martinez was hired as the new collections manager starting June 17. In June, Kurt Hasselbalch announced his retirement effective July 4, 2019, having served 29 years as the curator of the Hart Nautical Collections.

**John Durant**  
Director