Arts Initiatives

The academic year began on a celebratory and optimistic note with the renewal of funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST). It closed with an abrupt interruption of business as usual owing to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which required adjustments to many of the campus and public programs produced by the arts at MIT, including the biennial Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT ceremony, concerts in the MIT Sounding series, and the $15,000 Creative Arts Competition.

COVID-19 and the Arts

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a halt to the normal spring 2020 semester, with the campus closing in mid-March. As the MIT community shifted to remote work and learning, many programs had to be canceled or postponed indefinitely, and others were shifted to online formats; in addition, new formats were devised to accommodate the changed circumstances of distributed content and dispersed audiences.

MIT's biennial marquee arts event, the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT residency, public lecture, gala, and award ceremony, was postponed and will be presented as a virtual rather than as an on-campus event in fall 2020. The recipient, Thomas Heatherwick, proposed a design challenge for one of the core studios in the design major during the spring semester and was able to continue working with students remotely once the campus closed.

A new section of the arts website called Arts from Anywhere collected news, information on projects, and other information about how the arts continued in these challenging conditions. Email, social media, Zoom, and the arts portal became the primary means of connecting with audiences and maintaining a sense of community through the arts.

Highlights

CAST Conversations

A new online interview series, CAST Conversations, paired students with recent visiting artists and Mellon Faculty Fellows. The webinar series included Agnieszka Kurant and Adam Haar Horowitz, PhD candidate in the Media Lab's Fluid Interfaces Group; Karim Ben Khelifa and Danielle Olson, PhD candidate in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science; Jay Scheib and Rian Flynn, undergraduate student in Physics; and Rosa Colón Guerra and Sam Mendez, graduate student in Comparative Media Studies.

Visiting Artists in the Virtual Classroom

In response to the shift to remote teaching, CAST launched a lightning round of grants to support the Visiting Artists in the Virtual Classroom program. In the post-Covid half of the spring semester, 17 grants were awarded, with artists lecturing, reviewing studio work, and leading workshops for more than 280 students. In addition, Council for the Arts at MIT's Artist Guest Speaker Program pivoted to support virtual artist visits for two spring semester classes. Clips from the Classroom presented short excerpts from these sessions online.

Weekend Social Media Concert Series

A weekend social media concert series was inaugurated in April 2020 that streamed concerts from the MIT music archives on Friday and Saturday nights and on a Sunday matinee each weekend on Facebook and Twitter. The series included a "live" premiere of the MIT Symphony Orchestra performing Tod Machover's *A Toronto Symphony*; the concert was recorded in Kresge Auditorium the day before students left campus and presented May 9 on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. The series reached a Facebook audience of 34,550 with 515 engagements, and there were 110,560 impressions on Twitter with 1,175 engagements.

Comusica

The most ambitious undertaking of the post-Covid semester was Comusica, a special piece commissioned for the virtual Commencement ceremony held May 29, 2020. The collaborative music project assembled more than 800 videos of graduates from the Class of 2020 singing a single note and participating in an animated, virtual procession through the Infinite Corridor into Killian Court. Eran Egozy '95, professor of the practice in music technology, conceived the project; Evan Ziporyn, Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Music, composed the music; and Isaac Chuang '90, professor of electrical engineering and computer science and physics and senior associate dean, built the infrastructure and image-processing algorithms. CAST provided communications and production support as part of a team that included members of MIT Video Productions, Resource Development, and the MIT Media Lab Opera of the Future group.
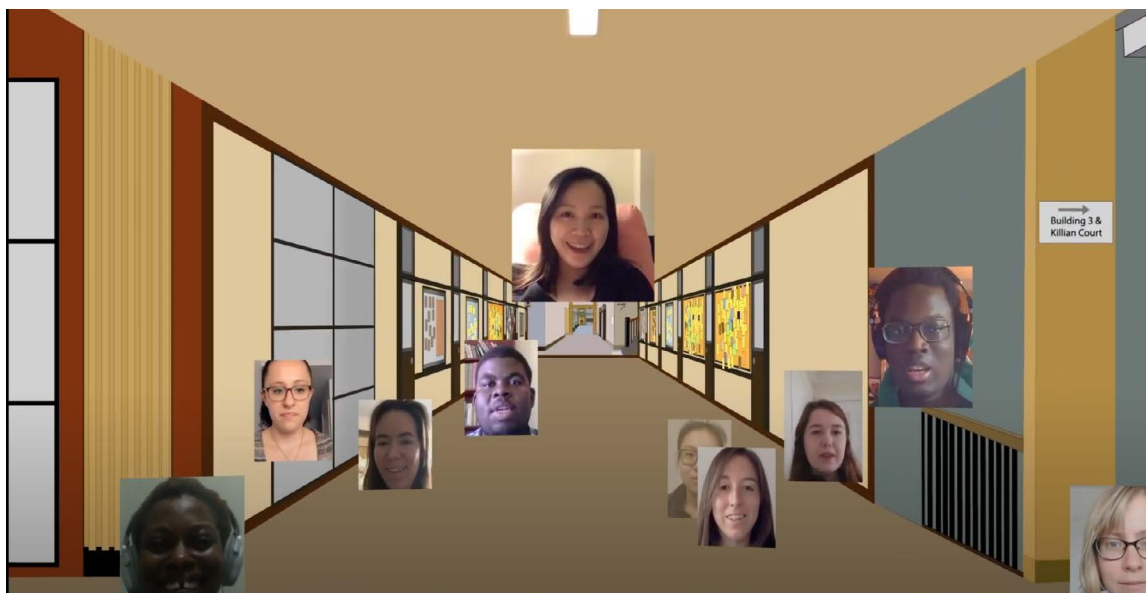
Still from Comusica video

MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology

Accomplishments

The Mellon Foundation renewed funding for CAST through 2024, which brings the foundation's total investment in the center to $4 million. *Being Material*, to which two Mellon postdoctoral fellows contributed, was published by The MIT Press in

October 2019. An expansion of the CAST symposium held in April 2017, the book was designed to be a physical as well as digitally activated object using machine learning and computer vision to interact with a companion website. The American Institute of Graphic Artists recognized *Being Material* in March with a 50 Books | 50 Covers award. In AY2020, along with eight continuing projects, CAST awarded $257,500 in funding for 12 projects commencing in AY2021 from a total of 17 submissions, including new awards for three International Exhibition and Performance Grants, six visiting artist grants, and three Fay Chandler Creativity Grants.

The award-winning cover design of Being Material *(The MIT Press, 2019. Photo by H. Erickson)*

Public Programs

MIT Performing

AY2020 was the second season of MIT Performing, a prototyping and presenting series curated by professor of music and theater Arts Jay Scheib.

The Block: An Afro-Musical with Lakaï Dance

The Lakaï Dance Theatre premiered *The Block: An Afro-Musical* at MIT with a pair of sold-out shows in September 2019. Over the course of two on-campus residencies in May and August 2019, the performers combined an original musical score with hip-hop and Afro-Diasporic movement styles to challenge stigmas on black and brown vulnerability and celebrate their creative and resilient urban community.

Thinking Choreographically: A Talk with Constanza Macras

In a lecture on October 31, Constanza Macras discussed how her choreography has developed over the course of her career. Through a highly collaborative creative process, Macras's work foregrounds the voices and experiences of the community members contributing to the project as co-creators and performers.

Jay Scheib's The Silence

This work-in-progress performance, held in December, was directed by Jay Scheib and inspired by Ingmar Bergman's *The Silence* (1963). The performance featured Ayesha Jordan, Lacey Dorn, Anna Kohler, Brandon Sanchez '18, Rionna Flynn '21, Sualeh Asif '22, and Kyleigh DeSilva, with design work by Afsoon Pajoufar, Shanise DeSilva, Kevin Fulton, Christian Frederickson, and Joshua Higgason.

MIT Sounding

The sixth season of MIT Sounding, curated by Evan Ziporyn, continued to present unique artists who push the envelope of their respective genres, creating new, evolving music for the 21st century. A planned virtual reality (VR)–enhanced, data set–driven "space opera" by artist Matthew Ritchie was cancelled due to COVID-19.

The Music of Glenn Branca Live: The Glenn Branca Ensemble/Ambient Orchestra

Honoring legendary composer Glenn Branca (1948–2018), this September program celebrated Branca's work as a composer and the continuing work of the Glenn Branca Ensemble to expand what is possible in contemporary music. The ensemble, led by Reg Bloor, performed *The Third Ascension* and Branca's last composition, "The Light (For David)." Also on the program were two of Branca's rarely performed orchestral works, presented by the Ambient Orchestra under the direction of Evan Ziporyn.

Lochan Rijal's काँचो आवाज (Raw Sounds)

In October Lochan Rijal, an award-winning multi-instrumentalist singer and songwriter from Nepal, presented *काँचो आवाज* (*Raw Sounds*), a public concert of Nepali music featuring original compositions played on guitar and traditional Nepali instruments. The concert featured Sarangi and the nearly extinct Gandharva lute arbaja that Rijal discovered during his research in Nepal and the premiere of *पागलखाना को साँचो*, a song about social inclusion.

The Heart is a Bell: Iva Bittová with the MIT Symphony Orchestra

On October 10, 2019, Evan Ziporyn conducted the opening concert of the MIT Symphony Orchestra (MITSO) season, featuring works by Vítězslava Kaprálová, Ziporyn, and Iva Bittová. Bittová performed the US premiere of her album *Zvon* with the orchestra and guests Keala Kaumeheiwa (bass), Phil Sargent (guitar), Austin McMahon (drums), and Venkatesh Sivaraman (piano).

the wave function collapses

Harbanger (pronounced "harbinger"), a turntable septet created by visiting artists Harry Allen, Hip-Hop Activist & Media Assassin, and X-Ecutioners' DJ Rob Swift, debuted in a groundbreaking January 2020 concert featuring DJs Axis Pro, Bobby Bangers, Don Santos, Emoh Betta, Menace, Slipwax, and Treeman. The event included a demonstration on how to scratch from Swift's Independent Activities Period (IAP) students and selections from the new eponymous album by Da Odd Couple (Swift and Mista Sinista).

JS Bach: Complete Cello Suites

Johnny Gandelsman returned to MIT in February to present Bach's complete cello suites on the violin. In addition to the performance, Gandelsman held an open technical rehearsal for local elementary and secondary school children.

MITSO MOVIES MACHOVER

The 2019–2020 Terry and Rick Stone Concert was the MIT Symphony Orchestra's tribute to the art of film music past, present, and future. The concert, directed by Evan Ziporyn, culminated in MITSO's first-ever performance of 2016 Composer of the Year and Muriel R. Cooper Professor of Music and Media Tod Machover's *A Toronto Symphony*, with input from student musicians to further customize the piece for this US premiere performance. Also featured was the world premiere of renowned composer and clarinetist Don Byron's *Three Pieces from the Saul Bass Project*. In addition, the program included music by John Williams, Angelo Badalamenti's brooding themes to David Lynch films, and the US premiere of Harry Manfredini's *Friday the 13th Suite*. The concert was not able to be performed in front of a live audience but was recorded and streamed in full on May 9.

MIT Symphony Orchestra MITSO MOVIES MACHOVER *concert performance film still (videography by Paula Aguilera and Jonathan Williams).*

Mellon Faculty Grants

V. Michael Bove, Media Lab

V. Michael Bove and David Levine, professor of the practice in theater, dance, and media, investigated the possibilities of 360-degree 3D holographic films. In IAP and spring and summer 2019, Bove, Levine, and seven students explored volumetric cinema through the development of a set of experimental films. The project was interrupted when Bove was asked to resign from MIT and the research group in the Media Lab was reassigned.

Ana Miljacki, Department of Architecture

Ana Miljački saw a need to intervene in the field of architectural production and transmission through new forms of operative criticism. In 2019, Miljački continued the lab's series of workshops and public lectures with Conversations on Care, featuring stewards of the architectural public sphere such as Beatrice Gallilee and Tom Weaver. In spring 2020, Conversations on Care continued weekly online through the Department of Architecture's What Are We Doing? Radio.

Work by the Critical Broadcasting Lab was exhibited internationally in 2019 at the Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism and the São Paulo International Architecture Biennial. At MIT, the lab presented *PLAY ROOM*, an exhibition of board and card games whose rules and mechanics are designed to examine a series of contemporary topics in architecture.

Richard Milner, Department of Physics

Richard Milner, physicists Rolf Ent at Jefferson Laboratory and Rik Yoshida at Argonne Laboratory, animator James LaPlante of Sputnik Animation, and video artists Chris Boebel and Joe McMaster at MIT are developing a new animation of the proton. They will make the visualization itself a centerpiece of a short film, aimed at science students in grades 7–12 and the general public, that explores the debates and decisions involved in creating representations of phenomena that are inherently abstract and invisible.

Lerna Ekmekçioglu, History Section

Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, the McMillan-Stewart Associate Professor of History, is creating an exhibition and digital archive titled *Twelve Faces of Armenian Feminism*. The project highlights 12 pioneering Armenian women writers and activists who produced work from the 1860s to the 1960s that Melissa Bilal and Ekmekçioğlu unearthed in archives around the world.

Cross-Disciplinary Class Development Grants

Graham Jones, Anthropology Program

The 21A.S01 Paranormal Machines course, led by Graham Jones, focuses on technological strategies for detecting and measuring paranormal phenomena, from traditional divination devices to the electromagnetic field meters of present-day ghost hunters. The class culminates in a final project assignment wherein students create their own interactive paranormal interfaces for a public showcase.

Ian Hattwick, Music and Theater Arts

Ian Hattwick developed 21M.370 Digital Instrument Design in spring 2020, a contribution to a burgeoning area of the curriculum in music technology. In this course, students gain hands-on experience in creating software systems, hardware interfaces, or interactive artworks and how to critically engage with technological development in aesthetics, social formations, and culture. The class sessions were moved to a virtual platform from March 30 to May 12.

Fay Chandler Creativity Grants

Elena Ruehr, Music and Theater Arts

Songs from Extrasolar Spaces was organized as part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's TESS (Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite) Science Conference at MIT. The July 30, 2019, concert featured Boston's Lorelei Ensemble performing works by composers Meredith Monk and Molly Herron and premiering new works by Institute Professor John Harbison and Elena Ruehr. The lyrics for each piece were inspired by discoveries in astronomy, including TESS exoplanet data. Pre-concert talks were offered by MIT faculty George Ricker and Sara Seager and Natalia Guerrero '14, who co-organized the event.

Sara Brown, Music and Theater Arts

The Day is a new music/dance work by cellist Maya Beiser, dancer Wendy Whelan, and choreographer Lucinda Childs, with music by David Lang. Sara Brown and technical instructor Joshua Higgason of MIT joined the collaboration as designers and developed the work during a weeklong residency at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA), with a work-in-progress showing on July 21, 2019.

Hans Tursack, Department of Architecture

Pietro Belluschi Research and Design Fellow Hans Tursack and Viola Ago of Ohio State University designed and built a pavilion for Exhibit Columbus, an internationally renowned showcase for experimental commercial and academic architecture offices held annually in Columbus, IN. The pavilion, titled *Understorey*, is a large open-air vivarium built from a combination of off-the-shelf agricultural products and custom, digitally fabricated structural elements.

Ian Condry, Comparative Media Studies/Writing Section and Anthropology Program

Sound, Learning, and Democracy is a collaborative project aimed at developing works and performances for the MIT Spatial Sound Lab created specifically for a 360-degree environment. In February, Ian Condry hosted Dissolve Music 2020: Spatial Sound Festival at MIT, which featured 30 performers. The three-day program was attended by more than 500 participants from the MIT community and the general public.

Visiting Artists

Matthew Ritchie

In AY2020, Dasha Zhukova Distinguished Visiting Artist Matthew Ritchie continued his MIT residency to develop a new work, *The Invisible College*, in collaboration with a team of MIT faculty and students including Evan Ziporyn, Professors Markus Buehler and Peter Fisher, and PhD candidate Sarah Schwettmann.

Ritchie held beta tests of the virtual reality installation, led a work-in-progress roundtable discussion, and guest lectured in two classes. The site-specific VR experience, held in Building 6C, incorporates features of the building's public artwork, Sol LeWitt's *Bars of Color within Squares (MIT). The Invisible College* is built in a game engine and features 360-degree videos of the MIT campus and images created by machine-learning algorithms trained on MIT data sets, with music composed by Ziporyn and Christine Southworth.

A participant beta tests Matthew Ritchie's The Invisible College VR experience. The work was a collaboration among Ritchie and a team of MIT faculty and students including Evan Ziporyn, Markus Buehler, Peter Fisher, and PhD candidate Sarah Schwettmann. (Photo by Caroline Alden)

Lisa Dwan

Mellon Distinguished Visiting Artist Lisa Dwan, acclaimed Irish actress, producer, and director, returned to MIT to work with Media Lab, Literature, and Theater Arts faculty members to further her explorations of the intersection of text, live performance, and technology. Initial plans to develop a holographic installation of her performing Samuel Beckett's *Not I* using a Voxon VX1 in collaboration with the Object-Based Group at the Media Lab pivoted due to the reassignment of team members in the group. Currently, Dwan is working with Jay Scheib to prototype a fully remote version of Veronique Olmi's *Beside the Sea*.

Hussein Chalayan and Skylar Tibbits

Hussein Chalayan, a London-based fashion designer known for innovative and technology-focused design, worked with Assistant Professor of Architecture Skylar Tibbits and his team at the Self-Assembly Lab to create active, transformable fashion. Throughout AY2020, they continued to refine prototypes that are expected to go into production in fall 2020.

Diemut Strebe and Brian L. Wardle

Ida Ely Rubin Artist in Residence Diemut Strebe and Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics Brian L. Wardle applied new research in engineered materials and structures to artworks. Strebe and Wardle's *The Redemption of Vanity* is a 16-carat color diamond covered with a grown "forest" of carbon nanotubes (CNTs). The CNTs absorb 99.995% of light, creating the blackest black material on earth. They cast no shadows due to their unusual light-absorptive properties, obscuring their plasticity and three-dimensionality. *The Redemption of Vanity* was exhibited at the New York Stock Exchange from September 2019 to February 2020.

Thom Kubli and Hiroshi Ishii

Thom Kubli is collaborating with Jerome B. Wiesner Professor of Media Arts and Sciences Hiroshi Ishii and members of the Tangible Media Group at the MIT Media Lab to develop a machine capable of creating ultra-light hollow shapes filled with helium that would ascend to the upper realm of space, where they would be caught in a thermal stream and eventually float in an orbital movement. The speculative machine developed throughout this research relates to the technique of rotational molding and has potential applications in art as well as theoretical problems and manufacturing processes in science and engineering. The project team created an exhibition documenting their artistic and scientific research and experiments that was to be presented at Beyond the Cradle in March 2020, which was canceled due to COVID-19. The exhibition materials were documented in two videos.

Jenna Sutela and Caroline Jones

Jenna Sutela works with words, sounds, and other living media to explore possibilities for interspecies communication. At MIT, she is pursuing her interest in biological and computational art, making use of organisms such as *Bacillus subtilis* natto bacteria and the "many-headed" slime mold *Physarum polycephalum*. In fall 2019, Sutela participated in the 4.S63 Architecture and Art: Building, Body, Biome class led by Professor of the History of Art Caroline Jones. Throughout AY2020, Sutela made remote lab visits and held meetings with faculty including Tanja Bosak and Tami Lieberman.

Sarnath Banerjee and Abhijit Banerjee

Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics Abhijit Banerjee collaborated with Sarnath Banerjee (no relation) to create a novel medium that bridges the gap between the social science discourse of academia and the loud and inchoate but intuitive expressions of everyday life. They share a conviction that storytelling is essential to social science as a method to reexamine the key ideas—such as poverty and efficiency—used to justify policies that can have disastrous and far-reaching effects. They are working closely with the MIT community to bring together scholarship, theater, drawing, and sound to explore themes of water, greed, and economic growth in the form of a multi-character soap opera centered around addressing the various water-related intrigues of South Asia.

Rosa Colón Guerra and Mikael Jakobsson

Mikael Jakobsson, research coordinator in the MIT Game Lab and lecturer in comparative media studies, is collaborating with Rosa Colón Guerra to challenge colonialist ideologies through the development of counter-colonial board games. Building on work with Mary Flanagan (Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor in Digital Humanities at Dartmouth College), Aziria Rodríguez Arce SM'18, and members of the MIT Game Lab and MIT CoLab, they are planning a small print run of a new board game that challenges narratives of colonialism and foregrounds Puerto Rican voices and lived experiences.

Lochan Rijal and Jeffrey S. Ravel

Together, professor of history Jeffrey S. Ravel and Lochan Rijal, an ethnomusicologist at Kathmandu University and a multi-instrumental singer-songwriter, are launching an MIT–Kathmandu University collaborative project to create an online ethnographic atlas of Nepali music offering users access to recordings and documentation of the Himalayan country's rich musical heritage. Rijal's residency included collaborations with the MIT-Nepal Initiative and MITeri, MIT's Nepali student association, as well as visits to Professor Patty Tang's 21M.030 Introduction to World Music class and Professor Sana Aiyar's 21H.157 The Making of Modern South Asia history class. Rijal's residency activities on campus culminated in काँचो आवाज (*Raw Sounds*), an MIT Sounding public concert of Nepali music featuring original compositions played on traditional Nepali instruments.

Harry Allen, Rob Swift, and Eran Egozy

Eran Egozy, with collaboration from Philip Tan and Ian Condry, facilitated a pair of intensive two-week courses during the spring 2020 IAP centered on the performances and histories of hip-hop battle DJs. Harry Allen taught How DJs Invented Hip-Hop: The Rise and Rise of Turntables in Rap Music, focusing on the history of DJs who have advanced the scratch DJ art form since its inception. DJ Rob Swift taught How to Scratch: Six Techniques in Six Days, leading students and faculty members as they developed a solid technical foundation for using DJ technology. Beyond the tactility of manipulating music, students also learned about the history and cultural context of DJing techniques and presented a demo of their work at *the wave function collapses*, a capstone concert that was part of MIT Sounding.

Constanza Macras and Kurt Fendt

Award-winning dance theater choreographer Constanza Macras came to MIT to collaborate with Kurt Fendt, senior lecturer in Comparative Media Studies/Writing and director of the MIT HyperStudio, and other faculty members and students in Music and Theater Arts. During her visit from October 28 to November 1, 2019, Macras gave a public lecture as part of MIT Performing, instructed students in Fendt's digital humanities class, led a workshop focusing on movement improvisation with 20 students in Dan Safer's class, visited a rehearsal of the student dance group Fixation, and met with Junot Diaz, Tod Machover, Otto Cordero, and Jay Scheib to discuss future collaboration possibilities.

Exploratory Visits

Jill Magid

Artist Jill Magid SM '00 came to campus with Justine Ludwig, executive director of Creative Time, on October 30, 2019. At present, the details of their project work are confidential. Jill and Justine met with faculty in the Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences; staff in the Office of the Vice President for Research; and staff in MIT's Climate CoLab. They also participated in a brainstorming session with students in the MIT Media Lab.

John Heller

John Heller, CEO of Little Sun, visited MIT in November 2019 to discuss a biodegradable or recyclable version of the Little Sun solar lamp and explore the company's interest in developing inexpensive, small, portable horizontal axis wind turbines for rural African smallholdings. Heller met with faculty in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, the Department of Biology, and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.

Dan Tepfer

Jazz pianist Dan Tepfer came to MIT in December 2019 for an exploratory visit with Jesse Thaler, associate professor of physics, to discuss possibilities for a collaborative project that uses musical improvisation and computer-driven algorithms to illuminate core concepts in particle physics. Thaler and Tepfer met with faculty and students in the Department of Physics, Music and Theater Arts, and the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Thomas Heatherwick

In spring 2020, 4.022 Design Techniques and Technologies: Thinking through Making, a foundation course for the School of Architecture and Planning's design major and minor, included a design challenge with 2020 McDermott Award recipient Thomas Heatherwick. The interaction began with research around affect and emotional embodiment to expose students to Heatherwick Studio's creative approach. Engaging his focus on the hyper-physical as a means to resist the hyper-digital, Heatherwick invited students to facilitate an articulated form of human connection and interaction that transformed a public space, fostered reengagement, or changed human interactions within the space.

When confronted with the global pandemic that curtailed human physical interactions and activity, the design challenge was expanded to include a second definition of hyper-physicality, one that exists in a space of more than three dimensions or bridges points within an entity such as a network. Heatherwick and Stuart Wood, partner and group leader at Heatherwick Studio, conducted interim and final reviews via Zoom, with 4.022 students assembled into teams tasked with producing a form of hyper-physical connection.

Communications

The communications effort in the Office of the Arts is devoted to making the arts at MIT more widely known, regardless of discipline or department. Twenty-five blog posts were published in AY2020 highlighting visual and performing artworks made or produced by MIT visiting artists, faculty, students, and alumni as well as exhibitions and arts events on campus. The most popular blog posts, "Musician Lochan Rijal Brings the Music of Nepal to MIT," "Behind the Artwork: Ben Bloomberg," and "Biologic's Living Textile," each reached about 1,000 readers. New story compilations were added to the website, demonstrating projects at the intersection of arts and computing in response to COVID-19 and supporting antiracism efforts.

Media Coverage

The Redemption of Vanity project by Brian Wardle and Diemut Strebe that was on view at the New York Stock Exchange garnered an enormous amount of media attention, with coverage in the *New York Times*, *Artnet*, CNN, and dozens of other publications. Comusica and the concert by Johnny Gandelsman were featured in the *Boston Globe*. The Polaroid project at the MIT Museum was featured in several media outlets, including the *Boston Globe* and the *Wall Street Journal,* and a PBS television feature segment was broadcast nationwide. A *New York Times* feature about *Bat out of Hell* included quotes by and photos of director Jay Scheib.

Website and Electronic Communications

The Arts at MIT web portal provides a comprehensive view of arts news, resources, stories, and events from across the Institute. The site serves 132,000 visitors annually, and an email newsletter is distributed to 3,400 subscribers and 11,480 arts alumni. Arts at MIT social media accounts reach 35,000 combined followers via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Council for the Arts at MIT

Now in its 48th year, the Council for the Arts at MIT (CAMIT) welcomed six new volunteer leaders in July 2019, all of whom will serve three-year terms:

- Hyun-A C. Park, chair

- Nancy T. Lukitsh, treasurer

- Larisa Leventon and Robert Scalea, co-chairs, Membership Committee

- Carolyn Wang, chair, Arts Scholars Committee

- Tracy Taylor Wydra, chair, Student Art Awards Committee

The highlight of AY2020 was CAMIT's first Giving Day Microchallenge, aimed at encouraging broad alumni participation in giving to MIT's student arts programs as part of the Institute's 24-Hour Challenge. Four CAMIT members served as matching donors. The challenge, which represents a new collaboration with MIT's Alumni Association, raised $8,791 for the direct benefit of student art programs.

McDermott Award Selection Committee (Susan Poduska, Chair)

British designer Thomas Heatherwick is the 2020 recipient of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT, which was established in 1974 by Margaret McDermott (1912–2018) in honor of her husband, Eugene McDermott (1899–1973), cofounder of Texas Instruments and long-time friend of MIT. The council presents the biennial award at a gala celebration. The celebration, scheduled to be chaired by Brit d'Arbeloff and originally planned for April, was postponed due to COVID-19. The artist's residency, which has been a key component of the award since 2010, took place in spring 2020.

Student Art Awards Committee (Tracy Taylor Wydra, Chair)

The committee recognized 11 MIT students for outstanding accomplishments in the arts:

- Louis Sudler Prize in the Arts: Venkatesh Sivaraman '20 (computational biology)

- Laya and Jerome B. Wiesner Student Art Award: Allan Gelman '20 (computer science and comparative media studies), Danny Gelman '20 (computer science and comparative media studies), Talia Khan '20 (materials science and engineering and music), Margaret Kosten '20 (mechanical engineering and theater arts), and Olivia Yao '20 (mechanical engineering)

- Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts: Nicole L'Huillier G (media arts and sciences), first prize; Rae Yuping Hsu G (art, culture, and technology), second prize; Jonathan Zong G (computer science), third prize; Elaheh Ahmadi '20 (electrical engineering and computer science), honorable mention; and Siranush Babakhanova '20 (physics), honorable mention

Annual Meeting Committee (Margaret Dunn, Chair)

The council's 47th annual meeting, which took place October 25 and 26, 2019, drew 26 attendees. Highlights included a hard-hat tour of the new MIT Museum in Kendall Square, dinner with MIT Arts Scholars, a presentation by CAMIT grant recipient and alumna Devi Lockwood, a presentation by the chair of Music and Theater Arts on the proposed new music building, a presentation from the director of the Tangible Media Group, and a guided tour of the List Visual Arts Center exhibition *Alicja Kwade: In Between Glances*.

Grants Committee (Niels Cosman, Chair)

The CAMIT grants committee awarded more than $106,000 to support 30 projects by MIT students, faculty, and staff. Four undergraduate students and student groups, 13 graduate students and groups, nine faculty members and lecturers, and four staff members received funding this year. Outstanding projects included the following:

- Undergraduate student Elaheh Ahmadi created *Trapped*, a series of photographic portraits focused on gender and identity.

- The MIT Wuming Theater Club student group staged *Das Kapital*, an absurdist contemporary comedy written by Shanghai-based playwright Nick Rongjun Yu and performed in Chinese with English subtitles in Building W97's black box theater.

- Graduate students Alexandre Beaudoin-Mackay and Sarah Wagner engaged in a collaborative design process and produced play structures for elementary school students in the Margaret Fuller House after-school program.

- Lecturer Cristina Parreño Alonso exhibited *Tectonics of Wisdom*, an art installation inspired by the public spaces of libraries, at the Shchusev Museum of Architecture in Moscow. The work was part of an exhibition on the future of public architecture in Europe sponsored by the European Cultural Centre.

The council also continued the director's grants program, which awarded $2,747 to support eight projects by and for undergraduate students and student groups, and continued supporting a seed fund for projects by graduate students in the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT).

CAMIT grant recipient MIT Wuming Theater Club. (Photo by Professor Claire Conceison, Wuming Theater Club advisor)

Membership and Nominating Committee (Larisa Leventon and Robert Scalea, Co-Chairs)

At the end of FY2020, the council was made up of 76 full members, eight ex officio members, two honorary members, and eight associate members. This year, the council welcomed Fady Jameel as its newest member.

Annual Allocations and Ticket/Membership Programs

In 2020, the council continued to provide annual support to ACT, CAST, the List Visual Arts Center, the MIT Museum, Student Arts Programs, and other important arts organizations on campus.

The council also continued partnerships with Boston-area cultural organizations including the Boston Ballet, the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO), the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), offering free and discounted admission for MIT students. This year, through the closing of the campus in mid-March 2020, CAMIT supported more than 7,400 off-campus student arts experiences, providing 280 Boston Ballet tickets and 1,874 BSO tickets and supporting 907 visits to the Gardner Museum, 1,178 visits to the ICA, and 3,199 visits to the MFA.

CAMIT provided faculty support for teaching through two programs: Tickets for Classes, which enables access to arts events related to course content, and Artist Guest Speakers, which provides honoraria for artist guest speakers who visit classes. The latter program included virtual visits in spring 2020 after the campus closed in March. Several of these visits, including three virtual visits by musicians to the 21M.299 Music of Brazil class, were highlighted in the Clips from the Classroom video series.

Excursion

Twenty-five council members and guests, along with three MIT staff, participated in a weekend trip to Washington, DC, from January 30 to February 2, 2020. Highlights included a tour of the Phillips Collection, a guided tour of the National Museum of American Art and the Renwick Gallery with emerita director Elizabeth Broun, and a before-hours tour of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Members enjoyed visits to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Gallery and to Glenstone, a private museum of contemporary art in Potomac, MD. The itinerary also included visits to two private collections and a performance of the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Student Programs

MIT student arts programs include the Student Art Association, Arts Scholars (a program endowed by the Council for the Arts at MIT), the Graduate Arts Forum, the Wiesner Student Art Gallery, the First-Year Arts Seminar and Advising Program, and arts entrepreneurship programming, including the Creative Arts Competition and the START Studio.

Student Art Association

The Student Art Association, founded in 1969, is a suite of four studios that provides space for hands-on exploration of drawing, painting, printmaking, darkroom photography, and ceramics. This year SAA offered nearly 60 classes and workshops during the summer, fall, and IAP. A total of 643 individuals were enrolled during the year, 68% of whom were matriculated students. New classes this year included Drawing and the Visual Journal, Board Game Design, Ceramic Coffee Pour Overs, Drawing Pet Portraits, Block Printing, and Sewing.

Four weeks into the 12-week spring 2020 term, SAA canceled all classes due to COVID-19.

Arts on the Radar

Arts on the Radar, a joint event organized by the List Visual Arts Center, ACT, Music and Theater Arts, and the Arts Office, is an annual arts-focused kickoff event held at the beginning of September for MIT students. Activities at Arts on the Radar in 2019 included an interactive art installation, the List Visual Arts Center's Student Lending Art Program exhibition, demos of art projects funded by CAMIT, a sound art performance by Professor Condry, and open studios hosted by ACT graduate students. Approximately 350 MIT students, staff, and faculty attended the 2019 event.

Arts Scholars

The Arts Scholars calendar included excursions to on-campus and local arts events as well as the annual trip to New York City. An expert in the relevant discipline accompanied students on each excursion for dinner and conversation. After COVID-19 necessitated the students' departure from campus, the Arts Scholars convened virtually for a series of arts shares, livestream events, and panel discussions. Whether on campus or remote, these discussions facilitate learning from the expertise of the guest(s), and the arts experiences themselves positively affect students' lives and their studies at MIT. In AY2020, 60 students participated as Arts Scholars, including 40 undergraduates and 20 graduate students. Their courses of study ranged from engineering and the sciences to management and media.

Arts Scholars visit 2020 McDermott Award winner Thomas Heatherwick's Vessel during an excursion to New York City. (Photo by Shannon Rose McAuliffe).

Graduate Arts Forum

The MIT Graduate Arts Forum, now in its 17th year, is designed to build an interdisciplinary community of graduate students who admire or create art as part of their graduate studies or through independent practice. Our partnership with the Graduate Student Council (GSC) allows us to reach a broad range of graduate students and take advantage of cost sharing between departments. In fall 2019, GSC and the Grad Arts Forum co-hosted a gallery tour of Newbury Street followed by dinner and a lively conversation about the experience.

Wiesner Student Art Gallery

The Wiesner Student Art Gallery, located on the second floor of the Stratton Student Center (W20), presents the work of MIT student artists selected to represent the breadth of the Institute's academic and extra-academic programs. One of the highlights from the past year was the group exhibition of the Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts winners, which included undergraduates and graduate students from the Media Lab, ACT, Computer Science, Physics, and Neuroscience. The Wiesner Gallery has enhanced its online platform and will support a full roster of artists during the 2021 academic year even if the physical gallery is not accessible.

Creative Arts Competition

Since 2013, the MIT Creative Arts Competition has grown from a single $10,000 prize to a semester-long program offering mentorship, workshops, and entrepreneurial development. The 2020 competition drew 17 teams who submitted their proposals in February. Teams then worked with arts industry mentors to develop a business plan and hone pitches throughout the spring. In the first week of May, at a virtual event held via Zoom, the seven finalist teams pitched their proposals to a panel of judges before a live audience.

First prize was awarded to Elements, which produces individual art-making kits to promote creative thinking. Second prize went to Rarify, an online platform that uses big data to assess and market classic furniture pieces. Third prize was awarded to Material Futures Lab, which uses biology to produce environmentally friendly pigments.

START Programs

The START Studio is a makerspace for arts-focused student groups and arts entrepreneurship teams. Students from Student Art Association courses and art-focused Undergraduate Association clubs, Wiesner Gallery student artists, and arts entrepreneurship teams have 24-hour access to the studio. Available tools and storage areas reflect varied student needs, from digital art to sewing, design, printmaking, mural painting, and picture framing. A maker-in-residence oversees the studio and is available to students 16 hours a week.

First-Year Arts Seminar and Advising Program

The First-Year Arts Seminar and Advising Program introduces first-year students to the wealth and breadth of arts opportunities available at MIT. Over the past year, activities included a lecture and discussion with CAST visiting artist Sarnath Banerjee; a tour and overview of The Deep, a makerspace in the Project Manus network; a private tour of

the Polaroid exhibition at the MIT Museum; a List Visual Arts Center public art tour; a glass-blowing demonstration; a field trip to see Boston Ballet's *The Nutcracker*; a ceramics workshop; and a listening session in the Spatial Sound Lab with Professor Condry.

Personnel

Andrea Volpe was hired as director of the Council for the Arts at MIT in September 2019. Sam Magee, manager of Student Art Programs, left his position in August 2019, and Shannon Rose McAuliffe joined the team as Student Art Programs manager in October.

Leila Kinney served as co-chair of the executive committee of a2ru, the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities, through November 2019.

Leila W. Kinney
Executive Director of Arts Initiatives and of the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology