

Associate Provost

Associate Provost and Ford International Professor of History Philip S. Khoury oversees the Institute's extra-academic arts programs and institutions. The arts programs include the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST); the List Visual Arts Center; and the MIT Museum. Khoury is the principal investigator for CAST, a joint initiative with the dean of the School of Architecture and Planning and the dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. The associate provost chairs the Creative Arts Council and the advisory board of the Catalyst Collaborative at MIT (CC@MIT). He is an ex officio member of the executive committee of the Council for the Arts at MIT (CAMIT) and the advisory boards of the List Visual Arts Center and the MIT Museum. He is also a member of the International Advisory Committee and serves with the provost and dean of the School of Engineering on the Collaboration Governance Board of the MIT–Singapore University of Technology and Design Collaboration. He chairs the Compton Lectures Advisory Committee and the Emile Bustani Middle East Seminar at MIT, which will begin its 35th year in the fall of 2020.

The Arts

The 2021 academic year began with great momentum, marked by continued progress on the new MIT Museum in Kendall Square, additions to MIT's outstanding public art collection, and another four years of funding for CAST provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. A series of interviews with more than 40 stakeholders undertaken as an assessment of the state of the arts at MIT revealed major advances and widespread support for highlighting the importance of the arts to MIT's community and educational mission. The global pandemic that required the sudden evacuation of the campus in mid-March brought this momentum to a halt, however, as both the MIT Museum and the List Visual Arts Center closed their doors and all in-person arts public programming ceased.

Current Contributions and Goals

The most important contribution by the arts during the ongoing crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic has been to adjust programs to support faculty and students in the transition to remote learning, for example 2020 McDermott Award recipient Thomas Heatherwick's participation in a remote design studio, and CAST's Visiting Artists in the Virtual Classroom lightning round of grants during April and May. We have been able to conduct several major programs online, such as the \$15K Creative Arts Competition and the spring round of grants offered by CAMIT. CAST has revised its programming to allow for remote collaborations and student engagement with visiting artists, many of whom have lost opportunities to exhibit and perform in the constrained conditions required by the public health situation. We are inventing a new kind of virtual event for the McDermott Award public lecture, gala, and award ceremony. The arts communications program will continue to be vitally important to all of these efforts, as much of the MIT community remains dispersed. Reopening the List Visual Arts Center and the MIT Museum, even as it continues to prepare for the move to Kendall Square, are urgent priorities. Maintaining a sense of cultural life for both the smaller number of faculty, students, and researchers on campus and those distant from campus as well as facilitating the continued practice of art in remote settings are primary goals for the arts at MIT in the coming year.

Accomplishments

Prior to the COVID shutdown, the List Visual Arts Center entered a major phase of commissioning and placing new public artworks on campus, with installations planned for Kendall Square, the new dorm on Vassar Street, and the new Volpe Center in Kendall Square; selections for the new music building and the MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing are under way. The MIT Museum staged a major two-part exhibition, *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology*, that was well received by the public and the press before it had to close down prematurely in March.

Finances and Funding

Fundraising for the sector continued to focus on support for the MIT Museum at Kendall Square, with more than \$4.6 million in new gifts and pledges. The museum received dedicated gifts to name two capital spaces in the new museum: a gallery by Ron Kurtz and Ann Allen's Collections Workshop. Several other six- and seven-figure gifts were made to support exhibition development as the museum continued to expand its base of donors. The List Visual Arts Center raised almost \$850,000 before the campus closed in March and all public programming ceased. CAST received \$350,000 in endowments (including a \$250,000 payment on a previous pledge) and another \$131,045 in expendable funds.

Future Goals

The arts face particular challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, necessitating restricted access to the campus, including studios, rehearsal halls, and other spaces for making, as well as limitations on the size and types of interactions among people. Our immediate priorities are to sustain the cultural life of the MIT community in these altered circumstances and to reestablish MIT's public-facing exhibitions, performances, and other programs with safe social distancing and health protocols. We hope to do so in inventive ways that may actually increase our audiences nationally and internationally. In addition, the arts have an important role to play in MIT's renewed effort to become part of the solution to creating racial equity—both within and beyond MIT—in accord with the call of the provost's new ad hoc committee recommending artistic and cultural responses as part of the Institute's effort to address systemic racism and social justice.

Philip S. Khoury
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