

Center for Advanced Visual Studies

The Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS), an artist fellowship program founded in 1967, produces new artworks and artistic research within the context of MIT. A laboratory for interdisciplinary art practice, CAVS facilitates exchanges between artists and MIT's faculty, students, and staff through public programs, support for long-term projects, and residencies for MIT students.

In the past year, funds raised from internal and foundation sources effectively doubled the Center's base budget. Undergraduate involvement through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) effectively doubled as a result of new links to the Visual Arts Program. In addition, short- and long-term links to other MIT centers and departments increased. Audiences increased from an average of 60 to an average of 75–100. All affiliated artists exhibited internationally at group and solo exhibitions.

Center Fellowship

Artist fellows are the cornerstone of the Center's program. As emerging or established contemporary artists working for a period of a year or more at MIT, fellows are expected to use their stays to create significant new artistic work or research that provides opportunities for long-term graduate and undergraduate involvement.

Artist and architect Damon Rich, founder of the Center for Urban Pedagogy—a nonprofit organization that makes educational projects about places and how they change, conceived and is producing "Red Lines, Death Vows, Foreclosures and Risk Structures," an interactive exhibition that focuses on the history of home finance in the 20th century. Working with faculty from the Center for Real Estate, the MIT@Lawrence program, members of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, and many others outside MIT, Rich demystifies a complex, underresearched topic area in an idiosyncratic, accessible way while bringing together laypeople and experts from a wide range of disciplines to exchange their ideas. The exhibition will open at the MIT Museum's Compton Gallery in fall 2008 and travel for the ensuing year.

Graduate Affiliates

Any MIT graduate student who considers himself or herself an artist may apply for CAVS studio space, a small grant for materials, and studio visits from the Center's staff and senior fellow. In turn, the graduate affiliate helps link the Center, its fellows, and its visiting artists to his or her home department or laboratory.

Tad Hirsch (PhD candidate, MIT Media Lab, Smart Cities Group) conducted ongoing research into models of participation and civic engagement afforded by mobile communications technology, including dial-up radio, a communications system for activists in sub-Saharan Africa, and an interactive map of Chinatown's surveillance cameras and police incident data intended to provide residents with a tool to evaluate the Boston police department's program of deploying closed-circuit television technology in the neighborhood.

Azra Aksamija (PhD candidate, Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture) has been working on wearable mosques—clothing that can be transformed into prayer environments—to examine the notion of mosque space and its formal limits. She also coorganized “The Lost Highway Expedition” with pioneering artist-architects Marjetica Potrc and Kyong Park. The exhibition sprang partly out of Potrc’s workshop at CAVS in spring 2005. Aksamija, along with CAVS curatorial associate Meg Rotzel, joined a massive group of people moving through the Balkans in August 2006. The expedition was discussed in a short symposium held at CAVS in October 2006. Aksamija was featured in numerous group exhibitions internationally, and she presented a solo show at the Vienna Secession in summer 2007.

Public Programs

The Center’s public programs increase the visibility of the School of Architecture and Planning while providing informal opportunities for exchanges across disciplines and age groups. Programs also reach the cultural community outside MIT.

Visitors

Visitors included designers Dexter Sinister, geographer Trevor Paglen, lawyer Andrew Brooks (presenting on the topic of extraordinary rendition), Danish artist group N55, sculptor Rachel Harrison with critic Johanna Burton, artist and publisher Ulrike Mueller (with MIT Press editor Roger Conover), and dancer and choreographer Xavier Le Roy (presenting on biology and dance). Their three-day site visits to MIT included meetings with students and faculty along with public presentations that garnered expanded public and MIT attendance.

Symposia

In the fall, CAVS hosted travelers from “The Lost Highway Expedition,” an exploration of the cultural and urban landscape of nine cities in the western Balkans that took place in August 2006. MIT graduate students responded with their own work. In the spring, CAVS produced “Let’s Put on a (Puppet) Show!” a workshop and public program on contemporary puppetry. Participants included MIT undergraduates in Joe Zane’s Introduction to the Visual Arts class, who made puppets and heard lectures by artists, curators, and scholars in the field.

Fellows and Affiliates

Fellow Damon Rich presented work in progress. Fellow Michael Smith presented his newly completed “Portal Excursion,” which later premiered at the PS1 Contemporary Art Center; he is now touring with his major solo exhibition. Graduate affiliate Tad Hirsch presented his work; affiliates Judith Barry and Elizabeth Goldring led Independent Activities Period (IAP) classes. Affiliate Jason Schiedel led a SCREEN print-your-own-giant-T-shirt party.

Research Affiliates

The research affiliate program solidified this year, especially in the realm of UROP involvement. Through this program, an emerging or established greater Boston artist receives a studio and access to small materials grants. This year CAVS affiliates exhibited locally and nationally, generated popular formal and informal events, and worked closely with undergraduates from a range of disciplines who have made significant contributions to their artmaking.

Nell Breyer curated and participated as an artist in the Ideas in Motion Conference during Boston Cyberarts and worked closely with CAVS associate director Larissa Harris to bring dancer Xavier Le Roy to MIT. She was awarded grants from the Cambridge Arts Council, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the New England Foundation for the Arts, and MIT's Arts Council this year. She presented her work in New York, Washington, DC, and Italy, as well as other exhibitions.

Elizabeth Goldring continues to develop a portable nonlaser version of her "seeing machine" to present images to visually challenged people. She worked with three UROP students, led an IAP class on blindness, and continued working on *CenterBook*. Her writing was included in the poetry anthology *Chance of a Ghost*.

Jessica Rylan, a well-known sound artist, investigated and experimented with chaotic approaches to sound synthesis and constructed a prototype chaotic oscillating instrument in collaboration with UROP student Dugan Hayes. After a month-long European tour in fall 2006, she toured the West Coast in spring 2007. She is also working with UROP student Michael Anderson on theories of chaos and mathematics to develop a new synthesizer.

Jason Schiedel, a video artist, has been working on new projects that unite documentary practice with animation. *Fresh Music* incorporates interviews with a diverse array of local and national musicians into a multichannel video installation. Schiedel works closely with UROP students Amanda Mortiz and Brooke Jarrett. This year his videos were included in Observatori: 7th International Festival of Contemporary Art in Valencia, Spain. He coordinated the Center's giant T-shirt party, mentioned above.

Pam Larson makes short videos and installations around our complicated relationship with nature. While completing graduate work at Bard College, she has had exhibitions in galleries and schools including the Berwick Research Institute, where she was an artist-in-residence in 2005; Harvard University; the Longy School of Music; and Tanglewood, as part of a filmmaker-composer collaboration.

Director emeritus Otto Piene participated in a number of overseas exhibitions, including a retrospective in Karlsruhe, Germany. At CAVS, he continues to work on *CenterBook*. A catalog for the 2002 Sky Art Conference, coordinated by Piene, was published.

Fundraising

The Center more than doubled its base budget with grants from local funding bodies (\$10,000 from the LEF Foundation and \$4,000 from the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in Boston) and prestigious national funding bodies (\$40,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts and an amount to be determined from the Multi-Arts Production Fund [a Rockefeller/Creative Capital collaboration]). The MIT Council for the Arts awarded a total of \$32,000 for basic programming and individual artist projects, double the previous year's amount, and pledged \$10,000 more for summer 2007.

Staff

Krzysztof Wodiczko continued his directorship at CAVS, directorship of the Center's Interrogative Design Group, and professorship of architecture in the Visual Arts Program. He continues to work with students and International Development Group (IDG) affiliate Monica Haller on creating the "War Veteran Vehicle." Wodiczko is collaborating with Julian Bonder on a memorial to the abolition of slavery, commissioned by the city of Nantes, France, and scheduled to be completed in 2007–2008. In fall 2006, the PBS program *Art:21* devoted an episode to Wodiczko's work.

Associate director Larissa Harris, who spearheaded the redevelopment of the Center when she arrived in 2004, continued to design, implement, and oversee new programs; write grants; and select and host visiting artists and make new contacts for them inside and outside MIT. She also published regularly in *Artforum International* magazine, was named a contributing editor at *Modern Painters* magazine, and contributed essays on Stanislaw Lem and the Strugatsky brothers to *A Prior* magazine and *Interviu* magazine, which was included in documenta 12 in Kassel Germany. She was a visiting critic at the Massachusetts College of Art, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the International Artists Studio Program in Sweden.

Curatorial associate Meg Rotzel (part time) traveled on "The Lost Highway Expedition" and coordinated the expedition's subsequent symposium and exhibition. She is a program manager and contributing artist for the Center for Urban Pedagogy's "Red Lines, Death Vows, Foreclosures and Risk Structures" exhibition, and she coordinates affiliate programs. She is also working on public art projects with the Boston-based Berwick Research Institute as the co-curator of the program, and taught at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.

Production manager Joe Zane (part time) coproduced Michael Smith's "Portal Excursion" project, manages technical aspects of public programs, designs temporary exhibitions, and provides support for CAVS affiliates. This year Smith's "Portal Excursion" was screened at the PS1 Contemporary Art Center in New York and will tour to Houston, TX, Austin, TX, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. Zane taught a foundations class for the Visual Arts Program on the theme of puppetry, which culminated in a student-produced puppet show (hosted at the Center) that was open to the public. In conjunction with the class, he organized a daylong puppet-themed event at the Center that featured a puppet-making workshop, performance, and lectures. Zane received the International Art Critics and Curators Award for Best Show by an Emerging Artist for his 2006 solo show at the Allston Skirt Gallery. In addition, he curated an

exhibition at the gallery featuring the work of Center affiliates John Bell, Jason Schiedel, Michael Smith, and Joe Gibbons (Visual Arts Program) as well as other artists of national and international repute. Articles on Zane's contributions have appeared in *Tech Talk*, the *Boston Phoenix*, and the *Boston Globe* and on the MIT home page.

Krzysztof Wodiczko
Director
Professor of Architecture

More information on the Center for Advanced Visual Studies can be found at <http://caos.mit.edu/>