

Arts Communication

In the 18th year of the Office of the Arts, Arts Communication continued to maintain and increase awareness of the arts at MIT both within and outside the Institute by publishing and distributing up-to-date information on MIT arts events and exhibitions; actively promoting arts-related activities, programs, and people at MIT through publications, products, and media relations; and working with the Admissions Office to inform prospective students about the arts at MIT. Initiatives included the following:

- The arts@mit website
- Publication and distribution of print and electronic event calendars
- Assignment and writing of most arts stories for MIT's Tech Talk
- Applications of the arts@mit identity and development and distribution of arts@mit promotional materials
- Communications about the arts through MIT's Admissions Office and Alumni Association
- External media attention through press releases and personal contact with print and electronic media writers and editors

Also, director of arts communication Mary Haller represented the arts as a member of both MIT's Communications Operations Group and MIT's Information Group.

Information Gathering and Dissemination

Arts Communication continued to function as a central source of information on MIT arts events, collecting information from nearly 100 programs, departments, groups, and clubs across campus and disseminating it within and outside of MIT. Information was gathered primarily through members of ArtsNet, a communication network maintained by Arts Communication and made up of student, staff, and faculty representatives from arts-related areas across campus. Information was then published and distributed as detailed in the sections that follow.

arts@mit Website

Billed as a "gateway to the events, people, and programs in the arts community at MIT," the arts@mit website continued to be a primary vehicle for communicating to our many audiences, including prospective students, members of the MIT community, and those outside MIT. "Spotlight" sections featuring selected events, news, and announcements were updated every two to three days, and the site was continually improved and enhanced. The site continued to attract attention and email to the Office of the Arts from around the world. Senior editorial assistant Lynn Heinemann fielded numerous questions and comments posted to the site, ranging from inquiries from potential applicants about campus visits and MIT arts opportunities to questions from outside artists about the availability of exhibition spaces and music practice rooms.

A new element was added to the lower right-hand banner of the arts@mit home page this year. Rotating images and links promote the “Discover the Arts at MIT” DVD, arts grants, the Boston Symphony Orchestra College Card program, free admission to the Museum of Fine Arts, and the student excursion series.

MIT Website

Heinemann publicized arts events on MIT’s web-based events calendar and maintained the arts@mit website, updating calendar listings, linking to each week’s *Tech Talk* arts stories, creating hypertext mark-up language (HTML) documents for arts stories not published in *Tech Talk*, and creating new links.

Thanks in part to the close relationship developed with Susan Curran of the MIT Home Page Team, the main MIT home page (<http://web.mit.edu/>), which receives an average of 300,000 hits per day, featured approximately 90 arts-related spotlights, as well as numerous news headlines on the arts. In addition, the three daily spotlights on the community page (<http://web.mit.edu/life/>) usually included at least one item related to the arts.

Print Calendars

The “month-at-a-glance” calendar (monthly listings of MIT’s arts events and activities) was published eight times during the school year, distributed around campus, and mailed monthly to 616 people at their request and to area hotels. On campus, 3,800 copies were available for pickup at various news boxes, libraries, lobbies, and dormitories, as well as at Bates Linear Accelerator, Draper Laboratory, Haystack Observatory, Lincoln Laboratory, and Endicott House.

Arts Communication also continued to produce and mail the Media Arts Calendar, a monthly set of performance and exhibition listings, to Boston-area media for inclusion in their event listings.

Email Announcements

The Arts-Announce email listserv, which delivers announcements about MIT-related arts, free and discounted ticket offers, and information on special MIT arts events to interested recipients, remained another effective tool for communication.

Tech Talk

For the 18th year, Arts Communication provided the vast majority of arts-related articles, items, and images for *Tech Talk* (both the print and online versions), including three arts-related front-page stories and/or images. Haller served as *Tech Talk* arts assignment editor and Heinemann as primary arts writer. Other *Tech Talk* contributors included members of the News Office staff, members of the MIT arts community, and interns from Boston University’s School of Journalism and Emerson College (Amy Farnsworth, Joanna Michalowski). Many of these arts-related stories and items were spotlighted on the News Office website, the MIT home page, and on the websites of the Admissions Office and Alumni Association.

Internal Promotional Efforts

Work with MIT Admissions

For the sixth year, Haller organized an arts presence for prospective students and their families during Campus Preview Weekend in April. The Arts Fair, which featured representatives from and information on MIT's extracurricular and cocurricular arts programs and groups, gave accepted applicants for the Class of 2011 a chance to meet faculty and current students and obtain information on MIT arts programs and opportunities. This year the arts tables were combined with academic tables in the Johnson Athletic Center, while other arts activities took place in the adjacent Zesiger Center, including live music performed by members of MIT's Festival Jazz Ensemble, a T-shirt silk-screening activity run by Clay Ward and the Student Art Association, and a drawing for prospective students to win a copy of Junot Diaz's book of short stories, *Drown*. The visual appeal of the event space was enhanced through arts@mit signage and arts banners prominently displayed in the Zesiger Center.

Arts brochures (accompanied by an arts@mit postcard, flier, and letter from the Office of the Arts) were mailed to 49 of 64 individuals who used the online request form. Because of rising postage costs, Arts Communication continued to follow the Admissions Office's policy of mailing out brochures only to addresses in the United States and Canada. Requests from outside the United States could be answered with a personalized email, with an assurance that any questions that couldn't be answered on referenced websites would receive specific responses.

Work with MIT Alumni Association

Arts-related stories, including those from *Tech Talk*, continued to be featured on the Alumni Association's website. Haller worked to develop contacts in the Alumni Association and to pitch them more arts-related stories involving alumni for publication as *Tech Talk* rarely publishes alumni stories now. Heinemann forwarded news clips and emails from alumni to relevant personnel at *Technology Review* and the Alumni Office.

Other Internal Promotional Efforts

In November and February, Infinite Corridor slides were produced to advertise and promote regular programs sponsored by the Office of the Arts (such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra Student Card program and free admission to the Museum of Fine Arts) as well as to provide information on other events or deadlines (such as Council for the Arts grant deadlines). In addition to the regular notices, in November the slides advertised performances of assistant professor Thomas DeFrantz's *Queer Theory: A Musical Travesty*, the Catalyst Collaborative at MIT's staged readings of *On Ego*, Dramashop's production of *Imperceptible Mutabilities of the Third Kingdom* by Suzan-Lori Parks, the Student Art Association's holiday sale, and Independent Activities Period class registration. In April, the events that were advertised were Professor Marcus Thompson's concert with the Audubon Quartet, a concert by Mark Harvey and the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, the List Visual Arts Center's *Sensorium Part 2*, and the Abramowitz Program by Suzan-Lori Parks.

Fifteen individual banners, depicting a variety of arts activities at MIT and installed five at a time in the plaza between Buildings E15 and E23, were changed seasonally. Heinemann continued to write announcements of MIT arts events and activities for the electronic sign in the lobby of Building 16.

Magnetic arts@mit bulletin boards that echo the look and feel of the arts@mit website and other materials were installed outside the Office of the Arts (Room E15-205), in the lobby of Building 56, and outside the office of associate provost Philip Khoury (Room 10-280).



A new magnetic bulletin board was installed outside the Office of the Arts, Room E15-205.

External Media Relations

MIT arts events, programs, and people continued to receive attention in the local and national media, despite a general decline in serious coverage of arts news and events and the loss of some longtime local arts writers.

Heinemann continued to act as a “clipping service” for MIT arts-related stories and items that appear in the external media, finding and emailing these items on an almost daily basis to the associate provost, members of the Office of the Arts, and other members of the MIT community (including the News Office) as appropriate.



During the production of Einstein's Dreams, the sleeping Einstein (Robert Najarian) listens to the whispers of dream tellers (Debra Wise and Steven Barkhimer).

Photo by Arthur Ferguson.

Haller and Heinemann made special efforts to work with members of the Underground Railway Theater on publicity efforts for the Catalyst Collaborative at MIT (CC@MIT), a cooperative venture by MIT and the theater designed to introduce complex, thought-provoking scientific and technological subjects to a diverse nonspecialist audience. Arts Communication generated press for well-received staged readings and discussions of *On Ego* and a full production of *Einstein's Dreams*. The CC@MIT program and this year's events received numerous listings and were the focus of numerous Editor's Picks and stories in local and regional newspapers. *Einstein's Dreams* received splendid reviews, winning praise for director Wes Savicks's "inventive staging" and the "childlike delight [that] infuses this exploration of weighty ideas" (*Boston Globe*) and admiration for the show's ending as Einstein exits through a panel depicting the mountains he's ripped open. "It's an elegant exit and—dare I say it—better than the book's which was content to finish with the exhausted genius staring out the window," raved the *Boston Phoenix*.

Press Releases

In addition to monthly Media Arts Calendar mailings, Arts Communication wrote and distributed 19 press releases regarding selected arts announcements and events, as follows:

- New work by MIT's Thomas DeFrantz chosen for the New York Musical Theatre Festival
- MIT's public art collection named one of the top 10 best campus collections in the country
- Nigerian writer/musician/activist Chris Abani visits MIT
- MIT presents the seventh "Great Glass Pumpkin Patch," a sale of hand-blown glass pumpkins
- Violist Marcus Thompson joins top string quartets in MIT's celebration of Mozart's 250th birthday
- Works by MIT professor Evan Ziporyn and alumnus Christopher Adler premiere at Carnegie Hall
- Suzan-Lori Parks selected by MIT to receive \$70,000 McDermott Award for innovation in the arts
- Japanese artist Noboru Tsubaki named 2006 Ida Ely Rubin artist-in-residence at MIT
- Evan Ziporyn awarded MIT's Kepes Prize
- MIT and Underground Railway Theater (CC@MIT) present *On Ego*
- MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies receives \$40,000 National Endowment for the Arts grant
- Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks returns to MIT; Dramashop stages her *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*
- MIT announces visiting musicians for spring 2007
- Interdisciplinary artist/writer Coco Fusco visits MIT

- Adam Boyles appointed director of MIT Symphony Orchestra
- Jazz artist Magali Souriau appears at MIT in rare Boston-area performance
- Empire Brass tuba player Kenneth Amis appears with MIT Wind Ensemble
- MIT and Underground Railway Theater presents *Einstein's Dreams* in association with the Cambridge Science Festival
- MIT presents jazz artists Kenny Werner, Joe Lovano, and Judi Silvano in world premiere of major wind ensemble composition

Also, individual press releases were emailed to 65 hometown newspapers for nearly 40 MIT students who received arts awards at end-of-the-term ceremonies. In addition, Arts Communication provided free, customized press labels to numerous MIT art makers and presenters, allowing them to mail their own press releases for specific events.

Other Media Attention

Other arts-related people, programs, and projects that received media attention this year include:

- “Lost Highway Expedition,” a symposium and exhibition at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, featured in the *Boston Phoenix*.
- Alumnus Christopher Janney, who was featured in an National Public Radio “Weekend Edition Saturday” story about his sound sculptures. The tagline for the feature was “MIT-trained artist blurs technology and art.” Janney was also featured in articles in the *Boston Globe* and *Metro Boston*.
- The MIT Guild of Bell Ringers, featured in a *Boston Globe* article headlined “Think all church bellringers are created equal? To join this crew, it helps to be a rocket scientist.”
- The Logarithms, who emerged as champions in Emerson College’s a capella competition concert, *All a Cappella LIVE at the Majestic*.
- The Musical Theatre Guild’s production of *Reefer Madness*, which garnered attention and an extensive feature article in the *Cambridge Chronicle*.
- The Cool Japan Symposium, “Love and War in Japanese Popular Culture,” organized by Ian Condry, which received front-page coverage in *Metro Boston* and was the focus of a major article in the *Boston Phoenix*.
- MIT alumnus and benefactor Cherry Emerson, whose death was reported in a lengthy *Boston Globe* obituary featuring quotes from Professor Ellen Harris and lecturer David Deveau.
- The groundbreaking for the Central Square Theater, a permanent home for the Underground Railway Theater and the Nora Theatre Company in a facility owned by MIT.
- New media artist Jonathan Bachrach’s collaboration with Boston Symphony Orchestra first violinist Lucia Lin and Berlin-based composer Michael Rodach for Snappy Dance Company’s *String Beings*, which received major local

coverage. Bachrach's video manipulations allowed the dancers and their virtual counterparts to interact on stage.

Arts Faculty Off Campus

MIT arts faculty members who received media attention for their work off campus include:

- Joan Jonas, whose New York City exhibition *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things* was included in a top 10 list compiled by *ArtForum Magazine*.
- Assistant professor Jay Scheib, whose *This Place Is a Desert*, the inaugural theatrical production at Boston's new Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), received attention in Boston's major publications as well as in such media outlets as the *Jewish Advocate*, *mass-media.com*, and the *Weekly Dig*. *Boston Globe* columnist Geoff Edgers featured video clips on his Exhibitionist blog at *boston.com*.
- Professor of media arts and sciences Tod Machover, who received major coverage for his *but not simpler . . .*, which was performed by the Ying Quartet at the ICA.
- Professor Evan Ziporyn, who was lauded in the *New York Times* in a concert review of the Bang on a Can All-Stars; he played "multiphonics-laden clarinet lines" as well as a birthday tribute to Martin Bresnick, with whom Ziporyn studied while a Yale undergraduate.

In addition, off-campus installations by MIT artists Andrea Frank (lecturer, Visual Arts Program) and Pia Lindman (research affiliate, Center for Advanced Visual Studies) were reviewed in such publications as the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*. Local press also gave extensive coverage to the Boston Jazz Festival, which was cochaired by lecturer Mark Harvey.

Personnel

After 16 years at MIT as director of Arts Communication, Mary Haller left the Institute in May 2007 to pursue creative interests and spend more time with her daughter.

Lynn Heinemann was awarded a 2007 Infinite Mile Award for Outstanding Achievement.

Lynn Heinemann
Senior Editorial Assistant

More information about Arts Communication can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/arts/about/office/artscomm/>.