

## Center for Advanced Visual Studies

The Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS), an artist's 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, the commissioning of major new collaborative artworks, and residencies for MIT students.

### Public Programs

The Center's public programs increase the visibility of CAVS and the School of Architecture and Planning while providing informal opportunities for exchanges across disciplines and age groups.

Visitors included artists Mel Chin, Ann Craven, David Robbins, Fritz Haeg, and Jenny Romaine. Visitors meet with undergraduates, graduate students, and professors in the Department of Architecture; the Media Lab; the Sloan School of Management; the Department of Linguistics; the Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, Science, Technology, and Society and more.

Along with the visiting artists, new CAVS fellow John Bell presented a short history of toy theater, and affiliate Jessica Rylan gave a talk and presented an Independent Activities Period (IAP) session on chaos circuits and building analog synthesizers. CAVS hosted the fall 2007 *ASPECT Magazine* launch that included artwork by affiliate Pam Larson and commentary by CAVS staffer Meg Rotzel. Affiliate David Reinfurt gave a lecture on Muriel Cooper that was published in cutting-edge design magazine *Dot Dot Dot*, and our undergraduate student art group Cracked produced the annual Giant Art Party.

CAVS will show a sampling of the Center's work from the last four years at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis during August 2008. On view will be finished artworks, material representing projects currently in production, and sketches for, parts of, and products of performances or workshops that have already taken place. Affiliate Pam Larson showed three works at the Centerfront gallery that reflected the relationship of humans to nature through the lens of technology.

CAVS hosted artist Fritz Haeg and his internationally touring project *Animal Estates* in April. While at MIT, Haeg gave a talk on his work and, with the help of MIT students and artists, built an installment of a new series of dwellings designed to welcome animals back into the city. CAVS is currently keeping tabs on 16 birdhouses made for tree sparrows and an American kestrel falcon that have been installed on the roof of N52 and on the grounds of the Stata Center.

### Center Fellowships

Artist fellows are the cornerstone of the Center's program. As emerging or established contemporary artists working for a period of up to two years at MIT, fellows conduct significant new artistic research that provides opportunities for long-term graduate and undergraduate involvement.

Artist and architect Damon Rich is one of the founders of the Center for Urban Pedagogy, a New York City–based nonprofit organization that makes educational projects about places and how they change. While at CAVS, Rich has been working on an exhibition titled “Red Lines, Death Vows, Foreclosures and Risk Structures” that focuses on the history of home finance in the 20th century. The exhibition, which opens at the MIT Museum’s Compton Gallery in fall 2008, will include five curricular and public programs. A tour and publication are under development.

John Bell, theater historian, puppeteer, and cofounder of Brooklyn-based avant-garde theater group Great Small Works, arrived at the Center in fall 2007. He is the author of *Strings, Hands, Shadows: A Modern Puppet History* (Detroit Institute of Art) and editor of *Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects* (MIT Press); also, he finished a new book, *American Puppet Modernism*, during the first months of his fellowship and organized the annual Honk Festival in Cambridge.

During his fellowship, Bell taught 21M.714 Performance, Art, Technology, a class cosponsored by Music and Theater Arts, and collaborated with CAVS artists and MIT graduates and undergraduates to produce *Definitely Maybe*, a toy theater play performed at the Great Small Works 8th Annual Toy Theater Festival at the prestigious St. Ann’s Warehouse, Brooklyn, NY. *Definitely Maybe*, adapted by Bell and Center staff member Larissa Harris from a novel by Boris and Arkady Strugatsky, poses questions about the limits of modern knowledge and the ecological effects of modern society through a series of fantastic, comic, and spectacular tableaux set on a miniature toy theater stage representing a Soviet-era apartment building. Bell and Jenny Romaine of Great Small Works, MIT undergraduate Shaunalynn Duffy, and Larissa Harris performed the show with a synthesizer designed and built by Jessica Rylan and puppets and sets designed and constructed by Bell, MIT undergraduate Sam Kronick, and others. Slava Gerovitch, a lecturer in MIT’s Program in Science, Technology, and Society, also consulted on the project.

### **Graduate Affiliates**

Any MIT graduate student who considers himself or herself an artist may apply for studio space at the Center, a small grant for materials, and studio visits from the Center’s staff. In turn, he or she helps link the Center and 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 dialup radio, a communications system for activists in sub-Saharan Africa.

Laurel Braitman (PhD candidate, Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society) will be a new addition to CAVS in the fall of 2008. Most recently, Laurel has been working on a project titled “Human/Nature: Artists Respond to a Changing Planet,” for which she organized artist visits to UN-designated World Heritage sites to create work that addresses shifting conceptions of the human place in nature.

## Research Affiliates

The research affiliate program solidified this year and has become a successful initiative. Through this program, an artist, often but not exclusively a long-time CAVS affiliate, receives access to the Center's resources, including a studio; access to small grants for materials; and access to Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) students. This year CAVS affiliates produced works that have been exhibited both locally and nationally, and they have been working very closely with undergraduate students.

Nell Breyer participated in performances of her new work, "Insula," at the Arts & Ideas Festival, part of the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) Exchange for Dance in New Haven, CT; at NEFA's Exchange for Dance at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art; at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (ICA Boston), CrashArts Ten's the Limit performance series; and at the Dance New Amsterdam Theater in New York. She installed permanent public commissions for RMS Meridional Flow in New Jersey and at the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Cardiovascular Center of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. She showed in group exhibitions at the NurtureArt Gallery in Brooklyn, NY, and the National Academy of Sciences Speculative Data and the Creative Imaginary exhibit in Washington, DC. Nell also received the LEF New England General Fund Award and was selected for participation in the Regional Dance Development Initiative/New England Dance Lab for NEFA's National Dance Project.

Elizabeth Goldring continues to work with UROP students to develop a portable nonlaser version of her "seeing machine" to present images to visually challenged people.

Jessica Rylan, a well-known sound artist, investigated and experimented with chaotic approaches to sound synthesis and constructed a prototype chaotic oscillating instrument in ongoing collaboration with MIT undergraduate Dugan Hayes. She gave a lecture at CAVS about her work, led an IAP class on chaotic circuits, performed with the Kinodance Company at the ICA Boston, and installed Elevator Music 12 at the Tang Museum.

Jason Schiedel, a video artist, has been working on new projects and drawings and is continuing with *Fresh Music*, which incorporates interviews with a diverse array of local and national musicians on their need for music into a multichannel video installation.

Pam Larson makes short videos and installations that deal with our complicated relationship with nature. She installed three new works in the Center Gallery in spring 2008. Currently Pam is working with Dale Joachim from the Media Lab, adapting his project of broadcasting and recording bird calls through cellular phone networks.

Director emeritus Otto Piene celebrated his 80th birthday at the MIT Museum, an event attended by many current and former CAVS fellows and artists. He continues to participate in overseas exhibitions and is working in ceramics in the US and abroad. At CAVS, he continues to work on *CenterBook*.

## Publicity

The Center's work was covered in the preeminent contemporary art journal *Artforum International*. Performances and projects were covered by the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Phoenix*, and the *Boston Globe*.

## Fundraising

The Center received external funding from the LEF Foundation (\$10,000), the Multi-Arts Production Fund (\$25,000), French Cultural Services (\$5,000), and the Massachusetts Cultural Council (\$5,000). Internal funding was provided through the MIT Council for the Arts (\$15,000), CAVS artist projects (\$1,000), and gifts from David Robbins (\$500) and Fritz Haeg.

## Personnel

Director Krzysztof Wodiczko was on sabbatical from CAVS and the Visual Arts Program. Wodiczko worked on a major public project in Warsaw for the official celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Polish student uprising of 1968; the project was commissioned by the Polish National Theater and the city of Warsaw. He also completed the design of the War Veteran Vehicle with the Interrogative Design Group at CAVS. In addition, he was awarded the 2007 Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture; won the competition for the Memorial to the Victims of World Terrorism, organized by Masel Museum at Babi Yar Park in Denver (with architect Julian Bonder); received the 2007 Faculty Design Award from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (along with Bonder); was selected as one of eight artists to develop a public art project for the 2008 Democratic Convention in Denver; received an honorary degree from the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznan, Poland; and won a public art commission from the Cambridge Arts Council for a permanent architectural art installation at the Robert Healy Public Safety Facility in Cambridge. His major art installation "If You See Something . . ." has been purchased by the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art and the Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto.

Director of programs Larissa Harris, who spearheaded the redevelopment of the Center when she arrived in 2004, continued to design, implement, and oversee new programs and write grants; also, she was responsible for generating publicity for the Center in addition to selecting and hosting visiting artists and making new contacts for them inside and outside MIT. She published regularly in *Artforum International* magazine as well as several artists' publications, was an adjunct professor in the Graduate Studies Program at the Rhode Island School of Design, and lectured on CAVS at the International Studio Program in Stockholm, Sweden; the Palais de Tokyo in Paris; the Rhode Island School of Design; and Virginia Commonwealth University. She was a juror for ICA Boston's James and Audrey Foster Prize.

Curatorial associate Meg Rotzel (part time) coordinated Fritz Haeg's public project "Animal Estates" and its workshop. 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, serving as cocurator of the program that will release a publication on her project "Meet Me at the

Table” in July 2008. Rotzel is a candidate for a master’s degree in public humanities in the Department of American Civilization at Brown University.

Artistic production coordinator Joe Zane (part time) manages technical aspects of public programs, designs exhibitions, and provides support for CAVS affiliates. This year he curated a show at the Allston Skirt Gallery in Boston that included Michael Smith, Jason Schiedel, and John Bell of CAVS and visitor David Robbins. He also presented an exhibition of his own work in collaboration with VAP faculty member Joe Gibbons. Zane is a finalist for the ICA Boston Foster Prize, with an exhibition at the institute during fall 2008. His work was recently added to the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Fogg Museum at Harvard, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

**Krzysztof Wodiczko**  
**Director**  
**Professor of Visual Arts**

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