

## Council for the Arts

Fiscal year 2008 was the second most successful fundraising year on record for the Council for the Arts at MIT (CAMIT)—a marvelous feat! The extra funds have made it possible for the Council to grant a special allocation to the List Visual Arts Center to help preserve the permanent collection of sculpture. In addition, the Council welcomed several younger members, signaling a trend that needs to be aggressively pursued, as we find our core membership “graying.” The Council also looks forward to the upcoming trip to Prague, its first arts excursion since January of 2005.

### Council Standing and Prize Committees

**Annual Meeting Committee** (Ann Allen, chair). The 35th annual meeting was held on October 25 and 26, 2007, and was unusual in that Council director Susan Cohen was hospitalized with pneumonia and unable to attend. Fortunately Lori Gross, director of arts initiatives, and Magda Fernandez, administrative assistant, gamely took on the responsibility of running the event, with help from Office of the Arts staff members Lynn Heinemann, Carla Sehbani, and Madeleine Sheldon-Dante. Gross was also instrumental in the innovation of break-out sessions for the annual meeting; these working groups involved various factions of the arts at MIT: the List Visual Arts Center, MIT Museum, Visual Arts Program, and Music and Theater Arts. Each group was led by members of the group’s faculty, and by all accounts the sessions were a great success. Followed by a plenary session at which CAMIT members reported on their individual sessions, this marked a change in annual meeting programming—for the better (in the author’s opinion). Later that day CAMIT members were treated to various tours and presentations, including a visit to the MIT Libraries archives and conservation lab.

That evening a spectacular gala dinner was held at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston with guest speaker Elizabeth Diller, one of ICA’s architects (Diller, along with her partner Ricardo Scofidio, received the Eugene McDermott Award in 1999). ICA director Jill Medvedow addressed the dinner guests, and CAMIT chair Brit d’Arbeloff presented the first Catherine N. Stratton Medal in the Arts to Leo Beranek. This etched glass medal, designed and realized by Suzana Lisanti and Peter Houk, will be presented from time to time to CAMIT members and friends who have played a significant role in the Council’s history or who have made great contributions to the arts at MIT. Beranek was the first official recipient, with Kay Stratton receiving an honorary medal at the annual meeting dinner.



*Brit d'Arbeloff and Catherine Stratton introducing the Catherine N. Stratton Award.*

The second day of the annual meeting followed its usual agenda. The business meeting was held in the morning, chaired by Brit d'Arbeloff, with remarks from Provost Rafael Reif; Deborah Fitzgerald, dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; and associate provost Philip Khoury. Students from the Arts Scholars Program screened their film *No Screaming*, followed by Henry Jenkins' presentation on the Comparative Media Studies program; Adèle Santos offered insights into the new Media Lab building. Next was the traditional annual meeting luncheon at the MIT Museum. Debra Wise of the Underground Railway Theater and the Catalyst Collaborative at MIT gave a spirited talk during the lunch.

**Communications Committee** (Pepi Weis, chair). The newsletter *Council Currents* was not published in fiscal year 2008, but a decision has been made to create an e-newsletter that will be distributed through the Constant Contact service.

**Development Committee** (Anne Street, chair). A total of \$416,327 was raised from 70 Council members (an average gift of \$5,947); \$29,196 came from nonmember donors. The grand total raised for FY2008 was \$442,523.

**Grants Program Committee** (Martin N. Rosen '62, chair). A total of \$105,131 in the form of 31 grants and 43 Director's grants was awarded to students, staff, and faculty. Highlights included support for a traditional Indian dance performance based on the discovery of DNA, the creation of sculptural benches for temporary installations in MIT's public spaces, a jazz concert celebrating the late Herb Pomeroy, and the end of semester exhibition of the work by the graduate students in the Visual Arts Program.

**Membership Committee** (Bernard G. Palitz '47, chair). Council membership currently stands at 92, with six ex officio members. The following individuals have joined the Council since our last Report to the President: Colleen Messing, Sherwin Greenblatt '62, Rosanne Goldstein, Eran Egozy '95, Damon Suden '99, and Mary Tolikas '92.



*Brit d'Arbeloff presents long-time Council for the Arts member Leo Beranek with the first Catherine N. Stratton Award.*



*Detail of Catherine N. Stratton medal.*

Edwin Roos '44, Roger Blum '41 and Priscilla Blum, and Paul Fricke '61 have resigned, and John Proctor '73 and Alan Fetzer were rotated off the membership list at the end of their terms.

With much sadness, I report that founding member Ida Ely Rubin passed away on January 1, 2008, and Jim Goldstein '46 passed away on February 12, 2008. Susan Cohen attended memorial services for both, in New York and New Jersey, respectively.

**Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts Committee** (Peter Wender '71, chair).

The Eugene McDermott Award is an international award given by MIT to recognize innovation in the arts. One of the country's most esteemed and unique arts awards, the McDermott reflects MIT's commitment to risk taking, problem solving, and connecting creativity across boundaries. Since its inception, the Council for the Arts at MIT has bestowed the award upon individuals producing creative work in the performing, literary, visual and media arts. Recent awardees include playwright Suzan-Lori Parks, architect Santiago Calatrava, filmmaker Isaac Julian, and author Junot Díaz. Video artist Bill Viola will receive his McDermott Award in March 2009, when he comes to the MIT campus for his residency.

**Student Art Awards Committee** (Claude Brenner '47, chair). At the Institute Awards Convocation on May 6 at the Stata Center's Kirsch Auditorium, Provost Rafael Reif presented the Laya and Jerome B. Wiesner Student Art Awards to Payal Agrawal '08 for her work in classical Indian dance and community organization, Sarah Dunbar (graduate student) for her work in architecture and design, and Suelin Chen (graduate student) for her achievement in the visual arts, music, writing, and dance. The Louis Sudler Prize was presented by Reif to YeeKwan Lo '08 for excellence in music. Each award winner receives \$1,250. The Student Art Awards Committee is made up of Boston-area Council members.



*Intellectual Circle, sculptural benches designed for temporary installations, created by Hayami Arakawi from the MIT Hobby Shop.*



*Susan Cohen (center) with Schnitzer Prize winners (left to right) Talieh Rohani, Caitlin Berrigan, Sabrina Kleinenhammans, and Mary Hale.*



**Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts Committee** (Peter Athens '52, chair). The first-prize winner of the Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize was Visual Arts Program graduate student Caitlin Berrigan. Mary Hale (graduate student, architecture) won second prize, and Sabrina Kleinenhammans (graduate student, architecture) and Talieh Rohani (graduate student, Comparative Media Studies) tied for third place. The exhibition, which opened on May 27 in the Wiesner Student Art Gallery in the Stratton Student Center, featured a performance of sorts when Hale inflated a floatable dress she designed and built (see photo below). The prizes were larger this year: first prize was \$5,000, second prize was \$3,500, and honorable mention was \$3,000. Schnitzer Prize winners are chosen by a committee made up of Council members, former Schnitzer winners, faculty, and staff, led by Council member Peter Athens '52. The Schnitzers, philanthropists from Portland, Oregon, founded the prize in 1996.



*Mary Hale models her inflatable dress at the opening reception for the 2008 Schnitzer Prize winners exhibition. Watching is Caitlin Berrigan, first-prize winner of the Schnitzer competition, with Noah Vawter in the background.*

### **Affiliated Committees**

**List Visual Arts Center Advisory Board** (Jennifer Frutchy, chair). The List Visual Arts Center (LVAC) continues to provide the MIT community and the world with the highest caliber contemporary art exhibitions. The LVAC staff also oversees the Percent-for-Art Program, in which a percentage of the budget for any new building or renovation on campus is put toward the purchase or commission of a work of art. The Council allocates \$30,000 annually to LVAC, to be expended at the discretion of the center's director, and this year pledged \$30,000 per year for five years (starting in FY2009) for a conservation program for the MIT permanent collection of art. Members of the Council will participate in a campaign to raise a \$1 million endowment for the program, and consider this pledge to be a stopgap measure to provide funding until that endowment is secured.

**MIT Museum Advisory Board** (David Ellis '63, chair). In April 2008, the MIT Museum programmed its second Cambridge Arts Festival, this time under the guidance of newly hired festival director P.A. d'Arbeloff. The Council allocates \$30,000 annually to the MIT Museum, to be used (if possible) to support the operation of the Compton Gallery and the Friday After Thanksgiving Chain Reaction event.

### **Special Programs**

The Council pledged \$30,000 per year for FY2008 and FY2009 to the Catalyst Collaborative at MIT (CC@MIT), a program designed to bring knowledge of science into the community through drama. CC@MIT was founded by professors Alan Brody and Alan Lightman and works with the Underground Railway Theater.

This was the second year in which the Council for the Arts received a grant from the Graduate Student Life Grants program for a special Boston Modern Orchestra Project concert for MIT graduate students, held at the Club Café in Boston. The event took place on March 13 and was a great success, with approximately 30 people in attendance.

The Council continues to provide an annual allocation of \$7,500 to the Artists Beyond (née Behind) the Desk Program, which organizes concerts, readings, performances, and a visual arts exhibition by staff members.

The Council allocates \$20,000 to Student and Artist-in-Residence Programs, \$12,500 to Arts Communication, and \$20,000 to the Student Art Association. In FY2008, CAMIT allocated \$10,000 to the Center for Advanced Visual Studies for general operating support.

Since 1980, the Council has underwritten MIT's enrollment in the University Membership Program offered by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. This program provides free admission and discount benefits to all MIT undergraduate and graduate students, as well as 10 day passes for use by MIT faculty and staff.

The Council for the Arts also sponsors a student membership program with the Photographic Resource Center (PRC) at Boston University. PRC provides a range of programs, including exhibitions by national and international photographers and educational programs. MIT undergraduates and graduate students have free unlimited access to the PRC galleries and library and receive member discounts on admission to lectures, workshops, and other special events. They can also enter their work into the juried members' exhibition.

The Council underwrites MIT's institutional membership at the Harvard Art Museums, allowing all MIT graduate and undergraduate students free admission to the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Sackler museums as well as to the Agnes Mongan Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs.

The free-ticket program with the Boston Symphony Orchestra continued this year. MIT students can obtain, with their student ID, free admittance to an average of 24 concerts per year. The Council also provided 50 free tickets for MIT students to three of the four concerts of the Boston Chamber Music Society's season. Similar arrangements provide tickets to the Boston Modern Orchestra Project's season and to the concerts presented by the vocal ensemble Boston Secession.

The successful Student Performing Arts Excursions Series continued, with \$16,524 expended on free tickets for MIT students for such performing arts events as the premiere of John Harbison's *Symphony No. 5* by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, a performance by Bunraku: The National Puppet Theater of Japan, and Boston Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Susan Cohen, director of the Council, attended the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Summer Institute at Vanderbilt in July 2007, the CASE District 1 conference in Boston in February, and the annual convention of Americans for the Arts in Philadelphia from June 20 through June 23.

**Susan Cohen**  
**Director**

*More information about the Council for the Arts can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/arts/about/office/council/>.*