

## **MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology**

The [MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology](#) (ACT) is an academic department and research center that facilitates artist-thinkers' exploration of art's broad, complex, global history and conjunction with culture, science, technology, and design via rigorous critical artistic practice and practice-driven theory.

### **Academic Program**

ACT is one of the five discipline groups in the Department of Architecture; the department oversees the graduate program and faculty appointments and promotions.

### **Master of Science in Art, Culture, and Technology**

The Program in Art, Culture and Technology offers a highly selective two-year master of science in art, culture, and technology (SMACT) degree. There were seven students enrolled in the graduate program at the beginning of the academic year, four of whom graduated in June. Three students will enter their second year of study in the fall of 2014. Six of the 64 applicants to the graduate program in AY2015 were accepted, and five were waitlisted. ACT ultimately offered admission to four of the candidates on the waitlist, and four of the 10 individuals offered admission accepted the offer.

ACT hosted its third open house for prospective applicants in November. More than 100 people registered for the event and 43 attended, an increase of 43% over the prior year. The open house included faculty research presentations, an overview of the application process, a presentation on financial aid by Student Financial Services, a tour of the ACT facilities, a presentation by the List Visual Arts Center, a reception, and an invitation to attend a lecture featuring visiting artists John Akomfrah, OBE, and Lina Gopaul.

### **Undergraduate and Graduate Enrollment**

In addition to its core graduate program, ACT offers electives for master of architecture (MArch) students and graduate students from other disciplines.

At the undergraduate level, ACT offers a Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) concentration and minor. In AY2014, 24 students were ACT HASS concentrators and three were ACT HASS minors. Among senior concentrators, the major most represented was electrical engineering and computer science (Course 6), and among junior concentrators it was mechanical engineering (Course 2).

Of the 186 students enrolled in ACT subjects in AY2014, 74 (40%) were graduate students and 112 (60%) were undergraduates; 46% of students taking ACT subjects were majors within the School of Architecture and Planning (SAP). Outside of SAP, the major most represented in ACT classes was mechanical engineering (Course 2), at 17%.

International travel was an integral component of 4.368/4.369 Seminar in Public Art. The class traveled to Doha, Qatar, and Kuwait City, Kuwait. The SAP dean's office provided support for the trip. The introductory and advanced photography classes also took field trips to New York City, funded by ACT.

ACT offered a special one-time course for graduates and undergraduates: 4.373/4.374 Sound Installations and Sonic Interventions. Students enrolled in the course worked with visiting sound artists Stephen Vitiello and Robin Rimbaud and with professor Keeril Makan's 21M.351 Music Composition Seminar class.

As part of the two-year Visiting Artists Program residency of John Akomfrah and Lina Gopaul, ACT offered 4.356/4.357 Cinematic Migrations.

## Research

The final residencies of international filmmaker John Akomfrah and producer Lina Gopaul (Smoking Dogs Films) took place during the second year of Renée Green's Cinematic Migrations research project. Migration and shifting notions of the cinematic in spatial forms, performance, dance, theater, essay films, and emerging technologies were the means for exploring a broad range of themes including time, movement, attention, memory, diaspora, history, and forms of knowledge.

Azra Akšamija continued her research investigating the "cultural aspects of genocide in Bosnia" over the last decade. She is also working to document her work launching CULTURESHUTDOWN, an international initiative protesting the financial and political crisis affecting the National Museum and six other Bosnian cultural institutions. In addition, she has completed three new art projects: *Mashrabiya*, a calligraphic installation made of textile; *The Museum Solidarity Lobby*, a sound sculpture exhibit; and *The Future Heritage Collection*, a video installation with a collection of stories that explore heritage.

## Fellows, Affiliates, and Visiting Students

During AY2014 research affiliate Javier Anguera continued the development of the Contemporary Culture Index ([ccindex.info](http://ccindex.info)), an online, open-access bibliographical database that indexes international journals and periodicals. With a database of more than 16,000 records, the index's focus includes art, architecture, literature, philosophy, and social science. The index has been featured in library guides at the Art Institute of Chicago, Cornell University, and Zentalinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, among others. Also, it was featured preeminently in Amy Ballmer and Siân Evans' "Alternative Access Models: Enhancing the Discoverability of Small Press and Avant-garde Art Journals," published in 2013 in *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*.

Research affiliate Howard Chen published *IRL*, a "mood board wrapper with an interview inside" that takes the form of a portable document publication. Chen also curated the exhibit *The Poplar Tree and Mirror* for the International Studio & Curatorial Program in New York in April and *New Humans* for New York's Bureau gallery. Among the participating artists were Professor Green and ACT guests Charles Atlas and Mika Tajima.

Florian Hecker was a research affiliate during the fall semester. Over the year, Hecker had a variety of exhibitions and performances. His work was presented at *Soundings*, the New York Museum of Modern Art's first exhibition dedicated to sound art, and in group shows in Vienna and Denmark. He was commissioned by Performa 13 to produce a new opera that was presented at the Guggenheim Museum's Peter T. Lewis Theater in New

York. He also had a solo exhibition in Lisbon (Luminar Cité). Hecker produced a full-length album titled *Articulação*, participated in four presentations of his work in Europe, and gave three sound performances in Mexico and Europe.

Neil Leonard was a research affiliate during the spring. He worked closely with professor Gediminas Urbonas on the development and execution of 4.373/374 Sound Installations and Sonic Interventions. The class culminated in the presentation of *Resonating MIT*, five student sound installations.

Peter Schmitt was a research affiliate for the academic year and worked closely with Professor Akšamija on four projects in development: the Islamobile, a vehicle designed to facilitate intercultural understanding; the Acculturator, a traveling vehicle that “demonstrates cultural exchanges in different locations”; Culturunners, a project designed to create cross-cultural empathy; and Empathy Suits.

Gloria Sutton, an assistant professor at Northeastern University, a curator, and an art historian, was appointed as a research affiliate for the academic year. She was an active participant in reviews of student work and organized a visit by critic and historian Suzanne Hudson to help students contextualize their work. She published four texts, was named web editor for *Art Journal*, and did a public talk on the work of William Kentridge at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.

Nomeda Urbonas participated in the creation of the exhibitions *Public Space? Lost & Found* (MIT), *Pro-Test Lab Archive* (SALT Beyoglu, Turkey, and Casetello di Rivoli, Italy), *Druzba* (European Capital of Culture, Latvia), *Ambassador's Song* (Nord-Pas de Calais, France), and *Vegetation as a political agent* (Parco Arte Vivente, Italy). Urbonas was also a part of the Levanger-Kino and Frontiers in Retreat research projects, taught three courses, delivered two presentations, and authored texts in three collections.

Visiting student Fabio Ciaravella from the Università della Basilicata in Unibas, Italy, was in residence from October through April. He explored the relationship between contemporary art and architecture under the supervision of Gediminas Urbonas. His piece *Augmented Reality* was installed at RISO, the Contemporary Art Museum of Sicily in Palermo.

### **Center for Advanced Visual Studies Special Collection**

Jeremy Grubman, the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) Special Collection project archivist, has worked diligently to identify funding, process the materials in the collection, create a finding aid to make the items as accessible as possible, and digitize a number of collection pieces.

In July, ACT submitted a grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The total budget was \$215,853, of which \$117,295 was requested from NEH. The funds were to be used to rehouse collection materials, prevent deterioration and damage, digitize collection materials in order to facilitate wider access, and develop a digital service model to allow constant, free public access via a web portal. In April, ACT learned that funding had not been approved but that final reviewer evaluations were either “very good” or “excellent.”

In the last year, the concept of the web interface has moved from the model of a repository that can be accessed via the web to the development of a virtual collection interface for the repository. Creating visual connections between multiple digital object types is key to facilitating virtual research in the CAVS Special Collection. The breadth of the history of CAVS requires “connection making” among materials pertaining to people, places, projects, and technologies. A virtual collection that clarifies and assists in making these connections would provide an innovative model for future digital collection arrangement, description, access, presentation, and research. This is the model for which grant funding is being sought.

### **Lecture Series and Public Events**

The Monday night lecture series continued for its ninth year, attracting a broad range of speakers and sizable audiences. It was part of the Cinematic Migrations research project during both AY2013 and AY2014. ACT faculty and students also hosted several other events examining the intersection of art, culture, and technology as part of faculty research and the program’s academic offerings.

### **Experiments in Thinking, Action and Form: Cinematic Migrations**

This two-year collaborative research project was initiated by Renée Green (Free Agent Media) and cohosted by the MIT Visiting Artists Program and ACT. The work of John Akomfrah and Lina Gopaul, the founders of Smoking Dogs Films and founding members of the seminal UK-based Black Audio Film Collective, is one of the project’s focal points of investigation.

Fall semester speakers were artist and filmmaker Charles Atlas; multimedia artist duo John Lovett and Alessandro Codagnone; Tarek Elhaik, media anthropologist, film curator, and assistant professor of media and culture at San Francisco State University; and ACT professor emerita Joan Jonas. In the spring, speakers included Kazue Kobata, professor in the Department of Intermedia Art at the Tokyo University of the Arts; dancer, choreographer, and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer; and Elvan Zabunyan, art critic, historian, and associate professor at the University of Rennes in France.

### **Center for Art, Science & Technology**

The Program in Art, Culture and Technology collaborated with the Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) on three residency programs: Cinematic Migrations, the visiting artist residencies of Robin Rimbaud (Scanner) and Stephan Vitiello, and *Public Space? Lost & Found*.

As part of the Cinematic Migrations research project and in cooperation with the Visiting Artists Program, John Akomfrah and Lina Gopaul visited MIT for a week each semester for two years. During their residencies, they participated in public programs, seminars, and workshops and collaborated with MIT faculty, researchers, and students on a March symposium that concluded their residency. Their visit in November included both the United States premiere of their 2013 documentary *The Stuart Hall Project* and a student workshop that was the basis for the creation of the short *The Memory Album*, a collaborative essay film involving Akomfrah, Gopaul, Professor

Green, research affiliate Javier Anguera, and ACT, MIT, and Harvard students (Ryan Kuo, Ian Soroka, Adi Hollander, Anne Macmillan, and Soyoung Kwon) enrolled in 4.356/4.357. The film was presented at the Cinematic Migrations symposium that concluded the residency. In addition to Akomfrah and Gopaul, the symposium featured cinematographer and producer Arthur Jafa; Manthia Diawara, professor of comparative literature at New York University; Laura Marks, Dena Wosk university professor at Simon Fraser University; Fred Moten, philosopher, poet, and professor of English at the University of California, Riverside; and Gloria Sutton, assistant professor of art history at Northeastern University. As a result of ACT's invitation and mediation, the Harvard Film Archives organized a March film series (*John Akomfrah: A Poet in the Archives*) dedicated to Akomfrah and Gopaul's work.

Sound artists Robin Rimbaud (Scanner) and Stephen Vitiello were in residence at ACT during the spring semester. As part of their residency, they participated in Professor Urbonas' 4.373/4.374 Sound Installations and Sonic Interventions class. The class was a collaborative effort with Professor Makan's 21M.351 Music Composition Seminar and the visiting artists, avant-garde ensemble Either/Or, participating in Makan's class. On May 13 and 15, the students from the two classes presented their work in an event titled *Resonating MIT*. Student installations and performances took place at five locations on the MIT campus provided via a mobile-ready website. Scanner and Vitiello presented their individual and collaborative work to the general public during their visit in February. In March and April they worked with students to develop sonic installations around the MIT campus, and in May they held a public concert, *Sonic Bodies*, that included David Shively (percussion) and Jennifer Choi (violin) of Either/Or as well as digital visualizations by Madeleine Gallagher, ACT's media associate.

Professor Urbonas organized a symposium and exhibition, *Public Space? Lost & Found*, to honor the work of professor of the practice Antoni Muntadas, who retired after the completion of the 2013–2014 academic year. The symposium was held April 18 and 19 and included five panels and 31 speakers. Panelists were thought leaders who explored the definition of public space, questions of culture and identity in relation to public space, surveillance and control, alternatives for contemporary public space, and the future of public space. Speakers also acknowledged the contributions of Muntadas as an artist concerned about the nature of public and private space and the role of art in this context. Approximately 300 people attended the symposium. The symposium also marked the opening of the *Public Space? Lost & Found* exhibition in the Maki lobby. Ten billboards presenting the cities visited and documenting the work done by Muntadas and his students over the years were on display, representing the work of 41 former students.

### **Rob La Frenais**

Rob La Frenais is a critic and curator with the United Kingdom's Arts Catalyst. While in Cambridge, he spoke about the "Future of Transport/Transport of the Future."

### **Florian Hecker Book Launch**

ACT hosted a book launch in the Cube for Florian Hecker's *Chimerization*. Hecker has been a visiting artist and lecturer and was a fall 2013 research affiliate.

## Faculty Accomplishments

### Awards

In September the Islamic Cemetery in Altagh, Austria, designed by Bernardo Bader, was conferred the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Professor Akšamija designed the Qibla wall-curtain and rugs for the prayer room. The cemetery also received a “special mention” at the April 2014 ceremony for the Eighth Award of the European Prize for Urban Public Space.

### Exhibitions, Performances, and Commissions

Renée Green participated in the following group exhibitions: *Blues for Smoke* (Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio), *New Humans* (Bureau, New York), *Empire State: New York Art Now* (Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, France), *Alumni Show II* (Wesleyan University, Connecticut), *Words as Doors* (Künstlerhaus, Austria), *Some Issues of History* (Agathenburg Castle, Germany), and *Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology* (Hammer Museum, California).

Gediminas Urbonas had multiple group exhibitions including *Public Space? Lost & Found* (MIT), *Nouvelle Génération* (FRAC Nord-Pas de Calais, France), *Vegetation as a political agent* (Parco Arte Vivente, Italy), *(re)Construction of Friendship* (European Capital of Culture, Latvia), *Disobedience Archive (The Park)* (SALT Beyoğlu, Turkey), *Disobedience Republic* (Castello di Rivoli, Italy), *Espaces in/civils* (Parallel Program of the 13th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey), *The Moving Image City Festival* (Museu Picasso, Spain), and *Part of a Larger Whole. Lithuanian Contemporary Art* (Contemporary Art Centre, Lithuania).

Azra Akšamija had a solo exhibition at MIT, *Solidarity Works: Politics of Cultural Memory* (Wolk Gallery) and a presentation of her work *Wearable Mosques* at the Venus Window. She also participated in the group exhibitions *Frontier Vest* (Museum of Arte Útil, the Netherlands), *Museum Solidarity Lobby* (Make Art With Purpose Festival, Texas), *ZOOM Sarajevo* (Cultural Research Center, Germany), and *Imaginary Archive* (Visual Culture Research Center, Ukraine).

Professor emerita Joan Jonas’s work will be presented by the List Visual Arts Center. During AY2014, she performed and exhibited at multiple sites around the world, including *Theatrical Fields* in Bildmuseet, Sweden, and *Reanimation* at several venues.

Antoni Muntadas had solo exhibitions in Venezuela (*The Construction of Fear*, Periferico Caracas/Arte Contemporaneo), Spain (*Protocoli Veneziani*, Galeria Joan Prats), and Canada (*Muntadas: Entre/Between*, Vancouver Art Gallery).

Gabriel Kahan was a lecturer during the spring semester. He became a part of the working group of the national mobile learning initiative in Mexico, gave a seminar at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics in Mexico, and lectured at Virtual Educa in Lima, Peru. Kahan also gave a presentation on his practice at the MIT Center for Civic Media in May.

Lecturer Jesal Kapadia had a screening of her film *Notes for a Non-Capitalist Cinema: Sikkim* at the Anthology Film Archives in New York. In addition, Kapadia's work was presented at *Working In and Out of the Archive* (Gallery TPW, Toronto).

Mathew Mazzotta was a lecturer during the spring semester. During this time he participated in three group exhibitions, gave nine lectures nationally and in Europe, and received four art and architecture awards for his *Open House* project.

Angel Nevarez was a lecturer during the fall semester. He exhibited and performed throughout New York and in Luxembourg.

### **Lectures and Symposia**

Faculty lectured widely in Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Kuwait, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United States.

### **Publications**

Renée Green's essay "Loss and Transmutation" was published in the CCC *Newsletter* (Geneva).

Gediminas Urbonas had essays on curation, archives, and his Hearsay House project published by Siemens Stiftung, NTNU Press, Torpedo Press, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig.

Azra Akšamija published "Dare to Wear—a Mosque! Immigrant Protest as Cross-cultural Pedagogy" in *Immigrant Protest: Politics, Aesthetics, and Everyday Dissent* (SUNY Press).

Monos Digital Books published *For a Project Methodology* by Antoni Muntadas in September.

### **Student Awards, Exhibitions, and Publications**

ACT provided funding for student exhibitions as part of the continuation of its pilot grant program. Ryan Kuo's *Party*, Sooyoung Kwon's *Himalaya and Elephant*, and Floor van de Velde's *Score Line Intervals* were shown in the Venus Window gallery space over the course of the year. ACT also supported graduate students' final exhibition *Massachusetts Institute of Act-ion*.

Graduate student Floor van de Velde's *Score for a Color Field* was shown at 17 Cox, an alternative gallery in Beverly, MA, in November and December. Leigh Christie's work *Local Warming* was exhibited as part of the Elements of Architecture display at the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale.

ACT graduate student Anne Macmillan won first place and Floor van de Velde was the third place honoree for the Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize for the Visual Arts in spring 2014. In addition, van de Velde won a Laya and Jerome B. Wiesner Student Art Award.

## Resource Development

The dean's office sponsored an "evening with the dean" in October as a cultivation event for donors.

In June, the dean's office and ACT convened a gathering of a core group of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) Fellows to discuss fundraising for the CAVS Special Collection.

## Facilities

The Committee for the Review of Space Planning authorized \$100,000 for renovation of the audiovisual equipment in the Bartos Theatre. The work was completed in January by MIT Audio Visual Services. The sound system was upgraded, audiovisual controls were streamlined and updated, and the space was repainted and recarpeted.

The Cube is one of ACT's primary classroom, presentation, and work spaces. In March, there was a flood in another area of the building that impacted the Cube. As a result, electrical equipment located under the floor had to be replaced. In addition, ACT proceeded with a digital media upgrade for the space that led to the installation of new scaler/receivers, transmitters, interconnect cabling, a touch panel, a surround-sound processor, and a Blu-Ray player.

Computers in the Interform Editing Lab were replaced at the beginning of the academic year.

Student studios were moved from the Venus Lab at the end of the academic year. ACT is considering how to repurpose the Venus studios in a manner consistent with its research agenda.

## Personnel

Renée Green was promoted to full professor effective July 1.

Ute Meta Bauer resigned to become director of the Center for Contemporary Art at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore; her resignation was effective January 16.

Azra Akšamija was on research leave during the spring. During Professor Akšamija's leave, Oliver Lutz SMVisS '06 taught her classes, including two sections of 4.301 Introduction to Visual Arts (one for architecture majors and one for nonmajors).

Angel Nevarez resigned during the spring semester. As a consequence, Matthew Mazzotta SMVisS '09 and Gabriel Kahan joined ACT to teach, respectively, Introduction to Visual Arts and 4.352/353 Advanced Video and Related Media.

A new faculty search was launched during the 2013–2014 academic year.

Seth Avecilla started as the media assistant/fabrication associate in August, replacing Martin Seymour; Andrew Barosy became the financial assistant in March, replacing



Michael Enos; and from February 3 to May 3, Lucas Spivey worked with ACT as the producer associated with the CAST-sponsored events that were a part of the Cinematic Migrations, Scanner/Vitiello, and *Public Space* projects.

**Renée Green**

**Director, Program in Art, Culture and Technology**

**Professor of Architecture**