

## The Art, Culture, and Technology Program at MIT

The [Art, Culture, and Technology \(ACT\)](#) program at MIT is an academic program and center of critical art practice, intelligence, and discourse within the School of Architecture and Planning. ACT is headed by distinguished artist-professors and supported by a dynamic cast of practitioner graduate students and staff, visiting artists, lecturers, affiliates, and guests. Through an integrated approach to pedagogy, a dynamic coterie of visiting artists and research affiliates, public event programming, and publication, ACT builds a community of artist-thinkers around the exploration of art's complex conjunctions with culture and technology. The program's mission is to promote leadership in critical artistic practice and deployment—developing art as a vital means of experimenting with new registers of knowledge and new modes of valuation and expression. The program continually questions what an artistic research and learning environment can be and do.

### Year in Review

#### Coronavirus Disease 2019

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) first appeared in late December 2019. On March 23, 2020, Massachusetts Governor Baker issued an emergency order requiring that organizations “close their physical workspaces and facilities to workers, customers, and the public,” effective March 24. These requirements meant that in-person programs and gatherings were cancelled and staff moved to dispersed, largely home-based, work. The state of emergency remained in effect until June 14, 2021.

### Highlights

#### Noteworthy Accomplishments

- On June 30, Judith Barry ended her 3.5-year tenure as ACT's director. Over the course of her directorship, the Master of Science in Art, Culture and Technology degree requirements were updated to allow students more time in 4.390 ACT Studio; a new thesis sequence was developed; 4.S32 Animation, 4.S34 Artistic Methodologies, and 4.S31 Video Installations were introduced as new courses; the pedagogical structure of the core ACT Studio subject was revised; and students were allocated more studio space in which to create, present, and experience their art.
- Nida Sinnokrot received the Ford International Career Development chair and was awarded grant funding from the Prince Claus Fund and Goethe-Institute.
- On June 10, the rebranded ACT program launched its new website and identity.
- ACT received a record number of applications: 92 applications were received for the Class of 2023, an increase of 30% over the prior year and the largest applicant pool in ten years.
- ACT hosted three lectures in fall 2020 and four lectures in spring 2021 as part of its fully virtual Monday Night Lecture Series and co-marketed Ekene Ijeoma's yearlong lecture series, Black Mobility and Safety in the US, which included 23 speakers.

## Exhibitions

- Judith Barry's *All the light that's ours to see* was exhibited at Lumiar Cité in Lisbon, Portugal.
- Renée Green's work was featured in two exhibitions at the Bortolami Gallery, as well as the outdoor exhibition *TITAN* in New York City and at Halle für Kunst Steiermark in Graz, Austria.
- The Urbonas Studio—Gediminas Urbonas and Nomedas Urbonienė—exhibited *TRANSmutation* at *We Never Sleep* with the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, Germany; *The Swamp Observatory* was commissioned for the Critical Zones exhibition at the ZKM Art and Media Center in Karlsruhe, Germany; and *The Swamp Intelligence* was a part of the 2020 Taipei Biennale.
- Azra Akšamija exhibited *Silk Road Works* and *Displaced Empire* at the 2021 Venice Biennale.

## Publications

- Judith Barry published in books for DIA Art Foundation and the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.
- Renée Green published *Pacing* in January and *Camino Road* was reissued in April.
- Gediminas Urbonas published *Swamps and the New Imagination: On the Future of Cohabitation in Art, Architecture, and Philosophy* with Sternberg Press.
- Azra Akšamija edited and contributed to the November 2020 volume *Architecture of Coexistence: Building Pluralism*.
- Nida Sinnokrot published in *e-flux* and *Artforum*.

## Selected Artistic Output

### ACT Faculty

ACT's tenured and tenure-track faculty were referenced in the popular and art press, lectured extensively, and participated in group and solo exhibitions in Europe, Asia, and the United States.

### Judith Barry

ACT director and professor Judith Barry had a solo exhibition, *All the light that's ours to see*, in Lisbon, Portugal and was part of the B3 Biennial of the Moving Image with her exhibition, *Cairo Stories*. Barry gave four lectures, was a juror for the Falling Walls Foundation: Global Science Conference, a commentator for Hyundai/Bloomberg's Art and Technology series, and the curator of ACT's lecture series in both the fall (The Allegorical Resonance of Alchemical Affect) and spring (The Incidence of Fingerprints When Earth Meets the Sky). Barry co-wrote the essay "Polydisciplinary Magnetism" with Prem Krishnamurthy and Forest Young for the Rizzoli Electa publication *Willi*

*Smith: Street Couture* that was produced in conjunction with the Cooper Hewitt's *Willi Smith: Street Couture* exhibit.

### **Renée Green**

Professor Renée Green exhibited *Excerpts* and *Excerpts A.1* at the Bortolami Gallery in New York City, *TITAN*—a series of outdoor exhibits running from October to January in New York City—and participated in eight group exhibitions in Germany, France, Austria, and the United States. *Pacing* was published by the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, and *Camino Road* was rereleased by Primary Information. Green participated in seven online lectures. In January, the Holt-Smithson Foundation announced that Green was one of five artists awarded a five-year commission “to develop [a] proposals [sic] responding to an island in Maine....”

### **Gediminas Urbonas**

Associate Professor Gediminas Urbonas continued teaching and lecturing internationally with visiting professorships at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania; Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing, China; and Nuova Accademia di Belle Arte in Milano, Italy. A new appointment includes a position as associate faculty at Dartington Arts School in Totnes, England. He received two grants from the Lithuanian Council for Culture, exhibited *TRANSmutation* at *We Never Sleep* with the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, Germany; *The Swamp Observatory* was a part of the Critical Zones exhibition at ZKM Art and Media Center in Karlsruhe, Germany; and *The Swamp Intelligence* was exhibited at the 2020 Taipei Biennale. Urbonas had a solo exhibition, *Swamp Intelligence*, in Bratislava, Slovakia; organized the symposium *Terrestrial University: Swamps and the New Imagination* at ZKM in Karlsruhe; and lectured for organizations based in Lithuania, Denmark, India, Russia, France, Germany, Slovakia, and the United States.

### **Azra Akšamija**

Associate Professor Azra Akšamija edited and contributed to the book *Architecture of Coexistence: Building Pluralism*, which was published in November. Akšamija also contributed articles to the *Scholar & Feminist Online*, *e-flux Journal*, and *War Diaries: Design After the Destruction of Art and Architecture*. She designed the exhibition architecture for the show *Sanctuary* at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, participated in exhibitions in Germany, and exhibited *Silk Road Works* and *Displaced Empire* at the Arsenale, Venice Architecture Biennale in Italy. She lectured in Bosnia and the United States.

### **Nida Sinnokrot**

Assistant Professor Nida Sinnokrot received the Ford International Career Development chair, was awarded grant funding from the Prince Claus Fund and Goethe-Institute for the project *Storytelling Stones - The Art, Ecology and Mythology of Dry Stack Stonewalls in Palestine*, and published “Artist Cinemas Presents *Soils, Habit, Plants* a Film by Elke Marhfer and Mikhail Lylov in Conversation with Nida Sinnokrot and Sahar Qawasmi” in *e-flux* and “The Museum Now” in *Artforum*. Sinnokrot participated in the group exhibition *Palestine from Above* and lectured at Goldsmiths University and New York University.

## Lecturers

### **Lara Baladi**

Lara Baladi had exhibitions in Luxembourg, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Her film *Don't Touch Me Tomatoes & Chachacha* was screened at the Arab Film Fes Collab; she participated as a speaker, respondent, and panelists in presentations in Saudi Arabia, Luxembourg, Germany, and the United States. Baladi held workshops in November and December, published "Acts of Resistance" in *Dear Truth, Documentary Strategies in Contemporary Photography*, was the focus of three interviews, and was a featured artist in the publication and exhibition *The Protest and the Recuperation*. Baladi was named one of 50 new Hundred Heroines by the United Kingdom charity Hundred Heroines.

### **Lisa Crafts**

New ACT lecturer Lisa Crafts was a part of a five-person show at the C24 Gallery in New York City. In addition, she created five animations, three of which were chimeric portraits. She participated in three virtual panels and presentations.

### **Georgie Friedman**

Georgie Friedman exhibited *Blindness* at the Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea in Italy, *Journey to the Sun* in Boston, and *Hurricane Lost*, a solo nine-channel sculptural and video installation at Emerson College. She received grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Boston Foundation and gave five talks about her work in and around the Boston area.

### **Marisa Morán Jahn, SMVisS '07**

Marisa Morán Jahn had a solo show in Houston, Texas, and was a part of group exhibitions at the Venice Architecture Biennale, the Aedes Architectural Forum in Berlin, the DePaul Art Museum in Chicago, IL, and 21c Museum in Durham, NC. She gave four talks over the year, co-edited the book *What is Ours: Art and Architecture Towards Mutualism*, wrote a chapter in *Entertainment Education Behind the Scenes: Case Studies for Theory and Practice*, and published an article in *Media N*. In addition, Jahn had a policy paper accepted by the Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism for the Biden Administration and received funding from the MIT Center for Art, Science and Technology (CAST).

### **Rasa Smite and Raitis Smits**

Rasa Smite and Raitis Smits are artists and researchers working in the intersection of art, science, and emerging technologies since the mid-1990s. They are key founders of RIXC the Center for New Media Culture in Riga, Latvia; curators of RIXC Gallery, organizers of RIXC Art and Science festival, and chief editors of *Acoustic Space*, a peer-reviewed journal and book series. Smite and Smits exhibited "Atmospheric Forest" at the *Critical Zones* exhibition at ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany.

## Affiliates

ACT had four research affiliates: Adesola Akinleye, Javier Anguera Phipps of ccindex and Free Agent Media (FAM), Arianna Mazzeo, a collaborator on the Zooetics research program, and Nomeda Urbonienė, principal in Urbonas Studios. Selected updates are presented below.

### **Adesola Akinleye**

Research affiliate and CAST visiting artist Adesola Akinleye was a co-instructor for the class 4.314/5 Advanced Workshop in Artistic Practice and Transdisciplinary Research: Choreographing the City. *Dance, Architecture and Engineering (Dance in Dialogue)* was published in April and *(RE:) Claiming Ballet* was published in March and edited by Akinleye. As part of the Royal Gold Medal celebrations, the Royal Institute of British Architects commissioned her to create a series of videos inspired by the work of Sir David Adjaye OBE. These videos were released in May, at which time she also contributed to the exhibition *How We Live Now: Reimagining Spaces with Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative*.

### **Javier Anguera Phipps**

The Contemporary Culture Index (ccindex) is “an online, open-access bibliographical database indexing international journals and periodicals.” Over the academic year, 1,574 new records were added to the database and one new infoweb record was added for *Tropiques*. As Free Agent Media archivist, Anguera coordinated publication of *Pacing* and the rerelease of *Camino Road*, coordinated Professor Green’s lecture requests and exhibitions in the United States and Europe, and was the producer and co-editor of the new film *Mise-en-scène: Commemorative Toile*.

### **Arianna Mazzeo**

Arianna Mazzeo worked closely with Professor Urbonas as part of the class 4.368/9 Studio Seminar in Art and the Public Sphere. The course focused “on the production of [a] new lexicon for digital public places as well as new research questions for Public Art through the lens of Nuclear Aesthetic.”

### **Nomeda Urboniene**

Nomeda Urboniene exhibited in Sweden, Germany, Taiwan, and Slovakia and was part of five group exhibitions. In addition, she gave lectures, conducted workshops, and offered presentations in Europe (Italy, Germany, Lithuania, Slovakia, the United Kingdom) and the United States.

### **Selected Student Honors and Recognition**

Four students comprise the Class of 2021 and four students are in the Class of 2022. The Transmedia Storytelling Initiative issued a Request for Proposals for Fialkow Distance Residencies and production projects for the summer of 2021. Of the 13 residencies and projects funded, ACT graduate students received six grants: two of the four residencies and four of the nine project and collaborative grants.

ACT graduate students were also recognized by the Office of the Arts and by Comparative Media Studies/Writing:

- Po-Hao Chi SM '21 in ACT, won first prize, Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts.
- Jesús Ocampo Aguilar SM '21 in ACT, won second prize, Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize in the Visual Arts.
- Kwan Queenie Li SM '22 in ACT, won first prize, Enterprise Poets Prize for Imagining a Future.

## Alumni/ae

ACT alumni/ae exhibited extensively and internationally. Of particular note are Sung Hwan Kim SM '03 in VisS and Jill Magid SM '00 in VisS, who were 2021 recipients of Guggenheim fellowships in the Creative Arts.

## Research Activities

### Integrated Approach to Pedagogy

ACT subjects and faculty research are interwoven. There are eight active research projects that are or will be tied to ACT subjects:

1. Embodiment in Contemporary Art (J. Barry). Judith Barry explores themes of embodiment in contemporary art and architecture.
1. Machine Learning and Machine Vision (J. Barry). Barry's research extends her artistic and pedagogical work toward understandings of machine learning and machine vision as they relate to embodiment in contemporary art and architecture.
2. Artistic Methodologies (J. Barry). Barry investigates ways to use scientific data and technologies to create new aesthetic experiences; SP21 seminar 4.s34 Artistic Methodologies: Art, Science and Experiential Aesthetics (co-taught with lecturers Rasa Smite and Raitis Smits) is an outgrowth of this research interest.
3. Cinematic Migrations (R. Green). SP21 4.356/4.357 Cinematic Migrations is a multifaceted look at the role of cinema's transmutations over time.
4. Synchronizations of Senses (R. Green). This body of research centers on testing various ways aesthetic forms and their shifts—historic and contemporary—are related to still emerging contemporary subjectivities; Synchronizations of Senses was taught in the fall under 4.s33.
5. Climate Visions (G. Urbonas). Urbonas's research speculates on interspecies ecologies and probes the usefulness of the concept "sympoiesis" toward imagining and working together in radical interdisciplinarity toward desirable futures.
6. Future Heritage Lab (A. Akšamija). The Future Heritage Lab explores creative responses to conflict and crisis.
7. Art/Science/Agriculture (N. Sinnokrot). Sinnokrot's research scrutinizes the intersection of art, science, and agriculture and offers students the opportunity to develop projects as a means for addressing the social, cultural, and ecological consequences of technology.

## Public Programs

### Lecture Series

ACT hosted three lectures in fall and four lectures during the spring as part of its fully virtual Monday Night Lecture Series.

### ***Fall 2020: The Allegorical Resonance of Alchemical Affect***

ACT was scheduled to have four speakers during the spring 2020 semester. However, all lectures after March 10 were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the two remaining lectures (Barbara London and Cesare Pietroiusti) were rescheduled as Zoom events in the fall of 2020.

- Barbara London, *What's Technology Got to Do With It?* The talk focused on how early pioneers and today's young innovators combine forms and revise the definitions of such categories as single-channel, installation, performance, painting, photography, and interactivity. Respondent: Caroline A. Jones, professor, Department of Architecture. (October 26; 469 views)
- Media Lab faculty member Ekene Ijeoma, *Poetic Justice*. Professor Ijeoma researches social inequality across multiple fields, including social science, to develop artworks in sound, video, multimedia, sculpture and installation. Respondent: Dayna Cunningham, executive director, Community Innovators Lab (CoLab), Department of Urban Studies and Planning. (November 9; 298 views)
- Cesare Pietroiusti, *Economic Principles and Artistic Use of Paradox*. Pietroiusti presented a number of artistic projects and participatory performances that, by diverting or playing with economic principles, attempted to create temporary areas of freedom where faith was suspended and rules became tools and toys. Respondent: Jesal Kapadia, lecturer; Art, Culture, and Technology. (December 7; 306 views)

### ***Spring 2021: The Incidence of Fingerprints When Earth Meets the Sky***

Speakers were varied and their presentations touched on reincarnation, cultural heritage, Indigeneity, and changes in Chinese society.

- Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *Natq* (impossible speech). Hamdan presented a live audiovisual essay on the politics and possibilities of reincarnation. Respondent: Lara Baladi, lecturer; Art, Culture, and Technology. (March 15; 260 views)
- Brook Andrew, Mario Caro, Candice Hopkins, and Miguel López, *Indigenous Curation*. The panelists and moderator, Mario Caro, discussed curatorial challenges and strategies in curating Indigenous arts globally. (April 12; 334 views)
- Azra Akšamija, *Future Heritage*. Co-sponsored with the Department of Architecture, Dr. Akšamija presented the recent work of the MIT Future Heritage Lab, an experimental laboratory that invents creative responses to conflict and crisis at the intersection of art, culture, and preservation technologies. Respondents: Ulrike Al-Khamis, interim director and CEO of the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto and Sean Anderson, associate curator in the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art. (April 22; 5,917 views)
- Cao Fei, *Narrative Labyrinth—From Reality to Illusion, From Fantasy to Reality*. Cao Fei is an innovative and globally recognized artist. Her work is a mix of social commentary, popular aesthetics, and documentary conventions in film and installations. Respondent: Nick Montfort, professor, Comparative Media Studies/Writing. (May 3; 421 views)

## Black Mobility and Safety in the US

ACT co-marketed Ekene Ijeoma's yearlong lecture series Black Mobility and Safety in the US, which included 23 speakers. The public lectures were a complement to the course Black Mobility and Safety in the US, and speakers were asked to reflect, respond, and present their research related to issues around mobility, e.g., physical, mental, socio-economic, political, and safety for Black Americans.

## Public Lectures

In addition to the lecture series, ACT subjects hosted 44 guest speakers and presenters over the academic year. Guests included Patricia Reed, Dutch Art Institute; John Bingham-Hall, director of Theatrum Mundi in London; artist-thinker Ayreen Anastas; writer and artist Naeem Mohaiemen; MIT professor Jacopo Buongiorno; video artist Christine Southworth; curator Christiane Paul; and biological artist Paul Vanouse.

## Arts on the Radar

The sixth Arts on the Radar was held September 3–4 and was hosted by ACT, Music and Theater Arts, the List Visual Arts Center, and the Office of the Arts. All of the sessions were virtual and included the following:

- Making Music Virtually
- Creating Dance Virtually
- MIT Students in the Arts
- ACT Maker Workshop
- Misalignments Gallery Tour
- Creating Successful Virtual Events
- ACT Artist Tour

Seventy-four students, alumni/ae, and members of the MIT community attended the two-day event.

## Archives and Collections

With the merger of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies and the Visual Arts Program, ACT became the steward of archival materials related to these programs. Inherited materials included items from the Visible Language Workshop and papers from György Kepes's Vision + Value series of publications. In 2019, the Experimental Music Studio recordings were separately arranged, digitized, and added to the collection. As an active program, ACT generates its own content such as event posters, course materials, and documentation of student work. Together, these form the ACT Archives and Special Collections.

## Reference Requests

There were 101 reference requests. Materials were cited in 46 academic journal articles, eight book chapters, seven dissertations, four monographs, and one film. Researchers



were MIT faculty, students, and staff (25); students, staff, and faculty from non-MIT universities and colleges (20), and independent researchers (56). The distribution of requests among the collections is summarized below.

### ACT Collections Accessed, AY2021

Collection name	Research visits
Center for Advanced Visual Studies	76
Kepes Vision and Value Papers	8
Visible Language Workshop	5
Art, Culture, and Technology	9
Electronic Music Studio	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>

### Council on Library and Information Resources

In April 2020, ACT received a \$47,305 grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources as part of the Recordings at Risk program; in December, ACT received an additional \$3,000 in Emergency Relief Funds to cover additional pandemic-related costs. All funding is being used to preserve recordings from the Experimental Music Studio.

### Donations

ACT received video recordings from Robert Dell, audio and video tapes of work by Elizabeth Goldring and Otto Piene, and documents and booklets of work by Paul Earls.

### Academic Program

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

The Art, Culture, and Technology program at MIT offers a selective, two-year, graduate program leading to a Master of Science in Art, Culture, and Technology (SMACT) degree. The program focuses on research-based artistic practice, advanced visual studies, and experimentation. It offers opportunities for transdisciplinary relationships with other programs and labs at MIT. The degree culminates in a final project and a written thesis.

### Open Houses

#### Fall Open House

ACT hosted three virtual open houses for prospective applicants. The first, on October 26, was in collaboration with the Department of Architecture; approximately six prospective SM in ACT applicants attended. Two additional ACT-specific virtual open houses were held November 17 and 19 with a total of 144 individuals between the two sessions. The November open houses included an overview of the admissions process, a question-and-answer period, presentations by faculty, and breakout rooms focused on the alumni/ae experience, conversations with current students, and the infrastructure for making art. Of the eight accepted students, six attended an open house.

### Spring Open House

On April 1, ACT hosted a virtual open house for accepted students; seven of the nine matriculating students attended. The open house included a presentation of student work by a first-year and second-year graduate student, a video tour of the facilities, and a question-and-answer period. Students were also invited to attend 4.S34 Artistic Methodologies.

### Applicants and Admissions

ACT received 92 applications. Eight applicants were accepted into the graduate program and all of them chose to matriculate in fall 2021 (along with one deferral from the spring 2020 admissions season). Nine students are scheduled to join ACT in the fall as the Class of 2023. Summarized below are ACT's application and admissions statistics for the last five years.

#### ACT Admissions, AY2017–2021

Class entering September	Applicants	Acceptances	Waitlist	Declines	Matriculants	Deferrals*
2021	92	8	8	0	9**	0
2020	67	8	4	5	4	2
2019	81	7	3	5	5	0
2018	81	8	5	2	6	0
2017	71	6	4	2	4	0

\*ACT did not grant deferrals prior to spring 2020.

\*\*One of the two students who deferred in 2020 will be part of the Class of 2023.

### Class of 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to be highly disruptive to the thesis process. As a result, in consultation with their thesis advisors, three of the four members of the Class of 2021 opted to complete their thesis during the summer and move to the September degree list.

### Academic Curriculum and Enrollment

ACT offered 29 classes, four of which were new subjects:

- 4.S31 Video Installation: Art, Architecture, and Related Media
- 4.S32 Animation
- 4.S33 Circulating Circuits: Enacting Intersections and Diffusion in Print, Matter, and Forms
- 4.S34 Artistic Methodologies: Art, Science and Experiential Aesthetics

ACT offers electives for undergraduate and graduate students. The table below summarizes enrollment and the distribution of classes between graduates and undergraduates as well as architecture and non-architecture students from 2017 to 2021:

**ACT Enrollment, AY2017–2021**

Academic year	Number of students enrolled	Number of classes	Graduate students (%)	Undergraduates (%)	Architecture (%)	Other (%)
2021	222	29	56%	44%	50%	50%
2020	209	23	49%	51%	45%	55%
2019	226	24	58%	42%	48%	52%
2018	210	21	46%	54%	39%	61%
2017	257	23	67%	33%	45%	55%

**Finance and Administration****Grants Administration**

ACT has a fiduciary responsibility for the administration of \$15,000 on behalf of the Council for the Arts at MIT (CAMIT) and administers the funds for the \$1 million Transmedia Storytelling Initiative (TSI) pilot.

**Council for the Arts Funds**

For the fourth year, ACT administered a portion of the funds that CAMIT provides for student projects. The goal is to support the artistic production of ACT's graduate students while preparing them to successfully present their work to non-artists. All of the ACT graduate students participated and 14 proposals were submitted. ACT administered \$19,074 in CAMIT funding, representing unused reserve funds from FY2019 (\$2,526) and FY2020 (\$1,548) in addition to the \$15,000 allocated for FY2021. A total of \$19,052 in CAMIT funds were distributed, matched by \$7,200 in grant funding from ACT, and \$21,641 in external funding, e.g., National Theater and Concert Hall.

**Transmedia Storytelling Pilot**

This is the second year of the three-year TSI pilot. A total of \$411,641.49 in funds were disbursed. These funds represented unused funds from year one of the pilot and the funding of year two of the pledge (\$365,000). Transmedia funds were used as follows:

- Four specialists were hired in writing, digital fabrication, augmented reality and virtual reality and media production.
- Eight graduate students were supported as research assistants, teaching assistants, and student workers.
- A special subject was developed in ACT and in Comparative Media Studies.
- TSI funded the Open Documentary Lab's fall and spring lectures series and hosted "Data Magic and Democracy: Privacy, Politics, and Transmedia Storytelling" in the fall and 3D/5G: "Surveillance and Agency" in the spring.
- Bridge funding was provided to Architecture's student-run film series Cinema and Architectural Imagination.
- During summer 2021, TSI provided four student and alumni/ae Fialkow Distance Residencies and nine student and alumni/ae production grants.

## Communications

With the move to remote learning and dispersed work, finding alternative means to present and develop art was essential. ACT continued to develop its podcasts, launched a new and vibrant website, and actively used its e-newsletter as an engagement tool.

### E-Newsletter

ACT sent 53 emails with an average open rate of 31.4% and an average click rate of 3.2%. Listed below are ACT's open and click rates compared to other, similar organizations; ACT compares favorably:

#### ACT Email Communications Performance vs. Industry Benchmarks

	Open rate	Click rate
ACT (53 emails)	31.4%	3.2%
Overall	21.3%	2.6%
Arts and artists	26.3%	2.9%
Education	23.4%	2.9%
Entertainment and events	20.5%	2.4%
Nonprofit	25.2%	2.8%

\*Source: Mailchimp, "Email Marketing Benchmarks and Statistics by Industry." October 2019, [mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks](https://mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks). Accessed July 29, 2021.

### Podcast

ACT continued to build its podcast series, *The Eye of the Artist*, adding an interview with Erin Genia SM '19 in ACT and repurposing the morning conversations from the fall class *Choreographing the City* to create the *Choreographing the City* podcast.

### Social Media

ACT's social media growth for the past two years is summarized below:

#### ACT Social Media Followers, AY2020 vs. AY2021

	June 30, 2020	June 12, 2021	FY2019–2020 growth (%)
Twitter	5,933	6,272	5.7%
Facebook	6,079	6,725	10.6%
Instagram	3,593	4,280	19.1%

Instagram has continued to be the growth leader in ACT's social media platform. However, after languishing last year, Facebook growth has returned to the double digits, largely an outgrowth of increased use of social media in general and ACT's use of Facebook Live for its virtual lecture series.

### Website

In November 2019, ACT selected the New York City-based firm WKSHPs to redesign its website and develop a new visual identity. Delayed by the pandemic, the new website

and identity were launched in June 2021. As part of the launch, the MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology became the Art, Culture, and Technology program at MIT. The Committee on Graduate Programs, the Committee on Curricula, the Committee on the Undergraduate Program, and the Chair of the Faculty were notified of this change.

## Personnel

### Staff Accolades

In June, Antonina “Nina” Palisano received a School of Architecture and Planning Infinite Mile Award as a member of the Academic Administrators and Student Support Services Team.

### Faculty

- Judith Barry’s term as ACT director concluded June 30 after 3.5 years.
- All of ACT’s tenured and tenure-track faculty taught both semesters of the academic year: Judith Barry, Renée Green, Gediminas Urbonas, Azra Akšamija, and Nida Sinnokrot.

### Lecturers

- Katarina Burin co-taught 4.390 ACT Studio in the fall.
- Mario Caro taught the thesis sequence 4.387 ACT Theory and Criticism Colloquium (fall), 4.388 Thesis Preparation (spring), and 4.389 Tutorial for SMACT Thesis (fall).
- Lisa Crafts offered a new seminar, 4.s32 Animation, in the spring.
- Georgie Friedman was the instructor for 4.354/4.355 Introduction to Video and Related Media in the fall and spring and seminar 4.s31 Video Installation: Art, Architecture, and Related Media in the fall.
- Marisa Morán Jahn taught 4.301 Introduction to Artistic Experimentation both semesters.
- Jesal Kapadia taught 4.361/4.362 Performance Art Workshop in the fall and co-taught the TSI-supported seminar 4.s33 Circulating Circuits: Enacting Intersections and Diffusion in Print, Matter, and Forms with Professor Renée Green in the spring.
- Lara Baladi was the instructor for ACT’s two photography classes, 4.341/4.342 Introduction to Photography and Related Media and 4.344/4.345 Advanced Photography and Related Media. Baladi was approved for an international placement in Egypt for the spring semester.

- Tobias Putrih was the lecturer for 4.322/4.323 Introduction to Three-Dimensional Art in the fall, 4.373/4.374 Advanced Projects in Art, Culture and Technology in the spring, and was a part of the instructional team for 4.390 ACT Studio in the spring.
- Rasa Smite and Raitis Smits co-taught two subjects remotely in the spring: 4.320/4.321 Sound Creations and a new seminar, 4.s34 Artistic Methodologies: Art, Science and Experiential Aesthetics, co-taught with Professor Judith Barry.

## **Staff**

Antonina Palisano was hired as ACT's academic and administrative liaison in July. Mikaela Joyce was hired as ACT's media assistant in August.

**Judith Barry**  
**Director**  
**Professor of Architecture**