

# MIT List Visual Arts Center Year in Review

July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020

Thank you for being a part of the List Center community. While our annual report typically only covers our fiscal year, we've expanded the timeline to allow room to reflect on the past few months of digital programming. As we added new words like quarantine, social distancing, and lockdown to our lexicon, our team worked to present opportunities for engagement with art of our time. In this report you can read a letter from our director, Paul Ha, explore exhibitions, and revisit past programs.

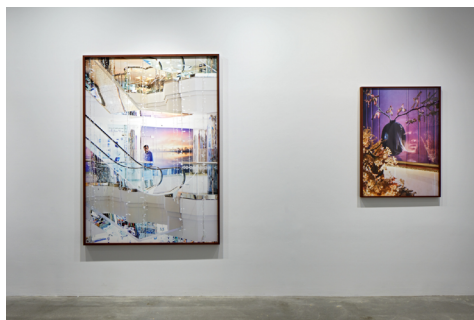
From all of us at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, thank you! We look forward to welcoming you back in our galleries in 2021!





## Timeline of Notable Events

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### List Projects: Farah Al Qasimi Opens

July 30, 2019

For her first solo exhibition at a U.S. institution, Farah Al Qasimi debuted a series of photographs along with the American premiere of her feature-length film, *Um Al Naar*. On October 10, the artist joined in conversation with Ilisa Barbash, curator of visual anthropology at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. The exhibition garnered acclaim from international publications.

### Student Lending Art Program Exhibition Opens

August 27, 2019

For this year's SLAP exhibition, we hosted a special reception for Boston-based artists whose work is in the collection. Over the past decade, the List Center has deliberately sought out work by local artists and purchased from Boston galleries in order to support our local arts ecosystem. Over 900 students entered into the SLAP lottery this year, 604 students took artwork home with them, and 164 received their first choice.



### Alicja Kwade's *Against The Run* is installed

September 24, 2019

At first glance *Against the Run*, a freestanding clock with a restrained modern design sited on a patch of lawn adjacent to Richard Fleischner's Upper Courtyard, figures seamlessly into the plaza's built environment. The clock's unusual feature becomes evident on closer inspection; although its minute and hour hands tell the correct time, the second-hand ticks counterclockwise one beat and then returns to the twelve o'clock position, while the clock's face rotates to the left, one fraction every second. This newly installed Percent-for-Art work was commissioned and presented in conjunction with Alicja Kwade's List Center exhibition *In Between Glances*.

As part of this percent-for-art commission, *Against the Run* will be relocated to Kendall Square in late 2021.

### Alicja Kwade: *In Between Glances* is installed

October 18, 2019

For her List Center exhibition *In Between Glances*, Kwade realized *Light Touch of Totality* (2019) a major new sculptural commission. Comprised of five stainless steel rings each with a diameter of approximately 16 feet and positioned at varying angles, the sculpture is adorned with over 1,400 strands of beads made from wood and lapis lazuli, which create a curtain-like effect on portions of its imposing frame.

### Farewell to Henriette Huldish

December 11, 2020

After five and a half years, beloved Curator and Director of Exhibitions, Henriette Huldish took on a wonderful new opportunity as the Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. During her tenure with the List Center, she presented ambitious solo and group presentations including *Before Projection: Video Sculpture 1974–1995* (2018).



## List Projects 20: Becca Albee Opens

December 12, 2020

List Projects 20: Becca Albee, the artist's first institutional solo presentation engaged two distinct sites of research and production—the archive of the late artist Robert Blanchon and Brooklyn's Plumb Beach—to reflect on deep and mortal time scales, as well as the enduring impact of a relationship frozen in memory.

Becca Albee's exhibition marked an important milestone for the List Center; our twentieth List Projects presentation. To mark this milestone, all List Projects thereafter are marked with the number.

## Welcome, Natalie Bell!

January 15, 2020

The List Center appointed Natalie Bell as Curator. She had previously been with the New Museum in New York and served as an assistant curator for the fifty-fifth Venice Biennale.

Natalie already has an ambitious schedule of exhibitions planned for 2021 and jumped into virtual studio visits with upcoming List Center artists (including Leslie Thornton, pictured here) right away.

## Colored People Time: Mundane Futures, Quotidian Pasts, Banal Presents Opens

February 7, 2020

Installed inside our Hayden Gallery consisting of three different sections, *Colored People Time* (CPT) offered a profound exploration into how the history of chattel slavery and colonialism in America not only shaped the foundations of our country but exists in our present moment and impacts our future. The group exhibition traveled to the List Center from the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, where it was organized by Associate Curator Meg Onli.



## Christine Sun Kim: Off the Charts Opens

February 7, 2020

In her List Center exhibition, the artist presented a series of new drawings breaking down the various factors involved in a number of personal decisions ("Why I Do Not Read Lips," "Why I Work with Sign Language Interpreters") by relative importance in pie chart form. Simultaneously funny and profound, the works also pivot on the absurdity of capturing complex choices and their cultural, social, and historical underpinnings in diagrammatic shorthand.

In February, Christine Sun Kim performed The National Anthem in American Sign Language (ASL) at the Super Bowl, attracting coverage from national and international press. Following the performance, Kim published an op-ed in New York Times about her (not praiseworthy) experience of the event.

## Panel Discussion: Colored People Time Examined is held in Bartos Theater

February 7, 2020

In conjunction with the exhibition *Colored People Time: Mundane Futures, Quotidian Pasts, Banal Presents*, this panel of artists and scholars explored the history and impact of how the history of slavery and colonialism has shaped our country and impacts our present and futures through examining their respective contributions to the exhibition. The panel participants included Aria Dean, Amber Rose Johnson, and Meg Onli.

## List Projects 21: Rami George is Installed

March 7, 2020

As we prepared to close our doors due to the early spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, our installation team and exhibition curator Selby Nimrod worked swiftly to install the artist's first institutional solo show.



For the List Center, George presented a new body of work that extends their ongoing inquiry into their family's entanglement with the Samaritan Foundation, a New Age spiritual cult that was active in the 1990s. Within an exhibition architecture loosely based on the floor plan of the Seminar Room that was part of the group's encampment, George premiered the video essay *Untitled (with my father)* (2020) alongside an earlier video, *Untitled (Saturday, October 16, 1993)* (2015), and a group of new works on paper that collage dowsing charts and other instructive texts generated by the Samaritan Foundation with family photographs.

## The List Center Closes its Doors due to COVID-19

March 13, 2020

As the cases in Massachusetts and around the world began to rise, MIT stopped in-person instruction and its staff was instructed to work from home. Our team jumped into action on three fronts:

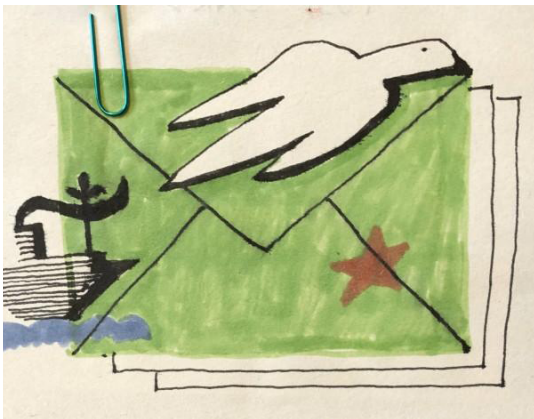
- To create a plan to collect artwork from the Student Lending Art Program from students who were preparing to leave campus.
- To redesign our website in order to host more digital content.
- And to adjust our exhibition and program schedule through 2021.
- The three exhibitions installed in our galleries were monitored to ensure the artwork's safety and we created a plan to engage our audiences digitally.



## List At Home Newsletter Hits Inboxes

April–May 2020

By early April, our newly launched #ListAtHome newsletter had a brand new webpage and was being published every week. Topics ranged from deep dives into past exhibitions, insights from our public art collection, and behind-the-scenes with our curators. The archive lives on our site and will be updated for as long as we remain closed. If you haven't already tuned in, catch up here!



## The Switch to Virtual Programs Begins with Rami George

April 1, 2020

For our first virtual program, we were thrilled to co-host a panel discussion with Art in America for *List Projects 21: Rami George*. Rami George joined in conversation with writer Rahel Aima and List Center Assistant Curator, Selby Nimrod, moderated by Art in America Assistant Editor Emily Watlington. The live event was held on Zoom, with over 70 attendees, and a captioned recording of the conversation was later released on *Art in America's* Instagram TV.



**Congrats, Class of 2020!**

May 29, 2020

For the first time ever, MIT hosted an all-virtual commencement ceremony. We are so proud of the class of 2020 and all they ahead to endure during the last semester of their senior year!

At the List Center, we said farewell to three of our undergraduate student guides. Together they authored a newsletter about their favorite works from the Public Art Collection and created walking tours for our Public Art Map.



### **Becoming Pros at Virtual Programming**

June–Fall 2020

As the cases continued to fluctuate, we made a plan to follow MIT's guidelines and remain closed through Fall of 2020. During this time, we installed *Nayland Blake: No Wrong Holes* and *List Projects 22: Cindy Ji Hye Kim* and introduced several new online and remote programs.

Highlights include:

- An eight-part series of talks organized by Sreshta Rit Premnath and Avi Alpert around the theme of waiting.
- A postcard exchange for members of the MIT community to share their works in progress.
- A special program with Paul Ha and Ethel Kessler, an art director for the USPS about creating the Ruth Asawa stamp and supporting the Postal Service in advance of the upcoming election.
- A virtual talk between artist Nayland Blake and Jamillah James on occasion of Blake's 30-year retrospective, *No Wrong Holes*.

# Director's Letter

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Dear Friends,

Around this time last year, I was writing with eager anticipation of all that 2020 and the start of a new decade would bring. I don't think any of us could have predicted what a year 2020 would actually turn out to be. Each year, we take time to reflect upon what we accomplished in the previous fiscal year. Within these digital pages, you will find our report from Fiscal Year 2020 which ran from July 2019 through June 2020. While these dates now feel like distant memories, reviewing our yearly happenings provides a helpful framework as we plan our exhibitions and programming in the coming years.

This past year, we were on track to present an ambitious schedule of eight exhibitions, expand our public programs, and install several works around campus. I'm pleased to share that despite our closure in March, our team continued to work safely and creatively in pursuit of our mission.

Prior to our closure, we presented seven exhibitions, expanded our Student Lending Art Collection and programming, and unveiled a major new public art acquisition with Alicja Kwade's *Against The Run*. We received significant coverage in local, national, and international publications including the New York Times, *Artforum*, *Boston Globe*, *Art in America*, and more. By December, we reached a milestone with our twentieth List Project exhibition: Becca Albee. Not long after, we said farewell to Curator and Director of Exhibitions, Henriette Huldish and welcomed Natalie Bell to take on the role of Curator.

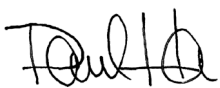
When we received the announcement from MIT and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that we would need to close our doors due to the threat of COVID-19, our team jumped into action on three fronts:

1. We worked swiftly to collect the artwork on loan through the Student Lending Program as students packed up and headed home.
2. We revamped our website to host List At Home weekly content.
3. And we created a plan for reorganizing the exhibition schedule for 2021 and beyond.

Since then, we, like most institutions, switched over to an entirely virtual semester of programming. We've hosted artist talks with Nayland Blake and Cindy Ji Hye Kim, presented a new series in anticipation of an exhibition with Rit Premnath, and conducted a postcard exchange project.

I am proud of how our staff worked together and adapted to our new normal. I was also very proud to be part of the MIT Community and one of the very few museums across the country that wasn't forced to furlough or lay off anyone on our team. It is because of the leadership at MIT and our leading philanthropic supporters that we are able to take care of our staff, continue serving our community, and plan for the future.

I miss seeing each and every one of you in our galleries, and I eagerly await a day when we can experience art together again. Thank you for supporting us through a truly unprecedented year. We couldn't do this work without you. We don't know exactly what 2021 will hold, but I look forward to using this upcoming year as an opportunity for growth, experimentation, and new beginnings.



Paul Ha  
Director, MIT List Visual Arts Center



## Exhibitions

In FY20 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020) the List Center presented seven exhibitions inside our galleries. We hosted our two most attended opening receptions and connected with diverse audiences all around the globe. When our galleries were closed due to COVID-19 on March 13, we worked quickly to continue programming and audience engagement through digital platforms.



### *List Projects: Farah Al Qasimi*

July 30–October 20, 2019

"In the most recent work of the photographer Farah Al Qasimi, people are largely absent, or they are merely suggested. But the interior scenes — all shot in Ms. Qasimi's home country, the United Arab Emirates — are full of color and pattern." - *New York Times*



### Student Lending Art Program Exhibition

August 27–September 15, 2019

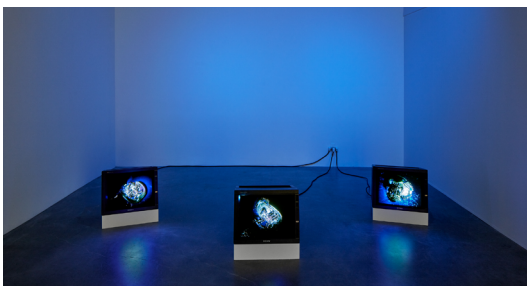
Since 1977 the Student Lending Art Program Exhibition and Lottery has provided MIT students the enviable opportunity to borrow, appreciate, and live with a museum quality work of original art for the academic year.



### *Alicja Kwade: In Between Glances*

October 18, 2019–January 5, 2020

"If that feels like a lot to wrap your mind around, then Kwade has you right where she wants you. For her, instability is key, and even the most solid-seeming of things has no right to claim the privilege of permanence." - *Boston Globe*



### *List Projects 20: Becca Albee*

December 12, 2019–February 9, 2020

".... this presentation of her work subtly and carefully compels us to feel a sense of intimate and geologic temporality simultaneously, setting into relief the necessary work of collective grief." - *The Brooklyn Rail*



### *Christine Sun Kim: Off the Charts*

February 7–July 19, 2020

"With titles such as Shit Hearing People Say to Me and Why I Play the Deaf Card (all works cited, 2019), these infographics are funny, self-deprecating, prideful, revealing, and emotional, much like a good stand-up routine." - *Artforum*



### *Colored People Time: Mundane Futures, Quotidian Pasts, Banal Presents*

February 7–July 19, 2020

"Curator Meg Onli explores the daily experiences of black people. In particular, she's very interested in language, and how black people use language to steer through inequality. She's curated pieces of art that are distinct, but that are also in conversation with one another." - *WBUR The Artery*



### *List Projects 21: Rami George*

March 19–October 11, 2020

"George's show at the List Center features a room within a room—a metaphor for buried memories—based on the floorplan of the Monastery's seminar hall. Inside, a new video plays on a monitor installed alongside displays of printed ephemera."

- *Art In America*

## Student Lending Art Program

### About the MIT Student Lending Art Program

Since 1977, the Student Lending Art Program Exhibition and Lottery has provided MIT students the enviable opportunity to borrow, appreciate, and live with a museum quality work of original art for the academic year. Lovingly known as SLAP, this unique and popular tradition is free and available to all MIT students. The collection includes more than 650 framed original works of art; primarily prints and photographs by leading contemporary artists. Works from the collection are distributed each fall through a lottery system to MIT students. Once the lottery has come to a close, any remaining unclaimed works are available for students to take home on a first come, first serve basis, once the exhibition closes.

The List Center added 13 artworks to the Student Lending Art Collection this year, with support from the Friends of Boston Art and gifts of art. We are particularly grateful to Alan May and John Taylor for endowing funds that enable the List Center to add new works to this collection annually. These included works by List artists Erika Beckman and Jenny Holzer.

The 2019–2020 Student Lending Art Program featured 624 exhibited artworks, 604 of which were borrowed by MIT students. There were 4,700 visitors and 917 lottery entrants during the run of the exhibition.

When MIT shut down due to COVID-19, our team worked swiftly to safely collect artwork from students. For the first time, we offered off-campus students the option to extend their loan period to help minimize stress and logistics. After working to collect over 400 works in just 4 days, members of our team drove around campus to collect the remaining artworks that were left inside dorm rooms. We're pleased to share that every work is safe and accounted for.

As of 2019, the collection has been digitized and is now available to view online. Visit the SLAP Portal to see the entire collection, learn about student experiences with art, and view our recent acquisitions.





### 2019 Program Highlight: Evelyn Rydz's *A La Mesa*

For this year's Student Lending Art Program exhibition the List Center invited artist Evelyn Rydz to create a participatory installation and site of social engagement for MIT students and the MIT arts community. Rydz created an intimate table setting to gather, listen, share and create. *A La Mesa* called participants to the table to partake in a shared communal meal made up of diverse stories. It is a call to welcome strangers through acts of hospitality, trust and generosity. For *A La Mesa*, participants were invited to sit at the table and listen to stories culled from Rydz's previous community events. Through a series of drop-in projects and scheduled workshops, participants used layers of colorful shapes to create step-by-step recipe instruction booklets inspired by the people and food that form a sense of home.

### The Annual Exhibition

During the course of a two-week annual exhibition at the List Center, MIT students view available artworks in our galleries and select their top five preferences. After the conclusion of the exhibition, List Visual Arts Center staff administer the lottery. Students receive their result via email and are invited to pick up their artwork along with hanging materials from our staff.

### The Lottery

Typically about 900 students enter the lottery, vying for 600 works of art. After the lottery matches students with art, there is a LAST CALL for any remaining unclaimed artwork. Students line up (pictured above) in the morning to claim an available piece, thus ensuring that all of the works find a home!

### About the Collection

The exhibition included recently acquired works by Edgar Arceneaux, Rosa Barba, Nicole Eisenman, Cerith Wyn Evans, Alicja Kwade, Steve Locke, Barry McGee, Nick Mauss, Charlotte Moth, Albrecht Schnider, Myron Stout, and Rosemarie Trockel. In addition MIT students have the opportunity to borrow favorite works by artists such as Berenice Abbott, Louise Bourgeois, Harold "Doc" Edgerton, and Cindy Sherman, among many others.

# Programs

This year, the goal of furthering our outreach to MIT has remained at the center of our programming efforts. Additionally, we prioritized accessibility initiatives in both facilitated programs and in gallery experiences.

Standing program series, such as our Graduate Student Talks, were continued and strengthened and new programs, such as our January Independent Activities Period artist film screenings and discussions with MIT students, were developed based on the desire and interest of students to have greater access to exhibiting artists. The 2019 Student Lending Art Program and its coinciding events were a resounding success. Resident artist Evelyn Rydz's participatory project, *A La Mesa*, was installed in the lobby and added an element of direct engagement to the program. We were pleased to welcome leading scholars to participate in panel discussions and artist talks around three exhibitions: *List Projects: Farah Al Qasimi*, *Alicja Kwade: In Between Glances*, and *Colored People Time*.

When our doors closed in March due to COVID-19, our team worked quickly to engage our global audience digitally. We introduced a newsletter series titled #ListAtHome, hosted digital talks, and trained two new guides remotely to lead public art tours over zoom!

## Program Highlights



### Lavine Lecture: Celia Bertoia

September 17, 2019

Harry Bertoia created the *Altarpiece for MIT Chapel*, a brazed steel delicate sculpture inside Eero Saarinen's MIT Chapel (1955). Celia Bertoia, daughter of Harry Bertoia's lecture reflected on the work at MIT, demonstrated how this fit into his body of work and design, and give insights into the relationship between Saarinen and Bertoia.



### Panel: Visibility of Time

October 18, 2019

An interdepartmental collaboration with MIT's Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences presented Professor Taylor Perron in conversation with physical sciences historian Jimena Canales and Alicja Kwade about the visibility of time and how various disciplines see this concept from different perspectives. This panel discussion was the first to incorporate real-time captioning to increase accessibility; such captioning will be included in future lecture programs.



### ASL Tour

*Christine Sun Kim: Off the Charts* led to discussions about how we engage the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Expanding accessible offerings in relation to the exhibition served as a catalyst for further engagement with these communities, providing a framework for continued accessibility efforts in our public and digital programming initiatives. Prior to the Covid-19 closure, the List Center hosted American Sign Language tours and in-gallery discussions for our public audiences and the MIT community.



# Thank You

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The MIT List Visual Arts Center Advisory Committee, Paul Ha, and the entire staff extend our profound gratitude to the following donors for contributions between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

Their philanthropy ensures our ability to present experimental and engaging contemporary art that serves our local and global communities. Thank you for your support, we couldn't do this work without each of you

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