

# MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER

F o r I m m e d i a t e R e l e a s e

Contact:  
Mark Linga  
Public Relations Officer  
617.452.3586  
[mlinga@mit.edu](mailto:mlinga@mit.edu)

MIT List Visual Arts Center

## ***In the Holocene***

October 19, 2012-January 6, 2013

Opening Reception:  
Thursday, October 18, 6-8PM

Reception events:  
Film Screening, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre  
Superstudio: *Life, Supersurface & Ceremony*

7PM, ACT Cube

Florian Hecker performs *Speculative Solution*, an 8-channel electroacoustic sound composition

**September, 2012 (Cambridge, MA)**—The MIT List Visual Arts Center presents *In the Holocene*, a group exhibition on view from October 19, 2012, to January 6, 2013, that explores art as a speculative science, investigating principles more commonly associated with scientific or mathematical thought. Through the work of artists spanning from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the exhibition proposes that art acts as an investigative and experimental form of inquiry, addressing or amending what is explained through traditional scientific or mathematical means: entropy, matter, time (cosmic, geological), energy, topology, mimicry, perception, consciousness, et cetera. Sometimes employing scientific methodologies or the epistemology of science, other times investigating phenomena not restricted to any scientific discipline, art can be seen as a form of investigation into the physical and natural world. In this sense, both art and science share an interest in knowledge and phenomena, yet are subject to different logics, principles of reasoning, and conclusions. *In the Holocene* suggests that art is itself an account of the world, and can expand the potential of investigative and experimental activity.

Emblematic of the central premise of the exhibition, Germaine Kruijff's film *Aesthetics as a Way of Survival* (2009) documents the phenomenon in which the male bowerbird arranges colored objects as part of its courtship display, suggesting an aesthetic faculty at work even within evolutionary behavior. Friedrich Fröbel devised a pedagogical system centered on childhood learning through color and form. Helen Mirra's sculptures address geological time and extremophile forms of living matter. Robert Smithson's interest in crystallography

-more-

and entropy are reflected in both his *Four-Sided Vortex* (1965) and *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970). Daria Martin's *Sensorium Tests* (2012) revolves around a recently recognized neurological condition called "mirror—touch synaesthesia." For FT Marinetti, abstract mathematical objects could stimulate in his readers the subjective experience of the sounds, smells, and motions of modern life; Iannis Xenakis' *Diamorphoses* (1957) and *Mycenae Alpha* (1978) utilize mathematical operations as compositional strategies for creating music. Alfred Jarry's "pataphysics," John Latham's "Time—Base Theory," and João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva's "Abyssology" are all examples of speculative systems of knowledge constructed by the artists to address gaps in historical, philosophical, and scientific discourse.

*In the Holocene* features a number of works that extend out and beyond the gallery space. Mario Merz's *Fibonacci Sequence* (2002), a series of ten neon numbers installed along the edge of the roof of the List Center will be seen by pedestrian traffic on Ames St. Ben Rivers's film installation *Origin of the Species* (2008), sited in the atrium lobby incorporates a dwelling assembled from discarded and reclaimed building materials with a film portrait of an elderly man who devises his own technologies for day-to-day subsistence while pondering the workings of the universe and the scope of human knowledge. The lobby space will also include a newly commissioned text based work by Lawrence Wiener.

The title of the exhibition is drawn from Max Frisch's 1980 novella, *Man in the Holocene*, in which an aging narrator gathers selections from books and encyclopedias, preserving human knowledge as a deluge threatens to destroy his village. Of particular interest to the narrator is knowledge about our geological present, the Holocene, starting with the last Ice Age and which includes the development of human culture. The Holocene is thus our period of geological time, in which we attempt to understand the physical and natural laws of the universe and the origins of life, while also coping with the significant extent of our own impact on the Earth's ecosystems.

***In the Holocene* includes a series of Thursday night film screenings and related public programs. See attached program schedule for more details or see [http://listart.mit.edu/upcoming\\_events](http://listart.mit.edu/upcoming_events)**

**Featured artists:** Berenice Abbott, Leonor Antunes, John Baldessari, Rosa Barba, Robert Barry, Uta Barth, Joseph Beuys, Alighiero Boetti, Carol Bove, Marcel Broodthaers, Matthew Buckingham, Roger Caillois, Hanne Darboven, Thea Djordjadze, Jimmie Durham, Terry Fox, Friedrich Fröbel, Aurélien Froment, Jack Goldstein, Laurent Grasso, João Maria Gusmão & Pedro Paiva, Florian Hecker, Alfred Jarry, Rashid Johnson, Joan Jonas, On Kawara, Kitty Kraus, Germaine Kruij, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, F.T. Marinetti, Daria Martin, John McCracken, Mario Merz, Helen Mirra, Trevor Paglen, Man Ray, Ben Rivers, Pamela Rosenkranz, Robert Smithson, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Superstudio, Georges Vantongerloo, Lawrence Weiner, and Iannis Xenakis.

*In the Holocene* is curated by João Ribas, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

*In the Holocene* is made possible by an Emily Hall Tremaine Exhibition Award. Additional support for this exhibition has been generously provided by the Council for the Arts at MIT, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Office of the Associate Provost at MIT, with special thanks to Centre Iannis Xenakis, the MIT List Visual Arts Center Advisory Committee, and the Friends of the List.



-more-

## About the MIT List Visual Arts Center

In 1950 MIT established the Hayden Gallery which was located in the Charles Hayden Memorial Library. The gallery served as a venue for a program of changing exhibitions. In 1985 the Hayden Gallery was renamed the List Visual Arts Center in recognition of a gift from Vera and Albert List that relocated the gallery to its current location on the ground floor of the Wiesner Building.

Over the years the MIT List Visual Arts Center has become highly respected as one of the most significant university art galleries in the country for its innovative, provocative, and scholarly exhibitions and publications. Just as MIT pushes at the frontiers of scientific inquiry, it is the mission of the List Visual Arts Center to explore challenging, intellectually inquisitive, contemporary art making in all media. In addition to presenting 4-6 exhibitions annually, the List Center presents a broad arrange of education programs in conjunction with its exhibition programming. The Center maintains and adds to MIT's permanent collection of 3,500 artworks that includes dozens of publicly sited sculptures and hundreds of paintings, prints, photographs, drawings and sculptures located throughout MIT's campus. The List Center is also responsible for commissioning new works for the MIT Public Art Collection through the MIT Percent-for-Art program, and organizing and administering the Student Loan Art Program, which lends over 500 works of art annually to MIT undergraduate and graduate students.

**Directions:** The MIT List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames Street, at the eastern edge of the MIT campus. It is in close proximity to Kendall Square, Memorial Drive, and the Longfellow Bridge.

By T, take the Red Line to the Kendall/MIT stop, follow Main Street west to Ames Street, turn left, and walk one block to the crosswalk. The MIT List Visual Arts Center, housed in a building identifiable by its white gridded exterior, will be on your left. Signage is on the building.

By car, coming across the Longfellow Bridge or from Memorial Drive, follow signs for Kendall Square. Limited metered parking is available on Ames Street. A parking garage is located at the Cambridge Center complex (entrance on Ames between Main and Broadway). Paid public parking is also available at the Marriott Hotel on Broadway.

**Gallery Hours:** Tues-Wed: 12-6PM; Thurs: 12-8PM; Fri-Sun: 12-6PM; closed Mondays and major holidays.

**Additional Information:** 617.253.4680 or <http://listart.mit.edu>

All exhibitions at the MIT List Visual Arts Center are free and open to the public.

-more-

## ***In the Holocene* Schedule of Public Programs**

Programs take place at Wiesner Building E-15, 20 Ames St., Cambridge, MA.

Bartos Theatre and the (ACT) Cube are located on the lower atrium level of the Wiesner Building.

### **Thursday, October 18, 2012 6-8pm**

Opening Reception

- 6:30 pm, Bartos Theater, Superstudio: *Life, Supersurface* (1972) & *Ceremony* (1973) DVD (22 minutes total running time)
- 7:00pm, ACT Cube, Florian Hecker performs *Speculative Solution*, an 8-channel electroacoustic sound composition.

### **Thursday, October 25, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

Daria Martin, *Soft Materials* (2004), 16mm, (10 min 5 sec)

Daria Martin, *Sensorium Test* (2012), 16mm, (10 min)

Terry Fox, *The Children's Tapes* (1974), DVD, (30 min)

### **Thursday, November 1, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

Ben Rivers, *Slow Action* (2010), HD video, (45 min)

Ben Rivers, *I Know Where I'm Going* (2009), 16mm, (29 min)

### **Wednesday, November 7, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

*The Last Pictures: An Artist Talk* by Trevor Paglen

### **Thursday, November 8, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

Superstudio, *Life Supersurface* (1972) & *Ceremony* (1973), DVD, (total running time 22 min)

Daria Martin, *Soft Materials* (2004), 16mm, (10 min 5 sec)

Daria Martin, *Sensorium Test* (2012), 16mm, (10 min)

### **Thursday, November 15, 6:30 pm, ACT Cube**

**Two works by Iannis Xenakis**

*Mycenae-Alpha* (1978), audio recording and video, (9 min 37 sec)

*Diamorphoses* (1957), audio recording, (6 min 54 sec)

### **Thursday, November 29, 6:30 pm, ACT Cube**

**Two works by Iannis Xenakis**

*Mycenae-Alpha* (1978), audio recording and video, (9 min 37 sec)

*Diamorphoses* (1957), audio recording, (6 min 54 sec)

### **Thursday, December 6, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

Ben Rivers, *Slow Action* (2010), HD video, (45 min)

Ben Rivers, *I Know Where I'm Going* (2009), 16mm, (29 min)

### **Thursday, December 13, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

John Latham, *Erth* (1971), 16mm, (25 min)

John Latham, *Ants and Locusts* (1970), video, (3 min)

Terry Fox, *The Children's Tapes* (1974), DVD, (30 min)

-more-

**Thursday, December 20, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

Superstudio, *Life Supersurface* (1972) & *Ceremony* (1973), DVD, (total running time 22 min)

Daria Martin, *Soft Materials* (2004), 16mm, (10 min 5 sec)

Daria Martin, *Sensorium Test* (2012), 16mm, (10 min)

**Thursday, January 3, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre**

Ben Rivers, *Slow Action* (2010), HD Video, (45 min)

John Latham, *Ants and Locusts* (1970), video, (3 minutes)

***In the Holocene* Public Program Descriptions**

**Daria Martin, *Soft Materials* (2004), 16mm, (10 min 5 sec)**

*Soft Materials* was shot in the Artificial Intelligence Lab at the University of Zurich where scientists research 'embodied artificial intelligence'. The film introduces a group of robots to two performers, their bodies mimicking responding, and touching.

Screening Dates: October 25, November 8, December 20, 6:30pm, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**Daria Martin, *Sensorium Test* (2012), 16mm, (10 min)**

In *Sensorium Tests*, Martin uses staged scenarios based on an experiment into the neurological condition called 'mirror-touch synesthesia'. People with this condition experience a physical sense of touch on their own bodies when they see other people, or sometimes even objects being touched. The film explores how sensations might be created and shared between people and objects.

Screening Dates: October 25, November 8, December 20, 6:30pm, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**Terry Fox, *The Children's Tapes* (1974), DVD, (30 min)**

In a classic early video work, Terry Fox constructs a series of elementary experiments that illustrate fundamental principles of physical science: A piece of fruit is placed under a tin lid held up by a single match, as an unsuspecting fly approaches the bait; a spoon, balanced on a fork, holds a piece of ice until the melting water topples it; a candle in a pan of water is extinguished when a pot is placed over it.

Screening Dates: October 25, December 13, 6:30 pm Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**Ben Rivers, *Slow Action* (2010), HD video, (45 min)**

A post-apocalyptic science fiction film, *Slow Action* applies the idea of island biogeography—the study of how species and eco-systems evolve differently when isolated and surrounded by unsuitable habitat—to a conception of the Earth in a few hundred years.

Screening Dates: November 1, December 6, January 3, 6:30PM, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**Ben Rivers, *I Know Where I'm Going* (2009), 16mm, (29 min)**

Set outside of mainstream society, *I Know Where I'm Going* takes the form of a fragmented road trip where Rivers sets out to meet and interview a number of individuals living off the beaten path, while ruminating on what traces might be left of humans in a 100 million years.

Screening Dates: November 1, December 6, January 3, 6:30PM, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15

***The Last Pictures: An Artist Talk* by Trevor Paglen**

**Wednesday November 7, 6:30 pm, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15**

Inspired in part by ancient cave paintings, nuclear waste warning signs, and Carl Sagan's Golden Records of the 1970s, artist/geographer Trevor Paglen has developed a collection of one hundred images that have been

-more-

etched onto an ultra-archival, golden silicon disc. The disc, commissioned by Creative Time and developed with researchers at MIT, will then be sent into orbit onboard the Echostar XVI satellite in the Fall of 2012, as both a time capsule and a message to the future. The University of California Press and Creative Time published a book in conjunction with the project. Copies of the publication will be available for sale and following Paglen's talk there will be a book-signing reception.

**Iannis Xenakis, *Mycenae-Alpha* (1978), audio recording and video, (9 min 37 sec)**

Composed in 1978 on the UPIC graphic computer system at the Centre d'Etudes de Mathematique et Automatique Musicales (Center for the Study of Mathematics and Automatic Music) in Paris, *Mycenae-Alpha* is a mono tape manipulated between two or among four speakers. By taking the shapes and movements of natural phenomena, such as molecules in a gas, Xenakis developed a method of digitally mapping those images into the computer and using them to trigger sound events of similar aural shapes. *Mycenae Alpha* is a composition of dense and intense textures, of phase-shifting waveforms rich in harmonics that cascade, flutter, crash, and scream like sirens in a vast cosmological territory.

Screening Dates: November 15, November 29, The (ACT) Cube, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**Iannis Xenakis, *Diamorphoses* (1957), audio recording, (6 min 54 sec)**

The studio at Radio France dedicated to the creation of new sounds was launched in 1948 by electroacoustic pioneer Pierre Schaeffer. Iannis Xenakis was quickly fascinated by the expanded possibilities of musique concrète, and by 1955 had begun working there, as part of what became known as the *Groupe de Recherches Musicales* (GRM). Between 1957 and 1962, he completed a number of pieces, the first being *Diamorphoses*. The sound-world Xenakis designed for this work combines the violent noises of jet engines, trains, and an earthquake with high bell-like sounds. The contrasting character of these sonic layers interacts with shifting densities and successions of events to produce a complex, yet balanced form.

Screening Dates: November 15, November 29, The (ACT) Cube, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**Superstudio, *Life Supersurface* (1972) and, *Ceremony* (1973), DVD, (total running time 22 min)**

*Life Supersurface* was the first of five films entitled *Five Fundamental Acts* planned by the 1970's Italian architectural collective Superstudio. Addressing the first of these acts, the film presents "an alternative model for life on earth." Starring members of Superstudio, *Ceremony* addresses the significance of tradition and domestic ritual, illustrating how life spontaneously erupts around ceremonies.

Screening Dates: November 8, December 20, 6:30pm, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**John Latham, *Erth* (1971), 16mm, (25 min)**

The launch of the first Soviet Sputnik of October 1957 to the American moon landing of July 1969 generated numerous photographic depictions of earth as seen from space. John Latham was fascinated by these images because they provided the perspective that he felt was necessary to perceive our temporary habitation of the planet in relation to what he called the 'whole event', the Universe. Utilizing still photos of the earth, spoken commentary providing a countdown of the age of the universe, and single frame shots of every page of a volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica Latham creates a visual countdown of the age of the universe, through time and space, to the surface of the earth.

Screening Dates: December 13, 6:30pm, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15

**John Latham, *Ants and Locusts* (1970), video, (3 minutes)**

As part of a solo show at Lisson Gallery in 1970, called *Least event/one second drawings/blind work/24 second painting*, John Latham staged a number of offsite events which he described as follows in the catalogue: "During the third week of the exhibition the gallery will be at places other than Bell Street, for short periods, probably not much more than a minute at any place, and the show there will be recorded on video or film." In the end, three of these were filmed. *Ants and Locusts* was shot at the Insect House in Regents Park on 24 November 1970.

Screening Dates: December 13, January 3, 6:30pm, Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Bldg. E15