MIT School of Architecture + Planning
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DATEBOOK
SPRING 2014

FEBRUARY 27
Goldstein Lecture: Shigeru Ban—Recent Work. MIT Room 10-250, 6-30PM.

FEBRUARY 28
Rethinking Property: A symposium featuring leading scholar-practitioners from over twelve countries exploring property rights in land today. Barton Theater, MIT Room E15-070, 5-8PM.

MARCH 20
Scholar Lecture: Bareaal Velha, Barcelona—Geographies. MIT Room 10-25Q, 6:30PM.

MARCH 24–28
MIT Real Estate Forum. Leaders in industry and academics discuss the trends, technology and new ideas shaping the future of the real estate industry. London. (mitcre.mit.edu)

APRIL 3–AUGUST 15
Hans Scharoun: Architect and Visionary. An exhibit of Scharoun’s graphic art including 25 rarely-seen watercolor renderings from the 1940s. Weekdays 9AM-5PM, SA+P’s Wolk Gallery, MIT Room 7-338.

APRIL 10–11
Scaling Infrastructure. Political leaders, infrastructural engineers, design professionals and academicians discuss game-changing ideas on infrastructure. Media Lab Complex. (cau.mit.edu)

APRIL 18–19
Public Space. A symposium and exhibition celebrating the legacy of ACT professor and renowned artist Antoni Muntadas. Media Lab Complex. (act.mit.edu)

MAY 28
Sheryl Sandberg in Conversation with Joi Ito. Sandberg is Coo of Facebook and author of Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead. Media Lab, Third Floor Atrium. 2-3:30PM

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(Cover) SA+P’s Azra Akšamija designed the prayer space of the Islamic cemetery in Altach, Austria, winner of the highly prestigious 2013 Aga Khan Award. Pictured: the Qibla wall, executed in the form of three curtains made of stainless steel mesh and carrying an array of wooden shingles; the curtains create an abstract form of the mihrab, or prayer niche. An additional layer of curtains, mounted above the mihrab part, simulates the decorative element of traditional Ottoman mihrabs, or miqarnas.

(Photograph AKAA/Marc Lins, 2013)
A few weeks before this issue of PLAN went to bed, I announced my decision to step down in June from my position as dean. I’d originally planned to hold the position five years but it ended up taking ten to do what I considered to be the most important things—to consolidate the school’s six locations, to make crucial hires and promotions and to increase the school’s overall visibility.

At this point I feel I’ve achieved most of the things I came here to do. Forty percent of the school’s current faculty was hired during my tenure, 38 percent have been tenured and 55 percent promoted. The school has been centralized from a diaspora of six locations to two dense concentrations, and applications for the MArch and masters in MAS programs have both more than doubled, while applications for the SMArchS program have risen by 85 percent and applications for the MCP program have risen by 70 percent.

All in all, in the last ten years I believe we’ve become more like MIT at large—we have more labs, more research, more collaboration within and outside the school—and the new Center for Advanced Urbanism represents our increased ability to operate on the international stage.

It has been an honor to be part of this inspirational community: being here has enabled me to see the direction of the future, and I will stay on the faculty so I can continue to play a small part in bringing that future about. And so I can take my time to thank all the people, here and elsewhere, who have helped this to be a successful run.

—Adéle Naude Santos

Researchers at SA+P’s Center for Bits and Atoms have developed a lightweight composite material that could revolutionize the assembly of buildings and bridges and other large structures such as airplanes and spacecraft, dikes and levees. The new approach is described in the August 15 issue of Science, co-authored by postdoc Kenneth Cheung and Center director Neil Gershenfeld.

Made from tiny interlocking parts that can be snapped together much like the bricks of a child’s construction toy, the chainmail-like composite is ten times stiffer than existing lightweight materials so that pound-for-pound less of it is needed to carry a given load—a factor that could greatly reduce the costs of construction and assembly while allowing greater design flexibility.

The mass-produced parts can easily be disassembled and reassembled to repair damage, or to recycle the parts into different configurations, and the team is now developing an assembler robot that can crawl, insect-like, over the surface of a growing structure, adding pieces one by one.

Although this new material is made by linking many small components—and structural failures in traditional composite manufacturing typically start in the joints between components—it behaves like an elastic solid, with a stiffness equal to that of much heavier composites, because forces are distributed through the lattice-work inside the pieces.

What’s more, when conventional composite materials are stressed to the breaking point, they tend to fail abruptly and at large scale. But this new modular system tends to fail only incrementally, making it more reliable and more easily repaired.

Furthermore, there is no risk of the pieces falling apart on their own because, like the buckle on a seat belt, they are designed to be strong in the directions of forces applied in normal use and require pressure in a different direction in order to be released.

The possibility of linking multiple types of parts introduces a new degree of design freedom into composite manufacturing. Combining different part types can result in structures that bend in different ways in response to loads—instead of moving only at fixed joints, for instance, the entire arm of a robot or wing of an airplane could change shape.

In addition to Gershenfeld and Cheung, the project included alumna Sarah Hovsepian (SM’12, Architecture), now at NASA’s Ames Research Center, and Joseph Kim, an undergraduate student in electrical engineering and computer science. The work was supported by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and the sponsors of the Center for Bits and Atoms, with Spirit Aerosystems collaborating on the composite development.
Creating Responsive Environments
Making Buildings More Sensitive to Their Users and Their Usage

To integrate technologies for lighting and gesture-based control with issues in climate control, researchers have developed a personal sensing and control device in the form of a wristband they call WristQue. With sensors moved off the walls of a room and onto the people in it, automatic controls are able to react to conditions where people actually are rather than arbitrary locations on the wall. WristQue can also identify and locate individual users wherever they are in the building, so the building systems can adjust conditions throughout to suit those who are currently using any given space.

To help with coordinating all these sorts of sensor systems, the Responsive Environments Group has created DoppelLab, a virtual environment that represents the multimodal sensor data produced by a building and its inhabitants. Using the popular game engine Unity 3D, they have created architectural models of SA+P’s new Media Lab complex that visualize streams of sensor data in real time.

Audio levels are represented by the extension of green-to-red colored ‘snakes’. Flames correspond to temperature sensed by built-in thermostats—reddish for hotter rooms, bluer for cooler—and a temperature-and-humidity sensor network is visualized as color-changing fog and cubes. By visualizing all this data at once in real time, DoppelLab provides a platform for optimal monitoring and control of multiple sensor systems in a responsive environment. Such data also provides some fun. The Data-Driven Elevator Music project transmits audio streams and real-time measures of motion, temperature, humidity and light levels to the building’s glass elevators, composing them into a sound installation. With audio streams positioned to simulate real locations in the building, visitors can hear the activities surrounding them as they move from floor to floor.

The ongoing work of the Responsive Environments Group extends far beyond the projects mentioned here to include dozens of applications in low-power sensing, printed electronics, smart tools, medical instrumentation, RFID, wearable computing and interactive media. For more information on any of their work, consult the group’s website or contact group director Joe Paradiso at joe@medialab.mit.edu.

Creating Responsive Environments
Making Buildings More Sensitive to Their Users and Their Usage

With modern buildings increasingly controlled by computerized infrastructure for heating, cooling, lighting, etc., opportunities for optimizing energy consumption and climate are likewise on the increase. But many buildings continue to be run inefficiently because of the nature of their control systems, systems that are often constrained by limited sensor input and badly designed user interfaces.

Researchers in the Responsive Environments Group at the Media Lab are exploring an array of approaches to overcome such limitations. One such approach addresses the problem of control panels that are difficult to decipher because the controls are badly grouped and mapped or too abstracted from their intention. Relight, an intuitive gesture-based system, uses a wireless handheld device to control indoor lighting without confusion; the user simply points the device at a light fixture to select it, then rotates his or her hand to control the dimming level.

The Radix Endeavor
A New Online Game to Help Teach High School Math and Biology

With a $3M grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, SA+P Education Arcade has designed, built and researched a Massive Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG) to help high school students learn math and biology. The project is one of several efforts at SA+P exploring new approaches to education. Massive Multiplayer Online Games are a hugely popular genre in which many players’ avatars can interact and cooperate in a shared virtual world, working together to understand how that world works and using that knowledge to progress in the game. In providing collaborative, self-directed learning situations, they are uniquely suitable for teaching STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), giving students the chance to explore those topics in a way that deepens their knowledge while also developing 21st-century skills.

The story of The Radix Endeavor is set in an earth-like world in which science is being kept from the people by an evil ruler; the players are part of an underground group that’s trying to take science back for the people for their own benefit. Entering the game, players find themselves on an island full of unknown plants and animals, and mysterious places to be discovered, along with many problems to be solved.

They come to join a group called The Curiosi who ask for help in finding solutions to some of the island’s worst environmental and social problems. By figuring out the cause of the problems, how the natural systems work and which factors need to be changed, players can improve the lives of the people and maybe even save the island from destruction. The game’s tasks involve a variety of topics in high school biology, geometry, algebra, and probability and statistics, all designed to align with Common Core standards in mathematics and Next Generation Science Standards for high school science.

The game uses back-end data logging to track players’ strategies, progress and potential misconceptions, all analyzed in real time to offer feedback to the player; the data is also synthesized and displayed on a ‘Teacher Portal’ website to help teachers monitor student progress and tailor their lessons to students’ needs.

The game was developed to assess the potential of an MMOG for STEM learning, as well as the specific ways in which students acquire and apply knowledge in an online environment. By the end of the three-year project, the game is expected to have 10,000 users nationwide. The team is actively seeking high school math and biology teachers to enroll their students in the research pilot at http://bit.ly/l29eiP. Anyone can try out the game for free at radixendeavor.org.

As director of the Education Arcade and the Scheller Teacher Education Program, Associate Professor Eric Klopfer has been conducting research into educational gaming tools for more than ten years. Other educational research efforts at SA+P include Mitch Resnick’s Lifelong Kindergarten Group, developing new technologies for creative learning experiences, and Deb Roy’s Cognitive Machines group, exploring children’s language acquisition, concept formation and attention.
Azra Akšamija, Assistant Professor in SA+P’s Art, Culture and Technology Program, has been recognized with a 2013 Aga Khan Award for her part in the creation of an Islamic Cemetery in Austria.

Designed by Austrian architect Bernardo Bader, the cemetery in Altach is the first of its kind in the region of Vorarlberg and only the second in Austria. Akšamija was commissioned to create the interior of the prayer space, including the Qibla wall and the prayer rugs. As visitors enter the prayer space, the Qibla wall appears like a wooden shingle wall, a reference to local tradition, but the shingles are directed towards Mecca, indicating the prayer direction. Six prayer rugs in different shades indicate the prayer rows, their color gradient brightening in the direction of Mecca to further emphasize the direction of prayer. The carpets were hand woven in the kilim workshop of artist Amila Smajović, professor at the International University of Sarajevo, by female survivors of the 1990s war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Opened in June 2012, the cemetery in Altach serves all Islamic communities from the towns and cities of the Vorarlberg region, allowing for burials according to the Islamic rites. (Previously, the Muslim population had to leave the region for burials.) For Muslims in Vorarlberg, the cemetery represents a milestone in the integration of Islamic culture in Europe. Its openness and its design, grounded in both local and Islamic traditions, embody a constructive dialogue between cultures, setting an important sign for coexistence in Austria and demonstrating that art and architecture can facilitate such a shift.

The cemetery, and Akšamija’s prayer space, also received the International Piranesi Award in 2012, named after the 18th century Italian artist and architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi; it was also nominated for the DETAIL Prize 2012 and the 2013 European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture Mies van der Rohe Award.

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is part of the Geneva-based Aga Khan Trust for Culture. Among others, the Trust supports the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) and the Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT and Harvard, as well as ArchNet.org, a major online resource on Islamic architecture.

This story is based on a report by Laura Anca Chichisan, Program Assistant in SA+P’s Art, Culture and Technology Program.

On view in SA+P’s Wolk Gallery from December—March, Solidarity Works presents recent work by Azra Akšamija, Class of 1992 Career Development Professor in the Department of Architecture and Assistant Professor of the Arts in SA+P’s Art, Culture and Technology Program. Solidarity Works explores how art and architecture can act as vehicles for community-making, both real and imagined, and generate a sense of solidarity in times of conflict and crisis. Bridging art, architecture and history, Akšamija’s exploration of heritage dynamics and cultural convergence through Islamic architecture includes projects in a variety of media, including textile, furniture, architectural sculpture, video, audio and networked productions.

In addition to presenting a range of Akšamija’s works exploring the visibility of Muslims in Europe and the US, the exhibit includes photo documentation of the Islamic cemetery at Altach, Austria—winner of the 2013 Aga Khan Award—for which Akšamija designed the Qibla wall-curtain and rugs for the prayer room. Akšamija’s perspective on conflicts over identity, territory and history, as they are carried out through cultural institutions and religious architecture, are particularly relevant for the ongoing socio-political conflicts related to Islam in the West.

On view in SA+P’s Wolk Gallery last fall, Sidewalk City presented the latest experimental maps developed by the MIT Sidewalk Laboratory (SLAB), a research group developing new methods of mapping in order to re-conceptualize urban space and find more inclusive ways to design and govern the 21st century city. Directed by SA+P’s Annette Kim, SLAB pursues the practice of mapping as a way to ground our understanding of how space is socially contested, negotiated and constructed; to chart the connections between the built environment, social institutions and human experience; and to propose new narratives and interventions.

The work in this exhibit focused on the side-walks of Ho Chi Minh City, perhaps the city’s most important and most overlooked public space—so narrow that they require intimate, local negotiations and yet so vast and networked they hold great potential for bringing people together in a humane and civic society. But despite their role as the major space by which people experience Ho Chi Minh City, the side-walks disappear in conventional cartography.

SLAB’s new mapping systems seek to celebrate and legitimize the sidewalk life of the city. Based on street vendor interviews, physical survey, policy analysis, photography, historical records and tourism study, the maps explore what the city’s sidewalk life contributes to urban life, an effort that bridges urban design and social science research while also aiming to make a practical intervention in the city’s landscape.

Sidewalk City
Mapping the Unmapped

Solidarity Works: Politics of Cultural Memory
Art and Architecture as Vehicles for Community-Making

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GLOBAL HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE GOES GLOBAL
NEW ONLINE COURSE RECEIVES FLOOD OF TRIBUTES FROM STUDENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Last fall, associate dean Mark Jarzombek taught his popular class, A Global History of Architecture, as a Massive Open Online Course presented through edX, an online learning initiative originated at MIT in 2011 as MITx. The first such course to be offered from SAxP, it generated an extraordinary outpouring of gratitude from its students.

Designed for a general audience at the undergraduate level, the course began with First Societies and extended to the 15th century, focusing on different architectural ‘moments’ that provide a rich understanding of our architectural heritage from the scale of trans-regional histories to the local history of a building and its site.

Since 2011, Jarzombek has taught the course on campus to an average of 35 students per class. But this year, in addition to that offering, he registered 25,000 students from all over the world. The class included a ninety-year-old building and its site.

In addition to lectures and readings, the online version included a great deal of interaction in the form of questions, quizzes and assessments, with maps, diagrams, timelines and even different parts of buildings that students were asked to assemble themselves. The participants also developed a Facebook page for the course so they could interact with each other, engaging in a truly international conversation on global history.

The material in the lectures was supplemented by readings from the textbook A Global History of Architecture (Wiley Press, 2006), one of Jarzombek’s two highly regarded books in the field. (The other is Architecture of First Societies: A Global Perspective, just released from Wiley Press.)

The course was taught in a Eurocentric fashion, covering Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. But in a global world based on economic inter- relations, the limitations of that sort of myopia can have regrettable consequences.

Which was, in part, the aim of the course—to help build participants’ ability to think globally. Historically, architecture has been taught in a Eurocentric fashion, covering Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. But in a global world based on economic inter-relations, the limitations of that sort of myopia can have regrettable consequences.

In addition to Jarzombek, the teaching team included Vikram Prakash an architect/urbanist and historian from the University of Washington—he is also one of Jarzombek’s co-authors for A Global History of Architecture—and Ana Maria Leon, a PhD candidate in SAxP’s History Theory and Criticism program.
For the past two years, SA+P’s James Wescoat has been working with Afreen Siddiqi, a research scientist in MIT’s Engineering Systems Division, to examine the connections between energy, water, and food in the Indus River Basin of Pakistan, a line of inquiry that could ultimately lead to better management of these three important resources worldwide.

While many researchers are looking at the use of water in energy-related activities such as operating power plants and extracting hydrocarbons, less attention is being focused on the growing consumption of energy to provide irrigation for food production. But today as much as 70% of all fresh water consumed worldwide is used for agriculture; and in recent decades, many farmers have started pumping groundwa-
ter for irrigation purposes rather than relying solely on water from rivers and lakes—a prac-
tice that, in addition to using up energy, is also causing the water table to drop in some places.

In the Indus River Basin, for instance, farm-
ers are increasingly using ‘tubewells’ to get the water they need, boring stainless steel pipes to the underground aquifer and withdrawing water using diesel- or electric-powered pumps. While this growing dependence on tubewells is providing great benefits, the pumping is also causing energy-related problems; for farmers using diesel-powered pumps, the increasing cost of fuel becomes a burden; and from a national perspective, the use of electric pumps severely strains the power grid.

To that end, Wescoat and Siddiqi are develop-
ing models to help understand what’s going on and why. Using new and existing data, they are developing a model based on system dynam-
ics to track quantities and flows of energy, water, agricultural products and other elements throughout the system. The model will help decision makers assess the long-term impacts of proposed infrastructure and policy initiatives. It will also take into account the effect of climate change on future water availability — a major concern in this area because of possible changes in mountain snowfields and glaciers.

Once the model is fully implemented, Wescoat and Siddiqi will use it to examine a series of ‘what if’ scenarios. For example, what would happen to energy, water use and food production if new irrigation technologies were adopted? What would happen if micro-hydro or solar power systems were installed? And what would happen if changes in prices, taxes or poli-
cies caused farmers to grow crops that might require significantly more or less water?

The ability to answer such questions could lead to innovations in irrigation that could result in more efficient use of both energy and water, helping ensure the future availability of those resources while increasing crop production and food security for people worldwide.

IN SEARCH OF BETTER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
UNDERSTANDING THE LINKS BETWEEN ENERGY, WATER AND FOOD

The research could lead to innovations in irrigation that could result in more efficient use of both energy and water, helping ensure the future availability of these resources while increasing crop production and food security for people worldwide.

(Credit: James Wescoat)

SA+P’s James Wescoat is examining the interconnections among energy, water and food in Pakistan’s Indus River Basin, where all these resources are in short supply; the effort is one of several projects Wescoat has been pursuing as part of SA+P’s Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture. (Photo: James Wescoat)

The Value of Virtual Real Estate
Exploring the Economics of Internet Domain Names

Current research at SA+P’s Center for Real Estate is investigating the economics of virtual real estate using techniques customarily used for bricks-and-mortar and dirt. The project is thought to be the first time real world evaluation techniques have been applied to the world of Internet domain names.

The arrival of this approach is timely because consumers soon will be able to choose from nearly 1,000 new domains for their online presence. And because the perceived value of virtual real estate can fluctuate wildly from one sale to the next—the agreed-upon price more a function of gold rush fever than the trend of the entire sector—postdoc fellow Thies Lindenthal is developing ways to assess the potential value of that new real estate by analyzing the field of existing names.

There are, for instance, about 50,000 .com domain names that include the word ‘Boston’. Bostonrealty.com, Boston360.com, Priscillaofboston.com, etc. It is possible to see when each of those names was registered and to determine whether demand for a Boston identi-
fier is growing or declining then use that trend to estimate pent-up demand.

As the new names are released to the mar-
tet, Lindenthal will establish a panel of DNS regis-
ters, registrars and domain end-users to track the actual market for new names, look-
ing to see how different launching strategies affect success. Going forward, he aims to set up an ongoing tracking system to analyze that market data and make it available to the pub-
lic, free of charge, on the web. At which domain name, however, has yet to be determined.

MORE SAP+P.EDU

Xavier de Souza Briggs
Appointed VP of Ford Foundation
Will Head Economic Opportunity and Assets Program

Xavier de Souza Briggs, associate professor of sociology and urban planning and associate head of SA+P’s Department of Urban Studies + Planning, has been appointed vice presi-
dent of the Economic Opportunity and Assets program of the Ford Foundation, effective January 1.

The One of three core areas of the foundation’s work, the Economic Opportunity and Assets program works to promote economic fair-
ness, advance sustainable development and build just and inclusive cities in the US, Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

In his new role, Briggs will oversee all of the program’s global grant making and serve as an officer of the Board of Trustees; he will also oversee Ford’s field offices in Beijing, Jakarta and New Delhi. “I’m humbled and excited by this new opportunity,” he said. “I’m eager to bring to this role a grounded—yet-global perspective we stress at MIT.”

From January 2009 to August 2011, while on a previous public service leave from the fac-
culty, Briggs served as associate director of the Office of Management and Budget in the White House where he oversaw six cabinet agen-
cies—the departments of Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Justice, Commerce and Homeland Security.

It was his second call to Washington. From 1998 to 1999, he was a senior policy official in the Clinton Administration, as Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He has also been an adviser to The World Bank, The Rockefeller Foundation and other major groups, and has worked closer to the streets as a community planner in locales including the South Bronx, where his work in the early 1990s garnered a national award from the American Planning Association.


MORE SAP+P.EDU

A renowned author, commentator and educator, Briggs has led groundbreaking research in economic opportunity, democracy and governance, and racial and ethnic diversity in cities and metropolitan regions. His research and planning work has received awards and fellowships from the National Science Foundation, American Planning Association and the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management. (Photo: L. Barry Hetherington)
New research into the power of community engagement in the design of public spaces was presented at SA+P in October with the release of a report entitled Places in the Making. Led by Susan Silberberg, lecturer in urban design and planning, the research was funded in part by Southwest Airlines which has invested in placemaking projects in Detroit M1 and Providence RI.

Placemaking is the practice of designing, creating and programming public spaces around the needs and desires of the community of users. The research asserts that the placemaking process contributes as much benefit for community empowerment as it does for creating public spaces themselves, blurring the lines between laypersons and professionals to create a strong ‘community of makers’.

Examples of successful efforts examined in the report include the Fargo/Moorhead community of makers. In the report, Silberberg writes, ‘the community of makers is self-empowerying as it does for creating public places.

For the first six months of the program, students develop technical and professional skills in the classroom, then they apply those skills during the second six months on an internship, earning up to 23 college credits and a weekly stipend with support from staff advisors, professional mentors and a network of community-based partners.

The revitalization of New York City’s Bryant Park is one of the most dramatic examples of successful placemaking in the last half-century. (Photo: Flickr)

This year, for the second year in a row, SA+P has hosted an intern from the Boston chapter of the nation-wide Year Up program—a one-year, intensive training sequence that provides underprivileged adults between the ages of 18 and 24 with a combination of skill development, college credits and professional experience. For the first six months of the program, students develop technical and professional skills in the classroom, then they apply those skills during the second six months on an internship, earning up to 23 college credits and a weekly stipend with support from staff advisors, professional mentors and a network of community-based partners.

Last year, three Year Up students were interns at MIT—Mohamed Ghazziou was at Sloan, Carl Azar was at MIT and AnnaLisa Centeno was at SA+P’s Media Lab working with Peter Pflanz in information systems and technology; she is now employed there full time as a computer technician.

This year’s Year Up student at SA+P was Jason James, a finance intern working with Dineen Doucette in the dean’s office and Doug Le Vie in architecture headquarters. James started work as an administrative assistant at SA+P’s Center for Advanced Urbanism in February. Since its founding in 2000, the Year Up Program has graduated over 4000 young adults, 84% of whom find employment or enter college full-time within four months of completing the sequence; those who start working earn an average of $15 per hour—the equivalent of $30K per year. Nationwide, the program is now operating in twelve cities and has more than 250 corporate and government partners.

For more information: yearup.org.

(Left) Jason James: “When a friend of mine told me about the Year Up program, I wasn’t that interested at first. But after speaking with a recruiter when I researched the program it captivated me. I figured I could sacrifice a full-time paycheck for a year for the opportunity, the skills and the network.”

(Right) AnaLisa Centeno: “When I started the application process, I didn’t really know what I was getting myself into. But after getting accepted and meeting the group of people who have now become my second family, I realized that I was exactly where I belonged.”

(Photos: Judith M. Danek/SA+P)

Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson has been named the recipient of MIT’s 2014 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts, which includes a $300K cash prize, a campus residency and a gala held in his honor. The award celebrates innovative talents in all arts disciplines and is one of the most generous cultural honors in the US.

Renowned for the multi-faceted practice of his studio in Berlin, Eliasson creates ambitious public art projects, large-scale installations, architectural pavilions, public art projects, major art exhibitions, spatial experiments and sensory experiences; his studio currently numbers about seventy craftsmen, architects, geometers and art historians. In April 2009, he founded the Institute for Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments), a five-year experiment in education.

“Previous winners of the award include SA+P’s Richard Leacock (1986), alumna I.M. Pei (1984) and Gyorgy Kepes (1974), founder of SA+P’s seminal Center for Advanced Visual Studies. Also among the award’s 34 previous honorees were engineer/Architect Santiago Calatrava (2005); Diller + Scofidio, interdisciplinary art (1999); Thomas Harvan & Richard Meyer, archivision (1993); and developer Paul Tishman (1976).”

Created by the Council for the Arts at MIT in 1976, the McDermott Award honors geophysicist Eugene McDermott (1923-1973), colophon of Texas Instruments and long-time friend of MIT.

(Left) Eliasson’s façade for the Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre (with Henning Larsen Architects) was awarded the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture Mies van der Rohe Award in 2013.

(Below right) Eliasson creates a light drawing using his Little Sun, a solar-powered lamp designed for use in areas of the world without access to electricity (developed with engineer Frederik Ottesen).

(Photos: Courtesy of Olafur Eliasson)
Jennifer Pahlka, founder of Code for America—a nonprofit dedicated to promoting openness, participation and efficiency in local government—has been named winner of the 2013-2014 Kevin Lynch Award. SA+P presents the award every other year for outstanding scholarship and/or practice in urban design, planning and landscape architecture.

Pahlka founded Code for America in 2009 to bring the innovative and creative skills of technology and web-industry professionals to cities. Since 2011, its fellowship program has partnered local governments with web developers and designers to create open-source apps that help solve pressing urban problems. One felicitous outcome has been that these apps organically go viral and spread to other cities, thereby eliminating time-consuming and costly bureaucratic red tape.

Pahlka said in her 2012 Ted Talk, Code for America ‘suggests that government could work better, not more like a private company, as many people think it should, and not even like a tech company, but more like the internet itself. And that means permission-less, it means open, it means generative.’ Pahlka is currently on leave from her position at Code for America while she serves as the Chief Technology Officer for government innovation.

The Lynch Award was established in 1988 to honor the memory of Kevin Lynch, an MIT alumnus, urban designer, author and 30-year faculty member in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Conferred to individuals or organizations whose work embodies and advances Kevin Lynch’s research as developed in his seminal books—Image of the City (1960), What is This Place? (1972), Good City Form (1981) and Site Planning (1984)—nominations are selected for their plans, books, research, designed projects, media productions, public processes or similar contributions.

In selecting Pahlka, the award committee noted: ‘Kevin Lynch defined the efficient city as one that “offers a level of access without any loss of local control.” By enabling citizens to report transparently on the small urban problems most affecting their daily lives, Code for America facilitates a more responsive local government at a fraction of the traditional costs.’

Andrew H. Popik MS'89, Earl Rennein MAS'95, Shirley A. Resnick

Robert G. Mashaal MS'95, Mark J. O'Connor, PhD '98, Ben Wattenberg, PhD '98

Ronald C. Bell MA'87, Stephen A. Bell, PhD '98

Ronald M. Margolis MArch'68, Richard L. Martin MArch'62, Frederick L. Merrill, Jr. MCP'80, Carol A. Memishian

Stephen e. Memishian SM'70 and Ronald y. C. Lu MArchAS '73

David L. Bazinet '93, Michael Deskey '54, James r. Loewenberg '56

Catherine S. Fogelman MSred'98, Richard J. Furman '81, MArch'84, John F. Kennedy SM'76 and Catherine S. Fogelman MSred'98

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