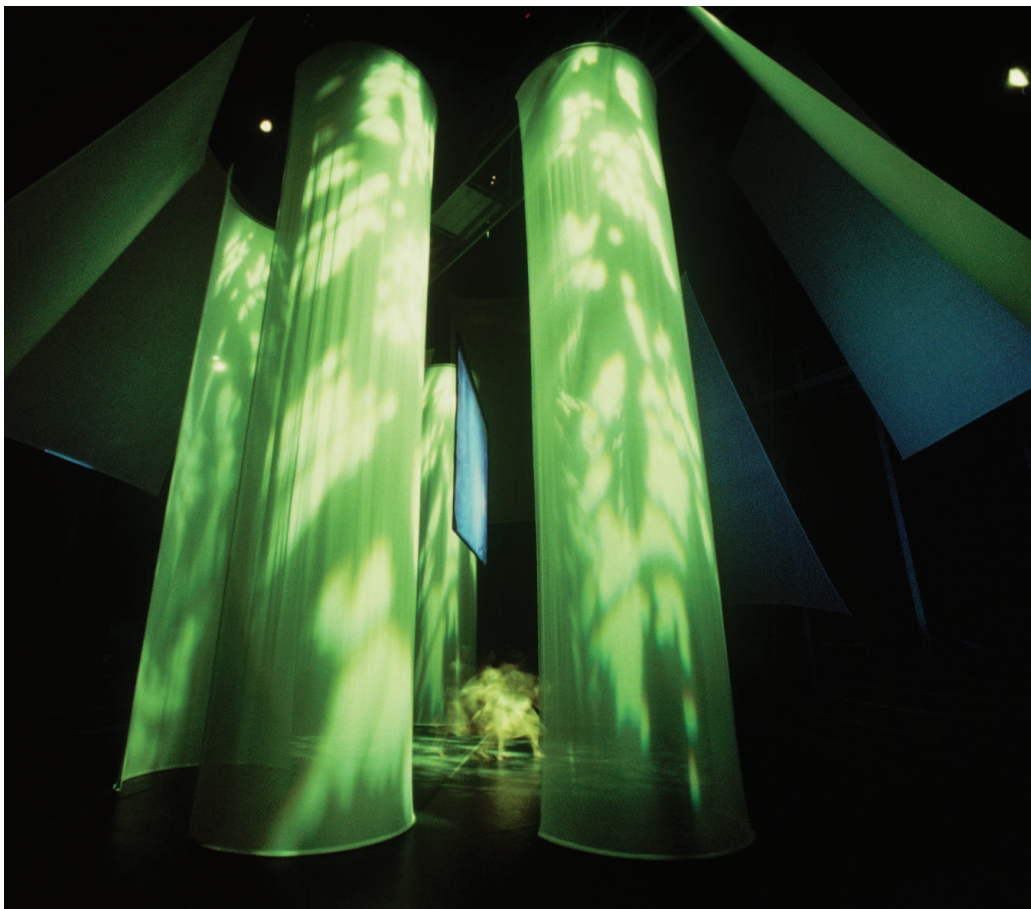


THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED VISUAL STUDIES
AND THE EVOLUTION OF ART-SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY AT MIT

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CENTERBOOK



Top: Beth Galston (set) and Ellen Sebring (video and music), "Aviary," a collaborative performance with Sarah Skaggs (choreography and dance), Philippe Villers Experimental Media Facility, the Cube, MIT Media Lab, May 1988
Photo: Beth Galston

Facing page: Bernd Kracke (live video processing) and Ellen Sebring (flute performance), MIT Chapel, 1981
Photo: Bernd Kracke

At times, everyone was in love with everyone else. There were clashes, friendships and love affairs, even marriages and an occasional divorce. There was always the feeling that one could count on anyone who was at the Center. Much of this stemmed from the work being done—new and imagined projects that were being tried out and that required more hands and brains than a single person could muster.

CAVS was a large family with age groups and clans, the juniors and the elders, the regulars and the passers-by but no matter what, we all belonged to a sort of movement that reached beyond what we could grasp. (Luc Courchesne interview)

Intense working relationships often led to collaborations that were not just one artist helping another to realize a project, but the forging of a mutual work. Many projects required complex setups, and fellow artists' donations of time and energy, as was the case for Ellen Sebring and Beth Galston's performance piece, *Aviary*.

The Media Lab had just been built, and I worked there on *Aviary* . . . creating music in Tod Machover's MIDI lab at night, like many artists, when the equipment was free. David Atherton [a fellow student] collected sounds of birds, ice, wind, and made Foley sound effects that became the keyboards. Once, I woke up over the keyboard, and listened back to music I had written in a dream state—the sampling keyboards were that intuitive—it was like listening to the unconscious mind. (Ellen Sebring interview)

The free collaboration among colleagues led to shared languages. Grabill ran with a camera held low to simulate an animal's point of view in the forest and appeared as a bear in Sebring's deconstructed fairy tales. Galston, a sculptor, became a musical object in Grabill's staccato time-lapse work. Seaman transformed a coastal train journey into a visual-musical-poetic hybrid. Kracke used feedback and chroma key to transform Sebring's flute performance in the nearby Eero Saarinen-designed MIT Chapel.

Bob Rosinsky, Luc Courchesne, and Atsushi Ogata shared a quasi-comic storytelling approach. The human dimension was the intangible yet dominant feature of CAVS collaboration.

We did a lot together, ate together, commiserated together, and collaborated, helping out on each other's projects. But we also jammed. I did some things with Ken [Kantor] and Bernd [Kracke] putting audio/video into a live jam session down in the basement. Ken was the technical whiz. Bernd had an interest in performance. Having that building was such a boon. It allowed almost any media-related experimental enterprise to take place in the Pit. (Vin Grabill interview)

The intensity, the level of commitment and passion that existed at the Center while I was there is probably what I remember and miss the most. The Center was active around the clock, you could walk in at three in the morning and the night shift was at work. They would sleep somewhere during the day and reappear the following evening. I could walk into Michio's space and see him working with metallic structures and then go into the next studio and see Frederick working on his holographic clouds; it was another world. I think the richness came from each individual but also in the contrasts, variations. (Georges Singer interview)





Top: Otto Piene, event with Seth Riskin performing "Light Dance," opening of Schadow Arkaden, Düsseldorf, 1995
Photo: K. Medau

What followed in my graduate career were many student projects that were elaborations of this artistic language of light, as well as more public projects that were collaborations with the residents of the Center. I worked on the parallel bars for my movements. I was using circular swinging and rotating movements, highly controlled and slowed so that the extensions of light from my body would move appropriately over a long distance. . . . I did collaborative work with Otto. We actually did flights, "Light Dances" in the night sky. . . . The flights were good, the collective experience of a light body in the sky was a kind of dream of humanity manifest. (Seth Riskin interview)

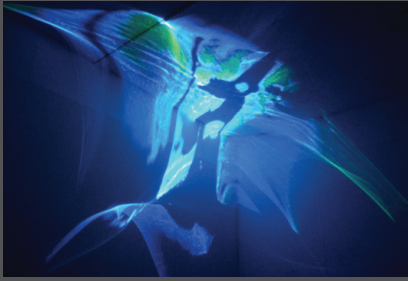
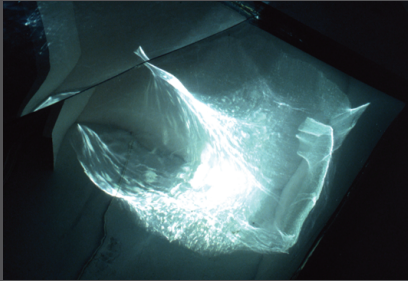


The idea of an object made by an artist that might exist within a museum or gallery space was one of the things that happened at the Center. There were connections to the art world of museums and galleries . . . the idea of a well-crafted object made for viewing pleasure was really important. The other thing was the idea of collaboration, celebration, team work and taking work out of a hermetically sealed situation and putting it out in the world and letting the viewer get involved. Once you start getting involved with the object and the space, the way light changes, the movement, the performance possibilities—BOOM!—you are into a conditional situation. Things can change, evolve and are not dependent on one person's efforts. It is only recently that art and technology caught on in a big way in the art world. (Beth Galston interview)

Top row: Beth Galston, "Mirror Light," with performers Galston and CAVS colleagues Luc Courchesne and Ellen Sebring, the Pit, CAVS, MIT, 1983

Bottom row: Beth Galston, "Lightwall" installation, Kingston Gallery, Boston, 1983
"Reflections evolve in color and intensity, evoking fire, clouds or an icy pond as wavelike light is transformed by four slide projectors that illuminate mirrored panels in slow dissolves." (Galston, description for Kingston Gallery, 1983)

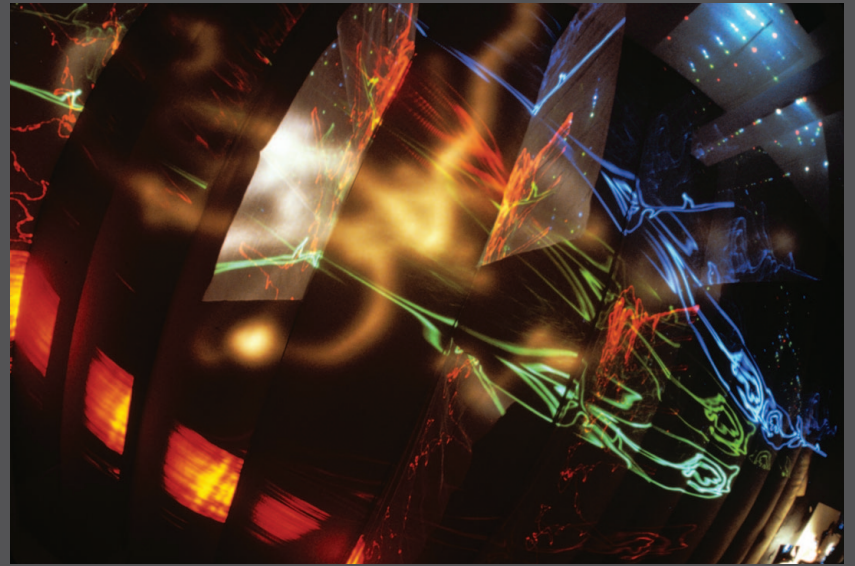
Photos: Beth Galston



It is about making a place of light: an artificial, a fictional enclosure that physically situates—a sort of self-theater: a walk-in-film. With in it, a drama: a subjective time-space sentence—the *Homo sapien* perceptive holdings of the uncanny (which resides in us, side by side in our everyday activities)—probed, profiled, projected. (Keiko Prince, "Topos," 1978)

Top left and right: Keiko Prince, "Dear Mr. Kukai," installation with water, mirror, poem, 15 x 15 x 15 feet, Mills Gallery, Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, 1993
Photos: Toru Nakanishi

Right: Beth Galston, scrim and light environments, top, "Tepee," Kingston Gallery, Boston, 1986
bottom, "Geometries," Montserrat College of Art, Beverly, Massachusetts, 1987
Photos: Beth Galston



Top: Paul Earls, Otto Piene, "Modulations: Lasers and Music in Space," Hayden Gallery, MIT, 1982
Photo: CAVS Special Collection

Bottom left: Newspaper photo with caption, "Laser show. Students from the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown are treated to a music and laser show at the Hayden Gallery of the Mass. Institute of Technology. Partially blind students were able to describe the brilliant laser images to their classmates." (*News-Tribune*, Waltham, MA, February 3, 1982)
Photo: UPI