Artists are not needed to humanize engineers

To the Editor:
John Miliotis' excellent front-page article in The Tech (September 21) reviews the perennial question of whether or not the scientist needs the artist to "humanize" him. The realization has existed since the mid-nineteenth century that complex machinery would profit from a central citizen anxiously owning over the possible social consequences of the latest mechanical invention, has often been thought of as a genuine government eager to usher in any gizmo as long as it installed a sense of wonder. The artist has been deemed necessary to awaken society to the importance of those aspects of life upon which the latter would instill such profound changes. Towards which his brainchildren may unwittingly pose a threat. Historically, this has meant nature and art, as well as those eternal values upon which civilized society must rest. Happily at MIT, there is no lack of respect for nature and art. Our Outing Club and Science Fiction Society are famous, the latter internationally so. Well-supported are our Symphony Orchestra and Shakespeare Ensemble, not to mention our weekend films! The fire under which Hayden Gallery and the sculpture program have come in recent years is probably a sign of good taste, rather than its absence. "For art, MIT is simply amazing!" an on-campus undergrad recently told me. The average MIT student does not dislike art; he really likes math and science more. Whether or not scientists, such as those at MIT, need the artist as a bearer of supposedly civilization values depends entirely upon the values that the artist is advocating. If he is preaching disrespect for man and his achievements, the image of man as slave to sexual impulse, economics or environmental forces; ethical relativism; the meaninglessness of life; the folly of modernization, self-restraint and humility; and contempt for the higher realms of thought such as are represented by scientific discovery and the political rights and institutions for which so much ink and blood have been shed, then the scientist doesn't need him at all. I believe that the art world is plagued by these antihumanistic values to a greater extent than the society before him, that is, for numbers at MIT explain why our students are easier to get along with than those on nearby campuses. Physicists in the art world, attempting to 'humanize' the scientist, should first set about to humanize themselves.

Roger Kolb

By Kent C. Massey

A soap bubble for Kresge??

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"I'll ask my nephew who works down at the Globe to write about the project," he continued. "He'll call it something like a daring breakthrough from a new school of architectural thought just forming at MIT, an exciting instrument of technology and free artistic expression. It'll be the only one of its kind in America -- like Frank Lloyd Wright's Glass House! What do you think?"

"The engineering department will really eat this stuff up, and, you know they're a big influence around here," said Nutly, "I think they'll really have a blast designing a bubble-blowing apparatus big enough to blow a bubble over a thousand people. And the union people will have lots of work blowing up a new bubble every day. Management will have new leverage in the next round of contract negotiations."

"Yes, I think that's just swell," said Mr. Done. "I really think an idea like this has an application in the temporary housing market. And if it goes over, with the housing shortage, we'll get together on this and make a bundle."