CAVS Director Otto Piene Retires
MIT searching for new head: CAVS to relocate below the MIT Museum

By Matt Mucklo

Otto Piene, director of MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies, retired on Sept. 1 and was named professor emeritus. Piene turned 65 last spring, but his reasons for leaving lie in his belief that "since you've lived through two generations, it's time to leave your obligations to a new generation," he said. He also wanted more time to pursue his own work.

Since last year, MIT has been actively searching for a replacement director and is now in the second round of the selection process. A final candidate should be chosen by the end of the school year.

Furthermore, CAVS is in the process of moving from its present location next to Bexley Hall down Massachusetts Avenue to Building 52, below the MIT Museum. Not only will this new location provide more space for the new director, it should also allow better access to the museum so that projects can easily be displayed.

CAVS is the first center of its kind. It was formed in 1967 and became part of MIT in 1968. This year marks its 25th anniversary. The purpose of the center is to encourage interaction between artists, scientists, engineers, architects, as well as those in the humanities. Piene sees the CAVS program as "a combination of the most basic and traditional concerns of teaching and learning in the arts," with explorations into "new art forms in the service of contemporary expectations." One of the fundamental questions that CAVS has tried to answer is "how can art be communicated in a world with five-plus billion people," he said. In the past, CAVS has experimented with forms such as sky art, holography, computer art, laser art, and environmental art.

Since CAVS formation, between 180 and 185 fellows have been invited to the center for periods ranging from three months to five years, in order to do research, produce artwork, and work with students. As with any academic institution, one of the fundamental concerns of the center has been teaching. In the past, the center has offered classes, as well as a graduate degree program.

Mucklo, Page 17

Inside

- Arab, Jewish Students comment on recent MidEast peace accord.
- On the Screen, a review of current movies.

Media Lab to Get $2.65M from HP

By Eva Moy

Hewlett Packard announced Monday that it will donate $2.65 million in computer equipment and funds to support research at the Media Laboratory over the next three years.

"The project aims to improve the ways in which humans interact with computers by programming the machines to be able to recognize more than just text and numbers," according to the HP press release.

The donation will support two research groups that are investigating information not only as content, but as representing physical properties.

These research groups include Associate Professor Tod Machover, who works with computer recognition of audio signals; Assistant Professor Rosalind Picard, who concentrates on video and recognition of patterns and textures; and Assistant Professor Neil A. Gershenfeld, who is conducting research relating the physics of sensors and the interfaces between computers and their environment.

Equipment being donated in the first year includes 11 HP Apollo 9000 Series 700 workstations, as well as several peripherals and measurement instrumentation.

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By Ben Machover

HP and MIT is an example of a valuable public/private relationship that will benefit not just HP and MIT, but potentially the rest of the world.