

MIT Appoints Pedro Reyes the Inaugural Dasha Zhukova Distinguished Visiting Artist

The artist launches a new residency at MIT, designed for research and development of new work.

Cambridge, MA, September 14, 2016 — Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is pleased to announce visual artist Pedro Reyes as the inaugural Dasha Zhukova Distinguished Visiting Artist at MIT, a [new artist residency program](#) announced last fall. The appointment, sponsored by the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) will begin this fall. Reyes will teach a studio entitled “[The Reverse Engineering of Warfare](#).” The course will be the beginning of Reyes’s residency dedicated to the research and development of a new work, shaped in collaboration with MIT faculty, students and researchers across the Institute’s different departments. Reyes was chosen by the CAST Executive Committee from a pool of more than 50 nominations by MIT faculty and arts leaders.

“Reyes’s multidisciplinary approach to art-making and activism is an ideal fit for the creative exploration and discovery taking place across MIT every day,” said Evan Ziporyn, Faculty Director of the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology. “And I have no doubt that this long-term research and development residency will have a lasting impact on both the arts community at MIT and hopefully the artist’s practice as well.”

Launched in fall 2015 with a \$1 million donation from Dasha Zhukova, a Russian American philanthropist, entrepreneur, art collector and founder of Garage Museum for Contemporary Art in Moscow, the Dasha Zhukova Distinguished Visiting Artist residency program provides support for artists from a range of disciplines to engage with the creative energy, innovative thinking and advanced technology found throughout the MIT community. The arts have been an integral part of MIT since its founding, and this new position builds upon the university’s vision for the intersections of art, science and technology as the essential foundation for achieving institutional excellence.

“I’ve been honored to collaborate with MIT and its Center for Art, Science & Technology to launch the Distinguished Visiting Artist Program and look forward to seeing the work that evolves from Pedro Reyes’s long-term engagement with the MIT community,” said Dasha Zhukova. “From my time on campus, it’s clear that the intersection of technology and the arts taking place at MIT represents a true hub of creativity, and I’m proud that this residency can continue to enhance MIT’s role as a vital site for innovation.”

Pedro Reyes is a widely celebrated multi-platform artist, activist and educator based in Mexico City. He uses all aspects of visual art and education to address political and social issues. One of his main commitments is using the arts to reduce gun and drug trafficking across Mexico. In 2008, Pedro commenced *Palas por Pistolas*. The program collected over 1,500 guns donated from Mexican citizens and melted them down into gardening tools, then gave them out to various schools and art institutions who used them to plant over 1,500 trees. The program’s success garnered attention from the Mexican army, who donated 6,700 weapons. In 2012, Pedro started *Disarm*, which converted donated military weapons into musical instruments. Last year he was one of 13 artists included in the Ford Foundation’s [The Art of Change](#) fellowship program. His newest work *Doomocracy*, presented by Creative Time, is on view at the Brooklyn Army Terminal starting October 7, 2016.

“As an artist with roots in architecture and a practice that spans many different media, I look forward to exploring new areas of innovation in my work through the in-depth engagement with MIT’s creative community fostered by this unique residency,” said Pedro Reyes. “My personal experience and perspective from Latin America, where human interaction matters more than technology, have made me particularly interested in challenging techno-optimism at MIT. Institutions around the world always pay attention to what happens at MIT, and I have witnessed many ideas that have emerged there that are being implemented in Latin America. It’s my hope, along with my co-teacher Carla Fernández’s, that this long-term residency, encompassing both our course and my own research and experimentation, can serve as a laboratory of sorts that will give feedback to MIT as much as it will impact my own practice. We want to place a human perspective where the machine now lives, which is very much a departure from the idea of progress that has prevailed for the last three centuries.”

ABOUT THE CLASS

“The Reverse Engineering of Warfare” reimagines the ethos of the defense sector and challenge the contemporary pervasiveness of technology through experimental performance, music and sculpture. Through the use of performative techniques and conflict resolution theory, this course will explore ethical questions underlying the relationship between technology and security through the design and enactment of a multimedia performance whose plot, script and stage setting

will be designed by the class participants. This undertaking will be informed by topics such as imperialism, defense budgets, representations of violence in pop culture, the history of engineering and military technology and global imbalances created by the Western fixation on technological advancement.

Artist Pedro Reyes and designer Carla Fernández will share their experience in applying innovative and unexpected techniques and resources including interactive installations, sound sculptures, agit-prop and interventions. As part of this course on politically- and socially-engaged practices, students may design costumes or instruments, compose or direct performances, or experiment with new creative processes.

This course also includes an optional field trip to New York to visit exhibitions and meet with artists and curators.

HISTORY OF VISITING ARTISTS AT MIT / RECENT ARTISTS

Since the late 1960s, MIT has been a leader in integrating the arts and pioneering a model for collaboration among artists, scientists and engineers in a research setting. CAST's Visiting Artists Program brings internationally acclaimed artists to engage with MIT's creative community in ways that are mutually enlightening for the artists and for faculty, students and research staff at the Institute. Artists who have worked extensively at MIT include Mel Chin, Olafur Eliasson, Rick Lowe, Vik Muniz, Trevor Paglen, Tomás Saraceno and Anicka Yi. As CAST's inaugural Visiting Artist, Saraceno initiated ongoing collaborations with researchers in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences, which have generated a master's thesis and three senior projects to date, and his large-scale installations and aerosolar projects are inspiring further research into bio-inspired building materials and simulations of atmospheric turbulence and ozone depletion.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ART, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

A major cross-school initiative, the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) creates new opportunities for art, science and technology to thrive as interrelated, mutually informing modes of exploration, knowledge and discovery. CAST's multidisciplinary platform presents performing and visual arts programs, supports research projects for artists working with science and engineering labs, and sponsors symposia, classes, workshops, design studios, lectures and publications. The Center is funded in part by a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Evan Ziporyn is the Faculty Director and Leila W. Kinney is the Executive Director.

Since its inception in 2012, CAST has been the catalyst for more than 35 artist residencies and collaborative projects with MIT faculty and students—20 cross-disciplinary courses and workshops, four concert series and numerous multimedia projects, lectures and symposia. The visiting artists program is a cornerstone of CAST's activities, which encourage cross-fertilization among disciplines and intensive interaction with MIT's faculty and students.

ABOUT THE ARTS AT MIT

Nearly 80 percent of incoming freshmen have prior training in the arts, and nearly 50 percent of all MIT undergraduates enroll in arts courses each year. The arts strengthen MIT's commitment to the aesthetic, human and social dimensions of research and innovation. Artistic knowledge and creation exemplify MIT's motto—*mens et manus*, mind and hand. The arts are essential to MIT's mission to build a better society and meet the challenges of the 21st century.

For more information, visit arts.mit.edu

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