

“Chaos and Communication, c.1962”

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12:30 - 2:00pm
Room 7-431

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Abstract:

“Organism is opposed to chaos, to disintegration, to death,” wrote Norbert Wiener in 1954, “as message is to noise.” Forged through his World War II military research, the cybernetic equivalence Wiener established between pattern, message, organism, and machine may have wrought the Axis powers as immediate enemy, but the lasting fight was against disorder. In the 1960s, as cybernetic epistemology worked its way into art and design disciplines, disorganization was revisited in a variety of creative contexts. This talk investigates its diverse reception and redeployment among artists, architects, designers, and cyberneticians at the 1962 UK “Conference on Systematic and Intuitive Methods in Engineering, Industrial Design, Architecture and Communications.” Challenging the hegemony of Wiener's role for noise in communication, particularly as it related to ideas of publicness and privacy, the conference was a critical moment in a trajectory known as the Design Methods movement, a discourse that leveraged emerging computer-related technologies to transform the theory, practice, and pedagogy of art, architecture, and design.

Bio:

Alise Upitis received her PhD from the MIT department of architecture in 2008, where her research considered how norms and nature were reconceptualized during the Design Methods movement. In 2009-2010, Alise was visiting scholar in the MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology in the archive of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, investigating how artists' practices at MIT have operated as modes of research and knowledge production. Since 2010 she has been public art curator at the MIT List Visual Arts Center. Recent and forthcoming publications are included in the edited volumes *Intellectual Birdhouse* (Rodopi) and *N52: On Art + Research at MIT*.