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Massachusetts
Institute of
Technology



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Tatyana Ishutkina
Executive Director
FERMATA ARTS FOUNDATION, INC.
24 Brentwood Dr., Avon, Connecticut, USA 06001

Re: Letter of support for Fermata – from prof. Mark
Jarzombek, Interim Dean SA+P, MIT

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to write a letter of support for the effort pushing hard to get a Consultation center organized for the embassies of post-soviet countries in the US with further development to the country's institutions in the context of Post-Cold-War Eastern Europe with the emphasis on the role that the arts can play in bringing the pressing issues of the day to fore.

The MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT) operates as a critical studies- and production-based laboratory, connecting the arts with an advanced technological community and civic forms of engagement. ACT faculty, fellows and students engage in advanced visual studies and research by implementing experimental and systematic approaches to creative production and transdisciplinary collaboration. As an academic and research unit, the ACT program emphasizes both knowledge production and knowledge dissemination. In the tradition of artist and educator György Kepes, an advocate of “art on a civic scale” and the founder of ACT’s precursor, the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies (founded in 1967), ACT envisions artistic leadership initiating change and providing a critically transformative view of the world with the civic responsibility to enrich cultural discourse.

In this context, Fermata Arts Foundation work is particularly relevant. Their critical understanding of art to engage the civic in a discourse that attempts to transform conflict and disaster, and impact artist could have by addressing the pressing issues of civic society in the post-totalitarian societies and in particular of the former Eastern Block countries is a model for exploring expanded notions of democracy. Since 2009 my practice and research at MIT has evolved and continued to focus on this topic expanding on the developments of artistic inquiry into the forms of democracy and networks that embrace concepts of civic participation, and collaboration in relation to building public space and civic societies in territories that have undergone fast social, environmental, and technological change.

Fermata’s initiative comes in a crucial point in history, a time when cross-border conflicts are prosaic and their by-products almost banal. As citizens of the world, never before have we needed to be reminded of the need to heal and empower those who are affected by such tumult. Fermata’s work addresses the transformative power of art while providing such a reminder, and I strongly support their initiative and wish them the best of success. Should funding be allocated I am happy to discuss further hosting of the events with involvement of our faculty, students and research facility at ACT, MIT.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Gediminas Urbonas'. The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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