

letter to: the Demaines


When I first heard news that I was accepted into the Visual Arts Program at MIT, I was elated. I would be surrounded by a whole new crop of interesting people.


That same week, the Tuesday science section (my favorite section) of the 'The New York Times' featured the work of Erik Demaine, the computation origami expert who, at the age of 22, was MIT's youngest tenured professor. Concurrently, my best friend had seen a TV special about how NASA was employing origami experts to design the folding wings of satellites. For me and my friend, Erik Demaine epitomized MIT.


OrigaMIT - Paperfolding at MIT: Members - Mozilla Firefox


File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://web.mit.edu/origamit/www/members.shtml

 **home**

 **members**

 **gallery**

 **links**

Next Meeting:




Date: 8 Mar 06
Room: 5-231
Time: 7-9 PM

OrigaMIT Members

Faculty Advisor:
[Erik Demaine](#)

Club Officers:
[Andrea Hawksley](#) (President)
[Brian Chan](#)
Connie Yeh (Treasurer)
Jim Sukha (Webmaster)
[Wesley Andrew Watters Farfan](#) (Phantom Spiritual Presence)

Members:
OrigaMIT has more members than it knows what to do with, but a few members with notable origami galleries are listed below.
[Gilad Aharoni](#)



Done



When I first got to MIT, I wrote Erik a letter and handed it to him in person.

After waiting on edge for several months with no response, I mailed a second letter directly to his office.

Still no answer.

I sent my final one in March 2006.

marisa jahn

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to:

Erik Demaine
Advisor, OrigamiMIT (MIT Origami Club)
MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory
32 Vassar Street
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edemaine@mit.edu

March 10, 2006

Dear Erik:

I'm writing to ask for your complicity.

As you know, my artwork often takes form as letters and correspondence such as this—likewise, as a person renowned for your work in the field of computational origami, much of your work begins from the manipulation of paper. I imagine that we must share an intimacy with this medium and take pleasure in its mastery.

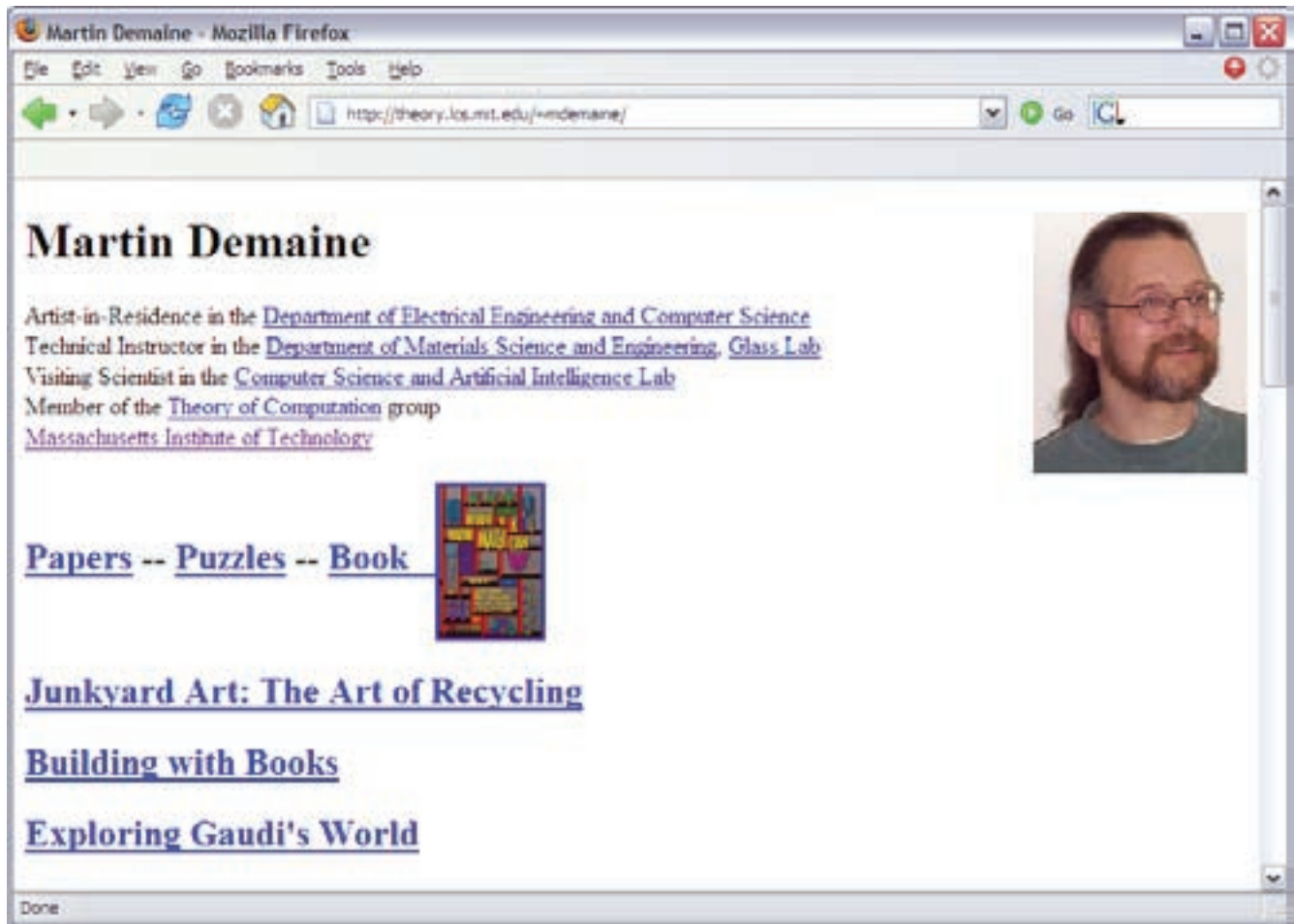
So here's what I ask of you: transform this piece of paper. In a previous letter I wrote to you, I suggested you fold it as origami. However, when I ran into your father the other day, he mentioned that hesitated to reply because you were considering a different kind of augmentation which you apprehended was in appropriate. I am guessing that you are thinking about an interest you vocalized when we met briefly at CAVS in Fall 2005—to expand the project to include an ongoing number of collaborators, thus rendering moot the relationship between tenure and collaborators in academia. I suppose I should explicitly tell you that I would be delighted in any liberties you take. In other words, I relinquishing control without expectations; you take over.

If you choose to send correspondence or evidence/documentation it would bring me great pleasure.

Warm Regards,



Marisa



Now Erik Demaine's biography is interesting. As a kid, he was schooled by his dad Marty (image above) on the road as they travelled throughout North America. They were quite close, and worked together at MIT. Occasionally I'd see them together but more often than not I'd run into Marty alone. We would occasionally chat, and he knew about the letters I'd sent to his son. He would assure me that he would mention something to Erik and follow up on my behalf. Only I still never received a response.

A month later, I asked Marty if he would (in Erik's stead), alter my letter. After all, Marty was a computation origami expert too. I let him know that he had the liberty to do anything he wanted to the letter.

marisa jahn

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to:

Martin Demaine
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April 25, 2006

Dear Martin:

I'm writing to ask for your complicity.

When we last ran into each other in the 77 Mass Ave. foyer with Andrea Frank, we talked about how wonderful it would be if you would transform this letter in place of your son Erik. From what I read on the 'Building with Books' section of your website, I see that we both share a fascination in the de-sacralization of language, whose authority we subvert through the manipulation of its physical form. This is evident to me in the furniture you've built from books which put the written word literally to use in functional forms.

And so I hope you will accept my invitation/solicitation. So here's what I ask of you: transform this letter. You are invited to take creative license and liberty.

If you choose to send correspondence or evidence/documentation it would bring me great pleasure.

Warm Regards,



Marisa

six months later, in October 2006, I received the following letter in the mail with the accompanying disposable camera. When I developed the film I discovered what Marty meant by 'paper cuts' [see image right]...

marisa,
I thought
the pics had been
sent. sorry.

paper cuts

the papers in my
office

Marty
32-~~5~~582

EXHIBIT 101



1. Description of the object
2. Material
3. Dimensions
4. Weight
5. Other information

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2. Material
3. Dimensions
4. Weight
5. Other information

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