



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **French Government Confers Honors and Title of “Chevalier” on Two Distinguished SAIC Academics**



Peter Gena, Barbara Scharres, and French Consul-general Richard Barbeyron  
Photo credit: Tim Bradbury

October 25 -- We are honored to announce that the Government of France has recognized the outstanding contributions of two members of the SAIC community, Barbara Scharres and Professor Peter Gena. At a ceremony hosted October 16 by Consul-general of France M. Richard Barbeyron, Ms. Scharres was awarded the *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, and Professor Gena awarded the *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques*.

Ms. Scharres has been an integral part of the School of the Art Institute's Film Center for 31 years, and has been instrumental in making the Gene Siskel Film Center one of the world's premier venues for cinema. The Film Center's Director of Programming, she is responsible for the development of series such as the Asian American Showcase, the Hong Kong Film Festival, and the Festival of Films from Iran, now in its 17th year.

“As a film scholar and writer,” said M. Barbeyron, “Barbara has contributed to many magazines and journals, has lectured at Yale and Columbia, and been named three times one of the *Chicago Tribune*’s ‘Chicagoan of the Year in the Arts.’ We are happy for the opportunity to publicly attest to Barbara’s excellence in the field of film scholarship and film exhibition, and are honored to have worked with the Gene Siskel Film Center on so many exciting projects over the years.”

In acknowledging Professor Gena’s contributions to scholarship, composition, and programming, M. Barbeyron noted that “Peter’s passion for music research, experimentation, and performance is equal to his passion for French music and composers. He has thus been instrumental in organizing many French events at the School of the Art Institute.” Among these events are the 1996 NEMO (New European Music Overseas) festival of contemporary European composition, and several editions of “La Fête de la musique,” the daylong French celebration of music. Faculty in SAIC’s Art & Technology Studies department, Professor Gena has a longstanding collaboration with the French composer Jérôme Joy, and through this collaboration has established reciprocal visiting artist residencies between the School of the Art Institute and the Ecole Supérieure d’Art d’Aix-en-Provence.

In his speech honoring Ms. Scharres and Professor Gena, M. Barbeyron noted that the recipients’ “excellence and dedication to their fields has had a profound impact on the cultural and academic landscapes in Chicago, as well as a direct influence on the advancement of French culture, and on the relationship between our two nations.”

Professor Tony Jones CBE, President of the School of the Art Institute warmly congratulated both honorands and noted, “Barbara and Peter are distinguished and highly regarded individuals, greatly valued in our community and nation, but we are all delighted that they are equally respected in the wider world. France gives no greater recognition to those who excel in the arts and academics than this award, and the whole of the Art Institute offers sincere congratulations to them both.”

#### About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC)

A leader in educating artists and designers for 140 years, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago ([www.saic.edu](http://www.saic.edu)) offers undergraduate and graduate programs to over 2,600 students from around the world. In addition to the time-honored study of painting, sculpture, printmaking, and fashion design, SAIC embraces film and new media, electronic and sound arts, designed objects and architecture, and visual and critical studies. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC hosts exhibitions, lectures, screenings and other public programs through venues such as the Gene Siskel Film Center, Betty Rymer Gallery, Gallery 2, Video Data Bank, the Division of Continuing Studies, and in conjunction with the Poetry Center.

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