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DC'S ALTERNATIVE ART SOURCE

## Art and Science Intersect at the National Academy of Sciences' DASER



By Jenny Cutler Lopez on June 27, 2017



At the June 15, 2017 "Redefining Spaces" DASER event. Credit: Kevin Allen Photo

J.D. Talasek and Alana Quinn are on a mission to not only help artists and scientists connect but to redefine how their two worlds intersect. To accomplish this feat, each month, Talasek and Quinn organize and host [DASER](#), the DC Art Science Evening Rendezvous, as part of the Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences also known as CPNAS.

"Science is the new avant-garde," says Talasek, Director of CPNAS.

What he and Quinn, Senior Program Associate for CPNAS, are doing is radical and experimental. Located within the illustrious halls of the National Academy of Sciences building, DASER brings together creators—artists and scientists who use similar processes of discovery and problem-solving to bring about positive transformation within themselves and the world around them.

The intersection of the two worlds is critical. An example is climate change; to bring about positive change, scientific data is crucial but so too is the message of empathy. It is in the latter domain in which artists reign. Paper engineer [Matthew Shlian](#) who spoke at a 2016 DASER event, helps designers and engineers create solar cells using kirigami, the ancient Japanese art of paper cutting, to produce the next level of solar energy design.

Talasek and Quinn not only invite world-class artists and scientists to speak at the DASER events but they also allot time for audience member interaction with the panel. One may stand before a microphone and be heard by scientists, artists, along with those listening to the live broadcast around the world. It is in this moment you can share your ideas, put out a call for collaboration, for funding and to bring life to the next chapter of your project.



June 15 DASER speakers on June 15th from left to right included Phillip K. Smith III, Benjamin Knapp, Stephen M. Fiore and Mika Yoshitake. Credit: Kevin Allen Photo

June's DASER event themed [Redefining Spaces](#) included speakers Mika Yoshitake, curator of the Hirshhorn's wildly popular exhibit [Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors](#) and Dr. R. Benjamin Knapp, director of Virginia Tech's Institute of Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT). June's

theme Redefining Space is indicative of DASER's approach to the intersection of arts and sciences, technology, human interaction, and connectivity.

Just as DASER produces an alternative to conference style academic lectures by scientists for scientists, so does Yoshitake in her response the same tired definition of Kusama's work viewed solely within the context of the artist's mental illness. In an interview at the Hirschhorn Museum, Yoshitake speaks of Kusama's sense of radical connectivity, pushing people to rid themselves of ego and letting go of seeing people as "the other"—a form of self-obliteration, if you will.

Yoshitake, like Kusama, encourages redefining the artist's role. Kusama has worked constantly to redefine herself since her first widespread success in the early 1960s and the artist herself places emphasis on breaking down barriers within our minds and in the world around us. Although they come from different generations and career paths, Yoshitake, Kusama, Talasek, and Quinn all view redefinition as inevitable and the intersection between art and science as crucial for a more connected conversation about the contemporary world.

Benjamin Knapp agrees. What he is directing in Blacksburg, VA is a similar confluence of ideas and dreams come to life in a structure simply called The Cube. Paralleled by only a handful of buildings throughout the world, The Cube is a teaching tool that uses an immersive audio and video based reality to bring about positive change.

Under the direction of ICAT, Knapp views his role as providing people with permission, space and time to create a nexus of art, design, engineering and science. Knapp's own research built technology that created music by streaming people's emotion and physiology. Now, at The Cube, he manages the space to allow projects by students such as teaching robots to have a heart or creating albums such as Dark Side of the Moon as an interactive experience within the The Cube. Knapp encourages artists to visit for a behind-the-scenes tour by contacting him [here](#).

**When:** [Check out](#) upcoming DASER themes and dates. The next event takes place September 21, 2017. It's theme: Artists in the Lab, Scientists in the Studio.

**How:** See a theme that jives with your work? [Click and register](#). Put on your extrovert hat and get ready to share your work and passion.

**What:** Click here to watch the full event of [Redefining Spaces](#) which took place on June 15, 2017.

**Where:** [National Academy of Sciences](#). Right by the Einstein statue at 2101 Constitution Avenue NW

**Who:** DASER is a partnership project of the National Academy of Sciences and [Leonardo/The International Society for Arts, Sciences, and Technology](#).



June 15th at the National Academy of Sciences. Credit: Kevin Allen Photo