News Release

Nancy Burson's AGE MACHINE and Composite Portraits at MIT
Contact: Dana Friis-Hansen - 617/253-4400
Public preview with the artist: May 11, 5-7 pm

As part of its forward looking celebration of the 151st anniversary of the invention of photography, the MIT List Visual Arts Center has organized the exhibition NANCY BURSON: "THE AGE MACHINE" AND COMPOSITE PORTRAITS, on view from May 12-July 1. The artist has worked at the frontier of computer-assisted art for over fifteen years; her first real advances in this field were made at MIT in the mid-1970s.

Burson's latest interactive video project,THE AGE MACHINE, allows intrepid viewers to face the future as they preview their face as it might appear twenty-five years down the road. Operation is quite simple: one sits in the console and scans a video image of one's face onto the screen, delineates the key points of one's features, and indicates one's present age. In a few seconds, THE AGE MACHINE produces a speculative portrait drawing upon the typical aging effects stored in the database.

Fifteen of the artist's provocative computer-assisted portraits, which age or combine the features and facial structures of two or more individuals will also be on view. Examples include the *Royal Family in 2010*, *Mankind*, (a contemporary generic world portrait), and more mysteriously compelling fictitious faces such as a bald plaster mannequin with human eyes and mouth or children with unusually formed faces.

Writing in the exhibition catalogue, curator Dana Friis-Hansen states: "Photography is a strange mirror in the hands of Nancy Burson, who pushes the parameters of portrait photography generations further with eerie computer-assisted portraits and interactive video projects. Whether she is picturing prehistory, as in *Evolution II*, 1984, a composite merging a chimpanzee and a man, or allowing us to look into the future with *The Age Machine*, Burson's poetic and visionary projects provoke both wonder and deep thought, often posing unsettling questions about photography, history, and identity. Plotting gut instincts about the self and human nature against the mechanics and metaphors of technology, she deftly transcends the "average" and "normal" necessary for the technology to function so that she can use it to make us conscious of, and, one hopes, tolerant about issues of difference, the self, and aging. The products of her system encourage an incalculable range of emotional and visceral -- but essentially *human*, responses."

In conjunction with the exhibition, Dr. Stephen A. Benton, Professor of Media Technology at the MIT Media Laboratory will present a lecture "Photography: The First 300 Years" at 7 pm on Tuesday, May 22 in the Bartos Theatre of the Wiesner Building. A 12-page illustrated catalogue is available. This exhibition is supported in part by the MIT Council for the Arts.

Also on view May 12-July 1: *Matt Mullican: The MIT Project*, and *Bill Traylor: Drawings*.

Admission to List Center galleries and events is free and open to the public.
Hours: Weekdays-Noon to 6 pm; Weekends-1-5 pm. Closed holidays.

MIT List Visual Arts Center
Wiesner Building, 20 Ames Street, Cambridge
Telephone: (617) 253-4680

Five minutes from Kendall Square Red Line subway stop. Parking available at corner of Main and Ames Streets.