



## **Mayor Bloomberg breaks ground on renovation of arts/media center; \$33 million renovation project designed by Lesser**

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg, city council speaker Christine Quinn, borough president Marty Markowitz, N.Y.C. Economic Development Corp. president Seth Pinsky and cultural affairs commissioner Kate Levin joined BRIC Arts | Media | Bklyn executive director Leslie Schultz and UrbanGlass executive director Dawn Bennett to break ground on the BRIC Arts | Media House and UrbanGlass Renewal Project. A multi-disciplinary arts and media complex at the former site of the Strand Theatre at 647 Fulton St., the \$33 million city-funded renovation project will double BRIC's operating space to 40,000 s/f and expand UrbanGlass by 3,300 s/f and modernize its 17,000 s/f glassworking facility. The event began with a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the Strand Theatre, attended by officials and representatives from each organization. Following the groundbreaking, architect Thomas Leeser unveiled the new design for the renovation project at a formal program at the Mark Morris Dance Center, a neighboring arts organization in the BAM Cultural District.

"The renovation of the historic Strand Theatre will provide a home for two of New York City's most dynamic arts groups," said mayor Bloomberg. "This major new addition to the thriving BAM Cultural District, which already houses more than 40 diverse arts organizations, will further cement Brooklyn's place as a cultural capital of the world."

"The BAM Cultural District has been a critical contributor to the growth and development of Downtown Brooklyn," deputy mayor for Economic Development Robert Steel said. "The renovation of the Strand Theatre will bring more jobs, visitors and investment to this rapidly-growing neighborhood."

"The city is proud to support this major renovation which will house two of our most important arts organizations," said Quinn. "Both BRIC and UrbanGlass will continue to enhance the neighborhood and bring life to this historic theater, providing much needed space for artists and their community."

"I think we can all agree that the building we are 'breaking ground' on today is truly a 'groundbreaking' building, and I have been proud to support it," said Markowitz. "UrbanGlass was the first 'artist-access' glass center in the country and today remains the largest, and visitors will now be able to enjoy the breathtaking drama of glass artists at work. And it's impossible to imagine what the arts scene in Brooklyn would be like without BRIC—from the BCAT-TV Network to the Celebrate Brooklyn! performance series. The project is yet another example of how the BAM Cultural District is shaping up to be the City's most exciting and vibrant arts development."

"The renovation of the historic Strand Theatre will create a greatly improved home for two important Brooklyn institutions, BRIC and UrbanGlass," said Pinsky. "The project is a win-win for the people of Brooklyn and the city as it will generate much-needed jobs, attract new visitors to the area and enrich the cultural fabric of New York. This project, together with a number of other recently

launched projects in the area, is delivering on the promise of the BAM Cultural District, turning the area into one of the great centers of art and culture in the world."

"The renovation of the Strand Theatre will allow two vibrant cultural organizations to expand their operations and enhance programming for artists and audiences from across the five boroughs and beyond," said Levin. "The project will modernize a historic facility, allowing BRIC Arts Media Bklyn and UrbanGlass to present dynamic programming in state-of-the-art surroundings, and increase the visibility of this extraordinary community resource on Fulton St."

Set to open in 2013, the Thomas Lesser-designed renovation of the historic 1918 Strand Theatre will incorporate new designs for both BRIC and UrbanGlass. BRIC's design doubles the organization's operating space from 19,000 to 40,000 s/f, and will include a 2,500 s/f contemporary art gallery, a 250-seat performance space, a television studio that will include a new glass-walled studio and control room on the ground floor of the facility, an artist performance/work space, a public lobby and classroom space to expand BRIC's media education program.

The new UrbanGlass includes an expansion into an additional 3,300 s/f street-level retail and gallery space on Fulton St. and a rebuilt and modernized 17,000 s/f glassworking facility on the third floor. The LEED Silver project will contain new systems for the glass studio, which will make UrbanGlass's equipment 20-30% more energy-efficient and include one furnace that will melt only recycled glass.

"Since 1979, BRIC has used many wonderful spaces in Brooklyn to stage artistically excellent and highly accessible programming. The essence of this building's design - an inviting public cultural space and a welcoming home for artists in Brooklyn - is entirely consistent with, and indeed was inspired by, the mission of our organization to serve artists and the public," said Schultz.

"The New UrbanGlass will be both a state-of-the-art energy efficient glassworking facility and a cultural destination that offers the public a unique opportunity to engage in the exciting artistic medium of glass," said Bennett.

This renovation project is the result of a public-private partnership among BRIC, UrbanGlass, the city and private funders. The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the City Council and borough president Markowitz provided \$33 million in funding for the project which is being managed by the N.Y.C. EDC. Additional support for BRIC was provided by Booth Ferris Foundation, Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, Goldman Sachs, National Grid, The Rockefeller Foundation Cultural Innovation Fund, Verizon and the Andy Warhol Foundation. UrbanGlass received funding support from the Tiffany & Co. Foundation and the Dana Foundation. The Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Economic Development Corporation have provided extensive technical assistance as plans for the ambitious project have developed.

"The new Strand building is not only a huge step forward for the institutions that will occupy it, but also a huge opportunity for the community surrounding it," said Thomas Leeser, principal, Leeser Architecture. "We designed the building as an extension of the city, accessible to all."

The renovation of BRIC Arts | Media House will allow BRIC to expand its performing arts, exhibition, community media and educational programming; increase its support for emerging artists from Brooklyn and beyond; and serve more than one million people each year. Programming in the revitalized facility will include BRIC House Fireworks Residency, a signature residency program for multidisciplinary artists; a multi-year, six week annual residency for Ronald K. Brown's Evidence: A Dance Company; a series of visual art micro-biennials of Brooklyn artists; and six art exhibitions per year. The organization also manages Brooklyn's only public access television station, the BCAT-TV Network. BRIC is launching an endowment campaign to support programming opportunities offered

by the new facility.

The renovation of UrbanGlass will provide greater capacity for the organization's glassworking programs. New spaces will be tailored for classes and workshops for professionals and students; exhibitions in a new on-site Robert Lehman Gallery; fellowships for visiting artists; and The Bead Project, a workforce development program that teaches jewelry-making. UrbanGlass has launched a capital campaign to raise additional funding towards outfitting the facility and programming.

"We are deeply grateful for the City's remarkable demonstration of its belief in BRIC's future as a significant cultural force in Brooklyn, and for the dedication of our elected officials to enable us to deepen our service to the public and to Brooklyn artists," Lizanne Fontaine, BRIC's Board Chair. "What is most exciting about our new home is the potential it brings to be a vibrant public gathering space and center of creative activity. To enliven the space, we welcome everyone's attendance, participation and support."

"With this project UrbanGlass will enhance its services for professional and emerging artists, and be a stronger contributor to Downtown Brooklyn's wonderful arts district," said UrbanGlass Vice Board Chair Carol Yorke.

"Downtown Brooklyn is one of the fastest growing urban centers in America achieving development milestones that are tremendous in any economy, and the expansion of cultural venues is a critical component of our success," said Downtown Brooklyn Partnership Chief Operating Officer Michael Burke. "The renovation of the Strand not only provides permanent homes for BRIC and Urban Glass, but also strengthens the BAM Cultural District as the borough's cultural destination."

The renovation marks the latest project start in the BAM Cultural District, a vibrant, multicultural arts district in the neighborhood surrounding the Brooklyn Academy of Music, coordinated by the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership. The expansion of the district involves the conversion of underutilized, city-owned properties into affordable performance and rehearsal space for a diverse array of non-profit visual, performing, and media arts groups. Already a destination for avant-garde arts and culture, the BAM Cultural District will also be a dynamic commercial and residential center, featuring innovative architecture linked by a series of distinctive public open spaces. Amenities including restaurants, cafes, retail and parking will make the neighborhood a true 24/7 urban and cultural center.

The City has committed \$100 million in capital funding to further enliven an already vibrant neighborhood of arts organizations and support the development of the downtown Brooklyn area as a whole. In addition to BRIC Arts | Media House and the UrbanGlass Renewal project, the City is also funding ongoing construction of the BAM Fisher Theater and a new home for Theatre for a New Audience. These improvements are part of the City's commitment to support the existing concentration of established and emerging arts organizations in Downtown Brooklyn. There are 40 arts and cultural organizations based in the BAM Cultural District, and the district already draws more than 500,000 visitors per year.

Downtown Brooklyn was rezoned in 2004 in part to help facilitate the growth of the new BAM cultural district centered around the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Since the rezoning other cultural, residential and commercial projects involving a cross-section of the surrounding community have been planned or built in Downtown Brooklyn. These new projects, along with other City investments, have improved the street-level experience in the district while serving to further integrate cultural organizations, residents and businesses in Downtown Brooklyn.

Founded in 1979, BRIC Arts | Media | Bklyn presents contemporary art, performing arts and

community media programs that reflect Brooklyn's creativity and diversity. BRIC also provides resources to launch, nurture and showcase artists and media makers. The organization advances access to and understanding of arts and media by presenting free and low-cost programming, and by offering education and other public programs to people of all ages.

UrbanGlass is a leading resource for both aspiring and established artists wishing to create with glass. The organization aims to foster innovation and advance the use and appreciation of glass as a creative medium. Founded in 1977 by artists Richard Yelle and Erik Erikson as the New York Experimental Glass Workshop, UrbanGlass was the first artist-access glass center in the United States and is now the largest.

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