



## **Bloomberg opens \$41 million renovated multi-disciplinary arts center; Doubles BRIC Arts|Media operating space by 40,000 s/f**

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Brooklyn Borough president Marty Markowitz, Cultural Affairs commissioner Kate Levin, and New York City Economic Development Corp. president Kyle Kimball joined BRIC Arts|Media|Bklyn executive director Leslie Schultz and UrbanGlass executive director Cybele Malone to open 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 \$41 million city-funded renovation project doubles BRIC's operating space to 40,000 s/f and expands UrbanGlass by 3,300 s/f, modernizing its 17,000 s/f glass-working facility.

"Two years ago we launched this project to provide a state-of-the-art home for BRIC and UrbanGlass," said Bloomberg. "I'm thrilled with the result of this public-private partnership, which has brought an extraordinary addition to the burgeoning downtown Brooklyn cultural district, and new and renovated space for unparalleled access to the terrific programming of these two dynamic organizations."

This renovation project is the result of a public-private partnership. The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the City Council and Borough president Markowitz provided \$41 million in capital funding for the project which was managed by the New York City Economic Development Corp. 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 Agnis Varis Trust, Corning Incorporated, Tiffany & Co., and the Dana Foundation. The Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Economic Development Corp. provided extensive technical assistance as plans for the ambitious project 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 doubles the organization's operating space from 19,000 to 40,000 s/f - bringing BRIC's programming under one roof for the first time since its founding in 1979 - and will include a 3,000 s/f contemporary art gallery, a 240-400 capacity flexible performance space, a glass-walled television studio fully visible to the public lobby, an artist work/performance studio, a public lobby with a café and full state-of-the-art media broadcasting center. The renovated home 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.

The new UrbanGlass includes an expansion into an additional 3,300 s/f street-level retail and gallery

space on Fulton Street and a rebuilt and modernized 17,000 s/f glassworking facility on the third floor. UrbanGlass' renovated third floor studios offer a 30% increase in energy efficiency, and expanded space for glassblowing, education programming, and visiting artists. New third floor spaces are tailored for classes and workshops for professionals and students; fellowships for visiting artists; and The Bead Project, a workforce development program that teaches jewelry-making.

For the first time, UrbanGlass has a ground floor presence on Fulton Street, the Agnes Varis Arts Center, which encompasses The Robert Lehman Gallery and UrbanGlass|ware, the organization's store. The Center is named for the philanthropist Agnes Varis in recognition of the Agnes Varis Trust's \$1 million gift to the capital campaign. Jeffrey Beers International designed the new storefront gallery and retail environment. The Robert Lehman Gallery will present changing exhibitions highlighting and exploring the different ways that artists and designers use glass in their work. The inaugural exhibition, A Tree Grows, a site specific project by artist Katherine Gray, features close to 800 handmade and recycled glasses.

The renovation marks the latest project completion in the Downtown Brooklyn 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 nonprofit visual, performing, and media arts groups.

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 a new home for Theatre for a New Audience and several other multi-use development projects. 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 Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District, and the district already draws hundreds of thousands of 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.

BRIC and UrbanGlass will host three full days (Oct 3-5) of free community programs will celebrate the opening of the renovated facility. Activities include a concert by roots reggae icon Burning

Spear, the opening of a major art exhibition featuring 13 Brooklyn visual artists, an epic installation of 800 drinking glasses by the artist Kathy Gray in the Agnes Varis Arts Center, and live tapings of a new daily television show. The week culminates on Saturday, October 5 with an all-ages block party on Rockwell place with free musical performances, food trucks and art activities for families.

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