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Coll. 516

Trenton Artists' Workshop Association (TAWA)

1979-2020 (bulk 1988-1989)

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History

Founded in 1979 by Latta Patterson and Dr. Mary Tatum Howard, the Trenton Artists' Workshop Association (TAWA) is a nonprofit organization that seeks to promote the arts in and around Trenton, New Jersey. The organization has steadily grown from the time of its founding to include an increasingly large geographic swath of the New Jersey arts world, and has become a major force therein. Throughout its history, TAWA has funded numerous projects and staged countless exhibitions. Two notable endeavors represented within this collection are its Soviet Exchange program and its 1995 photographic exhibition, *Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City*.

The TAWA Soviet Artists Exchange Program was founded in 1988 on the basis of a protocol signed by Tair Salakhov, Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists, Arthur Holland, then-Mayor of Trenton, and Shelley Zeiger, a local Trenton entrepreneur, on behalf of TAWA. The first stage of the Exchange consisted of a visit by four Soviet artists to New Jersey, where they lived for a month with hosts selected from the ranks of the artists of TAWA. These artists were: Yuri Orekhov, the Secretary of Sculpture of the Union of Soviet Artists; Vadim Kulakov, Secretary of Monumentalism of the Union of Soviet Artists; Farkhad Khalilov, President of the Azerbaijan Union of Artists; and Vladimir Stelmashonok, the President of the Byelorussian Union of Soviet Artists.

The second stage of the Exchange took place in the summer of 1990. During this time, six Soviet artists visited Trenton for a 10-day visit in conjunction with the opening of their exhibit *Union of Soviet Artists in the USA* at Ellarslie, the Trenton City Museum. This exhibit featured 10 works by each of the 10 artists, and after debuting at Ellarslie, traveled to the galleries of Glassboro State College in New Jersey. These artists gave talks and participated in panels in conjunction with the exhibit.

During this time, an exhibition entitled *TAWA in the USSR* was staged in the Soviet Union, featuring 100 works by 100 TAWA artists. The exhibition was accompanied by six TAWA artists: Joy Barth, Judith Brodsky, Anne Bobo, James Colavita, Louis Draper, and Robert Mueller, who all spent a month-long residency in the Soviet Union. Upon their return to the United States, the artists were required to give talks about their trip so as to inform the larger American artistic community about the cultural and artistic issues dealt with by the artists of the Soviet Union. The Exchange's final stage was to feature a joint exhibition featuring the works of both the Union of Soviet Artists' and TAWA's members, and was to be accompanied by a bi-lingual catalogue.

The exchange was conceived as an extension of the citizen diplomacy project known as the Sister Cities program, and TAWA aimed to leverage the relationship of Trenton and the Lenin District of Moscow as sister cities under its auspices. The citizen-led nature of this program meant that in order to support the sweeping cultural exchange outlined above, TAWA would have to work diligently to raise the requisite funds. Consequently, several fundraising auctions were staged, including one in 1989 and another in 1990.

The 1995 exhibition *Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City* was staged by TAWA with the intention to "communicate the identity and significance" of Trenton by making "an image (or images) to represent and preserve its likeness" on a single day: May 3, 1995. As James Guimond, then-Chair of the English Department at Rider University wrote in his foreword to the exhibition's catalogue, "in these images Trenton's diversity is...expressed in the range of activities we can see". Thus, as Dan Aubrey of TAWA states in the same catalogue's preface, the exhibition functions as a "a celebration of being...a commemoration of hot meals, faces, buildings, shadows and human activity of all shades. It's the document of a time passing and unfolding".

TAWA continues to operate as a Greater Trenton nonprofit organization and to build upon its history of exhibiting at venues such as the Trenton Free Public Library, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton City Museum, Artworks Trenton, Prince Street Gallery in New York City, and many other locations.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection consists of letters, newspaper articles, database files, memoranda, press releases, and other documents pertaining to TAWA. In particular, this collection contains information related to its Soviet Artists Exchange Program and TAWA's 1995 exhibition *Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City*. This is reflected in the division of the collection into four series: I. General Information; II. Soviet Exchange; III. *Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City*; and IV. *Eyes on Trenton*. This collection contains documents from the years between 1979 and 2020, with the bulk of the documents representing the organization's activities in the years 1988 and 1989.

The TAWA collection provides insight into the artistic community of the greater Trenton area in the late 20th century. *Trenton Takes* provides a glimpse into the many lives and activities that constitute a single day in Trenton, through the simultaneously historical and personal nature of its images. Additionally, the self-conscious relationship of the Soviet Exchange program to the

Cold War Sister Cities program positions TAWA within the larger narrative of Cold War politics; particularly in regards to civilian politics and cultural dialogue between the two poles of the war. Thus, this collection provides information about an organization that sat at the nexus of local culture and arts, Trenton politics, and the currents of international diplomatic relations during one of the pivotal moments of modern world history.

Series Description

Series I. General Information

This series contains information related to TAWA at large, and contains a variety of documents. Consequently, this series has been broken up into several subseries. It is important to note that in each of the following subseries, the included documents do *not* include those which relate to either the Soviet Exchange program or the *Trenton Takes* exhibition, as each of these constitutes a separate series within this collection.

The first of these subseries is *TAWA UPDATE*, which consists of copies of the titular TAWA periodical, beginning with its first edition (Vol. 1, No. 1), dated September 1989, through the *Summer 2002* edition. Not every publication within this date range is represented in the collection.

The second subseries is *just briefly...*, and consists of copies of the titular TAWA periodical, beginning with its April 1980 edition (Vol. 2, No. 4), and ending with its July/August 1989 edition (Vol. 11, No. 7). Much like the *TAWA UPDATE* subseries, not every publication within the given date range is represented in the collection.

Press releases and advertisements related to various TAWA programs and exhibitions make up the third subseries. The advertisements represent a variety of formats, including mailing cards, flyers, and posters. Due to their size, the posters are housed together in flat box 10. The posters include those for the 1984 fundraiser and 1988 exhibit “Three Soviet Artists” at the Trenton City Museum, and 7 copies plus a felt banner of the 1989 TAWA Soviet Arts Exchange by Aztec Graphics. Programs and catalogues for a variety of TAWA exhibitions are also included in this subseries and include materials related to such events as *Eyes on TAWA* and *TAWAFEST*. More material related to the *Eyes on Trenton* events can be found in Series IV.

The fourth subseries is comprised of photocopies of newspaper clippings pertaining to TAWA, its artists, and various exhibitions and programs staged by the organization.

Subseries five, “Operational Documents”, is comprised of a large variety of documents relating to day-to-day operation of TAWA. It contains several pieces of correspondence between TAWA, the Old Mill Hill Society, and the Trenton City Council, among other things. Of particular note are two separate copies of the By-Laws of TAWA, the first being written in 1979 and the second copy being written ten years later, in 1989.

The six series contains a 25”x19” framed certificate of appreciation presented to Trenton City

Museum Director Ben Whitmire for his 10 years of collaboration with TAWA (c.1988). The certificate is hand-drawn by JoAnn Humphrey and signed by the TAWA officers.

Series II. Soviet Exchange

Contained within this series are documents relating to TAWA's Soviet Exchange program. This series thus contains a wide range of document types and subject matter, and as a result has been subdivided into 9 subseries.

The first of these is "Newspaper Articles", which consists of photocopies of articles related to the TAWA Soviet Exchange program. The earliest is the *Trenton Metro* article, "Trenton to host exhibition of works by 3 Soviet Artists" (April 6, 1988). The latest article contained in this subseries is *The Star-Ledger Today* article "Hue and Cry" (July 12, 1990).

The second subseries is made up of press releases and advertisements related explicitly to the Soviet Exchange program. Included in this subseries is a press release from the Mercer County Community College News Press titled "MCCC Artists Travel to Moscow", which highlights the involvement of TAWA in the New Jersey arts and educational communities. Posters, which are oversized, are housed together in flat box 10 and described above in Series I, subseries 3.

"TSEC Official Correspondence" is the title of the third subseries, which contains various pieces of correspondence between TAWA and various groups with which it collaborated or sought to collaborate in staging the Soviet Exchange. Of particular interest are two series of communications, the first of which is a series of correspondence between Gary Saretzky, head of the TAWA Soviet Exchange Committee (TSEC) and Tair Salakhov, head of the Union of Soviet Artists. These letters span the time period between December 8, 1988 and November 13, 1989, and provide insight into the planning and execution of the Soviet Exchange. The second is a smaller series of communications between Saretzky and Lena Militanian of the Union of Soviet Artists, dating from November 30, 1989 to July 13, 1990.

"Financial and Fundraising Documents" constitute the fourth subseries. It contains documents pertaining to the finances and fundraising endeavors of TAWA in support of the Soviet Exchange. This includes a copy of the organization's 1989-1990 budget, as well as a variety of letters soliciting donations, materials from the April 9, 1989 Soviet Exchange Benefit auction and the April 22, 1990 Soviet Exchange Benefit auction, several database files, and other materials related to funding the Exchange.

The fifth subseries is titled "TSEC Internal Documents" and contains a wide variety of documents related to the operation of the Soviet Exchange. This includes documents related to the creation of criteria for the selection of artists from TAWA to travel to the USSR, the final rubrics for said selection, and the actual applications of TAWA artists to travel to the USSR. In addition to this set of documents are tentative schedules for the Soviet artists' visit to the United States, various memorandums for TSEC members, internal correspondence between various members of TSEC, and lists of contact information important to TSEC.

The sixth subseries is comprised of photographs which are largely from two separate events. The first of these is one of the benefit auctions that sought to raise money for the Exchange program. These photographs come in a variety of sizes, including 3.75x5 inches, 5x7 inches, and 8x10.5 inches; they are all color photographs. The second major event is a cookout with the Soviet Artists (though no date is provided in the collection). These photographs are all color and in the 3.5x5 inch format. Notably, the envelopes containing these photographs include many sets of negatives. There are also multiple miscellaneous photographs, including portraits of various Soviet artists and their respective works. These miscellaneous photographs are in a variety of sizes; some are in color while some are black and white.

The seventh subseries is comprised of the minutes and agendas for TSEC meetings. These documents are dated November 30, 1988 to November 17, 1989.

The eighth subseries is comprised of five lapel pins in the shape and color of the American and USSR flags, created for the Soviet Exchange; a DVD entitled "TAWA in the USSR, 1990" by Judith Brodsky. The disc states that the "movie (was) completed after 2001" and contains various scenes from the trip; and a cookbook "Recipes of the Soviet Union" (1989) by Anne Fikaris, which contains illustrations by TAWA members.

The final subseries in the Soviet Exchange series is "Unrelated Materials" and contains a diverse set of documents, including advertisements for various foreign museum exhibitions, a series of postcards with works by Russian artists, and a pamphlet for *The State Museum of Ceramics and the 18th Century Kuskovo Estate*. Additionally, this series contains a pendant for the Red October Metallurgical Plant's 100th anniversary, and the catalog for the "Three Soviet Artists" (Ugarov, Salakhov, Bisti) exhibit at the Brandywine River Museum in Pennsylvania and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C.

Series III. Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City

This series is comprised of documents and photographs pertaining to the TAWA exhibition *Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City*, which was staged in 1995 and sought to capture the complex life of Trenton at a specific point in time. Of particular interest is the first subseries, which contains the photographs from the original exhibition, here organized by size and then alphabetically by artist.

The second subseries consists of documents pertaining to this exhibition. It contains a list of photographs from the exhibition and their formats, as well as promotional material and the original exhibition catalogue. Of particular interest is a copy of this catalogue that has been signed by various artists from the exhibition.

The third subseries is comprised of documents related to the 10th anniversary exhibition, which took place in 2005. These documents include advertising materials as well as a letter from Aubrey Kauffman (then president of TAWA) to then Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer in which Kauffman states his intention to donate the photographs to the Trentoniana Department at the Trenton Free Public Library. There are also two copies of the "TAWA at 10" exhibition catalog.

Series IV. Eyes on Trenton

The fourth series was added in February 2023. *Eyes on Trenton* was a two-year project started in November 1979, and sponsored by TAWA. It culminated in a two-month exhibit of paintings, photographs, sculpture, drawings, and poetry dealing with the theme of Greater Trenton. It ran at the New Jersey State Museum and the Trenton City Museum, September 4 to October 4, 1981. Similar exhibitions occurred in 1985 and 1988. Items in this series include programs, brochures, and ephemera related to these three events.

Container List

Box / Folder / Title

Series I. General Information

- 1 / 1 / "TAWA UPDATE", September 1989 - September 1991
- 1 / 2 / "TAWA UPDATE", October 1991 - January 1994
- 1 / 3 / "TAWA UPDATE", February 1994 - Summer 2002
- 1 / 4 / "just briefly...", April 1980 - December 1986
- 1 / 5 / "just briefly...", January 1987 - January 1988
- 1 / 6 / "just briefly...", February 1988 - August 1989
- 1 / 7 / Press Releases and Advertisements
- 10 / Posters
- 1 / 8 / Programs
- 1 / 9 / Newspaper Clippings
- 1 / 10 / Operational Documents

Series II. Soviet Exchange

- 1 / 11 / Newspaper Clippings
- 1 / 12 / Press Releases and Advertisements
- 1 / 13 / TSEC Correspondence
- 1 / 14 / TSEC Correspondence - Salakhov Correspondence
- 1 / 15 / TSEC Correspondence - Militanian Correspondence
- 1 / 16 / Financial and Fundraising Documents
- 1 / 17 / Financial and Fundraising Documents
- 2 / 1 / TSEC Internal Documents
- 2 / 2 / TSEC Internal Documents
- 2 / 3 / TSEC Internal Documents
- 2 / 4 / TSEC Internal Documents
- 2 / 5 / TSEC Internal Documents - Artist Applications
- 2 / 6 / TSEC Internal Documents - Artist Applications
- 2 / 7 / TSEC Internal Documents - Artist Applications
- 2 / 8 / TSEC Internal Documents - Artist Applications
- 2 / 9 / TSEC Internal Documents - Artist Applications
- 2 / 10 / TSEC Internal Documents - Artist Applications
- 2 / 11 / Photographs - TAWA Soviet Exchange Benefit Auction
- 2 / 12 / Photographs - Cookout with Soviet Artists
- 3 / 1 / Photographs - General
- 3 / 2 / TSEC Meeting Minutes and Agendas, November 30, 1988 - February 9, 1989

Container List (cont.)

Box / Folder / Title

Series II. Soviet Exchange (cont.)

3 / 3 / TSEC Meeting Minutes and Agendas, February 16, 1989 - November 17, 1989

3 / 3a / Lapel Pins, "TAWA in the USSR" DVD, cookbook

3 / 4 / Unrelated Materials

Series III. *Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City*

3 / 5 / Documents Pertaining to the 1995 *Trenton Takes* Exhibition

3 / 6 / Documents Pertaining to the 1995 *Trenton Takes* Exhibition - Exhibition Catalogues

3 / 7 / Documents Pertaining to the 10th Anniversary Exhibition

Box 4-10 Photographs from the Exhibition

Adams, Dale S. (4, 6); Budd, Patrick (4, 6); Carr, John (4, 6); Curry, Amy Wilson (9); Draper, Louis C. (9); Greco, Robert (4); Gloos, Conrad (6, 9); Guerra, Gene & JoAnn Humphrey (4, 6); Jacobs, Frank D. III (5); Kassel, Lewis (8, 9); Kauffman, Aubrey J. (8); Kurdzuk, Tony (8, 10); Lindgren, Robert D. (5); Lindsey, Bill (6); Long, Doc (6, 8); Losse, George (5, 8, 10); Mancuso, Michael (6, 8); O' Connor, William J. (8); Otis, Lauren (8); Pachuta, Joan (7, 8); Perone, Michelle P. (5); Phillips, Richard (5); Ritualo, Mario I. Jr. (7); Shelly, Paul R. (7); Spirer, Dee (5, 7); Therese, Jane (7); Vaughn, Martha (6); Walker, Ron & Angela Gonzalez (5)

Series IV. *Eyes on Trenton*

3 / 8 / Programs, 1981

3 / 9 / Programs, 1985

3 / 10 / Programs, 1988

Provenance: The documents and artifacts of this collection were found in the stacks of the Trentoniana Department, having been donated thereto over the years. Some material had been donated by Gary Saretzky. They have been collected and organized into the series and subseries presented above.

Restrictions: None

References

"Trenton Artists' Workshop Association (TAWA)." Accessed December 30, 2019.

<http://www.mercerbucks.com/organization/trenton-artists-workshop-association-tawa/>.

TAWA. *Persistence*. Collection: TAWA, Series I., Subseries 4; Box 1, Folder 8.

TAWA. *Trenton Takes: 24 Hours in the City: A Photo Documentary*. Collection: TAWA, Series III., Subseries 2; Box 3, Folder 5. Trenton Artists' Workshop Association, 1995.

TSEC. *TAWA Soviet Art Exchange Committee Press Release*. Collection: TAWA, Series II., Subseries 2; Box 1, Folder 12. 1989.