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Collection 641
Trenton Arts Connection (TAC)

by Anthony Lepore
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History

Founded in 1999, the Trenton Arts Connection (TAC) is a non-profit organization intended to cultivate the Trenton art community and, per their description on VisitNJ, “revitalize... downtown [Trenton] using the arts.” In addition to these aesthetic and community-strengthening goals, the creation of this thriving downtown arts community, the organization would claim, would be a major social and economic asset to Trenton.

TAC hoped to maintain and attract further corporate investment within downtown Trenton, as well as bolster housing values within the region, generate jobs, and increase local tax bases. Towards this end, the non-profit would collaborate with local artists, alongside the city government and other art-centric organizations (such as Artworks, the Capital City Redevelopment Commission, and Isles), to build out spaces for their self-expression and self-promotion. This would be portrayed as a symbiotic relationship, as artists would utilize their TAC-publicized work as a springboard for their own career ambitions.

The organization is deeply entwined with its sister organization, the Trenton Downtown Association (TDA) founded in 1986, who likewise pursued their ambitions of a redeveloped urban landscape. Originally created to investigate Trenton’s potential as an art destination, TAC would within time become a useful entity for the pursuit of artistic revitalization within the city. As one internal document declared, it would be more economically viable to pursue real estate to revitalize under the flagship of the TAC rather than the TDA.

Though TAC’s front-facing publications were particularly vague regarding its precise origins, former director of Trenton housing and development Alan Mallach would be named in later

History (cont.)

internal documents as TAC's Founding President. By 2002, David Schure would succeed him as Trenton Arts Connection President, later replaced the same year by Doug Rhinehart. He would be succeeded by Anne LaBate, a prolific local realtor and former board chair of the Trenton Parking Authority. Much of the collection revolves around LaBate's time within the organization.

By the end of 2001, the organization would meet their goals of creating a self-designed website, advertising an "Art & Architecture Walking Tour of Downtown Trenton" brochure, and distributing an artist registry. In 2002, the organization would move towards several large projects, including the creation of live/work spaces in the historic "Canal House " on West Hanover Street and within its immediate vicinity. This would not be the only historic building that TAC sought to revitalize and convert into live/work spaces for a nascent Trenton arts community. Much was written about TAC's Board-wide efforts to transform a downtown office building at 217 East Hanover Street into another hub for local artists. It is unclear if this project was fulfilled from these documents alone, as the enumerated interest in the property seems to disappear from the records following 2002. It is nonetheless indicative of the creative methods that Trenton Arts Connection attempted to refurbish/maintain historical buildings and convert them into centers of cultural production.

Another project from 2002 that is featured prominently within this collection is the Trenton Clayworks facility. This would be the creation of a ceramic art facility within downtown Trenton as the proverbial reincarnate of the city's historical ceramics industry dating back to the 19th century. Akin to their other projects, this would provide studio rentals for artists, shared work areas, spaces for artists to sell/display their work, and opportunities to lead educational programming.

One other major feature of this collection is the Passage Theatre Company and Mill Hill Playhouse. Anne LaBate, formerly a member of the Passage Theatre Company's Board of Directors, seemingly maintained close ties between Passage and TAC. Several "Experience the Arts" brochures illustrate that TAC was involved in the production of advertisements since 2001. It is probable that specific arts shows were supported by the organization.

The organization would additionally hold festivals, such as Artfest in 2001, to showcase local artists' works. There is a small, but noteworthy series on the Trenton Arts Connection George Antheil festival, aligning with the organization's interest in melding Trenton's history with its contemporaneous arts community.

History (cont.)

Though there is a dearth of information on the later history of TAC, their sister organization, Trenton Downtown Association, is still a major fixture within Trenton's nonprofit revitalization efforts. Anne LaBate, who figures prominently within this collection, is currently a treasurer of TDA. It is still aligned with several of the foregoing organizations, such as Isles, the Passage Theatre Company, and more. However, the fate of several of their projects are unknown, with spaces once aimed as the loci for TAC-facilitated urban transformation no longer operating as the cultural hubs outlined in TAC internal documents.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection primarily spans the organizational history of Trenton Arts Connection from the 2000 to 2003, with scant material from before the organization's incorporation or after 2004. Materials include a wealth of internal documentation: board correspondence, institutional applications, board minutes, plans, project inspirations, miscellaneous forms, and financial documentation. It also includes several publications either from Trenton Arts Connection, institutions supported by/related to TAC, or other forms of inspiration (e.g. a printout of an article explaining the role of cultural policy).

The bulk of the material was received from Anne LaBate, a board member and president of the Trenton Arts Connection, and her original order for the material has been mostly retained.

Series Description

Series 1: Administrative (1999-2001)

This series contains a variety of materials relating to the business operations of the Trenton Arts Connection. This includes project-planning materials, proposals, correspondence with external institutions (e.g. New Jersey government departments), and a handful of inspiration materials.

Series 2: Financial (2000-2003)

This series contains the majority of materials related to Trenton Arts Connections' finances, including financial summaries/reports, charts, financial aid applications, printouts, and correspondence.

Series 3: Board of Directors Material (2000-2002)

This series contains board meeting minutes, agendas, memos, and internal documents from both the executive and full boards of Trenton Arts Connections.

Series Description (cont.)

Series 4: Marketing/Public-Facing Materials (1983-2008)

This series contains materials intended for public consumption, such as pamphlets, guides, and event advertisements. It is unclear how germane some of these materials are, as it is difficult to ascertain how exactly the organizing institutions are affiliated with TAC. They were included in the original collection box and will thus be included within this collection.

Series 5: Passage Theater Company/Mill Hill Playhouse (2000-2019)

This series contains playbills, show guides, program advertisements, and seasonal schedules for the Mill Hill Playhouse, which was funded in part by TAC and TDA.

Series 6: Clayworks (2001-2002)

This series contains material relating to Trenton Art Connection's Clayworks project, the creation of a ceramic art facility within downtown Trenton.

Series 7: Antheil Festival and Symposium (2002-2004)

This series contains material related to the Antheil Festival and Antheil Symposium. George Antheil (1900-1959) was a Trenton-born avant-garde musical composer. He is buried in Trenton's Riverview Cemetery.

Container List

Box/Folder/Title

Series 1. Administrative (1999-2004)

1 / 1 / Administrative, 1999-2001

UEZ Fund Application, June 9, 1999

Project Goals, c. February 2000

TDA Real Estate Dev. Committee, December 29, 2000

Isles Housing Draft Work Plan, March 27, 2001

Handwritten Note on back of Memo, April 11, 2001

NJ Department of Labor Fax (RE: At-Risk Youth), May 1, 2001

Artfest Project Plan, c. May 2001

Arts Festival Committee, May 12, 2001

Art Festival Committees/Blueprint, May 21, 2001

Trenton Artfest 2001 Overview, June 16, 2001

Artfest Meeting Reminder, July 26, 2001

Press Conference Release, December 7, 2001

TAC Board and Goals for 2002, December 17, 2001

Container List (cont.)

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Series 1. Administrative (1999-2004)

1 / 2 / Administrative 2001

Arts Build Downtown Trenton Blueprint for Action, 2001

1 / 3 / Administrative 2001

Arts Build Downtown Trenton, 2001

1 / 4 / Administrative 2001

Potential Live/Work Space Properties, c. 2001

Real Estate for TAC, c. 2001

Space Notes from Gail, c. 2001

Example: Millville News Release, c. 2001

Work Done for Previous Incentive Brochure, c. 2001

Sample P.R. Packet, c. 2001

1 / 5 / Administrative (January-June 2002)

TAC 2002 Board of Directors, 2002

Artsforum 2002 Proposal, 2002

Land Use Regulations Printout, c. 2002

Waterfront Park Parking Garage Correspondence, January 4, 2002

LaBate correspondence with Karpowitz, January 11, 2002

“Reminder List for Anne”, c. February 2002

UEZ Monies Correspondence, February 11, 2002

A Report for TDA, February 20, 2002

TAC Report, February 25, 2002

TAC Draft Constitution & ByLaws, May 2, 2002

Letter from Rockefeller Foundation, May 17, 2002

“Artist Workspaces Available”, June 26, 2002

1 / 6 / Administrative (July-December 2002)

TAC By-Laws Discussion, July 22, 2002

Exit Report Draft, October 1, 2002

TDA Letter to Grounds for Sculpture Curator/Director, August 7, 2002

TAC Draft Constitution & Bylaws, August 8, 2002

“Who is TDA?”, c. 2002

Topics for By-Laws Discussion, c. 2002

Michelle [?] Response to By-Law Questions , c.2002

Sample P.R. Packet, 2002

Container List (cont.)

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Series 1. Administrative (1999-2004)

1 / 7 / Administrative (2003-2004)

Artist Roundtable Minutes, January 13, 2003
TAC Board, 2004
“Flat Out in Trenton” Proposal Summary, 2004
“Flat Out in Trenton” Proposal Powerpoint, c. 2004
“Trenton’s History is in its Streets” Article Printout, July 19, 2004
“Cultural Policy...” Article Printout, N.d.
Letterhead, N.d.
TAC Artist Application Brochures, N.d.

Series 2. Financial (2000-2003)

1 / 8 / Financial (2000-2001)

Possible Funding for Small Projects/Marketing, c. 2000
Independent Auditors’ Report, June 30, 2001
Preliminary Draft of Accountants’ Compilation Report, December 10, 2001

1 / 9 / Financial (2003)

Finance Chart 1: Expenses, c. 2002
Finance Chart 2: Income, c. 2002
Finance Chart 1: Expenses, 2002
Finance Chart 2: Income, c. 2002
Finance Chart 3: Fundraising Detail, 2002
Funding Directory, c. 2002
For Canal House Project, c. 2002

1 / 10 / Financial (January-June 2003)

Fleet Bank Grant Guidelines, c. 2002
Fiscal Year End Funding Reports, c. 2002
TAC Funding Possibilities, c. 2002
Common Proposal Form, 2002
List of Contacts, April 19, 2002
Draft of Financial History, April 25, 2002
Positioning Strategies: To Do, April 2002
Fleet Museums On Us! Brochure, c. May 2002
Fiscal Year End 2002, June 2002
Funding Strategies & Tasks Report for 2002, June 17, 2002
TDA FY03 Draft Budget, June 18, 2002

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Series 2. Financial (2000-2003) (cont.)

1 / 10 / Financial (January-June 2003) (cont.)

TAC Funding Board Meeting, c. 2002

TAC Financial History, June 20, 2002

Letter to CCRC, June 24, 2002

Letter to Mayor Palmer, June 24, 2002

For TAC Operational Monies, June 24, 2002

AGM Common Proposal Printout, June 27, 2002

1 / 11 / Financial (July-December 2002)

Fleet Bank Proposal Draft, c. July 2002

FleetBoston Financial Foundation Printout, July 22, 2002

FleetBoston Community Renaissance Initiative, July 22, 2002

Wachovia Foundation: First Union in the Community, July 23, 2002

Gail Fax to Anne [LaBate]/Matt, July 24, 2002

Fleet Bank Proposal Summary, July 24, 2002

TAC Income Report, August 12, 2002

East Hanover Building Assessment, August 12, 2002

1 / 12 / Financial 2003

Community Arts Collab. Application/Acceptance, July 29, 2003

NJSCA Grant Application Form, July 2003-June 2004

Organizational Profile Form, 2003

Empty Organizational Profile Form, 2003

Series 3. Board of Directors Material (2000-2002)

2 / 1 / Full Board of Directors Materials (2000-2001)

Activity Report, January-August 2000

Board Member Introduction to TAC, c. 2000

TAC 2001 Mission Statement & Goals, 2001

TAC Board-wide Memo, January 2001

Anne LaBate Board Mem. Confirmation, January 31, 2001

Anne LaBate Invitation to "Cocktails..." Event, February 14, 2001

Notice of Full Board Dinner/Work Meeting, March 22, 2001

TAC Board-wide Memo, May 9, 2001

Notice of Full Board Dinner/Work Meeting, May 23, 2001

Board Agenda, May 23, 2001

Board Agenda, July 24, 2001

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Series 3. Board of Directors Material (2000-2002) (cont.)

2 / 1 / Full Board of Directors Materials (2000-2001) (cont.)

TAC Board-wide Memo, July 2001
TAC Board-wide Memo, c. October 2001
Director's Report, November 13, 2001
Meeting Agenda, November 20, 2001
Director's Report, December 5, 2001
TAC Full Board Agenda, December 5, 2001

2 / 2 / Full Board of Directors Materials

Basic Info. NJSCA Grant, 2002
Trenton Economic Development Corporation, c. 2002
TAC Board Meeting Reminder, February 2002
Full Board Agenda, February 25, 2002
TAC Full Board Agenda, February 25, 2002
TAC Board Meeting Reminder, April 2002
Full Board Agenda, April 22, 2002
Board Member Committees, c. 2002
TAC Board Meeting Reminder, April 2002
TAC Board Meeting Reminder, April 2002
Handwritten "Fundraising Agenda", c. April 2002
Exec. Board Agenda, April 22, 2002
Full Board Agenda, June 17, 2002
TAC Memo, June 24, 2002
Board Correspondence, July-August 2002
219 Marketing Plan, August 2, 2002
TAC Memo, August 2, 2002
Full Board Agenda, August 6, 2002
TAC Meeting Reminder, August 12, 2002
Full Board Agenda, August 12, 2002
Retreat Meeting Planning Documents, November 16, 2002
Itemized Action Plan, c. 2002
Unfinished Project/Meeting Goals, 2002

2 / 3 / Executive Board Materials (2001-April 2002)

Exec. Board Agenda, December 11, 2001
Memo to Anne LaBate/ Exec. Board Agenda, January 8, 2002
Exec. Board Minutes, January 8, 2002

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Series 3. Board of Directors Material (2000-2002) (cont.)

2 / 3 / Executive Board Materials (2001-April 2002) (cont.)

Exec. Board Agenda, January 23, 2002

Exec. Board Agenda, February 5, 2002

Exec. Board Agenda, March 5, 2002

Exec. Board Agenda, April 2, 2002

Exec. Board Agenda, April 2, 2002

Exec. Board Minutes, April 2, 2002

2 / 4 / Executive Board Materials (May-August 2002)

Exec. Board Agenda, May 7, 2002

Three Month Coordination Plan, c. June 2002

Board Attendance Record, c. June 2002

Exec. Committee Meeting Packet, June 4, 2002

Exec. Board Agenda, July 2, 2002

Exec. Board Minutes, July 2, 2002

Exec. Board Meeting Attendance, c. August 2002

Exec. Board Meeting Reminder, c. August 2002

Exec. Board Agenda, August 6, 2002

Series 4. Marketing/Public-Facing Materials (1983-2008)

2 / 5 / Marketing/Public Facing Materials (1983-2001)

Summer in the City (Trenton Arts Commission), June-August 1983

TAC Introductory Powerpoint, 2000

Artist Registry & Cultural Resource Directory, 2001

Printed Copy of TAC Website, May 21, 2001

“Something Different” Capstone Event Pamphlet, May 2001

“Experience the Arts” Guide, April-June 2001

Artworks Fall 2001 Catalog, c. September 2001

“Experience the Arts” Guide, November-December 2001

2 / 6 / Marketing/Public-Facing Materials (2002-2008)

“Hattitude: Hast Day at Ellarslie in Cadwalader Park, May 2002

Trenton Potteries Newsletter, September 2002

Trenton City Museum 25th Anniversary Gala, October 2003

The Ellarslie Muse Newsletter, c. October 2003

Stop the Wrecking Ball pamphlet, November 2003

Spring Benefit Concert in honor of Deborah Ford, April 2004

Container List (cont.)

Box/Folder/Title

Series 4. Marketing/Public-Facing Materials (1983-2008) (cont.)

2 / 6 / Marketing/Public-Facing Materials (2002-2008) (cont.)

Stop the Wrecking Ball Postcard, 2005
Stop the Wrecking Ball Pamphlet, November 2005
Women in Jazz Festival Pamphlet, May 2007
Isles Tent Event, September 2007
Renaissance Ball of Trenton, October 19, 2007
Fifth Annual Stop the Wrecking Ball pamphlet, December 2007
Preservation New Jersey, September 2008
Downtown Trenton Artwalk, N.d.

Series 5. Passage Theatre Company/ Mill Hill Playhouse (2000-2019)

2 / 7 / Passage Theatre Company/ Mill Hill Playhouse (2000-2003)

Mill Hill Playhouse 2000-2001 Season, c. 2000
Zora Neale Hurston... Show Guide, February 2000
Bending Light Show Guide, June 2000
Welcome Home Marian Anderson, October 2000
Welcome Home Marian... Advert, c. October 2000
The Book of Candy Show Guide, October 2001
Fly Mill House Playhouse Show Guide, 2001
Victor & The Virgin Advertisement, c. 2001
Passage Theater Co. Now Playing, c. 2001
2nd Annual Solo Flights Pamphlet, February-March 2002
2nd Annual Solo Flights Schedule, February-March 2003
Lovely Day Show Guide, April 2003
Passage Theater Company, 2003
3rd Annual Solo Flights Schedule, February-March 2003
3rd Annual Solo Flights Pamphlet, February-March 2003

2 / 8 / Passage Theatre Company/Mill Hill Playhouse (2004-2019)

In Mahalia's Light Advertisement, May-June 2004
Rosemary and I Show Guide, February 2005
Pretty Fire Show Guide, April 2005
Passage Benefit Evening, June 2005
Move it and It's Yours, October-November 2005
20th Anniversary Celebration Show Guide, 2005-2006
Love to All, Lorraine Show Guide, March 2006
A Stone Carver Show Guide, May-June 2006

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Series 5. Passage Theatre Company/ Mill Hill Playhouse (2000-2019) (cont.)

2 / 8 / Passage Theatre Company/Mill Hill Playhouse (2004-2019) (cont.)

Second Line Show Guide, October 2006
it goes without saying Show Guide, March 2008
A Sense of Wonder Show Guide, March 2008
If My Friends Could See Me Now Show Guide, March 2009
Love and Communication Show Guide, October 2010
Morir Sonyando Show Guide, May 2019
Black Comedy: The Wacky Side of Racism Show Guide, N.d.
Paul Robeson Show Guide, N.d.

Series 6. Clayworks (2001-2002)

2 / 9 / Clayworks (2001-2002)

Trenton Clayworks Floor Plan, July 16, 2001
Clayworks Correspondence, January 28, 2002
Anticipated Clayworks Cash Flow/Disbursement Schedule, January 28, 2002
Clayworks Project Proposal to Michelle Christina, January 28, 2002
Clayworks Financing Process, 2002
Trenton Clayworks Grant Application, 2002
Clayworks Financing/Process, c. 2002

Series 7. Antheil Festival and Symposium (2002-2004)

2 / 10 / Antheil (2002-2004)

Antheil Reception Invitation, February 26, 2002
Antheil Reception Pamphlet, February 26, 2002
Antheil Festival Timeline, c. March 2002
The Times Clipping, March 24, 2002
Antheil Fest. Committee Invite, April 9, 2002
Antheil Festival Meeting Agenda, April 9, 2002
Printout for Anne LaBate, April 2002
Antheil Festival Meeting Agenda, May 20, 2002
George Antheil Festival Brochure, 2004
Antheil Festival Tentative Budget, N.d.
Printed Profile of Antheil, N.d.

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