

Harvey Lichtenstein Photographs

Collection Identifier

Harvey_Lichtenstein_Photos

Dates

bulk

Extent

cubic feet

Agency History

Brooklyn Academy of Music presented its first performance in 1861 and has been the premier performing arts center in Brooklyn since then. From its Victorian beginnings to its contemporary, multi-cultural present and its multi-media future, BAM has survived for almost 150 years by remaining open to change and reflecting the development and evolution of its community and the artists it represents. The first BAM facility at 176-194 Montague Street was originally conceived by the Philharmonic Society of Brooklyn as a home for its concerts. It housed a large theater seating 2,200, a smaller concert hall, dressing and chorus rooms and a vast "baronial" kitchen. The Academy of Music presented both amateur and professional music and theater productions. Performers included Ellen Terry, Edwin Booth, Tomas Salvini and Fritz Kreisler. After the Academy burned to the ground on the morning of November 30, 1903, The New York Times eulogized its achievements, "In short, there has hardly been a great public movement of national import but the old Academy has been at one time or another its principal focus." Plans were quickly made to rebuild at the edge of Brooklyn's business district in the fashionable neighborhood of Fort Greene. The cornerstone was laid at 30 Lafayette in 1906 and a series of opening events were held in the fall of 1908 culminating with a grand gala evening featuring Geraldine Farrar and Enrico Caruso in a Metropolitan Opera production of Gounod's Faust. The Met would continue to present seasons in Brooklyn through 1921. It was during one of the engagements of the final Met season at BAM that Caruso, while performing in L'Elisir d'Amore, suffered a throat hemorrhage and filled "handkerchief after handkerchief with blood" before quitting the stage. Two weeks later, he gave the last performance of his career at the Met. After World War II, Brooklyn shared the growing problems of other urban centers throughout America, and Brooklyn Academy of Music's audience and support base declined. Language classes and martial arts instruction were booked into performance spaces. A school for boys held classes in the partitioned grand ballroom. By the time Mr. Lichtenstein was appointed Executive Director, the programs and facilities needed rethinking. During the 30 years that Mr. Lichtenstein has been BAM's leader, the Academy has experienced a complete

renaissance, and is now recognized internationally as a leading presenter of contemporary performing arts. BAM's current programming consists of the Next Wave Festival each fall a spring season of opera, theater and dance; an Education and Humanities Program, and a variety of community programs. BAM recently opened the BAMcafé in its third-floor Lepercq Space (which includes free music and other programming), and the on-site BAM Rose Cinemas in November 1998.

Historical/Biographical Note

Harvey Lichtenstein directed the Brooklyn Academy of Music from 1967 to 1999 and is credited with resurrecting the institution and making it a world-class arts organization. A Brooklyn native, he attended Brooklyn Technical High School and Brooklyn College, and became a dancer, studying and performing with a number of modern dance greats, including Pearl Lang, Martha Graham, and Sophie Maslow. By the 1960s, he'd become an arts administrator, and held management positions at both New York City Ballet and New York City Opera before becoming director of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. When Lichtenstein arrived in 1967, the neighborhood surrounding the Academy had become seriously economically depressed, and the theater itself was at risk financially. Lichtenstein's tack to revitalize the Academy, soon rebranded with the acronym BAM, was to present adventurous programming that couldn't be seen elsewhere. Soon BAM had the reputation as a showcase for cutting-edge contemporary performance, particularly in dance, but also in drama and music. In 1983 he established the Next Wave Festival, and the long list of artists who came to perform on BAM's stages under Lichtenstein's purview reads like a Who's Who of contemporary performance. It includes Laurie Anderson, Pina Bausch, Peter Brook, Merce Cunningham, Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Jerzy Grotowski, Mark Morris, Steve Reich, Twyla Tharp, and Robert Wilson. Iconic works performed during his 32-year tenure include *Satyagraha* by Philip Glass; *Einstein on the Beach*, a collaboration by Robert Wilson/Philip Glass/Lucinda Child; and Peter Brooks' *The Mahabharata*. Lichtenstein pulled the institution from near financial ruin into a dynamic period of renovation and expansion, which included the acquisition of a new theater, the Majestic, a renovated vaudeville house. After his retirement, the theater was renamed the BAM Harvey Theater in his honor. In 1999, President Clinton awarded Lichtenstein the National Medal of Arts. Lichtenstein's legacy includes significant contributions to the revitalization not only of BAM, but also its Brooklyn neighborhood. After leaving BAM, Lichtenstein became director of the BAM Local Development Corporation, an organization with the mission of creating a cultural district in the area surrounding BAM. With the construction, notably, of the nearby Mark Morris Dance Center, Theater for a New Audience's Polonsky Shakespeare Center, and the BAM Fisher Building Fort Greene is now recognized as a vibrant, established arts destination.

Scope & Content

The Harvey Lichtenstein Photographs Collection spans 1967 through the present, but focuses on 1967 through 1999. Included are a selection of portraits and group photos with artists, board members, funders and government officials, that reflect the 32 years Harvey Lichtenstein spent as President and Executive Producer of BAM.

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[Portrait of Harvey Lichtenstein and David Jones, circa 1980-1981], circa 1980 – 1981

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[Harvey Lichtenstein and Bianca Jagger, 1991], June 1991

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[Harvey Lichtenstein presents Pina Bausch with Prada Pina purse during "Two Cigarettes in the Dark" opening night, 1994], circa 1994

[Karen Brooks Hopkins, Harvey Lichtenstein, Joseph V. Melillo, 1995], 1995

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