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Peek Inside Fort Greene's Unique Glass-Making Studio UrbanGlass (Photos)

by Barbara Eldredge [No Comments](#)

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Glass is everywhere in our lives — from eyeglasses to screens to windows — but we're usually looking through it instead of at it. Not so at UrbanGlass, a glass-obsessed non-profit offering studio space in one of the country's largest glass-making studios, located at 647 Fulton Street in the heart of Fort Greene's emerging Cultural District.

Here, roughly 200 artists and makers regularly fire up the furnaces to make neon signs, sculpture, beads and blown-glass vessels — all with an eye to exploring glass as a medium for creativity. Brownstoner recently visited the 17,000-square-foot facility, which is closed to the public.

Read on for a look inside.



Artist James Corporan prepares molten glass for working.

Founded in 1977, UrbanGlass was originally based on Great Jones Street in Manhattan. But the organization was eventually priced out of its SoHo home. Through the New York City Economic Development Corp., they bid and won a spot in 1991 in the former Strand Theater building in Fort Greene — shared with BRIC Media. The building underwent a \$35 million renovation completed in the fall of 2013.

"When UrbanGlass moved here, the neighborhood was blighted," Cybele Maylone, UrbanGlass's Executive Director told Brownstoner on our visit. "Soon we'll be surrounded by thousands of new apartments. The artists have whiplash about how the neighborhood has changed."

Nearby Downtown Brooklyn is expected to add 6,412 new apartments over the next four years. Artists peering out of UrbanGlass' windows can already see a number of new buildings rising on adjacent blocks.



The ground-floor space houses UrbanGlass's store featuring work from their studio artists, as well as a gallery space.



The gallery is currently showing a range of artworks by Helen Lee. Lee's work often uses glass to prompt the viewer to think about language.



Upstairs, UrbanGlass leaves the sleek showroom atmosphere at the door. There are a number of studio rooms, each with a special purpose in the glass-making process. In the "cold room," artists like Bianca Abreu, above, grind and rework glass.



Here, small kilns enable glass to be formed by molds. Artist Jamie Grove is creating a series of glass birds.

The main furnace room occupies the former fly loft of the Strand and has six "glory holes" — giant ovens used to melt sand into glass and make the material workable. Above, Danielle Brensinger shovels fine sand into metal bins to prep it for the furnace.



The molten glass needs to reach a temperature of roughly 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit in order to be malleable. You might be surprised to learn that glass-making is often a group effort.

Above, Pete Singleton, James Corporan, and Emily Craddock. The molten glass will be blown into the plaster mold above, taking its shape.



On Brownstoner's visit, these two artists –Paul Giotopoulos and Vince Tancredi — were creating glass paperweights inspired by the Guatemalan flag.



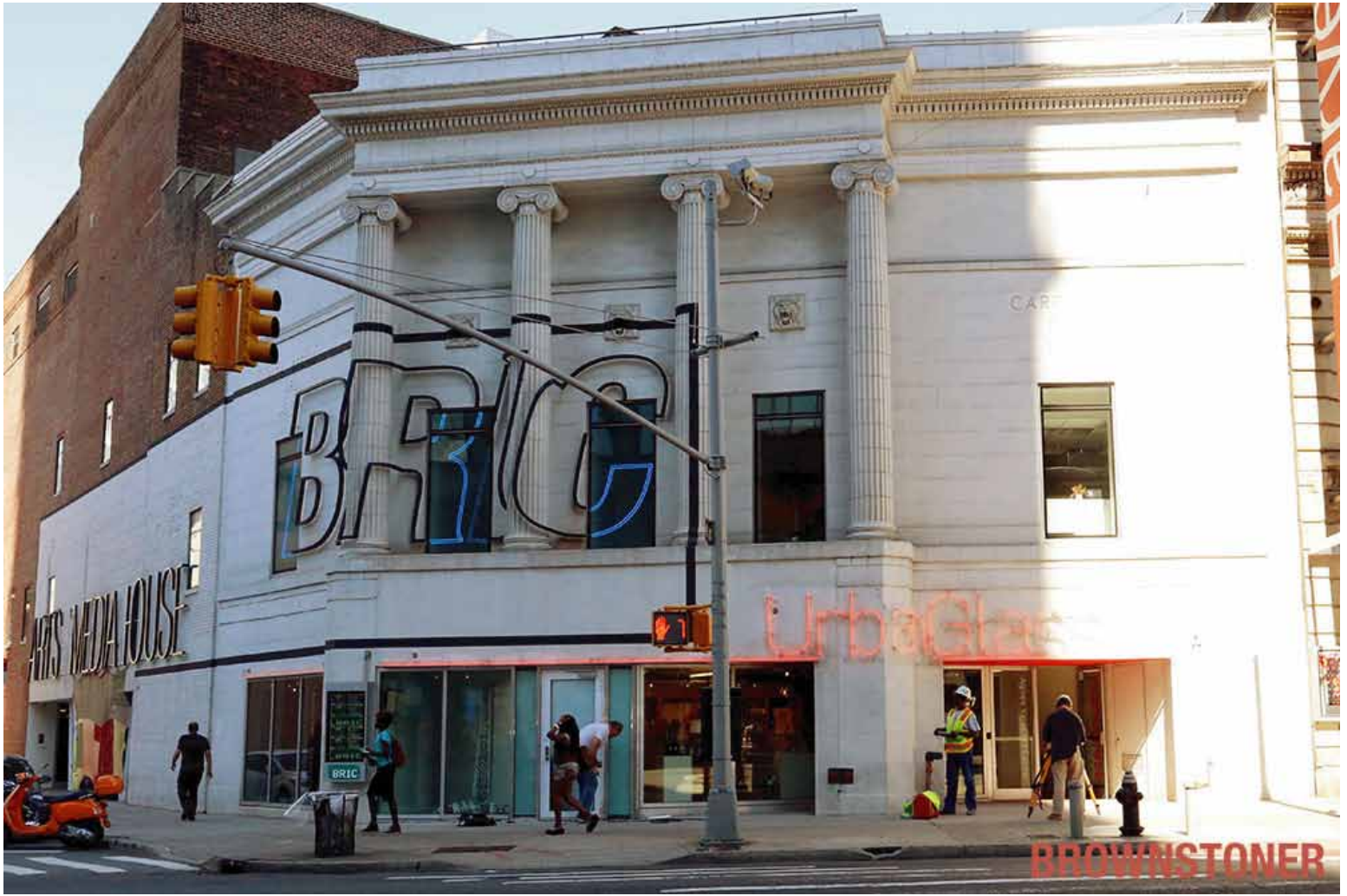
In the neon studio, artist Starr Eaddy made glass beads. The neon studio includes equipment needed to make illuminated signage.



Examples of blown glass made by Jamie Harris, an avid Brownstoner reader.



This area of smaller kilns is used for teaching glass work.



Want to visit UrbanGlass for yourself? The facility is hosting a rare Open Studios event on Saturday, October 3 from 1-5 p.m. Visitors will be able to tour the studios, watch artists at work and even create glass works of their own. Additionally, on October 18, architect James Carpenter will explore the ways that glass is used in the built environment — stained glass windows, neon signs and more.

[Photos: Barbara Eldredge]