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Southampton Arts Center Inaugural SummerFest Raises \$400,000

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The Southampton [Arts](#) Center held its Inaugural SummerFest Gala Thursday night. The evening raised \$400,000 to bring world class cultural programming to the Southampton community.

The Center, which formerly housed the Parrish Art Museum, left a question mark as to how the iconic building would be used when the Parrish moved to Watermill.

“Southampton could not afford to have this building go dark,” said Southampton mayor Mark Epley. “It would have had a significant impact on property values, on shop owners and restaurants. The Center is the focal point of our village. We’ve reinvigorated the space, we’ve brought in art in a variety of forms, and we’ve brought in members of the community that had never experienced the grounds before. This is a community building, and the community loves it. We’ve been able to develop relationships with the Hamptons Film Festival, Bay Street Theater, Guild Hall, Jazz At Lincoln Center, to name a few. It’s been everything and more than I ever thought would happen on this property.”

Epley and philanthropists Whitney Stevens and Simone Levinson worked tirelessly for four years to make their vision of bringing a vibrant cultural resource to East Enders a reality. Levinson chaired Thursday’s event with Tiffany Moller, drawing over 400 people under an enormous tent, where local restaurants served a sampling of their best dishes, Jazz At Lincoln Center played music, and Dance Heginbotham, a dance company obtained through a programming partnership with the Baryshnikov Arts Center, performed. Guests included Cristina Cuomo, whose Beach magazine has been a huge supporter of the Center, and her husband Chris, Hilary and Wilbur Ross, Fairley Pilaro, Dayssi and Paul Kanavos, Danielle Ganek, and Erica and Michael Karsch, who contributed healthy Juice Press juices.

“Tonight is as much a ‘friend raiser’ as it is a fundraiser,” said Levinson. “This shows what’s possible when a community comes together.”

“I joined the board of the Southampton Arts Center because it is an exciting opportunity to enrich our community by bringing world class programming through partnerships with an amazing and diverse slate of artists, performers and educators,” said Moller. “The grounds of the Southampton Arts Center are beloved in this community and I wanted to do my part to ensure that the grounds and the iconic building are protected, and that the original purpose of providing art and culture to the community is continued for future generations.”

Close Up: Contemporary Portraiture was on display in the gallery. The show includes portraits by Richard Prince, Jeff Koons, and Julian Schnabel.

“The current survey of contemporary portraiture curated by Leila Heller and Kelly Behun is comprehensive, provocative, and first rate,” said Bob Colacello. “I particularly love the Julian Schnabel plate portrait of Geoffrey Bradfield, Jonathan Becker’s supersized photographs of Andy Warhol, Elaine Kaufman, and Emma Becker, and Martin Saar’s painting of me. I love the fact that the Southampton Art Center has brought Grosvenor Atterbury’s neo-classical building in the middle of the village back to life so beautifully and elegantly,”

“It’s wonderful to see the return of the old Parrish Museum as the vibrant and new Southampton Arts Center,” said Lisa Dennison. “The support and participation that the SummerFest program has received is a testament to its exciting, diverse programming, and to the leadership of both the local and broader community of arts patrons.”