

by Charles A. Riley II

These are heady times for Manhattan's Lincoln Center. Construction has just begun on a facelift for some of its nearly fifty-year-old halls; opera simulcasts in movie theaters nationwide are a hit; attendance is way up (with eighty-five sellout performances during the most recent opera season); and a multi volume book publishing project, including a coffee table-size book on the art collection has just been rolled out.

But Lincoln Center as a dynamic art destination? The same sixteen-acre campus where visitors have thrilled to performances by Renee Fleming and Placido Domingo saw the opening this April of a chic "white box" gallery space facing the plaza in front of the Metropolitan Opera House, full of work by hot Chelsea artists. But most of the Center's five million annual visitors are in too much of a rush to be seated in time for curtain call or to make their trains home after the performance, to notice the treasures of its veritable museum of nearly fifty major modernist works by artists including Marc Chagall, Henry Moore, Alexander Calder, Jasper Johns, David Smith, and Louise Nevelson, which are always on display.

Visitors may cast a peripheral glance at the highlights of the permanent collection, including the massive



The 16.3-acre campus of New York's Lincoln Center, now undergoing a major renovation, is a treasure trove of Modern and contemporary art.

Chagall murals facing Broadway or the dreamy Moore sculpture set in a reflecting pool (the largest reclining figure he ever did) near a Calder stabile. The artworks were acquired for the Center from 1962 to 1967 as the various buildings were completed. The committee was composed of art-world insiders that included Alfred Barr, pioneering director of the Museum of Modern Art, collector and philanthropist David Rockefeller, the architect Philip Johnson, impresario Lincoln Kirstein,

Great Impressions at Lincoln Center

A New Gallery and Major Printmaking are Part of a Renaissance of Visual Art



and the sharp-eyed CBS executive and collector, Frank Stanton.

After assembling the collection (for a song when compared with what the Jasper Johns alone is worth today), the committee's work was essentially done. Now the committee is being revived at the instigation of Lincoln Center's dynamic president Reynold Levy. The art world was buzzing when the grapevine learned that Donald Marron had agreed to head the committee and that they might just be gearing up for new acquisitions. Marron is a major-league collector who is also one of the most influential and active of MOMA's board members and the eye behind the corporate collection at Paine Webber, where he was once chairman.

An even lesser-known aspect of Lincoln Center's involvement with art is its List Poster and Print Program, a publishing venture that has, since its inception in 1962, brought the latest and greatest in contemporary art to the campus. Started by the philanthropist Vera List (an amateur sculptor) as a way to commission prints and posters related to performances and events, it has been a healthy source of revenue for Lincoln Center. Each

Tom Lollar, Lincoln Center's director of visual arts, inspects an important late work of painted steel by David Smith, *Zig IV*, 1961, that was recently on loan to the Tate Modern.

image is produced as both a print and a poster. Because of their limited edition, some of the prints resell quickly in galleries or at auction for many times what they cost upon their release.

The program is headed by the dapper Tom Lollar. Recently named the Center's director of visual arts, he is the driving force behind commissioning the images. An internationally known ceramist, teacher, and collector, Lollar has leveraged his insider status to gain access to contemporary artists, who in turn seek him out with an eye toward collaboration. As such, Lollar has built Lincoln Center's reputation among dealers and connoisseurs since coming to campus in 1988.

Lollar's timing could not have been better. When he arrived, the market for graphics was picking up

momentum, with record auction prices being achieved for prints and posters. "I could see that Lincoln Center had just scratched the surface of the possibilities of their archive," he recalls. Because of his collaboration and marketing efforts, sales tripled in his first year, and the ripple effect of the success broadcast Lincoln Center to an international community of graphics collectors, scholars, connoisseurs, and dealers.

This past April, the program released a stunning new print by Chuck Close, produced by arrangement with the artist's dealer, Pace. It is the latest in a string of blockbusters that have included exclusive commissions of works by Andy Warhol, Robert Motherwell (his last completed work before his death in 1991),

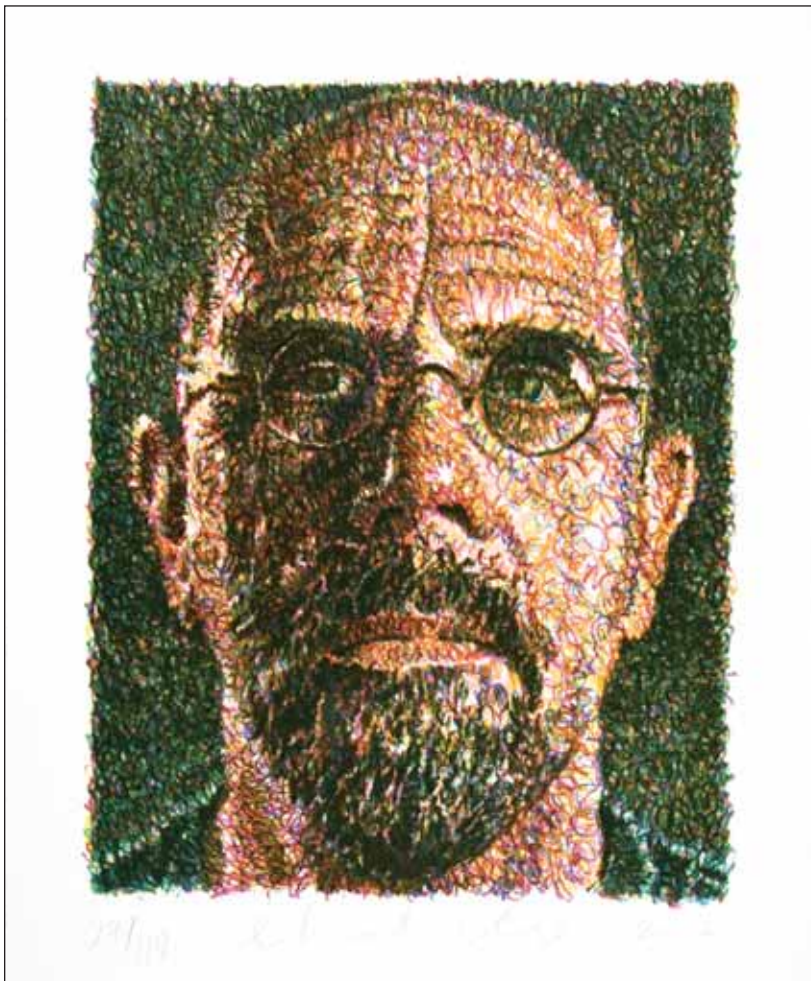


Bill Viola's (b. 1951) video still for *The Tristan Project*, May 2007, which accompanied a concert version of Wagner's opera, drew an audience full of contemporary art connoisseurs.

Robert Longo, Gerhard Richter (an almost instant sell-out), Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Rauschenberg, Wolf Kahn; the roll call continues. Lollar, whose position also entails the management of the permanent collection and such interesting tasks as loaning the David Smith sculpture to the Tate Modern, notes the way the List Program relate to the high modern art on campus: "The prints really do keep the collection current. Collectors perceive the prints and posters as part of the collection, and when they acquire one it is as though they can take a little bit of Lincoln Center home with them." @

For information call 212.875.5000
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The latest release from the highly successful List Print and Poster Program is a stunning self-portrait by art star Chuck Close (b. 1940).