There were always artists in Newark. But until the past decade, there wasn’t an artists’ community, says Linwood Oglesby, executive director of the Newark Arts Council.

That changed in 2002, with the city’s first annual Open Doors Studio Tour, when Newark artists collectively opened their doors to the public. This year marks the 11th anniversary of the tour, which features more than 350 artists and runs from October 11 to 20, ushering the advent of a citywide arts festival that lasts through November. Check the council’s website for details and updated information: www.newarkarts.org.
The first tour created a sense of unity that grows stronger every year, says Oglesby.

“Artists were living throughout the downtown and the Ironbound but the Open Doors Tour helped to bring them together,” he contends.

Since then, the city’s art scene has coalesced and grown, attracting out-of-town artists to move here and the establishment of new spaces to show their work.

“Open Doors for the past dozen years has provided the best opportunity to see the broadest range of contemporary artwork in the state of New Jersey,” Oglesby says.

Events range from pop-up shows in vacant industrial spaces to exhibitions at institutions like the Newark Museum, where you can catch an exhibit by photographer George Tice from September 18 through February, and, on those same dates, Ming to Modern, which spotlights works from the museum’s 8,000-piece Chinese art collection.

Other must-see places on the tour are City Without Walls, New Jersey’s oldest not-for-profit alternative space, founded in Newark in 1975, and Solo(s) Project House, a combination studio and gallery space for resident artists. There’s also the Prospect Fire Station, a Victorian firehouse turned exhibition space; Gallery Afero, a newcomer to the city; and Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, one of New Jersey’s major art institutions.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Susan Reading by Robert Ross, Sumei Art Center; Solo(s) Project House; Untitled, detail, by Tayo Adenaike, 1997; The Simon Ottenberg Collection; gift to the Newark Museum; Solo(s) Project House; Grape Ape, detail, by Baja Ukweil; Kati Vilm; above: Jerry Gant; below left: Horizon Plaza, Newark Museum; below center: Italian conductor Gianandrea Noseda making his NJPAC debut in March 2014.

The Arts: A Corporate Responsibility in Newark

BY CARRIE STETLER

Some of the greatest supporters of the arts in Newark are companies that do business here. They know that fostering creativity and imagination are as important as other efforts to make Newark a strong and vibrant city. "The arts provide opportunities for individuals of diverse backgrounds to come together to engage and observe," says Jonathan R. Pearson, director, corporate philanthropy and community affairs at Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey. "Community building occurs through arts and culture."

Last year the Horizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, approved a $1 million grant to become the title sponsor of New Jersey Performing Arts Center’s (NJPAC) Sounds of the City, free outdoor summer concert series, now called Horizon Foundation Sounds of the City. In addition to many other arts funding efforts, it built Horizon Plaza, a new entrance and garden area at the Newark Museum.

PSEG, New Jersey’s largest utility based in Newark, is another contributor to the city's cultural and educational life, lending financial support and employee volunteer time to the Newark Museum, city arts centers and other institutions.

"The Newark arts and culture community helps educate children, encourages tourism, and helps to keep our local economy growing," says Ellen Lambert, PSEG’s Foundation president and director of corporate social responsibility.

TD Bank is sponsoring the TD James Moody Democracy of Jazz Festival at NJPAC in November and has partnered with the Newark Museum, the Newark-based New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and Jazz House Kids in the city.

"TD has had the opportunity to positively impact programs and performances that entertain the Newark community," says Nick Micelle, market president for TD Bank.

Prudential has lent major support to NJPAC (Prudential Hall was named for the company); the Newark Arts Council, jazz radio station WBGO and every significant cultural institution in the city.

Verizon, which has its New Jersey headquarters in Newark, has also funded city arts programs and organizations.

Newark’s corporate citizens realize that a thriving cultural life benefits everyone. "It increases civic engagement, which is vital to the health and well-being of communities," says Horizon’s Pearson.