

Honoring Hispanic *Heritage*



Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry of the Riverside Art Museum in California

THE CHEECH MARIN CENTER FOR CHICANO ART, CULTURE AND INDUSTRY



Latino culture on exhibit at upcoming museums

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WO NEW MUSEUMS HIGHLIGHTING THE history and contributions of Latinos, the nation's largest ethnic group, are on the way: a Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino in Washington, D.C., and Southern California's Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry of the Riverside Art Museum. >



**CULTURAL
TREASURES
FROM THE
SMITHSONIAN
INSTITUTION:**

**Puerto Rican
carnival mask,
1983**



Although the facilities will be new, there is nothing novel about Latinos or their integral place in the story of America. "Latinos have played a foundational role in building this country and shaping its culture even before there was a United States of America," says Eduardo Díaz, director of the Smithsonian Latino Center.

It took 27 years to obtain the official nod for the new museum, says Estuardo Rodríguez, president and CEO of Friends of the American Latino Museum, the organization that's led the fundraising campaign. Before it opens (in an estimated 10 years at the earliest), he says about \$700 million has to be raised and a location on the already crowded National Mall must be found.

Fortunately, there's no shortage of Latino exhibitions at the Smithsonian, and more are coming. Since 1997, the Smithsonian Latino Center has helped embed cultural content across the Smithsonian's museums and research centers. Díaz says exhibits have included Hispanic history and Chicano graphics and

featured topics such as the Latino influence on baseball and design.

Less than 1 percent of the permanent works in the National Portrait Gallery featured Latinos until a Latina curator, Taína Caragol, arrived in 2013. Since then, more than 200 portraits of notable Latinos have been installed, Díaz says, adding that the Smithsonian American Art Museum now has the largest collection of U.S. Latino art among all major art museums in the U.S.

More Latino content is coming even before the National Museum breaks ground. The Molina Family Latino Gallery at the Smithsonian will be the institution's first physical space on the National Mall dedicated to the Latino experience. The 4,500-square-foot space will be



**Aztec mask building facade,
1955**



**Flaco Jimenez's accordion,
circa 2009**



CASAS DE LA CULTURA

Here are some other Latino-focused museums and centers:

ARIZONA

▶ Arizona Latino Arts & Cultural Center, Phoenix

CALIFORNIA

- ▶ Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach
- ▶ La Plaza de Culturas y Artes, Los Angeles
- ▶ Centro Cultural de la Raza, San Diego
- ▶ Arte Américas Cada de la Cultura, San Diego
- ▶ Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana, San Jose
- ▶ Galería de La Raza, San Francisco

COLORADO

▶ Museo de las Americas, Denver

FLORIDA

▶ The American Museum of the Cuban Diaspora, Miami

ILLINOIS

- ▶ National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago
- ▶ The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, Chicago
- ▶ Puerto Rican Art Alliance, Chicago

NEW MEXICO

▶ National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque

NEW YORK

- ▶ El Museo del Barrio, New York City
- ▶ Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, New York City

NEBRASKA

▶ El Museo Latino, Omaha

PENNSYLVANIA

▶ Taller Puertorriqueño, Philadelphia

PUERTO RICO

- ▶ Museo de Arte De Puerto Rico, Santurce
- ▶ Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, San Juan
- ▶ Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce

TEXAS

- ▶ Latino Cultural Center, Dallas
- ▶ Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, Austin
- ▶ Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin
- ▶ Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio

located on the ground floor of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History because, as Díaz says, "Latino history is American history."

The gallery is scheduled to open in May 2022 and was seeded with a \$10 million donation by the family of Long Beach, Calif., physician C. David Molina, founder of Molina Healthcare Inc., and his wife, teacher Mary Molina.

Universal design techniques are being used to create bilingual interactive exhibitions, hands-on educational programming and digital initiatives. "We want to create a space that is accessible to anyone with physical, sensory or brain-based conditions," Díaz says.

The first exhibition will be *¡Presente! A Latino History of the United States*. Díaz says, "Some visitors will probably not know much about us. A typical Anglo family from, say, Rapid City, South Dakota, may not know much about our history. This is an opportunity for us to introduce the Latino community to the American constituency."

Meanwhile, on the West Coast, the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry of the Riverside Art Museum is planning to open this December, executive director Drew Oberjuege says.

Located about 55 miles east of Los Angeles, the museum will house hundreds of paintings and drawings collected through the years by actor Cheech Marin of *Cheech and Chong* film fame. The Cheech, as it is known, will sit in a former 60,000-square-foot midcentury-style public library in Riverside's historic Mission District, she says.

The city is looking at the opening of the museum as part of its post-COVID-19 recovery and plans an ad

campaign featuring restaurants and hotels such as the famous Mission Inn Hotel & Spa to highlight the city as a great weekend destination, Oberjuege says.

"We hear a lot from people who haven't been to Riverside and are surprised by what's here in terms of arts and the hotels and the historic downtown corridor," she says. "We're hoping people will come and discover what Riverside has to offer."

The inaugural exhibition at The Cheech will feature the glass sculptures and lenticular works of Jamex de la Torre and Einar de la Torre in a program titled *Collidoscope: A De La Torre Brothers Retro-Perspective*.

Attendance

for The Cheech, according to a local economist, could reach 250,000 visitors annually, Oberjuege says. But even with pandemic restrictions that limit capacity, she believes it can reach 100,000 a year.

A real "community barn raising" took place to make the museum happen, she says. Although the city will contribute about \$1 million per year under a 25-year agreement to cover operating costs, the Riverside Art Museum will fund the \$13.3 million renovation of the former public library through a \$9.7 million state grant and private donations.

Historically, many museums have struggled to tell the complete true and unbiased stories of America. "Cheech says Chicano art is American art and needs to be represented in museums and exhibits. Families need to see themselves reflected in art on the walls to enforce that their stories and experiences matter," Oberjuege says. "Arts are key to civic engagement and better understanding." ■



The El Chico Cookbook, circa 1975