



LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN ART  
MOMA at EL MUSEO

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is published on the occasion of the exhibition

MoMA at EL MUSEO:  
LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN ART  
FROM THE COLLECTION OF  
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

El Museo del Barrio, New York  
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## FOREWORD

"MoMA at El Museo: Latin American and Caribbean Art from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art" is the central exhibition in a triptych of shows with which El Museo del Barrio, New York's Latino center for arts and culture, celebrates its thirty-fifth anniversary. We initiated our yearlong commemoration with "Voces y Visiones: Highlights from El Museo del Barrio's Permanent Collection" (November 2003–February 2004); we now present "MoMA at El Museo" (March–July 2004), and later this year will witness the opening of "Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits." This series of landmark exhibitions marks the most ambitious undertaking in the history of El Museo.

The collaboration behind the exhibition brings to light the distinctive histories of two different institutions whose holdings are nonetheless complementary. Whereas the origins of El Museo lie in the vision of an enlightened group of Puerto Rican educators, artists, and parents during the civil rights movements of the 1960s, who sought to recognize the cultural achievements of this important community, MoMA's interest in Latin America can be traced to its early years, in the 1930s. The collections of both El Museo and the Modern have grown considerably over time and have become more comprehensive in their focus. By presenting exhibitions first of El Museo's Permanent Collection and then of MoMA's holdings in Latin American art, we wish to stress the different strategies underlying each collection and how today their juxtaposition enriches both while at the same pointing to their respective particularities. In short, the breadth of El Museo's mission within Latino culture provides context, history, and a sounding board for MoMA's holdings.

As an institution, MoMA may be said to have come to define and signify modernism. It is all the more relevant, then, that it has had close ties with Latin American art from its inception. Not surprisingly, MoMA is considered the first institution of international prominence to have devoted attention and resources to Latin America, sending representatives to travel extensively south of the U.S. border and adding these expeditions' discoveries to its collection. Yet the Latin American works that constitute this exhibition are not a separate collection within MoMA; within its larger holdings they serve to integrate the art-historical discourse of past and current centuries. That is precisely what marks this exhibition as a landmark, in that it brings together works hitherto overseen by different departments in the first attempt to gauge the breath of its Latin American holdings. MoMA's international scope and privileged vantage point make its Latin American art a reflection of the times in which that collection was created, and should be considered against the backdrop of an evolving notion of modernism. As the collection is constantly growing, we may consider it a work in progress, and this presentation as a milestone for its scholarly examination and understanding.

"MoMA at El Museo" marks the culmination of a very fruitful collaboration between two leading New York cultural institutions, a unique exchange of expertise and knowledge. The origins of this project date to conversations between my predecessor, Susana Toruella Leval, and Glenn D. Lowry, Director of The Museum of Modern Art. Recognizing that such a joint venture could generate both groundbreaking scholarship and pure pleasure for museum-goers, teams from El Museo and MoMA have worked tirelessly on all stages of the exhibition, producing a very fine publication and important education programs in the process.

It has been a gratifying experience to see these institutions come together and bring to fruition so ambitious an undertaking. During this exchange, the staffs of MoMA and El Museo del Barrio have built a deeper mutual appreciation and respect for the professional talent of participating

individuals. Their stewardship in producing this challenging exhibition and groundbreaking publication warrant acknowledgment: to curators Miriam Basilio, Fatima Bercht, Deborah Cullen, Gary Garrels, and Luis Enrique Pérez-Oramas goes my profound gratitude, not only for truly original research but also for the contribution this exhibition makes to the field of Latin American art and to the history of MoMA. I join the curators in acknowledging the seminal, insightful efforts toward this collaboration by Paulo Herkenhoff during his tenure as Adjunct Curator at the Modern. His enthusiasm, commitment, and remarkable collegiality inspired this project throughout.

It is equally important to acknowledge that for many visitors this exhibition will come to life through interpretative programs devised by the education departments of the collaborating institutions. MoMA's leadership in and El Museo's innovative approaches to arts education have resulted in unique programs that illuminate the visitor's experience of this exhibition.

In addition, I would like to extend my gratitude to those who have contributed so much to the organization and success of this project. In particular I would like to thank, from MoMA, Glenn Lowry, Director; Jennifer Russell, Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Collections Support; and Jay Levenson, Director of The International Program, for their continuing support and the engaging dialogue they brought to the realization of the project. I would also like to thank the staff and Board of Trustees of El Museo del Barrio for their early embrace of this initiative and for the passion, dedication, and personal commitment they have made to bring this exhibition to its full potential.

A major undertaking such as this would not have been possible without significant support from our sponsors and generous patrons. We are especially indebted to Bloomberg and Altria Group, Inc., for recognizing the importance of this exhibition early on.

We are also very honored to have received major support from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation, The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Estrellita and Daniel Brodsky, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, Joseph and Carmen Ana Unanue, and Nazca Saatchi & Saatchi. Additional funding was provided by Yolanda Santos Garza, GEICO, the LEF Foundation, Power Corporation of Canada, the Mex-Am Cultural Foundation, Inc., and Tony Bechara.

We are most grateful to Patricia Phelps de Cisneros and The Reed Foundation, Inc., for the support that made this publication possible.

Lastly, a very special thanks to The Board of Trustees and Advisory Board of El Museo del Barrio for their vision and support of this project.

In closing, we are very proud to present "MoMA at El Museo," a unique collaboration between two of New York's leading art institutions, brought together to share and complement our expertise to present this landmark exhibition in celebration of our thirty-fifth anniversary.

Julián Zugazagoitia  
Director, El Museo del Barrio