



For Immediate Release:

VOCES Y VISIONES: Signs, Systems & the City

*Permanent Collection Selection featuring over 100 works by over 40 artists
on view December 18, 2010 - December 2011*

Press Preview: Tuesday, February 1, 2011, 11:00am
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New York, NY, November 29, 2010—El Museo del Barrio announced today that the newest installation drawn from its Permanent Collection, ***VOCES Y VISIONES: Signs, Systems & the City in El Museo del Barrio's Permanent Collection***, will be on view in the Carmen Ana Unanue Galleries December 18, 2010 - December 2011. Curated by Deborah Cullen, El Museo's Director of Curatorial Programs, the exhibition includes over 100 works by over forty Puerto Rican, Latino, and Latin American artists, as well as objects created by Kuna, Shipibo, and Taíno cultures.

This exciting new edition of *VOCES Y VISIONES* features works with an urban sensibility that deploy pared-down building blocks of shape, color, and form to express revealing worldviews. The Pre-Columbian objects included in the exhibition will call attention to weaving patterns and geometric shapes over animal anthropomorphic form.

"This is a dramatic departure from the social focus of the Permanent Collection exhibition we showcased in 2009-2010," explains Cullen. The more conceptual, formal qualities of art foregrounded by this selection from our Permanent Collection echo the conceptual nature of artist and writer Luis Camnitzer's work, which we will simultaneously display in a career retrospective from February 2 - May 29, 2010."

Exhibition highlights include a large painting by Brooklyn-based Rafa el Vargas Suárez, a glass floor installation by Colombian Oscar Muñoz, a computer animated sculpture by Venezuelan Elias Crespín, as well as a selection from recent important donations by the Estates of Uruguayan Julio Apuy and Cuban Emilio Sánchez.

About the Permanent Collection

El Museo's Permanent Collection, one of the oldest and most important holdings of Caribbean, Latino, and Latin American art in the United States, includes over 6,500 works spanning more than 800 years of Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino art.

The Permanent Collection both serves and defines El Museo's mission by tracing the paths of its growth and shaping its programs' shifting themes. The breadth of its

holdings, which allows for such variety, is only possible thanks to the generosity of our donors, without whom such curatorial richness could not be displayed.

Among the oldest works in the collection are those of the Taíno, the dominant culture in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, and the Bahamas from approximately 1200 to 1500 A.D. Comprising of sculptural objects, ceramics, tools, dance, music, and poetry, these pieces are important elements of the Caribbean's Pre-Columbian past. The Collection includes archaeological objects from the Taíno culture as well as fine art photographs, and contemporary works that have been influenced by the Taíno legacy.

The Collection also includes later folk art pieces from Puerto Rico and across Latin America and the Caribbean. Among these holdings are devotional objects from Catholic customs and Vodun traditions originating in West Africa, including *santos de palo* (wooden saints) mostly from Puerto Rico, ex-votos, or votive offerings of prayer and gratitude, and Vodun *drapeaux*, beaded and sequined flags used in spiritual rituals. Other folk art holdings include festival and ceremony masks, textiles, and other objects.

El Museo's print collection features important works from the 1960s and 1970s, when Chicano artists in California and the southwest, and Nuyorican artists in the northeast, were engaged in an effort of cultural affirmation. These artists employed techniques that appropriated images and symbols from the histories of their communities, advertising and the media. Both groups reworked Pop Art into a highly politicized critique of U.S. imperialism, consumer culture, the media, and representation itself. The Permanent Collection also includes midcentury works by artists who looked to indigenous and popular traditional cultures as a way to get in touch with the spiritual world. These artists explored ancestral cultures and holistic worldviews, and created art that aimed to contemporize the sacred and the ritualistic. In recent years, thanks to the generosity of Mr. William Sheehy from Latin American Masters in Belverly Hills, CA, El Museo has received three successive, large donations of over 100 hundred prints by Matta, Lam, Tamayo, and a significant number of works by Toledo.

Around the time that El Museo began to strengthen its contemporary art holdings in the early 1990s, the fifth centennial of the arrival of Europeans in the Americas was giving rise to an aesthetic debate related to colonial heritage and identity politics. During this time, indigenous heritages were reevaluated as the history of colonization was rewritten to make audible and visible the tale of the so-called conquered. Another significant theme in El Museo's contemporary art holdings is that of the continued migration and communication transformations across Latin America and the U.S., in particular, New York City and other metropolitan areas where vibrant artistic communities emerge. Urban forms, mixing language, pop culture, and the influence of media, among many other themes, inform the work of contemporary artists, which continue to explore, expose, criticize, and celebrate the struggles and triumphs of their communities. With the creation in 1999 of *El Museo's Bienal: The [S] Files*, and thanks to the generosity of the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Trust, many new works by living artists have expanded the museum's artistic wealth.

About El Museo del Barrio

El Museo del Barrio, New York's leading Latino cultural institution, welcomes visitors of all backgrounds to discover the artistic landscape of Latino, Caribbean, and Latin American cultures. Their richness is represented in El Museo's wide-ranging collections and exhibitions, complemented by film, literary, visual and performing arts series, cultural celebrations, and educational programs.

El Museo del Barrio was founded 40 years ago by artist and educator Raphael Montañez Ortiz and by a coalition of Puerto Rican parents, educators, artists and activists who noted that mainstream museums largely ignored Latino artists. Since its inception, El Museo has been committed to celebrating and promoting Latino culture, thus becoming a cornerstone of El Barrio, and a valuable resource for New York City. El Museo's varied permanent collection of over 6,500 objects spanning more than 800 years of Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino art includes pre-Columbian Taino artifacts, traditional arts, twentieth-century drawings, paintings, sculptures and installations, as well as prints, photography, documentary films and video. For more information on El Museo del Barrio, please visit www.elmuseo.org.

Press Materials

Current and past press releases about El Museo del Barrio's exhibitions and programs are available for downloading at: <http://www.elmuseo.org/en/content/press/press-release>.

Hi-res downloadable images are available for press use at:
<http://www.elmuseo.org/pressfiles>. User ID: media / Password: elm101709

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