



THE CLEMENTE SOTO VÉLEZ CULTURAL & EDUCATIONAL CENTER
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LATINX ARTS CONSORTIUM NEW YORK

ANNOUNCES *HISTORIAS*

A \$2.5 MILLION, THREE-YEAR INITIATIVE TO RE-CENTER LATINX NARRATIVES IN NYC
THROUGH ART, HISTORY, AND PERFORMANCE

Launching with a Block Party at The Clemente on September 28, 2024



New York, NY - August 22, 2024 - New York is home to the largest Latinx population in the United States, a community that will soon represent the city's largest single ethnic group. To celebrate and contextualize the Latinx cultural community's foundational contributions to the city, **The Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural & Educational Center** is pleased to announce *Historias*, a citywide presentation of cultural programming, art commissions, and scholarship beginning in September, 2024. Unfolding in three phases over three years, *Historias* is the largest initiative in The Clemente's thirty-year history.

"The *Historias* initiative represents a bold step forward in rescuing and re-centering Latinx narratives within New York City's cultural landscape," said Libertad Guerra, Executive Director of The Clemente. "By highlighting official and erased or forgotten Latinx stories, we aim to

underscore their impact on the city's evolution and the ongoing struggle for the Right to the City." In partnership with the LxNY Consortium, a network of 45 leading Latinx-serving cultural institutions dedicated to advancing cultural equity and addressing the historical underfunding of Latinx arts and culture, *Historias* will offer "an exciting model for organizing around new frameworks that support long-term coalition building and co-learning," added Guerra. "Together, we celebrate the crucial histories of Latinx presence and rescue and amplify the indispensable role that culture-specific arts organizations play in their neighborhoods and across the city. The ripple effects of this work are profound, contributing to what makes NYC distinct and ensuring that the voices and stories of our communities are recognized, accessible, and supported in the public imagination."

The Clemente will partner with leading NYC-based institutions, including the Brooklyn Public Library, the Kinfolk Foundation, the Public Art Fund, the Vera List Center, BRIC, the Incite Institute, and Latino Arts and Activisms (LAAS) at Columbia University, among others. The lead advisory committee for the initiative includes Pedro Regalado (historian, author of the forthcoming book *Nueva York: Making the Modern City*); Urayoán Noel (poet, critic, translator, and board member of The Clemente); Ana Sepúlveda (Associate Director at Performance Space New York); and Shaun Leonardo (artist, performer, Co-Director of Recess Art).

"Rooted in decades of important work by Latinx artists and arts organizations throughout the five boroughs of New York City, *Historias* brings together hyphenated ethnic and racial experience, community belonging, informed dissent, and creativity," shared Arnaldo J. López, Managing Director of PREGONES / PUERTO RICAN TRAVELING THEATER and LxNY Steering Committee member. "In its multi-disciplinary, multi-location, and multi-voiced design, *Historias* mirrors the lived experience of all New Yorkers and all Americans. LxNY Latinx Arts Consortium of New York is proud to collaborate in the rollout of this thrilling historic undertaking."

For several years, *Historias* has been supported by The Clemente's resources, including a significant grant from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

"With Robert Rauschenberg's legacy as our guide, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation has funded *Historias* for its exceptional collaboration in the convergence of artforms and images reflecting underrepresented histories," shared Courtney J. Martin, Executive Director of The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. "*Historias* is a true example of how partnerships can create opportunities for multiple generations to thrive."

The initiative marks a new chapter of an ongoing effort, spearheaded by Guerra, to transform the Clemente from a community-centered organization rooted in the Lower East Side/Loisaida into a hub of multidisciplinary thought and creativity, commissioning art and research across the city.

Phase one of the initiative, *Historias Sembradas (Sown Histories)*, begins in September and will introduce the key themes through collective research, public programs, and community events to test ideas, seed partnerships, and artistic explorations. A celebration of the launch and block

party at The Clemente on September 28 and 29, 2024 will include street performances, artist commissions, music, open studios, and public activations presented in partnership with Street Lab. The event will close with the special debut of *Cuarto Oscuro*, a newly commissioned video work by Seth Tillet and Lucía della Paolera that will be projected onto The Clemente's historic building. Additional featured artists include Lizania Cruz, Yanira Castro, Jonathan González, Xenia Rubinos, Jesús Hilario-Reyes, and others.

Historias Sembradas will also see the Public Art Fund collaborating with The Clemente on a public domino tournament and conversation series titled *Domino Table Talks*. The series will coincide with Edra Soto's *Graft*, a grouping of interactive metal and terrazzo sculptural works installed in Central Park's Doris C. Freedman Plaza as a monument to Puerto Rican communities. *Domino Table Talks* will host intergenerational videotaped conversations in September and October, and feature participants such as Papoleto and Edwin Torres—two iconic Nuyorican poets from different generations—filmmaker and scholar Frances Negrón-Muntaner, and artist Miguel Luciano. A domino tournament, emceed by Christian Mártir and CapiCú NYC, will be announced in September 2024.

Also in September, a Latino poetry event series presented in partnership with the Brooklyn Public Library and Library of America will mark the NYC launch of *Latino Poetry: The Library of America Anthology*, edited by celebrated poet Rigoberto González. The series will engage new audiences through music, poetry, and performances. The first program will be held on September 25 at Brooklyn Public Library, with a live performance by Bobby Sanabria and readings by Emanuel Xavier, Darrel Holnes, and others to be announced. The series continues on September 29 at the Brooklyn Book Festival Main Stage with a panel on the Politics of Latino Poetry featuring Gonzales and Yesenia Montilla moderated by Urayoán Noel. A full list of programming for *Historias Sembradas* will be announced in September 2024.

The second phase, *Historias Entrecruzadas (Interwoven Histories)*, starting in the fall of 2025, will launch a new, interactive digital platform called *The Nueva York Chronicles* that will focus on the compilation and presentation of scholarship and oral histories to create a timeline of Latinx cultural movements from 20th century to the present. The site will offer space to continue sourcing oral histories across Latinx New York. It will also serve as a repository for *Historias* program documentation, video content, maps, and digital commissions. A series of public programs and symposia will accompany the platform's launch.

Historias Reveladas (Histories Revealed), the third and final phase, will culminate in a Center-wide exhibition in spring 2026 compiling Clemente-commissioned art and oral histories at the newly renovated ADA-compliant The Clemente. The season-long festival will culminate with presenting citywide commissioned public artworks and symposia, historical walking tours, and further satellite exhibitions across NYC.

Historias fosters collaboration among scholars, artists, and community members, enhancing awareness and engagement with Latinx-centered arts and institutions. *Historias* is organized by The Clemente's Curatorial and Programs team: Libertad O. Guerra, Executive Director and

Chief Curator; Sofia Reeser del Rio, Associate Director of Programs and Curator; and Sally Szwed, Strategic Growth and Special Projects Director.

To learn more, visit www.theclementecenter.org/historias.

About The Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural & Educational Center

Founded in 1993, The Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural & Educational Center is a Puerto Rican/Latinx multi-arts institution with an inclusive and international vision rooted in NYC's Lower East Side/Loisaida. The Clemente engages diverse audiences in heritage preservation, neighborhood history, and cutting-edge multicultural experimentation, emphasizing the humanities' role in bridging civic and cultural life.

As a downtown cultural mainstay for three decades, we focus on cultivating, presenting, and preserving Puerto Rican and Latinx culture while embracing a multi-ethnic and international perspective. Committed to operating in a polyphonic manner, The Clemente provides affordable spaces to artists, small arts organizations, and independent community producers, reflecting the rich cultural diversity of the Lower East Side and New York City. Guided by our namesake's values of culturally grounded multigenerational leadership, local empowerment, and mutuality, we are a collaborative hub for creating and co-producing multidisciplinary contemporary work.

The Clemente is a proud co-founder/partner of [LxNY Consortium](#) and the [Coalition of Small Arts NYC \(CoSA NYC\)](#).

About LxNY

LxNY | Latinx Arts Consortium of New York is a collaborative peer network dedicated to knowledge exchange, resource-sharing, and collective action towards systemic change. Formed in 2020 by organizations serving Latinx communities and artists across New York City, LxNY aims to transform the historical underfunding of Latinx arts by advocating for the equity-driven missions of our cultural institutions, nurturing our deep relationships with community, and stewarding our hard-fought legacies into the future. Advancing cultural work as essential work, LxNY honors the expertise of our multigenerational arts leaders and culture bearers, harnessing their collective experience to better serve the city's diverse cultural landscape.

The **LxNY Historias Working Group** comprises six organizations within the Consortium that will play key roles as programmatic partners and advisors for the initiative. This group is represented by the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI), Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater (Pregones/PRTT), People's Theater Project (PTP), Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC), Brooklyn Arts Exchange (BAX), and New Latin Wave.

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