



# The Foundation for New York's Strongest

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure—Or Inspiration for Art**

The **Foundation for New York's Strongest**, the official nonprofit of the **Department of Sanitation (DSNY)**, **Hi-ARTS** and the **Hunter East Harlem Gallery** are proud to present an art exhibition inspired by discarded items found by retired East Harlem Sanitation Worker Nelson Molina. *What is Here is Open: Selections from the Treasures in the Trash Collection* will be on view from June 26<sup>th</sup> to September 14<sup>th</sup> at the Hunter East Harlem Gallery.

For over 30 years, Sanitation Worker Nelson Molina was assigned to routes in Manhattan 11, in a district bordered by 96<sup>th</sup> Street and 110<sup>th</sup> Street between First and Fifth Avenues. While on his assigned collection route, he found many useful and even collectible objects; some that needed repair and others that were fully intact. Over the years, Molina recovered and mended some 40,000 items, displaying the still city-owned items inside a DSNY garage and slowly creating the Treasures in the Trash Collection.

Curator Alicia Grullón designed the exhibition to be a collaborative process beginning with seven New York City-based artists taking inspiration from the Collection. After they produced their pieces, Molina, along with Grullón, returned to *Treasures in the Trash* and chose objects to be displayed alongside the artists' works. By creating these unique installations, *What is Here is Open* seeks to create a conversation between these reclaimed objects and artistic pieces, engaging in a dialogue on the past, present, and future identity of this community.

This is a first of its kind collaboration for the Foundation for New York's Strongest, presenting a unique opportunity to not only showcase the work of one of its former employees but also celebrate the practice of salvage and reuse—which is critical to the agency's mission of zero waste to landfills.

“With our focus on sustainability, Molina's Collection exemplifies the creative spirit of reuse and a ‘waste not, want not’ mentality that is ultimately good for the planet,” said **Julie Raskin, Executive Director of the Foundation for New York's Strongest**.

The exhibition, which runs from June 26 to September 14, 2019, will host a public reception on Wednesday, June 26, from 6-8 p.m. at HEHG, 2180 Third Avenue at 119<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10035. The gallery is open Thursday–Saturday, 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. July through August

14th. It will reopen Wednesday–Saturday 12-5 p.m. in mid-August. Admission is free. For more information, call (212) 396-7819 or visit [www.hunter.cuny.edu/eastharlem-artgallery](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/eastharlem-artgallery).

*What is Here is Open: Selections from the Treasures in the Trash Collection* is curated by Alicia Grullón and Nelson Molina. Organized by Raymond Codrington, Hi-ARTS Executive Director, Arden Sherman and Nora Maité Nieves at Hunter East Harlem Gallery, the exhibition is made possible in part thanks to support from Hi-ARTS, the Foundation for New York’s Strongest, Hunter East Harlem Gallery, and Hunter College.

## **ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR NEW YORK’S STRONGEST**

The Foundation for New York’s Strongest, Inc. is the official nonprofit organization of the New York City Department of Sanitation. Supported by private funding and in-kind donations, the Foundation leverages non-traditional strategies to promote sustainability and advance the essential services of Sanitation employees. To learn more, please visit [nycstrongest.org](http://nycstrongest.org).

## **ABOUT HUNTER EAST HARLEM GALLERY**

Hunter East Harlem Gallery is a multi-disciplinary space for art exhibition and socially-minded projects located on the ground floor of Hunter College’s Silberman School of Social Work at 119th Street and 3rd Avenue. The gallery presents exhibitions and public events that aim to foster academic collaborations at Hunter College while addressing subjects relevant to the East Harlem community and New York City. The gallery seeks to initiate partnerships with publically oriented organizations and focuses on showcasing artists who are engaging in social practice, public interventions, community projects, and alternative forms of public art. All exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public.

## **ABOUT Hi-ARTS**

Hi-ARTS is dedicated to advancing urban art by empowering artists to develop bold new works of performance and creating a lasting and positive impact on urban communities. For eighteen years Hi-ARTS has consistently broken new ground by presenting the work of artists from historically marginalized groups and finding creative ways to address issues related to equity and social justice. The work we present truly reflects the diversity of New York City, giving voice to and celebrating traditionally underrepresented narratives and communities. Located at the center of creative and community practice at El Barrio’s Artspace PS109, Hi-ARTS engages arts and culture both locally and nationally.