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EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO ANNOUNCES
A MANO: ART AND CRAFT FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION
Celebrating the handmade and rethinking the boundaries between art and craft

January 6 – April 25, 2027



Unidentified Chilean artists, Arpillera, 1980s. Collection of El Museo del Barrio, New York.
Gift of Arthur and Dorothy Hammer. Photograph by Matthew Sheman

PRESS KIT here
Press Reception: Wednesday, February 17 at 10:00 AM | RSVP here

NEW YORK, NY, November 17, 2026 — El Museo del Barrio presents *A Mano: Art and Craft from the Permanent Collection*, an exhibition that brings artists working within craft traditions into dialogue with contemporary artists exploring similar techniques, materials, and themes. Organized by **Lee Sessions**, Permanent Collection Associate Curator, and artist **Guadalupe Maravilla**, guest curator, the exhibition challenges long-standing distinctions between high and low art, vernacular and fine art, and craft and contemporary artistic practices.

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Taking its title from the Spanish for "made by hand," *A Mano* brings together sequined banners, carved wooden sculptures, photographs, paintings, and other one hundred other artworks from El Museo's Permanent Collection, alongside select loans. Materials including coconut shells, plastic buttons, hand-dyed wool, and copper wire reveal the breadth of artistic invention represented in the exhibition. Together, these works invite visitors to explore relationships between pattern and form, material and meaning, and personal expression and shared traditions.

Craft has been central to El Museo del Barrio since its founding. The Museum's first exhibition, *The Art of Needlework*, was presented in a public-school classroom in 1970. *A Mano* builds on this history, affirming the enduring importance of craft within the museum's collection and its approach to presenting Puerto Rican, Latine, and Latin American art.

"*A Mano* reflects El Museo del Barrio's commitment to honoring the breadth of Puerto Rican, Latine, and Latin American artistic expression and challenging the hierarchies that have too often shaped whose work is valued," said **Patrick Charpenel, Executive Director of El Museo del Barrio**. "At a time when questions of identity, belonging, and cultural recognition remain urgent, this exhibition celebrates the knowledge carried through handmade traditions and the power of art to connect generations and sustain communities."

Featured works include mola textiles from Panama, woven belts from Guatemala, Caribbean cloth dolls, and Puerto Rican santos de palo, bringing distinct cultural traditions into dialogue across regions and generations. Conservation and the development of custom mounts for nearly fifty artworks support their presentation and long-term preservation.

Featured in the exhibition is Margarita Cabrera's *Esmeralda Perez: Saguaro*, from the series *Space In Between*, a nearly five-foot-tall cactus sculpture made from U.S. Border Patrol uniforms. The sculpture was embroidered in community workshops with scenes of participants' own border crossings, connecting the act of making with migration, cultural memory, and collective expression.

Organized around cross-geographic, cross-media thematic sections that include "Pattern Recognition," "Procession," "Soft Power," and "Guardians," *A Mano* explores political expression, faith and spirituality, visual experimentation, and the boundaries between human, animal, and mystical forms. The exhibition foregrounds the complex technical knowledge — and, in many cases, sacred and political significance — of making. Whether stitching figures into a fabric cityscape, carving a block of linoleum for a print, or hammering a tiny silver ex-voto, the artists represented transform everyday materials through acts of skill, imagination, and devotion. Their

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works bring recognized masters of Latin American modernism into dialogue with self-taught visionaries and makers whose identities remain unknown.

At the heart of *A Mano* is an altar by Guadalupe Maravilla celebrating personal journeys and communal care. As both artist and co-curator, Maravilla brings a perspective that connects the handmade experiences of memory, belonging, and collective support.

Building on the Museum's ongoing research into its Permanent Collection, including the two-part exhibition *Something Beautiful: Reframing la Colección* (2023–2024), *A Mano* invites visitors to consider the long histories of craft alongside the individual voices that sustain and transform them— and to celebrate the many hands that made these artworks.

Guadalupe Maravilla (b. 1976) is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice combines sculpture, painting, performance, and installation, exploring themes of migration, activism, and healing. Drawing on his experience migrating unaccompanied to the United States during the Salvadoran Civil War and his personal battle with cancer, Maravilla examines the physical and emotional impacts of displacement and systemic injustice.

His work is held in major institutional collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Tate, and Museo Reina Sofía. He has presented solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Brooklyn Museum, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, and Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, among others.

Recent projects include *Guadalupe Maravilla: Mariposa Relámpago* (2023), which toured to Ballroom Marfa and the Contemporary Austin. His work is currently featured in the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, *In Minor Keys* (2026).

Lee Sessions, Permanent Collections Associate Curator. A member of the curatorial team at El Museo del Barrio for over four years, Dr. Sessions has led the planning and execution process for a number of exhibitions during this period, including *Something Beautiful: Reframing La Coleccion* (2023-2024) and *Flow States: La Trienal 2024*. Sessions has a PhD in Art History from Yale University and prior to El Museo del Barrio, he held curatorial and research positions at the Yale Center for British Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the New York Botanical Garden.

SPONSORS

A Mano: Art and Craft from the Permanent Collection is presented at El Museo del Barrio with generous support from the Coby Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Mellon Foundation,

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and the Terra Foundation for American Art, as well as ongoing support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, and other public agencies.

ABOUT EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

El Museo del Barrio is the nation's leading Latine and Latin American cultural institution. The Museum welcomes visitors of all backgrounds to discover the artistic landscape of these communities through its extensive Permanent Collection, varied exhibitions and publications, bilingual public programs, educational activities, festivals, and special events. The Museum is located at 1230 Fifth Avenue at 104th Street in New York City.

The Museum is open Thursdays through Sundays from 11:00am – 5:00pm. Pay what you can. To connect with El Museo via social media, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and X. For more information, please visit www.elmuseo.org.

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