

Subject Line: Exploring Identity and Heritage: 1,849 Millas Project Takes Buffalo on a Diaspora Journey

Buffalo, NY - February 28, 2024- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Buffalo Arts Studio presents:

1,849 Millas: Al otro lado del charco, A Diaspora Journey

May 24 to June 29, 2024

Opening Reception, Friday, May 24, 2024, 5:00—8:00 pm

Part of M&T Bank 4th Friday @ Tri-Main Center

1,849 Millas: Al otro lado del charco, A Diaspora Journey, an innovative cultural initiative, is set to captivate Buffalo, NY, this spring and summer, inviting audiences on a profound exploration of African and Indigenous cultural expressions from Puerto Rico. This immersive project, encompassing an exhibition, performances, workshops, discussions, and forums, promises to illuminate the rich tapestry of heritage that often remains unseen.



Multinational Illumination Art with artists Deborah Canales and Benjamin Cirino

At the heart of the project lies the intersection of art, activism, and identity. Through the lens of traditional *vejigante* masks and bomba music, rooted in the African heritage of Puerto Rico, **1,849 Millas** aims to amplify voices often marginalized within the broader narrative of Hispanic/Latinx and American identity.

"With 1,849 Millas, we're not just showcasing art; we're delving into the depths of cultural resilience and resistance," says Alma Carrillo, Executive Director of Buffalo Arts Studio, the lead organization behind the project. *"This initiative is a testament to the power of art to shape narratives and reclaim histories."*

The project's centerpiece is an exhibition featuring meticulously crafted *vejigante* masks, a symbol deeply rooted in the African heritage of Loíza, Puerto Rico. These vibrant masks, handcrafted by Multinational Illumination Art with artists Deborah Canales and Benjamin Cirino, pay homage to tradition while incorporating contemporary themes, reflecting the journey of diaspora and adaptation.

Accompanying the exhibition are bomba performances, workshops, panel discussions, and public forums, offering audiences a multifaceted experience. Beatriz Flores, Founder of El Batey Puerto Rican Cultural Center, emphasizes the importance of these cultural exchanges.

"This collaborative project highlights three critical aspects of both vejigante masks and bomba: the ways these traditional art forms are shaped by social and political context, how they embody the spirit of resistance, and how they amplify Puerto Rican voices by demanding space within the larger cultural community. For Puerto Rico, traditional art forms serve as a fortress against cultural erasure. Visibility is the first step."

The project also addresses broader questions of artistic categorization and representation. Panel discussions will explore the role of contemporary artists in preserving folk traditions and the challenges of inclusion within mainstream art institutions.

1,849 Millas: Al otro lado del charco, A Diaspora Journey, represents a collaborative effort involving diverse organizations and individuals committed to celebrating cultural diversity and fostering dialogue. Partnerships with El Batey Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Journey's End Refugee Services, and other community organizations underscore the project's commitment to inclusivity and community engagement.

The project, funded in part by a generous grant from **Humanities New York** to Buffalo Arts Studio, as well as a New York State Council for the Arts Support for Artists grant to Multinational Illumination Art, exemplifies the transformative potential of the humanities in addressing pressing social issues and fostering cultural understanding.

For those eager to embark on this diaspora journey, mark your calendars for the exhibition at Buffalo Arts Studio from May 24 to June 29, 2024, and prepare to be transported across 1,849 miles of cultural heritage.

Event Dates:

Saturday, May 18, 2024	Mask-Making Workshop at El Batey
Saturday, May 18, 2024	Bomba Performance at El Batey
Friday, May 24, 2024	Exhibition Opening at Buffalo Arts Studio
May 24–June 29, 2024	Exhibition at Buffalo Arts Studio
Saturday, June 15, 2024	Mask-Making Workshop at Buffalo Arts Studio
Friday, June 21, 2024	Bomba Performance at Buffalo Arts Studio

Venues:

El Batey is located on 175 Rano Street in Buffalo, New York 14207.

Buffalo Arts Studio is located at 2495 Main Street, Suite 500, inside Tri-Main Center in Buffalo, New York, 14214.

Funders:

Buffalo Arts Studio receives exhibition support from The Cameron and Jane Baird Foundation, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Erie County Cultural Funds, Humanities New York, John R. Oishei Foundation, M&T Bank, National Endowment for the Arts, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Arts & Culture Initiative, Simple Gifts Fund, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the New York State Council for the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, and through Arts Services Inc.'s Creative Impact Fund program thanks to a New York State Senate Initiative supported by the NYS Legislature and the Office of the Governor, and administered by the New York State Council on the Arts.

For more information and updates on *1,849 Millas: Al otro lado del charco, A Diaspora Journey*, visit <https://www.buffaloartsstudio.org>

About Buffalo Arts Studio:

Buffalo Arts Studio (BAS) connects diverse communities through visual arts via inclusive exhibitions, educational programs, mentorships, and public art while also providing affordable studio space, exposure, paid opportunities, and ongoing professional development for visual artists. BAS is a catalyst for self-empowerment, innovation, and action focused on enhancing our region

Buffalo Arts Studio connects diverse communities through exhibitions, educational programs, and public art while providing support for visual artists. BAS is a catalyst for self-empowerment, innovation, and action focused on enhancing our region.

Media Contact:

Shirley Verrico

Director of Visual Arts

Buffalo Arts Studio

716-833-4450

shirley@buffaloartsstudio.org

<https://www.buffaloartstudio.org>

<https://www.buffaloartsstudio.org/events/multinational-art-collective-1849-al-otro-lado-del-charco-a-diaspora-journey/>

Note to Editors: High-resolution images and additional press materials are available upon request.