



## **East Harlem Culture Collective 1st Year Report**

### **About Us**

The East Harlem Culture Collective (EHCC) is a group of local artists, neighbors, cultural institutions and community based organizations located in East Harlem. In pursuit of the Arts & Culture vision of the 2016 East Harlem Neighborhood Plan, and with modest seed money from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, our mission is to support and preserve East Harlem's historic cultural identity as a community of immigrants, workers, artists and activists.

### **How We Operate**

We believe in collaborative thinking, decision making and action. We believe that for a collaborative process to be successful it is important to meet on a bi-weekly basis to pursue the East Harlem Culture Collective's Working Plan.

### **Our 1st Phase Working Plan**

(August 1, 2018 - July 31, 2019)

- 1- Develop a brand identity for the East Harlem Culture Collective
- 2- Establish a collaborative and inclusive working process for the East Harlem Culture Collective
- 3- Start an Interactive Neighborhood Map of East Harlem's historic and cultural landmarks
- 4- Publish six Monthly Zines and one social media platform promoting East Harlem's cultural activities
- 5- Host a temporary (70 Days) Cultural Exchange Space at La Galeria del Barrio \*\*
- 6- Organize Reunion, a one-day East Harlem Arts and Culture Celebration

### **\*\*About our 70 Day Cultural Exchange Residency at La Galeria del Barrio**

From March 1st until May 11th we took residency at Hope Community's La Galeria del Barrio and facilitated a Cultural Exchange Hub concept.

### **Outcomes throughout this 70 day period:**

- Over 200 artists participated
- Provided over 100 free activities including book presentations, art exhibitions, tours, workshops, group dialogues, music and dance performances, film screenings, charity events, fashion shows, live portrait painting, participatory art projects and rehearsals
- Welcomed over 2,500 visitors, consisting of activity participants, walk-ins, community members and invited guests
- Inclusive outreach targeted children, teens, seniors and immigrant populations
- Acquired a highly visible social media presence
- Helped to foster a new generation of arts and culture participants by engaging with and hosting events for children and youth
- Helped to reclaim a sense of community pride

## Findings:

- The East Harlem Culture Collective served as arts and culture ambassadors and as a community connector between artists, community members, and community based organizations
- Our grassroots approach helped to promote community and served to connect different generations
- Networking and collaboration increased between emerging artists and more established artists as well as community based organizations
- The open venue drew people together who would otherwise not have engaged
- Emerging artists were more receptive to and thrived within a grassroots approach
- The immigrant community benefited from access to a creative outlet, especially during this time of overt discrimination
- Artists played an active role in supporting immigrant and working class communities affected by gentrification.
- Artists play an important role in preserving the historic and cultural identity of the neighborhood
- There is a need for more participation and commitment from people in leadership positions in the community

*“African drummers, dancers wearing the traditional costumes of various Mexican states, poets and painters, a well-known mosaic artist working on-site—you never knew what you might find when you entered Hope Community’s La Galeria del Barrio during the 70 days of the East Harlem Culture Collective’s residency from March to May 2019. Creative type or curious passerby, you were welcomed, and encouraged to contribute something of yourself, and made to feel that you belonged. Together, we created something magical.*

*The gallery space quickly transformed from an empty white box to a marvelous kaleidoscope of images and objects. The gray gallery floor morphed into a black and white checker board. A piano appeared, courtesy of the Mexican business owner nearby, and was soon adorned with books about East Harlem by a local writer. A group of African drums lined up alongside the piano. A chandelier created from recycled plastic bottles embellished the ceiling. Rapidly changing exhibitions of watercolors, charcoal portraits, and oils graced the east wall, and the west wall became a delightful collage of memorabilia. La Galeria del Barrio became a feast for the soul as well as for the eyes.”*

Kathy Benson, founding member of EHCC

*“On a daily basis for 70 days the community could witness the beauty of the diversity and cultural riches of the East Harlem community. It was inspiring and affirming. This was made possible by two entities, Walter M. Roberts of Hope Community, who provided La Galeria, home for this vision, and Alonso Gorozope, East Harlem Culture Collective coordinator, whose hard work made it possible for the ideals set forth by the members of the collective to be made manifest. As a result, a model was created that illustrates the magic that can happen when much needed space is open to a cultural group.*

*It is a testimony to what is possible when ideals are engaged, supported and celebrated. Right from the start, the members of the EHCC envisioned the governing ideals of inclusion and diverse, cultural representation to be at the core of the collective. This was fully realized during the residency at La Galeria and a strong relationship was developed that will hopefully lead to more collaborations.”*

Sandra Rivera, founding member of EHCC

*“What is it that connects us all as human beings and elevates us to be the best version of who we want to or think we can be?*

*In East Harlem we discovered the answer in a little space that exploded with a local energy which can only be described (uniquely described) by the approximately 2500 or so who were fortunate enough to have experienced it at first hand. ART in all its expressions found a way into La Galeria del Barrio at 162 1/2 East 104th Street every day of the week for ten weeks and a neighborhood was transformed by the creativity of one person in many, one artist of many and one*

spectator or admirer at a time, each uniquely personal experience resonating with the next. There was a current that flowed within our hearts that bonded us together with an equal vision managed by the East Harlem Culture Collective team who welcomed everyone with an authentic smile and an open heart. Their laid back energy was the guiding light that led the way for all of us to feel welcomed and accepted. Void of politics or the usual bureaucracy that stifles creativity and discourages even the best intentions. One wall held all the pieces of a puzzle that fastened together with pins a tapestry of local history and herstory included as it should be...free and loving expressions of anything and everything that pulls us together.

The East Harlem Culture Collective kept this energy which vibrates into the soul producing an eclectic harmony ...that flow... We each experienced with a quiet joy emanating and touching very delicately the chords that formed our community from a synchronization of bodies spirits and minds in action acting on spontaneous inspiration. The East Harlem Culture Collective created this vision from a hope and a knowing ...that Artists create community just by being who they are and by expressing that love they share a part of themselves with the world...inspiring others to do the same.

Whether your medium of expressing art was your own body, your voice, your hands, movement, dance, a song or a poem... spoken word! A camera, a book, a love for history and local architecture, a musical instrument or painting, drawing, designing clothes, crocheting, painting on canvas on your body or on clothes or arranging colored tiles into the mosaic of life itself....just the pure admiration for any and all of them was enough to invite you into it. Whatever we brought to La Galeria...whatever we gave of ourselves was given back to us through the spirit of community and continues to grow far beyond its glass door. Come share with us the unity that Love created within those walls. Let's take it outside and expand the possibilities even further ... dare I say...into the hearts, into the minds into the people of East Harlem that we may reclaim the spirit of creativity and build our community on this foundation.

For almost three months an entire neighborhood was transformed into a quiet loving respectful community where our commonality, softer than our differences, rose to new heights elevating our experiences with one another for the highest good of all there is.

Art is and always will be our bond!"

Genevieve Andre - Poet, Artist and Activist

### **Our 2nd Phase Working Plan**

(August 1, 2019 - July 31, 2020)

- 1- Fundraise for a full time coordinator position
- 2- Strengthen the East Harlem Culture Collective brand through community collaborations and partnerships
- 3- Continue to populate the Interactive Neighborhood Map of East Harlem's historic and cultural landmarks
- 4- Continue the East Harlem Culture Collective's social media presence
- 5- Host a temporary (at least 30 days) Cultural Exchange Space at La Galeria del Barrio (Spring 2020)
- 6- Organize East Harlem Culture Collective's second Reunion (June 2020)

For more info visit: [www.eastharlemculturecollective.org](http://www.eastharlemculturecollective.org) or email us at [eastharlemculturecollective@gmail.com](mailto:eastharlemculturecollective@gmail.com)

**Partial list of participants in East Harlem Culture Collective's Cultural Exchange Residency at La Galeria del Barrio**

Manny Vega	El Museo del Barrio	Sandra Rivera	Rene Escamilla
Mariachi Angeles de NY	El Barrio's Artspace PS 109	Juan Escamilla	Daniela Escamilla
Naomi Lawrence	Danza Azteca Chichimeca	Eddie Conde	Grupo Yaocihuatl
Carlo Nicolau	Kotchezna Dance Company	Noahlot Gotit	Alexandra Munoz
Violeta Galagarza	KR3TS Dance Company	Mia Roman	Kimberly Fergie
Kevin Rivera	Mi Mexico Mini Market	Willie Perdomo	Rhina Valentin
Magdalena Aguirre	Ligmeri Irahunun	Noemi Coello	Evelyn Collazo
Christopher Bell	Coronado Print Studios	Doris Hernandez	Carl Foye
Sicky Tutz	Sathi Nails Spa	Slone	Dana Morales
DJ Caluda	Zemi Dance Theater	Clemente Flores	Marina Ortiz
Genevieve Andre	G & J Pizzeria	Kathy Benson	Leo Zumba
Sean Washington	East Harlem Preservation	Alyshia Galvez	Polina Porras
Renee Goust	Church of the Living Hope	Sandra Perez	Mike Cruz
Felix Leo Campos	Museum of the City of New York	Adrian Gonzalez	Kirin Lawrence
Cafe Ollin	Pabade Bakery	Ruben Perez	Francis Nguyen
Lauren Ashley Hdz	Tacos Maribel	Jess Zamora	Miguel Luciano
Rolinda Ramos	Ana Chireno	Alonso Gorozpe	Mark Araujo
Jilberto Jimenez	Amyra Leon	Ruben Gonzalez	Anabella Bergero
Paulina Olivares	N.O.GAR.RATZ.D	FRANCO TH3 ARTIST	Simone Marques
Ruben Gonzalez	Hope Community	Arcadia Caraballo	Hermes Torres
Neighbors of 104th Street	Feegz	Realizando Vidas	Familia Villegas

