



**Museum Visitor Studies, Evaluation & Audience Research**

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**Program Evaluation:  
Public Programs at  
El Museo del Barrio**

*Prepared for*  
**El Museo del Barrio  
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# SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the year, El Museo del Barrio hosts various cultural programs that are open to the public and often free. To explore the effectiveness of the Museum's cultural programs, Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A) conducted case studies for three programs—Day of the Dead, Three Kings Day, and Super Sabado – Carnival.

**The findings presented here are among the most salient. Please read the body of the report for a more comprehensive presentation of findings and details related to each individual program.**

## PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

The data reported below are from observations, interviews with program participants, and stakeholder interviews. For a detailed overview of the methodology, refer to the “Methodology” section on page 1; a detailed description of the methodology is also included in each report section.

- ◆ Overall, visitors to the three programs were very similar—many Latinos and mostly females in their mid-30's visiting in groups with adults and children. More than one-half of visitors were first-time visitors; the greatest number of first-time visitors attended Three Kings Day and the fewest number of first-time visitors attended Day of the Dead.
- ◆ While most visitors came to El Museo specifically to attend the programs, a small portion of visitors either happened across the programs by noticing the buzz outside the Museums (particularly at Day of the Dead) or visited primarily to see the galleries (Super Sabado - Carnival).
- ◆ Of the visitors that intentionally attended the program, many came specifically to celebrate the holiday/Latino culture, while others attended out of curiosity or were interested in learning about other cultures.
- ◆ Engagement with the program was very high for Latino and non-Latino visitors alike. Of the three programs, visitors seemed most engaged and spoke most excitedly about Day of the Dead and Three Kings Day and the spirit and festivity surrounding these programs; visitors enjoyed the costumes, music, and parade that created an experiential and stimulating atmosphere. Additionally, the presence of hands-on activities were very important to family audiences; for instance, visitors liked the Day of the Dead activity Art Making Workshop – *Retablos* Making and the Super Sabado – Carnival activity Colorín Colorado with Glenys Javier.
- ◆ Achievement of new knowledge was most achieved at Day of the Dead. As mentioned above, Day of the Dead was a highly engaging program but it was also supported by a variety of activities and opportunities for learning, more so than in other programs. For instance, in the Altar Talks - *A Mi Querida Catrina*, visitors were able to have a one-on-one discussion with the artist about an altar he made for Olga Mendez, in which he used many different Day of the Dead symbols. In another activity, visitors were able to engage with the Day of the Dead content through a hands-on project in which they made *retablos* to honor one of their loved ones who passed. The variety of activities seemed to appeal to a broad range of learners. Furthermore, visitors' knowledge was enhanced at Three Kings Day and Super Sabado - Carnival, although both these celebrations were already familiar to most visitors.

- ◆ In addition to engagement and knowledge, one of El Museo’s other visitor outcomes is social capital. As cited in the Encyclopedia of Informal Education, John Field believes “the central thesis of social capital theory is that ‘relationships matter.’ The central idea is that ‘social networks are a valuable asset.’ Interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric. A sense of belonging and the concrete experience of social networks (and the relationships of trust and tolerance that can be involved) can, it is argued, bring great benefits to people” (Smith, 2000-2009). Social capital was evident in all three programs. Visitors readily understood that the events provided opportunities to share cultural traditions. Moreover, many Latino visitors expressed an understanding that El Museo is a place where visitors can gather as a community to celebrate together and preserve traditions.
- ◆ Social capital was an idea that seemed important to stakeholders, who mostly talked about the programs with regard to their importance to the community. El Museo staff and volunteers said the programs offer opportunities for Latinos to gather in celebration of their culture and share with others.

## DISCUSSION

El Museo’s cultural celebration programs are clearly an asset to its audience and the surrounding community. The programs are festive and rich in content, not to mention that the Day of the Dead and Three Kings Day programs are now both long-standing traditions. The cultural celebrations result in a shared cultural experience, overall good will among visitors, and provide a unique opportunity to preserve and embrace cultural traditions. Findings show that most program visitors, who were nearly equal parts repeat and first-time visitors as well as Latino and non-Latino, left the various programs with an enhanced appreciation for the cultural traditions and a sense of connectedness to the Museum as well as to other visitors. These programs clearly contribute to El Museo’s mission to “to present and preserve the art and culture of Puerto Ricans and all Latin Americans in the United States,” and in particular address two of El Museo’s purpose statements: “To enhance the sense of identity, self-esteem and self-knowledge of the Caribbean and Latin American peoples by educating them in their artistic heritage and bringing art and artists into their communities” and “to provide an educational forum that promotes an appreciation and understanding of Caribbean and Latin American art and culture and its rich contribution to North America.”

Nevertheless, the challenge facing El Museo, specifically with regard to the cultural celebration programs, is how to better reconcile “art” with “culture” as stated so deliberately in the Museum’s mission and purpose. While the celebrations in their current form are excellent venues for presenting and celebrating the culture of Latin American peoples, the art and artistic heritage aspect of the programs is not as overt as it could be. Even though art was undoubtedly embedded in the programs—through art-making activities and various forms of performance art (i.e., music, storytelling, processions, and other forms of performance)—art was not top of mind for any visitors when they described the experience they had had. As El Museo continues to provide Super Sabado programs and as it repeats Day of the Dead and Three Kings Day, the staff should consider ways of making the connections between the cultural traditions and artistic traditions of the Latino celebrations more explicit for its audiences. In doing so, the Museum can more completely fulfill its mission and purpose through the cultural celebrations.

## REFERENCES

Smith, M. K. (2000-2009). 'Social capital', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, [[www.infed.org/biblio/social\\_capital.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/social_capital.htm)].

# INTRODUCTION

El Museo del Barrio contracted with Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A) to study its public programs. To do so, RK&A conducted case studies of three programs: (1) Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*); (2) Three Kings Day (*Día del los Tres Reyes*); and (3) Super Sabado - Carnival (*Carnaval*). While RK&A and El Museo created unique objectives for each case study, overall, the case studies explore the extent to which programs achieved visitor outcomes related to engagement, knowledge, and social capital.

## METHODOLOGY

RK&A used two data collection strategies to assess visitors' experiences: naturalistic observations and in-depth interviews.

### OBSERVATIONS

Naturalistic observations provide detailed information about how visitors participated in the programs. They are valuable because they provide an objective account of visitors' response to the program—rather than visitors' recollections.

RK&A conducted naturalistic observations of visitors to the three programs. Trained data collectors unobtrusively observed program attendees and took notes on select behaviors using observation guides specific to each program (see Appendix B, E, & J).

### INTERVIEWS

In-depth interviews produce data rich in information because visitors are encouraged and motivated to describe their experiences, express their opinions and feelings, and share with the interviewer the meaning they constructed during a program.

RK&A interviewed program participants 18 years and older onsite during various stages of their program experience. Trained data collectors took notes while interviewing the visitors. Data collectors interviewed visitors in English or Spanish, as necessary, using interview guides specific to each program (see Appendix C, F, & K). Additionally, RK&A conducted telephone interviews with teachers who attended the Three Kings Day Parade; data collectors took handwritten notes and used a specific interview guide (see Appendix G).

In the weeks after the program, RK&A also conducted telephone interviews with various program stakeholders identified by El Museo del Barrio. These interviews were audio recorded with the interviewees' permission (see Appendix D, H, & L for the interview guides).

## DATA ANALYSIS

All data were analyzed qualitatively. That is, the evaluator studied the data for meaningful patterns and, as patterns and trends emerged, grouped similar responses or behaviors.

## REPORTING METHOD

This report is organized by program—one section dedicated to each program. Within these sections, RK&A presents the evaluation objectives, describes how data were collected, and presents findings by data collection strategy. Observation findings are presented in bullets while interview findings are presented in narrative; findings from the stakeholder interviews are presented along with exemplary quotations.

### SECTIONS OF THE REPORT:

1. Principal Findings: Day of the Dead
2. Principal Findings: Three Kings Day
3. Principal Findings: Super Sabado – Carnival

# PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: DAY OF THE DEAD

## INTRODUCTION

RK&A evaluated El Museo's Day of the Dead program held on October 31, 2009. Day of the Dead, which dates back thousands of years to the Valley of Mexico, is a holiday that celebrates and honors loved ones who passed away. Many people believe these loved ones return peacefully on Day of the Dead to celebrate the life and death cycles, while others believe they return to play tricks and pranks on the living. El Museo's long-standing Day of the Dead program celebrates the holiday in traditional Meso-American fashion. As part of the program, El Museo highlights various customs associated with the celebration, such as making altars to honor loved ones. The Day of the Dead program was free to the public, with activities throughout the day culminating in a parade.

The evaluation objectives for this program are to:

- ◆ Identify specific program-related behaviors and engagement;
- ◆ Gauge the extent to which visitors gain an understanding of Day of the Day and its symbolism;
- ◆ Determine how, if at all, visitors personally connect to Day of the Dead; and
- ◆ Gauge how, if at all, Day of the Dead affects the way visitors think of their role in the El Museo community.

## INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

RK&A interviewed three program stakeholders via telephone: one El Museo staff, one El Museo volunteer, and one representative of Goya; interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The various stakeholders talked about the Day of the Dead program differently. As one may expect, staff spoke directly to the goals for the program and the various audiences, saying that the program preserves Latino cultural traditions, and in doing so, allows for Latinos to celebrate together as well as introduces Latin traditions to non-Latino visitors (see the quotation below).

Primarily, the main purpose in doing them [cultural celebrations like Day of the Dead and Three Kings Day] is that we have a strong belief that we need to preserve traditions and allow for an evolution of traditions. We think about the families who are immigrants to this country; they are here in New York, and we want to reach out to them and provide programming that connects with their traditions. But, we also realize that there are a lot of families that might be first generation, second generation, or beyond, who may remember certain kinds of cultural celebrations and traditions from their own childhood that aren't readily available in this country, and so, it provides an opportunity for those parents to be able to introduce those traditions to their children in an environment that is friendly, educational, and has access to language and different kinds of things. . . . And then, I think there is another group of people who have no connection necessarily to the holiday or the tradition but are very intrigued by it. And so, what we try to do with these cultural celebrations is to pull out those ideas, themes, and concepts of a cultural celebration that are most universal in nature. [El Museo staff]



The volunteer's responses were similar to staff's, although much less specific and more focused on the Latino audiences. The volunteer emphasized the program's ability to bring the Spanish Harlem community together in celebration of Latino traditions as well as the Museum's ability to empower the community (see the first quotation below). The volunteer's perspective of the program and El Museo was rooted in his personal experiences with El Museo (see the second quotation).

Besides the fact that [Day of the Dead] brings other people in, I think that it helps build a little bit more confidence in some people who are not necessarily prideful in what they believe. They come and feel a part of something bigger because they are not only celebrating what they feel, but other people are getting to understand what their culture means, so they feel more special. [El Museo volunteer]

I went to [El Museo] exhibits when I was younger and it was different; it was more Hispanic, and being from that kind of background, it was easier for me to relate to some of the things in the Museum. It seemed like a welcoming community, and then when I first volunteered, it was real nice; for me, it was easy and I felt good helping other people that I feel close to and our relationship wasn't so hard to establish. [El Museo volunteer]

Goya staff mostly talked about the program and El Museo as being family friendly and connected them to his company's branding as making family-friendly products. In partnering with El Museo, Goya looked to serve families as well as strengthen connections between their products and families (and implicitly the Latino community).

## OBSERVATIONS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Data collectors observed seven program activities for about one hour each: Face-painting and Photos – *Mi Cara Calaco* Storytelling; Art Making Workshop – Mask Making; Art Making Workshop – *Retablos* Making; Altar Talks – *A Mi Querida Catrina*; Concert – *A Mover El Esqueleto*; and the Street Procession. Data were reported in handwritten notes; the findings are presented below by individual activity.

### FACE PAINTING AND PHOTOS – *Mi Cara Calaco*

At the Face-painting and Photos – *Mi Cara Calaco*, visitors have their faces painted as *calaveras* and pose as the famous *La Catrina* and her friend. Findings are:

- ◆ The majority of visitors spent 5 to 15 minutes at the activity, including time spent waiting in line.
- ◆ There was a long line at the face-painting station; although most people waited, some did not.
- ◆ Children seemed very pleased with their black and white painted faces.
- ◆ While waiting in line, visitors made small talk within family groups as well as between family groups.
- ◆ The face painters made general small talk with visitors while they had their faces painted; they were not observed talking about Day of the Dead specifically.
- ◆ Staff continually monitored and reorganized the line so that it did not block the entrance.

### ART MAKING WORKSHOP – MASK MAKING

At the Art Making Workshop – Mask Making, visitors decorated festive colorful *calaca* masks to be used later that day during a procession through Central Park. Findings are:

- ◆ The majority of visitors spent 10 to 15 minutes at the activity.

- ◆ The activity was extremely crowded because it was near the entrance.
- ◆ While some visitors seemed to enjoy it, the music and DJ prevented conversation and seemed to distract visitors from the mask-making activity.
- ◆ Interaction was mostly between adults and children from the same family group.
- ◆ Older children often worked on their masks alone, while younger children often received assistance from their parents.
- ◆ Conversations at the activity were mostly superficial, such as “How great is this?” and “Look how beautiful yours is!”
- ◆ Staff mostly monitored the activity, restocking supplies or lending a hand in the mask making as necessary. They were not observed sharing Day of the Dead content.

#### CONCERT – A *MOVER EL ESQUELETO*

Musicians of *The Mariachi Academy of New York* and *Mexico Beyond Mariachi* showcased Mexico’s vast cultural expression through a concert that took the audience on a journey beginning with Aztec civilization, then continuing in chronological order and showing how time, geography, climate, and foreign influence have affected folk traditions to the present day. Findings are:

- ◆ Most participants stayed through the end of the concert.
- ◆ Several visitors danced in their seats during the concert, especially visitors with children.
- ◆ Conversation among visitors was rare and limited.

#### STORYTELLING

During the storytelling activity, a presenter gave a brief overview of Day of the Dead before the storytelling began. Findings are:

- ◆ Families with small children tended to leave during the activity (about 30 minutes into it), possibly because of the length of the activity, depth of the content, technical issues with the sound system, or because they were under the misconception that the storytelling would be a puppet show.
- ◆ The presenter directly addressed Day of the Dead content before beginning the actual storytelling; he asked the audience questions like, “What are we celebrating today?”; “Would you like to tell me what Day of the Dead is?”; “What is pan de muerto?” and, “What is an altar?”. The presenter talked about the significance of Day of the Dead, mentioning tradition, symbols, family, food, and altars, among other things.
- ◆ Interaction took place mostly during the introduction to the activity. Adults encouraged their children to answer the presenters’ questions, and occasionally, adults spoke with their children directly either to explain something or respond to a question.

#### ART MAKING WORKSHOP – *RETABLOS MAKING*

Participants created their own interpretation of the traditional tin devotional painting practice known in Mexico as the *retablos* or *ex-voto*. Images produced honor and remember loved ones who have passed.

Findings are:

- ◆ Most visitors worked on *retablos* for 30 minutes or more.
- ◆ *Retablos* making was a popular activity; outside the room in which the activity took place, there was a line of visitors waiting to participate in the activity.

- ◆ Day of the Dead content is strongly conveyed in this activity. Children and adults made *retablos* and they often used Day of the Dead symbols, like skeletons and marigolds.
- ◆ On a few occasions, both adults and children made *retablos* although often, the adult watched their children make *retablos* or helped them do so.
- ◆ There was not much conversation among family groups because they were focused on making their *retablos*.
- ◆ There was one staff or volunteer at each table; they explained the activity to visitors, addressing the significance of *retablos* and often the symbols of Day of the Dead. Staff remained at the table to monitor visitors and assist them as necessary.
- ◆ Visitors mostly asked for advice on completing their *retablos*, such as “Should I use this color?” and “How many flowers should I use?”

#### ALTAR TALKS – A MI QUERIDA CATRINA

Artist Edwin Gonzalez explained the ideas behind the altar he created to honor Olga Méndez, the former East Harlem senator who recently passed away. Findings are:

- ◆ Most visitors spent between 5 to 10 minutes at the activity.
- ◆ Altar talks were spontaneous and informal. The presenter positioned himself near the altar and approached visitors who showed interest in the altar he created or waited for visitors to approach him.
- ◆ The altar was in the café so only small groups could gather around the facilitator. At times, it was noisy in the café.
- ◆ Day of the Dead content was very explicitly conveyed in this activity. The presenter explained that the altar was created for Olga Mendez, a Puerto Rican politician that recently died; he talked in detail about the symbols that he incorporated into the altar, like butterflies and marigolds.
- ◆ Interaction took place in small groups and with the facilitator.
- ◆ Participants mostly asked questions about the symbolism in the altar or about Olga Mendez.

#### STREET PROCESSION

Led by *Mariachi Academy*, people of all ages dressed in skeleton costumes and gathered at El Museo’s courtyard and assembled in a procession through Central Park. Findings are:

- ◆ The street procession included a mariachi band and dancers with Day of the Dead props.
- ◆ The street procession assembled in the theater and then marched out through the Museum’s lobby and courtyard and on to Central Park.
- ◆ About 100 people gathered inside to see the mariachi band, but only about one-half followed the mariachi band into Central Park, most likely due to the rain.

#### INTERVIEWS WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Interviews were conducted with 40 visitors (five interviews with participants at each activity except the Street Procession and 10 exit interviews); data were reported in handwritten notes. Two-thirds of interviewees were female, and the median age was 35 years. About two-thirds of visitor groups were adults and children, one-third were adults only, and a couple visitors were alone. Nearly three-quarters

of visitors were first time visitors. Many visitors were of Latino heritage. Findings are reported by three broad visitor outcomes, which are engagement, knowledge, and social capital.

## ENGAGEMENT

The majority of visitors said that they intentionally came to the Museum for the celebration, and most were attending with children. While most visitors talked about the celebration generally as a fun and festive way to honor the dead, a few visitors said they personally observe Day of the Dead. Additionally, a few visitors, who were teachers, brought their students to the program to expose them to Mexican cultural tradition, and similarly a few parents brought their children to expose them to other cultural traditions. There were a few visitors who spontaneously stopped by the Museum; these visitors said they were in the area and were curious about the activities at the Museum.

When asked to name the most engaging aspect of the program, most visitors cited the celebratory atmosphere of the event. For instance, many talked about music (both the DJ and concert), hands-on activities like the mask making and *retablos* making, the street procession, and food. A few simply talked about the energy, color, and spirit of the event.

When asked about the least engaging aspects of the program, about one-half of visitors did not name anything. About one-quarter cited waiting in lines for activities or crowding, which visitors said was concentrated in the courtyard and lobby. A couple visitors said that the Museum did not provide enough information about the activities or provided misinformation. A couple others said that the storytelling activity was least engaging because it was too long for children (as well as not what they expected).

## KNOWLEDGE

This section describes the information and ideas visitors gained from their experiences with Day of the Dead. Most visitors reported gaining new knowledge at the Day of the Dead event; visitors who stated they had not gained any new knowledge tended to be Latino visitors who regularly observe Day of the Dead.

Visitors most commonly said that they learned that Day of the Dead is a day to honor and celebrate the dead in a happy and optimistic way, as opposed to mourning. Few visitors specifically cited playful humor and/or irony as central to the celebration, but many alluded to these concepts through their acknowledgement of the comical qualities of the decorations and traditions. In addition to learning particular information about the event, a few visitors said they gained insight into Mexican culture in general, describing the culture as colorful and proud.

Most visitors recognized the celebration as symbolic, but had a hard time accurately conveying the meaning behind particular symbols, such as marigolds, skeletons, and paper cutouts. Several visitors assigned their own interpretations or meanings to the symbols, but were not accurate. For example, some visitors described the marigolds as being symbolic of color and life, but did not mention their use to attract the spirits. Of the various elements and symbols of Day of the Dead, the altar was most frequently identified correctly as a way to honor the dead.

## SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital describes the extent to which visitors' experiences resulted in community building. Specifically, this section explores personal connections visitors made between the Day of the Dead and/or other cultural traditions, how the program affects visitors' ideas about their role in the community (Spanish Harlem or their own communities), and how visitors' perceive El Museo's relationship with the community.

Many visitors were of Latino heritage and said they strongly connected with the themes of the Day of the Dead since they were already familiar with the tradition; these respondents generally appreciated the opportunity to celebrate a cultural tradition outside of Latin America and praised the opportunity for others to learn about the culture.

Many Latino visitors said that the Day of the Dead program at El Museo is important because it opens the celebration to different cultural groups. Visitors' responses were passionate and stressed the need to learn about different cultures in order to understand different communities. Again, Latino visitors also recognized the importance of creating a unified sense of community by celebrating the Day of the Dead at El Museo together; additionally, some visitors' responses indicated the distinct importance of the celebration taking place at El Museo so as to create bridges between the Latino community and others.

Visitors who were not of Latino heritage tended to compare and contrast the Day of the Dead celebration with their own family traditions. Many visitors recognized connections with their own traditions of honoring the passing of loved ones, but cited differences in the mood and perspective. Most non-Latinos frequently connected with the concept of honoring deceased loved ones in a fun and celebratory manner. A couple visitors recognized similarities between Day of the Dead and All Saints' Day as well as Halloween, though they generally emphasized how the holidays are different. A few respondents did not make any personal connections with the theme of the Day of the Dead celebration.

Like Latinos, non-Latino visitors said that the program was important because it shared and informed others about different culture groups in general and specifically about Latino traditions. And, some of these visitors were motivated to attend the program to expose themselves or their children to another culture.

# PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: THREE KINGS DAY

## INTRODUCTION

RK&A evaluated El Museo's Three Kings Day program held on January 6, 2010. In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year, the program is a long-standing tradition that celebrates Three Kings Day—a Christian holiday that commemorates the biblical story of the Three Kings who followed a star to Bethlehem to bring gifts to the infant Jesus. El Museo's program harkens to the Latin American and Caribbean traditions of the celebration. As such, El Museo hosts a parade led by the Three Kings that includes music, floats, and animals. The parade is followed by a gift distribution for the children. The program is free to the public and open to all.

The evaluation objectives for this program are to:

- ◆ Identify specific program-related behaviors and engagement;
- ◆ Determine how, if at all, visitors personally connect to Three Kings Day themes;
- ◆ Gauge the extent to which visitors gain an understanding of Three Kings Day; and
- ◆ Gauge how, if at all, visitors' participation in Three Kings Day affects the way visitors think of their role in community.

## INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

RK&A interviewed two program stakeholders via telephone: an artist/poet and a task force member; interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The artist/poet was one of the kings in the parade and has participated in Three Kings Day for many years. He was very enthusiastic about the event and particularly the gift-giving ceremony, which he felt was a special experience for the children. The artist/poet took pride that the Museum celebrates Latino traditions and particularly Puerto Rican traditions, although he expressed some concerns that the Museum is becoming less “grassroots” and community-focused. For instance, he lamented that a politician was part of the parade this year and that the Museum branding has dropped “del barrio,” which affectionately refers to neighborhood, from the Museum's name in favor of “El Museo.”

By contrast, the task force member praised aspects of the program that the artist/poet lamented, such as the mainstream recognition of the event, the Museum, and the community (see the quotation below).

(And in general, what are your thoughts about the parade?) I like the fact that it's recognized by the elected officials. They all attend. I like the fact that El Museo has become . . . a crib for the Hispanic community because of the exhibits and the programs that they offer our community. I like the fact that many community organizations come together that day. You see the faces of the people who work very hard throughout the year to continue to improve the living conditions and quality of life in our community. So, we all know each other, and it's a wonderful place to gather and be a social and network. [task force member]

## OBSERVATIONS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The Three Kings Day program included a parade and gift-giving ceremony. The parade started at 106<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue and wound its way through Spanish Harlem, finishing at El Museo. The parade included traditional music, the Three Kings, live animals (e.g., camel), and girls singing Christmas carols. The gift-giving ceremony took place after the parade. Students waited in lines (according to their schools) to receive gifts. Two data collectors observed the program; data were reported in handwritten notes. Findings are as follows:

- ◆ Participants included many teachers and elementary school students as well as some community members, which were predominately mothers/grandmothers / caregivers and children.
- ◆ During the parade, teachers often pointed out traditional elements of the celebration to their children, such as the camels and the kings.
- ◆ Conversation among community members focused mostly on how El Museo's celebration is similar to or different from celebrations that the adults grew up with.
- ◆ Despite the cold, many visitors followed the parade and were enthusiastic—there was much chatter in the crowd, singing, and dancing.
- ◆ Staff wore costumes and encouraged children to participate in the singing and dancing.

## INTERVIEWS WITH GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Interviews were conducted with 13 general program participants (not teachers); data were reported in handwritten notes. Two-thirds were female, and the median age was 35. Two-thirds of interviewees were adults with children, a few were in adult only groups, and one man attended alone. More than two-thirds of interviewees were first-time participants of the parade. More than one-half of interviewees were Latino. Findings are reported by three broad visitor outcomes, which are engagement, knowledge, and social capital.

### ENGAGEMENT

More than one-half of visitors who were of Latino heritage said they were attending the program to celebrate Three Kings Day, keep tradition alive, and share traditions with their children. The rest were attending out of curiosity or simply looking for something to do. All visitors made positive remarks about the parade, although because of the nature of the interview (e.g., outside during the parade), responses were mostly general.

### KNOWLEDGE

As mentioned previously, more than one-half of interviewees celebrate Three Kings Day as part of their own ethnic background; these interviewees claimed to be from various countries or cultures, including Puerto Rico, Spain, Santo Domingo, and Nicaragua. Furthermore, even those visitors who did not celebrate Three Kings Day personally said they were familiar with the holiday and traditions. Thus, none of the visitors said that they learned anything new about Three Kings Day.

### SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital describes the extent to which visitors' experiences resulted in community building. Specifically, this section explores personal connections visitors make between Three Kings Day and/or other cultural traditions, how the program affects visitors' ideas about their role in the community

(Spanish Harlem or their own communities), and how visitors perceive El Museo's relationship with the community.

Most Latino visitors (as well as others who celebrate Three Kings Day) said that the program preserves traditions. A few of the visitors who talked about how the program preserved traditions also liked that the program allowed visitors to celebrate together. One visitor said it is empowering for Latinos living in New York. Additionally, a few Latino visitors said the program shares the Latino customs with others, and a couple specifically acknowledged that the parade has grown over the years and has reached a broader audience.

Non-Latino visitors thought the program was important to El Museo because it celebrated and shared Latino traditions (a few visitors who were not of Latino origin but celebrated Three Kings Day spoke about the traditions as Christian, Catholic, or ethnic). They valued the program for these reasons.

## INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

Six teachers were interviewed via telephone one week or more after Three Kings Day; data were reported in handwritten notes. Most teachers worked in elementary schools and one in middle school. All teachers had attended the parade previously with their students.

### ENGAGEMENT

All teachers interviewed had attended the program previously and some for many years. Teachers said they came to the program because their students enjoyed it and it fit with their curriculum. Teachers enjoyed the spectacle and energy of the program, naming the floats and animals specifically, because they excited their students.

Most frequently, teachers identified the weather as a weakness of the program. A couple teachers cited weather in passing, noting that it is unavoidable and out of the Museum's control, while a couple teachers thought that the staff could plan better for the weather issues by providing some outdoor heaters or improving communication so that teachers could keep their students indoors until the parade begins.

### KNOWLEDGE

All teachers said their students gained awareness of the holiday from the program. A couple talked in-depth about the history of Three Kings Day; these teachers taught students in upper elementary school and middle school.

All teachers used the educator's guide, primarily for background information on Three Kings Day. One teacher said she used the coloring activity and one teacher said that an El Museo educator had facilitated a program for her students and their parents prior to the parade.

### SOCIAL CAPITAL

Most teachers felt that by participating in the program, their students became more connected with their community or that the program improved their proclivity to feel connected. One teacher talked about a particular student who encouraged his parents to celebrate Three Kings Day and other Latino holidays that they rarely celebrate anymore.



# PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: SUPER SABADO – CARNIVAL

## INTRODUCTION

RK&A evaluated El Museo’s Super Sabado program held on February 20, 2010. Sponsored by Target, Super Sabado takes place on the third Saturday of each month; on these days, El Museo is free to the public. Carnival was the theme for the February Super Sabado. Carnival is traditionally a Roman Catholic celebration that takes place immediately prior to Lent—a time marked by abstinence and fasting. By contrast, Carnival is marked by public celebration, parties, music, dance, and masquerades. El Museo mostly focused on the Dominican celebration of Carnival but also incorporated some Latin American traditions into their celebration.

The evaluation objectives for this program are to:

- ◆ Identify specific program-related behaviors and engagement;
- ◆ Determine how, if at all, visitors used the Gallery Guide;
- ◆ Determine how, if at all, visitors personally connect to Carnival;
- ◆ Gauge the extent to which visitors gain an understanding of Carnival; and
- ◆ Gauge how, if at all, visitors’ participation in Super Sabado affects the way visitors think of their role in community.

## INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

RK&A interviewed two program stakeholders via telephone: one El Museo security guard and one contracted performer; interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

When talking about the Super Sabado program, the security guard mostly talked about the value of offering a free program and the inclusiveness of the program (see the quotation below).

(What are your thoughts about the Super Sabado events that El Museo hosts?) They’re great. They’re beautiful. It’s like open up the doors for everybody. [Security guard]

The performer talked mostly about the uniqueness of the program, specifically because it is very community friendly and highlights Latino culture (see the first quotation below). Furthermore, the performer talked at great length about the importance of offering programs for children; this emphasis is probably derived from the activity that she participated in—Colorín Colorado (see the second quotation).

It brings [culture] to the community; it has to offer what no museum in New York offers, which is a lot of cultural events, Latino-based. It shows the culture, like I said before, and it just connects with the people, no matter if they’re black, Asian, etc. It just connects. [Performer]

(And just in your opinion, why do you think that this program that you participated in is important to El Museo?) I just think that [it is great] to do something just for the kids, it’s something that a lot of places should do, just target kids. Let them come in, let them play

around, and do creative things. Make them feel like they have a place to go to and do whatever they want—just to learn and let their creative juices flow—because kids are very talented and we don't give kids enough credit. And what the Museum is doing is letting them know that they are important and can do things. . . . Because you know, the school systems are taking a lot of stuff out that the kids need, like art programs and music programs. The kids are missing this, so what the Museum is doing is bringing it back to where it needs to be in the community. [Performer]

## OBSERVATIONS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Data collectors observed each of four program activities—Super Sabado Photo Station, Mask Making and Jester Hats, Colorín Colorado with Glenys Javier, Candombe Jazz Project—for about one hour; data were reported in handwritten notes. Findings are organized by activity.

### SUPER SABADO PHOTO STATION

Visitors captured their visit at the photo station, which was set up outside the Museum and displayed a colorful depiction of Carnival as a backdrop. Findings are:

- ◆ Visitors spent about 2 minutes being photographed at the photo station.
- ◆ The photo booth prompted the least amount of interaction between and among visitors and staff. Visitors interacted with each other to organize themselves for the photograph, but generally did not interact with staff.

### MASK MAKING AND JESTER HATS

Visitors created their own paper mask and jester hat to wear during the Carnival fun. Findings are:

- ◆ Visitors worked on the activity for about 30 minutes.
- ◆ Visitors interacted mainly among their own social groups (i.e., parents aiding their children in completing the activities). Those participating in the workshop without children tended to work individually.
- ◆ At any time, there was normally one staff at each table. Staff assisted visitors by providing materials, providing instruction or advice, and making room for more visitors.

### COLORÍN COLORADO WITH GLENYS JAVIER

Visitors joined actress Glenys Javier on a colorful journey from the festive streets of the Dominican Republic to New York City through the book *Mi Carnaval* by Elizabeth Balaguer. The story was told simultaneously in English and Spanish. Findings are:

- ◆ Most visitors stayed the entire hour.
- ◆ The activity did not start on time, and there were some technical issues; some visitors became visibly agitated although they remained in the café, where the activity took place.
- ◆ Most children sat on a carpet near the stage and colored in a book, while most adults sat in chairs behind them. Because of crowding, some visitors stood.
- ◆ For the most part, visitors did not interact with others in their group, mainly because most children were separated from the adults. Staff facilitated interaction with the audience, namely children, through group participation activities. During this time, children coloring in the area in front of the stage tended to interact with each other in order to share materials and see each others' work. Parents and adults seated in the chairs behind this area sometimes interacted with one another by talking about personal memories and experiences related to Carnival.

- ◆ Presenters engaged with visitors as they acted out the story. They also encouraged children to recite some parts of the tale and taught them songs and words.

#### CANDOMBE JAZZ PROJECT

Visitors celebrated Uruguayan Carnival through the oral tradition of song and candombe drums.

Findings are:

- ◆ Most visitors stayed for the entire performance—1 hour and 30 minutes.
- ◆ Visitors interacted among themselves by dancing and enjoying the music together. There were no opportunities for visitors to interact with the staff or performers.

### INTERVIEWS WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

RK&A interviewed 40 visitors onsite (five interviews with visitors attending the four activities observed and 20 exit interviews); data were reported in handwritten notes. Three-quarters of interviewees were female, and the median age was 35 years. Three-quarters of interviewees were adults with children, a few were in adult only groups, and two were visiting alone. A little more than one-half of interviewees were first-time visitors. Many were Latino. Findings are reported by three broad visitor outcomes, which are engagement, knowledge, and social capital.

#### ENGAGEMENT

When asked what motivated them to visit the Museum that day, visitors named a variety of reasons. More than one-half said they wanted to do something with their children. About one-quarter said they wanted to do something culturally oriented, and a few specifically said they wanted to celebrate Carnival. Several said they saw the event advertised, while several others said they heard about the event through word-of-mouth or had been to other events like Super Sabado, such as Three Kings and Day of the Dead. A couple each said they were in the area, came to see the art, or were interested in seeing the renovations.

When asked what aspects were most engaging, almost one-half of visitors named the Mask Making and Jester Hats activity, describing it as funny and hands-on. About one-quarter of visitors named Colorín Colorado with Glenys Javier. Several each cited the Candombe Jazz Project and their gallery experiences.

Many visitors could not think of anything that they found least engaging. However, several talked about the lines and crowding. Several others named specific activities, such as Colorín Colorado and the Candombe Jazz Station, which visitors said were not appropriate for their young children, and the Super Sabado Photo Station because it was too simplistic.

#### KNOWLEDGE

Many visitors said they learned that Carnival is a Dominican version of Mardi Gras and that it is based around Lent. A few visitors said they did not learn anything more than that Carnival exists, and a few visitors said they did not learn anything new because they were already familiar with the themes of Carnival from their own cultural backgrounds.

#### SOCIAL CAPITAL

Many Latino visitors felt personally connected to Carnival because they remember or still celebrate Carnival, and several expressed a desire to share traditions with their children. When asked why the

celebration of Carnival is important for El Museo and the community, most Latino visitors said it is important to bring people together to learn about each other's cultures and traditions. Some Latino visitors also said it is important for El Museo to host programs such as Carnival to bring the Spanish Harlem community together and celebrate the neighborhood's various Latino cultures.

Of the respondents who were not of Latino heritage, a few related Carnival to their own traditions of celebrating Lent or their personal experiences with Mardi Gras in Louisiana. A few others cited a specific desire to learn more about and/or experience different cultures. Still a few others were unable to describe how the event related to them personally; these visitors stated the celebration had little or no relation to themselves or their family traditions, or listed how the celebration was different from their traditions. Similar to Latinos, non-Latino visitors said it is important to bring people together to learn about each other's cultures and traditions.

#### GALLERY GUIDE

Visitors were asked whether they used the guide, how they used it, and what they liked most about it. A little over one-half of the visitors reported using the guide. Most of these visitors described using it as an orientation tool either to help them navigate the museum or for the schedule of events. Many visitors described the guide as clear, helpful, informative, and conveniently-sized. Of those who did not use the guide, some had not yet picked one up, and others said they had a guide but did not look at it.

# APPENDICES

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REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES