



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**August 28, 2024**



**EXHIBITION HONORING PUERTO RICAN IDENTITIES  
OPENS AUG. 31 AT THE MSU BROAD ART MUSEUM**

*Diasporic Collage shares overlapping histories of colonialism, resistance, and survival.*

**East Lansing, MI** – This month, an exhibition honoring Puerto Rican identities will open at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad Art Museum). *Diasporic Collage: Puerto Rico and the Survival of a People*, opening August 31, 2024, is the result of collaborative research produced by the Diaspora Solidarities Lab (DSL), a Black feminist-led partnership between Michigan State University, Johns Hopkins University, and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO) at Hunter College, CUNY.

“A dream many years in the making, this exhibition is an act of multi-institutional and community collaboration that showcases the insurgent and intimate imaginary of Puerto Rican and Diasporican artists,” said CENTRO Directora Dr. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez. “The pieces featured in *Diasporic Collage* underscore forms of relationality, kinship, and struggle across Puerto Rican communities and offer us a visual and audio palimpsest of survival and autopoiesis.”

Puerto Rico's colonial status and geographical location situate it as a locus of global encounters and ongoing displacement. As such, the Puerto Rican diaspora can be understood as a collage of overlapping histories of colonialism, resistance, and survival. The artists featured in this exhibition consider the Puerto Rican diaspora in a fluid and expansive way. While several focus on the diaspora in the traditional sense—Puerto Ricans who migrate to the United States—many honor the different diasporas that intersect with the archipelago of Puerto Rico, documenting their communities with care and showing us a collage of Puerto Rican and Caribbean experiences.

*"Diasporic Collage* invites us to reflect on the construction of the multiple Puerto Rican identities that have been nurtured in the *ir y venir* (coming and going) between the archipelago and the host states from where we dream of returning and reuniting with those who stayed behind," commented Dr. Windy M. Cosme Rosario, instructor at The University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras. "But, at the same time it tells us how we build communities, piece by piece from the memories, affections, and collaboration that have allowed us to resist, rethink ourselves, and continue to exist as a nation wherever we are."

The exhibition takes the first major documentary initiative on the Puerto Rican diaspora as a point of departure to examine the enduring legacy of survival and migration. The "Puerto Rican Diaspora Documentary Project," led by community organizer, activist, educator, and documentary photographer Frank Espada (1930–2014, Puerto Rico), was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1979 to 1981. The resulting collection of over 4,000 photos and 130 interviews led to the 2007 publication *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Themes in the Survival of a People*, from which this exhibition takes its subtitle.

*Diasporic Collage* engages with collage as both practice and metaphor. Collage is an assemblage, an art technique that uses discrete materials, images, or text to create a whole image. Countering the concept of a melting pot, which emphasizes assimilation and loss of culture, the idea of a collaged community allows for the celebration of roots and relations. *Diasporic Collage* also considers the close relationship between photography and collage, both notable 20th-century art forms.

"The exhibition is an invitation to consider ways to tell Puerto Rican stories through photography presented in varied forms," said Dalina A. Perdomo Álvarez, assistant curator at the museum. "It is a scrapbook of diasporic experiences, like a family album meant to be perused from a dining table."

A series of engaging, free events featuring artists from *Diasporic Collage* will take place while the exhibition is on view. Campus and community are invited to attend a Collage Making for Liberation workshop with Rebel Betty on September 29, from 2–4pm; an artist talk with Edra Soto on October 9, from 7–8:30pm; and a performance with Brenda Torres-Figueroa on January 29, from 6–7:30pm.

The MSU Broad Art Museum is open Wednesday–Sunday from 10am–6pm. Admission is always free. Learn more at [broadmuseum.msu.edu](http://broadmuseum.msu.edu).

***Diasporic Collage: Puerto Rico and the Survival of a People*** (Aug. 31, 2024–Feb. 2, 2025) is organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO) at Hunter College, CUNY, in collaboration with the Diaspora Solidarities Lab (DSL), and curated by Dr. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez, directora of the

CENTRO, formerly associate professor at MSU; Dr. Windy M. Cosme Rosario, instructor, University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras; and Dalina A. Perdomo Álvarez, assistant curator, MSU Broad Art Museum; with support from DSL fellows Melanie Rodríguez Vázquez, Ariana Costales Del Toro, Yafrainy Familia, Nicole Hernández, Stephany Bravo, Imaida M. Durán Mariñez, Alana Cordero Montesinos, Meleny González, Olivia M. Ramírez, Jaden Morales, and Yuleysy Ortiz. Support for this series is provided by the MSU Federal Credit Union. The Diaspora Solidarities Lab is made possible with financial support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This exhibition is the result of collaborative research and community projects produced since 2022 by the DSL, a Black feminist-led partnership between Michigan State University, Johns Hopkins University, and Hunter College. The DSL is directed by Dr. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez, professor and directora of the CENTRO, formerly associate professor at MSU, and Dr. Jessica Marie Johnson, associate professor at Johns Hopkins University. A DSL sister exhibition, *Coastal Relations: Enacting Diaspora*, will be on view at the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, College of Charleston, South Carolina, from Aug. 24, 2024–Jan. 8, 2025.



**The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad Art Museum)** connects people with art through experiences that inspire curiosity and inquiry. Presenting exhibitions and programs that engage diverse communities around issues of local relevance and global significance, the MSU Broad Art Museum advances the university values of quality, inclusion, and connectivity. Opened on November 10, 2012, the museum was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid and named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift for its creation.

**Michigan State University** has been working to advance the common good in uncommon ways for more than 150 years. One of the top research universities in the world, MSU focuses its vast resources on creating solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, while providing life-changing opportunities to a diverse and inclusive academic community through more than 200 programs of study in 17 degree-granting colleges.

Image: Frank Espada, *Young Man with Puerto Rican Flag*, 1981. Courtesy David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University and Jason Espada. Copyright Frank Espada

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MSU Broad Art Museum representatives are available for interview.

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