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**MUSEO ALAMEDA, AFILIADO CON EL SMITHSONIAN (MAS*) ANNOUNCES GRAND OPENING PLANS,
NEW LOGO AND LOOK**

San Antonio, TX - Plans for the much anticipated opening of The Museo Alameda, Afiliado con el Smithsonian (MAS*) and its 2007 season of exhibitions were revealed Friday, February 16 during a news conference hosted by Henry R. Muñoz III, Founding Chairman of The Alameda National Center for Latino Arts & Culture.

Located on Commerce and Santa Rosa streets, at the corner of Market Square and near the heart of downtown San Antonio, the unique, striking pink structure has been the talk of the town for months. Now the Museo Alameda is ready to make its debut with an exciting program of exhibits that represent the rich tapestry that is the marriage of the American and Latino cultures.

“The Museo Alameda, Afiliado con el Smithsonian will tell the story of the Latino experience in America through art, history and culture,” said Henry R. Muñoz III, Founding Chairman of The Alameda National Center for Latino Arts & Culture. “Through our partnership with the Smithsonian Institution and Kennedy Center, the Museo is poised to become a national destination, not only for Latino art and culture but also as a teaching museum with an already proven track record of world class Latino scholarship.”

“We at the Smithsonian are very proud and honored to be a part of this wonderful partnership,” said Richard Kurin, Director of the Smithsonian’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and Acting Director of National Programs. “Like its counterparts in Washington, D.C. and across the country, the Museo Alameda, afiliado con el Smithsonian will preserve and promote the history and traditions as well as the current and future impact of the Latino experience in America.”

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An economic feasibility study by Economic Research Associates predicts that the Museo Alameda will become, “the most visited museum of its kind in the nation.” Attendance is expected to top 400,000 in the first year of operations, which would make it the most visited Latino museum in the country.

"Ford is proud to continue our history of promoting Latino contributions to America," said Raquel Egusquiza, Director of Community Development and International Strategy for Ford Motor Company Fund, the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company. “We value our partnership with the Alameda, a project that will foster cross-cultural exchange and honor San Antonio’s longstanding heritage.”

Ruth Medellin stressed the important support of generous sponsors like Ford Motor Company and AT&T. "We are proud to support the Museo Alameda in its quest to highlight the Latin American experience through unique works of art," said Laura Sanford, AT&T Foundation president. "This institution will surely enhance tourism and community pride while it reflects San Antonio’s rich Hispanic culture."

At the news conference, the Museo’s logo was unveiled for the first time. Bold capital block letters in hot pink and neon green spell out MAS, an acronym for Museo Alameda, afiliado con el Smithsonian. Like the MoMA, Museum of Modern Art in New York and many other institutions, MAS will provide visitors an easy nickname.

The History

The Museo, which embodies “The American Story,” according to Muñoz, marries the Alameda Theatre to the new Museo Alameda. It’s actually come full circle, with the theatre opening its doors in March of 1949, as part of the Casa de Mexico building on Houston Street. The brainchild of G.A. Lucchese, Italian immigrant and scion of the boot fortune, Lucchese saw the opportunity of opening film theatres for San Antonio’s Spanish-speaking population.

He writes in the theatre opening night program nearly fifty years ago, “...By redeveloping this area and providing more suitable structures for business and living, it is hoped that this culture will be brought forth...[it] was also designed with the idea that it would be a permanent symbol of good faith and understanding between the Latin-American and the Anglo-American.”

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The Grand Opening

Grand opening plans for The Museo Alameda, afiliado con el Smithsonian will take place over a fun-filled three-day period beginning Friday, April 13th when the public will be invited to take part in a Luminaria procession to the Museo Alameda through downtown San Antonio and featuring dancers and performers representing a variety of cultures.

The historic Smithsonian Mace will lead the procession, representing the Institution's mission to "increase the diffusion of knowledge." Its arrival in San Antonio will symbolize the bonds between the Smithsonian Institution and its first affiliate institution, the Museo Alameda. The grand procession will culminate in a fireworks display and a free *¡Celebremos!* concert, featuring performances by nationally known singers, dancers, musicians, actors and comedians.

Saturday, April 14 and Sunday, April 15, the Museo Alameda will host *Festival Alameda*, a family fiesta featuring musicians, artists and artisans, cooks and nationally acclaimed performers. *Festival Alameda* will provide families the experience of diverse Latino and Latino-connected traditions that vitalize the community, the region, the U.S. and other nations and provide the basis for the museum's work and mission.

"Everyone is invited to join in the celebration," said Ruth Medellin, Executive Director of the Alameda National Center for Latino Arts and Culture. "This will be one of the biggest street parties San Antonio has ever seen, with entertainment that everyone in the family can enjoy."

"It's very exciting; we're proud of this event," Muñoz says. He stresses staying true to the Alameda mission, which is "To tell the story of the Latino experience in America through art, history and culture."

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About the Museo Alameda, afiliado con el Smithsonian

The Museo Alameda, afiliado con el Smithsonian was the first to sign on with the Smithsonian's Affiliations programs. It was, in fact, part of the initial conversation when the program began - helping to build the spirit of the Smithsonian's affiliations program that would create opportunities to share the Smithsonian's 140 million objects with museums across America. There are now 152 affiliate museums of the Smithsonian Institution throughout the nation.

The huge, oversized "hojalata" on the exterior of the museum is stainless steel and cast aluminum. It is a lattice work, almost lace-like, that resembles the punched-tin of a luminaria. It is riddled with symbolism and includes the sun of the Smithsonian, the aura of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the eagle from the Mexican flag and other Mexican symbology, and the crest of Quetzalcoatl, the mythological serpent god which foresaw the coming of Cortez.

In the spirit of the "hojalata" - MAS's docent program is calling its docents "Luminarias", as they will illuminate Latino culture for visitors as guides to exhibitions and programs at the Museo.

There will be seven galleries in total, as well as a sculpture garden. Four of the galleries will be rotational, including a gallery dedicated always to the Smithsonian. The other three will represent collections that are on loan to the Museo.

The Tobin Sculpture Garden will feature pieces from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. on long-term loan. Also, as a part of the public art program initiated by MAS*, the Hirshhorn is generously lending an installation of Felix Gonzalez-Torres "Untitled (For Jeff)." This magnificent photo image of a palm extended, is duplicated on a grand scale and currently on display at numerous sites across the city. The Hirshhorn will announce the loan of future pieces at a later date.

A space called "Proyectos" or "project space," will be artist-driven and will give emerging and established artists the room to create new works. One of the first artists to be featured is Vicky Suescum, a Panamanian artist whose exuberant, brightly-colored paintings reflect the "Myth of the Manicure," exploring the Meso-American roots of manicures and a leading form of artistic expression for Latinas from Panama to San Antonio. Her playful works of art are framed in blow-up children's toys, and will delve interactively into the manicure as a ritual for storytelling.

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