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Cheech Marin and Riverside Elected Officials Celebrate Opening of The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture

Comedian/Art Collector Marin ready to share his passion for Chicano art with the world

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (June 16, 2022) — It is time to welcome a glimmering jewel in the world of Chicano art.

That was the message from those who gathered Thursday at [The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum](#) for a dedication ceremony of the long-anticipated center in downtown Riverside that will house, by all estimates, the finest collection of Chicano art anywhere in the world.

The guest of honor himself, Cheech Marin, said the center represents a major step forward in his decade-long mission to bring Chicano art to the forefront of the art world.

“My motto has always been that you can’t love or hate Chicano art unless you see it,” said Marin who received a key to the city from Riverside Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson. “And now people will have a place to always see it. This is such a happy and humbling moment for me.”

The center, affectionately known as The Cheech, opens to the public on Saturday. It is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and tickets can be purchased on-site or [in advance](#).

Dozens of people—including reporters, lawmakers, business owners, art lovers and community members—cheered as Marin unveiled a commemorative plaque and officially dedicated his new home for 500-plus works of Chicano art, including paintings, sculptures, and photography.

The Cheech is the result of a public-private partnership between the Riverside Art Museum, the City of Riverside, and Marin, who has spent the last 40 years collecting the work of notable Chicano artists like Carlos Almaraz, Margaret Garcia, Wayne Alaniz Healy, Judithe Hernández, Frank Romero, and Patssi Valdez.

During the event, Artistic Director of The Cheech María Esther Fernández, said that one of the center’s goals is to deepen the visitors' understanding of Chicana/o/x art through exciting and innovative exhibition and education programming.

Fernández said “visitors will make their own connections with the work and be able to better understand themselves, their community, and the world.” For Fernández, one of the most important aspects of The Cheech is that “it will be a dynamic space for intergenerational dialogue and exchange.”

Also speaking at the dedication were the Riverside Art Museum’s Executive Director Drew Oberjuege and Mayor Lock Dawson who said the new center represents another major step in the City’s mission to celebrate diversity and education.

“The Cheech not only will give visitors another reason to visit Riverside, the City of Arts and Innovation, but also serve as an epicenter for us to connect with each another, celebrate our diversity and creativity, and provide space for education and reflection,” Lock Dawson said. “I encourage everyone to visit our historic downtown and see for themselves the majesty of The Cheech.”

Oberjuerge said The Cheech could not have happened without the dedication of RAM board and staff who partnered with city leaders, community groups, grassroots organizations, and Marin himself to make the center a reality. Plus, the new center will broaden the Riverside Art Museum's mission and commitment to serve its diverse community.

"The Cheech will foster our learning about new curatorial and collections management practices to further our pursuit of promoting equity and inclusion in the art world," Oberjuerge said. "The Cheech is a reflection of how museums across the nation are transforming to better serve our communities."

After the dedication ceremony, attendees toured the 61,420-square-foot center, which itself is a marvel.

Los Angeles-based architects [Page & Turnbull](#) worked with museum architects [WHY](#) to convert a 1964 mid-century library into a modern museum and cultural center. While preserving the historic and vintage aspects of the original building, such as the exposed brick walls, the stainless-steel framework, and aluminum stair railings with restored decorative polyester panels, The Cheech represents something entirely new both inside and out.

"Interventions are thoughtfully integrated to celebrate both the building's historic character and its transformation to a world-class art center," said Page & Turnbull Manager and Principal Architect John Lesak. "It's an inspiring idea and a model for other cities and cultural groups to revive underused architectural gems."

One of the most striking features of the space is the visual connection between the galleries, which are centered around a permanent installation of a 26-foot-tall lenticular piece by brothers Einar and Jamex de la Torre. The dynamic installation, which changes as the viewer moves from side to side, is designed to generate a central source of energy for The Cheech, encouraging visitors to explore the different galleries both above and below. Accessed by a restored mid-century stairway, the second-floor features exhibition art galleries, a multi-purpose space, a film screening room, staff offices, and an artist-in-residency studio/education center where visitors can witness the next generation of Chicano art as it emerges.

WHY founder and Creative Director Kulapat Yantrasast said he was struck by the lack of representation and focus in other venues for Chicano artists, their work, and their culture.

"When the architect selection process started, we threw our hat in the ring with full force," he said. "We wanted to make this venue and its experience a reality. I could not be prouder of this new cultural epicenter."

Museum designers and architects aren't the only ones excited about the opening. More than 100,000 people are expected to visit the center every year with the first wave arriving this Saturday during a sold-out opening day.

Whenever they arrive, the first visitors to the center will be treated to two major exhibitions: *Collidoscope: de la Torre Brothers Retro-Perspective* featuring more than 70 mixed-media works, and *Cheech Collects*, which weaves a story of Cheech Marin's 40-year journey as an art collector.

For Cheech, the center is a dream come true.

"We've put so much work into this center, and I can't believe it's finally here," Marin said. "I'm so excited to share my passion with the rest of the world. There's something in here for everyone."

Tickets for opening day on June 18 are sold out, but admission for other dates to the Riverside Art Museum and The Cheech can be purchased at www.riversideartmuseum.org.

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About RAM: RAM is one museum with two locations: the Riverside Art Museum, housed in a National Historic 1929 building designed by Hearst Castle and AIA Gold Medal-winning architect Julia Morgan, and The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture, slated to open June 18, 2022, just one block away in downtown Riverside, the "City of Arts & Innovation". RAM integrates art into the lives of people in a way that engages, inspires, and builds community by providing high quality exhibits and art education programs that instill a lifelong love of the arts. A 60-plus-year-old, non-profit cultural arts institution, RAM strives to be a distinguished, yet accessible institution that serves as a cultural, collaborative, and educational focal point for our diverse community. For more information about RAM, visit www.riversideartmuseum.org. Find the Riverside Art Museum on Facebook (www.facebook.com/riversideartmuseum), Twitter ([@RAMRiverside](https://twitter.com/RAMRiverside)), and

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