

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Bolívar Arellano was born in Alausí, Ecuador on September 3, 1944. He began his photography career in Bucaramanga, Colombia in 1963 freelancing for nine different newspapers. Three years later, Arellano moved to Guayaquil, Ecuador and worked for *El Telégrafo* and *Vistazo* magazine. In both 1969 and 1970, he was the recipient of Best Annual News Picture awards.

After arriving in New York City in 1971, Arellano continued to work as a photojournalist for The Associated Press and *El Tiempo*. In 1974, he started contributing photographs to *El Diario La Prensa* and *Noticias Del Mundo*. A year later, Arellano became a freelancer for *The New York Post* and in 1993 he joined the staff retiring in 2004.

As a photographer for the Associated Press, Arellano covered El Salvador's Civil War and the Sandinista Revolution. In 1985, he was kidnapped by the Contras in Nicaragua, and held captive for several days. On September 11, 2001, while on assignment, Arellano survived the fall of the first tower and was wounded after the fall of the second. Despite his injuries, Arellano continued to work. The Library of Congress has since purchased over 100 of these photographs for their collection.

*Bolívar Arellano in Greenpoint, Brooklyn 1971*  
C-print, 24x19-1/4

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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In addition, I would like to recognize Javier Gómez and Angel Vázquez, who worked tirelessly and wonderfully in all aspects of *El Diario La Prensa's* centennial curatorial process. I am equally grateful for my colleague Michael Ryan, director of Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library, whose support and knowledge are essential to the entire enterprise, and Dean Pierre Force for his generous support of the gallery. My appreciation also goes to Associate Director of Operations Theresa Delgado, Client Services Supervisor Marah Arbaje, and Deputy Vice President of Strategic Planning Susan Mescher for graciously entertaining at least one unconventional request.

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The show, of course, belongs to Bolívar Arellano. I am more than thankful that he had faith in our efforts and trusted us with his phenomenal work. *Mil gracias.*

## CATALOGUE

*Bolívar Arellano in Greenpoint, Brooklyn 1971*  
C-print, 24x19-1/4

*Arrest of a Young Lord 1971*  
C-print, 24x20

*Juan Mari Brás and Angela Davis at "National Day of Solidarity with Puerto Rico" Rally 1974*  
C-print, 24x20

*Tito Puente in El Barrio 1974*  
C-print, 19x24

*Roasting a Pig in the Lower East Side 1975*  
C-print, 24x19

*Rubén Blades at Studio 54 1975*  
C-print, 24x19-1/4

*José Peña Gómez Durán Visits New York 1976*  
C-print, 24x17-3/4

*Rita Moreno in Her Dressing Room 1976*  
C-print, 24x19

*Children at Immigration March 1977*  
C-print, 19-3/4x24

*Marihuana Park 1977*  
C-print, 24x19

*Miguel Piñero and Sandra María Esteves in the B Train 1977*  
C-print, 24x20

*Arrests after Blackout 1977*  
C-print, 24x18-3/4

*Miguel Algarín in the Lower East Side 1978*  
C-print, 18-1/2x24

*Willie Colón at Studio 54 1977*  
C-print, 24x19-3/4

*Iris Chacón at Madison Square Garden 1979*  
C-print, 24x19-1/4

*Celia Cruz at Madison Square Garden 1980*  
C-print, 18-3/4x24

*Miriam Colón at the Puerto Rican Day Parade 1980*  
C-print, 18-3/4x24

*Herman Badillo and Ted Kennedy Campaigning 1980*  
C-print, 24x19

*Aníbal Santiago and Daughter Edna 1981*  
C-print, 20x24

*Mayor Ed Koch and Inés Mendoza at Luis Muñoz Marín Boulevard 1982*  
C-print, 24x19-3/4

**GALLERY at the CENTER**  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY  
OF ETHNICITY AND RACE

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New York City

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THE RAGING 70s:

# LATINO NEW YORK

AS SEEN BY *EL DIARIO'S* BOLÍVAR ARELLANO



**GALLERY at the CENTER**  
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October 8, 2013 - May 15, 2014

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# LATINO NEW YORK

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Frances Negrón-Muntaner

Director/Curator

Well before *Time* magazine declared that the 1980s would be the “Decade of Hispanics” and before the 2000 census revealed that Latinos were the nation’s largest minority, New York was living a Latino cultural and political awakening. In the context of major debates about immigration and urban decay, the long 1970s—from the late 1960s to the early 1980s—saw a flourishing of artistic talent and the emergence of new forms of politics. The city itself became a magnet for artists and politicians from the rest of the country and Latin America who saw Latino New York as an important political and cultural stage. Neither New York nor Latinos would ever be the same.



Mayor Ed Koch and Inés Mendoza at Luis Muñoz Marín Boulevard 1982  
C-print, 24x19-3/4

To revisit this period’s impact, *The Raging 70s* features twenty black and white images of public figures, significant events and everyday life through the lens of one of the era’s most talented photographers, Bolívar Arellano. Born in Ecuador in 1944, Arellano learned the craft of photography as a teenager from a relative in Colombia. In 1966, he returned to Ecuador and started working for *El Telégrafo* newspaper and *Vistazo* magazine. Five years later, Arellano escaped to New York City after receiving death threats from the Ecuadorian military for his investigation into the murder of a student at the hands of an officer. In New York, he continued to work as a journalist, becoming the only Latino photographer at The Associated Press. In 1974, he started freelancing for *El Diario La Prensa*, the nation’s oldest Spanish-language newspaper.

The photographs shown here are part of *El Diario La Prensa*’s 5,000-image collection, which was recently donated to the Latino Arts and Activism archive, a joint project of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race and the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University.

The collection includes the work of over ten photographers and spans from the 1970s to the present.

Of the literally thousands of possibilities, we chose twenty of Arellano’s images for a few good reasons. The most immediate is their striking ability to position the spectator *inside* the picture, transforming the act of viewing into a fully sensorial and participatory experience. This quality of Arellano’s prints is in sharp contrast to the majority of photographs of Latinos in mainstream publications during this period. Figuratively and literally, prominent photographers like Dan McCoy tended to shoot Latinos from a distance, often highlighting the poverty of their subjects and their surroundings. Fittingly, Arellano’s insistence to “look closer” and place Latinos at the center of the scene envisions a critique of these practices and invites viewers to see Latino New York as rich and complex in its own terms.

In looking this way, Arellano’s photographs also offer an indispensable counter-memory of the 1970s. If in many contemporary popular accounts, the 1970s are New York’s darkest moment, Arellano shows both the era’s turmoil—bloodied heads and mass arrests included—as well as its verve and joy. This may be particularly evident in



Miguel Piñero and Sandra María Esteves in the B Train 1977  
C-print, 24x20

his photos featuring figures of the Nuyorican Renaissance. A sweeping Puerto Rican cultural-political movement, the Renaissance created a new public identity for a historically disparaged community along with an innovative literature, music and visual culture. Equally important, the movement founded alternative institutions such as El Museo del Barrio, Taller Boricua and Nuyorican Poets Café that brought hope and pride to neighborhoods and offered alternative ways to think about artistic production and reception. Whereas Arellano does not capture all challenges faced by Latino communities, his chosen emphasis disrupts the image of Latinos as victims and visualizes how people confronted and transformed these circumstances through new forms of community and ways of being in the world.

A rich example is Arellano’s extraordinary photograph of writers Miguel Piñero and Sandra María Esteves riding the B train past midnight. Focusing on Piñero’s joy is, to say the least, fruitfully unsettling. Of all the Nuyorican writers of this period, Piñero is among the most famous, and his fame is closely tied to his portrayal as a creative soul devoured by his own demons. In this photo, however, we see a

playful Piñero enjoying the city as part of a community. Piñero’s laughter both defies how Latino New York was (and arguably still is) represented and underscores that the love that many felt for their city at this time was not in spite of, but because of, its volatile mix of pride and prejudice, brutality and beauty. As Piñero movingly captures in his signature “Lower East Side Poem”:

There’s no other place for me to be  
there’s no other place that I can see  
there’s no other town around that  
brings you up or keeps you down...  
this concrete tomb is my home.

Arellano’s emphasis in public figures is then not about celebrity. Like other Latino photographers such as the Mexican American Jesús Manuel Mena Garza or the Nuyorican Tontxi Vázquez, who acted as contemporary *nuevos cronistas* of a changing United States, Arellano is particularly interested in making visible the role of Latinos in this pivotal transformation. A case in point is Arellano’s photographs of Latino music stars. Although dominant narratives of America’s music scene in the 70s continue to tell largely Latinless accounts of rock and roll and hip hop, the radiant presence of Rubén Blades, Celia Cruz and Willie Colón

clearly accentuate that Latino New York produced one of the most compelling global sounds of the century: salsa. Arellano’s selection of stars—immigrants from Panamá, exiles from Cuba, and colonial migrants from Puerto Rico—further underscores that while salsa was spoken as mostly a localized barrio phenomenon, this sound was the product of a transatlantic mix slowly cooked to perfection in New York and concurrently marketed “para el mundo.”

Not surprisingly, Arellano also zooms in on the political impact of Latinos during the 1970s. While in the decades following World War II, the city’s establishment perceived Latinos as politically passive and many among the Latino middle class tried their best to pass, the 1970s radically changed this status quo. The era produced new political actors, most notably Puerto Rican New Yorkers, who in fighting—and often winning—key battles against discrimination in hiring, and for access to bilingual education and health care expanded the democratic rights of all Americans.

Moreover, the 70s produced new multiracial alliances, bringing together African Americans and Latinos to contest colonialism, racism, and gender subordination. Likewise, as the unusual photograph featuring Dominican politician José Peña Gómez Durán’s 1973 visit to New York evokes, Latino politics in the city became constitutively transnational, ushering a different way of thinking about immigration, citizenship and belonging across the Americas. If before the 1970s, many dreamt of their return home as the only solution to the hardships of immigrant life, afterwards, immigrants built multistoried homes everywhere they went.

Ultimately, Arellano’s photographs continue to compel because they are radically prophetic. It is hard not to see in the image of children holding placards demanding immigration reform an anticipation of today’s young Dreamers. Similarly, it is impossible not to connect the Nuyorican Renaissance and the salsa explosion with the confidence and contradictions of contemporary Latino creativity, caught between the desire to be and the demands of the cultural marketplace. At the end, the raging 70s remains because we are still standing on its foundation and haunted by its boundless imagination.

Rubén Blades at Studio 54 1975  
C-print, 24x19-1/4



Miguel Algarín in the Lower East Side 1978  
C-print, 18-1/2x24

