

FEMA Allocations Promote Arts and Culture

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GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico ? The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) allocated nearly \$400,000 to boost projects that promote Puerto Rican culture and the arts in the towns of Guayama, Barranquitas and Dorado.

The Barranquitas School of Fine Arts; as well as the Artisan House and the Marco Juan Alegría Museum and School of Art, both in Dorado, received funds from the agency and the works have already been completed.

“The preservation of our culture and heritage is fundamental to keeping the identity of our communities alive. These museums, restored with FEMA’s support, celebrate our rich history and represent the agency’s continued commitment to the recovery and enhancement of Puerto Rico,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

In Barranquitas, the municipality’s School of Fine Arts received over \$209,000 for its reconstruction. This school is located downtown and provides learning during an extended hours schedule. It offers art classes and courses for a strings program, a piano program and for the municipal youth pre-band program.

The pre-band began as an initiative to create the Barranquitas municipal band, in which young people and adults participated. The project was later redirected to the musical education of children and young people, explained music professor Angel “Güiso” Berríos Ortiz. Today the municipality has a musical band and a pre-band made up of children, with the intention that they will continue in the program as their development progresses.

“Because, as they grow, the children may leave, and we have to go back, to sow the seeds,” said the teacher.

Some of the students have gone on to pursue music careers, Berríos Ortiz added. “We have one who is doing his teaching practice. He started with us and



graduated from the Music Conservatory.” Perhaps the most recognized is virtuoso multi-instrumentalist Daniel Díaz, creator of the *tripandero* concept: a hybrid instrument that allows him to play three *plena* drums simultaneously with his hands while playing other instruments with his feet.

Part of the work for the school included replacing walls, panels, lighting fixtures and remediating mold problems in the infrastructure. Nearly \$21,000 within the allocation were earmarked for mitigation measures to address water infiltration during future atmospheric events.

Furthermore, FEMA allocated over \$160,000 to rehabilitate centers dedicated to the preservation and teaching of arts and culture in the municipality of Dorado. These funds include over \$103,000 to rehabilitate the Marco Juan Alegría Museum and School of Fine Arts; and over \$57,000 to repair damage to the Artisan House.

The Museum and School of Fine Arts was built in 1913 and was the former residence of painter Marco Juan Alegría. The facility helps to honor the works of the painter and art teacher in his former residence. It also features an exhibit hall with memorabilia from past decades.

Both the Marco Juan Alegría Museum and the Artisan House received funds for mitigation works, mainly to reinforce the roofs. In the case of the Artisan House, it benefited from an improved roof waterproofing system and an anchoring system was installed to protect the building’s air conditioner.

FEMA has approved over \$34.2 billion for over 11,000 projects that address the reconstruction of Puerto Rico following Hurricane María

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