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## **NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING JOIN LOCAL ARTS COUNCILS TO ANNOUNCE INAUGURAL “SPARC WEEK” FROM JUNE 12-22**

*SPARC: Seniors Partnering with Artists Citywide Public Programs Take Place across the Five Boroughs*

**New York** - The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and Department for the Aging joined local arts councils in each borough to announce the inaugural “SPARC Week” from June 12-22. SPARC - Seniors Partnering with Artists Citywide - is a community arts engagement program that places artists-in-residence at senior centers across the five boroughs of New York City to provide arts programs for older adults. Each SPARC residency culminates with a public program inviting the community into senior centers to see the work of the artists and their SPARC program participants. To capture the breadth of this program – which this year placed 51 artists in 50 senior centers boroughs – the City is hosting the inaugural “SPARC Week” to highlight SPARC public program events and encourage New Yorkers to join in this celebration of art and community.

Public programs will take place at SPARC-participating senior centers across the city through the end of June. Events will feature work in a variety of disciplines, including Bomba dance performances in the Bronx; an audio walking tour comprised of participants’ oral histories in El Barrio; the unveiling of a ceramic tile mural at a senior center damaged by Hurricane Sandy in Coney Island; an exhibition of autobiographical art books in Queens; and, later in the month, an exhibition of seniors’ photography work in Staten Island. All programs are free and open to the public.

SPARC has three primary goals: (i) to positively impact the quality of life of the City’s older adults through direct engagement in arts and cultural activities; (ii) to reinvigorate neighborhood senior centers as vital community spaces through increased cultural programming and events; and (iii) to increase opportunities for arts residencies and access to workspace for artists in a City where affordable space is limited. SPARC Week is intended to further these goals, inviting the public into senior centers to engage the work of the SPARC participants, strengthening ties between senior centers and their communities and enlivening them as neighborhood hubs.

SPARC is a collaboration among the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department for the Aging and five of the City's local arts councils—Brooklyn Arts Council, Bronx Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Queens Council on the Arts and Staten Island Arts.

“SPARC artists and senior participants bring an incredible amount of imagination and dedication to their projects, as the public programs highlighted in this inaugural SPARC Week make clear,” said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl. “Whether it’s a choral performance in the Bronx or a mural unveiling in Brooklyn, these events give us an opportunity to celebrate this year’s SPARC program, which has expanded access to the arts for seniors and increased support for working artists. I encourage all New Yorkers to see what public programs are taking place in their neighborhood.”

"Just like all New Yorkers, our elderly population seeks opportunities to showcase its talents and achieve self-enrichment, which are so important for healthy aging," said Aging Commissioner Donna M. Corrado, PhD. "The SPARC program offers that important outlet for creative expression while changing the perception people have of aging. Dr. Gene Cohen, a major researcher in the field of aging, calls the senior years, 'the liberation years,' a time for elders to be fully who they are. That is what projects like SPARC that focus on creative aging help to promote."

SPARC Week programs will take place across the city. Below is a full listing:

## **BRONX**

- **Bomba Dance Performance – Monday, June 16, 11:00 AM**  
A performance of Bomba dance by seniors participating in Melinda Gonzalez's SPARC program.  
*Casa Boricua, 910 East 172nd Street, 10460*
- **Choral Concert – Tuesday, June 17, 11:30 AM**  
A choral concert by seniors in SPARC artist Ellen Bardekov's program.  
*Bronx House, 900 Pelham Parkway, 10461*
- **Poetry and Creative Writing Presentation – Friday, June 20, 1:00 PM**  
A presentation of poetry and creative writing by seniors in Lorraine Currelley's SPARC program.  
*JASA Dreiser Senior Center, 177 Dreiser Loop #7, 10475*

## **BROOKLYN**

- **If I Ruled the World – Friday, June 20, 1:00 PM**  
Each senior in Mahayana Landowne’s SPARC program was asked "What would it be like if you ruled the world?" Some seniors chose countries to represent. Each participant will share their vision and knowledge of their country at a festive meal.  
*Neighborhood Senior Center, 196 Albany Avenue, 11213*
- **Ceramic Tile Mural Unveiling – Friday, June 20, 1:30 PM**  
During Jennifer Wade’s residency, a group of seniors have hand sculpted and painted ceramic tiles to be joined together to create beautiful Mural on the walls of their garden. The garden wall was destroyed by Hurricane Sandy; the rebuilding of the garden reflects strength of the community.  
*JASA Scheuer House, 3601 Surf Avenue, 11224*

- **Performance Infinitum – Friday, June 20, 1:00 PM**  
Over the past three months, a group of seniors in Ximena Garnica's program have worked together to create an original performance work. Their movement-based performance reflects on cycles of life, nostalgia, and the laughter of life. Performance is 15 minutes long, DJ party to follow.  
*Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Center, 319 Stanhope Street, 11237*

## MANHATTAN

- **Telling Your Story Writing Workshop – Friday, June 13, 2:00 PM**  
A reception and presentation of work done by center members during Jeffery Colvin's Telling Your Story Workshop. Activities include a meet and greet with Telling Your Story participants, remarks and comments by Center staff, and readings and performances of selections from the "Telling Your Story Anthology," a collection of historical and biographical prose, poetry, and performance art written by workshop members.  
*Dyckman Senior Center, 3754 10th Avenue, 10034*
- **Memories of El Barrio (Recuerdo del Barrio) - An Audio Walking Tour – Monday, June 16, 2:00 PM**  
Seniors who grew up in East Harlem created an audio tour based on their memories of growing up in the neighborhood. Listen to stories of what El Barrio was like in the 40s and 50s while viewing the city as it is now and be taken back to a different era. Participants will walk the tour together, listening to pre-recorded stories on mobile devices, then reconvene at the East Harlem Council for Human Services for refreshments and a Q and A with artist Amanda Belantara and the seniors who created the tour.  
*East Harlem Council for Human Services, 150 East 121st Street, 10035*
- **Exploring Nature in Clay Form – Thursday, June 19, 12:45 PM**  
A reception and unveiling of mosaic murals to be permanently placed onto auditorium walls created by seniors in Olivia Beens's residency at Sirovich Center along with a slide-show and video of creation of project.  
*Sirovich Senior Center, 331 East 12th Street, 10003*
- **A Wedding Reception – Thursday, June 19, 5:00 PM**  
A public event that recreates the floral artistry of a wedding reception. During the course of Lois Cremmens' Horticulture-Art workshops, participants have made creative projects using natural materials as well as gained basic floral decorating skills. For the Wedding Reception, the room will be transformed with centerpieces on tables, plantings and garlands. Workshop participants will wear fresh corsages they have created. Exhibited on the walls of the space will be a selection of the art projects created during the residency.  
*Lenox Hill at St. Peters, 619 Lexington Avenue, 10022*
- **SeniorPlaces: SeniorMoments, Printmaking at the Coffeehouse – Tuesday, June 17, 2:00 PM**  
A gallery exhibit and reception featuring work seniors created over the course of Ann deVere's printmaking workshop, representing the many different techniques they studied.  
*Coffeehouse Senior Center, 331 West 42nd Street, 10036*

- **The Teeth Sell: Senior Eyes on the New York African Burial Ground – Friday, June 20, 2:30 PM**

The participants in Martia Goodson's "Creating Art from History--New York Roots" are re-creating 18th century life and death of New York's early enslaved Africans artistically. Using recycled and new materials, participants will tell the stories of the New York African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan and the lives of those 15,000 enslaved and free Africans buried there between 1690 and 1790. This event will demonstrate what the seniors have learned and created in response to this exploration.

*Central Harlem Senior Citizen's Corner, 24 West 134th Street, 10037*

- **In The Heights from the Inside Out: Life, Love and Remembrances by Those who Live There – Friday, June 13, 2014, 2:00 PM**

SPARC artist Thomas Harris and his Digital Diaspora Family Reunion collected photographs and stories from residents who have made Washington Heights home for decades. These intimate accounts reflect lives well lived and serve as an inspiration to us all to never let go of our dreams. This event will be the first public presentation of these images and stories and all are welcome to participate. Bring a selection of your favorite photos and become part of the celebration. The public can also upload photos online using Instagram and the hashtag #1World1Family-WHts.

*YM-YHHA of Washington Heights, 54 Nagle Ave, 10040*

## QUEENS

- **Creative Visual Memoirs – Thursday, June 19, 1:00 PM**

Over the course of Ifeatuanya Chiejina's residency, participating seniors have been exploring the importance of storytelling and history through writing and visual arts. In response to a series of exercises, seniors have reflected on their own experiences and beliefs and have been immersed in the creation of memoirs. Selected text and visuals will be on display at this final exhibition.

*Rockaway Boulevard Senior Center, 123-10 143rd street, 11436*

- **Artist Book Exhibition – Friday, June 20, 10:30 AM**

Over the past 5 months, seniors in Aya Rodriguez-Izumi's residency have explored a variety of mediums through workshops, critiques and museum visits and grappled with a range of subject matter. This exploration has led to a culminating autobiographical art book created by each artist in the program which will be on display.

*CCNS Catherine Sheridan Senior Center, 35-24 83rd Street, 11372*

## STATEN ISLAND

*While none of the public events in Staten Island occur during SPARC Week, there will be several public programs later in the month, including:*

- **Japanese Visual Arts Exhibit – Tuesday, June 24, 10:00 AM**

An exhibition of work from seniors in SPARC artist Hiroko Otani's program, whose work focused on Asian folk art and traditional Japanese culture.

*Anderson Avenue Neighborhood Senior Center, 120 Anderson Avenue, 10302*

- **Visual Arts Exhibit: Inspired by the Old Masters – Monday, June 30, 12:30 PM**

An exhibition of work from seniors in SPARC artist Victoria Wrubel's program. Wrubel led seniors in the creation of work inspired by the Masters.

*Avis - South Shore JCC, 1297 Arthur Kill Road, 10312*

- **Multicultural Arts & Crafts Exhibit – Friday, June 27, 11:00 AM**

An exhibition of work from seniors in SPARC artist Laura del Prete's program. Del Prete led her seniors in a multicultural arts and crafts program inspired by cultures from around the world.

*JCC of Staten Island CLLD, 1466 Manor Road, 10314*

SPARC expands access to the arts for underserved populations in all boroughs while increasing support for working artists. Since 2012, SPARC has supported 163 unique six-month programs developed and led by working artists at participating senior centers across the City. Projects and public programs conducted over the years include a production of Chekhov's Three Sisters; permanent installations of tile murals created by participants; and the formation of a ukulele orchestra that performed at senior centers and music venues in Brooklyn. In 2013, SPARC supported more than 1,000 class sessions for almost 1,300 older adults. Eighty-six free public events engaged an audience of more than 7,000 New Yorkers, and senior center directors reported significant increases in positive attitude, social engagement, and mastery of new skills in seniors who participated in SPARC. Eighty-seven percent of senior participants reported making a new friend through SPARC and almost ninety percent would participate in SPARC again if the program was extended.

Attendees at public programs are encouraged to use #NYCSPARC when posting about SPARC Week on social media. A full listing of SPARC public events – including programs occurring outside of SPARC Week – can be found on the NYCulture Calendar ([www.nyc.gov/nyculture](http://www.nyc.gov/nyculture)) by selecting “SPARC” from the Event Category drop down menu.

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