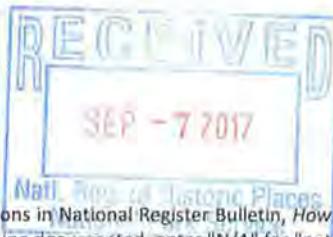


SG-1763

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name Mural "La Familia"

Other names/site number _____

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & Number 2030 Avenida Borinquen

City or town San Juan State PR County San Juan

Not for publication Vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Carlos A. Rubio Cancela

SHPO/Director

September 1, 2017

Signature of certifying official>Title:

Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official

Date

Title

State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

10-23-2017

Date of Action

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OMB No. 1024-0018

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
 Public-local
 Public-state
 Public-federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- Building(s)
 District
 Site
 Structure
 Object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

0
0
0
1
1

Noncontributing

1
0
0
0
1

Buildings
Sites
Structures
Objects
Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ work of art

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ work of art

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Venetian mosaic glass; concrete

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Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The mural "**La Familia**" (The Family) is a 1970 Venetian mosaic glass art piece designed and built by one of the best Puerto Rican muralists, Rafael Ríos Rey. Commissioned by the San Juan's government administration, the mural was placed in front of a 1970 building, the *Centro de Servicios a la Familia* (Family Services Center), located in the urban sector of *Barrio Obrero* (Workers' Ward) on 2030 *Avenida Borinquen*, corner Calle 9, in Santurce. The art work is twenty-two feet, seven inches long and eleven feet, three inches high, with approximately ninety thousand pieces of glass in a large variety of colors, placed over a seven inches thick reinforced concrete wall. Out of approximately one hundred and twenty murals done by Rios Rey, only seven art pieces were produced by the artist in Venetian mosaic glass. Among this extremely limited production, "**La Familia**" has the highest level of historic integrity, thrusting upon the resource an exceptional value.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

Located in a highly populated urban ward and in a very visible location, the two hundred and eighty-eight square feet mural consisting of approximately ninety thousand pieces of Venetian mosaic glass, faces north towards *Avenida Borinquen* (**Fig. 1**).

Figure 1. La Familia



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Although no document has been found on which Ríos Rey explained the production process of “**La Familia**”, a short narrative does exist where the artist speaks briefly about the technic used on his very first 1960 Venetian mosaic mural, *Héroes de Ponce*. More than likely, Ríos Rey designed and built “**La Familia**” in a very similar way.¹ Rey initiated the mural by drawing the design of the desired figures upon the surface of the support element, in the case of “**La Familia**”, a seven-inch thick reinforced concrete wall. After determining and properly identifying the colors assigned to every part, the Venetian glass acquired in large plates in Mexico and the United States, were hand-cut to the desired sizes and shapes. The edges of the pieces of glass, rough-sided after the cut, were then smoothed-out using a small sander with an emery wheel. Once every piece of glass was meticulously prepared, it began the arduous process of manually gluing every fragment in its particular place in the mural’s drawing, actually building a ninety thousand piece’s jigsaw puzzle. The surface is then cleaned to remove any excess of mortar.

“**La Familia**” was unveiled to the public in 1970, as part of the *Centro de Servicios de la Familia*’s inauguration. The facility had the mission of providing social services to the Barrio Obrero’s families.² The mural reflects the building’s social purpose. A nuclear family is depicted as the central figure, being the main character of the entire art piece. The group is surrounded by images comprising a network of social practices and customs. Looking at the art piece, at the upper, western section, Rey included images associated to Old San Juan (the well recognize sentry boxes, the city walls, and two different angles of the old forts). The Old City seems to be “supported” by a mountain of books, past history. However, an open, empty book, seems to invite the population to write their new history (**Fig. 2**).

¹ El Mundo, 14 de mayo de 1960, Suplemento Sabatino, 4-5.

² The building, a two-story, reinforced concrete, rectangular layout property, along with the mural, sits in a 1,290 square meters lot. The building has no significant architectural value, it has less than fifty-years of age and it had been substantially intervened in its interior and exterior, first in the early 1990s and as recent as May 2015, seriously compromising the resource’s integrity. As indicated by one of the employees with twenty-two years of service, “*the only thing that is original from the 1970’s in this building is the mural*”. It was at the latest intervention (2015), that the building’s main façade was partially extended to add an additional room (the Computer Room), which was annexed to the mural’s back wall. The building was originally named *Centro de Servicios de la Familia*. Today the facility, called *Centro de Servicios Integrados*, still serves the very same purpose providing free assistance to the local population in various ways: job searching, free access Internet computer room, and various services to the senior population, including basic medical assistance, and free breakfast and lunch. The entire second floor is used by the Head Start program. Because of its social use, no pictures were allowed of the building’s interior for this nomination.

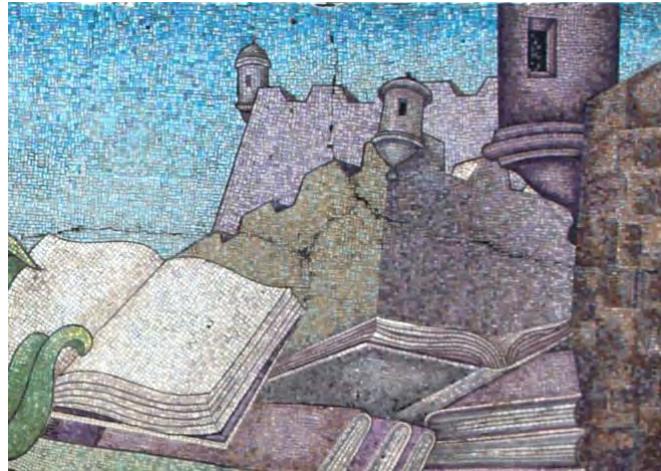
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Figure 2. Detail



The images at the lower part of this section (western end), brings the educational theme as part of the mural's message. However, it is not the expected discourse of the need to educate our youngsters, but the need to bring the tools of education to the adult population (**Fig. 3**)

Figure 3. Detail



The eastern section of the mural is mostly dedicated to represent the Fine Arts like dance, music, sculpture and the performing arts. Carnivals masks are included indicating that the popular festivities are just as significant as the classic fine arts. A strong social comment is introduced by the artist through the image of a mother feeding her son. Ríos Rey seems to emphasize that the health and welfare of the population should be the founding block on which every other social activity is built upon (**Fig. 4**).

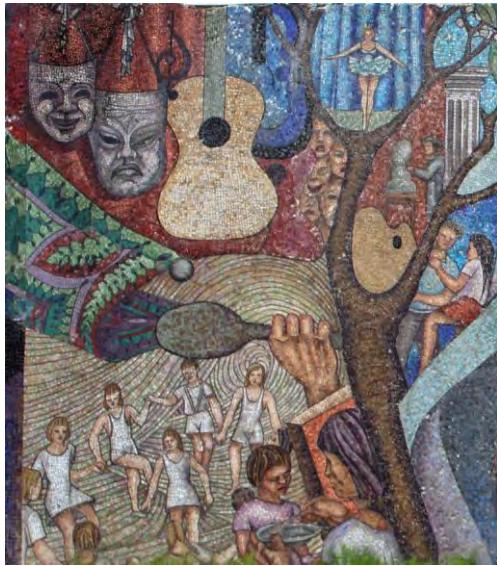
Mural "La Familia"

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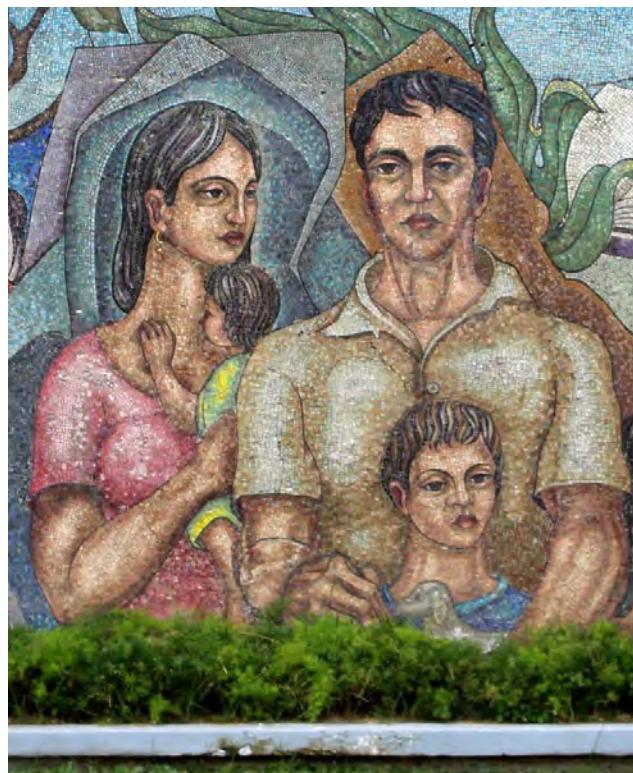
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Figure 4. Detail



All these details and images are placed around the mural's main character, the family. The young nuclear family is definitely the most significant image and social construct within the mural. Recipient and beneficiary of all the social projects proposed in the mural (health care, education, better nutrition and access to the creativity and beauty of the fine arts) the "construction" of the "ideal" family seem to be the most important project of them all (**Fig. 5**).

Figure 5. Detail



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A twenty-seven inches wide and eight inches high reinforced concrete flower bed, runs along the base of the mural. The plants actually hide from view Rafael Rios Rey's signature and date of construction, located at the mural's right-side-bottom (western end) (**Fig. 6**).

Figure 6. Detail



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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art

Period of Significance

1970

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Rios Rey, Rafael (designer/builder)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The mural "**La Familia**" (The Family) is statewide significant under Criterion C as one of the most representative works done by Rafael Ríos Rey in the Venetian mosaics art form. Ríos Rey had a very limited production of murals in Venetian mosaics, with only seven designed in this particular style. As some of these seven murals had been permanently lost and some of the extant resources have their integrity compromised, the high level of integrity of "**La Familia**", places an exceptional historic value upon the resource. The piece is also extremely significant as it represents the true meaning of the art of muralism: a piece of art with a social message, located in such a way as to have a direct and continuous contact with the people. "**La Familia**", achieving significance within the last fifty years, has been considered under Criteria Consideration G.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Rafael Ríos Rey, the artist.

Rafael Ríos Rey is considered by many the most significant Puerto Rican muralist. The artist produced his first mural in the 1930s and continued this art form well into the 1970s. Ríos Rey's active period overlaps with the life changing economic policies of *Manos a la Obra* (Operation Bootstrap) and the new political arrangement born out of the *Estado Libre Asociado*. Ríos Rey became deeply involved in the populist movement originated in the 1940s. His works, specially his murals, became a graphic portrait that captured the social condition of the Puerto Rican common folk: the farmer, the sugar cane worker and the new industrial worker. He's murals captured long standing cultural traditions coexisting with the new industrial discourse, creating and facilitating the social harmony preconized by the new political order established during those crucial years. No other muralists captured the transitional cultural and social changes and the new economic discourse and its paradigms as Rafael Ríos Rey.

Rafael Ríos Rey (**Fig. 1**) is the artistic name assumed by Rafael Ríos Reyes (1911-1980)³. Born in the southern city of Ponce, on July 28, 1911, Ríos Rey was in touch with the fine arts from an early age, as his father, uncle and grandfather were set designers, graphic artists, wood carvers, painters and cartographers with a standing reputation in the world of the plastic arts. Octavio Ríos de Jesús, Ríos Rey's father, worked three years as a set designer for the famous Russian dancer Anna Pavlova. Juan Narciso Ríos, Rey's grandfather, received the medal *Cruz de Isabel la Católica* from the King of Spain for his artistic merits and contributions.

³ The main sources for Rafael Ríos Rey's biographical notes and production chronology used in this section are Nestor Murray Irizarry, ed., *Rafael Ríos Rey y el muralismo en Puerto Rico*. Sociedad Amigos de Rafael Ríos Rey. Casa Paoli del Centro de Investigaciones Folklóricas de Puerto Rico, Inc. 2005; Luis Felipe López, *Rafael Ríos Rey, primer muralista puertorriqueño*. Tesis para la obtención del grado de Maestría. Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1999; and multiple newspapers articles. All sources are listed in the bibliography.

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Figure 1. Rafael Ríos Rey, 1911-1980. (Courtesy of Néstor Murray Irizarry)



By the time Ríos Rey was ten years old, he was working at his father's workshop, painting signs and decorating floats for the city's annual carnival. By 1924, Ríos was studying drawing in his hometown with masters Horacio Castaing and Miguel Pou. For the next few years Ríos Rey made his living designing and painting signs for the Shell Company. In 1934, Ríos conducted his first exhibition of watercolors at *Walldrops Galleries* in San Juan. Ponce's industrialist, José A. Ferré, who became the artist's most important private sponsor, impressed by Ríos' work, acquired the entire collection. In 1935, Rey met his great mentor, the Catalan artist Ismael D'Alzina Guaras. Ríos Rey worked under D'Alzina's direction on the decoration of three majestic properties: the *Castillo Serrallés*, the *Cabassa* mansion (both in Ponce) and *Casa de España*, in San Juan.⁴

In 1936, Ríos Rey moved to New York City, establishing his residence at the culturally dynamic neighborhood of Greenwich Village. The experiences in the Big Apple contributed greatly in Ríos Rey's artistic career. The hard years of the Depression forced the artist to earn his living as a house painter. But beyond the hardships, Ríos Rey found himself in the right place at the right time. The mural movement, particularly in NYC, was going through a great revival encouraged by different forces. One of these was the New Deal's Federal Art Project (FAP). Operated from 1935 to 1943, under the Works Progress Administration, the Federal Art Project focused its efforts in the larger cities employing artists

⁴ Castillo Serrallés was included in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on November 3, 1980. Casa de España was included on July 5, 1983.

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to paint murals and other decorative elements in federal, state and municipal buildings. In the first three years of the program, 2,566 murals were painted in schools, post offices and other public buildings. Forty five percent of the artists employed by the federal program resided in New York City, at the time of Ríos Rey staying.⁵

The other important force in reviving the muralist art form was the influence of the 1920s Mexican school.⁶ While in New York City, Ríos Rey came in direct contact with the influential views of David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974), the great communist Mexican muralist. Ríos Rey participated in the new research ideas that the Mexican artist tried out in New York upon the founding in 1936 of the *Siqueiros Experimental Workshop*, a laboratory of modern muralist techniques. Ríos Rey was attracted to the Mexican vanguard not only for stylistic reasons, but also for its idealistic social commitment. The pictorial language underlying the Mexican school, called social realism, reached its ultimate expression in the 1930s. The Mexican school presented the art of murals as the most progressive way of reaching the masses. For the school, murals were not a piece of private art, but a public art that allows for the establishment of a dialogue between the artist and a constantly changing number of observers.

During his time in New York, Ríos Rey also studied the techniques of other great contemporary muralist masters: the Spaniard José María Sert (1876-1945), the American Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) and the socialist Ecuadorian Camilo Egas (1899-1962), with whom Ríos Rey studied for a brief period at the New School for Social Research. Egas, who arrived in New York in 1927, was by 1935, Director of the New School for Social Research's Art Department. The progressive school became the center of the international muralist movement.

Back in Puerto Rico by late 1937, Rafael Ríos Rey embarked in an extremely productive life. In 1938, his friend and sponsor, the businessman José A. Ferré, commissioned the services of the artist to produce several murals for his private residence in the upper class neighborhood of La Alhambra in the city of Ponce. Combining it with other projects, it took Ríos Rey ten years (1938-1948) to paint eight outstanding murals, out of which, seven still adorn the private residence: *Pelea de gallos*, *Promesa a la Santa Cruz*, *Estampa del Carnaval de Ponce*, *Recogedora de café*, *Zafra y flamboyán*, *Fiesta campestre*, *El cultivo* and *Frutas tropicales* (**Fig. 2**)⁷

⁵ Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973.

⁶ Laurance P. Hurlburt. *The Mexican Muralist in the United States*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

⁷ The mural *Frutas tropicales* was lost during the 1980s due to damages.

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Figure 2. Partial view of the four murals at the José A. Ferré's residence in the dining room. (Photo: Juan Llanes Santos, 2011)



The Ferré family would call again upon the artist to produce murals for specific properties. In 1953, the building *Empresas Ferré* was built in the Playa ward in Ponce to house the administrative offices of the family's industrial complex. Rey painted two impressive murals for the building's main lobby: *La Fundición* and *La Represa* (Fig.3).⁸ In 1955, the artist was commissioned again by the influential family

⁸ The Empresas Ferré Building was listed in the NRHP on August 27, 2013.

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to paint the mural *El Hombre*, as part of the opening of Ponce's Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Building (**Fig. 4**).⁹

Figure 3. Partial view of "La Fundición" and "La Represa" at the Empresas Ferré Building. (Photo: Juan Llanes Santos, 2013)



Figure 4. *El Hombre*, at the YMCA Building. (Photo: Juan Llanes Santos, 2011)



⁹ The YMCA Building was listed in the NRHP on June 4, 2012.

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Rafael Ríos Rey did very significant muralist work for the private business as well. On June 5, 1948, Ríos unveiled the mural *La Caña* at the vestibule of the impressive building *Banco de Crédito y Ahorro Ponceño* in Ponce. In 1956, it was shown to the public *Alegoría a la india puertorriqueña* at the India Brewery Building in the city of Mayaguez. In 1963, the interior of the *Banco de Crédito y Ahorro Ponceño* was renovated with new decoration, including two new Ríos Rey's murals: *El Comercio* and *La Agricultura*. At that time he redesigned his 1948 mural *La Caña* at the bank, removing one of the panels and adding a new mural, *La Industria*.

The *Banco de Crédito y Ahorro* also acquired Rey's mural *La Transportación* in 1969, to be displayed at the International Airport in San Juan. In 1970, the *Hotel Borinquen* in Miramar (San Juan) commissioned Rey to paint the mural *La flora puertorriqueña*. In 1973, the First Federal Savings and Loan Association donated Ríos Rey's mural *Elegía a Santiago Iglesias Pantín* to the Dockworkers Union building at Puerta de Tierra in San Juan (**Fig. 5**). In 1976, the artist produced the mural *El Progreso* for the First Federal Savings' offices in Old San Juan.¹⁰

Figure 5. Rey working with the mural "*Elegía a Santiago Iglesias Pantín*". (Courtesy of Néstor Murray Irizarry)



¹⁰ The murals at the India Brewery, Borinquen Hotel, the San Juan Hotel and the International Airport were later destroyed. The mural at the Dockworkers Union Building was removed from its original location, as the 1970s building was scheduled to be demolished.

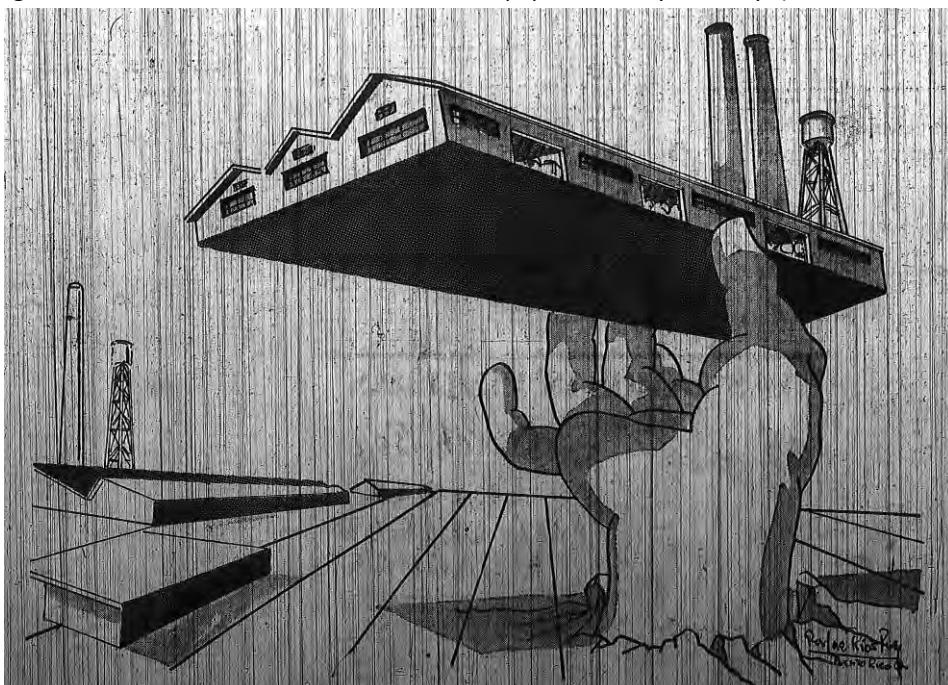
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During the late 1930s, Ríos Rey's development crisscrossed paths with a local emergent political movement that took his art into the social and political arena. By the time Ríos Rey came back to Puerto Rico after his life changing experience in New York City, the island was about to embark in a life changing process of its own, as a new intelligentsia of young politicians were in the ascending road to political power. Many of these young leaders were part of the old socialist movement in Puerto Rico. Luis Muñoz Marín led the faction and became the guiding force that came to organize itself in a new political party formally incorporated in 1938, the *Partido Popular Democrático* (Popular Democratic Party, PDP). In the 1940s, the PDP swept the elections to the local legislatures and offices, eventually raising Muñoz as the very first governor elected by the people of Puerto Rico. The PDP had a mass appealing agenda involving land reform, political autonomy (with an initial independentist rhetoric) and social and economic justice. Its populist discourse became a very effective formula to attract people from all walks of life: from the dispossessed to the new middle class, from the rural farmer to the urban worker. The leftist and nationalist rhetoric used by the PDP's leadership in the initial years of the movement became a magnet that brought into the party's sphere of influence people from a wide political spectrum. Among these was most definitely the socially committed artist from Ponce.

By the late 1940s, *Manos a la Obra* (Operation Bootstrap) became the chosen political strategy for the island economic change. The government agency responsible to guide *Manos a la Obra* was the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company (PRIDCO). In a very significant way, Rafael Ríos Rey became the graphic voice of PRIDCO's development program (**Fig. 6**).

Figure 6. PRIDCO's advertisement in local newspaper, done by Ríos Rey. (El Mundo, 1953)



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Among the many drawings and works done for the agency, Ríos Rey created PRIDCO's most emblematic and persisting symbol, the cog-wheel pushed by an Herculean anonymous worker, still used to identify PRIDCO's factory buildings, sites and projects. In 1948, Ríos decorated the PRIDCO float for that year's Fourth of July parade, presenting for the first time as public art the symbolic cog-wheel (**Fig. 7**).

Figure 7. View of PRICO's 1948 float prepared by Ríos Rey. (Photo: Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR))



In 1949, when Luis Muñoz Marín was sworn-in as the first governor ever elected by the Puerto Ricans, the artist decorated the platform used by the new governor (**Fig. 8**).

Figure 8. Partial view of the 1949 platform decorated by Ríos Rey. (Photo: AGPR)



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In 1949, Rey was designated administrator of the Tapia Theater in Old San Juan by the city's PDP Major Felisa Rincón de Gautier. He remained in that position until 1968. In 1950, PRIDCO contracted Ríos to paint two murals to be exhibited at the International Fair in Port au Prince, Haiti, for which Rey won a gold medal. He also decorated the pavilion built by PRIDCO at the fair. In 1954, the artist painted the mural *El agua* in Carolina for a building belonging to the *Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados*. In 1975, commissioned by the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* (ICP), Rey did the mural *Elegía a Ernesto Ramos Antonini* for the school of the same name in Barrio Obrero, Santurce.

Other works were done by Ríos Rey out of personal reasons. In 1972, the artist lost his son Rafael Octavio Ríos Torruella, age 37, when his body rejected a kidney transplant intended to save his life. This painful moment was recorded by Ríos Rey in the mural *El transplante de riñon*, donated by the artist to the Arkansas School of Medicine.

Rafael Ríos Rey was also deeply involved in preparing the next generations of Puerto Rican artists. From 1965 until 1977, he taught mural painting, mosaics and set design at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture's School of Plastic Arts. He was also a founding member and treasurer of the Center for Advanced Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean (1977-1980).

In 1979, Rey suffered a stroke that affected his speech. On April 29, 1980, Rafael Ríos Rey died in the city of San Juan. Besides his numerous drawings, sketches and paintings, according to the artist himself, Ríos Rey did one hundred and twenty (120) murals in public and private buildings.¹¹ In these murals the great artist presented the exuberance of the Puerto Rican flora as a dominating background where the human actions took place, mixing and transforming humans into plants and plants with human attributes.

The cultural traditions of the common folks were a recurrent theme in his works. The artist represented on his characters' faces and colors the complexity of the Puerto Rican ethnical history. Rey captured the hardships and hopes of the rural farmers, the sugarcane cutters and the new industrial workers. In 1948, Juan Luis Márquez wrote an article on Ríos Rey, as part of the unveiling of *La Caña*. The critic's comment could apply to every mural done by the artist:

"During six weeks he carries out his contract, bringing into the canvas the realization of a dream: to paint a mural where the people could take a look at themselves".¹²

The contradictions and struggles among the social classes were present in his works, but with a sense of social harmony. The artist was a witness, an active participant and a believer of the life changing process that took place in Puerto Rico during the 1930s through the 1970s. The industrial revolution that transformed the life in the little island in the Caribbean was a continuous character in

¹¹ El Mundo, 21 de enero de 1973. Puerto Rico Ilustrado, 3.

¹² Juan Luis Márquez, *Rafael Ríos Rey: descubre una pintura mural en Ponce*. Puerto Rico Ilustrado. San Juan, 3 de Julio de 1948, 4-9. (The translation is ours).

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Ríos Rey's murals. However, as new economic relations were established and new cultural discourses were developed, Ríos Rey kept close to those cultural elements that were disappearing as Puerto Rico made its entrance into that gray space called *Modernity*. In a way, his murals became a work of cultural rescue. In 1992, writer Rosario Ferré rightly stated:

*"Ríos Rey was the best muralist of his time, and probably, the best of all times...he presented in his works the social life of the Puerto Ricans, contributing to define our cultural identity."*¹³

The populist movement found in Rey its greatest translator into the artistic language. Rafael Ríos Rey died the very same day (April 29, 1980) that Luis Muñoz Marín passed away. In many ways, it was the end of an era.

"La Familia", the mural

Rafael Ríos Rey's mosaic murals are not as prolific as his murals on canvas. This type of artistic production came in late into Rey's career. In 1958, sponsored by the ICP, Rey spent some time in Mexico and Spain studying mosaics techniques. Between 1960 and 1974, Rey worked in seven mosaics projects.

In 1960, the artist designed his first Venetian mosaic mural for the city of Ponce, *Héroes de Ponce*, a masterpiece composed of 175,000 pieces of colored-glass, dedicated to the members of Ponce's Fire Department. In 1961, Rey was commissioned by the town of Utuado to do a mosaic mural honoring Luis Fernando García Ledesma, first Puerto Rican recipient of the *Congressional Medal of Honor*. By 1964, the decorations of the State Capitol Buildings' rotunda were finished. Between the rotunda's vault ribs, four allegorical murals depicting significant events in Puerto Rico's history cover the curves down to the main cornice. The scene on the northwest corner depicting the discovery of the island was designed by Ríos Rey in Venetian mosaics, as was the north frieze, which shows Pre-Columbian figures in a council. In 1966, Ríos' mosaic mural *Génesis de la historia de Puerto Rico* was unveiled at the San Juan Hotel in Isla Verde. In 1968, according to historian Nestor Murray Irizarry, the ICP asked Ríos Rey to design the façade for the *República de Colombia* School's theater in Río Piedras in Venetian mosaics. By 1970, the city of San Juan commissioned the artist to do "*La Familia*", the currently nominated resource. Rey's last mosaic work was in 1974, when he designed and built Puerto Rico's Official Seal to be placed in a round-concrete-pedestal within La Fortaleza's gardens.

Among all the Venetian mosaic murals worked by Ríos Rey, when analyzed as separate art objects, the mural ***La Familia*** has the highest level of integrity. The 1960's *Heroes de Ponce* stands in disarray, partly lost and partly covered by plastic material. The 1961 mural in honor of García Ledesma, which was a double-sided wall with a mural on both sides, lost one of its faces. The 1966 mural in the San

¹³ Quoted in Luis Felipe López, *Rafael Ríos Rey, primer muralista puertorriqueño*. Tesis para la obtención del grado de Maestría. Centro de Estudios Avanzados, 1999, 23. The translation is ours.

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Juan Hotel was destroyed as part the building's restoration. The 1968 mural mentioned by historian Néstor Murray for the school in Rio Piedras is nowhere to be found. As personnel from the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office visited the mentioned resource, no trace of the mural was found in the existing theater (which is the original building) and no recollection of such mural was validated among those interviewed. Probably, the assignment was never successfully completed by Ríos Rey. Finally, the two remaining Venetian mosaic works (the round pedestal in Fortaleza, which do not qualify as a mural, and the mosaic work at the Capitol's rotunda, designed by Rey, but not build by the artist) are located within well-preserved historic resources, and are part of a large array of contributing elements within both properties. Under these circumstances, "**La Familia**" acquires a very special distinction as the best-preserved work done by Rafael Ríos Rey in Venetian mosaic and the most representative and significant art piece in Ríos limited production on this type of fabric.

Located at #2030 Avenida Borinquen, in the heart of *Barrio Obrero* (Workers Ward), "**La Familia**" was commissioned by the city of San Juan to adorn the entrance to a 1970 building designated at the time as *Centro de Servicios de la Familia*. The building, known today as *Centro de Servicios Integrados*, was to provide a series of social services to the working class population that dominated this particular sector within Santurce's ward since the 1920s. The mural, worked in Venetian glass, is twenty-two feet, seven inches long and eleven feet, three inches high, with approximately ninety thousand pieces of glass in a large variety of colors (**Fig. 9**).

Figure 9. Mural "La Familia". (Photo: Juan Llanes Santos, 2017)



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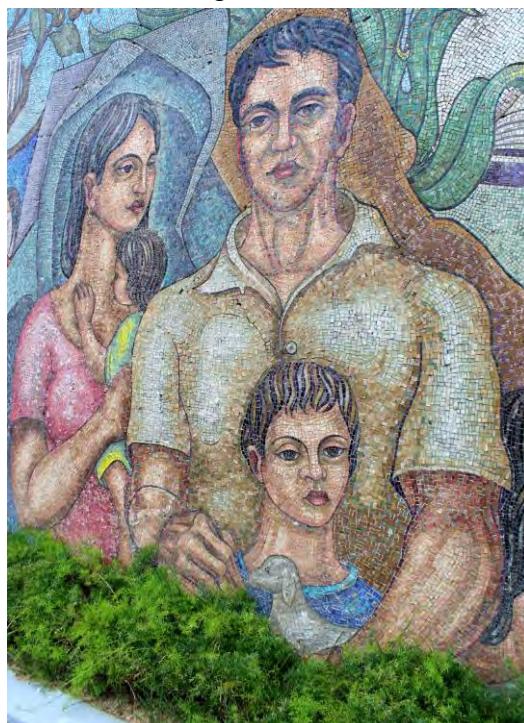
County and State

When designed and built in 1970, the art piece was conceptualized as a free standing object, directly in front of, but with an approximate five feet separation from the building. A 2015 intervention on the building brought, among many changes, the occupation of the space directly behind the mural. The added space, used as a computer room, was extended from the building's main façade towards the mural's back side. However, as the art piece was thought-out as a free standing object by the artist, and it was a free standing object for most of its significance period, the mural it's been considered as a separated object for evaluation purposes, and not covered under the Multiple Property Cover Document "*Rafael Ríos Rey, A Puerto Rican Muralist, 1911-1980*".

In "**La Familia**", Ríos Rey presented a visual and philosophical message: the family is the point of origin and the point of return of every social and cultural project. The dominance of the family figure as a social statement is represented not only by its centered location, but also by its disproportional size as compared to every other element in the art piece. Surrounded by the symbols of the fine arts, history and education, the family seems to be at the center of all the cultural values that in many ways define the Puerto Rican society. The work seems to embrace the idea that the construction of the structural unit that we call "family" is a social project on itself, a by-product of the interaction of all the forces depicted in the mural.

Ríos Rey added a very significant mission upon that social unit called "family": to be the keepers of the national identity. That cultural and political assignment thrusted upon the family is depicted through the young lamb (central figure in Puerto Rico's Official Seal since 1511) held in a protective embrace by the figures of the father and the oldest of the two children (**Fig. 10**).

Fig. 10. Detail



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The family group portrayed by Ríos Rey could be defined as “traditional”, by today’s standards: a unit consisting of two married or legally-bounded parents of opposite genders and their biological (or adopted) children. The family portrayed sends also a strong patriarchal discourse. The male figure imparts his protective strength upon the other members. The two female figures are slightly behind the father. While the father figure looks straight ahead upon the future challenges and opportunities, the mother figure looks directly towards the husband figure for protection and offering her support.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the term "nuclear family" was first used in 1947. Even so the concept of a family that consists of just parents and children is much older, the concept of "nuclear family" is of a more recent construction and defined from an economic perspective. As the industrial booms post Second World War facilitated a general rising in wages, young parents (like the ones in the mural) were able to afford their own homes, breaking away from living with extended family members. At the same time, better healthcare contributed to the nuclear family, as elderly members became more self-sufficient and independent for decades after their children were grown.

In Puerto Rico, however, even with the industrial development brought by Operation Bootstrap during the 1960s and 1970s, the possibility of actually establishing a “nuclear family”, as defined from an economic point of view, was off-limits for thousands of people. According to the 1970 Census of Population, fifty nine percent of the families in the island had an income of less than \$4,000, the amount considered as the poverty level at the time.¹⁴ The local Department of Health, also in 1970, indicated that a family needed an annual income of \$5,700 to satisfy their basic needs, including proper housing. At the time, this meant that 336,622 out of 564,155 families in the island were living under the poverty line, making extremely difficult for thousands of them the possibility of acquiring their own homes, separating themselves from the extended family and creating a “nuclear family”.¹⁵ So, when the by-standers stop to look at the “nuclear family” in Ríos Rey’s mural in 1970, in spite of its “patriarchal and traditional” discourse, they were looking at a symbol of modernity and social progress.

In many works done by Ríos Rey, mostly on canvas, the rural workers and the exuberance of Puerto Rico’s nature were many times the main characters of the art pieces. The industrial workers in their industrial environment was also a common character in Rey’s works. However, besides the tropical tree and the leaves crowning the family figures, “**La Familia**” seems to emphasize the benefits of the urban life: access to educational facilities, medical services, better nutrition, and accessibility to the academic knowledge and to the enjoyment of the fine arts. This message was relevant and appropriate to the lives of the population in the surrounding ward of *Barrio Obrero*, as many residents in the working-class neighborhood were a product of the exodus from the country-side to the big cities, caused by the economic growth from the 1950s, up to the 1970s. Ríos Rey used “**La Familia**” to talk

¹⁴ United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1970. Government Printing Office. Washington DC, 276-286.

¹⁵ Departamento de Salud. *Necesidades básicas del puertorriqueño en 1970*. Oficina de Publicaciones y Estadísticas. San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1970, 78.

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directly to the immediate people with a visual message that made sense to them in many ways, using the artistic language of the social realism as he had learned it from its early contacts with the Mexican muralist movement in the 1930s in New York City.

The physical location of "**La Familia**" is significant on its own. Many of the murals done by Ríos Rey were commissioned by the private sector (banks, offices, private collectors). As such, the exposition of those works was limited to a reduced number of observers. "**La Familia**", however, due to his solid and enduring fabric (Venetian mosaic glass) and its aesthetical intention of adorning the entrance to a public building, was placed as a free standing art object along the sidewalk of a very well-travelled road continuously used by vehicular traffic and pedestrians alike (**Fig. 10**). Following the Mexican muralist school, to which Ríos Rey adhere throughout his entire productive life, "**La Familia's**" epitomizes the quintessential postulate that as the most progressive way of reaching the masses, a mural should not be private art, but should bring its social message to as many people as possible in public spaces.

Figure 10. "**La Familia**" in its continuous interaction with its immediate population. (Photo: Juan Llanes Santos, 2017)



The 1970 mural "**La Familia**" falls three years short of the fifty-year cut off time normally required to be included in the National Register of Historic Places. However, evaluated under Criterion Consideration G, the property possess a number of exceptional attributes. For one, "**La Familia**" is the best preserved mural out of Ríos Rey's limited production in Venetian mosaics. "**La Familia**" retains the

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highest level of integrity of them all, making the mural the most representative piece of a very particular art form and style. Its remarkable condition, speaks well of the quality of Ríos Rey's work, allowing the specialists to study and understand Rey's technics in the use of the Venetian glass. Its high level of integrity also speaks extremely well of the quality of the people of Barrio Obrero. Besides the expected wear-out of been exposed to the natural and man-made inclemency for the last forty-seven years, no damages could be found in the mural due to its daily contact with the thousands of people in the ward.

In 1960, Rafael Ríos Rey indicated that:

*"I will love to establish a school to train students in the art of making murals in mosaic. Maybe we could place a mural on every empty wall and bring a little bit of art and historic education to each school and every public building."*¹⁶

"**La Familia**", probably better than any other mural done by Ríos Rey in mosaics or canvas, captured the artist's personal desire to create a piece that could continuously bring a "*little bit of art*" into the everyday life of the many people that come in daily contact with it. At the same time, "**La Familia**" represents the true essence of the art of muralism: the ability and possibility of delivering a social message through its continuous contact with the people. The mural's great integrity, its special quality of being the best preserved work done by Ríos Rey in his extremely limited production of mosaic murals and its ability to convey the philosophical meaning of the art of muralism, make "**La Familia**" an exceptional piece of art.

¹⁶ El Mundo, 24 de junio de 1960, 15. (Translations is ours)

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County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (Insert bibliography here – cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Archivo de Fotos. Colección del Departamento de Instrucción.

1948. Desfile de carrozas durante la celebración del 4 de julio de 1948.

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El Mundo

14 de mayo de 1960. Suplemento Sabatino. Cooperan con Ríos Rey en elaboración mural de mosaicos.

24 de junio de 1960. Enrique Laguerre. *Hojas Libres*. El mural de Rafael Ríos Rey.

21 de enero de 1973. Puerto Rico Ilustrado. Una idea, un artista, un mural.

Hurlburt, Laurance P. *The Mexican Muralist in the United States*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

López, Luis Felipe. *Rafael Ríos Rey, primer muralista puertorriqueño*. Tesis para la obtención del grado de Maestría. Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1999.

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Unites States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1970. Government Printing Office. Washington DC, 276-286.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #
-

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other (Name of repository)

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than an acre (0.32 acres)

USGS Quadrangle 19Q

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): _____

 NAD 1927 or X NAD 1983

1.	Zone <u>19Q</u>	Easting <u>811094</u>	Northing <u>2041110</u>
2.	Zone _____	Easting _____	Northing _____
3.	Zone _____	Easting _____	Northing _____
4.	Zone _____	Easting _____	Northing _____

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lot of one thousand two hundred and ninety (1,290) square meters, as recorded at the Centro de Recaudaciones de Ingresos Municipales (CRIM) under the number 041-092-516-01.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire lot historically associated with the mural.

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Map 1. Regional Vicinity Map (Scale 1: 1,800)



Mural La Familia
San Juan, Puerto Rico
19Q 811094 2041110 UTM

1:1,800
0 50 100 Feet
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United States Department of the Interior
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OMB No. 1024-0018

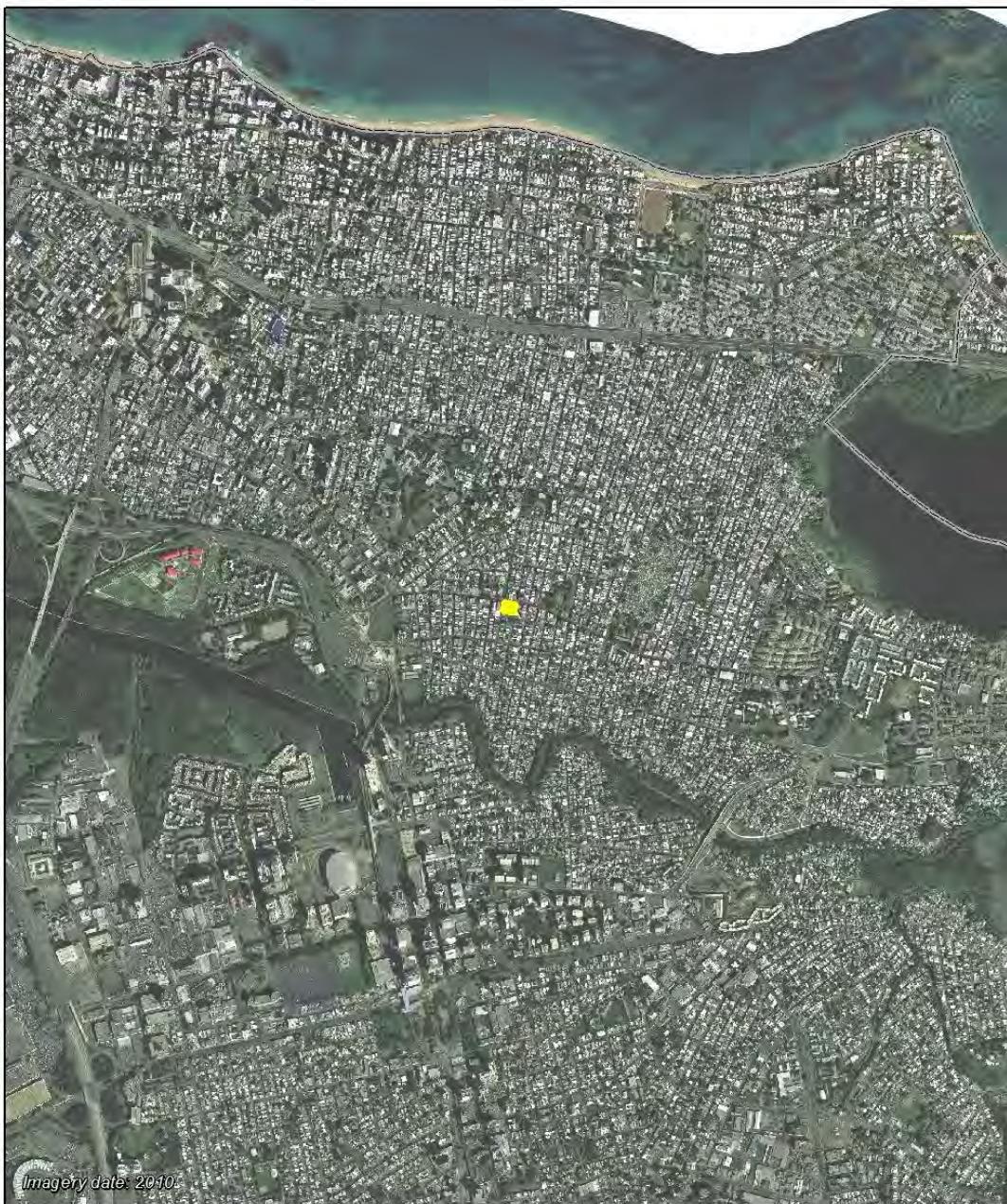
Mural "La Familia"

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Map 2. Site Map (Scale 1: 20,000)

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Mural La Familia
San Juan, Puerto Rico
19Q 811094 2041110 UTM

1:20,000
0 500 1,000
Feet

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Juan Llanes Santos, Historian
organization State Historic Preservation Office date September 1, 2017
street & number PO Box 9023935 telephone 787-721-3737
city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00902-3935
email jllanes@prshpo.pr.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property Mural "La Familia"
City or Vicinity San Juan County San Juan State PR
Photographer Juan Llanes Santos Date Photographed January 30, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera.

Photo 0001. Building's main façade with mural at foreground; looking southeast.

Photo 0002. La Familia; looking south.

Photo 0003. Detail of added room annexed to the mural; looking southeast.

Photo 0004. La Familia; looking southwest.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC.







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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Nomination
Property Name:	Mural "La Familia"
Multiple Name:	
State & County:	PUERTO RICO, San Juan

Date Received: 9/7/2017 Date of Pending List: 10/4/2017 Date of 16th Day: 10/19/2017 Date of 45th Day: 10/23/2017 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:	SG100001763
Nominator:	State

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 10/23/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:	This property was not submitted under the MPS regarding the artist's work, primarily due to its stand-alone nature not meeting one of the defined property types. However, the MPS cover does lay out the exceptional importance of the artist as a social commentator and this mosaic mural fits importantly into his work
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Recommendation/ Criteria	Accept / C
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Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO
State Historic Preservation Office



September 1, 2017

J. Paul Loether

National Register Chief
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street NW (Mail Stop 2280)
Washington, DC 20005

SUBMISSION – (La Familia and Hostos-Ramírez de Arellano School District)

Dear Mr. Loether:

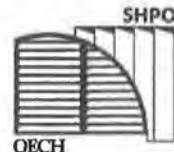
The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copies of the nominations for the mural “La Familia” and the Hostos-Ramírez de Arellano School District to the National Register of Historic Places. The properties are located in the municipalities of San Juan and Añasco, respectively, in Puerto Rico.

Should you have any questions on the nomination, please contact Juan Llanes Santos, at 787-721-3737 or jllanes@prshpo.pr.gov.

Sincerely,

Carlos A. Rubio-Cancela
State Historic Preservation Officer

CARC/GMO/BRS/JLS



SHPO
OFICINA ESTATAL DE
CONSERVACIÓN HISTÓRICA
OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR
STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR