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## **Foundations Break Ground on Star Ceiling Project \$5.5 Million Goal Celebrated with Artist Leo Villareal**

**EL PASO, Texas – January 18, 2024** – [The El Paso Museum of Art Foundation](#) (EPMAF) and the [Paso del Norte Community Foundation](#) (PdNCF), signature project partners in bringing [Star Ceiling](#) to life, held a groundbreaking event today in Arts Festival Plaza. Foundation officials, along with project managers from [Jordan Foster, inSitu](#) architects, and representatives from the [El Paso Museum of Art](#), celebrated the private fundraising efforts totaling \$5.5 million. Invited guests included donors to the project, civic and business leaders, and City of El Paso staff and elected officials. El Paso-raised artist [Leo Villareal](#) was in town to participate in the groundbreaking ceremony.

Villareal was engaged by the EPMAF to design and permanently install Star Ceiling, which can be viewed in front of the El Paso Museum of Art, at the foot of Arts Festival Plaza and directly across from the Paso Del Norte Hotel. The site-specific installation will consist of a suspended LED array, zero gravity benches carved out of local stone, and planters with species indigenous to the Chihuahuan Desert. The 120-foot LED array will be composed of 13,500 individually addressable, monochrome, and energy-efficient LEDs activated by Villareal in non-repeating patterns. This unique interactive display will never repeat the same light patterns, creating a different experience for every visitor.

Leo Villareal shared that, “Having grown up in El Paso and Juarez, I have many fond memories of observing the night sky over the desert, and the vast expanse of city lights arrayed across the landscape. Star Ceiling (El Paso) encapsulates many of these influences. I’m honored to bring this immersive, site-specific artwork to the south entrance plaza of the El Paso Museum of Art. My hope is to create a greater sense of connection and community as the people of El Paso gather underneath this canopy of light.”

“We are so very pleased to have Leo with us today, to have reached our fundraising goal, and to finally break ground on this exciting and innovative project,” said Judy Robison, Development Chair of the El Paso Museum of Art Foundation. “The Star Ceiling will be a celestial gem for all El Pasoans to enjoy when visiting downtown.”

“Star Ceiling will be a great addition to the downtown landscape – a free and accessible gathering space designed to encourage connection, communication and community for residents and visitors to the region,” said Tracy J. Yellen, CEO of the Paso del Norte Community Foundation. “We are grateful for the El Paso Museum of Art Foundation and donors for their vision and generosity.”

In November of 2021, and in accordance with an agreement with the City of El Paso, Star Ceiling was approved and the EPMAF pledged to raise the funds required to design, construct, install, and permanently maintain Star Ceiling. Construction is scheduled to run through early fall of 2024, at which time Star Ceiling will be gifted to the City. \$500,000 will be held in the Paso Del Norte Community Foundation for purposes related to the operational upkeep and maintenance of the installation.

“We are incredibly grateful to the EPMA Foundation’s generous commission of Star Ceiling, which will transform the Museum’s plaza into a beacon of light for the over 2 million El Pasoans and visitors annually to the Downtown Arts District,” said Ben Fyffe, Managing Director – Quality of Life for the City of El Paso.

“Star Ceiling will anchor the Downtown Arts District in a compelling way, turning passersby’s into stargazers. It’s a bold installation capable of setting the tone for awe, wonder, and introspection in El Paso’s cultural epicenter. The Museum embraces this gift from the Foundation, and looks ahead to all the public engagement opportunities under the stars,” said Edward Hayes, Director of the El Paso Museum of Art.

[El Paso Museum of Art Foundation](#) is a Texas Non-Profit Corporation, a 501(c)(3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code. It is organized exclusively for the benefit of the [El Paso Museum of Art](#) to provide long-term funding for acquisitions, conservation, preservation, education and interpretation, and museum-related functions not provided by the City of El Paso’s operational funding. A board of El Paso citizens governs the EPMA Foundation, with support from committees for development, planned giving and investment, establishing a legacy of passion for art and a commitment to its sustainability in the community.

[The Paso del Norte Community Foundation](#) was established in 2013 to support the philanthropic goals of individuals, families, corporations, foundations and nonprofit organizations to improve health, education, social services, economic development and quality of life in our binational, tri-state region. The PDN Community Foundation provides fiscal and administrative support to charitable organizations and funds like the Green Hope Project to further its mission. For more information, visit [www.pdnfoundation.org](http://www.pdnfoundation.org).

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