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**EN FOCO AND THE NUEVA LUZ ARCHIVES ANNOUNCES *BORICUA LENS: SOPHIE RIVERA PORTRAITS* OPENING OCTOBER 13, 2023 AT PREGONES/PUERTO RICAN TRAVELING THEATER**

En Foco and Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater Presents



Image Credit: Sophie Rivera, Untitled

**BORICUA LENS:  
SOPHIE RIVERA PORTRAITS**

OCTOBER 13, 2023 - APRIL 04, 2024

**Bronx, NY** – En Foco, Pregones, and the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater present ***Boricua Lens: Sophie Rivera Portraits***, a selection of portraits by Puerto Rican street photographer Sophie Rivera. The exhibition is an initiative of the [Nueva Luz Study Center \(NLSC\)](#) and is part of En Foco’s efforts to preserve the culture and legacy of diasporic lens-based artists. It will be on view at Pregones/PRTT from October 13, 2023 – April 4, 2024, located at 575 Walton Ave, Bronx, NY 10451, and virtually at [enfoco.org](http://enfoco.org). Public programs will be announced.

Sophie Rivera had been involved with En Foco since before the launch of the *Nueva Luz* photographic journal in 1985. ***Boricua Lens: Sophie Rivera Portraits*** honors this connection by showcasing photos from En Foco’s permanent collection and reproduced pages from the premiere issue of *Nueva Luz* including the historic cover. The virtual exhibition will also

feature additional photos and supplemental material provided by Light Work, in Syracuse, NY, the Estate of Sophie Rivera as well as sources that help to decipher Rivera’s portrait journey Intercambio essay ***Sophie Rivera: Portraits*** by Rocio Aranda-Alvarado, in [Nueva Luz Vol. II:2](#) (2006), and references in En Foco’s *Critical Mass* newsletter.

When viewing Rivera’s images one sees individuals looking directly at the camera. Facing the photographer’s lens, each subject holds the viewer’s gaze directly, imparting a bit of themselves to their audience. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Sophie Rivera’s portraits highlight the under-represented communities of New York City. The same communities En Foco continues to serve. The quest to learn more about Sophie Rivera’s photography began with a visit to the warehouse storing Sophie’s full collection and archives. After getting over the sheer volume of work, we concentrated on the ephemera that paints a picture of an artist’s career outside of their body of work.

– Valarie Irizarry, Curator

With the recent launching of the **Nueva Luz Study Center**, access to Sophie Rivera’s archives inspired En Foco to expand the current information available for the artist. Giving a fuller picture of Sophie’s professional and creative life through this exhibition expansion to her entry in our archive. En Foco would like to thank the Estate

and family of Sophie Rivera, for their support and for providing access to Rivera's archives and materials.

### **About Sophie Rivera:**

Sophie Rivera (June 17, 1938 – May 22, 2021) was a photographer of Puerto Rican descent, who was an activist and teacher. She is best known as a photographer whose work challenged stereotypical assumptions of Puerto Ricans in the United States. During her photographic career, Sophie Rivera's neighborhood served as an inspiration for her body of work. From the maintenance and repainting of the IRT 125th Street subway to the people walking past her apartment building on Tiemann Place. Rivera was unique in her decision to represent and document her subjects through a combination of direct photography, neutral backgrounds, and double exposures that produce a strong and non-judgmental aesthetic to these portraits.

In the 1980s Sophie turned the camera's focus on herself and explored the world of self-portraiture. Rivera took photographs of her nude body from different angles by employing mirrors and captured human waste and other bodily materials as a tool for self-referentiality. In 1986 she photographed strangers during the Halloween Day Parade in Greenwich Village. In this series of photos, she wanted to explore, "the relationship between personal fantasy and personal reality." She would later become a member of the En Foco Board of Advisors, and a curator while running her own photography gallery. Ms. Rivera's photographs are featured in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, El Museo del Barrio, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, among other institutions.

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### **ABOUT THE CURATOR:**

Valarie Irizarry (She/Her) is an artist, curator, and cultural worker of Afro-Caribbean descent born and raised in the Bronx. She earned a B.S. in Computer Graphics and Imaging from Lehman College CUNY, Bronx, New York, in 2007 and a certificate in art handling from the Bronx Council on the Arts in 2012. For over a decade, she has worked as a freelance art handler in the Bronx at such institutions as Longwood Art Gallery @ Hostos, Derfner Judaica Museum at Hebrew Home at Riverdale, and Bronx River Art Center, among others. After completing a training program at the Joan Mitchell Foundation where she worked on the Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) database project for older artists, she presently holds the role of Collections and Archives Manager at En Foco.

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### **ABOUT EN FOCO:**

En Foco, Inc. is a non-profit that supports U.S.-based photographers of African, Asian, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander heritage. Founded in 1974, En Foco makes their work visible to the art world, yet remains accessible to under-served communities. Through exhibitions, workshops, events, and publications, it provides professional recognition, honoraria, and assistance to photographers as they grow into different stages of their careers. The Nueva Luz Study Center (NLSC) makes our history accessible through the digital archives of all issues of the photographic journal since 1985. Exhibitions, programs, and commissions are underway that focus on artists and issues that have been introduced in Nueva Luz For more information about En Foco, please visit [www.enfoco.org](http://www.enfoco.org).

**ABOUT PREGONES/PUERTO RICAN TRAVELING THEATER:**

Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater (aka Pregones/PRTT) is a multigenerational performing ensemble, multidisciplinary arts presenter, and owner/steward of bilingual arts facilities in The Bronx and Manhattan. Our mission is to champion a Puerto Rican/Latinx cultural legacy of universal value through the creation and performance of original plays and musicals, exchange and partnership with other artists of merit, and engagement of diverse audiences. For more information about Pregones/PRTT, please visit [pregonesprtt.org](http://pregonesprtt.org).

En Foco is supported in part with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, The Mellon Foundation, BronxCare Health System, The Joy of Giving Something, Inc., New York Community Trust Mosaic Network & Fund, the Phillip and Edith Leonian Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Jerome Foundation, and Aguado-Pavlick Arts Fund.

En Foco would like to thank the Estate and family of Sophie Rivera, for their support and for providing access to Rivera's archives and materials.



Image Credit: © Sophie Rivera, *Untitled*.