

# Fiesta Passion Fiesta Fashion (Entertainment and Communication)

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The Fiesta Passion Fiesta Fashion exhibit opening received around 300 guests from San Antonio, it was in a sense the pre-opening of the Fiesta celebrations with a brief look into the Fashion aspect of Fiesta's past.

Fiesta, as many San Antonians know, is a very central event to this city. People from all over Texas and other states attend, and participate in the Fashion of Fiesta, by wearing highly elaborate hats or suits or maybe the simpler Fiesta medals. This year, the Institute of Texan Cultures wanted to cater to anyone who wanted to attend by displaying some of Fiesta's most iconic Fashion pieces by some of San Antonio's most iconic fashionistas, Michael Quintanilla and Graciela Carrillo. This project manifested would be an event with food, beverage, musical performances and commentary by these fashion icons as well as the director of the Institute of Texan Cultures.



*Figure 1 Grupo Folklórico Bendiciones*

### **Best Practices**

Going into the more detailed approach of what goals were to be reached, this was an event open to the public, anyone could come in and enjoy the music, food, and exhibit, as well as the whole museum. I dare to relate this event, and others a bit to what Rebecca Shulman described in her article in 'The Curator' titled,

‘Where are the objects? Why is this a Museum?...turning to the Curator for answers’.<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Shulman at the Peoria Playhouse Children’s Museum, encouraged using the senses to learn about exhibits, so not just reading or listening, but also touching. For the Fiesta Passion project, we wanted to make guests experience an atmosphere of Fiesta. Our development team, including Mr. Quintanilla, and Ms. Carrillo the Fiesta celebrities shaped this event with Mariachi, fiesta food, performances, and Fiesta fashion, so that guests would be able to understand the event. As Rebecca with her Touch to learn mentality, we created an atmosphere in which, the music, the taste, and the feel of Fiesta would be exhibited. A taste of each was offered to give the guest an idea of what to expect, and what this celebration has been so far. The quote by Michael and Graciela ensures this, calling their display ‘[Puro San Antonio](#)’ or ‘Purely San Antonio’ maybe also read as ‘only San Antonio’.<sup>2</sup>

Jennifer Dickey’s explanation of Public history with Big Tent Theory as opposed to Applied history fits the presentation of our exhibit opening at the Institute of Texan Cultures<sup>3</sup>. We did display a Big Tent in a limited way I think. For one, we displayed a diverse and evolving array of Fiesta hats and dresses and we also welcomed anyone who wished to attend the opening for free.

## **Artifacts**

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<sup>1</sup> Shulman Herz, Rebecca. "Where Are the Objects? Why Is This a Museum? What Allows Us to Claim Special Educational Status for These Charming Play Spaces?: Turning to Curator for Answers." *Curator The Museum Journal*, May 2, 2017. Accessed May 13th, 2019. <https://curatorjournal.org/virtual-issues/why-is-this-a-museum/>.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Quintanilla and Graciela Carrillo prepare a “Puro San Antonio” display’. UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures. [www.texancultures.com](http://www.texancultures.com). Accessed May 13th, 2019

<sup>3</sup> Dickey, Jennifer ‘Public History and the Big Tent Theory’. *The Public Historian*, November 2018, Accessed May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019

As far as documentation of *Fiesta Passion Fiesta Fashion*, the photographs provided were taken by myself. The run of show was decided after several e-mails and was made to provide enough time for people to enjoy music, and then food, then the exhibit, with not too much speaking time for speakers. The [text below](#) is taken from one of the e-mails and is an example of the run of show, this was edited by me. You can see how the time allotted to each participant is precise to the number.

UTSA Mariachi plays La Negra, script begins immediately after music.

6:33 p.m.

LIZ

(writer's note: play it up. Keep it fun and keep the energy of the mariachi music going – you're going right into another number)

Thank you, UTSA Mariachi Los Paisanos! Give them a hand!

Thank you so much for joining us tonight for a fantastic celebration of our friends, Michael Quintanilla and Graciela Carillo, and their amazing work.

I'm Elizabeth Ruiz of KTSA radio, and so honored to be a friend to both Michael and Graciela. Fiesta time means it's time to see Graciela to get our party clothes, and chances are, we're going to run into Michael – Mr. Fiesta himself – at one of those parties.

And what's a party without good music?!

(Mariachi gives a grito)

It's FIESTA! How about another from Mariachi Los Paisanos!

6:35

MARIACHI PERFORMANCE

6:38

LIZ

Thank you, Mariachi Los Paisanos!

It's great that we had a chance to gather here at the Institute of Texan Cultures for this new exhibit, "Fiesta Passion, Fiesta Fashion." We'll have a chance to see Michael's over-the-top costumes and Graciela's festive and functional clothes prepared for San Antonio leaders, celebrities, spouses and everyday people.

And speaking of, we have some wonderful guests with us tonight.

(VIP ROSTER)

Fiesta is "Puro San Antonio," and these two individuals capture that spirit so well that they were the only people the institute could think of to create this exhibit that expresses this piece of San Antonio culture in costume and everyday dress.

Fiesta is a celebration of Los Tejanos, the original Texans, the blend of peoples who made their home here. We preserve this heritage and tradition in many ways, including music and dance. Please welcome Bonnie Ramos, who performed at the first Texas Folklife Festival in 1972, now leading the Ballet Folklorico de San Antonio.

6:40

BALLET FOLKLORICO PERFORMANCE

6:46

LIZ

Thank you, Ballet Folklorico de San Antonio!

And thank you to the institute, for preserving our traditions. Executive Director Angelica Docog arrived in San Antonio in 2012 to assume her position, and Fiesta was one of her first big experiences of Puro San Antonio.

Please welcome the executive director of the Institute of Texan Cultures, Angelica Docog. Angelica?

6:47

ANGELICA

Thank you, Elizabeth. We're so glad to have you here as well. We certainly see plenty of you at Fiesta and we appreciate all your work in the community. A round of applause for Elizabeth Ruiz!

It's such a privilege to have Michael and Graciela here, opening their new exhibit and showing us these treasures from their own collections.

Fiesta was one of those traditions I had to learn through experience. The music, dance, food, parades, costumes, cascarones, celebrations and special observances are expressions of who and what San Antonio is. It is one of the greatest expressions of local culture. It reminds us of what it means to call San Antonio "Home."

Documenting culture and exhibiting our discoveries is our duty and our mission. We give voice to experiences from people across the globe who call Texas "Home."

The Institute of Texan Cultures is a UTSA component, and this year marks UTSA's 50th Anniversary. The university has an obligation to prepare students to succeed in a global environment. This museum is one of the university's unconventional classrooms, and here, students of all ages learn what it means to be a Texan.

With Michael and Graciela's exhibit, I hope we can teach students and learners of all ages to carry joy and merriment with them.

Thank you, Michael and Graciela, for sharing your joy and visions of San Antonio in its purest form – Purisimo San Antonio – here at the Institute of Texan Cultures. It is a joy to have you here.

Celebrations call for music and dance. Please welcome Grupo Folklorico de Bendiciones.

6:50

#### PERFORMANCE

(NOTE: Back-to-back numbers)

6:56

LIZ

Thank you, Grupo Folklorico de Bendiciones!

Michael Quintanilla is an award winning fashion writer and editor and has covered Fashion Week in New York, Milan, and Paris for the L.A. Times, and he became a beloved part of our community in his time with the Express-News.

The institute got to work with Michael on a previous Fiesta hats exhibit a few years back, and again for its 50th Anniversary celebration, when he had the 1968 hostess uniforms recreated for the anniversary dance, and curated a 1968-themed fashion show.

Please welcome the disco maniac, the glue gun master, "Mr. Fiesta," Michael Quintanilla.

6:58

MICHAEL

(Remarks)

7:02

LIZ

Graciela Carillo is a San Antonio legend. You don't see her name in the newspaper and you don't see much in the way of advertising, but word gets around about exactly what Graciela can accomplish and the fashions she can create. She has dressed our city's best. She travels Central and South America in search of those colors, patterns and fashions that express pieces of our shared heritage.

Please welcome Graciela Carillo.

7:03

GRACIELA

(Remarks)

7:07

LIZ

Compadres, it has been a pleasure to celebrate with you all. Please keep the Institute of Texan Cultures in mind, because there's a lot coming up, including the Texas Folklife Festival, June 7, 8 and 9, and Last Call for the Brewing Up Texas exhibit on May 3.

If you like what you've seen here tonight, check [TexanCultures.com](http://TexanCultures.com) to see how you can support the institute and keep events and exhibits like this coming to our community.

Let's follow the mariachis to the lower gallery, so Michael and Graciela can show us "Fiesta Passion, Fiesta Fashion."

Thank you all, and good evening.

7:09

MARIACHI PERFORMANCE

7:15

The playlist for the event included celebratory Mariachi pieces such as [\*El son de la negra\*](#)<sup>4</sup> the very popular 20<sup>th</sup> century piece, and [\*Las Alazanas\*](#), and [\*El Fandanguito\*](#).

Documentation of the event also includes the [facebook page](#) a [News 4 San Antonio interview](#) and [Kens 5](#).

## **Objectives**

The goal was to bring in at least 200 visitors, through media exposure, facebook, and newsletters. We offered the experience of Fiesta captured in a two hour exhibit opening, while keeping the museum gift shop open, this way the 200 or more guests would be able to purchase our new fiesta medals. To keep count of how many attended as a rough estimate we offered the option to RSVP, we also employed this to estimate how much time we could ask the Mariachi to play or the Folklorica even how much time the speakers, be they Michael Quintanilla or Graciela Carrillo would be able to speak. There was negotiation especially with the Mariachi of how much time they would play, since they charge by the hour and mariachi count. The ITC had enough to fund 45 minutes of playing time and could not afford the whole hour especially with the whole Mariachi which consists of about 25 members. This is where my project management involvement came in. I contacted three groups; Mariachi Los Paisanos, Grupo Folklorico de San Antonio, and Grupo Folklorico de Bendiciones. I allotted all three time limits which changed a couple times, and then edited according to suggestions by the development staff.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Rescue origin of Son de la Negra'. INAH.gob.mx.

<https://www.inah.gob.mx/en/boletines/859-rescatan-origen-del-son-de-la-negra>, Accessed May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019

. This project was meant call on San Antonians, announcing the near arrival of Fiesta, and it did quite well. We drew out some 300 individuals, some brought young children, who have now been exposed to the history of Fiesta Fashion, and to the Mariachi that is so characteristic of San Antonio. Furthermore, the Mariachi, after playing joined the crowd to explore the museum, and even talk about their own experience in Fiesta.



*Figure 2 Michael Quintanilla's Exhibit, Michael in golden blazer*

## **Conclusion**

The Fiesta Passion exhibit left people cheerful. The event planning behind the scenes was critical even for a two-hour event, because there is much that goes into this. There must be awareness of the event, catering, sponsors, and performers must be put together and fit a budget which I was not shown. In the case of the Institute of Texan Cultures the main objective for development is to have every event pay for itself, either through customized Fiesta medals,

membership sign-ups, or gift shop purchases, and all this while creating great ambiance for hundreds of people.

For this event I was personally able to affect how people viewed their cultural heritage in this city through conversation and listening, as well as curating a playlist to which they could reminisce on Fiestas past. I managed to keep the speaking time short, and performance time longer, so that attendees could experience the cultural artifacts by themselves faster.



*Figure 3 Mariachi Los Paesanos*



