

Ann Rockefeller Roberts (1934-2024) was one of the most important benefactors in the 50-year history of The Mexican Museum (TMM). Her passing this week gives me an opportunity to share memories of my dear friend and mentor.

I first met Ann shortly after I became the museum's second Executive Director (1984-1989), following our founder, Peter Rodriguez. At that time the museum had just moved to Fort Mason Center. TMM was one of several museums she was looking at to gift her father's collection of Mexican folk art. We were the least developed of all the art museums that she was considering.

However, Ann being Ann, she was immediately taken with the purity of Peter's vision and the core mission statement at that time, "*to foster the exhibition, conservation, and dissemination of Mexican and Chicano art and culture for all peoples.*"<sup>1</sup> The community rallied around supporting our candidacy to receive her father's prestigious collection and, together, we convinced Ann of our vitality as one of the most important community-based art museums in the country. She carefully and methodically made the decision to divide the Nelson A. Rockefeller Folk Art Collection between TMM and the San Antonio Museum of Art. Ann's astute decision catapulted TMM into national, even international, visibility propelling us into a new phase of growth and development. On the evening of the inaugural celebration for the acquisition of the collection, Ann and I literally skipped across the Fort Mason parking lot filled with joy and happiness. I will be forever grateful for these memories.

Ann and I kept in touch throughout our careers, she as a writer and philanthropist, I as a museum director and curator. Together we kept track of the museum's cycles of change. We saw each other whenever we could, in New York, San Francisco and, even, Hawaii.

I returned to TMM in 2012 to inventory the permanent collection as Adjunct Curator and Director (2012-2015). At my request Ann returned to support TMM once again as a primary advisor. She funded a day-long strategic planning meeting in Sausalito for our stakeholders, including Guadalupe Rivera Marin, Diego's daughter. The two of them, Ann and Lupe, became instant friends and stayed close through their lives.

We owe Ann R. Roberts a great deal of gratitude and admiration for gifting her father's collection, providing major grant support and inspiring us to do our important work. Ann R. Roberts will be remembered as a great humanitarian and supporter for women's issues, Native American and Mexican American art and culture.

Ann's generosity and love for TMM continued throughout the museum's history. While there have been several key benefactors, I believe that without a doubt Ann is THE single most important patron to have supported TMM. I will miss her today and every day.

RIP Ann Rockefeller Roberts

David J. de la Torre  
TMM Executive Director (1984-1989) (2012-2015)

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<sup>1</sup> The current mission of The Mexican Museum is "*to voice the complexity and richness of Latino art and culture throughout the Americas, and to engage and facilitate dialogue among the broadest public.*"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/20/nyregion/ann-rockefeller-roberts-dead.html>



Honoree Ann Rockefeller Roberts (R) and David J. de la Torre (L), The Mexican Museum 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala, Four Seasons Hotel, San Francisco CA, November 20, 2010.