

FORT GANSEVOORT

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1,000 Artists In a Salute To Diversity

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Festival 2000, which begins on Saturday, is a rainbow coalition of 1,000 performing and visual artists from across the nation that for 23 days will salute the cultural diversity of both this city and the nation.

The events will take place in more than 30 locations in the city and will include gospel music, jazz, film, dance, theatrical performances and multimedia exhibitions.

"This is the largest showcase of work by contemporary artists of color in the history of America," said Lenwood O. Sloan, the festival's executive producer. "But this is not ethnic work. This is American work by artists of all colors."

He said that along with its mandate to draw national attention to the cultural riches of San Francisco, the festival was also intended as a demonstration of cross-cultural fusion of arts by different ethnic groups.

The North-South Connection

For example, "Norte Sur" looks at Latin American influences on the arts of North America. Guillermo Gomez-Pena, a Mexican performance artist and writer, and Coco Fusco, a Cuban-American writer, use theatrical performances, music and an exhibition of photographs, sound objects and multi projections to examine the fusion of the two cultures.

"A year ago, after I came back from touring the western United States and from lecturing in South America, I was struck by how there was a very strong American pop cultural presence in South America, and vice versa," said Ms. Fusco, who lives in Miami. "The presences are equally strong, but the conscious recognition is not as widespread here as in South America. Americans consume a lot of Latin culture without knowing it."

The project, to be shown in the Mexican Museum, is also pointed in an east-west direction. "There's been very little communication between the West Coast Chicano Mexican and the Caribbean from the East Coast," Mr. Gomez-Pena said. Festival artists were chosen from 184 applicants from northern California by a jury of artists and arts administrators from around the country. The festival commissioned 23 works.

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"Festival 2000 is a national festival joining sister cities," said Mr. Sloan, a former deputy director of the California Arts Council and a program consultant for the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as a dancer, choreographer and artistic director of his own dance company.

Several projects from the festival are expected to continue after it ends. The "Festival of Masks," for example, will be used as a model in schools across the nation. The workshop will use the art of making masks to explore the many different cultures that use them. 40 Shows Will Tour The "Forum on the American Esthetic," a three-day discussion, will include scholars, educators, artists and policy makers. Among those expected to take part are Dr. Amalia Mesa Baines, the San Francisco arts commissioner; A. B. Spellman, director of expansion arts at the National Endowment for the Arts; Tom Marshall, marketing manager for Group W Television in New York, and Edgar A. Heap of Birds, representing the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations.

The Association of Performance Arts Presenters, based in Washington, will bring 60 members from all over the country to see the works, Mr. Sloan said. In addition, more than 40 of the performing arts events will tour the country after the festival.

The festival opens with "Sole Night: A Celebration of Foot, Hand and Drums," a melange of choreography by Katherine Dunham, the American Indian Dance Theater, the Muntu Dance Theater of Chicago, Citresh Das, Dance Brazil, and the Urban Bush Women from New York.

Other festival highlights include "The Gospel at Colonus," a modern adaptation of the Oedipus legend by the American Conservatory Theater and the Oakland Ensemble Theater; "Bringing It All Back Home," a fusion music and jazz concert performed by Take 6, the Oakland Youth Chorus, and Bobby McFerrin's Voicestra, with Danny Glover and Pete Escovedo as hosts; and a two-day film festival featuring Gordon Parks and the works of five Bay area film makers who were awarded grants by the festival.