



San Antonio's McNay unveils first outdoor work by a Latina artist

By Brandon Watson for *CultureMap San Antonio* | June 17, 2026



A troupe performs in *Screenhouse*, then on view at Chicago's Millennium Park. Photo by Andrew Glatt.

San Antonio plants that echo Puerto Rico's foliage. Patrons are allowed to walk through the structure instead of viewing it from afar.

"Screenhouse" is part of Soto's GRAFT series, which draws on rejas and quiebrasoles, the decorative concrete blocks and iron grilles common to Puerto Rican homes. In the island climate, they aren't merely decorative — providing shade and airflow without sacrificing privacy.

The Chicago-based artist uses the architectural motifs to surface an African influence often left out of the island's tourism-friendly image, born from Spanish colonialism. The block patterns trace back to Yoruba symbols brought to the Caribbean by enslaved West Africans.

"My artistic practice encourages viewers to reflect more closely on architectural motifs common in Puerto Rico's working-class communities and to experience them beyond mere utility and aesthetics," Soto said in a release. "Often, Puerto Rico's status as an unincorporated United States territory renders its history imperceptible."

The placement is its own conversation. The geometric blockwork speaks to the tilework from founder Marion Koogler McNay's residence, and the sculpture's black silhouette sets up a deliberate dialogue with Tony Smith's cubist "Asteriskos" nearby, according to museum officials.

The acquisition is part of a broader McNay initiative to expand the definition of American art. In 2023, the museum hired Mia Lopez, its first curator of Latinx art.

"By introducing these rejas and quiebrasoles to San Antonio, Edra Soto evokes the nostalgic warmth of home for the Caribbean diaspora with a broader, vital conversation about history, culture, and public space," said Lopez.

For the first time in its century-plus history, a Latina artist's work will greet guests at San Antonio's McNay Art Museum (6000 N. New Braunfels Ave). Edra Soto's "Screenhouse," a 10-foot reimagined gazebo, will be installed on the grounds in late July.

Although the near-Alamo Heights institution has works from Sonia Romero and Maria Natividad in its contemporary Latino prints collection, this will be McNay's first outdoor sculpture by a Latina artist. The interactive structure, based on the artist's Boricua heritage, invites visitors to contemplate Caribbean history as American history.

The piece is built from roughly 400 12-inch charcoal-hued cast concrete blocks, and will be ringed by native