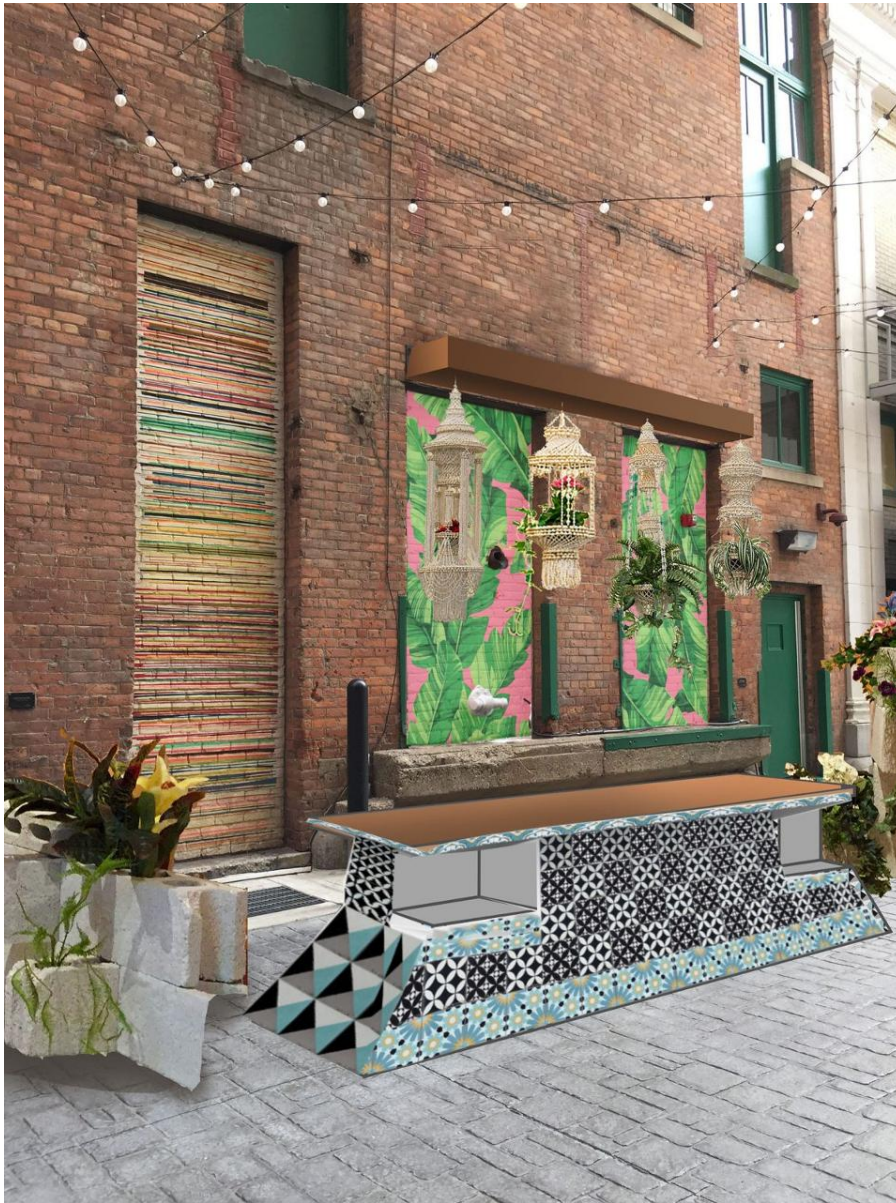


Artist Carlos Rolón Shows Detroit How They Do It Down In Puerto Rico

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Loiza by Carlos Rolon

Chicago-based artist Carlos Rolón wants to show Detroit how they do it down in Puerto Rico. He hopes that people will get off their phones and live in the present when they visit his new Detroit site-specific installation Loiza, located in The Belt, an empty alleyway that The Library Street Collective transformed into a public exhibition space.

Rolón found inspiration in San Juan's Barrio Loiza, a neighborhood where roadside kiosks selling goodies like alcapurrias and empanadillas provide a place for people to come together, chat, and build community. "When visitors walk through the passageway of Loiza, the hope is when you enter the environment, you're immediately transported

to another place and time," said Rolón. "You forget for a moment about the world around you and become immersed in the present moment."



Carlos Rolon works on his Loiza exhibition.

Instead of roadside kiosks hawking fried snacks, the Detroit version of Loiza offered Puerto Rican-influenced cocktails by mixologists from Standby, the James Beard-nominated restaurant located in The Belt. A mariachi band provided the background music, while Chicago-based nail artist AstroWifey — who collaborated with Rolón on his Imperial Nail Salon at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago — created Caribbean-inspired nail art. Rolón added a number of markers of Puerto Rico: ceramic tile tables, a Jibaro garden composed of cinderblock and artificial flowers, and shell macramés against a site-specific wall installation, as well as a

petrified palm tree draped in illuminated Christmas lights.

The project is one of several arts initiatives that are turning Detroit into a thriving art scene. In many ways, Rolón’s native Puerto Rico is similar to Detroit. Both places are struggling economically, yet have a strong creative community. “I believe that neighborhood revitalization through arts-related projects are vital to the fabric and the restructuring of a city,” said the artist. “I truly feel that what I have created is a project that in some way is experiential, site specific, part social practice and a form of escapism.”

Library Street Collective is planning an exhibition of Rolón’s work next year.