

TUFIÑO, NITZA (1949–)

Daughter of the well-known Puerto Rican artist Rafael Tufiño and the Mexican dancer, Luz María Aguirre, Nitza Tufiño was born in Mexico City and taken to Puerto Rico when she was a year old. Her artistic talents blossomed under her parents' tutelege and by 1966 she was studying fine arts at San Carlos Academy at the Universidad Autónoma of Mexico. In 1970, as a newly minted B.F.A., with a place in Manhattan, New York, Tufiño embarked upon her career as an artist. Her first ceramic mural was for the façade of el Museo del Barrio, a community-based museum that she had helped found. During the 1970s she served as a consultant on Puerto Rican and Caribbean art at the Brooklyn Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the early 1980s she returned to school, earning an M.S. in urban affairs (1982) from Hunter College, City University of New York. Commissioned to create a mural for the Third Street Music School in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Tufiño was inspired by Taíno history and titled her work "Sinfonía Taína" (Taino Symphony). Her ceramic mural, Neo-Boriquén, was installed in the subway station at 103rd Street and Lexington Avenue. Depicting a tropical landscape, reminiscent of the Caribbean, with Taino spirits overseeing the lush, flowering trees and plants, this work was commissioned by the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority. Among her recent projects, The Wall of Peace, is found in the lobby of the Thomas Jefferson School in South Orange, New Jersey. Tufiño's work continues to inspire and she has received numerous accolades including the Mid-Atlantic National Endowment for the Arts Regional Award (1992), the New York Foundation for the Arts Artist's Fellowship in 1984, and 1987, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Arts (1992), and the New York City Council Excellence in Arts Award (1991).