

Contact: WICG, Lorna Harris 917-825-4959
lorna@lornaharris.biz
CCCADI, Monthina Williams 212-307-7420
Ext. 3006, mwilliams@cccadi.org

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COMIC BOOKS AND SANTERIA?

**Franklin H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute
PRESENTS GROUNDBREAKING EXHIBIT
By JOE QUESADA, Editor-In-Chief of Marvel Comics**

New York (February 5, 2007). The Gallery at the *Franklin H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI)* debuts their first ever comic book exhibit, *Santerians: The Art of Joe Quesada* curated by Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez of Somos Arte, a New York based creative services firm in collaboration with Marvel Comics. CCCADI brings to the world an exhibit of illustrations bridging the gap between super heroes and spirituality, featuring the first Latin American super-hero team, the *Santerians*. The exhibit offers the public an up-close view of artwork depicting characters that are based on the popular yet, misunderstood religion, Santeria. The exhibition features the original illustrations of Quesada's work from the Marvel Comic series *Daredevil: Father* where the popular character Daredevil meets a new team of heroes, the *Santerians*. The official opening is Friday, February 23, 2007, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., 2nd floor gallery at 408 W. 58th Street.

Santerians: The Art of Joe Quesada, will be on view at CCCADI's gallery until July 30, 2007 and consists of original concept drawings used to develop the characters who take on the monikers of the *Orishas: Ogun, Oshun, Oya, Chango* and *Eleggua*. The *Santerians* are the first comic book characters inspired by deities from the Yoruba-based sacred traditions from Nigeria that traveled to Brazil and Cuba whereas the religion became known as Santeria.

On display and unique to each comic book character, the gallery walls of the exhibition space are colored to represent each *Orisha's* individuality and powers. The color prints were created from the original full color digital masters from the *Daredevil: Father* comic book allowing the viewer to witness the process of a comic book being created in a gallery setting.

In tribute to his late father, Quesada created the *Santerians*, based on his coming of age experiences and Cuban heritage. "I looked to my past and beyond. My hero, my Santerian leader, reflects a more modern and accurate representation of the contributions that Latinos across the spectrum are making in our world today," says Quesada.

Daredevil: Father a limited series of 6 issues is the 2nd time he revisits Daredevil after his last successful run in 1998 with filmmaker Kevin Smith. His new hero, named Nestor

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Rodriguez is the son of a popular councilman who was an outspoken social justice activist. As a child, Nestor Rodriguez started a vigilante group, the “Street Angels,” that would patrol his neighborhood and fight crime. Nestor discovered his father was corrupt and also witnessed his death. He later emerges as an adult as a hip-hop star with his own fragrance and fashion line and goes by the name of *NeRo*. The young people that were originally part of the “Street Angels” join his entourage as the *Santerians* – the *Orishas: Ogun, Oshun, Oya* and *Chango*. Nestor *NeRo* Rodriguez becomes their leader, *Eleggua*. The story, set in Hell’s Kitchen, New York, is also the location of CCCADI since its establishment in 1976.

Quesada is one of the most highly respected figures in the comic book industry as an illustrator and for rejuvenating the focus and progress of Marvel Comics as its Editor –in-Chief. His career began working as a colorist for Valiant Comics in 1991. He then went on to work with Event Comics and in 1996 worked with Marvel to create a trading card set that combined computer generated imagery (CGI) comic art and photography. In 1998 he launched Marvel Knights which reintroduced popular characters such as *Daredevil* and the *Black Panther* to great commercial success. In 2000 he became Marvel Comic’s Editor-in-Chief and increased the company’s sales by over 75% in their first year.

A collaboration between the CCCADI, Marvel Comic and Somos Arte this exhibition is a unique opportunity for people to see these exciting illustrations in a space that acknowledges the depth of the meaning behind Quesada’s work, questions the diversity of characters of color in the comic book industry, the emerging relationship between new generations of Santeros and popular culture, and the Center’s mission to make visible the history, culture and welfare of peoples of African descent in the Caribbean, South America and throughout the Diaspora.

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CCCADI Gallery Hours: Monday-Friday: 10 – 6 p.m. & first Saturday of each month|408 West 58th St, NYC, 10019. Bet. 9th & 10th|Subway: 1, A, B, C, D to Columbus Circle 59th St| Suggested Donation \$5|212-307-7420 x3006| ww.CCCADI.org

Santerians: The Art of Joe Quesada kicks off CCCADI’s 2007 season, ***Making the Invisible Visible: Connecting Global Cultures*** with the following Public Programs:

Tuesday, March 13th, 2007-6:30 p.m.

Panel Discussion: 'Black Ink' - A panel discussion that looks at the diversity of illustrations and animation created by African descendants in the Caribbean, America, Latin America and worldwide.

Thursday, April 5, 2007-6:30 p.m.

Film Screening: The Marvel Comic Book - An evening with special guests from Marvel Comics (TBA) to discuss the origins, story evolution, themes, comic art and public fascination with these characters, in particular “Daredevil” in addition to a special documentary screening

Thursday, May, 10 th, 2007-6:30 p.m.

Panel Discussion: Sangre Nueva ‘New Blood’-An open discussion on the influence of popular culture and media on the experiences of younger generations of ‘Santerians’ and the effect it has on how they practice their religion.

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The *Franklin H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI)* is a not-for-profit cultural organization based in mid-town Manhattan. Building upon thirty years of educational programs, lectures, workshops, visual art exhibitions, international forums and cutting edge concerts, CCADI continues its 30th Anniversary theme of ***Making the Invisible Visible: Connecting Global Cultures*** and creates multi-cultural programming that reflects the notion on which the organization was created, making visible the history, culture and welfare of peoples of African descent in the Caribbean, South America and throughout the Diaspora. www.CCCADI.org 212-307-7420, x3006. *CCCADI members receive discounts on all ticketed events.*

Somos Arte is a New York based creative services firm specializing in photography, web development, graphic design, branding and arts events. For further information please visit www.somosarte.com or call 718-389-5889.

Marvel Comics is an American comic book line published by Marvel Entertainment, Inc. Affectionately called "The House of Ideas" by the fan press, Marvel's best-known characters include Spider-Man, the X-Men, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Captain America, Iron Man, and Daredevil. Most of Marvel's fictional characters are depicted as inhabiting a single shared world; this continuity is known as the Marvel Universe. Located in New York City, since the 1960s, Marvel has been one of the two largest American comics companies, along with DC Comics. For further information, please visit www.marvelcomics.com.