



*The museum display artwork at child-friendly heights. (Photo credit: Wade Zimmerman)*

## LIFESTYLE

# Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling opens with aim of engaging youngsters

By MEREDITH DELISO

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There's a new children's museum in town.

The **Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling** opened over the weekend in the basement of the Sugar Hill Project, a new development built by Broadway Housing Communities that also features affordable housing, a pre-school and offices.

Designed by architect David Adjaye, the museum is built with young visitors in mind, with artwork displayed at lower levels, wall texts for both children and adults, prompts throughout the galleries to encourage kids to react and programming geared toward ages 3-8.

"We firmly believe in the value of engaging with the arts at an early age so that we can become lifelong contributors that appreciate the arts and use creative minds regardless of what industry we choose to enter into," said Jennifer Ifil-Ryan, the museum's associate director for education and community.

As the name implies, the museum has a special focus on storytelling, from featuring artists and artworks that explore the practice to activities that engage the visitors.

"We're trying to set up foundations for young people to tell their own stories," Ifil-Ryan said. "We're trying to develop skills that help us be self-determined individuals, and storytelling is our way in."

Areas where visitors can do just that are the studio labs -- learning spaces where children can make art using materials like clay and paint.

"Not only are we coming here to make art, but we're exploring our own minds and figuring out what we want to say and putting that to some medium and expressing that," Ifil-Ryan said. "On any given day that we are open to the public, families can anticipate walking into the studio labs, seeing a wide range of materials and can make something. ...We're giving people the opportunity to organically create something when they visit us."

Art materials can also be found throughout the galleries, so children can further respond to the art and be creative.

The museum's inaugural exhibitions include "People, Places, and Things: Selections from The Studio Museum," comprised of artwork that depicts everyday life in America; "Txt: art, language, media," which explores new forms of literacy, from texting to spoken word poetry; and "The Pollen Catchers' Color Mixing Machine," a site-specific mural by Saya Woolfalk.

The museum will also hold a storytelling series on the second Saturday of each month and have monthly family programming inspired by the current exhibitions.

"We want to have highly programmed workshops for families and young people at least once a month," Ifil-Ryan said. "Hopefully that will grow."



The **Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling** (898 Saint Nicholas Ave at the corner of West 155<sup>th</sup> Street) is open Saturdays and Sundays from noon-5 p.m. and, starting Nov. 5, also Thursday-Friday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission \$7 adults, \$4 ages 9-17, students and seniors and free for ages 8 and under.