

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AS BENVIDAS | THE WELCOMES | LAS BIENVENIDAS

Presented by: Xunta de Galicia, El Consello da Cultura Galega, Spanish Consulate in NY and La Nacional



April 16 – May 15, 2019

La Nacional – Spanish Benevolent Society
239 W 14th St, New York, New York, 10011

Open Mon – Fri 9 AM - 3 PM, Weekends and evenings by appointment.

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Reception: Tuesday April 16, 2019, 6:30PM

The Welcomes / As benvidas / Las bienvenidas, an exhibition of early twentieth-century photographs of Spanish (Galician) immigrants in New York.

“Land of farewells” is what geographer Ramón Otero Pedrayo once called Galicia, the Spanish region that sits atop Portugal in the Northwest corner of the Iberian peninsula. Because for centuries, tens of thousands of peasants and workers would say their tearful goodbyes on the docks of Galicia’s ports, as they headed off to seek opportunities, most often in the Americas. In fact, so many people from Galicia crossed the Atlantic in the late 1800s and early 1900s, that in many parts of the Spanish-speaking Americas, “gallego” is the term used to refer to anyone from any part of Spain. Alberto Martí’s stunning

collection of photographs, “Os adeuses / Los adioses / The Goodbyes” —currently on view at Ellis Island— captures poignant scenes of departure that have become icons of Galician culture and history.

“A welcoming land” has been, for the better part of its history, a common epithet for the United States, a nation of immigrants if there ever was one. The words that Emma Lazarus, in her famous sonnet, put in the mouth of Lady Liberty, could have been directly addressed to the crowds jostling on the docks of A Coruña, Vigo or Ribadeo: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” And while the vast majority of Galicians emigrated to countries like Argentina, Brazil, Cuba or Uruguay, thousands of them also ended up settling in the United States, often in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.

“The Welcomes” is an exhibition curated by James D. Fernández and Luis Argeo (authors of the book Invisible Immigrants: Spaniards in the US 1868-1945), who have spent almost ten years digitizing the family archives of descendants of Spaniards who emigrated to the US. In counterpoint with “The Goodbyes”, which highlights the sweet sorrow of partings, “The Welcomes” documents and celebrates the bitter joys of arrivals. The show uses unique and private images from family albums to help us imagine how the advice and pleas uttered through tears on those Galician docks continued to echo in the minds of the emigrants as they struggled and adapted to their new lives in the US.

Sponsored by the Council of Galician Culture, the Xunta de Galicia, the Spanish Consulate in New York, and Centro Español- La Nacional, “The Welcomes” was designed by Noelia Lecue Francia. Centro Español - La Nacional, founded in 1868, is the oldest Spanish benevolent society in the US.

