



ORGANIZACION DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS  
ORGANIZAÇÃO DOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS  
ORGANISATION DES ETATS AMERICAINS  
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

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17th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006

AUDIO-VISUAL PROGRAM

AM  
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SLIDE  
(part 1 of 2)

SETS 204, 205 PAINTINGS AND FRESCOES BY JOSE CLEMENTE OROZCO

Jose Clemente Orozco was born in 1883 in Zapotlan, Jalisco, the state of which Guadalajara is the capital. First he studied agriculture, architecture and architectural drawing. At the age of twenty-six, he began to paint. Six years later, in 1915, he held his first exhibition in Mexico City. The works at this exhibit disturbed the critics and upper social set because they depicted the humanity of the women of the underworld showing the degradation to which they are reduced by society.

At the age of thirty, Orozco contributed to the publication of the "Jungle Group" a series of caricatures based on his observations of revolutionary activities - portraying the horrors of war: murder and rape, the mangling and disfiguration of bodies, the looting of houses, the caricatures were an irritant to the party in power and Orozco left for California in 1917.

The drawings made before 1920 are rare. Orozco was considered to be a cartoonist. The Bohemian crowd also subscribed to a weekly periodical which Orozco published under the title El Malora (The Nuisance). One hundred drawings and paintings of this period were confiscated by American customs officials, in the interest of North American morals.

In 1922, in the National Preparatory School, Mexico City, he painted his first frescoes. In 1934, after returning from the United States, he did his mural in the Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City. Everything he has to say to the world, he has said with his brush, fearlessly, convincingly. His condemnation of all false leaders and his defense of the exploited have not pleased the bourgeois world.

In the beginning his techniques, like Rivera's, were in the Renaissance tradition. Color was limited and transparent, brushstrokes fine and close together, and surfaces smooth. Later he became more interested in the Byzantine technique of fresco. His colors became opaque instead of transparent, lime white was used freely and sometimes mixed with color. The wall was not plastered first and then painted. Instead, he plastered as he painted, actually mixing his colors with wet plaster for his background areas and then organizing his composition by means of bold black lines. The mural at Dartmouth (1932) marks the turning point in his style. Orozco does not attempt to incorporate his murals with the architectural scheme -- and frequently creates an illusion of three dimensions in his frescoes.



He painted small easel paintings in oil and portraits in between his fresco commissions. When he died in 1949, the people of the United States called him "El Greco of Mexico". Jean Charlot wrote of Orozco:

"Every valid artist lives ahead of his era, connives with and enriches those not yet born. Pitted against contemporary taste he remains alive when his epoch dies. The artist of today, terrified of the spirit, remains bogged in the letter. Cubism dictates his output, clamps onto art an inflexible carcan. Lone rebel, Orozco maintains the supremacy of the spirit, unafraid of describing and raising issues...compared with orthodox moderns, Orozco appears romantic."

Orozco's work will be labelled monumental when cubism recedes into the past. Jose Clemente Orozco died of a heart attack in Mexico City, September 7, 1949.

Sources:

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Museum of Modern Art, New York in collaboration with the Mexican Government. Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art. Mexico, 1940.

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Text by Sharon Crockett.

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Third visit to the United States.
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- 1949 On September 7, a heart condition caused his death. He was buried in the Rotunda de los Hombres Ilustres, an honor usually granted by the Congress of the Nation twenty years after the death of the person honored.



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AUDIO-VISUAL PROGRAM

SET 204 Frescoes by José Clemente Orozco

204 A Father Hidalgo. Palacio Municipal

The priest Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla glows majestically. He is holding a torch, still pointing the way after all these years, his left hand points in an attitude of admonition.

204 B El Hombre Creador. The University of Guadalajara.

The dome consists of a metal frame, with two brick structures - one interior, another exterior for projection. The surface painted is 430 square meters. The tonal scale of the colors in the dome runs from grays to rose and reds, which produce a sense of elevation and space, suited to the optical dynamics of the figures. The theme here revolves around Man as a beginning and end; man in his four fundamental aspects of materialist philosophy - Man, the creator; the Constructor, the dialectician and the Rebel.

The Sage or Investigator measures and scrutinizes, investigates the corpse, calculates and compares; the Rebel concentrates on the tragedy of man and exalts it; the Dialectician explains and explores; the Constructor lays the foundation for a new life, in which man no longer has gods nor myths nor hopes. He faces himself - Reality.

The plastic aspect of this dome is parallel to the symbols. The artist achieves a perfect equilibrium. The great lyrical vigor of the passionate nature of Orozco is now controlled in measure necessary for the realization of all great decorations.

204 C Man with Four Faces. (El Hombre de las Cuatro Caras)

University of Guadalajara.

Detail of the dome scene El Hombre Creador. Man the creator, symbolized by the Sage or Investigator.

204 D Dome at Hospicio de Niños Cabañas

The motif of the dome gave Orozco the opportunity for developing a structural decoration worthy of the great Renaissance painters. From stone grey to vivid red, the tonality moves in perfect ascension giving the whole the sensation of a fugue.

The theme of the dome deals with the four natural elements - fire, air, water, earth. the central figure is fire symbolized by a flaming figure of Man, a model of dynamics; in the circle are Water, Air, and Earth.



- 204 E Detail of the Figure of Fire. (El Hombre en Llamas).  
Hospicio de Niños Cabañas  
Colors are opaque, lime white is used freely. Composition is organized by means of bold black lines.
- 204 F Liberty and Reform (Libertad y Reforma) Congreso del Estado.  
Father Hidalgo is bringing liberty to the Mexicans. The use of strong diagonals give the scene a dramatic action.
- 204 G Conquista (detail) fresco. Hospicio de Niños Cabañas  
The conquistadors charge in a diagonal in this battle scene.
- 204 H Conquistadores (Conquista) Hospicio de Niños Cabañas  
The battle scene between mounted Conquistadores and terrified Indians, with two unrealistic horses sharing the center of pictorial interest and recalling the Aztec dread of the supernatural seeming mounts of the Spanish cavalry.
- 204 I Detail of Juarez. Fresco 14 x 20 feet. 1948  
National Museum of History Chapultepec Castle.  
Revolutionaries and the victims can be seen in this detail.  
White, brown, grey, predominate as the vertical, diagonal, and horizontal elements fight the pictorial space.
- 204 J Katharsis (Detail) 1934  
The power and the weaponry streak diagonally across the picture plane in whites, greys and browns.



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SET 205 PAINTINGS AND FRESCOES BY JOSE CLEMENTE OROZCO

205 A Bordello. oil c.1921

This scene is painted in Orozco's "French" period when his style was less personal and more cosmopolitan.

205 B The White House (La Casa Blanca). oil 1922

The figures in the left foreground are fluid and loose contrasting to the solid mass of the white house. Orozco has reduced the scene to a simple statement.

205 C Christ Putting an Axe to his Cross. 1922

This scene combines imagery of the Revolution with Christ standing powerful over the felled cross. Color patterns of black, grey, white and brown can be seen.

205 D The Trench (La Trinchera). c.1923

This fresco is among the first done in Orozco's personal manner. It can be found in the National Preparatory School. It introduces the unmistakable Orozco style: diagonal lines, oblique angles, color patterns of black, white, grey, and brown. The bodies of the soldiers are naked above the waist, the legs clothed in white, the feet bare, the torsos mighty, the angularly outstretched arms expressive and powerful, the hands strong yet sensitive.

205 E The Women of the Soldiers (Las Mujeres de los Soldados) c. 1924

The curved backs of the soldiers at the right establish a rhythm that is repeated in all the figures.

205 F Detail of a Ritual Scene.

This detail shows female figures participating in some ritual. White diagonal light areas focus the viewer on the performing figure. Orozco uses monochromatic browns.

205 G Native Sacrifice. fresco c.1932 University of Dartmouth.

Orozco started the series as an epic narrating the cultural history of the Continent of North America. This scene shows the grim horrors of the ancient practice of human sacrifice. Orozco uses colors of brown, grey, and white with strong modelling. The composition is a balanced pyramid with marked diagonals. The idol Huitzilopochtli, is represented in the brutal mask in the top center. The priests and victim are masked according to custom.



- 205 H Cortes and Malinche. fresco c.1926  
Cortes has victoriously squelched the Indian. He asserts his  
wishes over Malinche.
- 205 I Still Life. oil 38" X 49" c.1943  
The leaves and cabbage have been painted loosely with vigor.  
The composition is frontal.
- 205 J Detail of the Head of Benito Juarez. 14 X 20 ft. 1948  
National Museum of History Chapultepec Castle