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Mexican Muralists

Written by Amanda Schurr

At the dawn of the 20th century, Mexico was reeling from the repercussions of a political tug-of-war that had devastated her people for hundreds of years. The Spanish conquest in the early sixteenth century, followed by three centuries of colonial rule, had taken its toll on her predominantly poor Mestizo, or mixed-race, population. Citizens were frustrated with the hierarchical class system, which favored a small segment of wealthy landowners, and the republic's hard-won independence from Spain in 1821 did little to improve matters. The ill-fated Mexican War dealt another blow to the nation as the United States acquired more than half of its territory, and mounting debts forced the sale of further land holdings to foreign interests.

With agriculture and industry at a virtual standstill and the all-powerful military and religious institutions firmly in control, a growing liberal opposition campaigned for democracy and individual rights. Their efforts eventually yielded the constitutional reform of 1857, but that victory prompted a decade of civil war. At last, in 1876, former Mexican Army General Porfirio Diaz prevailed, determined to lead an impoverished country into the next century.

Diaz looked to Europe and North America in his quest to modernize Mexico, but advancement came at a crippling cost to most of her citizens. Lured by the promise of cheap labor and property, foreign investors wrested any say about agricultural, industrial, and economic matters away from the people. The division of wealth, property, and power became even more pronounced. Most assets were controlled by elite or foreign interests, and the huge estates, or haciendas, owned by these aristocrats covered over half of the nation's total area. By 1910, a whopping ninety percent of the rural peasant population did not own land, and the average Mexican's standard of living was lower than it had been a whole century earlier. A spirit of rebellion was in the air.

Facing labor strikes and public dissatisfaction, Diaz called for a "true democracy" as early as 1908 but, in reality, he had no intention of ceding power to the people. He

rigged the proceedings and was re-elected. On the eve of his bogus 1910 win, Diaz had his challenger, Francisco Madero, arrested, but Madero escaped and fled to Texas, where he declared himself the rightful president of the republic. The ensuing revolution inspired other uprisings, and in May of the following year, Diaz resigned, in what began a new decade of bloody civil war.

The Mexican Revolution took millions of lives and ultimately toppled the 400-year-old feudal “hacendados” order that bound countless citizens in virtual slavery. As one president after another rose to and then fell from power, rebel leaders like Emiliano Zapata challenged the status quo, commanding guerilla forces that topped 5,000 in number. In the words of Mexican philosopher Octavio Paz, it was “an excess of squandering, an explosion of joy and hopelessness...of suicide and life, all of them mixed together.” By the time Alvaro Obregon, a general in the Constitutionalist army and a key figure in the revolution, was elected president in 1920 and the Mexican party was established, the institutions of the church, the army, and the rich landowning class had been knocked off their powerful pedestals. A modern nation was born.

Amid the mass carnage of revolution, Mexico rebounded from decades of creative crisis, to experience a cultural renaissance. Art was seen as an historical record, a visual dialogue with the Mexican people, and a depiction of the events, ideals, and philosophies of the era. Obregon’s administration commissioned artists to create works as permanent fixtures in public buildings, democratizing art by its very location. Artists veered away from strict realism to a symbolic, spiritual, and idealistic approach that echoed national sentiments. In their search for a collective style, an overwhelming majority of these artists attended the Fine Arts Academy of San Carlos, a shared apprenticeship that bound them in both ideology and technique. Compositions were monumental in scale, vivid in color, folkloric and even mythological in form.

While their critics deemed the results propaganda, the forefathers of Mexican Muralism exalted their work above all other art, a righteous merger of form and function, style and substance. For David Alfaro Siqueiros and his peers, the fundamental aesthetic goal of this epic art was to socialize “artistic expression and wipe out bourgeois individualism, to . . .commit itself to the goal of a monumental public mural art, and to direct itself...to the native races humiliated for centuries... .” Rather than concerning itself with heroic gods, kings, chiefs of state, and generals, Mexican Muralism, in the words of Diego Rivera, “made the masses the hero of monumental art.”

Eccentric renaissance man and artist Gerardo **Murillo** was an essayist, art critic, teacher, historian, and scientist whose impact upon the revolution is particularly significant. Born in Guadalajara, a young Murillo traveled to Europe under the patronage of then-dictator Diaz, where he found inspiration in the Italian Renaissance painters, Neo-Impressionists, and Fauves. Upon his return, he settled in Mexico City and adopted the pseudonym Doctor Atl, which translates as “water” in the Aztec language of Nahuatl. For Murillo, the name change signified not only the source of life, but also a more authentic Mexican identity, and he was soon to become one of the most politically active artists in the revolution. A passionate advocate of Constitutionalist ideals, Murillo debuted his first

public mural in 1910, months before Diaz's exile, effectively launching the artistic revival. Murillo would soon devote much of his time to the revolutionary cause of Venustiano Carranza, founding propagandist newspapers and working to ally himself with union leaders and fellow rebel Emiliano Zapata. In the meantime, he created an innovation called "Atl-Color," a substance composed of dry color in resin that could be used on a wide variety of surfaces including plaster, fabric, and board. The artist used this Atl-Color in a series of painted landscapes, seen here in *The Eruption of Parícutin* (**Murillo Slide 500P**), a mural depicting the volcano's 1943 birth in a Mexican cornfield. Murillo was fascinated by volcanoes, those temperamental targets of fear and admiration, and created an awe-struck portrait that appears as symbolic of the era's political upheaval as of Mother Nature herself. With bold colors, monumental scale, and a fiercely independent spirit, Murillo set the tone for his revolutionary brethren.

Jorge G. **Camarena** sustained the muralist philosophy with vibrant images of Mexico's collective plight. Camarena experimented with different painting techniques, incorporating everything from oil to meteorological elements on special weaves of fabric. Camarena's knack for color, texture, and geometrical composition is seen in this detail of *Humanity Attaining Freedom* (**Camarena Slide 600F**). A majestic tribute to mankind's struggle for independence, the mural is at once violent and triumphant. Notice the larger-than-life scale of the red figure in the background, its giant torso wresting its arms determinedly, bound to wooden posts with thick ropes. In the foreground, a cross-like structure has been splintered during the conflict, while other limbs echo the strife. With its literal uprooting from the ropes of persecution, this work's religious symbolism is matched by the civic connotations of the marble and stone pillars framing the picture plane, suggestive of ancient Greece. Located in a high-profile place, the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City, Camarena's unique brand of social realism can be appreciated by the general public.

In his expressionistic creations, Julio **Castellanos** took a distinctive, almost sculptural approach that set him apart from his artistic peers. Brief stints in the United States, Paris and other travels abroad exposed the impressionable young artist to Western influences. He in turn developed a style that fused old and new sensibilities. In 1931-34's *Children's Games: The Horse* (**Castellanos Slide 601F**), we discover his preference for linear perspective and chiaroscuro, the dramatic use of light and shade. With color, fluid line, and brushwork, Castellanos crafts a dynamic composition of greater depth than is typical of Muralism. It's also markedly softer in contour, pigmentation, and theme. Here a young child is held up to pet the horse at the center of the image, an endearing portrait of the common man at one with his natural environment and its creatures. Notice the native, even Mayan appearance of the human figures, a nod to the heritage of Pre-Columbian art so integral to the Mexican school. Located in the Heroes of Churubusco School, this is an earnest and earthy fable about humanity, one that humbles and unifies not only Mexico's population, but the global community as well.

Painter, muralist, and sculptor Francisco Eppens **Helguera** was born in San Luis Potosí, and, like his friend and colleague Camarena, made significant contributions to the muralist school. Helguera's early work in the print-rooms of the Stamps and Values

office of the Secretary of Property and Public Credit prepared him for later commissions celebrating his sovereign mother country. After creating commemorative stamps and posters early in his career, Helguera designed the national shield, and in 1963 won the competition to produce exterior murals for the Mexican Party, or PRI, building. He often used colored glass tiles for his monumental outdoor murals, their flat, decorative quality ideally suited to the format (*Life Helguera Slide 500P*). This work is more figurative than that of his peers, interpreting everyday existence through the symbols of the republic's legacy. As in Castellanos's paintings, the Mayan influence is evident in style and content. A serpent frames the composition, while a Pre-Columbian mask occupies the middle of the image. Amid lush vegetation, an ear of maize is a vertical presence in front of the central face, and a pair of hands is consumed in fire. Notice how, upon a second glance, the placement of the hands and the flames evokes an eagle, another iconic character for the Mexican people, and emblems signifying the sun, water, earth, and air are also prominent. With his simple and universal visual language, Helguera's art made a nation's collective identity accessible to its citizens.

For Saturnino **Herran**, a profound love of country and her people inspired dramatic visions of Old Mexico in the new republic. Herran's stylistic hybrid of classic and modern sensibilities, with its merger of pre-Hispanic mythology and contemporary life, was not unlike that of Diego Rivera and Gerardo Murillo. The lyricism and harmony of his visual narratives owed as much to Gauguin's canvases as to the artist's friendship with poet Ramon Lopez Velarde. In 1913's *Day of the Dead* (**Herran Slide 500P**), the artist tells of an aboriginal family's journey to decorate the altars of deceased relatives in observance of the Mexican custom. Carrying indigenous flowers, they sail through one of the city's canals, the presence of an infant, a young girl, and middle-aged and elderly travelers a reference to the human life-cycle. Here we also see a technique known as "acuarelado drawing," in which colored pencils are used to create outlines, which are then filled with watercolor pigments. Herran's simplicity of form and powerful composition challenged the academic realism of the day. Whether Spanish or Mexican, Indian or Mestizo, Creole or Aztec, the artist celebrated the racially-mixed beauty of his native land, documenting the visual history of an ever-changing world.

Jose Chavez **Morado** similarly incorporated aspects of the old and the new in his civic-minded creations. The artist and children's book illustrator belonged to the League of Writers and Revolutionary Artists, producing posters and lithographs that denounced the fascist ideologies responsible for his fellow man's suffering. In 1955, he turned his creative attentions to *Hidalgo, The Liberator* (**Morado Slide 600F**), a moving memorial to one of the Mexican Revolution's earliest precursors. Miguel Hidalgo was an impoverished priest who, along with Jose Morelos, led a revolution against Spanish Colonialism in 1810. Hidalgo issued his call to arms, known as *El Grito de Dolores*, or the Cry of Sorrows, and led a force of Indians toward Mexico City armed with nothing more than farm implements. While the rebel priest was executed the following year, his crusade for a new government and the re-distribution of land was not forgotten. One of the cause's best-known and beloved martyrs, Hidalgo is here depicted in a Christ-like pose, his arms outstretched to the common man. Stoic and noble in stature, he appears to be framed by the shape of a halo, one arm outstretched to save a kneeling soul, the other

cradling a limp figure and several weary faces. Notice the repeated occurrence of architectural antiquities, seen here in the archway and columns. It's a rare three-dimensional element in a style better known for its flat visual properties.

In the forceful creations of Luis **Nishizawa**, Muralism expressed national pride and duty beyond Mexican borders. Born in San Mateo to a Japanese father and Mexican mother, the artist moved to Mexico City where, like many of his contemporaries, he enrolled at the Academy of San Carlos. While there, he honed a style he would later refer to as "poetic semi-figuration," influenced by colleague Jose Orozco, Rembrandt, and the pictorial art and haiku poetry of his father's native Japan. A renowned teacher, painter, and sketcher, Nishizawa captured the splendor of the Mexican landscape in murals like *Air is Life* (**Nishizawa Slide 500P**). Located in the National Medical Center, the theatrical image reflects both of the artist's backgrounds. It's a work characteristic of the artist's blend of expressionism, abstraction, and figurative representation, a kinetic scene of the untamed spirit, evident both in the composition's equestrian, human, and perhaps, otherworldly forms. Here we see a sky as embattled as that of Camarena's *Humanity Attaining Freedom*, a scorching tangle of hands and outstretched limbs. Like his peers, Nishizawa placed special emphasis on the public space, stating, "There is no complete work without [the] spectator." From the Mexican Institute of Social Insurance to the Cultural Center Mexiquense, the artist used his language of colors, forms, textures, and ideas to communicate with the common man.

It was a philosophy echoed in the mammoth visions of Juan **O'Gorman**, whose most esteemed murals depicted complex historical, social, and political allegories. A progressive socialist, **O'Gorman** studied architecture prior to applying his cultural and environmental aims to the painted medium. With this glimpse of the *Gertrudis Bocanegra Library* mural (**O'Gorman Slide 600F**), we examine a section of the artist's masterpiece, a work that, in its entirety, comprises some four thousand square meters of natural stone and glass. Notice the equal attention paid to each element of the composition, rendered with a precision of stroke, contour, and color befitting an architect's hand. In the bottom left corner, a man is bound with ropes to a tree, whose roots are symbolic of the republic's heritage. Above him, the figure of Emiliano Zapata holds his manifesto of earth and freedom, while to the right of him, the national symbol of the eagle makes its presence known. At the top right of the slide, a Spanish colonial officer raises his hand to strike a Mayan figure, as the ruling aristocrats enjoy the shade in their seats of absolute power. From the blue-collar worker to the farmer, O'Gorman included every social class and aspect of industrialization and commerce, crafting an exhaustive visual narrative that bridges the nation's history, from its Pre-Columbian to revolutionary days.

Rufino **Tamayo** took a different approach with his murals, opting for Mexican folklore over political subject matter. Born in Oaxaca, he too studied at the Academy of Art at San Carlos, but felt unsatisfied by his schooling in conventional painting techniques. It was during his employment at the National Museum of Archeology that the fledgling artist and Zapotecan Indian became better acquainted with the Pre-Columbian art of his ancestors, a rich legacy that would dominate his work. A talented printmaker and graphic

artist, Tamayo is credited with mixography, a printing process that uses beeswax to produce high-relief prints. But his interest in such decorative and formal aspects of painting placed him in marked opposition to the socially-conscious imagery of Siqueiros, Rivera, and Orozco, and he soon left his homeland for the United States and Europe. It was only after an acclaimed decade abroad that Tamayo returned to Mexico, where he continued to address issues of destiny and the cosmos in his gorgeous compositions. In *Quetzalcoatl Struggling with Tezcatlipoca (Tamayo Slide 007F)*, the artist makes use of his signature color palette, its brilliant wash of earthy reds, cool greens, and vibrant yellows suggestive of his native country. On the left is Quetzalcoatl, the mysterious feathered serpent god, whose dual nature is half air and half earth. To the right of the picture plane is Tezcatlipoca, the tiger-skinned god of warriors and princes, presiding over the arid northern region. Together the two deities were revered in Pre-Hispanic and Mesoamerican mythology as creators of the world, framed here by Tamayo's omnipresent sun and moon. With his unique visual synthesis of primitivism and modern flair, Tamayo presented the masses with one of the earliest chapters in national history.

"Los Tres Grandes," the Three Great Ones, are Orozco, Siqueiros, and Rivera, the artists most inextricably linked with the Mexican Muralist movement. Jose Clemente **Orozco** was hailed for his social realism and candid, arguably pessimistic take on the collective human experience. Born in Jalisco, Orozco witnessed firsthand the plight of his community as a child growing up during Diaz's regime, and devoted his artistic career to the visual documentation of his people's hardship and suffering. He found employment as a political cartoonist at a Constitutionalist newspaper, where he worked alongside David Siqueiros and Gerardo Murillo. Yet despite his efforts for Carranza's campaign and his alliance with fellow left-wing artists Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and Juan O'Gorman, Orozco seemed less concerned with political agendas than with the human condition. In works like 1937's *Hidalgo (Orozco Slide 016F)*, he expressed sympathy for his fellow citizens. But Orozco was hardly a naïve idealist, tempering heroics with the somber realities of revolution. Flaming torch in hand, Hidalgo hovers against a blood red background, a looming presence over a sea of bodies. It was one of many instances in which the artist conveyed the tragedy of violent conflict.

A controversial series of anti-Catholic murals prompted Orozco to take a self-imposed exile in the United States, but upon his return to Mexico City, he began work on a series of murals that adorned the patio of the National Preparatory School. Among the universal themes were scenes of man against nature, the elements, the destruction of the old order, an early version of Christ destroying his cross, and this image of a *Mother's Farewell (Orozco Slide 500F)*, a mournful portrait of the heartbreak and peril of war. The Symbolist influence is obvious in this composition, an emotional commentary on the self-destructive nature of humanity. As parent is torn from child, a palette of blues and grays bathe their parting embrace in melancholy. Orozco would further explore the cyclical order of history in 1936's *The 5 Phases of Man/Knowledge (Orozco Slide 600F)*, a work of impressive clarity, detail, and perspective. Here the stages of moral decay and oppression, self-discovery, and revolution resurface in an ambitious visual epic. Notice the similarity between Camarena's writhing red figure and the one in Orozco's pictorial narrative, their forms united in theme and representation.

By this time the artist had already made another extended visit to the United States, where he completed several frescoes commissioned for the Baker Library at New Hampshire's Dartmouth College. A twenty-four panel chronicle of American civilization, it spans the story of Quetzalcoatl, the migration of the Aztecs into central Mexico, the Spanish conquest and supremacy of the clergy, and the dangers of the industrial age, concluding with this Byzantine-like image of *Christ Destroying His Cross* (**Orozco Slide 066F**). Another reminder of human sacrifice and the mechanization of the modern metropolis, the composition poses Christ against a background of yesteryear and tomorrow, the remnants of a classical bust and pillar tossed on the ruins of what appear to be assorted machine parts. Its visual style owes much to the old Mexican painting tradition, as does 1948's *Juarez and the Fall of the Empire* (**Orozco Slide 618F**), a tribute to the Indian statesman who, in 1855, ousted conservative General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna from office. The event helped usher in the liberal reform era and would serve as the political precursor for the turmoil of the next century. Orozco illustrates the bittersweet triumph with Benito Juarez's towering presence, his head flanked by an image of the flag, the struggle between tyranny and righteousness all around him.

If Orozco found social justice in art alone, Diego **Rivera** saw it almost everywhere. The painter, designer, graphic artist, illustrator, architect, and sculptor was also a passionate political activist who believed art was nothing short of a life-altering experience, capable of empowering all who viewed it. A precocious talent who challenged authority from the get-go, Rivera's participation in a student revolt at the Academy of San Carlos resulted in his expulsion, and he accepted a scholarship to study in Europe. It was a defining journey that introduced him to the canvases of Renoir, Goya, and the Post Impressionist school, not to mention new friend and colleague Picasso. During some 15 years abroad, he would experiment with Cubism and Surrealism before a visit to Italy gave him the artistic and social inspiration to begin his public mural career. Rivera returned to his homeland where, in 1921, he helped to pioneer the Muralist movement, joining Orozco and David Siqueiros to paint a series of fresco cycles for the Mexican government.

Despite his incredible talent and classical training, the artist deferred to indigenous art and Mayan sculpture, rejecting the sophisticated pictorial image in the service of art for the people, accessible to all. This socialist spirit would grow more pronounced as he developed a visual vocabulary of simplified form, two-dimensional composition, and vigorous color. His early Creation murals for the National Preparatory School reflect Rivera's affinity for the Italian Renaissance tradition, seen here in these details of *Woman* (**Rivera Slide 500P**) and *Man* (**Rivera Slide 613P**). Note his emerging linear style as he traces the origins of the human race. His pictorial narratives expressed genuine compassion for the common man. Rivera once explained, "If the artist can't feel everything that humanity feels, if the artist isn't capable of loving until he forgets himself and sacrifices himself if necessary, if he won't put down his magic brush and head the fight against the oppressor, then he isn't a great artist."

To Rivera, the artist was also an activist, a soldier of the working class and an ambassador between the past and the future. His was a decidedly Marxist philosophy,

one that he incorporated into his portraits of Mexican history, like 1926's *Fecund Earth* (**Rivera Slide 617F**). In content and color, the mural is an earthy celebration of the nation's agricultural heritage, a sensual homage to Mother Earth, here literally depicted as one with the fertile land. Lush vegetation sprouts in the central figure's right hand, while a flock of birds soars through the air and an isolated head provides a forceful gust of wind, which spins the windmill below.

Whether portraying a farmer's toils or the struggles of the middle class and the poor, Rivera saw the dignity in an honest day's effort. An opponent of what he thought was capitalist fascism, the artist showed his growing interest in the military in 1928's *He Who Wants to Eat Must Work* (**Rivera Slide 600F**). Here several figures outfitted with weapons and ammunition look on as a young girl holds a broom and an artist is forced to the ground. Despite the architectural framing device and the background images of oil-rigs and machinery, the pictorial space again appears flat. Notice Rivera's trademark use of bold color in depicting the cultural diversity of a mixed-race population.

Fascinated with the Russian army and the Orthodox Church's conflict with Marxist revolutionaries, the artist shifted his attentions to the political arena. In 1922, he helped to establish the Revolutionary Union of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors, officially joining the Mexican Communist Party later that year. But his convictions were not so warmly embraced by his American employers, particularly the Rockefeller family, who had summoned Rivera to New York for a mural commission. Enraged by the artist's inclusion of Soviet leader Lenin, the mogul had it destroyed when Rivera refused to alter the element of propaganda. His other stateside assignment met with considerably less scandal when, at the height of the Great Depression, Rivera was asked by Henry Ford to commemorate the American worker. The result was 1932's Detroit Institute of Art mural, a cycle depicting technology and progress in the United States, from automobile manufacture to industry, transportation, and medical research, seen here in *the Detroit Research* image (**Rivera Slide 010F**) on the south wall. With its vivid iconography of history and contemporary life, the frescoes offered a blueprint for the Roosevelt administration's WPA federal arts project and proved a major influence on American painting.

Rivera was a radical in every sense of the word, from his atheistic outburst at six years old to his reputed cannibalism and his tempestuous relationship with fellow artist Frida Kahlo. But more importantly, he possessed the ability to reduce complex national, social, and religious histories to an essence of form and motif. With 1943's *Technique Brings Man Mastery of the Universe* (**Rivera Slide 609F**), the artist examines human development and the effects of the machine age in a visual link between ancient and future civilizations. In one corner, the wheel of progress moves forward, while below it, a microscope and various specimens signal medical breakthroughs. The sun and moon occupy the bottom left corner, the solar system shown on the right. As a large hand clutches a gauge that suggests the measure of time, energy, and strength, an overall-clad worker symbolizes the vital human spirit at the center of this visual tapestry. Rivera's message is as simple as his approach, a tribute to the common man and a testament to the Muralist cause.

In a movement that shattered the distinctions between art and revolution, David Alfaro **Siqueiros** would emerge the most aggressive if not well known of the mural masters. A man of image and action, Siqueiros was one of the most politically involved artists of his or any era. He was born in Chihuahua and eventually relocated to Mexico City, where as a classmate of Rivera's at the Academy of San Carlos, he led a six-month long student strike to revise traditional teaching methods. It wouldn't be the last collaboration between these two, but Siqueiros would abandon his artistic ambitions for years at a time to serve the cause, first as an active soldier during the revolution, where he attained the rank of captain, and later in the Spanish Civil War of 1937. Upon his return from his stint in the Constitutionalist army, he worked with Orozco and Murilla at *La Vanguardia*, a pro-Carranza newspaper that opposed current military dictator, Victoriano Huerta. A devoted nationalist, the artist addressed a 1921 manifesto to American painters, in which he encouraged them to create their own works of social and political significance.

Siqueiros was unorthodox in philosophy and practice, experimenting with new techniques and materials and often creating his frescoes on concrete instead of the typical plaster wall. He explored the possibilities of photography and cinema with filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, transferring his designs to the wall via camera-projection, utilizing stencils and an airbrush for fast, exact application. His use of pyroxylin, a quick-drying substance related to gun-cotton, and Duco, a transparent automobile paint, produced works of surreal beauty, as in this detail of the *Bourgeoisie Mural (Siqueiros Slide 005P)*. The composition, style, and subject matter are starkly reminiscent of Salvador Dali's fantastic imagery, a squawking dictator commanding the microphone as the masses march below him. We again see classical architectural elements in the blocky right-hand columns and steep stairs. Sponsored by the Electrical Workers Union, it's a dramatic work that dehumanizes and even mocks the tyrannical figurehead while depicting the plight of the ordinary citizen.

Celebration of the Future Victory of Medical Science Over Cancer (Siqueiros Slide 502F) is another instance of Siqueiros' signature visual theater. Notice the exaggerated perspective as a machine of Cyclops-like proportions surveys a patient, while a person on the far right shakes the doctor's hand in gratitude. A very public triumph, here the artist stresses that, like Rivera's commentary on technology and progress, modern advances are worthless unless placed in a human perspective.

Siqueiros re-teamed with Rivera to found *El Machete*, a communist publication that called for "people's art," but their friendship ultimately fell victim to the bitter Stalin-Trotsky rift in the communist party. A guest at the 10th anniversary of the Soviet Revolution, Siqueiros was a dogmatic supporter of Stalin, going so far as to organize a failed assassination attempt on the leader's rival, Leon Trotsky. One of many endeavors that prompted the artist to flee his environment, it was during these exiles that he produced his most accomplished and prolific work in the Muralist movement. In 1952's *Social Security to all Mexicans (Siqueiros Slide 017P)*, the artist casts a new spin on the Greek myth of Prometheus, the creator of mankind. According to legend, Prometheus stole fire from the gods when he discovered Zeus's mistreatment of man, giving the fire

to mortals and instructing them in the arts and sciences. In this cautiously optimistic image, the fiery figure plummets into a plastic, comic-book-styled metropolis. As a crowd looks on in amazement, a rainbow punctuates the sky above the city's towering skyscrapers and intricate machinery. And like the titular god, Siqueiros expresses sympathy for his fellow man, dwarfed by the excesses of modern life.

A similar theme dominates the immense *Progress of Humanity* (**Siqueiros Slide 6052**), a severe, almost robotic work. At once primitive and futuristic, the figure recalls an indigenous mask of Pre-Columbian days, with its thick geometric lines, opaque and monochromatic color palette, and expressionless face. It's a confrontational image that seems to question the true extent of the human race's evolution.

In this final detail of *Revolution Against Porfirian Dictatorship* (**Siqueiros Slide 604P**), Siqueiros presents a glorious summary of a nation's bid for life, liberty, and happiness. The Symbolist and Impressionist influence is apparent in the shapely forms of the foreground's female revelers, while in the background, the wealthy upper class men and Diaz himself watch with anxiety. Here their literal and figurative elevated position offers little protection from a general population in search of equality. They are no longer isolated or relegated to rural poverty. A heroic and lively portrait of a nation in transition, it is public, it is powerful, and it belongs to the people.



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Item Code	Artist / Period	Slide Title
MC67600F	Camarena, Jorge G.	(det.) Humanity Attaining Freedom (Center). Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City
MC68601F	Castellanos, Julio	Children's Games: The Horse. c.1931-34, Heroes of Churubusco School, Mexico
MH15500P	Helguera, Fran.Eppens	Life
MH19500P	Herran, Saturnino	Day of the Dead. 1913, Bella Arts, Mexico City
MM80600F	Morado, Jose Chavez	Hidalgo, the Liberator. 1955, Granaditas Storehouse, Guanajuato, Mexico
MM67500P	Murillo, Gerardo	The Eruption of Paricutin Mural
MN13500P	Nishizawa, Luis	Air is Life. Medical Center, Mexico City
MO11600F	O'Gorman, Juan	(det.) Gertrudis Bocanegra Library Mural (Lower Left). Patzcuaro, Michoacan
MO06013F	Orozco, Jose	Vision, Contemplation, Mastery: Soul's Flame. 1938-39, Guadalajara, Mexico
MO06016F	Orozco, Jose	Hidalgo. 1937, The Government Palace, Guadalajara, Mexico
MO06066F	Orozco, Jose	Christ Destroying Cross (Modern Migration of Spirit). 1932-34, Dartmouth
MO06500F	Orozco, Jose	Mother's Farewell. 1926, National Preparatory School, Mexico City
MO06600F	Orozco, Jose	The 5 Phases of Man/Knowledge. 1936, University of Guadalajara, Mexico
MO06602F	Orozco, Jose	The Iron Man. 1938-39, Hospicio Cabanas, Guadalajara, Mexico
MO06604F	Orozco, Jose	(det.) Hidalgo (Victims of the Colonial Regime), The Government Palace, Guadalajara, Mexico
MO06607F	Orozco, Jose	(det.) Catharsis (Upper Left). 1934, Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City
MO06609F	Orozco, Jose	Destruction of Old Order. 1926, National Preparatory School, Mexico City
MO06610F	Orozco, Jose	Mural in front of apse, Gabino Ortiz Library. c.1939-41, Michoacan, Mexico
MO06614F	Orozco, Jose	Two headed Horses. 1938-39, Hospicio Cabanas, Guadalajara, Mexico
MO06618F	Orozco, Jose	Juarez & the Fall of the Empire. 1948, National History Museum, Mexico City
MO06613P	Orozco, Jose	La Joie de Vivre. Orozco Museum, Guadalajara, Mexico
MR24002F	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Man and Machinery (Center of Mural). 1932, north wall, Detroit Institute of Art, MI
MR24010F	Rivera, Diego	Detroit Research. 1932, South wall, Detroit Institute of Art, MI
MR24600F	Rivera, Diego	He Who Wants to Eat Must Work. 1928, The Ministry of Education, Mexico City
MR24603F	Rivera, Diego	The Wall Street Banquet. 1926, The Ministry of Education, Mexico City
MR24604F	Rivera, Diego	Colonial Domination. 1951, National Palace, Mexico City
MR24606F	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Martyr's Blood (Emiliano Zapata). 1926, College of Agriculture, Chapingo
MR24607F	Rivera, Diego	Peasant Woman with Ears of Corn. 1926, College of Agriculture, Chapingo, Mexico
MR24608F	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Technique Brings Man Mastery of the Universe (War). 1934, National Palace, Mexico City
MR24609F	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Technique Brings Man Mastery of the Universe (Center). 1934, National Palace, Mexico City
MR24616F	Rivera, Diego	(det.) History & Perspective of Mexico (East Wall, Mid Right). 1935, National Palace, Mexico
MR24617F	Rivera, Diego	Fecund Earth. 1926, Chapel, National College of Agriculture, Chapingo, Mexico
MR24618F	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Ancient and Modern Medicine (Lower Left). 1953, Race Hospital, Mexico City
MR24621F	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Great Tenochtitlan, the Market (Upper Left). 1945, National Palace, Mexico
MR24500P	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Creation (Woman). 1922-23, National Preparatory School, Mexico City
MR24613P	Rivera, Diego	(det.) Creation (Man). 1922-23, National Preparatory School, Mexico City
MS286052	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) The Progress of Humanity (Dodecagon Outer Face). c.1965, Cultural Polyforum, Mexico City
MS28501F	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) New Democracy (Victim of War, Left Section). 1944-45, Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City
MS28002P	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) Mural El Coronelazo (Self Portrait). 1945, Mexico City
MS28005P	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) Bourgeoisie Mural (Dictator-left wall). 1939-40, Electric Union, Mexico City
MS28006P	Siqueiros, David A.	Death to the Invader Mural. c.1942, Escuela Mexico, Chillan, Chile
MS28017P	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) Social Security to All Mexicans (Prometheus). 1952-54, Race Hospital, Mexico City
MS28020P	Siqueiros, David A.	Theater in the Life of the Community Mural. 1958, Mexico City
MS28025P	Siqueiros, David A.	Siqueiros at Work
MS28026P	Siqueiros, David A.	The University to the People: The People to the University
MS28502P	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) Celebration of the Future Victory of Medical Science over Cancer. c.1954-61
MS28600P	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) Bourgeoisie Mural (Revolutionary, Right Wall). 1939-40, Electric Union, Mexico City
MS28602P	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) Revolution against Porfirian Dictatorship (People/ Horse). c.1954-61, National Museum, Mexico City
MS28604P	Siqueiros, David A.	(det.) Revolution against Porfirian Dictatorship (Porfirio Diaz). c.1954-61, National History Museum, Mexico City
MT02007F	Tamayo, Rufino	Quetzalcoatl Struggling with Tezcatlipoca. Mural, Mexico