



Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927–1940 (Pitt Illuminations)

Anna Indych-Lopez

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The art of muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros emerged after the violence of the Mexican Revolution. Beginning in the 1920s, promoters sought to bring the work of these artists to the U.S. public, who had acquired a newfound taste for Mexican culture. *Muralism without Walls* examines the introduction of Mexican muralism to the United States and seeks to account for the specific strategies and networks by which the muralists both engaged and resisted the broader fascination with “south of the border” culture.

Indych-López investigates the dynamics of cultural exchange for the artists and the viewing public. She analyzes the presentation of works by *Los Tres Grandes* in three influential exhibitions of the 1930s, probing critical reactions to the exhibitions, the visual strategies utilized to convey and downplay cultural nationalism, and how U.S. attitudes toward Mexican muralism evolved over time.

The presentation of muralism in the United States faced numerous ideological, logistical, and aesthetic challenges. Perceptions of Mexican cultural identity as rural and folkloric initially skewed the reception of the politicized, vanguard art of the muralists. And the reinterpretation of murals in entirely new media (small-scale portable frescoes, paintings, prints, photographs, and drawings) intersected with debates in the United States and Latin America about the role of public art in society. Indych-López reveals that despite the tendency of U.S. institutions to attempt a stifling of the revolutionary and panoramic power of the work, the museum-going public still held expectations for political content from the muralists.

Although Mexican culture is often used as a tool for diplomacy in the United States, this study reinserts the work of the muralists into the broader story of international modernism. *Muralism without Walls* opens a new perspective on the cultural politics of modern Mexico and the United States and the ways in which muralism fashioned Mexican modernity.

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