

## 1) Introduction

The Mexican Revolution began in 1910 as an uprising against the established order. It later changed from a revolt to a multi-sided civil war, lasting until 1920. In the 1920s and 1930s, post-revolutionary governments commissioned muralists to create narratives of Mexico's complex past as a way to educate the public and generate cohesion in a bitterly divided nation.

This research provides insight into the representations of the masses of the Mexican Revolution in the murals of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Álfaro Siqueiros, the three most important painters of the post-revolutionary period.

Although these artists have been the subject of many critical studies and exhibitions in Mexico and worldwide, little attention has been paid to whether their artwork reflects the perspective of early historians, contemporaries of the muralists, who spoke of a leaderless, popular, and anonymous revolution; or to how the artists coincide or differ in the way they depict the masses.

Research questions in the analysis of murals:

- 1) Are the masses represented as agents of an anonymous revolution, in other words, as autonomous or subordinate subjects?
- 2) How do these artists coincide or differ in the way they depict the masses?

## 2) Methodology

- 1) Prepare a bibliography on the Mexican Revolution and Mexican Muralism.
- 2) Create a synthesis of secondary sources.
- 3) Establish a comprehensive corpus of all the murals (21 in total) by the three artists that depict the masses.
- 4) Conduct a narratological analysis of each painting with the objective of answering the two research questions.

## 5) Next steps

- 1) Develop project into a conference presentation for the annual DMLL Undergraduate Student Symposium on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015.
- 2) Further develop my project into a research paper for an MA.

## 3) Results

### Artists' visions of muralism

Orozco	Rivera	Siqueiros
		
"The highest, the most logical, the purest form of painting is the mural. It is too, the most disinterested form, for it cannot be made a matter of private gain: it cannot be hidden away for the benefit of a certain privileged few. <b>It is for the people. It is for ALL.</b> "	"[Mexican muralism] for the first time in the history of monumental painting ceased to use gods, kings, chiefs of state, heroic generals, etc. as central heroes.... <b>For the first time in the history of Art, Mexican mural painting made the masses the hero of monumental art.</b> "	"[The goal of the movement was] to socialize artistic expression and wipe out bourgeois individualism, to repudiate the practice of easel painting, to commit itself to the goal of a <b>monumental public mural art, and to direct itself...to the native races humiliated for centuries; to the soldiers made into hangmen by officers, to the peasants and workers scourged by the rich.</b> "

### Analysis of three representative paintings

		
José Clemente Orozco: <i>Soldaderas</i> (1926), Museum of Modern Art, NY	Diego Rivera: <i>Agrarian Leader Zapata</i> (1931), Museum of Modern Art, NY	David Álfaro Siqueiros: <i>From the Dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz to the Revolution – The People in Arms</i> (1957-1965) Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico
❖ Popular revolution	❖ Popular revolution	❖ Popular revolution
❖ Ambiguous historical narrative ❖ Unrecognizable characters ❖ Male protagonists, women as followers ❖ Subjects facing away from spectator ❖ Emphasis on wandering aimlessly ❖ Critical perspective	❖ Identifiable historical narrative ❖ Recognizable characters ❖ Male protagonists ❖ Subjects facing forward ❖ Emphasis on force and direction ❖ Celebratory perspective	❖ Identifiable historical narrative ❖ Unrecognizable characters ❖ Female and male protagonists ❖ Subjects facing forward ❖ Emphasis on force and direction ❖ Celebratory perspective

## 6) Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Jorge Carlos Guerrero for his guidance and support in developing and completing my research project.

## 7) Contact information

Please feel free to contact me by email with any questions or comments you may have about my research project:

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## 4) Conclusion

- 1) The works of Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros coincide with the views of early historians of the revolution in that they depict a popular, leaderless revolution.



- 2) Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros share the same vision of muralism, but depict the masses of the Mexican Revolution in distinct ways.

Rivera and Siqueiros celebrate determined masses in action, always composed of clearly delineated individuals depicted in clear colours. Whereas Rivera depicts solely men as protagonists, Siqueiros portrays both men and women as protagonists of their own history.

On the other hand, Orozco provides a critical perspective of the masses in revolution; the masses are represented as erring groups, composed of indistinguishable individuals depicted in somber colours; both men and women wander aimlessly through a history they do not forge, but rather undergo.

- 3) The murals of Rivera and Siqueiros, in line with post-revolutionary governments, glorify a popular revolution, whereas Orozco's works raise questions about the nature and purpose of the popular revolution.

## 8) References

### Selected bibliography

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