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OROZCO IN GRINGOLAND:
THE YEARS IN NEW YORK, 1927-34, 1940

by

ALEJANDRO ANREUS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
1997

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

OROZCO IN GRINGOLAND:
THE YEARS IN NEW YORK, 1927-34, 1940

by

Alejandro Anreus

Adviser: Marlene Park

This dissertation investigates the life and work of the Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) during his extended stay in New York City in the years 1927-34, and in later, shorter visits in 1940 and 1945-46. It begins in 1927, when Orozco, lacking mural commissions, decided to leave Mexico and come to New York, leaving behind a country embroiled in both political and religious strife. I will examine chronologically and briefly summarize Orozco's career up to the point of his departure, as well as his reasons for leaving Mexico. I will also examine his encounter with "the modern," as exemplified by the city of New York, not just in the general environment of the urban center, but also in his first experiences with European avant-garde art, which he found in the city's galleries.

This study concentrates on Orozco's artistic production while in New York City, in the mediums of easel painting, drawing and lithography, as well as his murals at The New School for Social Research and The Museum of Modern Art. I

examine and interpret these works not just in the light of previous literature on the artist, but also through Orozco's own words, and in juxtaposition to the works of some of his contemporaries, both Mexican and North American.

I also place a special emphasis on Orozco's view of the Mexican Revolution, and Mexican reality in general, as expressed through his easel and graphic works, even in New York City. I examine the murals at The New School for Social Research from a contextual perspective, going beyond the usual formal interpretations based on the theory of Dynamic Symmetry. A pivotal work, Dive Bomber and Tank, the 1940 portable mural at The Museum of Modern Art, is discussed and interpreted thoroughly here for the first time in either Spanish or English. The work concludes with the artist's last visit to the city in 1945-46 and an overview of his influence on American artists.

Orozco's work during his New York period has either been ignored or misinterpreted, while greater emphasis and in-depth research has focused on his murals in California (Prometheus, Pomona College) and New Hampshire (An Epic of American Civilization, Dartmouth College). I have undertaken this research to remedy this omission within the Orozco literature. My contribution lies in the contextual examination of the artist's New York work, in the light of his changing political outlook and aesthetic concerns. My methodology is eclectic, synthesizing both formal means and

sociopolitical concerns to arrive at a clearer reading of the works. This dissertation locates Orozco in the crossroads of politics and art, grounded in the period between the two World Wars.

FOR MY WIFE DEBRA
TO THE MEMORY OF MY GRANDMOTHER,
MARIA OTILIA ANREUS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work began, perhaps, when as a 12-year-old boy I encountered Orozco's work through the books of both Alma Reed and MacKinley Helm at the Elizabeth Public Library in Elizabeth, New Jersey. I had become interested in art at age 11 and was reading everything I could find at the Public Library. I was coming home with books mostly on Italian and French artists. My grandmother, ever the Latin Americanist, suggested that I look for books on Cuban art (the country of my birth) or Latin American artists. She mentioned "Los Tres Grandes": Rivera, Siqueiros (who was still alive in 1972), and Orozco. My grandmother suggested that I look at Orozco. Orozco's work moved me at 12 years of age, and it has continued to move me through the completion of this dissertation.

When I did my undergraduate work in art history at Kean College of New Jersey, I was fortunate to study under Alan Wallach, currently Ralph H. Wark Professor of Art and Art History, College of William and Mary. He opened the doors of

art history to me; he made the discipline exciting and contextual, a method for reading reality and interpreting history. I will always be grateful for his encouragement, guidance and friendship.

My teachers at the Graduate and University Center, City University of New York, and scholars, colleagues, artists, dealers, collectors, the Orozco family and others all over the United States and Mexico have helped me to understand the matrix of ideas emanating from the subject I have tackled. My thanks begin at the Graduate Center with Marlene Park, my ever-supportive adviser. Her understanding and thoroughness kept me focused and on schedule in meeting deadlines. I want to also thank the rest of the Committee: Eloise Quiñones-Keber, Art History, and Paul Avrich, History, both of the Graduate Center, and Shifra M. Goldman of the Latin American Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

Among my fellow students, Diana Linden and Julia Herzberg talked with me about Orozco, muralists and social-realism, and made their enthusiasm for doctoral work contagious.

Before I knew what questions to ask about Orozco's years in New York City, the late José Gómez Sicre generously shared

his reminiscences as well as his papers. The same must be said of Orozco's widow, the late Margarita Valladares, who corresponded with me, and art critic and poet Luis Cardoza y Aragón, who did the same before his death.

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In the United States, Maria Leyva, at the Visual Arts Ar

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I thank my family, including my mother Margarita and my aunts Nereyda and Gladys, for their love and support. My children, David and Isabel, were always patient whenever I had to work on Orozco. Most of all, I am grateful to my wife and friend Debra Blehart, who shares the dedication of this

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INTRODUCTION

"Los Tres Grandes" of the Mexican mural movement revived a monumental, narrative painting that had a profound impact on the art of the Western hemisphere up to World War II. José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) is both the oldest and least studied of the "Big Three" of the Mexican mural movement. From 1927 until 1934, Orozco lived in self-imposed exile in the United States, and was based in New York City. For Orozco, who did not visit Europe until 1932, the encounter with New York City was his first encounter with a modernity radically different from his native Mexico's, whether expressed in art, design, economics, technology or urbanism. The modernity of Mexico City was one thoroughly grounded in its many pasts: Pre-Columbian, Colonial, 19th Century Positivism, the "modernismo" of Symbolism and Ruben Dario, etc. The modernity of New York City seemed to have no past, was grounded in Protestant practicality and was thoroughly industrial.

His engagement with New York City enabled Orozco to expand his artistic vision. While in the city of New York he produced over thirty seminal easel works, took up lithography (executing nineteen lithographs between 1928 and 1930), and painted two major murals: *Revolution and the Brotherhood of Man*, at the New School for Social Research (1930-31), and *Dive Bomber and Tank* (1940), at the Museum of Modern Art,

executed during a brief return to the city. The New York years fit into his total output and career not just as an experimental period for the formal and thematic concerns that would be expressed in the more mature murals of Guadalajara (1936-39), but also as a time when Orozco produced some of his most important easel work.

The New School mural has been studied from a formal and chronological perspective (Hurlburt), yet its iconographic and contextual aspects remain unexplored. The portable mural for the Museum of Modern Art was dealt with briefly by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. in 1946 (*What is Modern Painting?*). In this thesis, I have explored both of these murals in an integrated manner; examining context, form and content.

The artists' greatest champion in the city was the occasional journalist, Alma Reed (1889-1961). In fact, Reed opened the Delphic Studios gallery in May, 1929, to promote Orozco's work and in 1932 also wrote the first monograph on the artist. Nevertheless, Orozco had an uneasy relationship with his dealer. This was due in part to the economic and emotional demands placed upon the artist by the family he had left back in Mexico.

His stay in New York enabled Orozco to develop a critical position towards the work of his compatriots (Diego Rivera in particular), especially with regard to their depiction of Mexican life and the revolution from a picturesque, even exotic, point of view. To this he proposed

an essentially bleak and tragic view that is best expressed in the prints and paintings of the 1920s and early 1930s. While Rivera praised the assembly lines in Detroit, Orozco stressed the brutality of modern city life. Siqueiros and Rivera were Marxists, fascinated with the technology brought about by American capitalism. Orozco's political background was in anarchism - he came to understand that U.S. modernity, as expressed in New York City, was a sophisticated product of capitalist ideology. Also like many anarchists world-wide after the triumph of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and its totalitarian aftermath, Orozco became skeptical of revolutions in general. This skepticism is visible in many of his graphic and easel works of Mexican scenes.

SOURCES

Despite the significance of Orozco and the growing demand for studies of Latin American art and especially murals, studies of Orozco are few and inadequate. Five books in English have dealt with Orozco's work. These are Reed's 1932 monograph, MacKinley Helm's 1953 biography, *Man of Fire*, Reed's *Orozco* of 1956, the Oxford Museum of Modern Art's 1980 *Orozco!* catalogue, and Laurance Hurlburt's 1989, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States*. The first, a collection of black and white images with a one-page introduction by the author, scarcely addresses the importance of his work. The second, a traditional chronological biography, demonstrates

the author's lack of familiarity with Mexican culture as well as only a rudimentary knowledge of the Spanish language. Although a primary source, the Reed biography must be read critically, because of the author's subjective viewpoint. The Oxford catalogue presents an overview of Orozco's life and work which is too reliant on secondary and tertiary sources. Hurlburt's recent book is solid and basic, but limited. It lays out the itineraries of Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros while in the United States and presents previously unknown information regarding patronage. However, Hurlburt omits an iconographic reading of the murals; he treats Orozco's New School mural quickly and ignores the portable Museum of Modern Art mural of 1940.

In Spanish, the main works on Orozco are three which are generalized treatments of the artist and his works: Orozco, Forma e Idea (Justino Fernández, 1942), Orozco (Luis Cardoza y Aragón, 1959), and Orozco: Una Vida para el Arte (Raquel Tibol, 1983). A fourth book, Orozco: Una Relectura (Xavier Moyssén, ed., 1983), is an anthology of essays which vary in depth and critical content.

This dissertation builds upon and responds to the Orozco literature of the past fifty years in both Spanish and English.

METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, my work is both critical and

contextual, indebted to the model offered by Shifra M. Goldman in her *Mexican Painting in a Time of Change* (1981). For example, Goldman examines the complex relationship between Mexican Communist party aesthetics, as exemplified by Siqueiros and his work, and the more existentialist and ideologically disillusioned culture of the Mexican post-World War II environment, as exemplified by the work of artists like Arnold Belkin, José Luis Cuevas and others.

This dissertation begins with Orozco's reasons for leaving Mexico at the end of 1927; namely, the changing political environment under President Plutarco E. Calles and its effects on cultural politics. This study concludes with Orozco's last visit to New York in 1945 and his long term influence on diverse American artists (Jacob Lawrence, Jackson Pollock, Rico Lebrun, Leonard Baskin and Leon Golub). The dissertation is organized chronologically/thematically. The contextual approach required substantial background reading. In addition to Orozco and general mural literature, I studied the cultural history of New York City during the 1920s and 30s, the Museum of Modern Art and its sponsorship of Mexican art, reception to and perception of the presences of Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros in New York City through the general press, as well as the interest and presentation of Mexican art by the commercial art galleries.

A critical reading of Orozco's correspondence while in New York City was essential. Some of it is published, such as the letters to Jean Charlot (1971) and the letters to Margarita Valladares de Orozco (1987). Some remained unpublished until my writing of this thesis. Deciphering the artist's slim and straightforward autobiography (*Autobiografía*, 1945) was important in the reconstruction of his years in New York City. One manuscript interview with Orozco is in the José Gómez Sicre papers in Washington, D.C. It dates from 1946 and it was conducted in New York City by the critic-curator, José Gómez Sicre. It had not been published until now. I have utilized not only this interview, but also other Orozco correspondence to his wife that has not been published, as well as personal interviews and questionnaires of artists and critics that either knew Orozco or the time period that I am dealing with.

In this dissertation I examine Orozco's artistic production while in the city of New York, through two murals, easel paintings, drawings and lithographs. I interpret these works not only through the cultural and sociopolitical context and content of both the period and the depicted subjects, but also on their own terms as works of art endowed with formal power.

CHAPTER 1

"Pinche Pais": Leaving Mexico in 1927

In 1927, when Mexico entered the second year of the Cristero war, President Plutarco Elías Calles crushed the anarcho-syndicalist labor movement.¹ On the 11th of December² Orozco departed from Mexico on what was to be his second trip to the United States. He had been there, on a previous trip lasting two years, from 1917 to 1919. These

¹ Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, vol. 1: La guerra de los cristeros, (México, D.F.: Siglo XXI, 1973-74), pp. 9-20. The Cristero war (1926-29) originally started as a conflict between the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the government of Alvaro Obregón. The clash between these two institutions centered on Article 130, #3,5 and 27 of the Revolutionary Constitution of 1922, which established positions of intolerance towards the freedom of movement and association of the Roman Catholic church and the practice of the faith by its followers. The struggle evolved into a civil war, where the brunt of the fighting was borne by the peasant believers, who had in the 1910s supported Zapata and Villa.

John M. Hart, Anarchism & The Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), pp. 156-175. In this seminal work, the most thorough to exist on Mexican anarchism in either Spanish or English, Hart presents the origins and developments of the movement. He discusses the creation of the Casa del Obrero Mundial (September 22, 1912), its support of the Constitutionalist forces within the revolution (Carranza and Obregón), and the evolution of the Casa into the Confederación General de Trabajadores, founded on February 22, 1921. Through Dr. Atl, Orozco came into contact with the Casa's brand of anarcho-syndicalism. This is Orozco's only known political association.

² Lucrecia Orozco de Herrero, typed response to questionnaire by the author, September 5, 1995, p. 1. "Yo nací el 13 de noviembre de 1927, por lo que el 11 de diciembre tenía yo menos de un mes de edad. De hecho mi padre solo esperó mi nacimiento para partir a Estados Unidos. Él partió para Estados Unidos el 11 de diciembre de 1927, por tren."

events as we shall see, were not unrelated. In his Autobiografía Orozco dedicates chapters 6 and 7, a total of twelve pages, to his first sojourn in the United States.³ It is in these pages that we find the anecdote on the destruction (due to their immoral subject matter) of some sixty watercolors by Customs officers in Laredo, Texas. He then proceeded to describe his visit to San Francisco, his work there as a sign and movie poster painter, the general anti-German atmosphere (at the end of World War I), and his eventual decision to go to New York. During his first day in the city, Orozco encountered Siqueiros and his then wife, Graciela Amador, who were on their way to Europe. They spent a number of days together seeing the sights of the "Imperial City" (Orozco's words), traveling by subway to Brooklyn and arguing about the relationship between technology and art.⁴ In the text, Orozco insists that he took the opposite side of the argument simply to make it lively, even though he does not recall which side he took. Siqueiros remembered it differently:

³ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 3rd ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1984), pp. 47-58. Chapter 6 begins on p. 47 and ends on p. 52, chapter 7 starts on p. 53 and concludes on p. 58.

⁴ Ibid., p.53. "Al llegar a Nueva York encontré a Siqueiros que se disponía a embarcarse rumbo a Europa en compañía de su esposa Graciela Amador. Nos reunimos con Juan Olaguíbel y recorrimos la Ciudad Imperial. Fuimos por el subway a Brooklyn y discutimos acerca de los prodigios de la mecánica en relación con el arte, y para hacer más animada la velada tomamos cada uno diferente punto de vista con el objeto de que hubiera choque."

...I could not hold back my old admiration for such a 'powerful work of engineering'. With the usual enthusiasm of always regarding this work, I told José Clemente Orozco: 'One can barely imagine what it means to drill eighty miles of rock to make these trains run with such speed and precision, which is one of its great merits.' Once again, José Clemente Orozco turned his face towards me with his furious owl eyes, screaming: 'You are an idiot. This is nothing portentous. Anyone can make this!' Then to get him more upset, something which was my custom, I said to him with all the possible sarcasm, knowing that this way I would offend him: 'This is worth a thousand times more than all the work of your famous Rodin' (which he liked a great deal). Then the train came, we jumped in it quickly, and already sitting, José Clemente Orozco came back on the attack: 'Idiotic provincial. Idiotic provincial...'⁵

Already in this brief argument, we see Orozco's essentially dystopic stand towards technology.

After Siqueiros' departure, Orozco went on to explore Harlem, Coney Island (where the side shows with its freaks

⁵ David Alfaro Siqueiros, Me llamaban el Coronelazo, 3rd ed. (México, D.F.: Editorial Grijalbo, S.A., 1987), pp. 134-135. This and all other translations from the Spanish are by the author. "...yo no pude ya contener mi ya vieja admiración por tan 'portentosa obra de ingeniería'. Con el mismo entusiasmo de siempre que se trataba de esa obra, le dije a José Clemente Orozco: 'Apenas se puede uno imaginar lo que significa haber taladrado ochenta millas de roca para hacer correr estos trenes con rapidez y precisión, que son uno de sus mayores méritos'. Una vez más, José Clemente Orozco volvió la cara hacia mí con sus ojos de tecolote furibundo, gritándome: '¡Eres un verdadero payo idiota. Payo. Payo. Esto no es nada portentoso. Esto lo hace cualquiera!' Entonces, para hacerlo enojar más, cosa que era mi costumbre, le dije con todo el sarcasmo posible, sabiendo que así lo ofendía yo: 'Esto vale mil veces más que toda la obra junta de tus famosos Rodin' (que a él le gustaba mucho). En eso llegó el tren, tuvimos que trepar rápidamente, pero ya sentando, José Clemente Orozco volvió a la carga: 'Provinciano idiota. Provinciano idiota...'"

caught his fancy), tattoo parlors, and the Flea Circus.⁶ He ends this chapter with a sarcastic meditation on the pre-mural art milieu in Mexico, where anyone (given colors, canvases and brushes) could be an art student. This is obviously an attack on painter/educator Alfredo Ramos Martínez and his open air art school in Santa Anita.⁷

Undoubtedly the most interesting aspect in the first New York section of the Autobiografía is the artist's mention of Harlem and Coney Island, both marginal and exotic places that he would frequent after 1927 and from which he would derive visual works.

Orozco then returned to Mexico, married Margarita Valladares and executed murals at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria San Ildefonso (1923-26), Casa de los Azulejos (1925) and the Escuela Industrial de Orizaba (1926). The Preparatoria murals are his first monumental works, filled with experiments, indecisions and transitions. On the first floor we see his debt to Botticelli in the Maternity panel. His experience as a political cartoonist is reflected in the caricature-like panel The Rich Dine While the Workers Quarrel, as well as on the second floor in such works as The Law and Justice, God the Father and The Final Judgment (fig. 1), Liberty, The Church, and Reactionary Forces. The more

⁶ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 3rd ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1984) pp. 53-56.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

stylistically focused Orozco is found in the panels whose subjects are either the Conquest (Franciscan panels (fig. 2), Cortés and Malinche, etc.) or the Revolution (The Trench (fig. 3), The Farewell to the Mother, etc.). The arches in the corridor contain decorations comprising of powerful hands, hammers and sickles -- let us remember that at this time Orozco was a member of the Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores, founded in 1923, whose tenents and symbols resembled those of the Mexican Communist Party.

In 1925, while work at the Preparatoria was interrupted, Orozco painted in the private residence Casa de los Azulejos the mural Omnisciencia (fig. 4). This work was commissioned by the owner, Francisco Sergio Iturbe. The subject is an allegory of theosophic content,⁸ where nude figures of both genders represent a creation story.

The last mural of this period, Revolución Social (fig. 5) at the Escuela Industrial de Orizaba, again takes up the theme of the revolution. On a wall the shape of an inverted

⁸ Fausto Ramírez, "Artistas e Iniciados en la Obra Mural de Orozco", in Orozco: Una Relectura, ed. Xavier Moyssén (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1983), pp. 95-97. Ramírez interprets this mural as an allegory of creation, where the Eternal-Masculine (creative spirit, intellectual essence, fire) and the Eternal-Feminine (the soul, passive principle, water) are brought forth by the hands of God. The title itself, Omnisciencia, means knowledge acquired not through the physical eyes, but by an inner vision. When and how did Orozco encounter theosophic ideas? According to Ramírez, possibly through his friendship with poet, José Juan Tablada, and his reading of Amado Nervo and José Vasconcelos.

U, Orozco depicted workers and soldiers doing masonry work on the top panel, and weeping women (in one panel hiding a scared soldier of the old regime) in the lower two.

At this time Orozco was also involved in the execution of a number of easel pictures such as La casa blanca and El muerto (fig.6), which would be completed by 1928 in the United States.⁹

On January 28, 1924, José Vasconcelos, the Minister of Public Education and one of the key figures responsible for the execution of murals in public buildings, offered his resignation to President Obregón. It was formally accepted on July 3rd.¹⁰ In August all of the artists painting in the Preparatoria were dismissed, and J. M. Puig Casauranc was

⁹ Renato González Mello, Orozco ¿Pintor Revolucionario?, (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1995), pp. 26-32. González Mello states that Orozco did not begin to depict scenes of the revolution in his work until 1923. His known easel pictures and watercolors prior to this date are part of La casa del llanto series (brothel subjects). Alma Reed and Orozco backdated most of the work of the 1920s -- at issue was his (Orozco's) competition with Rivera and having depicted certain subjects first. Either the painter or Anita Brenner brought the unfinished canvases to the United States where they were completed by 1928.

¹⁰ José Vasconcelos, La Flama. Los de arriba en la Revolución, (México, D.F.: Compañía Editorial Continental, S.A., 1959), p. 293. José Vasconcelos (1881-1959) was the leading intellectual voice of the Mexican revolution between the years 1921-23. He had been Rector of the University under Huerta and Carranza. General Obregón appointed him Secretary of Public Education, a post he held until early 1924. In 1929, he ran for the Presidency of Mexico -- it is generally believed that the election was stolen from him by Pascual Ortiz Rubio, the candidate supported by President Calles. Orozco continued to admire Vasconcelos long after he lost political power.

appointed the new Minister of Public Education. Diego Rivera, ever the opportunist, weathered this crisis and established a good relationship with the new minister. Orozco eventually returned to the Preparatoria in 1926 and completed his work there. He also restored the work which had been defaced by students in 1924.

At this point the initial, enthusiastic phase of the mural movement in Mexico was over. Some of the artists went to the provinces to execute murals, others took up easel painting.¹¹ Again, it was Rivera who continued to receive governmental patronage; under the Calles administration, he completed murals at Chapingo (1926-27) and the Secretaría de Educación Pública (finished in 1928). In 1930, Rivera painted murals in the Palacio de Cortés in Cuernavaca; the patron was United States Ambassador Dwight W. Morrow, a personal friend of President Calles, and a lawyer for the J.P. Morgan Trust. Morrow, on behalf of the Trust, convinced President Calles to stop the nationalization of oil fields. Calles, during his time in power (as President from 1924-28,

¹¹ Conversation with Raquel Tibol and the author, 22 June 1995, Mexico, D.F. Tibol, a leading art critic, was Diego Rivera's secretary (1953-54) and David Alfaro Siqueiros' archivist and official biographer (1955-60). Tibol states that Siqueiros told her that after they were fired from the Preparatoria, he went to Guadalajara to assist Amado de la Cueva in a mural he was painting at the University there. He also recalled that Fernando Leal, Jean Charlot and Orozco went back (temporarily) to the execution of easel pictures. In 1934 the government of President Lazaro Cárdenas, as part of its progressive agenda, renewed the commission of murals.

and as a behind-the-scenes "caudillo" from 1929-34) abandoned the Mexican Revolution's agenda of agrarian reform and workers rights, in favor of the interests of foreign investors. On the cultural front, Calles further dismantled the cultural programs of Vasconcelos, mural painting included.

By mid-1927, José Clemente Orozco found Mexico without possibilities for his art,¹² yet his reason for departing must also be seen within the contemporary socio-political background, not simply as an aesthetic decision.

Orozco's only known political association was with the anarchism of the anarcho-syndicalist Casa del Obrero Mundial. This association came through the painter Gerardo Murillo (1875-1964), known as Dr. Atl. When the Casa took the Constitutionalist's (Generals Carranza and Obregón) side during the struggle against the forces of Villa and Zapata in 1915, Dr. Atl enlisted Orozco to join. Orozco became the political cartoonist of the newspaper La Vanguardia (fig. 7).¹³ After the successes of 1915, the Casa opened quarters in different Mexican cities and became a force within the labor movement. By 1916, Obregón ordered them to disband as a revolutionary movement. They then evolved into the

¹² José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 3rd ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1984) p. 85. "Encontrando poco propicio a México en 1927, resolví ir a Nueva York."

¹³ Ibid., pp.41-45. Proof of his activism are the covers he drew for La Vanguardia on May 10 and 14, 1915 (see fig. 7).

Confederación General de Trabajadores in 1921. In 1927, the CGT supported the strikes of the militant petroleum workers, in Tampico, and the railroad workers nationwide. On February 9, the CGT called for a general strike throughout the Federal District (Mexico, D.F.). President Calles dispatched troops to protect company property. Workers were shot by government troops and the strikers retaliated with sabotage.¹⁴ The government kept up the pressure. Early on, Calles had supported the corrupt labor leader Luis Morones (whom Orozco caricatured, fig.8) and his non-radical Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM). The year 1927 was a watershed for the anarcho-syndicalist labor movement (as represented by the CGT), because it was to be disempowered by the government. Although it continued to exist until its official demise in July 1931,¹⁵ (after 1927) it was ineffective. Orozco, as someone who had been involved with the anarcho-syndicalist movement and as a political cartoonist, had to be affected by the persecution and

¹⁴ John M. Hart, Anarchism & The Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), pp. 173-174. "The Tampico petroleum strike quickly deepened with the dispatch of troops to the scene by President Calles, 'to protect' company property. The soldiers were involved in shooting incidents and the strikers retaliated with sabotage. One scholar has observed that troops were used largely because it was a CGT syndicate on strike."

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 174-176. Hart states that after the 1927 strike, the government continued to harass and persecute the CGT. By 1929, (when faced with the CROM's total cooperation with the government) it lost its sense of direction. By July 1931, the CGT had disbanded.

eventual repression of his one-time comrades.

The other socio-political event of this time was the Cristero War (1926-29).¹⁶ It began as a conflict between the Mexican hierarchy, the Papal Nuncio, and the Obregón government (although it escalated under Calles) over the church's criticism of anti-catholic articles in the constitution and government policies. The Liga Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa was formed and by 1926 when the battles started, it had created a committee of war. The majority of cristero soldiers were peasants who had been followers of either Zapata or Villa. They wanted to continue to worship freely, and they also wanted the land that had been promised to them in the 1910s. If the government was brutal in its persecution of the cristeros, the cristeros themselves committed many atrocities, such as the torture and execution of teachers working with the peasantry in the countryside. The cristeros, which numbered some 20,000 in 1927, took over

¹⁶ Jean Meyer, Historia de los cristianos en America Latina. Siglos XIX y XX, 2nd ed. (México, D.F.: Editorial Vuelta, S.A. de C.V., 1991), pp. 231-233. Meyer states that the conflict started at an institutional level. The government wanted the church to keep its social opinions to itself, the church wanted the government to remove the anti-catholic articles of the recent constitution. The Vatican, ever the survivor, wanted to continue negotiations. The government had enough conflicts to deal with. Both institutions were surprised at the outbreak of war. Most of the cristero forces were comprised of former followers of Zapata and Villa, as well as young men from the middle class Acción Católica.

Jalisco, Colima and Nayarit.¹⁷ In 1929, at the behest of United States Ambassador, Dwight W. Morrow, the Mexican government and the Roman Catholic Church signed an agreement of mutual recognition. The clergy would not be allowed to wear religious habits in public, vote or own private property. The lay leaders of the cristero troops went into exile. The troops themselves were abandoned by the church hierarchy, and they either surrendered, were imprisoned, or executed by the government.¹⁸ Orozco, who was born in Jalisco and had family there, had to be concerned about this religious civil war. Although he was profoundly anti-clerical, his moralistic vision was based on a Christian ethic. Therefore, we can make a connection here with the non-institutional cristero peasants. Betrayed and abandoned, they had much in common with the images of Christ painted by Orozco from the Preparatoria murals to the easel works of the 1940s (fig. 9).

Orozco would recall years later to his friend and collector, Dr. Antonio Luna Arroyo, that in 1927 Mexico was a "pinche pais" (miserable country) in every way –

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 236. Jalisco, Colima and Nayarit were briefly cristero territories. Mexico City, its surrounding areas, and states like Chiapas and Tabasco, were staunchly anti-catholic.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 240–241. The lay leaders of the troops went into exile either to the United States or France. The troops, as well as the priests at the parish level, were betrayed. The best journalistic treatment in English of this subject remains Graham Greene's The Lawless Roads (1939), as well as his novel, The Power and the Glory (1940).

in art, politics, even daily life.¹⁹ He had to leave. In time he would be followed by both Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros into the United States, also in search of mural commissions.

To facilitate his departure, Orozco sold two oil paintings, Combate to Foreign Secretary Genaro Estrada, which gave him enough funds for trainfare and three-months subsistence, and Soldaderas to the Secretary of Public Education, José Manuel Puig Cassauranc.²⁰ He probably left these funds with his wife, two small sons and one-month old daughter, who stayed behind in Mexico.²¹

José Clemente Orozco left Mexico City by train on

¹⁹ Conversation with Dr. Antonio Luna Arroyo and the author, June 28, 1995, Guadalajara, Jalisco. Antonio Luna Arroyo (b. 1909) was a friend and collector of Orozco. They knew each other briefly before Orozco left for the United States in 1927 though Luna Arroyo was only 18. Their friendship grew while Orozco was painting in Guadalajara (1936-39). During the artist's last decade, (whenever Orozco came to Guadalajara or Luna Arroyo visited Mexico City) they met regularly for lunch. Luna Arroyo recalled Orozco using the phrase "pinche pais" whenever he referred to Mexico in 1927 and his decision to leave it.

²⁰ Conversation with Alfredo Orozco Valladares and the author, July 1, 1995, Cuautla, Morelos. Alfredo Orozco Valladares is the artist's second child. A retired architect, he lives in the small town of Cuautla, some three hours from Mexico City. Orozco Valladares recalled his father telling (over and over and throughout the years) the story of the sale of the easel paintings Combate and Soldaderas. Combate is currently in the collection of the Carillo Gil Museum, while Soldaderas belongs to the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City.

²¹ Ibid.

December 11, 1927.²² He was headed for New York. His reasons for leaving had a lot to do with the need for new opportunities for his art. He was also distancing himself from a country where his former anarcho-syndicalist comrades were being repressed, and cristero peasants were at war with the government. He was leaving behind a "pinche pais."

²² Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

"Gringoland": New York City, Alma Reed and The Delphic Studios

When José Clemente Orozco arrived in New York City shortly before Christmas, 1927, he wrote his wife:

My adored little wife: Here I am finally in Gringoland, trying to make a name for myself and promote my work. This incredible city, part amusement park and part growing monstrosity, has changed a great deal since I was last here. It is very cold and windy. For now I don't see any possibility for anything, not until after the holidays ... everybody is partying now. Send me Anita's [Brenner] address.

For now I am living at 316 W. 23rd St. Give many kisses to my little parrots and you receive the heart of your sad

Clemente.¹

The city had indeed changed since he was last there, almost a decade before. As cultural historian Ann Douglas has written recently,

From the start the nation has had a tangible and unique mission concocted of unlimited natural resources, theological obsessions, a multiracial and polyglot population, and unparalleled incentives and opportunities

¹ José Clemente Orozco, Letter to Margarita Valladares, 23 December 1927, Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, México. "Adorada mujercita: Aquí estoy por fin en Gringolandia, tratando de promover mi obra y situar mi nombre. Desde que estuve aquí la última vez, esta ciudad ha cambiado muchísimo, esta ciudad es increíble, parte parque de diversiones y parte monstruo en crecimiento. Hay mucho frío y viento. Por ahora no veo posibilidades de nada, hasta que pasen las fiestas ... todo el mundo está de parranda. Enviame la dirección de Anita. Por ahora estoy viviendo en el 316 W. 23rd St. Dales muchos besitos a mis rorritos y tú recibe el corazón de tu triste/Clemente."

for democratization and pluralism that culminated in the early modern era in the development of the media, all initially based in New York.²

After World War I, the United States, and particularly New York City, entered the modern era. The 1920s was the decade of jazz, skyscrapers (although some of these were not completed until the 1930s), new technologies, gangsters, Prohibition, the Harlem Renaissance, and the prose styles of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. All of this would come to an end with the Stock Market "Crash" in October, 1929. In the meantime, "modern America, led by New York, was free to promote, not an egalitarian society, but something like an egalitarian popular and mass culture, aggressively appropriating forms and ideas across race, class, and gender lines."³ Still, from the "Roaring Twenties" through the Depression, there was another United States: one where lynchings took place in the South, where immigrant labor was exploited, and radicals like Sacco and Vanzetti were executed. But for Orozco, coming from a country torn by social (the struggles of the Mexican Revolution exhausted the country with 7 years of armed conflict) and religious strife, and a society still burdened with the legacies and customs of the 19th and previous centuries, New York City in 1927 was

² Ann Douglas, Terrible Honesty Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995), p. 3.

³ Ibid., p. 8.

radically modern.

The October 1927 exhibition calendar in Art News listed fifty-nine galleries, most of which exhibited antique furniture, Old Masters and Orientalia. Only a dozen or so, such as Kraushaar, Macbeth, Daniel and the Intimate Gallery, displayed American art. Sterner, Weyhe and the Downtown Gallery (which opened in 1927) had exhibited or were to exhibit Mexican art. Paintings by Diego Rivera were exhibited in New York City as early as 1916,⁴ and Rufino Tamayo had exhibited his paintings at the Weyhe Gallery in the fall of 1926.⁵

Starting in the mid-1920s and lasting through the early 1930s, New York City (and other large cities such as Los Angeles and Philadelphia) would get its share of the "Mexican art invasion." Orozco would partake of this phenomenon, but always with reservations.⁶

⁴ "Diego Rivera Exhibition", Art News, 15, (October 14, 1916), p. 3. Organized by the Mexican caricaturist Marius de Zayas, the exhibit was held at the Modern Gallery. De Zayas had lived in New York since 1907, earning his living as a caricaturist for the World. He would become a collaborator of Alfred Stieglitz as well as an exponent of modernism in the United States.

⁵ Sun, (October 23, 1926), p. 5.

⁶ The best discussion of this fashionable interest in Mexican culture is to be found in Helen Delpar's The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican, (University of Alabama Press, 1992). Orozco's reservations regarding this "vogue" is found in his correspondence with Charlot, with his wife Margarita and in the Autobiografía. His reservations were based on his distrust of fashion and what he considered to be the bad taste of tourists.

Again, unlike Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros who had experienced Parisian modernism first hand, for Orozco the city of New York was his first encounter with a secular society in love with itself and its technologies. Rivera lived in Paris roughly from 1909 to 1921; Siqueiros lived there in 1919-20. Both of them, although born in the 19th century, possessed the open, experimental sensibility that we associate with the 20th century. Not so with Orozco. I believe that he was essentially a man of the nineteenth century, or at the very least, one caught in the crosscurrents between the two centuries. Orozco's moralistic outlook is definitely pre-modern, so is his cautious, nearly methodical approach to formal experimentation in his art. This is evident in the ways in which he deals with the "part amusement park and part growing monstrosity" that was New York City.

Orozco's reactions and opinions during his stay in New York City are best found in his correspondence with fellow artist Jean Charlot (1898-1979), and his wife, Margarita Valladares (1898-1993). Orozco exchanged letters with Charlot from December 1927 through February 1929. He wrote to his wife throughout his stay of 1927-34 and during later visits in 1940 and 1945. Most of 1928 was a period of solitude and difficulty in making contacts with the New York art world; therefore, the communication with Charlot at this time was most important to Orozco. The correspondence with

Charlot stopped (due to misunderstandings as well as a sense of competition between the two artists) roughly at the same time that Orozco joined the circle of friends around Eva Sikelianos and Alma Reed.

What did Orozco see in New York City? Who did he meet? Based on Orozco's letters to Charlot, we know that he visited the New York City galleries with regularity (even if he failed to mention which galleries). Before the end of December 1927, Orozco visited exhibitions of Picasso and Renoir:

Yesterday I saw two exhibitions, Picasso and Renoir. Of the first drawings: figures copied, it seems, from greek vases in museums. No more than two or three lines. Very repetitive. Pen and ink drawings. A very able hand. Drawings in pencil with "much volume." I made desperate efforts to become enthusiastic, but did not achieve it. You and I have drawings one hundred times better. A landscape in pastel, which according to W. Pach is exactly the same as Derain. Renoir made quite an impression on me, I liked him extraordinarily. I lost an hour and a half seeing five or six small pictures. The rest is not that good, they must be studies or youthful works. In the evening I visited W. Pach.⁷

⁷ José Clemente Orozco, El artista en Nueva York (Cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI, 1971), pp. 33-36. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 21 December 1927. "Ayer vi dos exposiciones, Picasso y Renoir. Del primero dibujos: figuras copiadas al parecer de vasos griegos de los museos. Dos o tres líneas nomás. Muy repetido. Dibujos a pluma. Mano muy hábil. Dibujos a lápiz con "mucho volumen". Hice esfuerzos desesperados por entusiasmarme pero no lo logré. Tú y yo tenemos dibujos cien veces mejores. Un paisaje al pastel que según dice W. Pach es exactamente igual a los de Derain. Renoir me hizo mucha impresión, me gustó extraordinariamente. Se me fue hora y media viendo cinco o seis cuadritos. El resto no es tan bueno, deben ser ensayos u obras de juventud. En la noche visité a W. Pach."

It is interesting to read in Orozco's own words his liking for Renoir, who was his antithesis, a painter of joy and sensuality. Yet, it demonstrates from the start his great curiosity, his receptiveness to new visual experiences, particularly in the City of New York where, at the age of forty-four, he was encountering the "modern".

Among the first persons whom Orozco visited in New York City was the art critic and painter Walter Pach. Orozco had met Pach when the critic had visited Mexico in 1922 to lecture at the Summer School for Foreigners at the National University. In that same letter to Charlot, Orozco writes of Pach's cordiality, his magnificent studio and great admiration for Picasso, his own awful paintings and good pictures hanging on the walls: a head by Derain, prints by Cézanne and Signorelli.⁸ The acquaintance did not develop into something more. Orozco felt that Pach did not consider him a serious artist; Pach did not appreciate Orozco's opinion regarding his mediocre talents as a painter.

Orozco's visits to galleries and museums continued. In

⁸ Ibid.

Walter Pach (1883-1958) was an art critic and painter, who had been one of the organizers of the 1913 Armory Show. In 1929, Pach published Ananias, or the False Artist (New York, 1928), a book which contains favorable comments on Orozco, although both Picasso and Diego Rivera receive the greatest praise. The most complete discussion of Pach's criticism is Sandra S. Phillips, "The Art Criticism of Walter Pach", The Art Bulletin, No. 1, Vol. LXV (March 1983), pp.106-122.

January of 1928 he visited exhibitions at New York University and the Valentiner gallery. At these, he was quite taken by Matisse, even while recognizing the dramatic differences between himself and Matisse:

...but one of the Matisse's was something very new for me: extraordinary color and so fine, fine that it becomes like china paper and the silk of the colors, yet it never loses its plasticity. The exhibition at the Valentiner gallery of which I send you the checklist, is immensely better, equally Matisse and Derain; this is the first time that I am seeing modern art, to the day, without missing ancient art. Pure painting, without doubts. Grace. Naturalness. Joy. It gives great pleasure to see these pictures and one remains content and satisfied for the rest of the day. The Derain's are busts of women, fleshy and profound. Matisse is color and light, freshness and serenity. These painters are among those who live in the garden and have girlfriends with the five o'clock tea, salons, the good society, good drink and good bed. We are the revolutionaries, the damned and starving.⁹

Orozco saw eighteenth century art, disliked the Sorollas at the Hispanic Society, while admiring its Grecos, Goyas and Velázquez. He found Picasso's pictures disconcerting, yet

⁹ Ibid, p. 38. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 3 January 1928. "... pero uno de los Matisse fue algo muy nuevo para mí: color extraordinario y tan fino, fino que llega al papel de china y la seda de colores, pero no pierde su categoría plástica. La exhibición en la Galería Valentiner y de la cual te mando la adjunta lista, es inmensamente mejor, por igual Matisse y Derain; es la primera vez que veo arte moderno, del día, sin echar de menos el arte antiguo. Pintura pura, sin rodeos. Gracia. Naturalidad. Alegría. Da mucho gusto ver esos cuadros y queda uno contento y satisfecho para el resto del día. Los de Derain son bustos de mujeres, carnosos y profundos. Matisse es color y luz, frescura, serenidad. Estos pintores son gentes que viven en el jardín y tienen amigas del té de las cinco, los salones, la buena sociedad, buena bebida y buena cama. Nosotros somos los revolucionarios, los malditos y muertos de hambre."

unforgettable. American painters he considered a tragedy; to him the true American artists were those who made machines!¹⁰

The one acquaintance from Mexico who was in New York at this time, and willing to help Orozco with her contacts was Anita Brenner (1905-1974). Brenner was a Mexican-born journalist of American Jewish parents. She had studied in Texas. In Mexico, she was something of a ciccerone for visiting Americans during the early 1920s. Although in time Orozco would see her as an advocate of Rivera's work over his, Brenner was the first person to take Orozco to parties and introduce him to potential patrons. When Brenner came to New York in the summer of 1927, she brought with her some of Orozco's drawings from the series "México en Revolución."¹¹ She also published an essay on Orozco in the October 1927 issue of Arts. Brenner would introduce Orozco to Alma Reed, his future patron, dealer, and biographer.

In June, 1928, Orozco would write to Margarita:

Anita told me the other day that there are possibilities of my selling a drawing and small picture of the ones I have made here. A Miss Alma Reed who was the fiancée of Carrillo Puerto, that governor of Yucatán who was killed, is interested in the drawing; she liked my works alot, but

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 39-41. Letter to Jean Charlot, dated 4 January 1928.

¹¹ Anita Brenner letter to Jean Charlot dated 16 January 1947, Charlot papers, Thomas Hale Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

naturally I was not introduced to her.¹²

ALMA REED

In a letter of August 2, Orozco mentions Reed for the second time:

To tell you that I have just received a letter from Alma Reed, whom I have not met, but she is a friend of Tablada and the person that Anita showed my drawings to in days past. She tells me that for a while she has been a profound admirer of mine, and that 'The entire series on the Mexican revolution holds a very intimate appeal to me, but of them, Cemetery scene, is irresistible' and she includes 20 dol. towards the 100, the price of the drawing. She wants to come to my studio and bring a friend to talk about the publication of I don't know what. My luck is changing a little bit, Miti. God listens to you!¹³

Who was Alma Reed (1889-1961)? Born Alma Marie Sullivan (fig. 10) in San Francisco on June 17, 1889, she was the

¹² José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 117. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 30 June 1928. "La Anita me dijo el otro día que hay esperanzas de que se venda un dibujo y un cuadrito de los que he hecho aquí. Que por el dibujo se interesa una srita. Alma Reed que fue novia de Carrillo Puerto, aquel gobernador de Yucatán que mataron, que le gustaron muchísimo mis obras, pero naturalmente no me presentó con ella."

¹³ Ibid, pp.121-122. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 2 August 1928. "Para decirte que acabo de recibir una carta de Alma Reed, a quien no conozco, pero es la amiga de Tablada y a quien Anita le enseñó mis dibujos en días pasados. Me dice que hace mucho es una profunda admiradora mía, que 'The entire series on the Mexican revolution holds a very intimate appeal to me, but one of them, Cemetery scene, is irresistible' y me incluye 20 dol. a cuenta de 100, precio del dibujo. Quiere venir a mi estudio y traer un amigo para tratar acerca de la publicación en no sé que. Ya va cambiando tantito la suerte, Miti. ¡Dios te oye!"

great-granddaughter of Irish immigrants.¹⁴ Her mother, Adelaide Murphy, a housewife, gave birth to ten children, Alma being the oldest. Her father, Eugene Sullivan, was an unsuccessful entrepreneur who doted on his eldest daughter. Alma did not attend college, but by the time she was twenty-four years old she was writing a human interest column for The Call under the pen name of Mrs. Goodfellow.¹⁵

In 1921 through this very column Reed (in 1915 she had married Samuel Reed, whom she would later divorce) saved the life of Simon Ruíz, a young Mexican on death row. Mexicans in California saw Reed as a heroine, and thus President Obregón invited her to visit Mexico as his guest. She returned to Mexico in 1923, this time reporting on the archeological excavations in Yucatán for the New York Times.¹⁶ In Mérida, the capital of Yucatán, Reed met and fell in love with the socialist governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto. They were to be married in 1924, after he had secured a divorce. Reed returned to San Francisco to arrange the wedding plans. While she was away, Carrillo Puerto was assassinated by right-

¹⁴ Antoinette May, Passionate Pilgrim: The Extraordinary Life of Alma Reed, (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1994), p. 4. This is the only biography of Reed, one filled with inconsistencies and errors and too reliant on Reed's own 1956 biography of Orozco. Yet, the basic facts of her early life are accurate.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 13.
The Call was a socialist newspaper.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 72.

wing forces during the abortive de la Huerta rebellion.¹⁷

By the time Orozco met Reed in the summer of 1928, she had traveled throughout Europe, lived in Greece for two years where she translated the poetry of Angelos Sikelianos, and was living on Fifth Avenue with Madame Eva Sikelianos, the poet's widow.¹⁸

Before he met Reed, Orozco had only one opportunity to exhibit his work in New York City. This was at a group exhibition of Mexican art held at The Art Center at 65 East 56th Street, from January 19, through February 14, 1928.¹⁹ Organized by Frances Flynn Paine, it contained works by Rivera, Charlot, Maximo Pacheco, Antonio Ruiz, Roberto Montenegro, Orozco and others. Together with the paintings, Mexican crafts were also for sale. Orozco found the exhibition to have been a total failure, badly hung and essentially an excuse to push Mexican folk art.²⁰

Orozco's first mention of Reed to Charlot is in a letter of September 1928:

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 124.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 212.

¹⁹ The Art Center, "Mexican Art", January 19-February 14, 1928, 65 East 56th Street, New York City. Exhibition announcement, Orozco papers, Visual Art Archives, O.A.S., Washington, D.C.

²⁰ José Clemente Orozco, El artista en Nueva York (Cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI, 1971), p. 54. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 23 February 1928.

Miss Alma Reed, a beautiful woman, is in the mythologizing [refers to the cult of Greek mythology and folk arts in the Sikelianos circle]. She admires me and purchased one of my tragic drawings.²¹

By mid-September Orozco had met Eva Sikelianos (whose portrait he would be painting a month later) through Reed. Madame Sikelianos bought a painting of Orozco's for \$300.00²² and he was invited to visit their "Ashram" at 12 Fifth Avenue. Orozco's nine months of solitude in New York City were over.

Orozco recalled the "Ashram" years later in his autobiography:

The literary-revolutionary salon of Mrs. Sikelianos was well attended. Some days came Greeks, among them doctor Kalimacos, patriarch of the Greek church in New York. One heard modern Greek, spoken to perfection by the owners of the house. Other days came bronze-colored hindus with turbans, followers of the cause of Mahatma Gandhi. Majestically Mrs. Sarojini Naidu would enter dressed in the custom of her country, showing between her eyebrows the distinctive red mark of her elevated caste, and followed by a group of maidens and secretaries, dressed similarly with their dresses and veils of

²¹ Ibid, p. 102. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 10 September 1928. "Miss Alma Reed, bella mujer, anda en el mitotito. Es admiradora mía y me compró un dibujo trágico."

²² José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 128. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 21 September 1928. Orozco does not write the painting's title, only that Madame Sikelianos paid him \$300.00 by check.

colors, stitched in gold.²³

At the "Ashram" Orozco not only met Dr. Kalimacos and Mrs. Naidu, but also the Dutch poet, Leonard Van Hoppen and the Lebanese poet and graphic artist Kahlil Gibran.²⁴ In this environment both literature and politics were constant topics of discussion; discussions where the artist was either an active participant or a careful listener. The subject of Prometheus and other Greek myths was familiar to Orozco before his contact with the Ashram. In the intellectual milieu of Mexico City during the early 1920s Greek myths and their literary expressions were discussed and popularized by both José Vasconcelos and Alfonso Reyes.²⁵ It was in the

²³ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 3rd ed. (México, D.F.:Ediciones Era, S.A., 1984) p. 88. "El salón de la señora Sikelianos, literario-revolucionario, era concurridísimo. Unos días acudían griegos, entre ellos el doctor Kalimacos, patriarca de la iglesia griega de Nueva York. Se oía el griego moderno, hablado a la perfección por las dueñas de la casa. Otros días venían hindúes de color bronceado y turbante, adictos a la causa de Mahatma Gandhi. Entraba majestuosamente la señora Sarojini Naidu ataviada a la usanza de su país, luciendo entre las cejas la marca roja distintiva de su elevada casta y seguida por un cortejo de doncellas y secretarias, ataviadas igualmente con sus trajes y velos de colores, bordados de oro."

²⁴ Ibid, p. 91.

²⁵ José Vasconcelos (1881-1959), politician and philosopher, Minister of Public Education until 1924, had the Greek classics translated into Spanish and published in affordable editions. He identified himself with Ulysses, entitling a volume of his autobiography Ulises Criollo (1935). Alfonso Reyes (1889-1959), poet and essayist, sought a reading of the Pre-Cortesian past with the heroic proportions of Greek myths. This concern is reflected in his Visión de Anáhuac (1917) and Ifigenia Cruel (1924). Reyes

Reed-Sikelianos circle where Orozco encountered the subject again, a visual reflection of which would be his Pomona mural of 1930. Yet the dual international/nationalistic aspects of the Reed-Sikelianos circle, with its Greek, Indian and Mexican components, is most clearly felt in Orozco's New School mural of 1931.

During the week of September 28, 1928, Alma Reed and Eva Sikelianos hosted a modest exhibition of Orozco's works in their apartment. Drawings from the "México en Revolución" series, some unidentified easel pictures and a self-portrait (later destroyed by Orozco) were displayed.²⁶ Reed wrote Orozco regarding the exhibition:

The interest in your exhibit grows. Yesterday we had several very important people here, some of whom are returning today with the owners of galleries and with wealthy prospective purchasers. We feel that in view of this continued interest that it would be wiser to keep the exhibition here until Friday night. There is a likelihood too of some portrait orders, so we think that it would be well to have your marvellous portrait of yourself here....There will be some heads of galleries here today including Marie Sterner. I think I shall have some news for you tomorrow evening.²⁷

and Orozco were friendly until the painter's death.

²⁶ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 130. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 28 September 1928.

²⁷ Alma Reed, Letter to José Clemente Orozco, 26 September 1928. Collection of Lucrecia Orozco Valladares, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

Marie Sterner, wife of realist painter Albert Sterner, did indeed visit Orozco's private display at the Reed-Sikelianos apartment. She offered him his first one-person exhibition in New York City in the coming month of October.

"Mexico in Revolution" opened at the Galleries of Marie Sterner on 57th Street, on October 10, 1928, and ran through the 22nd. The exhibition consisted of thirty-seven ink and wash drawings executed between 1927 and 1928, allegedly based on sketches from through 1917.²⁸ Orozco wrote Charlot:

The serious thing is that an exhibition has been arranged of the already famous 'horrors' in one of the most 'exclusive' galleries of 57th Street, the Marie Sterner, together with other exhibitions of 6 French (artists), Matisse and others. This exhibition is good as an introduction to the upper circles of painting.²⁹

To his wife he wrote:

Love, last night I visited Alma Reed and she gave me a series of FANTASTIC news! The first is that I will have the first exhibition of my work at the Marie Sterner gallery, which is one

²⁸ Galleries of Marie Sterner, "Mexico in Revolution," October 10-22, 9 East 57th Street, New York City. Exhibition announcement, Orozco papers, Visual Art Archives, O.A.S., Washington, D.C.

²⁹ José Clemente Orozco, El artista en Nueva York (Cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI, 1971), p. 119. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 8 October 1928. "Lo serio fue que se arregló la exhibición de los ya famosos 'horrores' en una de las galerías mas 'exclusive' de la calle 57th, la de Marie Sterner, junto con otras exhibiciones de 6 franceses, Matisse y demás. Esta exhibición es muy buena como introducción en los altos círculos de pintura."

of the most exclusive ...³⁰

Much to the disappointment of Reed and Orozco, the exhibition "Mexico in Revolution" did not receive any critical notice, and not a single work was sold.³¹

Orozco was becoming increasingly close to Alma Reed and Eva Sikelianos, going with them everywhere and visiting their apartment several times a week. He shared this with his wife Margarita, writing to her:

Both Alma and Mrs. Sikelianos are behaving towards me in the most generous and courteous manner, you have no idea, as if I was in reality their son.³²

Margarita did not react favorably to this closeness, and she must have expressed this to Orozco in a couple of letters (her letters to Orozco were destroyed by him before he

³⁰ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p.134. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 2 October 1928. "Amorcito, anoche estuve a visitar a Alma Reed y me dio toda una serie de noticias ¡FANTÁSTICAS! La primera es que voy a tener la primera exhibición de mis obras en la galería de Marie Sterner, que es una de las mas 'exclusivas'..."

³¹ Galleries of Marie Sterner, Sale records, Sterner papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C. Not a single critical notice for the exhibition appeared in either the newspapers or the art magazines. According to the records of sale, nothing was sold.

³² José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987) p. 138. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 20 October 1928. "Tanto Alma como la sra. Sikelianos se están portando conmigo de la manera más bondadosa y amable, como no tienes idea, como si realmente fuera yo su hijo."

returned to Mexico in 1934). He responded in November:

Your last two letters made me sad for various reasons, I see that you have formed a wrong idea regarding my dealings with Mrs. Sikelianos and Alma Reed. It is true that they esteem and care for me greatly, but it does not go beyond the purely intellectual plane, professional...³³

In the same letter, Orozco sees his artistic prospects realistically, yet with optimism. He writes of the possibility of painting portraits, yet discards this possibility for lack of both a proper studio and interest in this very society-connected genre. He mentions the different annual exhibitions, but the chances of making a living by selling work through annuals is remote. Finally, he brings up murals and the possibility of getting commissions through publicity, dropping off photographic portfolios at architectural firms, etc.³⁴ While Orozco waited, Reed became more involved as a champion of his talent and Eva Sikelianos returned to Greece.³⁵

All the while Orozco is corresponding with Charlot with

³³ Ibid, p. 141. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 16 November 1928. "Tus dos últimas cartas me dan mucha tristeza por varios motivos, veo que has llegado a formarte una idea muy equivocada con respecto a mi trato con la sra. Sikelianos y Alma Reed. Es cierto que ellas me estiman y me quieren bastante, pero no pasa de ser en el terreno puramente intelectual, profesional..."

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 144. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 5 December 1928.

whom he shares visual experiences. He wonders whether Rouault was familiar with Mexican Holy Week imagery, he visits an exhibition of Spanish painting at the Metropolitan where he sees Velázquez and Goya, but is most impressed by El Greco, whom he considers God. He does not like Forain and finds Renoir weak after the third encounter.³⁶

Orozco's first encounter with Seurat is profound:

The first Seurat that I see; he must have been a man of simplicity and pure heart, one feels guilty and filled with sin in front of his painting filled with light, the other pictures seem dirty, even Cézanne, even Renoir; if there was a need (and there isn't one) for religious painting, it would be Seurat—and not the ugly monkeys that are placed on altars.³⁷

The clarity and order of Seurat obviously impressed Orozco, who himself thought of composition as the true basis of picture-making. In this context, it is important to recall his earlier impression of American painters:

I assure you it is quite a tragedy that of the American painters...the true American artists are

³⁶ José Clemente Orozco, El artista en Nueva York (Cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI, 1971). See letters dated 23 February 1928 (p. 55), 20 March 1928 (p. 63), 25 September 1928 (p. 117).

³⁷ Ibid, p. 63. Letter to Jean Chalot dated 20 March 1928. "El primer Seurat que veo; debe haber sido un hombre puro de corazón y sencillo, se siente uno culpable y lleno de pecado ante su cuadro lleno de luz, los demás cuadros se ven sucios, aun Cézanne, aun Renoir; si hubiera necesidad (que no la hay) de pintura religiosa, ésta sería Seurat—y no los monos feos que ponen sobre los altares."

those who make the machines: in front of them one must discover oneself...³⁸

After this statement one wonders how Orozco would have reacted to the work of the Precisionists. They were after all painting machines in a machine-like manner. Orozco could have seen works by the leading Precisionists at The Downtown Gallery, but if he did, his opinion has never been documented.

Edith Halpert of The Downtown Gallery showed an early interest in Orozco's work. She handled some of his lithographs at the end of 1928, selling six of them at \$13.00 each.³⁹ She also gave Orozco a three-week exhibition of easel paintings of New York scenes, that opened on March 26, 1929.⁴⁰ Orozco complained to Charlot in February that he still had not finished the pictures that were to be exhibited at The

³⁸ Ibid, p. 41. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 4 January 1928. "Te aseguro que es toda una tragedia la de los American painters ... Los verdaderos artistas americanos son los que hacen las máquinas: ante ellos hay que descubrirse..."

³⁹ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987) p. 147. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 25 January 1929. Orozco mentions the sale of six lithographs to his wife at \$13.00 each. He complains that he has been paid for only one. He does not give the titles of the lithographs. Downtown Gallery records of this period are incomplete.

⁴⁰ The Downtown Gallery, "José Orozco: Paintings of New York City", March 26-April 15, 1929, 113 West 13th Street, New York City. Exhibition announcement, Orozco papers, Visual Art Archives, O.A.S., Washington D.C.

Downtown Gallery.⁴¹ Paintings of 1928 and early 1929, such as Eighth Avenue, The Subway, Fourteenth Street, Manhattan and The Elevated were in the exhibition. The Subway was acquired by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, a regular client of the gallery.⁴²

The previous month Orozco's work left the boundaries of New York City, when he presented a small group of easel pictures at The Little Gallery in Philadelphia. Organized by Mary Collum, the gallery's director, the exhibition had been the idea of painter George Biddle (fig. 11) who had met Orozco through Walter Pach. Biddle even made introductory remarks at the opening, and his brother Francis, future attorney general under Roosevelt, acquired the painting Coney Island Side Show for \$150.00.⁴³

⁴¹ José Clemente Orozco, El artista en Nueva York (Cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI, 1971), p. 129. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 19 February 1929.

⁴² Sotheby's, "Important Latin American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture", May 28-29, 1985, 1334 York Avenue, New York, New York. Auction catalogue, plate 30. Mrs. John D. Rockefeller bought The Subway from The Downtown Gallery exhibition. She sold the work through Halpert after World War II. The work was acquired by Mrs. Enid F. Goldsmith, who owned other works by Orozco. The Goldsmith Estate was auctioned by Sotheby's in May, 1985.

⁴³ José Clemente Orozco. Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 150. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 15 February 1929. The exhibition opened on February 13, and ran for two weeks. George Biddle (1885-1973) befriended Orozco through Walter Pach, and later painted his portrait, which according to Orozco made him look like Lincoln (Letter to Charlot dated February 19, 1929). Biddle recalled his friendship with Orozco in his 1939 autobiography An American

During the first two weeks of April an exhibition of preparatory sketches for the Preparatoria murals (1923-26) and photographs of the same murals by Tina Modotti were exhibited at the Architectural League of New York.⁴⁴ During the preparations for this exhibition Orozco met Thomas Hart Benton,

T. Benton, a good painter who could become a caricature of himself, teaches at the 'Art Student's League' and has invited me to exhibit drawings, lithographs and paintings in the large gallery there. He is enthusiastic about my mural work, and has the golden dream of painting large decorations in buildings. He sends large canvases to the League of Architects every year, but so far has not been able to secure even one commission. He makes a living by being a teacher at the Academy.⁴⁵

On April 15th Orozco's exhibition opened at the Art

Artist's Story.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.151. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 24 February 1929. The Modotti photographs of the Preparatoria murals would be used to illustrate Reed's 1932 monograph on Orozco.

⁴⁵ José Clemente Orozco, Letter to Margarita Valladares, 3 April 1929. Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, México. "T. Benton, un buen pintor, que se puede volver una caricatura de si mismo, enseña en la 'Art Students League' y me ha invitado a exhibir dibujos, litografias y pinturas en la galería grande de allí. Es entusiasta de mi obra mural, y tiene el sueño dorado de pintar grandes decoraciones en edificios. Cada año manda grandes telas a la Liga de Arquitectos, mas hasta ahora no ha conseguido ni una comisión. Vive de ser profesor de esa Academia." Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) met Orozco in 1929 and invited him to exhibit at the Art Student's League in April of that year. They both painted murals at the New School of Social Research in 1930-31. In his 1937 autobiography, An Artist in America, Benton does not mention Orozco. The Benton correspondence of this period also does not mention Orozco.

Students League. The exhibition had an impact not just on the students, but also the faculty. Will Barnet, who arrived at the League the following year to study lithography, recalled the impact:

I arrived at the League a year after Orozco had exhibited there, yet the students and faculty were still talking of the monumental forms, the sober drama of the content...everyone wanted to paint murals.⁴⁶

The exhibition at the League was up for two weeks.

During this time, Orozco wrote to Margarita:

...when I arrive at the school they treat me with a great deal of respect and many attentions. Truly, they have behaved very well towards me. A student told me that after seeing my works he wanted to throw out the window everything of his, and one of the most popular american painters, Mr. J. Sloan, said that this was one of the best exhibits of paintings that he had seen in New York in many a year, including the exhibitions that you pay a dollar to get in.⁴⁷

As early as February of the previous year Orozco started

⁴⁶ Will Barnet, Telephone interview with author, 17 October 1995.

⁴⁷ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987) p. 156. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 18 April 1929. "...cuando llego a la escuela me tratan con mucho respeto y muchas atenciones. Verdaderamente se han portado muy bien conmigo. Un estudiante me decía que después de ver mis obras iba a tirar por la ventana todo lo suyo y uno de los pintores más populares americanos, el señor J. Sloan, dijo que ésta era la mejor exposición de pintura que había visto en Nueva York en muchos años, incluyendo las exposiciones en que se paga un dólar la entrada."

doing lithographs with the printer George Miller, who had a shop on 14th Street and printed for artists associated with the Weyhe Gallery.⁴⁸ Orozco's correspondence with both Charlot and Margarita is filled with his skeptical remarks regarding "old man" Weyhe and his establishment.

In June Alma Reed arranged for an exhibition of drawings and small easel paintings at the Chicago Arts Club.⁴⁹ The exhibition opened on the 15th of June and closed on the 29th.⁵⁰ Orozco wrote Margarita that:

My exhibition at the Arts Club is very fine and yesterday they gave me a good reception which was attended by many people. The exhibition of the 'Century of Progress' is no big deal. They have there a ridiculous 'Mexican Village', but it is very popular. From Mexico they are sending lots of knick knacks to sell.⁵¹

⁴⁸ José Clemente Orozco, El artista en Nueva York (Cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI, 1971) p. 57. Letter to Jean Charlot dated 23 February 1928.

⁴⁹ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987) p. 161. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 16 June 1929.

⁵⁰ Chicago Arts Club, "Drawings and Paintings by José C. Orozco", June 15-29, 1928, Chicago, Illinois. Exhibition announcement, Orozco papers, Visual Art Archives, O.A.S., Washington, D.C. This announcement and Orozco's mention in the letter to his wife are the only remaining records of this exhibition. There is no record of it among the Arts Club papers.

⁵¹ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987) p. 161. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 16 June 1929. "Mi exhibición en el Arts Club está muy bien y ayer en la tarde me hicieron una buena recepción y fue mucha gente. La exposición del 'Century of Progress' no tiene gran chiste. Hay ahí un 'Mexican Village' algo ridículo, pero muy popular. De México van a mandar muchas chácharas para vender."

In the same letter, Orozco writes of how much Alma Reed works to help him, while complaining of how tired he is of the insecurity of his lifestyle. Yet he stresses to Margarita that there is no other way to achieve a name for himself and that they must all be patient.⁵² A week and a half later, Orozco returned to Mexico to spend the entire summer with his family.⁵³ This is the only occasion when he returned to his homeland during his stay of 1927 through 1934. Before going back to Mexico, Orozco and Reed came to an understanding regarding the promotion of his career. When he returned to New York in September, she would become his full-time representative and possibly open a gallery devoted to his work.⁵⁴

By the summer of 1929, Orozco's name was beginning to penetrate the New York art world. Although he was still looking for walls for the execution of murals, his drawings, prints and easel paintings were being seen. His early period of isolation was definitely at an end. In Alma Reed he had

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Margarita Valladares, Letter to the author dated 3 September 1992. Orozco stayed with his family in Mexico City from late June through September 3, 1929.

⁵⁴ Ibid. "Mi esposo y Alma Reed llegaron a un acuerdo sobre la promoción de su obra, antes de que él volviera a México en el verano del 1929. Ella iba a ser su representante y estaba pensando en abrir una galería dedicada a su obra."

acquired an advocate for the work he wanted to do in Gringoland.

THE DELPHIC STUDIOS

One of the difficulties in recreating the exhibitions that took place at the Delphic Studios is the lack of archival materials for the gallery. When Alma Reed died in Mexico in 1961, the apartment where she was living was cleaned out, and all of her papers, including the Delphic Studios records, disappeared.⁵⁵

After spending the summer of 1929 in Mexico with his wife and three children, Orozco was back in New York City by September 8. He wrote to Margarita:

Adored Little wife: I am still tired from the trip, this time I got very tired and I could barely sleep during the four nights, so you can imagine how worn out and without desire to do anything I am. I am installed in an 'apartment' which Alma found for me and fixed, it is well situated and comfortable, it has a large room with two windows to the street and a small room for a bedroom with windows to the street. Also there is a bathroom, closets and a small kitchen of about one square meter, but with all the necessities. The 'apartment' costs 70 dol. a month and I have taken it for ten months. Really it is not possible to find any better in N.York for what I need and my possibilities. You must suppose how much I miss you and I miss the

⁵⁵ Raquel Tibol, Conversation with the author, 22 June 1995, Mexico, D.F. Tibol remembers that after Reed's death all of her papers disappeared. She recalled that Siqueiros was indignant that the Reed papers did not end up in the archives of the I.N.B.A. (Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes).

little ones, I hope that some day you will become aware of how much is my share to suffer, no matter that you believe that 'he who leaves' does not suffer.⁵⁶

Orozco settled in at on 46 West 50th Street,⁵⁷ and started getting ready for the upcoming exhibition season. He was still not making much money, yet his name and work were starting to be recognized.

The Delphic Studios, located at 9 East 57th Street, opened its doors on October 14, 1929. The gallery consisted of four rooms, two large and two small. The opening exhibitions featured drawings by Thomas Hart Benton spread out between one large and one small room, one small room decorated in a Greek style and containing the following objects for sale: Chinese furniture, Byzantine icons and Persian rugs. The fourth room, a large one, had a number of

⁵⁶ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987) p. 162. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 8 September 1929. "Mujercita adorada: Estoy todavía muy cansado del viaje, ahora sí me cansé muchísimo y casi no pude dormir en las cuatro noches, así que ya te imaginarás cómo he quedado de aporreado y sin alientos de hacer nada. Estoy ya instalado en un 'apartamento' que me buscó y me arregló Alma, está muy bien situado y cómodo, tiene una pieza grande con dos ventanas a la calle y un cuarto pequeño para dormitorio con ventanas a la calle. Además, hay baño, clósets y una cocinita de un metro cuadrado, pero con todo lo necesario. Cuesta el tal 'apartamento' 70 dol. mensuales y esta tomado por diez meses. Realmente no es posible encontrar mejor en N.York para lo que necesito y mis posibilidades.

Ya supondrás cuanto te extraño y extraño a los pipirilincitos, espero que algún día te darás bien cuenta de lo que a mí me toca sufrir por más que creas que 'el que se va' no sufre."

⁵⁷ Ibid.

easel paintings and lithographs by Orozco on permanent display.⁵⁸

On a looseleaf of paper dated 1935, written in pencil in the artist's handwriting, is the following information:

Reconstruction of works in the first Delphic
exhibition, 1935

Lithos
Vaudeville in Harlem
Flag
Requiem
Ruined House
Mexican Soldiers
Revolution
Rearguard

Oils, some eight
Mexican House
Vigil⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 167. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 16 October 1929.

⁵⁹ José Clemente Orozco, "Reconstrucción de obras en la primera exhibición Delphic", 1935. Looseleaf written in pencil in Orozco's hand, Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, México. "Reconstrucción de obras en la primera exhibición Delphic, 1935

Litos
Vaudeville en Harlem
Bandera
Requiem
Casa Arruinada
Soldados Mexicanos
Revolución
Retaguardia

Oleos, unos ocho
Casa Mexicana
Vigilia"

The incompleteness of the list indicates that six years later Orozco could not remember all of the contents of that first exhibition. Yet we know through this recollection that, with the exception of one lithograph, all of the works exhibited were of Mexican subjects.

During the days prior to the opening of the Delphic Studios, Orozco received a visit from Antonieta Rivas Mercado (1900-1931), an occasional journalist, patron of the painter Manuel Rodríguez Lozano (1898-1970), and lover of José Vasconcelos. Manuel Rodríguez Lozano was an easel painter with a decidedly anti-nationalist and anti-muralist position. His paintings reflect the influence of Picasso's neo-classical period, charged with Lozano's own homoeroticism. Orozco helped Rivas Mercado find a place to stay (at the YWCA), yet avoided her as much as possible. He found her unstable, obsessed with the painter Rodríguez Lozano and constantly campaigning for Vasconcelos, who would lose the 1929 Mexican presidential election.⁶⁰

Rivas Mercado, in turn, wrote to Rodríguez Lozano giving her impression of Orozco and Reed:

My dear Manuel, I move on to Clemente. We just finished with the case of Diego and now, you'll be the judge, we must move on to the case of Clemente.

⁶⁰ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987) p. 168. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 16 October 1929. Orozco adds to his wife that spending time with Rivas Mercado is a waste, since he has many other things that need doing.

Who can resist that everyday they burn the incense of one's genius? Alma Reed is an Antonieta that would not have known Rodríguez Lozano, all good will and disorientation. Alma, who is well connected, weaves with red thread her tragedy with Carrillo Puerto and because of this, has a great interest in Mexico. Clemente, a Mexican, unprotected and with genius gave her the revenge over Mexico, which killed her Carrillo eight days before the wedding. She has adopted him and for 3 or 5 days does not do anything but create a reputation for Orozco in the U.S. Articles, exhibitions, lectures, etc. Finally she has taken a place on 57 Street, where all the best art galleries are, half a block from Fifth Avenue, where she has opened a gallery dedicated to Orozco. She currently has up drawings by a horrible gringo painter. Before two years Orozco will be rich and famous. He thinks he is really something, painting easel pictures in eight hours or in a day. Not once, but several times, I have said to Alma, in front of him, that when no one did him justice in Mexico, you were the only one to defend him—Clemente has forgotten and when I have said it he does not continue the conversation. But no, he follows the tactic of that pig Diego, how grave to be like your enemies! I will start my campaign on your behalf, of Abraham and Julio, and Clemente will not like it.⁶¹

⁶¹ Antonieta Rivas Mercado, Letter to Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, 20 October 1929. Manuel Rodríguez Lozano papers, Archivos del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, México D.F. "Mi querido Manuel, Paso a Clemente. Acabamos con el caso Diego y ahora, juzgue Ud., tendremos que pasar al caso Clemente. ¿Quién resiste que todos los días le quemem el incienso de la genialidad? Alma Reed es una Antonieta que no hubiera conocido a Rodríguez Lozano, toda buena voluntad y desorientación. Hasta ese momento Clemente no había hecho nada. Alma, que está muy bien relacionada, enarbola como lis rojo su tragedia con Carrillo Puerto y, por eso, tiene gran interés en México. Clemente, mexicano, desamparado y con genio, le dio la revancha sobre México que le mató a Carrillo ocho días antes de la boda. Lo adoptó y lleva 3 o 5 días de no hacer más que crearle una reputación a Orozco en los E.U. Artículos, exposiciones, pláticas, etc. Por fin a tomado un piso en la calle 57, donde estan las mejores galerias de arte, a media cuadra de la Quinta Avenida, donde abrio una galeria dedicada a Orozco. Ahora tiene unos dibujos de un pintor gringo pésimo. Antes de dos años Orozco es rico y famoso. Está creyéndose persona, pintando cuadros de caballete en ocho horas o uno por día. No una, varias veces le he dicho a Alma, conversando delante

Rivas Mercado's opinion of Orozco is of an artist full of himself and secure in the aesthetic value of his works. She sees Reed as naive and totally taken in by him. It is important to note that in Orozco's correspondence with his wife, he is always restrained in his assessment of himself and his paintings, while Reed comes across as the experimental muse.

In his 1969 autobiography Benton recalled the genesis of the Delphic Studios:

The Delphic Gallery was founded by Alma Reed who, as a buxom and attractive blonde reporter had found herself in Mexico...Alma envisaged a resuscitation of the Greek mysteries of Delphi in a new and modern form. This was too esoteric for me, but because Alma had the Mexican painter Clemente Orozco in tow and because I had a great admiration for his work, I joined her organization.⁶²

de él, que cuando nadie en México le hacía justicia usted era el unico en defenderlo—a Clemente ya se le olvidó y cuando lo he dicho no recoge la conversación. Y no, siguiendo la táctica del cerdo de Diego, ¡qué grave es parecerse a sus enemigos! Yo voy a comenzar mi campaña por usted, de Abraham y Julio, y le va a saber a rayos a Clemente."

The Abraham referred to is Abraham Angel (1905-1924), a painter and former student/lover of Rodríguez Lozano. The Julio referred to is Julio Castellanos (1905-1947) also a former student of Rodríguez Lozano and an extraordinary easel painter of genre scenes. Antonieta Rivas Mercado committed suicide by shooting herself in Notre Dame Cathedral in 1931. At the time, she was living in Paris with Vasconcelos.

⁶² Thomas Hart Benton, An American in Art, (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1969) p. 61. Benton mentions Orozco several times in his 1969 autobiography, while there is no mention of him in the earlier An Artist in America of 1937.

According to Orozco's correspondence, the opening of the Delphic Studios was well attended by the leading lights of the New York art world, and yet once again the art magazines did not carry a single mention of it.

Orozco's own recollection of the Delphic Studios in his 1945 autobiography is brief and humorous:

Once Delphic Studios opened to the public, there came some white Russians who had fled Moscow on the triumph of the bolshevik revolution, and had gone through Shanghai and San Francisco, ending their long trip in New York. They bought an enormous number of art objects whose sale they proposed. They had icons beautifully covered in gold and silver. Chinese paintings, furniture and pots of incredible sumptuousness, ancient Persian tapestries of all sizes, and fantastic drawings, rare procelains, ivories; and to complete these wonders, some objects that had been personal property of the last czar of Russia, Nicholas II. Among these objects there was monumental table clock, about a meter high, given to the czar by his relatives on one of his birthdays, according to a large inscription with the names of the archdukes and archduchesses. The clock was mounted on a solid silver base and on the base there was a playful infinity of fat little angels doing a thousand cute and mischievous things. The totality was heavy, insolent and of bad taste. All of the objects of the collection found their way slowly towards museums and private collections, but the czar's clock would not sell. I had it in my bedroom for a long time and it kept me company until Los Angeles where I lost sight of it.⁶³

⁶³ José Clemente Orozco, *Autobiografía*, 3ra ed. (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1984) pp. 96-97. "Abierta al público Delphic Studios, llegaron unos rusos blancos que habían huído de Moscú al triunfar la revolución bolchevique, habían pasado por Shanghai y San Francisco y terminaron su largo viaje en Nueva York. Traían una enorme cantidad de objetos de arte que proponían en venta. Eran iconos ricamente guarnecidos do oro y plata. Pinturas, muebles y tibores chinos, de increíble suntuosidad, tapetes persas

Orozco dedicates barely a page to the Delphic Studios in his entire autobiography, written in 1945, eleven years after he left New York in 1934. The passage reflects the end of his relationship with Reed, his insistence upon downplaying the importance of the Studios in promoting his work, and perhaps also a way of pleasing his wife, Margarita by not giving much importance to an enterprise headed by Alma Reed. Orozco's correspondence with his wife, from September 1928 through May 1932, is filled with constant mentions of Alma Reed and her plans for promoting his work. On a number of occasions throughout the correspondence, Margarita must have expressed concerns regarding Reed's attitude towards the artist and his work. Orozco would always write back assuring her of his love and that nothing was going on between himself and his patron. He insisted it was purely a professional relationship. Despite Orozco's denials to his wife, many

antiguos de todos tamaños y de fantásticos dibujos, porcelanas rarísimas, marfiles; y para completar tanta maravilla, algunos objetos que habían sido propiedad personal del último zar de Rusia, Nicolás II. Entre estos objetos descollaba un reloj monumental de mesa, de un metro de altura, regalado al zar por sus parientes en alguno de sus cumpleaños según se leía en una larga inscripción con los nombres de los archiduques y las archiduquesas. El reloj estaba montado sobre un cerro de plata maciza y sobre el cerro jugueteaban infinidad de angelillos gordinflones haciendo mil monerías y travesuras. El conjunto era pesado, insolente y del peor gusto. Todos los objetos de la colección fueron tomado su camino poco a poco hacia museos o colecciones particulares, pero el reloj del zar no se vendía. Lo tuve en mi recámara por mucho tiempo y me acompañó hasta Los Angeles donde lo perdí de vista."

rumors of an affair between the artist and his dealer have surfaced over the years.⁶⁴

What the Delphic Studios did was to promote Orozco in a consistent manner. If we look at The Art Index for the years 1929 through 1935, we find 39 entries of Orozco reviews and articles, and 18 reproductions. Some of these appeared in the major art periodicals of the time, such as Creative Art, Art News, and London Studio. As previously mentioned, when the Delphic Studios opened in October, 1929, it presented two exhibitions: Benton drawings and easel pictures and lithographs by Orozco. On February 3, 1930, the Delphic Studios inaugurated a second exhibition of Orozco's recent paintings and gouaches, which remained open until the 25th. After this exhibition, the gallery would no longer present Orozco's work in the form of a one-man show. Instead, it would present the work in a quasi-permanent installation, which would change when the artist finished work.⁶⁵ Reed would continue to exhibit and sell work by Benton, Boardman Robinson, Miguel Covarrubias, and Fidelio Ponce, along with

⁶⁴ Antoinette May makes such a claim in her Reed biography of 1994; Henry Adams does the same in his 1989 Benton monograph. Orozco was by no means a saint; in the last decade of his life he had an affair with the Mexican choreographer Nellie Campobello.

⁶⁵ Churchill Lathrop, Conversation with the author, 24 October 1991, Montclair, New Jersey. Lathrop, was Professor of Art History at Dartmouth College from 1928-66. He recalled visiting the Delphic Studios in the early 1930s, and always finding a quasi-permanent display of Orozco paintings, drawings and gouaches.

works by Orozco.⁶⁶

According to the artist's family, Reed's failure as a dealer of Orozco's work is explained by the fact that as Orozco was becoming better known, his prices were not increasing but decreasing.⁶⁷ This cannot be ascertained by checking the sales records of the Delphic Studios since they are no longer in existence. During the early 1930s, due to the Depression, all art prices fell. It is true, though, that Orozco collector Dr. Alvar Carillo Gil was able to acquire many works from the 1929-32 period for a modest sum during the 1940s.⁶⁸ As an art dealer Reed is remembered by those who knew her as very attractive, well spoken and aggressive, but also as someone who improvised as she went along. She was

⁶⁶ Thomas Hart Benton, An American in Art (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1969) p. 69. Benton mentions the other artist as showing in and selling through the Delphic Studios. Fidelio Ponce (1892-1949) was a Cuban expressionist painter, whose work was championed by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Reed showed his work in 1937.

⁶⁷ In all of my conversations with two of Orozco's children, Alfredo and Lucrecia, as well as in questionnaires to them, they agree on the decrease of Orozco's prices while in the U.S. This information they received from their father, but also from their mother Margarita. It is rare for two of the Orozco children to agree on anything.

⁶⁸ According to the acquisition records of the Carillo Gil collection in the museum of the same name, Dr. Carillo Gil acquired eleven easel works by Orozco, ranging in dates from 1929 through 1930, for no more than \$7,000.

not, for instance, a professional like Edith Halpert.⁶⁹ It is important to be aware that shortly after the Delphic Studios opened its doors, the Stock Market "Crash" ushered in the Depression. This socio-economic situation not only had a devastating effect on an already debilitated art world, but most importantly it affected the entire nation. In the cities the unemployed were in the streets, while in the Southern and Western regions of the country racism and lynchings were rampant. This situation of crisis would be evoked, directly and indirectly, in Orozco's paintings and graphic works of his New York period.

It was through Reed and the Delphic Studios that Orozco came in contact with Stephen C. Clark and Frank Lloyd Wright. Clark was a prominent art collector and trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, which had opened its doors in November of 1929. Wright was, without a doubt, the leading and most controversial architect in the United States at the time.

Orozco wrote Margarita in a letter of May 1931:

Clark came very early this morning and he liked very much the paintings I am doing, He told Alma that I am one of the greatest artists of today ... He says that what I need now is to paint large

⁶⁹ Churchill Lathrop, Conversation with the author, 24 October 1991. Lathrop remembered Reed as "a mature yet beautiful woman who could be aggressive." He thought her knowledge of art was limited.

Will Barnet, Letter to the author, 16 April 1996. Barnet remembers Reed as "attractive, someone who could be an aggressive champion for Orozco. Yet she lacked the knowledge and know-how of an Edith Halpert."

and very important paintings in order to have an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. He will buy five or six at the price of \$2,500 each for his own collection, which later on will be given to the museum.⁷⁰

Up to this time Orozco had been working on small canvases. After Clark's suggestion, he began painting larger works, ranging in size from 30 x 40 to 45 x 55 inches. Clark purchased three pictures in 1931 for \$7,500. These were Zapatistas, La Trinchera and El Cementerio. All three were given anonymously by Clark to the Museum of Modern Art in 1937.⁷¹

In this same letter, Orozco relates how well he got along with Clark, as well as how important the Museum of Modern Art was in the presentation of contemporary art. He mentions that Rivera will be having a retrospective there at the end of the year and that this was due to a Mr. Barr, the director. He proceeds to write a tirade against the "Mastodon" (Rivera) and to say that Barr saw him (Orozco) as

⁷⁰ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 241. Letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 26 May 1931. "vino Clark en la mañana temprano y le gustaron mucho los cuadros que estoy haciendo...Le dijo a Alma que yo soy uno de los más grandes artistas de hoy...Dice que lo que necesito ahora es pintar cuadros grandes y muy importantes para hacer una exhibición en el Museo de Arte Moderno. Que él me comprará cinco o seis a razón de \$2,500.00 cada uno, para su colección, que más tarde será cedida al museo."

⁷¹ Clemente Orozco Valladares, Orozco, verdad cronológica, (Guadalajara, 1983), p. 247. La Trinchera was reproduced in Reed's 1932 book on Orozco as Barricade, a title by which it has been known ever since.

a savage who was a bad painter.⁷² Career-wise, the contact with Clark was an important boost for Orozco, and he continued to mention Clark's visits to the Delphic Studios in the correspondence to his wife during the summer of 1931. Still, Clark was not able to convince Barr to give Orozco an exhibition at the Modern. The closest the artist would come to anything like it was in 1940 when he painted the portable mural Dive Bomber and Tank.

In 1932, long after Orozco had finished the New School mural, Frank Lloyd Wright visited the institution and then sought the artist at the Delphic Studios. Orozco wrote Margarita of the visit:

The well known architect F. Lloyd Wright came to the gallery after visiting the New School and seeing my murals there. He told me I am a master painter and that he wants me to work for him. He will bring you and the children, build a studio for me in Wisconsin...it is something to think about.⁷³

Reed recalled the words of Wright in her 1956 biography of the artist:

José Orozco, you are an authentic master. At last,

⁷² José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 241. Rivera would be the second artist (after Matisse) to have a retrospective at M.O.M.A.

⁷³ José Clemente Orozco, Letter to Margarita Valladares, 16 November 1932. Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, México. "El conocido arquitecto F. Lloyd Wright vino a la galería despues de haber visitado la New School y visto mis murales. Me dijo que soy un maestro de la pintura y que quiere que yo trabaje con él. Te traeria a ti y a los rorros, me construiria un estudio en Wisconsin...hay que pensarlo."

I find in you a painter with whom I wish to collaborate on great projects. I am willing to form an exclusive working partnership with you for the rest of our days.

Never before in history have an architect and a painter of our ability and our vision had the good fortune to create and execute together. Let us take advantage of the unique circumstances for the enrichment of contemporary art and life.⁷⁴

Undoubtedly, Reed has embellished Wright's words with the passage of time and her sense of the "greatness" of the meeting. Yet, the meeting did take place and Orozco was made an incredible offer for that time.

In 1932 Frank Lloyd Wright had behind him the Larkin Company Building (1904), Unity Church (1906), the Robie House (1909) and the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (1922), yet he was not building but was preoccupied with city planning and the establishment of Taliesin. Ahead of him were his three books on architecture, Falling Water (1936), and the S.C. Johnson Buildings (1938 and 1948). He would establish the Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin in 1932, and he must have foreseen Orozco playing a role here. Orozco reacted with caution. He thought about the offer for several days and decided against it. Orozco knew an egoist when he met one. Years later, he told his son Alfredo, also an architect, that Wright thought architecture the greatest of all arts and that under the

⁷⁴ Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University, 1956), p. 137.

shadow of such a large tree, nothing could grow.⁷⁵

Decorative murals in some of Wright's Prairie School houses are more abstract than realistic. Wright must have responded to the abstract patterns and monochromatic qualities of Orozco's work. Since Wright was at a critical point in his career, perhaps he thought Orozco would be a boost in his architectural enterprise. Orozco's independent spirit is reaffirmed in his reaction to the Wright episode; this at a time when any economic stability was badly needed by the artist. Orozco was not just cautious but practical, since Wright was out of work.

Reed would always blame the October 1929 "Crash" for the lack of economic success of the Delphic Studios and Orozco's work in particular. Again, the lack of any existing records does not permit us to evaluate the evolution, or lack of, in Orozco sales during the height of the Delphic Studios (1929-34). By May 1931, Orozco started to complain in the letters to his wife of Alma's fifty percent cut on all sales, her giving works away to make "important contacts," and the lack of any clear records for any transactions of the gallery.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Conversation with the author, 1 July 1995, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

⁷⁶ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 241. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 26 May 1931. In this letter, Orozco complains that Reed will take 50% of the sales to Stephen C. Clark. He also mentions Reed's lack of records for recent sales and his not knowing what is owed to him. This continues with regularity throughout the whole correspondence with Margarita through 1934.

The year 1932 saw the publication of Alma Reed's Orozco by the Delphic Studios. It is believed that Reed paid for the printing of the book out of her own purse - this in itself sheds light on the nature of their relationship; this kind of sacrifice on the part of the dealer was more than business. It was the first monograph on the artist. The book contained an introduction by the author, a one-page biographic chronology by the artist himself and over two hundred black and white reproductions of murals, easel paintings, prints and drawings. The photographs of the Preparatoria murals in the book had been taken by Tina Modotti in 1926 and 1927. Many of the early drawings and paintings reproduced in the book had been given earlier false dates by Reed, presumably with Orozco's approval. This was part of Reed's plan to prove that Orozco had depicted certain Mexican themes earlier than Rivera.⁷⁷ Concerning the book The Art Digest, stated:

Miss Reed has brought out a valuable work and a

Despite any personal involvement between the two, Orozco's economically prudent nature expressed concern over the lack of efficiency and clarity regarding Reed's business transactions. It is also obvious from Orozco's responses that his wife was badgering him regarding information on his sales.

⁷⁷ An example of this are the drawings for the México en Revolución series. The book alleges that they are based on sketches of 1913-17, a period when Orozco was painting the brothel pictures of the Casa del Llanto series. These drawings in reality were executed some nine or ten years later. A careful examination of some of these drawings in the Carillo Gil Museum show them to have the correct dates in Orozco's handwriting penciled on the back. Also, the sketches upon which they were supposedly based are non-existent, while all other preparatory sketches exist.

timely one.⁷⁸

The book was sold at the Delphic Studios and the Weyhe Gallery in New York City. In Mexico City, it was carried by the Libreria Misrachi.⁷⁹

By the time Orozco finished the frescoes at Dartmouth in February, 1934, his business relationship with Reed and the Delphic Studios was strained. When he returned to Mexico in June, he no longer considered Reed his exclusive representative.⁸⁰

Orozco returned to New York in February 1936 to address The First American Artists Congress as a representative of LEAR (Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios), an anti-fascist front organization of Mexican artists (more on

⁷⁸ "Recent Art Books," book review, The Art Digest, January 7, 1933, p.8.

⁷⁹ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 278. Letter to Margarita Valladares dated 28 April 1934. Orozco states that the book has been selling since its publication at both the Delphic Studios and Weyhe, and that Misrachi has bought a number of them to sell in his bookstore in Mexico City.

⁸⁰ Margarita Valladares de Orozco, Letter to the author, 3 September 1992. According to Orozco's widow, when he returned to Mexico in 1934, his connections with the Delphic Studios and its director were over. Reed kept an inventory of Orozco's work which she continued to exhibit and sell, even though, according to this source, the artist did not see a penny from these sales. Until her death in January 1993, Mrs. Orozco felt that Alma Reed tried to get the artist to leave his family and dedicate himself only to his art. Although she (Mrs. Orozco) never admitted the possibility of an affair between Orozco and Reed, she believed Reed wanted to be more than just the artist's dealer.

his address in Chapter 6). In his correspondence to Margarita, he claims not to have seen Reed during this visit. When he returned in May, 1940 to paint Dive Bomber and Tank for the Museum of Modern Art, Reed sought him out at his hotel. Again, his version to Margarita was that he was short with her and she went on her way.⁸¹ The Delphic Studios had finally closed its doors the previous month.⁸² Without a doubt, between 1929 and 1934 Alma Reed had helped Orozco make a name for himself in "Gringoland." During this time period, the Delphic Studios was "the" Orozco gallery. Even after the artist's death, Alma Reed would not give up that easily on Orozco as her subject; in 1956, seven years after Orozco's death, she would publish a biography of him. Reed's biography would contain twenty chapters and three hundred eight pages. Of these, pages 29 through 271 were dedicated to his seven years in New York. The years from 1934 through 1949, would be covered in only 36 pages. Clearly, the author was giving pivotal importance to the years spent by the artist with her in New York City.⁸³

⁸¹ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 302. Letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 25 May 1940.

⁸² Ibid., p. 300. Letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 10 May 1940. Also, it is important to note that all mentions of the Delphic Studios in the art magazines disappear by January 1940.

⁸³ Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University, 1956), pp. 29-271, 272-308. The major problem with this biography are Reed's subjectivity and her mythologized account of the artist's

The other important event in Orozco's artistic education while in New York City was his only visit to Europe during the summer months of 1932. Orozco dedicates five pages to this trip in the Autobiografía. He states clearly that he went only to see some of the great paintings to be found in museums and churches. He first visited London, where he was quite taken with both the clarity and colors of Raphael's cartoons at the Victoria and Albert Museum. He found the capital of the British Empire shabby, dirty and full of beggars: "I could never have imagined that I, a citizen of a modest country, 'semi-colonial' as they say, would be giving coins to the hungry in the streets and squares of the English capital."⁸⁴ Paris he found old, miserable, and filled with transvestites. He saw a "great" retrospective exhibition of Picasso at the Georges Petit gallery, and was keenly aware of the havoc being made by fascism throughout Europe.⁸⁵

All throughout Europe, from England to Spain, El Greco made the most profound impact upon Orozco; his mannerist color, rough application of pigment and agitated drawing were studied and absorbed.

life.

⁸⁴ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 3ra ed. (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1984) p. 106. "Jamás me hubiera imaginado que yo, ciudadano de un país muy modesto, 'semicolonial' como lo llaman, fuera a repartir monedas a los hambrientos en las calles y plazas de la capital inglesa."

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 106-108.

In Toledo, Orozco found that "they still bury the Count of Orgaz, El Greco lives there, painting, and his apostles work daily. One brings my luggage to the hotel, another one serves me a glass of wine, the one over there is the driver on the bus to Madrid and I see another one on the bridge of Alcantara."⁸⁶

Orozco was 49 years old when he went to Europe. As an artist he was essentially formed. He was simply double checking on this trip works that he previously knew either through reproductions or word of mouth. He had no great epiphany there. For Rivera, Europe was an experiment in painting that lasted 14 years. Not so for Orozco – a man who hated tourists, yet went to Europe as a tourist, to view the marvels of painting. His return, in his own words, was six days of perfect rest over the Atlantic Ocean and then New York.⁸⁷ Always New York, that amusement park/monstrosity where he felt ambiguously at home.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 109. "entierran todavía al conde de Orgaz, todavía vive El Greco, ahí pinta y sus apóstoles trabajan a diario. Alguno lleva mi equipaje al hotel, otro me sirve un vaso de vino, el de más allá es el chofer del camión a Madrid y veo otro más en el puente de Alcántara."

⁸⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

Easel Paintings, 1928-32

Orozco's one public definition of painting, written in 1940, states:

A painting is a Poem and nothing else. A poem made of relationships between forms as other kinds of poems are made of relationships between words, sounds or ideas. Sculpture and architecture are also relationships between forms. This word forms includes color, tone, proportion, line, etcetera.¹

Earlier, responding to Alma Reed's question, What is art?, Orozco said, "Art is knowledge at the service of emotion."² It is interesting to note the formal aspect of these statements, considering they are being made by an expressionistic and political painter. Orozco's easel paintings have generally been relegated to a secondary status, due to his importance as a muralist. There is no doubt as to the superiority of most of the murals, yet this should not take away from the importance of his easel pictures. At times, the easel pictures served as laboratories for ideas and forms to be expressed in a larger scale later. Most times, they stand as works that begin and

¹ José Clemente Orozco, Orozco "Explains", (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1940), p. 9.

² Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 64.

end within themselves. A great many of the easel pictures are failures. When they are complete as pictorial statements they achieve the same visual rigor and emotional depth of his best murals. Even the unresolved pictures tell us much of the artist's view of modernity as expressed through New York City, particularly when we compare his subjects with similar subjects painted by artists like the Precisionists and the 14th Street School. His Mexican subjects among these easel pictures are complex and tragic, radically different from the subjects chosen by Rivera and others.

After reviewing the general (and incomplete) registry of Orozco's easel work at the Carrillo Gil Museum, and noting the various works mentioned in the artist's correspondence as well as those reproduced during the years 1929-34, I have identified and located a total of forty-four works painted in New York City. These can be divided into four categories: New York scenes, Mexican scenes, mythological (Greek-inspired) or Surreal subjects, and portraits.³

³ The Carrillo Gil registry extends beyond its own collection. In spite of its incompleteness, it is the closest thing to a complete Orozco catalogue. Orozco titled the New York and mythological scenes in English, all others in Spanish. The following is the list of easel works by category:

New York scenes

1. Coney Island, 1928
2. The Subway, 1928
3. New York Factory, Williamsburg, 1928
4. Queensborough Bridge, 1928
5. The Elevated, 1928 (vertical)
6. The Third Avenue Elevated, 1928 (horizontal)
7. Eighth Avenue, 1928

Orozco painted these easel pictures usually in his

-
8. Fourteenth Street, Manhattan, 1928
 9. Subway Post, 1929
 10. Street Corner (Manhattan), 1929
 11. The City, 1930
 12. World's Highest Structure, 1930
 13. Construction, 1930
 14. The Curb, 1930
 15. The Dead, 1931
 16. Successful People, 1931
 17. Winter, 1932
 18. Tres Cabezas, 1932
 19. Bank Holiday, 1932-33

Mexican scenes

20. Mujer con Maguey, 1928
21. Casa Mexicana, 1929
22. Casa de Piedra, 1929
23. Soldado Herido, 1930
24. La Paz, 1930
25. Zapatistas, 1931
26. La Trinchera (or Barricada), 1931
27. El Cementerio, 1931
28. Pancho Villa, 1931
29. Maguey, 1932
30. Pueblo Mexicano, 1932
31. Paisaje Mexicano, 1932

Mythological (Greek-inspired) or Surreal subjects

32. The Teacher, 1929
33. Broken Glass, 1929
34. Vigil, 1929
35. Embrace, 1929
36. Fallen Columns, 1930
37. Drama, 1930
38. The Mirror, 1930
39. Aquella Noche, 1930

Portraits

40. Eva Sikelianos, 1928
41. Autoretrato, 1928 (lost)
42. Julia Peterkin, 1929
43. Alma Reed, 1929 (destroyed by Orozco)
44. Patsy Sullivan (Alma Reed's niece), 1930 (lost)

Based on conversations with two of the Orozco children, it seems that there were some ten to twelve easel paintings that he began in New York but never completed. These were all probably small oils on canvas.

living quarters, although after meeting Madame Sikelianos and Alma Reed, he did set up a kind of temporary studio in their apartment at the south end of the living room:

Each day after painting, Orozco would carefully remove the easel and other equipment to a room at the rear of the apartment which he had dubbed the pulquería.⁴

After the Delphic Studios opened, Orozco continued to paint in the apartment he was occupying at the time, in the gallery itself, and from April 1931 through March 1932 in a small skylight duplex on West 44th Street that he shared with his wife and children who were visiting him at this time. Everywhere he worked, his needs were similar to what they would be for the rest of his life. Orozco's studios during the 1930s and 1940s in both Guadalajara and Mexico City were spare and orderly, containing no more than one or two easels and a drawing table for the execution of works on paper, brushes, pencils and other supplies.⁵ We know that throughout the 1930s Orozco's palette in oils consisted of the following colors: zinc white, ivory black, viridian, cadmium red, burnt sienna, india brown, mars ochre, cobalt

⁴ Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 123.

⁵ Conversation with Alfredo Orozco Valladares and the author, July 1, 1995, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

blue, and ultramarine blue.⁶ Orozco preferred to paint with bristle brushes, and mix his colors with a combination of half turpentine, a quarter linseed oil and a quarter varnish.⁷ Orozco painted on either coarse cotton or duck canvas, which he primed himself with a mixture of zinc white, whiting, and linseed oil.⁸

Based on the artist's correspondence with his wife, as well as the abundant seals on stretchers and notebooks, Orozco purchased most of his materials and had pieces framed at Schneider & Co., Inc., Artists Materials Exclusively, located at 123 West 68th Street.⁹

Orozco's earliest New York period paintings range in size from small, such as Coney Island, 9 5/8 x 8 1/8, to medium, such as Queensborough Bridge, 19 x 24. The two sizes

⁶ José Clemente Orozco, Notebook 1, unpaginated. Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the notebooks in the following manner: Notebook 1 (1931), Notebook 2 (1931-32), Notebook 3 (1932), Notebook 4 (1933), Notebook 5 (1934), Notebook 6 (1934). This information comes out of one of six notebooks kept by Orozco from 1931 through 1934. They are dated irregularly with the years 1931-32, 33 and 34 and contain all sorts of notes, quick sketches and geometric diagrams. I will refer to them throughout this chapter.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ José Clemente Orozco, Notebook 2, unpaginated. Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

⁹ There are seals on the back of all six notebooks, also on the stretchers of paintings, such as Pancho Villa and Winter. There is mention of the store in a number of letters to Margarita from 1929 and 1930.

used most by the artist until 1931, were 19 1/2 x 24 and 24 x 30 inches. In 1931, at the suggestion of Stephen C. Clark, Orozco started painting large easel pictures, using canvases with the dimensions of 45 x 55 inches.

New York Scenes

We know from the Autobiografía that Orozco took long walks along Riverside Drive, by the Hudson River, and in and around Columbia University.¹⁰ He would also travel by subway to the other end of the island, Little Italy and the lower east side¹¹, visit composer Carlos Chávez in Greenwich Village, and "In two minutes go from Italy to China and Japan."¹² He became without a doubt thoroughly familiar with the city and its surrounding boroughs, and he traveled by subway even though he was not a fan of the invention. Orozco called New York an "imperial city" in his autobiography. In a letter to Margarita, he described it as "part amusement part and part growing monstrosity." The city, which extracted ambiguous responses from him, would be the subject of some nineteen easel paintings. Within this group, only

¹⁰ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 3rd ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1984), p. 85.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, p. 87.

"En dos minutos se puede ir de Italia a China y al Japón."

seven are truly successful works in both form and content, while others are interesting by what they propose, yet fail to achieve.

As he had during his first visit, Orozco visited Coney Island and he wrote:

those who speak of large multitudes and mass meetings without seeing Coney Island on a Sunday in the summer do not know what they are talking about....It is precisely at night when marvelous and great things happen, as Coney Island lights up with the lights of artificial fireworks.

Along the beach, there is a great fair, typically American, with many attractionsOne must mention the bearded woman, the fattest woman in the world, the ape man, the one with two heads, the dwarfs, the half-man, half-woman and other freaks.¹³

As far as we know, Orozco's first New York easel picture is an indirect reflection of the above experience, Coney Island Side-Show, 1928 (fig. 12). Measuring less than 10 by 9 inches, it is the smallest oil executed by the artist. A dark and compressed picture, it is comprised of browns, blacks, pinks and oranges. It represents a night scene, yet the artist does not depict in it any of the freaks he

¹³ Ibid., p. 54.

"Los que hablan de grandes multitudes y de mítines de masas sin haber visto Coney Island un domingo en verano, no saben lo que dicen Es precisamente en la noche cuando pasan cosas grandes y maravillosas, pues todo Coney Island se ilumina con las luces de colores de los fuegos artificiales.

A lo largo de la playa está instalada la gran feria típica americana, con un sinfín de atracciones Pero lo que sí debe mencionarse es la mujer con barbas, la mujer más gorda del mundo, el hombre mono, el de dos cabezas, los enanos, la mitad hombre mitad mujer, y otros varios adefesios."

mentions in the above passage. Instead, we see a scantily clothed woman, her arms outstretched. Her face is defined by seven quickly drawn lines that give her features. Behind her is a male figure with a grotesque face, torso covered with spots (perhaps he is the leopard man?), and no hands. Behind them, are either billboards whose letters we cannot see, or curtains that cover the entrance to a tent. At their feet, we see the backs of the audience, some of whom are female bathers. There is an oppressive quality to this picture, created in part by the dark palette and thickly applied colors, as well as the compression of foreground, middle-ground and background. The two figures on the stage live on the fringes of society; they have a kinship with the beggars and prostitutes of Orozco's earlier work (1913-17). This is definitely not the Coney Island of painters like John Sloan, Reginald Marsh, or Paul Cadmus, a place filled with a fleshy, animalistic sexuality, painted satirically "from above." Rather, it is a place of strangers seen by an outsider. Orozco is not part of the side-show, yet neither does he belong in the audience. His viewpoint is suspended between the two. Orozco's only experience of crowds was during the Mexican Revolution; these were either what he witnessed while with the Red Batallions, or at meetings at the Casa del Obrero Mundial. They were political and chaotic crowds, but still pre-modern Mexican ones. It was in New York and places like Coney Island where he encountered the modern, urban,

thoroughly anonymous, even alienated crowd.

A contemporary of Orozco who had a similar experience with New York was the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1899-1936). Lorca was in New York City in 1929-30, studying English at Columbia University. At this time, he met Orozco through the Spanish painter and critic Gabriel García Maroto.¹⁴ The poet responded to Coney Island by writing, Landscape of a Vomiting Multitude (Dusk at Coney Island):

The fat lady came first,
tearing out roots and moistening drumskins.
The fat lady
who turns dying octopuses inside out.
The fat lady, the moon's antagonist,
was running through the streets and deserted
buildings
and leaving tiny skulls of pigeons in the corners
and stirring up the furies of the last centuries'
feasts
and summoning the demon of bread through the sky's
clean-swept hills
and filtering a longing for light into subterranean
tunnels.
The graveyards, yes, the graveyards
and the sorrow of the kitchens buried in sand,
the dead, pheasants and apples of another era,
pushing into our throat.

¹⁴ Luis Cardoza y Aragón, Letter to the author, 6 October 1991. Luis Cardoza y Aragón (1904-92) was a Guatemalan poet and essayist/art critic. He wrote extensively on Orozco (La nube y el reloj (1940), Orozco (1959)), and was friendly with him until his death. He also met Lorca in both Cuba and Spain before the outbreak of the Civil War. According to Cardoza y Aragón, García Maroto introduced Lorca to Orozco while both were in New York. Years later, Orozco recalled to Cardoza that he had met the poet a number of times for lunch, to chat and to visit Harlem. There is no mention of Lorca in any of the Orozco correspondence; the artist probably considered the poet as someone very young and not fully formed as a writer, definitely not important enough to mention in his letters.

There were murmurings from the jungle of vomit
 with the empty women, with hot wax children,
 with fermented trees and tireless waiters
 who serve platters of salt beneath harps of saliva.
 There's no other way, my son, vomit! There's no
 other way.

It's not the vomit of hussards on the breasts of
 their whores,
 nor the vomit of cats that inadvertently swallowed
 frogs,
 but the dead who scratch with clay hands
 on flint gates where clouds and desserts decay.

The fat lady came first
 with the crowds from the ships, taverns, and parks.
 Vomit was delicately shaking its drums
 among a few little girls of blood
 who were begging the moon for protection.
 Who could imagine my sadness?
 The look on my face was mine, but now isn't me,
 the naked look on my face, trembling for alcohol
 and launching incredible ships
 through the anemones of the piers.
 I protect myself with this look
 that flows from waves where no dawn would go,
 I, poet without arms, lost
 in the vomiting multitude,
 with no effusive horse to shear
 the thick moss from my temples

But the fat lady went first
 and the crowds kept looking for the pharmacies
 where the bitter tropics could be found.
 Only when a flag went up and the first dogs arrived
 did the entire city rush to the railings of the
 boardwalk.

New York, December 29, 1929¹⁵

Lorca responded to the crowd with a hallucinogenic poem,
 while Orozco responded by painting a physically small picture
 of a minute fragment of the crowd.

¹⁵ Federico García Lorca, Poet in New York, translated by Greg
 Simon and Steven F. White, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1988),
 pp. 53-55.

Like Orozco, Lorca came from an essentially pre-secular and agrarian nation. Like the Mexican painter, the Andalusian poet was a leftist of sorts. Orozco came from anarcho-syndicalism and Lorca was becoming a fellow-traveller of the Spanish Communist Party. Both experienced a place like Coney Island with awe and revulsion.

Subways have been depicted by American painters throughout the twentieth century. Without a doubt, the artists who made it a central subject of their art were those who worked around 14th Street and Union Square. Kenneth Hayes Miller, Reginald Marsh, Isabel Bishop, Raphael Soyer and others rejected modernism in favor of a realistic figuration within a narrative context. The first three even looked to the Renaissance and Baroque periods for inspiration. They all had studios in or around Union Square, and their paintings depicted the life on 14th Street. When they painted the subway, it was usually as a modern means of transportation where characters from all walks of life would cross each others' paths. The subway paintings of Miller contain middle-aged matrons carrying bags, while Marsh mixed voluptuous young women with derelicts. Bishop depicted mothers with exhausted children, and Soyer, exhausted clerical workers of both genders. In general, these

paintings depict the "new woman"¹⁶ who has left the home to do her own shopping, or better yet, earn her own living. Orozco's single depiction of a subway is an entirely different matter.

Entitled The Subway, 1928 (fig. 13), painted in the same year as Coney Island Side-Show, it is a larger painting, measuring 16 x 21 3/8. A horizontal composition, the painting's general tone is dark. Orozco composes a series of austere rectangles and curves formed from the windows, seats and bars. Comprised of mostly umbers and ochres, there are touches of viridian and orange to accentuate the earth colors. The three figures, all males, are massive and dark. They wear hats and have their backs turned to each other. Their faces are quick mask-like sketches that lack individuality. This is a somber painting, claustrophobic, reflecting Orozco's dislike of underground trains.

An even gloomier urban image is Fourteen Street, Manhattan, of the same year (fig. 14). It is the same size as The Subway but it is a vertical picture. Orozco depicts in this work the fabled street painted so often by Kenneth Hayes Miller, Reginald Marsh and Raphael Soyer.

Orozco's painting presents seven female shoppers or

¹⁶ The best discussion of the paintings of the 14th Street School is to be found in Ellen Wiley Todd's The "New Woman" Revised. Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street, (University of California Press, 1993). Todd mentions briefly Orozco's painting Fourteenth Street, Manhattan, as a negative statement of both urban life and womanhood.

store workers, as well as a dark male silhouette in the right background. The figures are surrounded on each side and behind them, by buildings. To their lower right are some discarded steel beams from a construction site. Overall, the work is thickly painted, the palette knife evident in the blue-gray winter sky. The buildings are mostly in a burnt sienna, with highlights in orange, alizarin crimson and blue. The skyscraper in the background is a pinkish-gray. These are not serene geometric structures, rather they are painted with a nervous energy that vibrates their outline. The faces of the female figures are harsh, unattractive. The sensuality and vulgarity of a Reginald Marsh is not present. The bodies of these women disappear under their heavy coats, and their hair is hidden under dark hats and caps. Faces, painted in pale yellows and pinks with touches of gray and blue, are dark, with cavernous eyes, tightly pursed lips and large noses. Like the passengers in The Subway, they are huddled together, yet emotionally separate. Orozco has painted an alienated multitude.

Federico García Lorca offers a literary parallel. As before, Lorca is surreal, while Orozco is expressionistic:

Landscape of a Pissing Multitude
(Battery Place Nocturne)

The men kept to themselves:
they were waiting for the swiftness of the last
cyclists.
The women kept to themselves:

they were expecting the death of a boy on a
Japanese schooner.
They all kept to themselves –
dreaming of the open beaks of dying birds,
the sharp parasol that punctures
a recently flattened toad,
beneath silence with a thousand ears
and tiny mouths of water
in the canyons that resist
the violent attack of the moon.
The boy on the schooner was crying and hearts were
breaking
in anguish for the witness and the vigilance of all
things,
and because on the sky-blue ground of black
footprints,
obscure names, saliva, and chrome radios were still
crying.
It doesn't matter if the boy grows silent when
stuck with the last pin,
or if the breeze is defeated in cupped cotton
flowers,
because there is a world of death whose perpetual
sailors
will appear in the arches and freeze you from
behind the trees.
It's useless to look for the bend
where night loses its way
and to wait in ambush for a silence that has no
torn clothes, no shells, and no tears,
because even the tiny banquet of a spider
is enough to upset the entire equilibrium of the
sky.
There is no cure for the moaning from a Japanese
schooner,
nor for those shadowy people who stumble on the
curbs.
The countryside bites its own tail in order to
gather a bunch of roots
and a ball of yarn looks anxiously in the grass for
unrealized longitude.
The moon! The police. The foghorns of the ocean
liners!
Façades of urine, of smoke, anemones, rubber
gloves.
Everything is shattered in the night
that spreads its legs on the terraces.
Everything is shattered in the tepid faucets
of a terrible silent fountain.
Oh, crowds! Loose women! Soldiers!
We will have to journey through the eyes of idiots,

open country where the docile cobras, coiled like
 wire, hiss,
 landscapes full of graves that yield the freshest
 apples,
 so that uncontrollable light will arrive
 to frighten the rich behind their magnifying
 glasses—
 the odor of a single corpse from the double source
 of lily and rat—
 and so that fire will consume those crowds still
 able to piss around a moan
 or on the crystals in which each inimitable wave is
 understood.¹⁷

In Orozco's Fourteenth Street, Manhattan, the women keep to themselves, behind their painted masks. This painting is definitely the antithesis of the paintings of the 14th Street School of the same subject. Theirs are paintings full of movement and voluptuousness. Even Soyer, whose depictions of office girls are often thin and melancholic, still comes across as sensual. Orozco's misogyny is evident here; these women are automatons, lost in an alley of brick, steel and consumerism.

According to Gail Stavitsky, Precisionism was not a coherent movement with a program. Its stylistic sources lay in the paintings made by European artists like Picabia and Duchamp when they were in New York City during World War I.¹⁸ The subject matter of these painters tended to be mostly

¹⁷ Federico García Lorca, Poet in New York, translated by Greg Simon and Steven F. White, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1988), pp. 57-59.

¹⁸ Gail Stavitsky, Reordering Reality. Precisionism in America, (New York: The Montclair Art Museum and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), pp. 28-29.

industrial, even if not all of them were urban. They responded to forms within the environment but rarely to the environment itself.¹⁹ The paintings of Precisionist artists can be cold, very much enamored of the industrial forms that are being depicted. As an avid gallery goer, Orozco must have encountered while in New York the work of these artists, whether at Stieglitz' or The Downtown and Daniel galleries. The aesthetic of Precisionism was part of a sensibility that was "in the air," brought about to a degree by the implementation of mass production and prosperity of the 1920s.

A painting of Orozco's that reflects this milieu is the 1928 New York Factory, Williamsburg (fig. 15), an oil on canvas, measuring roughly 28 x 19 inches. Coarsely painted, it represents five buildings with three massive chimneys. As in a typical Precisionist picture, there are no figures present, but the similarity stops there. These are not beautiful industrial forms; instead, they are heavy boxes painted in sienna, black and crimson. The sky is a yellow ochre with patches of dirty pink. The massive brown chimney in the foreground spews a dark grey-green smoke into the sky. We do not know if it is dawn or dusk. Once again, Lorca in words crosses paths with Orozco:

As I said to you I was friendly with Clemente

¹⁹ Ibid.

Orozco these past nine months in New York. In the last years, he has painted some small and horrible pictures of the environments of the city. I remember one of a factory, which he painted like a dark jail, not a soul in the streets.²⁰

If we compare Orozco's painting of a factory with any work by Demuth or Sheeler, leading Precisionists, the differences are radical. A Demuth painting usually has bright colors, clear outlines, and the industrial shapes are depicted with an aesthetic that is classical. Works such as these are about order and serenity. New York Factory, Williamsburg is about solitude of an oppressive kind. We do not see what goes inside the buildings, yet their dark, heavy exterior reflects pessimism.

The elevated trains were another part of the City of New York since the start of the century. Painters like John Sloan, John Marin and Edward Hopper used this subject in their work. So, too, did the Precisionist painters and artists of the 14th Street School. Between 1928 and 1930, Orozco painted two versions of the El, one larger and sketch-like, dated 1928 (Carrillo Gil Museum), and the smaller version from the same year (Private Collection, Mexico City).

²⁰ Federico García Lorca, Letter to Luis Cardoza y Aragón, sent from Havana, Cuba, dated 6 April 1930. Luis Cardoza y Aragón papers, Fundación Lya Kosta y Luis Cardoza y Aragón, México, D.F.

"Como le dije hice amistad con Clemente Orozco estos nueve meses pasados en Nueva York. En los últimos años él ha pintado unos cuadros pequeños y horribles de los ambientes de la ciudad. Recuerdo uno de una fabrica, que pintó como una prisión oscura, sin una alma en la calle."

The latter is the fully realized picture in the most formal sense. Entitled The Third Avenue Elevated, New York (fig. 16), it is an oil on canvas mounted on masonite, measuring roughly 20 x 24 inches. This painting focuses on the mechanical structure of the elevated station on Third Avenue. Painted in brown, ochre and green, the work depicts an entrance to the station. On either side of the central structure, Orozco painted the staircases with their peaked roofs. Undoubtedly, Orozco's encounters with Cubism in the New York galleries is evident in this work, we can see this in the geometric and juxtaposed qualities of the composition. Once again, however, he transforms highly abstracted, geometric forms into a kind of tenebristic entity: the way the paint is applied gives the shapes a nervous, vibratory quality. Instead of a clean, industrial sign of modernity, the elevated station becomes a gothic-like contraption, evoking a sinister air. Orozco once commented to Alma Reed:

How absurd a thing is the Elevated ... It is not quite on the ground and it is not quite up in the air. And yet it completely spoils our enjoyment of both.²¹

Compared to any Precisionist work of this subject, Orozco's version is a monstrous structure, "an absurd thing" completely spoiling the environment.

²¹ José Clemente Orozco, quoted in Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University, 1956), p. 28.

These 1928 New York scenes were among the works Orozco exhibited at The Downtown Gallery in early 1929. Fourteenth Street, Manhattan was reproduced in both the reviews in The New York Post and The New York Times. In The New York Times review, Elizabeth Luther Cary wrote in reference to the above painting:

as simply characterized as they might have been by Daumier, they have a bearing more hieratic than Daumier would have given them.²²

In The New York Post Margaret Brening was impressed by how Orozco had captured the hectic movement of American industry.²³ She completely missed his negative commentary on urban life. When some of these same New York scene paintings were shown at The Delphic Studios in early 1930, Lloyd Goodrich captured the essence of Orozco's meaning:

His work also shows a new tendency toward abstraction, in which certain motifs appear with a frequency that suggests obsession: in particular the image of shattered fragments of stone and glass – perhaps the unconscious reaction of a life-long revolutionist to our mechanical civilization.²⁴

²² Elizabeth Luther Cary, "Reviews," The New York Times, March 31, 1929, Sec. 5, p. 16.

²³ Margaret Brening, "Orozco at The Downtown Gallery," The New York Post, March 31, 1929, Sec. 1, p. 17, col. 2.

²⁴ Lloyd Goodrich, "In the Galleries," The Arts, Vol. XVI, no. 6, February 1930, p. 423.

Without a doubt, Orozco's most complete visual statement on the City of New York is the 1931 oil painting, The Dead (43 x 36) (fig. 17). An urban and allegorical landscape, this composition gives us an aerial view of several skyscrapers falling and being torn apart. This work can be examined in the light of Orozco's recollection of the 1929 Crash, written years later in the Autobiografía:

A morning in 1929, something grave was happening in New York. People were rushing more than was usualYou could hear the sirens of the firemen and the Red Cross sounding furiously....Wall Street and its surrounding area was an infernal sea. Many speculators had thrown themselves from their windows onto the street, their remains picked up by the policeThe crash This was the crash, the disaster.²⁵

The cause of the disaster is unclear, yet the painting's title gives it symbolic content. The skyscrapers, which are symbolic of the prosperity of the 1920s, are falling apart, perhaps reflecting the chaotic situation of the Depression. Orozco was not fond of skyscrapers, subways and other features of the modern metropolis. Perhaps in this painting Orozco gives us all this modernity devouring itself, the

²⁵ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 2da ed., (México: Ediciones Era, 1981), pp. 94-95.

"Una mañana en 1929, algo muy grave pasaba en Nueva York. Las gentes corrían más de lo acostumbrado,....las sirenas de los bomberos y de la Cruz Roja aullaban ferozmente....Wall Street y sus alrededores eran un mare mágnam infernal. Muchos especuladores ya se habían arrojado a la calle desde las ventanas de sus oficinas y sus restos eran recogidos por la policía....El crash....Era el crash, el desastre."

bodies of the buildings being torn in half and the broken steel beams and pieces of glass becoming fang-like, sprouting out of jaws. Painted in grays, pinks and browns, the forms of the skyscrapers are geometric structures turned elastic, serpent-like as they criss-cross each other and jump over one another. The aerial viewpoint of the composition reaffirms our sense of looking down into a pit where a struggle for survival is occurring. "The Dead" of the painting's title are not just buildings but possibly also their creators and occupants who have perished in this disaster. One of Orozco's most abstracted paintings of the 1930s, The Dead, is his most searing image of the brutality of modern urban life. It is a picture of apocalyptic convulsion.

Orozco's Notebook 1 (1931), contains over half a dozen pencil sketches of "skeletons" of construction sites around New York City, steel beams, cement blocks, etc. Although the sketches seem to have been executed very quickly, there is a constant exploration of diagonals within these construction forms. Undoubtedly, there is a link between a painting like The Dead and these sketches. It is possible that these sketches are preliminary ideas for this painting.

Orozco did not find a way to integrate his expressive use of the human figure within his New York scene pictures. Two attempts, which are, in my belief, pictorial failures, are still worthy of discussion. These are Successful People, 1931 (fig.18) and Tres Cabezas, 1932 (fig.19). Both are oil

on canvas, and roughly 20 x 16 inches. The location of the first has been unknown since the closing of The Delphic Studios in 1940. The second is in the collection of the Carrillo Gil Museum.

We only know Successful People by the black and white reproduction in Reed's 1932 monograph. It is a vertical composition depicting an old woman in the foreground with her hand to the collar of her dress. Immediately behind her is another figure, whose gender is difficult to discern. This figure wears a bow tie, high collar and what seems to be hat. Their necks are stretched tight and their lips are pursed. The eyes of both figures are bird-like; they seem to be squinting and inside their eyes are pale, small pupils. The old woman's hand is drawn effectively, resembling an arthritic claw. The background is plain and dark, probably thickly painted. Who are these "successful people"? Obviously, this is Orozco's version of the types he encountered at exhibition openings and cultural cocktail parties. The faces have some of the rigidity and harshness of the face of the school teacher of the Anglo-America panel at Dartmouth. The "successful people" are those generous patrons of the arts that know they are above the artist as well as the common people. An American work to compare with this picture could be Grant Wood's Daughters of the American Revolution (Cincinnati Art Museum) of the following year. The Wood picture is a social lampoon at one of the

established institutions of American life, the Daughters of the American Revolution. This work is practically a monochromatic painting in browns, grays and tans, with very subtle touches of blue. The technique is tight, the expressions on the faces very rigid. There is an element of irony present in the Wood painting, a certain cool detachment from the subject. Although we do not know the color structure of Orozco's Successful People, the brushwork is agitated and expressive and there is no irony here, but sarcasm. These members of the upper class are indifferent birds of prey, but birds of prey nevertheless. If the painting does not quite work, it is perhaps due to the artist's exaggerations as a caricaturist in the drawing of the faces.

The opposite of Successful People is Tres Cabezas. The composition consists of three heads, one in three-quarters view in the foreground, and the other two in profile in the background. The predominant colors are gray and brown. The faces are pale pink with scumbled patches of Naples yellow. All three heads are bald. The mouths are awkward, teeth showing through in the one on the foreground. The eyes are painted in a way that evokes tension, cautiousness. There is an air of sadness and bewilderment to this picture. Both Cardoza y Aragón and Justino Fernández briefly mention this work as a reflection of the Depression in Orozco's easel

paintings.²⁶ I do not know if it is as specific as that, but these Tres Cabezas are not "successful people". They are common men on the margins of society. The painting is not successful because there is an element of incompleteness; the heads are not fully modelled, the colors applied sketchily.

We know from Orozco's correspondence with his wife that at certain points during his stay of 1927-32, he considered portrait painting as a possible income-earning genre. With the exception of self-portraits and portraits of contemporary figures that he either admired (critic Cardoza y Aragón) or despised (the Archbishop of Mexico, Mons. Martínez), Orozco was not a good portraitist on commission, the way Rivera and Siqueiros could be. Of his New York portraits, only two are known and located. These are Mme. Eva Sikelianos, 1928, and Julia Peterkin, 1930. Both are in the Carrillo Gil Museum. These two works are traditional, academic. They are in a visual language that is not typical of Orozco.

Mexican Scenes

Orozco rejected the visual expression of Rivera's indigenista stance, not so much the latter's glorification of the Pre-Columbian world in his murals, as his folkloric and decorative genre scenes. All of Orozco's correspondence, as

²⁶ Luis Cardoza y Aragón, Orozco, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1983), p. 30.

Justino Fernández, Orozco Forma e Idea, 2da ed., (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1975), p. 147.

well as his Autobiografía, contain comments against "pretty pictures of indians." Orozco also rejected the more formal reflection of indigenismo in the easel pictures of Charlot, Tamayo, the prints of Emilio Amero, and others.²⁷

Orozco's Mexican scenes are a gallery of images that consciously and critically reject the picturesque reality of the paintings of Rivera and others. Regardless of Orozco's masking of his experience in the Mexican Revolution as "a fun and diverting carnival;"²⁸ that reality as reflected in his paintings is anything but carnivalesque.

Soldiers are an important subject within Orozco's Mexican scenes. Rivera painted them as simple, romantic heroes, and Siqueiros generally depicted them as a part of the masses on the road to the Revolution. In Orozco's hands, soldiers are either brutal destroyers, potential tyrants or doomed tragic figures. There is also a racial stereotype at work in Orozco's depictions that has been ignored by the literature. His soldiers tend to be the coarsest, most brutal looking Indian types. Rather than stylizing Aztec or Mayan features into beautiful forms, as did Rivera, Montenegro and others, Orozco paints them as grotesque masks of horrors that instill fear.

²⁷ By formal I am referring to the quotations of Pre-Columbian forms in the shapes found in Charlot, Tamayo and Amero's works.

²⁸ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 2da ed., (México: Ediciones Era, 1981), p. 34.

"el más alegre y divertido de los carnavales."

Soldados Mexicanos, 1930 (fig. 20) is a painterly yet almost monochromatic gouache, depicting two soldiers stepping out of a plain, white abode. One is dressed like a Constitucionalista (follower of Carranza and Obregón) soldier; the other, more like a peasant follower of either Zapata or Villa. They are pressed against each other, staring at each other as if they were about to attack one another. They each hold rifles. Their bodies are accurately drawn; they are stocky men of combat endowed with powerful hands. At their feet lies an abstractly painted body of a victim. There is another corpse in the background, as well as a large blood stain on the ground. These soldiers have just finished butchering the enemy, and it is only a matter of time before they turn on each other.

Three of Orozco's most powerful and successful easel works dealing with the subject of revolutionary soldiers were painted in 1930 and 1931. These are Soldado Herido, 1930 (fig. 21), Zapatistas (fig. 22) and Barricada (fig. 23), both from 1931. The first is in the collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art, the other two in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Zapatistas and Barricada are also among Orozco's most reproduced works.²⁹

²⁹ Since the 1940 exhibition 20 Centuries of Mexican Art, the Museum of Modern Art has had both a 6 x 4 postcard and a 9 x 12 color reproduction of Zapatistas for sale in their museum store. Since the 1992 Modern Art of Latin America exhibition, a 6 x 4 postcard of Barricada has been available.

Soldado Herido shares a similar palette with both Zapatistas and Barricade, a color structure comprised of browns and grays with areas of intense blues, reds and yellows. Soldado Herido depicts an interior scene where one soldier is helping another lie down. They are both shirtless and have obviously removed themselves from an armed conflict outside. On the upper right of the picture, there is a window through which we see a Constitucionalista soldier with cap and uniform being attentive to a possible battle that we do not see. The sky through the window is thickly painted in a pink-gray color. The interior walls are raw sienna mixed with touches of gray. The floor is yellow ochre. The two soldiers in the interior wear dark blue pants with brown boots. Colors are painted boldly, with strong value contrasts accentuating the dimensionality of the forms. The heads and torsos are drawn powerfully, with the usual emphasis Orozco gives to arms and hands, as well as ribcages. Skin is painted in siennas and ochres, with touches of dark blue. All three figures possess Indian facial features, but unlike other depictions by Orozco, these are not grotesque. The physical movement of the two figures in the interior resembles a deposition scene; a dead, or in this case, dying man is being laid down. Suffering is present, grief is observed.

Zapatistas reflects Orozco's observance of the Zapatista prisoners brought into the Carranza camp:

I personally did not have a bad time during the revolution, but I saw much brutality, devastation, betrayal....I was with the Carranza forces, and I saw their defeated victims like the poor Zapatista peasants brought in to be executed. There was something suicidal about those Zapatistas, like their leader, they were marked for doom, death....In the end I don't trust revolutions or glorify them, since I witnessed too much butchery. Only a fool like Rivera, who was in France during the revolution can carry on about revolution.³⁰

Zapatistas does not exhibit the positive imagery found in works by the likes of Rivera. These peasants are not distributing land or arms, or embracing workers in a show of solidarity. They march forward, bowed figures, followed by shrouded soldaderas. The painting is somber, with dark areas of viridian and browns. Some red and blue is scattered in the shirts and robes. Four men on horseback loom large over the marching line. Behind them are dark mountains and a stormy sky of dark gray and pale pink. An angular tension is created throughout the whole composition, as the line of figures leans left, while the hills in the background lean towards the right. As in Soldado Herido, the painting is

³⁰ Unpublished typed manuscript of Orozco interview by José Gómez Sicre, 13 February 1946, p. 1.

"Personalmente yo no la pase mal durante la revolución, pero ví mucha brutalidad, destrucción, traiciones....Yo estaba con las fuerzas de Carranza y ví sus victimas vencidas como los infelices campesinos Zapatistas que traian para ser fusilados. Había algo suicida en esos Zapatistas, como su jefe estaban marcados para la tragedia, la muerte al final....En fin yo no le tengo confianza a las revoluciones ni las glorifico, pues he visto mucha carniceria. Solo un idiota como Rivera, que estaba en Francia durante la revolución puede chiflar y chiflar sobre la revolución."

sober, dramatic. In this picture the red of the clothes associates for the viewer the blood of martyrdom. This painting also reminds one of traditional Christian iconography; the captured Zapatistas are like martyrs being led to their death. They have kept their faith in agrarian revolution and are meeting their end. Orozco writes:

Poor Zapatista peasants, prisoners fallen to the Carrancistas, would be shot in the church atrium.³¹

Zapatistas was one of three works acquired by Stephen C. Clark, a trustee of The Museum of Modern Art. When Clark visited Orozco, he praised his talents, telling him he was one of the most significant artists of the period. Clark also suggested to the artist that he paint larger easel pictures, that he would buy several of them at \$2,500 a piece for his private collection, and eventually he would donate them to The Museum of Modern Art.³²

In 1931 Clark purchased three Orozco paintings, Zapatistas, Barricada and El Cementerio, for \$7,500, and in 1937 all three were given anonymously to The Museum of Modern

³¹ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 2da ed., (México: Ediciones Era, 1981), p. 45.

"Se fusilaba en el atrio de la parroquia a infelices peones zapatistas que caían prisioneros de los carrancistas."

³² José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 241. Letter dated May 20, 1931.

Art.³³

Barricada is a slightly different second version of Orozco's 1926 fresco mural La Trinchera at the National Preparatory School. The fresco is practically monochrome, executed in tans, black, brown and white against a blood-red sky. La Trinchera is an image of agonizing defeat. The composition contains a barechested man placed diagonally across the center. To the left, another man with two cartridge belts across his torso, bends in the same direction. The back of this figure is to the viewer. These two figures together give the impression of a single crucified figure. Barricada has more color than the fresco; the browns and tans are complemented by various blues, deep purples and red. Being an oil on canvas, the figures are thickly painted, while some of the background areas are flat. The hands, feet and torsos of the men are drawn in an exaggerated realism, with particular emphasis on the joints and fingers. Again, the two principal figures are juxtaposed front and back, giving as a unit the impression of a distorted crucifixion. While in the fresco a kneeling soldier grieves on the lower right, in the oil painting, Orozco replaces this one figure with three. These are all in profile and stacked one upon another. In the distant background, a head in profile seems to be screaming. This

³³ Clemente Orozco, Orozco, Verdad Cronologica, (Guadalajara: Guadalajara, 1983), p. 247.

1931 easel painting depicts the figures still engaged in battle, while the 1926 mural is definitely a scene of defeat.

Noting the constant explorations of diagonals in these easel pictures, it is important to look into the artist's sketchbooks at this time. Notebook 1 (1931) contains over forty sketches, highly schematic and geometric, which explore variations and diagonals. Next to these, Orozco writes:

Without diagonals there is no geometry, pure mechanics. Diagonals are a geometric after taste.

Study of energy: nature itself, the works of art and the machines, that which is mechanic.³⁴

Elsewhere in the same notebook, he jotted down:

In a painting, the articulations or points of anchor are found in the intersection of diagonals, in the axles or sides of the painting. The rigid bodies are the diagonals, the axles or sides of the painting. The forces are applied in any point of the aforementioned lines.³⁵

The sketches and notes are signs that Orozco was

³⁴ José Clemente Orozco, Notebook 1, 1931, unpaginated. Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, México.

"Sin diagonales no hay geometría, pura mecánica. Las diagonales son un resabio geométrico."

Estudio de la energía: la naturaleza misma, las obras de arte y las máquinas, la mecánica."

³⁵ Ibid.

"En un cuadro, las articulaciones o puntos de apoyo se encuentran en la intersección de las diagonals, de los ejes o de los lados del cuadro. Los cuerpos rígidos son las diagonals, los ejes o los lados del cuadro. Las fuerzas están aplicadas en cualquier punto de las antedichas líneas."

seriously studying the process of picture making. Although these sketches are crude, minimal, they are experiments which are eventually absorbed and synthesized into the easel pictures.

Toward the end of Notebook 1, he writes regarding composition:

A sculpture, a painting, an architecture is a space divided in unequal parts organized in a system.

Each part is also a space divided in unequal parts organized in a system. The organization of the parts is established by means of relationships determined by reason.

The relationships are of: proportion, form, color, tone, density, position, character, meaning.

The most important relationships in the totality establishes most powerfully the unity of the composition.³⁶

Undoubtedly, the pictorial dynamism of certain of Orozco's easel pictures, such Soldado Herido, Zapatistas, and Barricada, have their gestation, however abstractly and conceptual, in the jottings of the two notebooks of 1931-32.

³⁶ Ibid.

"Una escultura, un cuadro, una arquitectura es un espacio dividido en partes desiguales organizadas en un sistema.

Cada parte es también un espacio dividido en partes desiguales organizadas en un sistema. La organización de las partes se establece por medio de relaciones determinadas por el razonamiento.

Las relaciones son de: proporción, forma, color, tono, densidad, posición, carácter, significado.

La relación más importante en el total establece más poderosamente la unidad de la composición."

El Cementerio, 1931 (fig. 24) is roughly the same as Zapatistas. As mentioned before, this painting was one of the three acquired by Steven C. Clark, and later given to The Museum of Modern Art.³⁷ Painted in what is known as a "media pasta", an intermediate, yet dense, application of the pigments, the composition depicts a graveyard in the upper right. In the background, we see a hill, stretching from left to right, painted in combination of viridian and gray. The sky is painted in an impasto of Prussian blue. Throughout the graveyard, there are caskets, opened and closed, corpses covered in white sheets, and female mourners. A solitary male figure, seen from the back, with a rifle and zarape stands guard. Deep blacks and browns are used throughout to depict the shrouded mourners as well as the caskets. Dark and cool blues and grays are used to emphasize the coldness and desolation of death. This is what remains of revolution. This is how the Mexican people deal with death in Orozco's eyes, in a tragic, stoic manner.

In a work such as El Cementerio, Orozco is rebelling against the pretty and picturesque representations of Mexican reality which were popular with collectors in the United

³⁷ Telephone interview with Judith Cousins and the author, October 21, 1996. Ms. Cousins is the Curator of Files in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art. She confirmed that El Cementerio had been given anonymously to the museum in 1937, also that it had been deaccessioned in the early 1970s with a group of other Latin American works. It is now in a private collection in Mexico City.

States and the public in general.

The Mexican Revolution created its own particular iconography. Where there had been Catholic saints since the time of the Conquest, now there were secular revolutionary leaders, like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. From 1923 on, after the deaths of both Zapata and Villa, and throughout the 1930s, their figures became mythologized in historical accounts, novels, paintings and eventually films. As a caricaturist for the anarcho-syndicalist, La Vanguardia in 1915 (which was allied with the forces of Carranza and Obregón), Orozco created satirical drawings of the so-called "peasant rebels," Villa and Zapata. For La Vanguardia these men and their followers were seen as agrarian, backward and religious. The anarcho-syndicalists of La Vanguardia sided with the Constitutionalists, whose roots were urban, secular and who favored scientific progress.³⁸

Over time, Orozco's view of Zapata would change and emerge in a 1930 easel work executed in California as well as the Dartmouth mural. Zapata evolved in Orozco's hand from bloody and obscurantist peasant to noble martyr. Not so with Villa. Pancho Villa, 1931 (fig. 25), is a small painting wherein Orozco depicts Villa as a powerful and ruthless figure.

Francisco Villa was born Doroteo Arango Arámbula in San

³⁸ John M. Hart, Anarchism and The Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), p. 126-27.

Juan del Rio, province of Durango in 1878. When he was sixteen years old, he murdered a local man and fled his region. In time, he assumed the name of Francisco Villa. He was first an outlaw, and as one, he developed his own tactics of guerilla warfare. These he utilized years later when he joined the Revolution.³⁹ In 1910, he joined the peasant uprisings in the North against the regime of Porfirio Díaz. He was allied for a time to Carranza, Obregón and Zapata, yet by 1915, he had broken with the first two. Due to the United States government's recognition of a Carranza presidency, Villa started to attack border towns in the United States. Then President Wilson sent General John Pershing and his troops to push Villa back into Mexico.⁴⁰ By late 1921, Villa "retired" to Canutillo in the North, where he ran a small shop which produced iron beams.⁴¹ On July 20, 1923, Villa was assassinated by Jesús Salas Barraza and others, on the orders of General Obregón.⁴²

Orozco painted Villa dressed in the white cotton shirt and trousers of peasants from the South, where Zapata, not Villa, was from. He holds a gun in one hand, while with the

³⁹ Enrique Krauze, Francisco Villa, Entre el ángel y el fierro, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987), pp. 7-11.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 92-97.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 107.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 110-111.

other he pulls the hair of a naked, pregnant woman. At his feet, lies a nude male figure, who is about to be killed, if he is not dead already. Behind Villa, there is a tumultuous mixture of his followers and crouching figures that seem to be begging for mercy. In the background, there is also a house on fire. Villa's face is fierce; dark eyes and clenched teeth. The overall coloristic structure is one of browns, tans and grays with scattered patches of pale blue. The paint is applied sparingly, almost simulating a dry brush technique, and allowing the grain of the canvas to show through. The overall drawing is minimal, sparse. At times, Orozco's background as a political cartoonist is evident in certain exaggerations in the figures.

Orozco interprets Villa as a violent bandit, not a revolutionary leader. This is in stark contrast to Rivera's fresco of 1931, Agrarian Leader Zapata (fig. 26). Rivera paints Zapata as a Christ-like figure, dressed in the white cotton typical of the peasants of the South. The figure of Zapata steps over a vanquished soldier of the old order, just as Christ stepped over the devil. Zapata holds his horse by the reins; the animal represents a symbol of strength and purity, like the Holy Spirit. Zapata's face is calm, yet focused, so different from Orozco's Villa. Behind Zapata are his followers armed with agrarian tools that have become weapons. They are like the disciples of Christ, but their gospel is of agrarian revolution. Stylistically, the

influence of Masaccio, Uccello and other Renaissance artists is evident in the linear clarity of this work. The forms are stylized and the palette is of earths, greens and white, each element complementing the other.

Of course, over time the figure of Zapata became romanticized and made more sympathetic than Villa's. The revolutionary from the state of Morelos was never a bandit; he had an ideological platform (Plan de Ayala) and was also surrounded by intellectuals and journalists, including the father of poet Octavio Paz, forming the members of his inner circle.⁴³

Rivera feeds into the folkloric, romantic "vogue of things Mexican." When Orozco depicts this same world, it is usually cracked and corrupted or tragic and doomed. His own image of Zapata, Zapata Entering a Peasant's Hut of 1930 (fig. 27), painted in California shortly after completing the mural at Pomona, is dark and claustrophobic. Painted in dark reds, browns and blacks, with touches of pale gray and blue, the composition consists of Zapata dominating the upper center of the picture plane. The hut he enters is dark, two soldiers with their backs turned to the viewer are on Zapata's left, while two grieving figures kneel in the foreground. Zapata's face is tragic and mask-like, resembling the dramatic Pre-Columbian forms of Olmec and

⁴³ José Luis Martínez, Zapata. Iconografía, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982), pp. 7-8.

Toltec sculptures. The narrative within the painting is unclear. Yet, we discern a desperate situation without solution. The despair is accentuated by the grieving figures, which again are reminiscent of the Christian iconography of the lamentation. If Orozco's Pancho Villa represents the revolutionary as macho bandit, leaving chaos in his wake, his Zapata Entering a Peasant's Hut is the revolutionary on his way to inevitable martyrdom.⁴⁴

Siqueiros' own image of Zapata, the 1931 oil painting Zapata (fig. 28), has much in common with Orozco's. It is not a folkloric image; the face has the beauty and solemnity of an Olmec mask, and the coloristic structure is dark: black, gray, browns. Fatalism is evoked by placing the figure in front of a "callejón sin salida" – dead-end street.

What is interesting in the depiction of Zapata by all three of "Los Tres Grandes" is that they agree on the ideological superiority of the "caudillo" of the South over the banditry of Villa--thus their positive contributions to Zapatista iconography. Orozco, due to his anti-agrarian political background, was the last of the three to accept this view. His representation of Zapata is one filtered through a pessimistic view of history.

⁴⁴ The most thorough and only political discussion of Orozco's Zapata Entering a Peasant's Hut is John Hutton, "If I am to die tomorrow" – Roots and Meanings of Orozco's Zapata Entering a Peasant's Hut", in The Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies, Vol. II, no. 1 (Fall 1984), pp. 38-51.

Orozco's painting Casa Quemada of 1930 (fig. 29) is based on one of the ink drawings from the México en Revolución series. It is a large horizontal picture, almost the size of Zapatistas. Four women covered in shawls, their backs turned, stand in front of a traditionally white, rectangular peasant's house. The women's shawls and skirts are in black, pale blue, brown, dark blue, pink and red. The colors stand in strong contrast to the rest of the painting, which is essentially monochromatic; sienna ground, white house with charcoal gray and black burn marks above the doors and windows, light gray blue sky. Throughout the entire composition, the pigments are applied in "media pasta," with some areas of the white house being more thickly painted. Since their faces are not visible, the women are anonymous vessels of grief. They are every-man and every-woman, the Mexican people. Although the abode has remained standing, it is useless since its interior has been burned. The sky is austere, the ground barren, not a single bit of green visible. This is an image of sterility, hopes turned into ashes. This tragic view of history is obviously fed by the devastation that the artist witnessed while active in the Red Battalions.

Rivera, Charlot, and lesser artists painted Mexican scenes from at least two perspectives. Scenes of optimism regarding the Revolution, based on either a Marxist or populist perspective was one. The other was genre scenes,

which celebrated folk culture, and the matriarchy in particular. These last, at their worst, could be exotic views, which simplified a more complicated reality. Orozco, due in part to his disenchantment with the Revolution, with the betrayal of the anarcho-syndicalist movement by the government, and his own antipathy to any indigenista stance, chose to depict Mexican scenes in a critical, if sometimes overly gloomy light.

Mythological or Surreal Themes

Starting in 1929, Orozco experimented with mythological (Greek-inspired, as in ancient subjects) and surreal themes in a number of easel pictures. The first were obviously a reflection of the ideas of the Delphic circle to which he belonged. The works that I am labelling, for lack of a better word, "surreal", are a reaction to the modern European paintings that he encountered, for the first time, in the New York galleries. These differ from the Surrealism of André Breton and the School of Paris, both in form and content. These pictures by Orozco are more unreal than surreal. Reed's 1932 monograph documents eight oil paintings and two gouaches that fall under these two categories. The ten works that we know of range in size from small (9 5/8 x 8 1/8), such as The Teacher of 1929, to the 19 1/2 x 24 Aquella Noche of 1930.

All of these works are simply experiments; acidic and dissonant in color, filled with weak drawing and mediocre to kitschy compositions. Orozco, unlike Rivera or Siqueiros, could not absorb a style that was alien to his sensibility and experiment with it fruitfully. Rivera did this successfully with Surrealism, Siqueiros with abstraction. Orozco's easel paintings of the late 1940s approximate abstraction; this process was a slow one that started in 1940 with the mural Dive Bomber and Tank.

These failed paintings of Orozco's probably began as curious responses to the stylistic innovations he was encountering in art. Of course, it is possible that he was also attempting to paint themes and styles with a particular market in mind.

Orozco was most prolific as an easel painter when he was not involved with a major mural project. Easel paintings were executed before and after the Prometheus mural; the same holds true when he was working at The New School for Social Research and at Dartmouth.

In his easel pictures, Orozco depicted the darker side of reality, be this through New York scenes or Mexican subjects. His metropolis is not the same one as the Precisionists; the New York pictures are about alienation and destruction. These are negative images of urban life. His Mexico is not Rivera's; his paintings contain tragic, anti-picturesque views of the Revolution and the devastation it

left in its wake. In one of his notebooks Orozco defined Expressionism, a style that suits his work, as:

Static objects. Many religious themes. Suppress the object. Exciting. Extravagant. Dynamic. Loud. Summary. First planes. Moves forward. Great forms. Monumental. Warm. Thick chromatic substance. Rough: scratches. Like rock that has not been carved. Allows one to see the work, the hand, the craft. Expressive deformation of the objects. Supremacy of the diagonal, acute angle, in opposition to the borders of the painting. Primal.⁴⁵

With these words, Orozco could have easily been describing his own art; views of New York that captured the brutality of the city; Mexican subjects that turned "Indians with flowers" on their head and evoked the tragedy of religious art through the Revolution.

⁴⁵ José Clemente Orozco, Notebook 3, unpaginated. Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, México.

"Objetos estáticos. Muchos asuntos religiosos. Suprime el objeto. Rítmico. Excitante. Extravagante. Dinámico. Gritería. Sumario. Primeros planos. Se mueve hacia adelante. Grandes formas. Monumental. Cálido. Substancia cromática espesa. Aspero:rasca. Como roca sin desbatar. Deja ver el trabajo, la mano, la factura. Deformación expresiva de los objetos. Impera la diagonal, ángulo agudo, en oposición a las márgenes del cuadro. Primigenio."

CHAPTER 4

Drawings and Lithographs, 1928-32

All three of the major muralists drew extensively. Drawing was not just the first step in the process of designing the compositions of murals, it was also a medium in its own right, where works could be created independently of easel and mural painting. In Rivera's drawings both the rigor and boredom of academicism is present. Siqueiros could be a powerful draftsman, particularly during the late 1920s and into the 1930s, yet at his worst, his drawings are exaggerated and overly mannered. On the other hand, Orozco's weak drawings are no more than caricatures with monumental aspirations. At the same time, his background as a caricaturist also gives his drawings a more experimental and audacious slant. In terms of content, Orozco's graphic work is both more satirical and dramatic than Rivera's and Siqueiros.

Orozco discovered the medium of lithography during his second stay in the United States. He used the lithographic technique in its own right, exploring subjects not found in his drawings and paintings. Like Rivera and Siqueiros, Orozco used lithography to recycle and popularize earlier images from murals. With few exceptions, these tend to be his weakest prints. Like all traditionally trained artists, Orozco believed drawing to be the basis of all art; he

declared this belief verbally on various occasions throughout his life. More than that, he explored it throughout his life-long, intense involvement with graphic work. This is evident from the México en Revolución series of the late 1920s through the allegorical ink drawings of the late 1940s.

Drawings

Orozco's first one-person exhibition in New York City consisted of his México en Revolución series of ink drawings.¹ He exhibited some thirty-seven drawings at this time. The complete series consists of forty-three drawings. It is possible that Orozco had completed some twenty to twenty-two of these drawings by early 1927. He sent these ahead to the United States with Anita Brenner, since he feared a repetition of his earlier experience with U.S. Customs.² The rest of the series was obviously completed in New York City during 1928, and it is possible that the last six drawings

¹ As documented in Chapter 2, this exhibition took place at the Galleries of Marie Sterner, from October 10-22, 1928.

² Conversation with Alfredo Orozco Valladares and the author, July 1, 1995, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

The artist's son recalled hearing his father mention, years after the fact, that Brenner had brought some of his drawings to the United States before he arrived in December of 1927. Orozco feared his work could be destroyed once again by U.S. Customs agents as had happened earlier with the Casa del Llanto series.

were finished in early 1929.³ In her 1932 monograph, Alma Reed reproduced all forty-three drawings under the heading, "‘Mexico in Revolution’ Drawings and Lithographs from Sketches Made Between 1913 and 1917."⁴ There were no lithographs in this series; all were ink and wash drawings on paper, each measuring approximately 24 x 36 inches. Reed created the legend of these drawings as based on sketches made between 1913 and 1917. It seems unlikely that Orozco kept sketchbooks while he worked at La Vanguardia as a political caricaturist in 1915, as well as later when he drew for other newspapers. No sketchbooks from this period have been located. Without a doubt, Orozco saw in real life some of the episodes that he transformed into images in the México en Revolución series. Yet, by the time he sat down to draw these in the late 1920s, over a decade had passed since he had witnessed some of these scenes. Distance had helped him fictionalize, choose a point of view, and go beyond mere reporting. Other compositions in the series are purely imaginative. They are filled with the misogyny of the Symbolism of Julio Ruelas, an important influence on Orozco’s aesthetic development.

³ Ibid.

Alfredo Orozco Valladares recalled his father telling him of drawing more "estampas de la revolución" once he was already in New York City.

⁴ Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Delphic Studios, 1932), p. 130.

Six works from the series will be discussed. These are from the group executed in New York City. They represent traditional themes for the artist: anti-clericalism, disasters, corruption and devastation. All of these drawings were made with both pen and brush, possibly over a light pencil sketch delineating the overall composition. The washes range from very light gray, allowing the white of the paper to show through, to deep blacks. Since Orozco did not use the very best inks, but what was available to him, the drawings have faded to a range of black-browns; the grays over time have become sepia.

Evicción (fig. 30), depicts a group of five revolutionaries, three in the foreground, two in the background, evicting five priests and one "sacristan" (adult altar-server). The revolutionaries have been drawn with a great economy of means; a few strokes of the pen produces their broad hats, figures clad in white with cartridge belts strapped across their torsos, and barely visible faces. They are not drawn as individuals, but as symbols of the revolution. The priests, who are being pushed out of the picture plane to the left, do possess individual features. They are all grotesque. In this work, Orozco washed them in as a large black mass, comprised of six bodies. Their coloration makes them resemble a group of shrieking vultures. It is interesting that as late as the 1940s, when Orozco executed the portrait of the Archbishop of Mexico City, he

referred to him as the "major vulture". In the Autobiografía, he recalled the evictions of churches:

The church of El Carmen was also assaulted and given to the workers ... Saints, confession boxes and altars were chopped for firewood by the women to cook, we took the ornaments of the priests and altars. We all came out decorated with rosaries, medals and scapulars.⁵

In this drawing, Orozco's usual anti-clericalism is present. He does not, however, glorify the revolutionaries. They are simply abstracted. Orozco is better at attacking than affirming, and the bloated priests are a perfect target. Allies of the established order, the clergy depicted here are not the defenders of the peasantry, but rather are exploiters who tell the masses that justice is to be found only in heaven.

Tren Dinamitado (fig. 31) prefigures the apocalyptic qualities of the 1934 mural Catarsis. The composition intermingles the industrial forms of a blown-up train with female nudes. Between the slopes of two hills, there is a background littered with wheels and fragments of various wagons. In the central background, between the intersection of two converging diagonals, there is a blasted, wooden

⁵ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 2da ed., (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1981), p. 42.

"El templo de El Carmen fue asaltado también y entregado a los obreros ... Los santos, los confesionarios y los altares fueran hechos leña por las mujeres, para cocinar, y los ornamentos de los altares y de los sacerdotes nos los llevamos nosotros. Todos salimos decorados con rosarios, medallas y escapularios."

structure, possibly an electric pole. Lying across the foreground are three dead female nudes. One has her head covered by a piece of metal; blood drips down an arm, breast and leg. The other two nudes are drawn in a foreshortened manner; one has her head toward the viewer, the other her feet. The nude whose head is visible, has both arms tied together. Who are these women? Hostages, raped by their captors? Depicted in positions of submission, they become another expression of the artist's misogyny. Once again, Orozco's women are deprived of a life-affirming identity. They are either schoolgirls who will be corrupted, whores, or victims of absurd brutality. Rivera, on the other hand, opted to empathize and glorify the Mexican matriarchy in his paintings and drawings, particularly those of the most humble classes.

Blown-up trains were a very common happening throughout the Mexican revolution. First literature and later film are filled with this imagery. These are generally depicted as exciting opportunities for battle and for encountering the enemy unexpectedly. This is not the case in this drawing. Tren Dinamitado is an image of chaotic, absurd death, made stark by the white nude bodies on the foreground. Orozco, in this work, as well as others, pulls the rug of romanticism from under the revolution. Here is death and destruction, meaningless as ever!

One of Orozco's most grotesque drawings from this series

is La Boda del General (fig. 32). The composition depicts a minimally rendered street where the dark walls of two buildings are visible on the left side and background. In the center, slightly to the right, stand four figures. Two are common revolutionary soldiers, standing in the middle ground. One is barefoot, the other has his back to the viewer. They are drawn in an almost shorthand style; a few lines and bold washes of gray and black. The figure facing us is blunt; the features of his face grotesque. These features are evidence of "mestizaje" – the racial by-product of Indian and Spanish. Yet, Orozco always makes the features more Indian than Spanish; again a clue to his own "anti-indigenista" position. Orozco associates the Indian, unlike Rivera and even Siqueiros, not with a glorious pre-Cortesian past, but rather with brutality, coarseness, and ignorance.

The two central figures in this work are the General himself and the young wife he has just taken. The General wears a wide-brimmed hat with the seal of the Mexican flag on its center. His face, although more detailed, is similar to those of the soldiers in the background. It is a grotesque mask covered with a wild mustache. His left leg has a wooden peg below the knee. His paw-like hands clutch the voluptuous female figure. She covers her face with her hands; this is not the fate she would have wished for herself. Is she perhaps marrying the General to save her family or her family's property; or is she a human spoil of war? The

drawing is an image of corruption and abuse of power. The new revolutionary "caudillos," like the ones of the previous regime, take what they want, when they want it. Orozco evoked in his recollection of the revolution this state of corruption and chaos:

Song, drama and barbarism. Buffoons and dwarfs following hangmen in cahoots with smiling procuresses. Insolent commandants burning with alcohol, demanding everything with gun in hand. Shots in dark streets, at night, followed by screams, blasphemies, and unforgivable insults. Broken storefronts, dry blows, pain, more bullets.⁶

Lastly, the drawings Los Heridos (fig. 33), Guerra (fig. 34), and El Fusilado (fig. 35), form a telling trilogy of the remnants of revolution and war.

Los Heridos, the wounded, is very similar in content and graphic technique to works of the 1920s by Beckmann, Grosz and Dix. The Germans were depicting the remains of World War I: amputees, all sorts of cripples, the corrupt, and the deranged. Orozco in Los Heridos also depicts the remains of a conflict, in this case, the Mexican Revolution.

Los Heridos portrays a make-shift ward in what could be

⁶ Ibid, p. 46.

"Sainete, drama y barbarie. Bufones y enanos siguiendo a señores de horca y cuchilla en conferencia con sonrientes celestinas. Comandantes insolentes enardecidos por el alcohol, exigiéndolo todo pistola en mano. Tiroteos en calles oscuras, por la noche, seguidos de alaridos, de blasfemias y de insultos imperdonables. Quebrazón de vidrieras, golpes secos, ayes de color, más balazos."

a barn. The battlefield is obviously not far away. In the background, there are women mourning the dead or caring for the wounded. Two soldiers enter the ward bearing a stretcher with a sheet-covered corpse. A few typical sarape and broad-brimmed hat figures stand about. The ground is littered with bodies; some under sheets, some not. In the foreground of the drawing to the left, two figures (they could be doctors, nurses or orderlies) struggle over a dying patient whose head, arm and legs are visible below them. To their right are the real horrors: two amputees, one sideways, the other turning his back to the viewer. The first has the left leg missing, which is bandaged from the crotch to the stump at the knee. Both arms are also missing from below the elbows. The face is bandaged from the top of the upper lip to the cropped mane of hair. The mouth is semi-open, showing some teeth, perhaps expressing pain. The other figure has also lost both legs, as well as the right arm from below the elbow, which is bandaged. These mutilated torsos are drawn with great strength, demonstrating Orozco's knowledge of the structure of the human body.

The floor of this make-shift hospital seems to be plain dirt, upon which a drama is played out; namely the agony of the dying and mutilated, and the fatalistic indifference of the attendants, evident in the figures in the background.

Guerra is a composition that Orozco would reuse for an easel painting in 1930, retitled Casa Quemada (fig. 29).

The ink drawing, like the later easel picture, renders four women, their backs to the viewer. They stand in front of a burnt house. All four figures are covered in shawls. The house is the traditional peasant's house: white and rectangular with plain windows and doors. Since the faces of the women are not seen, they become anonymous – the Mexican people. Although the structure of the abode stands, its interior has been burned. The smoke has stained the areas above the doors and windows. Unlike the later oil painting, the drawing contains another element; between the women's skirts we decipher parts of a body, a bit of a torso, legs, feet. The women have survived, they remain after the war has gone through their village. Their homes, however, have been burnt; their men have been killed. The matriarchy has been reduced to mourning.

El Fusilado, the executed one, is one of Orozco's most powerful drawings within his entire production as a draftsman. A composition of tense angles, it renders the figures against the architecture and the architecture against the ground. This work contains nine figures, spaced throughout the foreground, middle-ground and background. Tonally, the drawing ranges from the deep blacks of the immediate foreground (the shawls of the women and entrance-ways to the building) to the white of the paper showing through a pale gray wash which becomes the sky. The scene portrays the activities in front of a building that could be

the headquarters of a revolutionary chief. A "fusilado" – someone who has just been executed by firing squad – is carried on a stretcher towards the left and into the background. One arm falls outside the stretcher, while the dead man's hat lies on his stomach. This figure is drawn opaquely with a great deal of black ink. The stretcher is carried by two men wearing hats. In front of them, two soldiers with rifles march. These four figures were sketched in with light pencil and ink. All are covered with a moderate gray wash. In the foreground, drawn forcefully and darkly with a brush, is a hatless old man, a woman and a small girl, both covered with shawls. Their backs turned to the viewer, they follow the corpse of the "fusilado." Nearby, a figure in sarape and hat walks to the right holding a rifle. We barely see his face, since most of it is covered by the sarape. Perhaps he might have been one of the executioners?

Every element in this drawing works; there is a balance between the quick sketch and the more carefully modelled forms. The synthesis of understated, violent content and the formal structure of angles and rectangles create an image with impact reminiscent of Goya and Daumier, artists known and admired by Orozco. Psychologically, El Fusilado evokes both grief and despair. The executed are buried by their families. The executioners continue to follow their orders. Against the tomb-like building in the background, the figures

seem small and insignificant, resigned to their daily tasks. This work is one of many footnotes to the revolution, any revolution. The vanquished are further victimized by the victors. Men are executed by firing squad, their families left behind in ruin. They are not entitled to the new social order.

Orozco's series of drawings, México en Revolución, can rightly be compared to Goya's Desastres de la Guerra prints, both in its narrative, episodic quality and bleak view of armed conflict and its aftermath. In his correspondence with his wife, Orozco always referred to these drawings as "los horrores" – the horrors. Orozco, like Goya, can be both somber and satirical. The literary equivalent to these works is the novel, Los de Abajo (The Underdogs) by Orozco's compatriot, Mariano Azuela.

Trained as a physician, Azuela (1873-1952) was a liberal supporter of Francisco I. Madero. After the collapse of the Díaz regime, Azuela was made Director of Education of the State of Jalisco. He joined Pancho Villa's army in the north as a doctor after General Victoriano Huerta assassinated President Madero. Azuela's knowledge of the revolution was acquired first hand, as he was active in Villa's army from 1912 to 1915. By the end of 1915, he was in exile in El Paso, Texas, and it was there that he published Los de Abajo in serial form. The definitive edition of the novel was

printed in Mexico City in 1920.⁷ Los de Abajo is credited with being the first realistic depiction of the Mexican Revolution. It narrates in episodic form, the story of Demetrio Macías, an Indian forced to side with the rebels to save his family. In the course of battle, he becomes both a compulsive and corrupt militarist, eventually becoming a general in Villa's army. The background of the entire novel is filled with battle scenes, executions and lootings. The characters range from loyal peasants who want land and freedom, to turncoats and women of easy virtue. Defeated and disillusioned by the end of the novel, Macías ends his days ambushed by former allies. Filled with bitter irony, the novel lays out the brutal excesses of the revolution and the betrayal of its idealistic principles by the new power structure. The book does in words what Orozco's drawings do in images.

It is no accident that Orozco was approached in early 1929 to illustrate an English translation of the book. He informed Charlot:

Enrique Murguía was here, he is a lawyer at the Mexican embassy, if you do not know him I will send you a letter of introduction, he comes from Mexico, is friendly, young, a drinker, ex-admirer of Diego and the translator into english of Azuela's The Underdogs.

Diego will do the illustrations and I the front

⁷ Luis Leal, Mariano Azuela, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1971), pp. 25-28.

and back covers, it will be published by Brentano.⁸

When Azuela's The Underdogs was published in 1930, it contained a reproduction of a painting by Rivera on the cover (The Burning of Judas Figures, a 1923 fresco at the Ministry of Public Education in Mexico City), and several brush and ink illustrations by Orozco.⁹ Orozco produced a total of five vignettes which were used as chapter headings, and five full-page illustrations. Of these last, two go beyond mere illustrations and stand as powerful drawings in their own right (figs. 36 & 37). One depicts a highly abstracted battle scene, where masses of figures descend upon one another at different angles. In the background, both a blasted tree and a stormy sky can be seen, the latter evoked by a brushed black stain. Throughout the drawing, using a series of rough, spiky lines, Orozco creates the illusion of heaps of figures being crushed, stabbed. The angular tensions and scumbled lines of this drawing create a surface similar to that of a Jackson Pollock drip painting from the

⁸ José Clemente Orozco, El Artista en Nueva York (cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1971), p. 130. Letter dated February 19, 1929.

"Estuvo aquí Enrique Murguía, abogado en la embajada de México, si no lo conoces te enviaré una carta de presentación, viene de México, simpático, joven, bebedor, ex-dieguista, traductor al inglés de Los de Abajo de Azuela.

Diego hará las ilustraciones y yo el jaquet y el sombrero, lo editará Brentano."

⁹ Mariano Azuela, The Underdogs, translation by Enrique Murguía, (New York: Brentano's, 1930).

1940s. The other illustration is a cleaner and more monumental drawing which depicts a revolutionary soldier holding a woman on his lap. The soldier, wearing a broad hat, a rifle leaning against his arm, holds a glass (of alcohol no doubt) in his hand. With the other arm, he holds a woman with braided hair, her back to the viewer. The squinting eye and twisted mouth on the soldier's face denote intoxication. The entire drawing has been executed with brush. Some lines are thin, but most tend to be wide and rough. Both figures are drawn as solid, powerful masses. Yet again, individual identity is either generalized or missing, transforming the figures into symbols for every soldier and "soldadera" - term used to define common-law wives of soldiers during the revolution.

The following two drawings reflect more directly the environment of New York City. These are New York Subway, 1929 (fig. 38), a charcoal drawing, and The Committee on Art, 1932 (fig. 39), an ink on paper.

The charcoal, whose location is unknown, could be the companion piece to the oil painting The Subway. The composition renders a platform which ends in a black square in the background. The beams on the ceiling as well as the columns are drawn as the solid pieces of steel that they are. Orozco, however, gives these forms gritty, coarse surfaces, evoking dirt. Four figures are visible - these are nothing more than black silhouettes of automatons. The work again is

the antithesis of the dynamic, lively depictions of the same subject by the artists of the 14th Street School. Orozco's subway platform is a steel and concrete underground where no exit is visible. In his eyes, it becomes a claustrophobic tomb or mine shaft rather than a waiting station for the latest form of modern transportation.

The Committee on Art is another of the artist's visual comments on the rich and powerful art patrons that he encountered at art openings. Orozco's background as a political caricaturist comes across not only in his ability to have the lines do his bidding with great economy of means, but also in the grotesquely drawn faces of the personages.

This drawing contains eleven figures, processing frieze-like to the left. Seven male figures form the background. These are drawn simply with square-jawed heads (some with hair, some without), two wearing glasses. Their bodies are all similar; massive and boxy overcoats with two feet at the bottom. The faces are all expressionless. The male at the end of the line, although balding, has an uncanny resemblance to Alfred H. Barr, Jr. In the foreground, three immense women wearing fur coats are followed by a young man with puckered lips. These figures are drawn in vitriol, not ink: the women are bloated, their faces mean and aggressive, like birds of prey. Two of them wear what seem to be top hats. They walk with authority. The figure at the head of the line holds a cane. The young man follows the three women with a

blank stare, like the other males depicted in the drawing. Could these women be powerful museum trustees?

Whatever they are, it is clear that they are the makers of taste, the elite. To Orozco, they could be the admirers of Rivera and French modernism. This drawing has much in common, both in satirical content and technical execution, with the ink and watercolor drawings produced by George Grosz, after his exile to New York City in 1932.

The Grosz drawings, like the Orozco, are vicious commentaries on the superfluous lives of the lovers of culture. Both artists have a deeper bond which informs their critical visions; both were outsiders within America culture, as well as, by 1932, former leftists. They both lived through revolutions, the Depression and fascism (in Grosz case), and survived as historical pessimists. Satire, as evident in The Committee on Art, as well as other works, made the dreadful present easier to bear.

Orozco used the medium of drawing in different ways, as the quick notation for more ambitious work in another medium and as a technique in its own right, producing series such as México en Revolución.

Lithographs

José Clemente Orozco starting working in the lithographic medium after his arrival in New York City. The new technique of lithography represented for Orozco an

opportunity to satisfy his natural inclination for experimentation. This medium offered the possibility of producing many copies of an image, which could be sold to a larger market for an accessible price. Orozco's letters to both his wife and Charlot during this time (1928-29) are filled with comments regarding the salability of prints.

Orozco started working in lithography in early February of 1928, as he explained in a letter to Charlot:

LITHOGRAPHY: I am going to make some, it is easy, not necessary to do it in stone, there are some special plates, I already have two of these. There is a man here, a Mr. Miller, who has a lithography shop and makes the impressions for the art galleries. The plates that I bought (26 x 43 cms) cost 50 cents, the impression of the first 12 proofs costs 10 dollars and each one after that is 25 cents, plus the paper. It is expensive for me, but I will see how I can pay.

There are many possibilities for any kind of engraving. In linoleum it is very easy.¹⁰

Between 1928 and 1930, Orozco executed a total of

¹⁰ José Clemente Orozco, El Artista en Nueva York (cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-29), (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1971), pp. 56-57. Letter dated February 23, 1928.

"LITOGRAFIA: Voy a hacer, es fácil, no es necesario hacerla en piedra, hay unas láminas especiales, ya tengo dos. Hay aquí un señor Miller, que tiene un taller de litografía y es quien hace las impresiones para las galerías de arte. Las láminas que compre (26 x 43 cms) valen a 50 centavos, la impresión de las 12 primeras pruebas vale 10 dólares y cada una de las siguientes 25 ctvs., más el papel. Es caro para mí, pero veré si lo puedo pagar. También hay muchas facilidades para toda clase de grabado. En linóleum es facilísimo."

nineteen lithographs,¹¹ seventeen of which were printed by George Miller in his shop on 14th Street. Miller printed both lithographs and etchings for artists associated with the Weyhe Gallery, as well as other galleries. Two of Orozco's last lithographs of 1930, Cabeza de Campesina and Tres Generaciones, were printed from zinc plates by Will Barnet at The Art Students League lithography shop.¹² Orozco's most prolific year with the lithographic medium was 1930, when he executed 10 of the 19 prints he produced while in New York. These were most probably pulled before he went to Claremont, California, to paint the Prometheus fresco at Pomona College,

¹¹ Chronologically, these are the lithographs executed by Orozco while in New York City, they were all titled by him in Spanish:

1. Vaudeville en Harlem, 1928
2. Bandera, 1928
3. Requiem, 1928
4. Casa Arruinada, 1929
5. Retaguardia, 1929
6. Soldados Mexicanos, 1929
7. Revolución, 1929
8. Inditos, 1929
9. Maguey, 1929
10. Paisaje Mexicano, 1930
11. Pueblo Mexicano, 1930
12. Manos Entrelazadas, 1930
13. Manos, 1930
14. Aflicción, 1930
15. Franciscano, 1930
16. Embarazada, 1930
17. Cabeza de Campesina, 1930
18. Tres Generaciones, 1930
19. Negros Ahorcados, 1930

¹² Telephone interview with Will Barnet and the author, April 4, 1996.

Will Barnet recalled printing an image of "a family and another of a peasant woman in profile, both on zinc plates. Alma Reed brought them to me at the League."

or later while back in New York preparing to paint The New School murals. As with easel paintings and drawings, Orozco did not produce lithographs while working on a mural project.

Among the 19 prints done in New York, Manos, Aflicción, Franciscano, Embarazada, Cabeza de Campesina and Tres Generaciones, are lithographic versions of various details from the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria murals. These murals were known by a larger public in the United States, due in part to the publication in various art magazines of the photographs of them taken by Tina Modotti and others. Therefore, Orozco probably recycled these themes in the medium of lithography, in the hopes that their previous recognizability would aid in their sale.

Six pencil and ink studies exist for six of the images Orozco executed in lithography. These are Vaudeville en Harlem, Requiem, Retaguardia, Soldados Mexicanos, Revolución and Manos Entrelazadas. The studies are simple linear ones, which lay out the overall elements of the composition. In scale they are slightly smaller than the prints that are based on them. Apart from these studies, Orozco seems to have drawn directly on the plate with the lithographic crayon or ink, without much preparation.¹³

Orozco sold his lithographs through the Weyhe Gallery

¹³ All of the original studies belong to the artist's older son Clemente, who resides in both Mexico City and Guadalajara. I saw photographs of these studies in the collection of the artist's second son Alfredo, when I visited him in Cuautla.

and, after the Delphic Studios opened in 1929, through both establishments. Generally his editions were a maximum of 100 copies, although the smaller editions consisted of 22 copies, and in some cases like Vaudeville en Harlem and Manos Entrelazadas, there is no information on the size of the editions. A problem with Orozco's United States lithographs is the different titles given a single work by either the artist or Alma Reed. A work like Negros Ahorcados is known by at least three different titles: The Hanged Men, Negroes, and The American Scene.

Vaudeville en Harlem (fig. 40), was Orozco's first lithograph. Executed in early February 1928, the work depicts the audience, block-like and silhouetted in the dark; four figures involved in some sort of acrobatic act occupy the light-filled stage. There is no specific indication that this is a Harlem scene. Only the title of the work tells us so. The work juxtaposes the liveliness of the performers with the denser forms of the audience. In the Autobiografía as well as in the letters to both Charlot and Margarita, Orozco expresses his fascination with the night-life of Harlem. He visited clubs and theatres there with regularity, at one point in the company of the poet, Federico García Lorca. This print is a remembrance of that life, as well as a homage to the popular theatre, an art form that always interested Orozco. The work is drawn in its entirety with lithographic crayon, without the use of ink.

Requiem (fig.41), also of 1928, is one of Orozco's most powerful prints. According to the artist's correspondence with his wife, the work sold out at the Weyhe Gallery quickly, and it was mentioned in the New York Evening Post (December 15, 1928) as one of the best prints of the year. It was also selected by the American Institute of Graphic Arts as one of the fifty best prints of 1928.

The composition has much in common with previous easel works by the artist, such as El Muerto. The work renders a mourning scene, in which five figures surround the front door of a house wherein a wake takes place. Of the five figures, three are standing, one kneels with her back to the viewer while the other, prostrate and weeping, covers her face with her hands. Two of the figures are male, the rest female. They are all dressed humbly, in typical Indian garb: barefoot, sarapes, shawls. Two lit candlesticks are held by two of the figures. Throughout the print, the blacks are deep and dark; the grays coarsely applied. The bodies are modelled simply, yet solidly. Even though this is an outdoor scene at night, there is a claustrophobic air throughout the work. Grief is a heaviness that cannot be shaken. Francisco Goitia's easel painting, Tata Jesucristo, another wake scene, comes to mind - mourning is represented as infinite and deep. It has become a way of life.

Inditos (fig. 42) is also known by the titles Maqueyes y Nopales and Mexican Peasants Working. This subject, Indians

working in a landscape, was popular in the work of Rivera and his followers. A theme such as this in his hands becomes a celebration of the abundance of the natural world and the Indians' proper place within it. Inditos, literally "little indians," is Orozco's satirical image of a subject that could otherwise become picturesque. Orozco renders three figures of Indians; two women and one man. They are small and seem to be crushed by the loads they carry. Next to them walks a mangy dog. The figures are lost in the middle-ground of the print. The foreground contains a gigantic maguey plant on the left, nopals on the right and plenty of rocks throughout. The background is filled with more enormous magueys, as well as hills that have been drawn to appear dry, arid. This nature is inhospitable. These "little Indians" are trapped within it. In this lithograph, Orozco does not romanticize a simpler, more primitive way of life. The figures have become a part of the dry, uninhabitable landscape. They are as arid and coarse as the environment around them. This is achieved through a drawing process which repeats the angles and textures of the natural forms in the human bodies and their bundles.

Franciscano, 1930 (fig. 43), is the best of the prints based on details from the Preparatoria murals. This lithograph has also been given the titles of El fraile y el indio and The Franciscan and the Indian. The work portrays a friar arched over an emaciated nude Indian, whom he is

kissing. Although only 12 3/8 x 10 1/2 inches, the print possesses the same somber grandeur as the original fresco. Both figures are monumental, drawn solidly and with exaggeration. This is not the usual anti-clerical Orozco. The print, like the mural, transcends simple anti-clericalism to make an ambiguous statement regarding human solidarity. This friar could be a soulmate to other larger-than-life figures that Orozco has depicted; Prometheus, Christ, Zapata, figures that in the eyes of the artist sacrifice themselves for those on the margins of society. Orozco transforms this composition into an icon of compassion. At the same time the friar seems to be overwhelming the Indian, as if choking him. Is this perhaps an image of oppression?

Negros Ahorcados, also of 1930 (fig. 44), is the last of Orozco's lithographs printed in New York City. The theme of lynching is a common one in American art of the 1930s.¹⁴ It is interesting to note that Orozco's first and last lithographs executed in the United States are the only ones with American themes, and specific African American subjects. In The New School murals Orozco rendered both an African and an African American with a great deal of dignity and sympathy. The artist was aware of the conditions of social injustice that blacks lived under at the time he was living in New York.

¹⁴ The most complete discussion of this theme is Marlene Park's "Lynching and Antilynching: Art and Politics in the 1930s," Prospects, Vol. 18, pp. 311-365, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Both George Biddle and Thomas Hart Benton, artist friends of Orozco, dealt with the subject of lynching directly and indirectly in their work of the 1930s.¹⁵

Orozco's Negros Ahorcados was included by Alma Reed in two 1930s exhibitions dealing with lynching. The exhibits were "The World Crisis Expressed in Art: Paintings, Sculpture, Drawings, Prints on the Theme Hunger, Fascism, War", held in the winter of 1933-34 at the New York John Reed Club, and the 1935 anti-lynching exhibition sponsored by the John Reed Club and held at the A.C.A. Gallery.¹⁶ The 1970 Luigi Marrozzini catalogue erroneously states that Negros Ahorcados was specially executed by Orozco as a fund-raising contribution for the American Civil Rights Congress. This is not possible, since this organization did not come into being until June of 1946.¹⁷

Another reason for Orozco's selection of this subject, beyond his personal solidarity with American blacks, may be

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 329-337.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 324-325.

¹⁷ Luigi Marrozzini and Clemente Orozco V., Catalogo Completo de la Obra Grafica de Orozco, (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1970), p. 48.

The principal problem with this catalogue is Marrozzini's total reliance on Orozco's oldest son, Clemente Orozco V., as the single source of information on the prints. According to the Encyclopedia of the American Left, (University of Illinois Press, 1992), the American Civil Rights Congress was founded in June, 1946, and was most active from 1946 to 1953. In the mid 1950s it was destroyed by the alleged infiltration of the CIA and the pressures of the Cold War.

found in Reed's politics. As a former journalist of liberal, even fellow-traveller tendencies, Alma Reed was surely aware of the epidemic of lynchings in the United States throughout the 1920s and 1930s – she could have suggested the topic to Orozco.

Negros Ahorcados is one of the artist's most horrific prints. The work portrays two thick tree trunks, from which hang the nude bodies of four lynched black men. Flames rising from the lower right of the lithograph, are starting to consume the bodies. Three of the bodies have been drawn in the background as little more than silhouettes. On the foreground, off-center and in detail is the fourth figure. This figure has a frozen expression of terror on its face; the eyes and mouth are wide open. The left hand has been severed, and the genitalia mutilated. The figures, as well as the tree trunks, have been drawn with the lithographic crayon in wide, agitated strokes. The flames have been drawn by scratching off a lithographic crayon surface. This graphic work is the most expressionistic of all his early prints, to be rivaled only by his last aquatints of 1944.¹⁸

In the April 1934 issue of The Print Collectors Quarterly, Laurence Schmeckebier published a laudatory article on Orozco's prints. The author considered the prints

¹⁸ This is a suite of 13 aquatints, the subjects of which range from unemployed figures to beggars, prostitutes and clowns. In both composition and treatment they have qualities similar to Rouault's prints of the early 1920s.

important, not only for their dramatic subjects and straightforward technique, but above all for the "torn and jagged outlines" of their powerful, overall design. The article was illustrated with the prints Retaquardia, Requiem, Bandera, Pueblo Mexicano, and Paisaje Mexicano. Schmeckeberier concluded the article by stating:

The monumental character of Orozco's work lies in the weight of his simple elementary masses combined with the dramatic intensity with which these masses are manipulated.¹⁹

Only four years after Orozco had completed his last lithograph in the United States, he was gaining international attention (the Quarterly was published in London) for work in a medium that he had only started working with seven years before.

Orozco's work in the printmaking mediums has been studied by J. H. Hopkins²⁰ and Luigi Marrozzini. The Hopkins book lacks complete information regarding titles, dimensions and dates of execution. The Marrozzini catalogue, as stated earlier, is overly dependent on information provided by Clemente Orozco V., the artist's oldest son, which tends to be subjective and incomplete. José Clemente Orozco's entire

¹⁹ Laurence Schmeckeberier, "Orozco's Graphic Art," The Print Collector's Quarterly, London, Vol. 21, no. 2, April 1934, p. 194.

²⁰ J. H. Hopkins, Orozco. A Catalogue of his Graphic Work, (Flagstaff: University of Northern Arizona Press, 1967).

output in both drawing and printmaking still await a scholarly endeavor.

Of the 19 lithographs that Orozco executed in the City of New York, the artist depicted only two exclusively American subjects - a theatre in Harlem and lynched African Americans. The other 17 prints explored more traditional Mexican subjects: Indians in the landscape, scenes of the revolution and details of his murals at the Preparatoria Nacional. In all of these, he avoided the picturesque qualities found in the prints of Rivera, Charlot, Amero and others. Orozco, as in other mediums, took popular themes in his lithographs and transformed them into images of pathos and tragedy. The artist's critical and fatalistic view of reality was an antidote to the popular allure of an exotic Mexico.

CHAPTER 5

The New School for Social Research Mural, 1930-31

José Clemente Orozco's New School mural, A Call for Revolution and Universal Brotherhood, has generally been considered an aesthetic failure by those who have written about it, from art critic Edward Alden Jewell in 1931 to art historian Laurance Hurlburt in his 1989 book.¹ But is it a failure, or is it an overly ambitious yet unresolved project? In this chapter, I will look at these murals through various contexts: the architectural, Orozco's own political aesthetics, the ideas of the Delphic Circle, and his interpretation of Hambidge's Dynamic Symmetry.

Orozco started doing pencil studies (figs. 45-48) on paper for the New School mural during his cross-country railroad journey from California, in late September, 1930. He had recently completed the Prometheus mural at Pomona College, Claremont, California. He began painting at The New School on November 1 and finished in the early days of

¹ Jewell in his The New York Times review of January 25, 1931, found the murals "with genuine regret disappointing." He added that the panels were "a melée of fragments without--from the standpoint of design--any relationship." He obviously missed the point of Dynamic Symmetry. Since this first review, writers as diverse as Justino Fernández, Luis Cardoza y Aragón, MacKinley Helm, and most recently Hurlburt in The Mexican Muralists in the United States, have found the murals contrived and programmatic.

January, 1931. The murals were dedicated on January 19th.² The origins of the commission are by now legendary; Alma Reed, Orozco's dealer, arranged an appointment with Dr. Alvin Johnson, the director of The New School, through Lewis Mumford (1895-1990), a cultural historian and lecturer at The New School who was an admirer of Orozco.³ Thomas Hart Benton, recalled the genesis of the murals at The New School in his 1969 memoirs:

As Alma was also hunting mural space in order to introduce Orozco to New York, this subject of walls was continually discussed among the three of us. The problem, as I saw it, was not only to find the walls but patrons willing to pay for what we put on them. It was Alma's view that it would be necessary to do the first murals for little or no compensation, in order to win approval of architects. I could not agree with this.... However, as it turned out, Alma was right. At this time Alvin Johnson, founder of the New School for Social Research, had raised enough money for the erection of a building for the school on West Twelfth Street near Fifth Avenue. Hearing of this, Alma visited Johnson and offered Orozco's services as a muralist. They were accepted. Orozco would paint a mural for the New School's dining room for the expense of execution.

² Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 198, 204.

³ Donald L. Miller, Lewis Mumford A Life, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), p. 329. According to Miller, Mumford was not only instrumental in The New School commission but also in the commission of the Baker Library at Dartmouth, since Mumford was friendly with both Artemas Packard, chair of the art department there, and Churchill Lathrop, professor of art history. Mumford never quite became a close friend of Orozco; he found the Mexican's shyness difficult to get through.

Alma did not inform me of this arrangement....⁴

Alma Reed made it perfectly clear to Johnson that she was in effect the donor of the murals:

And it is only right and proper that this cheerfully assumed (though at the time very difficult) responsibility of making it possible for Sr. Orozco to meet his personal and family needs during the progress of the work at the New School remain my own, since the whole idea of frescoes for the New School originated in my own mind.⁵

Again, Benton was overjoyed at this possibility:

So I found my first public wall. Unfortunately, the news of this was received very frigidly by Alma, who felt that I had taken advantage of the opportunity she had found for Orozco to provide one for myself. I must add here that this situation did not affect my relations with Clemente Orozco. We always remained on friendly terms.⁶

Johnson charged both Orozco and Benton to select

⁴ Thomas Hart Benton, An American in Art, (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1969), p. 62.

⁵ Alma Reed, Letter to Alvin Johnson, 28 April 1931. Collection of Felicia Deyrup, New York, New York.

⁶ Thomas Hart Benton, An American in Art, (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1969), p. 63.

subjects within contemporary life.⁷ Orozco chose anti-imperialist struggles in the Occident and Orient, while Benton settled on the various industries of the United States at the time.

The Architectural Context

For Orozco the particular situation at The New School became a part of his conflict with architecture. In 1929, he had written:

Already the architecture of Manhattan is a new value... The architecture of Manhattan is the first step. Painting and sculpture must certainly follow as inevitable second steps.⁸

The New School building was ideal; it possessed an ambitious modernity. The building had been designed by Joseph Urban, an architect born in Austria. Urban earned his living as a set designer for Florenz Ziegfeld. Urban's stylistic allegiance lay with the more expressionistic Wiener Werkstätte, yet the New School building has been described

⁷ Alvin Johnson, "Notes on the New School Mural," pamphlet of 1943, pp. 2-3.

⁸ José Clemente Orozco, "New World, New Races and New Art," Creative Art, (New York), 4, no.1 (January 1929), p. 44.

numerous times as a Bauhaus design.⁹ In a way, the building is more anti-Bauhaus than anything else. It may have a Bauhaus surface, but it lacks its substance. A very conservative use of solid brick is balanced in the facade by an aggressive use of horizontals, clearly seen in the Bauhaus-like wraparound windows. The horizontal was soon to be used as a sign of the International Style in buildings at this time. This horizontality is conveyed in the low ceiling of the dining room, and further in the dark, grey, wainscoting, and in Orozco's own work. I believe that in this case the architectural qualities of the building are reinforced and matched by the architectural dialogue of the frescoes.

Joseph Urban's architecture was in a broad sense Nietzschean, by this I mean expressionistic, containing a vitalistic quality that was meant to affect those who came in contact with the building in a positive manner. So was the philosophy of the Ashram, which seems to have been derived in part from the architect Henry Van de Velde and his synthesis between Nietzschean philosophy and primitive Hellenism.¹⁰ In

⁹ Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture. A Critical History, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 85.

¹⁰ Ivo Frenzel, "Prophet, Pioneer, Seducer: Friedrich Nietzsche's Influence on Art, Literature and Philosophy in Germany," in Christos M. Joachimides, Norman Rosenthal and Wieland Schmied, German Art in the 20th Century Painting and Sculpture 1900-85, (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1985), p. 77.

view of the whole Nietzschean influence on artists between circa 1880 and 1925, I am not surprised to see his theory of abstracted energy appearing in such diverse forms, conveyed through horizontality. Nietzsche simply provided justification for a cultural turn from representation to the architectural, from the ethnocentric to the universal.¹¹

Orozco's Political Aesthetics and The Delphic Circle

Orozco (like Siqueiros) was rejecting the ethnocentric "indigenismo" of Rivera and the majority of third-rate members of the Mexican mural movement. For Orozco, Rivera depicted the Mexican Indian in a folkloric manner, thereby truly exploiting the subject:

What he [Rivera] does by putting a profusion of Indians in his pictures is to make hay while the Indian smallpox rages, a disease that is making our politicians itch....As art for export it is understandable, but there is no excuse for painting it in Mexico....¹²

Unlike Orozco over time, Siqueiros developed a very specific theoretical response to Rivera's "indigenismo" – a

¹¹ Ibid.p. 77.

¹² Miguel Bueno, "El Arte de Diego Rivera atacado por el genial artista C. Orozco". El Imparcial, November 22, 1926, p. 7. Bueno quotes Orozco in his article: "Lo que él hace al poner una profusión de Indios en sus pinturas es hacer pienso mientras que el sarapión Indio agota, una enfermedad que pica a nuestros políticos...Como arte para exportación es comprensible, mas no hay excusa para pintarlo en México..."

synthesis of the Futurist's dynamic sense of form, the plasticity of film (from Eisenstein), and his own experimental Marxist aesthetics (even though politically he would always be an ally of Stalinism). Orozco, on the other hand, was by nature anti-theoretical and rejected any "systematic posing" on the part of the artist. Of course, the one exception to this was his involvement with Dynamic Symmetry in the New School panels. Orozco rejected Rivera's folklorism by temporarily embracing the Pythagoreanism of Hambidge's system. For him, the choice lay basically between what Charlot called "plastic values versus descriptive powers."¹³ Pythagoreanism already had a place in the cultural baggage that preceded the mural movement; José Vasconcelos, "the deus ex machina of the Mexican renaissance"¹⁴ as Secretary of Public Education, wrote a philosophical treatise entitled Pitagoras, while in exile in 1919. In it he argued that the Greek philosophers, particularly Pythagoras and Iamblicus, claimed that art always contains a soothing and therapeutic effect over the passions and routines of men, especially when the art rests on an ordered system for its expression.¹⁵ This idea, which Orozco must have been aware of

¹³ Jean Charlot, The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 77.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.82.

¹⁵ José Vasconcelos, Pitagoras in Obras Completas, Vol.1 (México:Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1982-83), p.82.

before he left for the United States in 1927, (as he would always be interested in Vasconcelos as a philosopher), was simply reinforced when he encountered the Ashram of Eva Sikelianos and Alma Reed. I have already mentioned the strong intellectual presence of Nietzsche in the Delphic program. This program had a lot in common with the political philosophy that the Spanish (and very Nietzschean) writer Ortega y Gasset had been developing since the 1900s. Simply put, it called for the development of a powerful intellectual elite which would bring both social justice and cultural enlightenment to the lowly masses.¹⁶

The socio-political program of the Delphic Festival, today available only in fragments, with the exception of a French edition, fits in with this Nietzschean/Ortega platform. The Delphic Festival was created by the poet Angelos Sikelianos and held in Delphi, Greece. It integrated theatre, music and the visual arts; these were seen as a way of revitalizing a decadent Western civilization. The one exception for Orozco was the Delphic call for a revival and maintenance of local crafts, something that, considering his reaction against Mexican curios, he would have rejected.¹⁷

¹⁶ José Ortega y Gasset discusses these ideas most clearly in his three books La rebelión de las masas, España Invertebrada and El tema de nuestro tiempo, all written between the end of World War I and 1926.

¹⁷ The program of the Delphic Festival or Society has been presented or discussed in a fragmented manner in articles in periodicals such as The Mentor, The Independent, and The Literary

Hambidge's Dynamic Symmetry

In the Autobiografía, Orozco writes regarding The New School panels:

This painting has the particularity of being constructed according to the geometric-aesthetic principles of the scholar Jay Hambidge. Apart from the purely personal realization, I desired to know practically up to what point were the principles true and useful, and what were their possibilities.¹⁸

Orozco met Mary Hambidge, widow of Jay Hambidge, at the Sikelianos-Reed apartment. Hambidge had died in 1928, and the widow proposed to Orozco that they continue the development of Dynamic Symmetry together.¹⁹ Orozco explored thoroughly what Hambidge meant in his theory; from an understanding of the Golden Section (the proportion and

Digest. The only complete version of the program is Angelos Sikelianos, Plan Général Du Mouvement Delphique, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1929), pp. 26-29 and 41-44.

¹⁸ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 2da ed., (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1981), pp. 99-100.

"Esta pintura tiene la particularidad de estar construida según los principios geométrico-estéticos del investigador Jay Hambidge. Aparte de la realización puramente personal deseaba yo saber prácticamente hasta qué punto era útiles y verdaderos tales principios y cuáles eran sus posibilidades."

¹⁹ Ibid, p.100.

relation between the minor and major side of a rectangle, 1.618).²⁰ For Hambidge, dynamic structures consist of surfaces organized in geometric proportion, where the relation between the diagonal and cube are key²¹ to the definition of two types of art: the dynamic and the static. The dynamic is best exemplified by the mature periods of both the Egyptians and the Greeks, while the static is the art produced by other cultures, with no exceptions. Those works that are dynamic are such because within their forms they have a structure which contains the principle of action, movement and growth, and which develops a structure that multiplies the forms in a way similar to the human body and all living things. These forms, when developed normally, produce a rhythm and a harmony that we define as beautiful.²² Static art, on the other hand, is composed of passive elements which correspond to the inanimate structures of the world.

Orozco saw Dynamic Symmetry as a strong influence in the United States and Europe beginning in 1920 and ending in 1930:

There wasn't a painter, sculptor, architect or decorator, that did not apply in their work the

²⁰ Ibid, p. 101.

²¹ Ibid, p. 102.

²² Ibid, pp. 101-102.

methods of Hambidge; but as it always happens, they were badly interpreted and became an academic recipe.²³

Perhaps Dynamic Symmetry was for Orozco what classicism was for Picasso, Severini, Derain and others after World War I. It was a search for a structured way of working and a reaction against the previous aesthetic waves, which had been more experimental, less anchored in traditional classical notions of art.²⁴

Another possible encounter for Orozco with a direct application of Dynamic Symmetry in a pictorial work may have been with Boardman Robinson's mural sketches for the Kaufmann family's Pittsburgh department store. Boardman Robinson (1876-1962) taught at the Art Students League of New York (1924-30) and exhibited the sketches for the Pittsburgh murals there in 1929.²⁵ Orozco, who had exhibited at the League in the spring of the same year, must have encountered Robinson's experiment with Dynamic Symmetry.

²³ Ibid, p. 103.

"La simetría dinámica hizo furor en los Estados Unidos y en Europa entre los años de 1920 y 1930. No había pintor, escultor, arquitecto o decorador, que no aplicara en su trabajo los métodos de Hambidge; pero como siempre sucede, fueron mal interpretados y se convirtieron en receta académica."

²⁴ The best discussion of this search for order is in C. Greene's Cubism and Its Enemies, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

²⁵ Albert Christ-Janer, Boardman Robinson, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 53.

Orozco was not directly influenced by the Pittsburgh murals, yet his encounter with them must have added to his thinking about the pictorial applications of Dynamic Symmetry.

The New School murals measure eighty square meters of wall space, counting the introductory panel outside the seventh-floor refectory. This is Science, Labor, Art (fig. 49). Inside, the central panel contains the Table of Brotherhood (fig. 50), Struggle in the Orient, Gandhi and Imperialism (fig. 51), on the east wall and on the west, Struggle in the Occident, Felipe Carrillo Puerto of Yucatan and Soviet Russia (fig. 52). The south wall gives us one of Orozco's few tender moments, Home (fig. 53). All of the panels stress horizontality, and a color scheme dominated by browns, reds, oranges and ochres, as well as a great deal of blue after recent conservation. Since the murals are located in a small space, the manipulation of scale becomes a dominant issue and a factor in the transmission of meaning. Orozco, in fact, altered Hambidge's Dynamic Symmetry in these frescoes. Orozco's figures fit the human body into an architectural structure. Their meaning is imposed from outside by form, rather than from within by the meaning of each figure. In the end, the formal result of Orozco's approach is a painting style that complements with tension the architectural space. In contrast to Rivera's scale which is fixed and fixes the spectator into a single position, Orozco uses consistently a shifting scale which makes the

spectator, and not the building, the active participant in the visual dialogue. Orozco, as well as Siqueiros, emphasizes the geometric structure of forms, specifically human forms, and not the architectural value of the painting as a whole. It is important to note that Justino Fernández in his 1942 Orozco Forma e Idea considers The New School murals "at first glance cubistic"²⁶ and says the composition "has a sense of geometry, repetition, which makes the paintings tight, stretched, a bit hard."²⁷ Elsewhere, he finds the drawing more stiff than in other work by Orozco.²⁸ Although Fernández does bring up Dynamic Symmetry, he simply accepts that Orozco used it whole, not critically. He interprets The New School murals as Orozco's subjection to architecture, where the abstract essence of the composition fits into the proportions of the space.²⁹ Fernández finds in the panels a few emotional touches, particularly evident in the naturalistic portraits.³⁰

²⁶ Justino Fernández, Orozco Forma e Idea, 2da ed., (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1975), p. 57. "a primera vista parece cubista."

²⁷ Ibid. "tiene un sentido geométrico, de repetición, que hace las pinturas estiradas, restiradas, un tanto duras."

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 59.

³⁰ Ibid.

In the end, the formalist Fernández cannot see into the forms of The New School murals.

Luis Cardoza y Aragón, the Guatemalan poet and critic, also misses the essence of The New School murals. In his 1959 Orozco, he writes: "When he works basing himself on the theories of Hambidge, as in the murals in the New School for Social Research in New York, he limits instead of expanding himself. Orozco was aware of this. In him it is not the rule but the exception to the rule."³¹ Cardoza y Aragón understood Orozco's work as a "baroque expressionism,"³² and any involvement on the artist's part with a method (even if he was subverting it) undermines this notion.

The misunderstanding regarding the New School murals continued into the 1950s with MacKinley Helm's 1953 Man of Fire: J.C. Orozco. Helm found the murals loose and bleak, richer in theme than form, and generally disappointing.³³ For Helm the domestic panel Home is gloomy.³⁴ He concludes: "It

³¹ Luis Cardoza y Aragón, Orozco, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1983), p. 123.

"Cuando trabaja sirviéndose de las teorías de Hambidge en los murales de la New School for Social Research en Nueva York, se limita en vez de desorbitarse. Orozco se dió cuenta de ello. En él no es la regla sino la excepción de la regla."

³² *Ibid*, p. 54.
Cardoza y Aragón defines Orozco's work as "Expresionismo barroco."

³³ MacKinley Helm, Man of Fire: J.C. Orozco, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), p. 51.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

was Orozco's nature to be spontaneous, baroque, and ecstatic, and if he continued to admire the classical style as more certainly revealing suggestions of movement to the advanced intellect, it was because Hambidge had unhappily taught him to feel that the ecstatic style is inferior."³⁵

Critics misinterpreted and dismissed The New School murals from the start, right after they were unveiled. Yet there were also a handful of champions. Helen Appleton Reade of the Brooklyn Eagle wrote:

Strangely enough, ...the effect of Orozco's portrayal of the revolutionary movement is one of serene peacefulness.³⁶

Lloyd Goodrich wrote in The Arts:

Orozco's murals furnish a striking contrast to Benton's in almost every respect. They are in a larger room and are in fresco, handled broadly and simply. Their prevailing warm, earthy color, together with the cool gray stone of wainscoting and floor and the plain white of the ceiling, give the whole room a quieter, simpler, more primitive effect.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid, p. 53.

³⁶ Helen Appleton Reade, "Review," Brooklyn Eagle, (February 1, 1931), p. 17.

³⁷ Lloyd Goodrich, "The Murals of The New School," The Arts, (Vol. XVII, no. 6, March 1931), p. 403.

Even after such positive comments, in the end Goodrich found the murals lacking emotional intensity, their abstraction carrying the least conviction.³⁸

Perhaps the most perceptive criticism of The New School murals was written by painter and critic Fairfield Porter. It appeared four years after the murals had been unveiled, under the title of "Murals for Workers" in the leftist periodical Arise. In this article Porter dismisses Rivera and his influence as mere propaganda.³⁹ Orozco's New School murals are another matter:

At the head of this class is Orozco. Whether or not he is a painter 'for the masses' I do not know. He is quoted as having related how when in Mexico City his frescos were unveiled, two people were killed in the crush. But returning tourists tell you that Mexicans dislike his frescos. Orozco is misunderstood as much by his admirers as by those who dislike his work. You are told that here is a man who paints from a kind of helpless, clumsy passion for art. The truth is that no modern painter is better educated in all things related to his craft. To his original intuition for form relationships, he can bring to bear four years of mathematics at Mexico University, two year's experience practicing architecture, two years studying anatomy at medical schools, he has also studied agriculture.... Two things determine the quality of the frescos in the dining room for the New School for Social Research: the architecture of the building and the ideas of the mural. This sounds elementary: it is. The austerity of the international style is matched by the angular, bare-bone style of painting. The idea is the revolutionary movement. In the walls about Mexico,

³⁸ Ibid, p. 444.

³⁹ Fairfield Porter, "Murals for Workers," Arise, (Vol. I, no. 4, 1935), n.p.

India, and Russia, the leaders are realistically painted in contrast to the masses who have group reality rather than individual reality.⁴⁰

For Porter, Orozco "has brought back to painting something that had disappeared: dramatic form."⁴¹

The Forms of Ideology

The narrative of The New School murals is an obvious one. Orozco made their message clear:

in the center, the table of universal brotherhood; men of all races presided over by a Negro. On the side walls allegories of world revolution. Gandhi, Carrillo Puerto and Lenin. A group of slaves; another group of workers entering their home after the labor of the day. On a wall outside the dining room an allegory of the sciences and arts.⁴²

The viewer is very clearly looking at an ideological dialogue (if such a thing is possible) between Nationalism and Communism on the east and west walls respectively. The

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 2da ed., (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1981), p. 99.

"en el centro, la mesa de la fraternidad universal. Gentes de todas las razas presididas por un negro. En los muros laterales alegorías de la revolución mundial. Gandhi, Carrillo Puerto y Lenin. Luego un grupo de esclavos y otro de obreros entrando a su hogar después del trabajo. En un muro al exterior del salón, una alegoría de las ciencias y las artes."

resolution of this dialogue is to be found on the south wall in the Table of Universal Brotherhood. The north wall is also part of the answer to this dialogue, wherein is depicted peaceful physical labor, while outside the room we view intellectual as well as physical labor. According to Reed, Orozco painted general types of what he termed the "despised races": "a Mexican peon and a Jew flanking an American Negro in the role of presiding officer. On the left are seated five figures - a Chinese Mandarin, a blond Anglo Saxon, a European Nordic, and a fur capped Iranian Kurd, and a turbaned Indian. On the right are seated three solid, block-like forms - a thick-lipped African Negro, a bearded Frenchman with classic features, and another Oriental, with the broad nose and high cheek bones of the Cantonese 'coolie,' to symbolize the Chinese masses, one fourth of the world's population."⁴³

There are four recognizable figures seated at the Table of Universal Brotherhood; on the right, the bearded French philosopher Paul Richard, on the left, the art critic Lloyd Goodrich with a slight moustache, and next to him the Dutch poet Leonard Van Noppen. At the head of the table, next to the black man, is another nationalist of sorts, the Palestinian-Jewish painter Reuben Rubin, himself a Zionist and former Parisian friend of Orozco's nemesis, Diego

⁴³ Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 207.

Rivera.⁴⁴ All of these men frequented the Ashram.

Of course, the figures with the true radical overtones at the time the mural was completed were Gandhi and, above all, Lenin. Carrillo Puerto had been martyred a number of years before, his agrarian socialism had been distorted and absorbed into the then stable Mexican state under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional. Gandhi was in 1930-31 very much the figure that most represented an anti-imperialist posture, a specifically anti-British one in Asia. Yet his radicalism was, let's say, tempered, by his political strategy of passive resistance. Both Carrillo Puerto and Gandhi fit under the umbrella of international liberalism represented by the New School.⁴⁵ Lenin, of course, was another matter. Reed narrates:

I recall that after submitting to Dr. Johnson the sketch for the Soviet panel, I had several conversations with the educator on its significance, and I carried his questions and Orozco's replies back and forth. Dr. Johnson finally agreed with the painter that the Marxist idea and its leader could hardly be omitted

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 209.

⁴⁵ The best discussion of the international liberalism of the New School is William B. Scott's New School: A History of The New School for Social Research (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1986). Most recently a focus on the "University in Exile" and the fellow-traveller aspect of the school during the war is to be found in Claus-Dieter Krohn's Wissenschaft im Exil (Munich: Campus-Verlag, 1987).

from any realistic appraisal of political trends.⁴⁶

We must note that Lenin had been dead since 1924, yet the notion of a violent, worldwide revolution was still very much alive in the 1930s, particularly in the United States after the 1929 Crash and in the midst of the Depression. At the time Orozco painted The New School murals the Moscow trials had not started, and Stalin's heavy hand was barely acknowledged beyond the circle of dissidents like Trotsky. Yet, Orozco's portrayal of Lenin was not the first in a New York City mural. The first image was created by Hugo Gellert for the Worker's Cooperative in Union Square in 1928. When the Communist Party moved to 13th Street two years later, it was painted out.⁴⁷ Although no visual record of this image remains, it is possible that Orozco, in New York City since the end of 1927, might have seen the Gellert mural.

The Lenin (fig. 54) that Orozco depicts is an image of an image. He is painted in a somber mood, his monumental figure taking up the entire space of a large rectangular banner. His face, all in ochres and grays, is dark, moody, intense. Behind him are several red banners and beyond them a kind of rising sun. Below him to his right are the

⁴⁶ Alma Reed, Orozco, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p.207.

⁴⁷ Fairfield Porter, "Murals for Workers," Arise, (Vol. I, no. 4, 1935), n.p.

impersonal heads of the Red Army, their eyes barely visible, their bayonets mingled with their red star helmets. Art critic Jewell found this passage a reminder of the Red Star brand of hams featured in Macy's Department Store.⁴⁸ Yet isn't it possible that Orozco was being slyly critical by showing us a robotic line of heads that could easily be manipulated by a strong man? After all, isn't this the same Red Army that crushed the left-wing rebellion at the Kronstadt Naval Base in 1921?⁴⁹

To Lenin's left there is a line of six Red Guards, with Joseph Stalin in the foreground. The bodies are painted simply and geometrically. Their fists all hold hammers. Orozco has chosen to depict Stalin as one of the Red Guards, not as the leader of the Soviet Union that he was in 1930. I believe that Orozco's truer, more personal depiction of Stalin is visible in his 1936-39 mural El carnaval de las ideologias at the Guadalajara Governor's Palace. Here Stalin is depicted as a sinister, mustachioed buffoon, who holds a gigantic hammer and sickle while sharing a stage with both Hitler and Mussolini.

From Alma Reed to Stanton Catlin, and most recently in

⁴⁸ Edward Alden Jewell, "Review," The New York Times, (January 25, 1931, Sec. 5), p. 11.

⁴⁹ The best discussion of this failed rebellion is Paul Avrich's Kronstadt 1921 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). The rebellion at Kronstadt was led by communists, socialists and anarchists.

the work of Laurance Hurlburt, the line of Red Guards in the Lenin panel has been interpreted as the different racial types of the Soviet Union. But how does one explain the Black man (next to Stalin) and the Latin American Indian at the end of the line? Neither of these are racial types found in the Soviet Union. I believe that this line of men stands more for an international family of Communism than anything else. In this case, Orozco's Lenin with his own Communist brotherhood by his side is a clear antecedent to Rivera's 1932-33 Rockefeller Center mural, the main difference being Orozco's usual misogynistic exclusion of women, and Rivera's inclusion of them.

Lenin shares the Occident panel with Yucatán's Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1874-1924), at the time of his death Governor of the Maya State. Carrillo Puerto had an extramarital affair with Alma Reed, and afterwards planned to divorce his wife and wed the journalist from the United States. Without a doubt, his presence in The New School murals is a homage to Reed, even though there is no denying his importance within the Mexican Revolution. Briefly, this is his background. Felipe Carrillo Puerto was born in Motul, the second of fourteen children of a mestizo merchant family. In his youth, he became a modest landowner and learned the Maya vernacular as part of his daily life. Politically he started as a liberal Maderista; by the end of his life he was a committed agrarian socialist. By 1914, Carrillo Puerto had

become a protégé of the populist Governor of Yucatán, General Salvador Alvarado, under whom he started to carry out a state-wide campaign of agrarian reform. In 1918, Carrillo Puerto took over the Partido Socialista del Sureste and became the new Governor. Under his regime, Yucatán distributed more land to the peasants than any other region in Mexico, with the exception of Morelos under Emiliano Zapata. This action, and others, made him the enemy of the landowning oligarchy in Yucatán, and eventually they plotted with the de la Huerta rebellion and had him assassinated. It is interesting to note that Carrillo Puerto was also threatening to the central government under Obregón and Calles; they rightly perceived him as radically pro-peasant and agrarian, as well as anti-United States industries.⁵⁰

Carrillo Puerto's violent death made him a natural icon for the Mexican muralists. Rivera himself painted Carrillo Puerto in 1928, wearing a martyr's gown, bullet holes visible and eyes open to the viewer at the Secretaría de Educación Pública. At The New School, Orozco paints him from the shoulders up, emerging behind a generalized mass of peasants, all of them women and children, with the exception of a soldier holding a rifle and seated to the side. Their faces have been quickly painted, with the greatest of economic

⁵⁰ The most thorough discussion of Carrillo Puerto and the Yucatecan agrarian reform is Francisco J. Paoli Bolio and Enrique Montalvo's El socialismo olvidado de Yucatán, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1977).

means; a couple of lines of brown suggest a face. Some of the faces are grotesque, bordering on caricature. Standing between a Maya pyramid and five red banners, Carrillo Puerto looks to the side as if foreseeing the future. He wears a light gray jacket, brown tie and white shirt. His face, although intense is not brooding like Lenin's. His light colored-eyes project a look of longing; this is accentuated by the darkness around his eyes. Orozco does not portray him as the peasant leader that he was, but rather as a leader of peasants, who looks like a middle class intellectual. Behind the Maya pyramid the sky ranges from black to a light purple-gray.

The panel representing Gandhi and imperialism presents the figures against an orange background. Left to right we see men in chains, painted monochromatically. These are followed by a line of representatives of imperialism: a British soldier, moustache and all, some turbaned native Royal Guards, and a line of six soldiers wearing helmets and gas masks. Then there is Gandhi, sitting on an ochre ground. Slightly behind him sits the poet Sarojini Naidu. Her entire body is covered by a light-brown, almost orange sari. It is important to note that this is one of Orozco's few non-misogynistic depictions of a woman in a mural. He has not painted her figure at the bottom of the mural, nor so much behind Gandhi that she is a figure of total dependency. Her face is quiet and firm, the closed quality of her body evokes

strength. Gandhi is depicted cross-legged and dressed in a white loincloth, revealing parts of his torso. As a portrait, Gandhi's face is one of the most realistic portrayals in Orozco's New School mural. His face is pensive, bordering on sadness. From where he is sitting, he confronts the abstracted and mechanical representatives of British imperialism. Reed wrote in 1956 that Orozco seems to have been most "simpatico" to Gandhi and that his feelings inspired the moving portrayal of the Indian Nationalist. In a way, in terms of sensibility Orozco was probably closest to Gandhi among the three revolutionaries portrayed. Like the Indian, Orozco was an anti-technological man who rejected organized religion while maintaining a very personal spiritual position. In the end, they both favored ethics over ideology.

Formally and conceptually, I believe that the weakest part of The New School murals is the allegorical panel in the refectory. The abstract qualities somehow lack Orozco's usual tension. Still, the faces of both Science and Art reveal turbulence, anxiety, as if the order their disciplines are meant to impose on reality are overwhelmingly, possibly chaotic.

The Home panel, which Helm finds "gloomy," is anything but that. In this composition, Orozco reveals a tenderness rarely seen in his art. It is true that the still-life element seems stiff (he was no Rivera in depicting this

subject), yet the overall work is warm without being sentimental. Once again, women are depicted neither as harlots or depraved school girls, but as strong wives and mothers. The children are painted simply and directly, lacking the saccharin quality of Rivera's children.

The most revealing aspect of The New School murals is The Slaves (fig. 55) in the Gandhi panel. One of the most disturbing of these figures is the one that has been identified as "the Old Man Throwing Off his Chains" (Reed, 1932). Left unpainted and highly schematicized by Orozco, he represents one extreme of the artist's thought on form. Like Hambidge's Dynamic Symmetry, "the Old Man" is incomplete; his figure still shows the base construction known as "mise-en-trait," the French academic practice Orozco had learned at the San Carlos Academy.⁵¹ Orozco explained once that his colorless figures in The New School mural were meant to be living in the past.⁵² Caught between the enslaved masses and the enslaved native intelligentsia, "the Old Man" raises his chains in anger. Against the dark figure of the oppressor, he is a ghost-like white. His rebellion is incomplete. He is pure structure without spirit.

In the end, Orozco's inter-ideological dialogue in The

⁵¹ Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 26, fig. 7.

⁵² Jean Charlot, The Mexican Mural Renaissance, 1920-25, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 6.

New School murals is problematic. As Shifra Goldman has noted, there is little interaction between the people and the great men of history.⁵³ Carrillo Puerto, Lenin and Gandhi are interpreted through the Delphic program's notion of leadership. They are the elite which will enlighten those below them. Yet there is little interaction among all of the figures, the meaningful exception being the family on the north wall. Still, there is a dialectic in the levels of abstraction with which Orozco has painted each of the figures. The large-scale Carrillo Puerto, Lenin and Gandhi, are very realistic, while the other, smaller figures become more abstract. Finally, "the Old Man Throwing Off his Chains" seems to disappear into a few lines. In these frescoes, the idea of abstraction itself carries dialectical meaning. Orozco's painting, instead of "representing" a conflict, embodies it through formal means. This dialectic of realism and abstraction is both real and metaphorical; both a matter of the object represented and the space it occupies. It is very telling that so-called orthodox Marxists simply ignored Orozco's idiosyncratic "forms of ideology."⁵⁴

⁵³ Shifra M. Goldman, Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 14.

⁵⁴ The New Masses ignored the New School murals by Orozco. We must keep in mind that Gandhi as a non-violent nationalist was not a favorite of the communists. In 1932, the magazine would revile Rivera for taking on a commission at Rockefeller Center.

In the Friday, May 22, 1953, issue of The New York Times, an article appeared under the heading "New School Keeps Red Mural Hidden." I quote:

The New School for Social Research will keep indefinitely a yellow cotton curtain over the 'Revolutionary Violence' section of a mural in the school's cafeteria by the late Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco, because the painting 'does not express the philosophy of the faculty,' Dr. Hans Simons, president of the school, declared yesterday.⁵⁵

At the height of the McCarthy period, this bastion of liberalism was following the pack with its anti-Communist hysteria. Orozco, the non-Marxist of the "Tres Grandes," had left behind in the good old U.S. of A. a painting with the radical images of both Lenin and Stalin. The article concluded that the "'Soviet' panel connects with a Mexican section of the mural depicting the revolutionary leader, Carillo Puerto, who also became a casualty of the yellow curtain."⁵⁶ The article contains a photograph of a female staff member of The New School lifting the "yellow" curtain to reveal the image of Stalin and men of many races (fig. 56). Both the ideology of form and the forms of ideology had shifted in the post World War II United States. Abstract

⁵⁵ "New School Keeps Red Mural Hidden," The New York Times, (May 22, 1953), Sec. 1, p. 15, col. 1. The curtain was removed in 1956.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Expressionism was at its height, and it was being depoliticized by its critics. Orozco's radical experiment had fallen victim to the latest political/cultural fashion.

In the end, Shifra M. Goldman's argument regarding the Mexican mural movement most ably fits Orozco's New School mural. Goldman believes that the mural movement matched Frantz Fanon's description of the third stage of post-colonial development. Here, the local population realizes that it must leave behind the past, but cannot agree on the path to follow in the fragmented present.⁵⁷ This condition is evident in Orozco's murals at The New School, in which the artist turns at last towards his recent, revolutionary past, and finds it closed. Thus, the unresolved tensions of this work.

⁵⁷ Shifra M. Goldman, Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 9.

CHAPTER 6

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART MURAL, 1940

From May 2, 1932, to February 13, 1934, with the exception of his only trip to Europe in the summer of 1932, Orozco was involved in the execution of murals in the Baker Library at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.¹ In a letter of June 7, 1934, Orozco wrote his wife:

I am sending by express through Laredo my boxes of books and other things accumulated over the years here. My paints and brushes I will take with me. I cannot wait to see you and the children, also a landscape that is not New York or Hanover. Although these have been positive years for my work, they have not been easy and I want to return home.²

Once he was back in Mexico, Orozco would execute the Catarsis portable mural, 1934, for the Palacio Nacional de Bellas Artes. Between 1936-39, Orozco would paint what many

¹ Laurance P. Hurlburt, The Mexican Muralists in the United States, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), p. 85.

² José Clemente Orozco, letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 7 June 1934. Collection of Alfredo Orozco Valladares, Cuautla, Morelos, México.

"Te estoy enviando por el expreso via Laredo mis cajas de libros y otras cosas que he acumulado atravez de los años aqui. Mis pinturas y pinceles me los llevo conmigo. Tengo ansias de verte a ti y a los niños, tambien un paisaje que no sea ni Nueva York ni Hanover. Aunque estos años han sido positivos para mi obra, no han sido faciles y quiero regresar a casa."

consider his masterworks in Guadalajara: the auditorium and dome of the University of Guadalajara, El hombre creador; the main stairway of the Governor's Palace, Hidalgo; and the murals dealing with the brutal encounter between Pre-Columbian Mexico and the Spanish Empire at the Hospicio Cabañas. These last murals represent Orozco at his most baroque and apocalyptic. In these panels, his vision of both the natives and the Spaniards is brutal and vitriolic; there is no political correctness here. It is also in these murals where Orozco continued to paint a negative view of technology; a view that can be traced to the 1932-34 Dartmouth murals. His one life-affirming moment in the entire cycle is the Hombre en Llamas (fig. 57), where fire is a metaphor for enlightenment and ascension.

The Artist as Anti-Fascist

Orozco returned to New York for a week in February, 1936. He came to attend, with David Alfaro Siqueiros, the first American Artists Congress. The Congress was in part a response of solidarity with the legitimate Republican government of Spain, which was waging a civil war against the fascists. Both he and Siqueiros were the official representatives of the Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (LEAR), to the Congress.

The LEAR was founded in 1934 by Mexican writers and visual artists as part of the Popular Front response to fascism. The LEAR had strong ties to the Mexican Communist Party, as well as to smaller and non-Trotskyite socialist organizations. Its founding members were the writer Juan de la Cabada, painters Siqueiros, Pablo O'Higgins, printmaker Leopoldo Méndez and sculptor Luis Arenal.³

The LEAR functioned from 1934 through 1938, producing the periodical, FRENTE a FRENTE as its official organ. FRENTE a FRENTE contained in its various issues contributions by its founders, as well as Spanish poet Rafael Alberti, European authors such as André Gide, John Strachey and Heinrich Mann.⁴ Siqueiros published in its pages an attack on Rivera entitled "Diego Rivera, pintor de cámara del gobierno de México."⁵ The organization, due to its Communist Party connection, had a decidedly anti-Trotsky position; therefore, it was anti-Rivera. Orozco published illustrations of his work in the pages of FRENTE a FRENTE, as well as his

³ Francisco Reyes Palma, "La LEAR y su revista de frente cultural", in FRENTE a FRENTE 1934-1938 Edición facsimilar, (México, D.F.: Centro de Estudios del Movimiento Obrero y Socialista, A.C., 1994), p. 5. The government of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) actively supported the Spanish Republic in its struggle against fascism. After the fascist victory in Spain in 1939, Mexico welcomed many Spanish refugees.

⁴ See the entire facsimile edition of FRENTE a FRENTE, 1994.

⁵ Ibid., No. 3, mayo de 1935, p. 8.

greetings to the American Artists Congress.⁶

At this time it is important to briefly look at Orozco's politics during this period. Most scholars have either represented him as thoroughly apolitical by the late 1930s or as a misanthropic conservative. Yet, here he is active in the Popular Front politics of his time, temporarily forgetting his usual anti-Stalinism and taking on the positions of a typical progressive anti-fascist. I am sure that the LEAR's official anti-Rivera position was something of an incentive for Orozco's participation!

Orozco, once again, found himself in New York, this time during the week of February 14, 1936. During this time, he did not write to his wife, Margarita, as usual. Yet we know he was a Mexican delegate to the Congress, read salutations and a general report there, and was "captured" in a caricature by Peppino Mangravite. The American Artists Congress was among the most important left-wing artistic organizations of the 1930s. This was partly because its policies were actively promoted by Stuart Davis, its national secretary. After the inauguration of the Popular Front in 1935, the American Communist Party urged the creation of both literary and artistic organizations across the country to aid

⁶ Ibid., No.2, abril de 1936, p. 19.

in the struggle against fascism.⁷

The Congress first met from February 14th through the 16th, 1936, at New York City's Town Hall. It endorsed government art programs and government support for art unions. Its executive committee supported the Stalinist positions on the Spanish Civil War and the Russo-Finnish War. By the summer of 1939, the Congress came out in support of the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the resulting dismemberment of Poland. That year Meyer Schapiro and other anti-Stalinist members abandoned the Congress in protest. By 1943, the Congress was defunct.⁸

During the final and fourth closed session of the Congress, which took place on February 16th at The New School for Social Research, where his murals were still on view, Orozco read the following:

COMRADES: First of all we shall render a report of the work carried out by our National Assembly of Artists.

This Assembly was held in Mexico City, following your invitation to us that we send delegates to this Congress.

This report will simply be a summary of the main points taken up by our Assembly. A more complete ideological summary will be drawn up later for your consideration.

No less than twelve papers were read and discussed

⁷ Matthew Baigell & Julia Williams, Artists Against War and Fascism. Papers of the First American Artists Congress, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), pp. 5-12.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 30-32.

in detail at our Assembly. The principal points taken up by our Assembly can be separated into four divisions.

1. The artists' position as far as the problems of imperialism, Fascism and war are concerned.
2. The economic security of artists, including artists and craftsmen in popular arts as well as artists engaged in teaching.
3. The artists' and workers' organizations.
4. And finally, form and content in art.

We have felt it advisable not to include local problems in this summary, despite the fact that we reached conclusions about these problems.

We shall confine ourselves to problems of international scope which affect all artists regardless of frontiers or nationality. Several months before the Assembly a conference was held in Mexico City in which problems similar to those being discussed at this Congress were taken up. The main achievement of the conference was the unification of numerous groups of artists and intellectuals in the fight against imperialism, Fascism and war. Since these three factors are common enemies which impede the development of new cultural forms, logically enough the conclusions dealing with this problem were unanimously adopted by our Assembly in the following terms: The artists' means of struggle against imperialism, Fascism and war consist fundamentally of Trade Union organizations, an essential point of which is the defense of all rights won by the working class.

The artists' means of struggle also include the open revealing of all crimes and criminal attempts practiced against intellectuals and artists in fascist countries, and the waging of an intense campaign against the forces which are leading humanity toward a new massacre.

The artist's economic problem was taken up in four papers touching on the following groups of artists; all workers in the Plastic Arts, Artist-Teachers, and workers in the popular arts. In connection with this discussion a very interesting paper was read on the subject, "The Artists' and Workers' Organizations."

First of all we shall take up the problem of the artist-teachers in Mexico. Because of economic pressure the vast majority of artists are forced to lend their services as teachers of drawing and other manual arts in government as well as private schools.

Because of the artist's lack of pedagogical training, however, a great deal of his work as teacher

is sterile and his own creative energy becomes atrophied in this activity.

The Assembly's conclusions on this problem were focused mainly on the necessity of removing artists without any pedagogical training from teaching jobs and instead, obtaining material and financial support for them to enable them to continue their work as creative artists.

How do we propose to do this? The organization of artists into trade unions and the relation of these unions to all other working class organizations offer the preliminary key to our plan of action.

The work of art is a commodity, subject like all other commodities to fluctuations on the market. Art galleries constitute the middle-man between the artist and his public, between producer and consumer. The crises through which art galleries are passing in the entire capitalist world, however, offer certain specific problems which must be clarified. The work of art has been considered an article of luxury accessible only to the leisure class. There is no doubt that the acquisition of so-called articles of luxury takes place only after the primary necessities of life, such as food, clothing, habitation, etc., have been fulfilled.

But is it true that a work of art is an article of luxury to be enjoyed by a privileged minority? Does not the work of art fill a higher function within the complexity of human relationships?

We shall go a step further. What should be the real function of the artist and his work today? If we accept the fact that the organization of artists into trade union groups is necessary for the defense of their interests, and if this organization struggles for economic betterment, is it not logical that the most direct way of placing our work, our art, before the working masses, should be through a system of inter-trade-union cooperation? Therefore we adopted the following concrete proposals:

The immediate establishment of a Cultural Section within trade unions and other syndicate organizations, these cultural groups to be under the leadership of members of the Artists' Union. The object of this Section will be to raise the cultural level of the masses by means of lectures, concerts, exhibitions, theater performances, etc.

Payment of the artists' services as well as the expenses entailed in the organization of this work, will be met by the works themselves by means of a cultural stamp to be sold at a minimum of five cents each.

Each worker will be obliged to buy one stamp every

month. The amount obtained by this assessment will be used to finance mural decoration in the different trade union headquarters, to publish books, pamphlets in accord with the Artists' Union cultural program, and to give theater performances.

All these activities will be directed by members of the Artists' Union, all of whom will be paid for their work.

This plan of cultural activity, destined to penetrate the ranks of the masses, has enormous possibilities in Mexico.

The League of Revolutionary Workers and Artists in Mexico and other organizations are already working toward the effective realization of this plan.

It is our task to present the problems offered by this plan in detail.

You know your own environment and its particular problems. We want, however, to present the general idea for your consideration.

The outstanding advantage of this plan lies in the fact that it gives the workers in every field of art an opportunity to carry on their own work within a constructive system of cooperation, *intimately* bound up with the problems and struggles of the working class.

We are *submitting* a detailed plan of organization based on the general idea already expounded to the permanent committee of the American Artists' Congress for discussion and approval.⁹

The document read by Orozco, was not written by him.

The "Popular Front" language betrays the presence of Siqueiros and possibly Luis Arenal as co-authors of the report since both could speak and write the English language. Knowing Orozco's highly idiosyncratic personality, he must have had a hand in the writing, otherwise it is doubtful that he would have read it merely as a

⁹ "General Report of the Mexican Delegation to the American Artists' Congress," in Matthew Baigell & Julia Williams, Artists Against War and Fascism. Papers of the First American Artists' Congress, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), pp. 203-206.

representative of LEAR. Following Orozco, Siquieros read "The Mexican Experience in Art," which was a reflection on the position vis-à-vis fascism of the National Assembly of Artists' of Mexico.¹⁰ In this document, Siqueiros not only called for a depiction of "daily, popular life,"¹¹ but also for a formal language that could reach the largest number of people, teamwork as opposed to isolated and individual work, and of course, on the economic front, for an accessible art. Siqueiros also called for a solid unity on the questions of defense against the menace of fascism and war, even if the artists held different aesthetic positions.¹²

When Orozco returned to Guadalajara, he started to publish a polemic rag sheet which he entitled, ROJO. In it, he spoke his mind concerning the arguments between Siqueiros and Rivera, as well as commentary on his most recent mural work in Guadalajara. The tone of the rag sheet was generally anti-fascist in politics and iconoclastic in art.¹³ The periodical lasted for a total of four issues. Still, it is

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 208-212.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 208.

¹² Ibid., pp. 211-212.

¹³ José Clemente Orozco published ROJO in Guadalajara, once a month, from March through June, 1936. The first issue dates from March 1; the last from June 7. The Orozco archives at the Museo-Taller in Guadalajara contain a complete set. The 1983 edition of Justino Fernández' Textos de Orozco, (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, U.N.A.M., 1983), contains two texts published in ROJO.

interesting to see that at this time Orozco saw the usefulness of the propaganda pamphlet, not only in the fight against fascism, but also as a forum in which to make clear his positions on art, vis-à-vis Siqueiros and Rivera.

The L.E.A.R., like the American Artists Congress, dissolved over the clashes between the Stalinist and anti-Stalinist left. The Mexican organization ceased to exist in 1938, at the height of the conflict between communists and anarchists in the Spanish Civil War, a cause very dear to the Mexican intelligentsia.¹⁴ It is not known where Orozco stood in this controversy, yet a Guadalajara mural, El Carnaval de las Ideologías (1936-39), depicts a decidedly anti-Stalinist position.

Orozco "Explains"

As previously mentioned, Orozco had painted his first portable mural Catarsis, 1934, at the Palacio Nacional de Bellas Artes (where it faces Rivera's Man at the Crossroads recreation of 1934). His last portable mural, Juarez y la Revolución, would be executed in 1948 at the Palacio de Chapultepec. In between these two falls the portable mural he executed for The Museum of Modern Art in the summer of 1940. Catarsis presents an apocalyptic massacre where

¹⁴ Francisco Reyes Palma, "La LEAR y su revista de frente cultural", in FRENTE a FRENTE 1934-38 Edición facsimilar, (México, D.F.: Centro de Estudios del Movimiento Obrero y Socialista, A.C., 1994), p. 7.

weapons, prostitutes and a mob of men all attack each other. The drawing with its tensions and exaggerations, is very baroque and figural and the palette ranges from bright yellow to deep oranges and reds with touches of light green and blue.

MacKinley Helm describes the origin and execution of the Dive Bomber and Tank in the following manner:

Orozco was still in the middle of painting the Jiquilpan murals [Gabino Ortíz Library, Michoacán] when he was called to the Museum of Modern Art in New York to paint some portable panels in connection with an exhibition of three freight carloads of ancient and modern Mexican art.¹⁵

At this point, we must ask: how did Orozco view this patron, The Museum of Modern Art? In the Autobiografía, he writes of discovering in Coney Island a business that rented fat ladies, bearded ones, as well as dwarfs, and that provided an illustrated catalogue for potential customers.¹⁶ Of course, we know that he is exaggerating to make a point about the excessive commercialism of the United States; still, it is a valid one. He then continues regarding The Museum of Modern Art:

This is nothing in particular, since the Museum of

¹⁵ MacKinley Helm, Man of Fire: J.S. Orozco, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), p. 83.

¹⁶ José Clemente Orozco, Autobiografía, 2da ed., (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1970), p. 54.

Modern Art in New York also rents, for exhibitions, lots of paintings that are cubist, surrealist, dadaist, Mexican or special combinations of Picasso-Braque, Picasso-Rouault, Picasso-Matisse, Picasso-Chirico, to choose from for a certain amount a week for the exhibition for any club, university, or cocktail-party where people want to show off with modern art.¹⁷

In this passage, Picasso is mentioned over and over again; Orozco was very conscious of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s (the founding director of the Museum) belief in the supreme importance of the Spaniard in 20th Century painting. Throughout the entire passage, Orozco is poking fun at the Museum as a kind of department store of modernism, making available all sorts of "special combinations" to its customers.

The Museum of Modern Art had from its start been interested in Latin America, and more specifically Mexican art. After dedicating its first one-person exhibition to Matisse in 1930, it made Diego Rivera the subject of its second one in 1931.¹⁸ Alfred Barr himself had met Diego

¹⁷ Ibid, p-55.

"Esto no tiene nada de particular, pues el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York alquila también, para exhibiciones, lotes de pintura cubista, surrealista, dadaísta, mexicana o combinaciones especiales de Picasso-Braque, Picasso-Rouault, Picasso-Matisse, Picasso-Chirico, a escoger y a tanto la semana de exhibición para cualquier club, universidad o cocktail-party donde se quieren dar pisto con el arte moderno."

¹⁸ The Museum of Modern Art, Diego Rivera, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1931). The catalogue contains an introduction by Frances Flynn Paine, technical notes on fresco painting by Jere Abbott, a checklist of 146 works and 71 black and white illustrations.

Rivera when he visited the Soviet Union in the company of Jere Abbott (his Harvard roommate), from December 1927 through March 1928.¹⁹ For Barr, Rivera had the right modernist pedigree; he lived in Paris from 1909 to 1921 and was a practicing cubist painter from 1913 through 1917.²⁰ During Barr's visit to the Soviet Union, he acquired, directly from Rivera the drawing Sawing Rails, Moscow of 1927:

Suddenly decide I want one of Diego Rivera's drawings.

Find him dressing – but all drawings over at Sterenberg's, Whither we go, he having an engagement there. I take back roll of drawings and choose a fine charcoal of men working on railroad tracks (30 rubles).²¹

Rivera (fig. 58) was for Barr the representative of the Latin American avant-garde, particularly since at the time of his retrospective at the Modern in 1931 (fig. 59) the artist was on the "outs" with the Mexican Communist Party. Barr recommended Rivera to the Rockefellers for the Radio Corporation of America Building mural, after Matisse had

¹⁹ Alice Goldfarb Marquis, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Missionary for the Modern, (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989), p. 51.

²⁰ Laurance P. Hurlburt, "Diego Rivera (1886-1957): A Chronology of His Art, Life and Times", in The Detroit Institute of Art, Diego Rivera A Retrospective, pp. 30-53, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986).

²¹ Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Russian Diary", in Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Defining Modern Art Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., p. 134, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986).

turned down the commission.²² Barr's favorable view of Rivera ended on May 9, 1933, when the artist and his assistants were removed by guards and not permitted to complete the mural Man at the Crossroads because of the image of Lenin.²³

By 1940, when 20 Centuries of Mexican Art was to open at The Museum of Modern Art, Diego Rivera was no longer the institution's Latin American artist of choice. The exhibition was one of the many efforts of the "Inter-American Good Neighbor" policy spearheaded by Nelson Rockefeller, in preparation for the coming war in Europe. This policy, which originated in 1938, was meant to counteract the wooing of Latin American countries by the Axis nations. Germany and Italy had been successful in gaining the support of Argentina, not to mention the "friendly" neutrality of Brasil and Paraguay. I believe that Orozco was chosen as the alternative muralist for this occasion, in hopes that he would not create "a situation" like Rivera's in 1933. After all, Orozco was the oldest of "los Tres Grandes"; he was not a Trotskyite like Rivera or an orthodox member of the Communist Party like Siqueiros. Tamayo was out of the question; the Museum needed a muralist. Therefore, Barr and

²² Irene Herner de Larrea, Diego Rivera Paradise Lost at Rockefeller Center, (Mexico City: Edicupes, S.A. de C.V., 1987), p. 41.

²³ Stanton L. Catlin, "Mural Census", in The Detroit Institute of Art, Diego Rivera A Retrospective, pp. 295-296, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1986).

his committee (art dealers Inés Amor and Alberto Misrachi, art historian Stanton Catlin, etc.), settled on Orozco. It is important to note that Rivera was represented in the exhibition with a singularly non-political work: a sensuous nude of a black woman (fig. 60).

Orozco himself, in letters to his wife, presents us with the genesis and execution of Dive Bomber and Tank:

You can imagine how tired I am from the trip and with this New York that is unbearable. But I am fine and happy. I am provisionally in the same hotel where the [Lou and Peggy] Riley's also are. Abbott and they went to receive me at the station, but they went to Pennsylvania while I arrived at The Grand Central. Tuesday the meetings regarding the Mexican exhibition start. Castillo Nájera [Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S.] is coming with other self-important people. The painting in fresco will have to wait since they don't even have a wall yet.²⁴

The following letter to Margarita, written eleven days later, mentions his meeting with Nelson Rockefeller (the mural would be paid for by the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund), and the promise that the portable plaster panels would

²⁴ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 300. Letter dated May 10, 1940.

"Ya te imaginarás lo cansado que estoy con el viaje y con este Nueva York tan pesado. Pero estoy bien y contento. Estoy provisionalmente en este hotel donde están también los [Lou y Peggy] Riley. Abbott y ellos fueron a recibirme a la estación, pero fueron a Pennsylvania mientras que yo llegué por el Gran Central. El martes empiezan los mitotes de la exposición mexicana. Va a venir Castillo Nájera y otros copetones. La pintura del fresco dilatará porque ni pared hay todavía."

be ready for him to start painting the next week.²⁵ In time, Orozco would work on the preparatory sketches for Dive Bomber and Tank for roughly a month in his Manhattan hotel, the St. Moritz. There would be meetings with Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the director of the museum, and "two secretaries" so that notes could be taken for the proper construction of the panels.²⁶ Orozco never really connected with Barr; he found him "severe and ceremonious, almost as if he is about to say mass, but of course he can't since he really comes across as a Calvinist minister. It is obvious that he believes he possesses the gospel of modernity, with Picasso at the head and followed by the mastodon Rivera."²⁷

As Orozco is about to despair, due to lack of progress in the preparation of the portable panels, John E. Abbott, Executive Vice-President of The Museum of Modern Art, takes over the arrangements. The artist starts to paint Dive Bomber and Tank before June 10, 1940.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., p. 301. Letter dated May 21, 1940.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 302. Letter dated May 25, 1940.

²⁷ José Clemente Orozco, Letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 29 May 1940. Collection of Alfredo Orozco, Cuautla, Morelos, México.

"Severo y ceremonioso como si estuviera diciendo misa, que claro no puede hacer pues en realidad es como un ministro calvinista. Es obvio que él cree poseer el evangelio de lo moderno con Picasso a la cabeza y seguido por el mastodonte de Rivera."

²⁸ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), pp. 305-306. Letter dated June 10, 1940.

The structure with six panels, each measuring nine by three feet, is set up in the lobby of the museum (fig. 61). The Public Relations department, as well as Barr, encourage a constant group of on-lookers to view the artist at work. Rivera had done this successfully during his 1931 retrospective. This activity was also popular at the New York World's Fair in 1939 and 1940. Orozco cooperates occasionally with this situation. He goes out and buys screen panels which he places around himself and the work when he is tired of being "a monkey eating his peanuts for the entertainment of children."²⁹

The artists Jacob Lawrence and Bernarda Bryson (Mrs. Ben Shahn) both visited the museum to watch Orozco paint Dive Bomber and Tank. For Lawrence, Orozco "worked carefully and precisely, rarely spoke and had a mischievous smile. I asked him if I could do anything for him, and he asked me for a bag of cherries. I came back with it and we shared it, when he stopped painting and took a brief rest. I was mesmerized by his painting, it had plastic values....form, color, and still it had a narrative."³⁰ Bernarda Bryson remembers the process as one of "incredible speed; he used a large sponge to paint the backgrounds, his colors would be mixed in cocktail or

²⁹ Ibid., p. 309. Letter dated June 24, 1940.

"Un chango comiendo sus cacaguates para el entretenimiento de los niños."

³⁰ Telephone interview with Jacob Lawrence and the author, March 25, 1993.

tumbler glasses, and I believe he used hard bristle brushes to paint the details, as opposed to Rivera who preferred sable....I was amazed at the speed with which Orozco worked, and this with only one hand."³¹ In addition, she recalled, "Later on, I went with Ben [Shahn] to see the completed mural and we were both mesmerized. It was at first sight so abstract, but not really. It was so human. Ben thought Orozco's painting was moving and genuinely anarchic. Over time he [Shahn] saw Rivera as utopic and simplistic. Siqueiros to him was a loud-mouth Stalinist. The great one was Orozco."³²

Orozco made no full-size cartoon for Dive Bomber and Tank; instead he drew in pencil to the scale of one inch to the foot. The salient lines were enlarged on the equalizing coat and gone over in a light red pigment (fig. 62).³³ A small scaffolding and tables were built so as to allow Orozco to reach to the very top of the panel (fig. 63). As usual, Orozco wore a mechanic's jumpsuit when painting, as opposed to Rivera's more "folkloric" overalls. Orozco painted Dive Bomber and Tank without any assistants, except a mason. He used only lime-proof colors: "earthen colors, Mars colors,

³¹ Telephone interview with Bernarda Bryson Shahn and the author, March 25, 1993.

³² Ibid.

³³ The Museum of Modern Art, Orozco "Explains", (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1940), p. 3.

cobalt, chromium oxide, non-animal blacks and lime white. Good cadmiums may be used also very thinly. The binding medium is the carbonate of lime produced during the drying of the plaster."³⁴

On July 5, 1940, Orozco wrote to his wife announcing the conclusion of the mural (fig. 64); he was still awaiting final payment as well as his imminent return to Mexico via Havana.³⁵ He was paid a total of \$7,500 for the project.³⁶ Yet, before he could return to his family, the painter had to write a didactic brochure in which he would explain the technical process of fresco painting, as well as the concept behind Dive Bomber and Tank. This brochure was requested by Alfred H. Barr, Jr.³⁷

In a matter of days, Orozco wrote the text that would be reproduced in the twelve-page pamphlet Orozco "Explains." The pamphlet contained nine photographs of the artist at work and eleven of the mural in progress from genesis to conclusion. The text contained technical passages by Orozco,

³⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁵ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 310.
Letter dated July 5, 1940.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ José Clemente Orozco, Letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 7 July 1940. Collection of Alfredo Orozco, Cuautla, Morelos, México.

and the main body of the text, where he "explains." He starts in a rather sarcastic tone:

The public wants explanations about a painting. What the artist had in mind when he did it. What he was thinking of. What is the exact name of the picture, and what the artist means by that. If he is glorifying or cursing. If he believes in Democracy.³⁸

He continues:

And now the public insists on knowing the plot of modern painted opera, though not Italian, of course. They take for granted that every picture must be an illustration of a short story or of a thesis and want to be told the entertaining biography and bright sayings of the leaders in the stage-picture, the ups and downs of hero, villain, and chorus.... Suddenly, Madame Butterfly and her friend Rigoletto disappear from the stage-picture. Gone, too, are gloomy social conditions. To the amazement of the public the curtain goes up and nothing is on the stage but a few lines and cubes. The Abstract. The public protests and demands explanations, and explanations are given away freely and generously. Rigoletto and social conditions are still there but have become abstract, all dolled up in cubes and cones in a wild surrealist party... The public refuses TO SEE painting. They want TO HEAR painting. They don't care for the show itself, they prefer TO LISTEN to me barker outside. Free lectures every hour for the blind, around the Museum. This way, please.³⁹

Orozco has essentially written a farce, where he is very tongue-in-cheek poking fun at The Museum of Modern Art's

³⁸ The Museum of Modern Art, Orozco "Explains", (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1940), p. 3.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

definition and explanation of modern painting. He is skeptical of the Museum's trying to present the artist "at work," involved in the act of creation with great "sincerity," all for the enlightenment of the "public":

The Artist must be sincere. It is true. He must be sincere. The actor on stage commits suicide to thrill or frighten the public to death. The actor feels exactly what a suicide feels, and acts the same way except that his gun is not loaded. He is sincere as an artist only. Next week, he has to impersonate St. Francis, Lenin or an average business man, very sincerely.⁴⁰

At the end of the pamphlet, Orozco co-opts the language of formalist modernism:

A painting is a Poem and nothing else. A poem made of relationships between forms as other kinds of poems are made of relationships between words, sounds or ideas. Sculpture and architecture are also relationships between forms. This word forms includes color, tone, proportion, line, et cetera....⁴¹

In the end, he disturbs a-historical formalism by bringing up history and human beings:

A linotype is a work of art, but a linotype in motion is an extraordinary adventure affecting the lives of many human beings or the course of history. A few lines from a linotype in action may start a World War or may mean the birth

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 6.

of a new era.⁴²

Orozco subverts formalist notions of art by using a formal language but not meaning any of it. He knew that art could only affect society in an indirect and complicated manner. Yet, he used the positive language of a "linotype in action," and we know full well that long ago he gave up any simplistic belief in the salvific qualities of art. Still, Orozco knew what was expected of him. Unlike Rivera, who was optimistic in his California and Detroit murals, and had high expectations of "liberal" U.S. institutions, Orozco "performed" in the language of formalism, consciously, sarcastically. To him, it was as defunct and corrupt as the technology that had supported it - the technology we see in the paintings of the Precisionists and Rivera's own Detroit murals.

On the two next to last pages of the pamphlet, six photographs present the original arrangement of Dive Bomber and Tank (the way the artist painted it), plus five variations in which the panels can be re-arranged. These do not work (fig. 65). These arrangements are also part of Orozco's verbal farce. He knows the administration of the museum, believes in the innate abstract qualities of a work, and the ability of these qualities to make the work function from any angle. Orozco demonstrates to us that the mural

⁴² Ibid., p. 7.

works only one way, the way he painted it; thereby undermining formalism with its own technique.

The Machine as Apocalyptic Hell

With a palette of grays, blues, purples, black and touches of red-orange, Dive Bomber and Tank measures nine by eighteen feet, with each of the panels measuring individually nine by three feet. The subject of this mural can be read as a dive bomber crashed onto a tank, surrounded by chained heads, while on the sides are human as well as mechanical refuse (fig. 66). The background is one of silvery, infinite gray with washes of pale blue, an endless road. The mural is an allegory against war, informed by the artist's "invisible" anarchism. Yet, it is more than a critique of the war-like situation of the summer of 1940. Dive Bomber and Tank is a critique of progress in its most mechanical, industrial sense. It is an anti-technological mural. It is an anti-war mural also, not a specific war, but war in general. Formally, it is the earliest example of the artist's exploration of abstraction; this work makes possible later works such as the Alegoría Nacional mural of 1947-48, and easel works such as Esclavo and Paisaje metafísico, both of 1948.

How should we interpret the Dive Bomber and Tank?

Despite Orozco's denial about artists having any political

convictions, we must go to his politics to read this portable mural. Let us remember that only four years earlier, in the very city where he would paint Dive Bomber and Tank, Orozco had represented the LEAR at the American Artist's Congress. Here, we have the artist as anti-fascist, not apolitical cynic.

Yet, by 1940 the cultural/political landscape had already started to shift, and Orozco, in weaving his own myth, went in the opposite direction of Rivera and Siqueiros. They over-emphasized their politics, while he wanted to make his politics invisible. Again, Orozco knew the rules of the game and would play them to get the work done. He had no interest in scandals and canceled commissions like Rivera, or periods of incarceration like Siqueiros. He wanted to subvert through the work, period. We are aware that Orozco's only known political affiliation was with the anarcho-syndicalism of the Casa del Obrero Mundial. His widow recalled seeing a copy of Ricardo Flores Magón's writings as well as an anthology of anarchist texts among his books.⁴³

⁴³ Letter from Margarita Valladares de Orozco to the author, dated 3 September 1992. Ricardo Flores Magón (1874-1922), was a journalist and anarchist revolutionary who started his career in opposition to the regime of Porfirio Díaz. He lived in exile in the United States from 1904 on. He was arrested in 1918 under the Espionage Act of 1917, since as an anarchist he opposed World War I. He died in Leavenworth penitentiary in obscure circumstances. He left behind hundreds of articles, which were anthologized after his death. An excellent biography of Flores Magón is Ward S. Albro's Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

Anarchists reject the idea of any state (whether of the left or right), believe in a grassroots worker's democracy and reject all war as a creation of the powerful elites for the maintenance of their power.⁴⁴

Both Cardoza y Aragón and José Gómez Sicre maintained that Orozco was basically an anarchist. Throughout the years that both critics knew Orozco, the artist made derogatory remarks not just about the opportunism of Rivera and the communism of Siqueiros, but also about the "heartless" capitalism of the United States and the brutality of fascism.⁴⁵

Justino Fernández interpreted Dive Bomber and Tank as "the very being of the life of today, charged with fear, oppression, danger, of materialism and mechanization, a life of refuse and constant flow."⁴⁶ He added that stylistically

⁴⁴ José Riera in "Introducción," in José Riera, ed., Antología Anarquista, (México: Ediciones El Caballito, 1980), pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ Luis Cardoza y Aragón, Orozco, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, S.A., 1983), pp. 231-243. This entire chapter entitled "Algo más sobre su pensamiento sociopolítico," discusses the artist's ideology as a libertarian anti-clericalism.

Interview with José Gómez Sicre and the author, 7 February 1991. José Gómez Sicre (1916-1991), art critic and chief of the Visual Arts Section at the O.A.S. (1949-83), remembered his conversations with the artist during World War II; "He saw the war as a catastrophe of enormous proportion, fascism had to be defeated, but he [Orozco] was fearful of what would come after. He saw Cartarsis and Dive Bomber and Tank as his two visual statements regarding fascism and war" (translation by the author).

⁴⁶ Justino Fernández, Orozco Forma e Idea, 2da ed., (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1975), p. 102. "La esencia de la vida actual, cargada de miedo, opresión, peligro, materialismo y

the artist was absorbing both Byzantine and cubistic influences, and points to the angular aspects of the composition and fragmentation of forms, as proof.⁴⁷ Cardoza y Aragón cannot see the Dive Bomber and Tank as anything but an unsuccessful incursion into abstraction.⁴⁸

Helm, like Cardoza, misses Orozco's point regarding this work:

I was in Mexico City myself, at the time, and I wrote up to New York to ask him to tell me what he meant to do there so that, though I perhaps would not see it, I could speak of the painting in my forthcoming book. He replied on June 21, 1940, that the subject matter of the work would be 'something like an airplane for war or a tank, with some figures. It would have no meaning except the one that the spectator may think it has.'⁴⁹

Later on, Helm criticizes the mural as having weak forms, an uneven concept and a cold palette. He dismisses the work as Orozco's forced attempt at pleasing the formalist aesthetic of The Museum of Modern Art.⁵⁰ He is wrong. Orozco, very conscious of the institution's aesthetic, uses

mecanización, una vida de basurero y fluidez constante."

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁸ Luis Cardoza y Aragón, Orozco, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, S.A., 1983), p. 53.

⁴⁹ MacKinley Helm, Man of Fire: J.C. Orozco, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), pp. 83-84.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 84-85.

and subverts it.

In 1991, The Museum of Modern Art exhibited Dive Bomber and Tank, which had been in storage since 1946. On this occasion, the mural was reproduced in full color in the accompanying publication.⁵¹ The following text was reproduced in the publications checklist:

Orozco's mural Dive Bomber and Tank was painted two months after Dunkirk. His mind, like ours, was full of the shock of the mechanical warfare which had just crushed western Europe. But instead of picturing an actual incident with technically accurate details, he makes us feel the essential horror of modern war – the human being mangled in the crunch and grind of grappling monsters 'that tear each other in their slime'. We can see suggestions of the bomber's tail and wings, of tank treads and armor plate and human legs dangling from the jaws of shattered wreckage.

Beneath emerge three great sightless masks weighted with chains which hang from pierced lips or eyes. These ancient symbols of dramatic agony and doom are fused with the shapes of modern destruction to give the scene a sense of timeless human tragedy.⁵²

This highly literary and World War II specific interpretation comes out of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s What is Modern Painting? (1946).⁵³ Barr divests the painting of any profound political connection and interprets it only in the

⁵¹ Riva Castleman, Art of the Forties, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), p. 40.

⁵² Ibid., p. 140.

⁵³ Alfred H. Barr, Jr., What is Modern Painting?, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), p. 10.

light of a recent event (Dunkirk). He edits out Orozco's genuinely apocalyptic view of technology; a technology which is the product of capitalism.

Orozco himself was both clear and evasive in his explanations of the Dive Bomber and Tank. The newspapers reported that the artist explained the general theme of the work as "the subjugation of man by the machines of modern warfare, but he was less definite about the various objects in the design, which he said represented whatever the observer chooses to see in them."⁵⁴ To The New York Times he sounded blatantly apolitical:

According to the artist, his selection of the subject has no political significance. He wished to paint an aspect of modern life. 'That is what modern art is', Mr. Orozco explained when the commission was announced, 'the actual feeling of life around us or the mood of whatever is just happening.'⁵⁵

Here, once again, we encounter the sly, farcical language of the Orozco "Explains" pamphlet.

Dive Bomber and Tank is a more abstract continuation of the anti-machinery sensibility that we can see in the Dartmouth and Cartarsis murals, as well as the Hospicio murals of 1936-39, in Guadalajara. Behind its content is the

⁵⁴ New York Herald Tribune, "Muralist Gives Explanation of 'Dive Bomber'", (July 4, 1940), p. 24.

⁵⁵ The New York Times, "Orozco Completes Fresco At Museum," (July 4, 1940), Sec. 1, p. 17, col. 2.

artist's anarchist past, activism in the LEAR, and even his future signing of international peace petitions before his death.⁵⁶

In Dive Bomber and Tank Orozco's aesthetic program stands in complete opposition to Rivera's, as evident in the Detroit Industry and Man at the Crossroads murals. Rivera is clear in his formal language, didactic in narrative, simplistically optimistic when it comes to machinery. Orozco, in this work is a true allegorist - tragedy is evoked through the symbolic use of both masks and machines, as well as genuinely baroque in the composition - this is evident in his use of angles and dramatic light in the mural. The machine and the system that produced it are essentially misanthropic.

⁵⁶ Luis Cardoza y Aragón, Letter to the author dated 7 October 1991, p. 2. "Orozco firmó la petición internacional por la paz en el 1948 y creo que también poco antes de su muerte. Yo le llevé la primera. En México firmaron Rivera y Siqueiros, al igual que otros intelectuales importantes."

Sponsored by the Mexican Communist Party, this petition also had the signatures of poets Carlos Pellicer and Octavio Paz, as well as novelist José Revueltas. Similar petitions were circulated in Chile, Argentina and Cuba.

CHAPTER 7

Last Visit and Influence

Last Visit

José Clemente Orozco left from Mexico City for what would be his last visit to New York, on September 15, 1945.¹ Partly vacation, but mostly business trip, the artist was once again looking for a gallery in New York City, as well as further exposure in the post-World War II art market.²

After being in the city a couple of days, he wrote to Margarita letting her know he was staying at the Yacht Club on West 44th Street, that he has been attending openings and the theater, and that he is healthy, even after the long train ride.³ He adds that everywhere he went, people ask him about Alma Reed, who seems to have disappeared.⁴ By his

¹ Interview with Lucrecia Orozco de Herrero and the author, June 27, 1995, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

² Ibid.

³ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 311. Letter dated September 23, 1945.

⁴ Ibid.

After interviewing by telephone Jorge Martínez (b. 1919), who was Orozco's assistant during the execution of the 1938-39 Guadalajara murals, I have shed further light on the Reed-Orozco relationship. Martínez assured me that Reed visited Orozco in Guadalajara in 1938-39 and stayed with him while his family was in Mexico City. He saw them hold hands and go out to dinner together in what he [Martínez] termed a level of intimacy. He believes that by 1940, when Orozco came to New York, to paint the Dive Bomber and Tank, the relationship was over under pressure from

second letter to her, he was settled in a one-bedroom apartment on 6 East 79th Street, had purchased canvas for painting, was sticking to a vegetarian diet, and found New York too fast, filled with people everywhere and very expensive!⁵

On October 17, he wrote again to Margarita, laying out his plan of work and making some acute observations:

I am going to use the small living room as a temporary studio, and I will concentrate on producing a few easel works. Possibly some landscapes of the city, a self-portrait, etc., we'll see.

Recently I encountered Tamayo at the house of a collector, he barely spoke to me; his wife is quite vulgar. It seems that his work has quite a market in New York now. He is not a bad painter, although too decorative for my taste. I am going to talk to the people at Knoedler. As I wrote to you before, the Knopf publishing house asked Paul Westheim to write my biography, yet he has not done anything. I want to interest them in publishing the autobiography. Mural painting seems to be completely dead here, the fashion has changed and now easel painting and abstraction seems to be the thing.

It is already cold. I am fine and eating well. I can make breakfast here.⁶

Mrs. Orozco. Let us recall that Orozco was involved during the last years of his life with the choreographer and dancer Nelly Campobello.

Telephone interview with Jorge Martínez and the author, 9 July 1996.

⁵ Ibid., p. 312.

Letter dated October 7, 1945.

⁶ José Clemente Orozco, Letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 17 October 1945. Collection of Alfredo Orozco, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Once again, Orozco made contact with John Abbott of the Museum of Modern Art, who introduced him to Julien Levy. Orozco liked Levy, yet knowing that Charlot exhibited with him, he asked his wife to inquire with Charlot regarding Levy's ethics as a dealer.⁷ He continued to talk to Levy, but nothing concrete came out of the conversations. He was aware that in the month of November there would be exhibitions of Tamayo, Mérida and Siqueiros, and that the public still loved decorative pictures filled with Indians.⁸ He had a pleasant surprise when he finally visited The Museum of Modern Art:

In the Museum of M.A. the zapatistas are hanging, and in their shop they have a beautiful color reproduction. It costs 3 doll. I am going to buy it. They also have Alma's monograph of me.

"Voy a utilizar la salita como taller temporal, y me concentrare en producir algunas obras de caballete. Quizas unos paisajes de la ciudad, un autoretrato, etc., ya veremos.

Recientemente me encuentre a Tamayo en casa de un coleccionista, apenas me dirigió la palabra; su mujer es muy vulgar. Parece que su obra tiene un buen mercado en Nueva York en este momento. No es mal pintor, aunque muy decorativo para mi gusto. Voy a hablar con la gente de Knoedler. Como te escribí antes, la casa editorial Knopf le encargó a Paul Westheim una biografía mia, pero él no ha hecho nada. Quiero interesarlos en publicar la autobiografía. La pintura mural parece estar completamente muerta aqui, la moda ha cambiado y ahora la pintura de caballete y la abstracción son lo ultimo.

Ya hace frío. Estoy bien y comiendo bien. Aquí puedo hacer desayuno."

⁷ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 314. Letter dated October 21, 1945.

⁸ Ibid., p. 315.

I don't know if I should buy it.⁹

By the end of the month of October, Orozco started to express concerns regarding his expenses in New York City. He didn't think that he would be able to stay too long and asked his wife to request payment for the portrait that he had finished of the Archbishop of Mexico, Luis María Martínez, whom he referred to as the "Big Vulture."¹⁰ In November he received a letter from Knoedler:

Yesterday I received a letter from Knoedler, a copy of which I enclose. I will respond accepting and this is the equivalent of a formal contract.... Now I only have to do my best and for this I have to work hard, since from this depends my getting established as an easel painter. The public still believes that I am only a mural painter and to this belief have contributed Inés [Amor, owner of the Galeria de Arte Mexicano] and her minor painters, in bad faith and to their benefit.¹¹

⁹ Ibid.

"En el Museo de A.M. Estan colgados los zapatistas, y en la tienda tienen una bonita reproducción a colores. Vale 3 doll. Voy a comprarla. Tambien tienen la monografía de Alma mia. No sé si comprarla."

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 316.

Letter dated October 23, 1945.
"Zopilote Mayor."

¹¹ Ibid., p. 322.

Letter dated November 11, 1945.
"Ayer mismo recibí una carta de Knoedler, cuya copia te adjunto. La voy a contestar aceptando y eso equivale a un contrato formal ... Ahora sólo falta quedar bien y para eso hay que trabajar como nunca, pues de esto depende quedar establecido como pintor de caballete. El público cree todavía que sólo soy pintor mural y a esa creencia han contribuido Inés y sus pintorcillos, de mala fé y en su beneficio."

From 1946 until his death Knoedler would handle Orozco's easel paintings , yet the gallery did never gave him a one-person exhibition.¹² The one Mexican artist that the gallery promoted constantly at this time and into the 1950s was Rufino Tamayo.¹³

Orozco visited exhibitions, just as he did when he was in the city in the 1920s and 1930s. He was disappointed with the recent drawings of Matisse and found them boring and too simplistic, yet he could still sense a major painter at work.¹⁴ He visited a Siqueiros exhibition at Pierre Matisse:

Siqueiros at Pierre Matisse: lithographs from last year, easel paintings. A good self-portrait. He is a good painter, very dynamic. Powerful forms. It is a shame he wastes so much time talking and with communism.¹⁵

¹² Interview with Lucrecia Orozco de Herrero and the author, June 27, 1995, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

¹³ Rufino Tamayo clipping file, Visual Art Archives, Organization of American States, Washington, D.C.

Starting in the mid-1940s and into he late 1950s, Knoedler showcased Tamayo's work in one-person exhibitions every other year or so.

¹⁴ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), p. 325. Letter dated November 11, 1945.

¹⁵ José Clemente Orozco, Letter to Margarita Valladares, dated 16 November 1945. Collection of Alfredo Orozco, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

"Siqueiros en Pierre Matisse: litografias del año pasado, pinturas de caballete. Un buen autoretrato. Él es un buen pintor, muy dinamico. Formas poderozas. Es una lastima que gasta tanto tiempo hablando y con el comunismo."

At the end of November, in the "Talk of the Town" section of The New Yorker Orozco was highlighted:

José Clemente Orozco, the Mexican painter is living and working in two rooms on the fifth floor rear of the old William Carter Dickerman house at 6 East Seventy-ninth Street. He came here three months ago and got his present lodgings by answering an ad. 'I arrived very early in the morning ahead of everyone else,' he told us when we called on him last week. 'First I stayed at the New York Yacht Club, where a friend of mine got a friend of his, who was a member, to get a room for me. My friend could not get me a hotel room'.... We asked Orozco whether he had run into many of the members. 'Most of the members are admirals', he said, 'and they are all away in the service.'¹⁶

In the previous passage, we can see Orozco's dry sense of humor still very much at work. The article continued:

Orozco hasn't seen any snow for ten years and hopes to paint some this winter. He works whenever he feels rested, sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the middle of the night, and averages eight hours a day. He has a cot in his studio, a cot and a bed in his bedroom, and a small table and four straight armless chairs. He likes to visit the Metropolitan and Frick museums and to eat at the Brussels. 'Facts are always distorted', he said, showing us some distorted sketches of the devil. 'I'd like to show life as it is, but art is not a document, not a record, not scientific research; it is a philosophy.'¹⁷

¹⁶ "On the Town," The New Yorker, (November 30, 1945), p. 16.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

By early December, Orozco was complaining to Margarita about the lack of money, the cold weather, and the daily anxieties of living in a city that he barely recognized. He found it difficult to work at painting; he lacked the necessary peace of mind.¹⁸ According to the correspondence with his wife, Orozco painted a couple of allegorical-symbolic oils of "the destruction of civilization," some small landscapes of New York City under the snow, and a self-portrait, all during his 1945-46 stay in the city.¹⁹ The location of the landscapes and symbolic works are unknown, while the self-portrait has been for many years in the collection of the Carrillo Gil Museum in Mexico City.

This Autoretrato (fig. 67), started at the end of 1945 and finished in early 1946, would be the artist's last. Measuring 35 x 30 inches, it is signed on the center right: J.C. Orozco/N.Y. 1946. Orozco depicts himself right in the foreground of the picture plane, giving his body the massive shoulders it did not have in life. He wears a dark grey suit with touches of green and blue. The background has been broken into a dark pyramid shape, painted thinly in a dark Prussian blue that is almost black. Juxtaposed next to it is

¹⁸ José Clemente Orozco, Cartas a Margarita, (México: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1987), pp. 332-333. Letters dated December 9 and December 12, 1945.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 330-341.
Letters from December 3, 1945 through January 3, 1946.
"La destrucción de la civilización."

another pyramid shape, this one painted thickly in a tan-yellow. Next to it, is a vertical rectangle, loosely painted in a bluish-grey. Orozco has drawn his head vigorously, emphasizing his forehead, cheekbones and chin. His thick glasses are painted in purple, black and brown; behind the lenses we see his small, intense greenish eyes. The entire face is comprised of colorful pink, green, crimson and yellows, juxtaposed against the brownish flesh. The moustache is grey with touches of purple. Throughout the entire painting, he juxtaposes thick and thinly painted areas, creating a balance between the two on the surface. The expression is intense, serious. The head and shoulders become a compact form pressing against the viewer. He depicts himself as a formal person, wearing a suit and tie. Yet the face goes beyond this representation. Here is Orozco as an older man, filled with a critical vision of reality, a man still in the plenitude of his powers.

Margarita joined Orozco in New York City in early February, 1946. She brought over twenty recent drawings, as well as a couple of large paintings on masonite. They were consigned to Knoedler, where Orozco was supposed to have an exhibition in October of 1946.²⁰

²⁰ Margarita Valladares de Orozco, Letter to the author, dated 3 September 1992, p. 3.

The exhibition at Knoedler never took place. No record of it exists in the gallery archives, nor are there notices in the art periodicals.

On the 13th of February, Orozco was interviewed by art critic and curator José Gómez Sicre (1916-1991), for the magazine Norte, a Spanish-language cultural monthly, published under the auspices of the U.S.I.A.. Gómez Sicre never published the interview; his editor Jorge Losada found it anti-American.

Gómez Sicre asked Orozco a number of key questions, and Orozco responded honestly:

Maestro, what are your memories of the Mexican Revolution?

I personally did not have a bad time during the revolution, but I saw much brutality, devastation, betrayal....I was with the Carranza forces and I saw their defeated victims like the poor Zapatista peasants brought in to be executed. There was something suicidal about those Zapatistas, like their leader they were marked for doom, death....In the end, I don't trust revolutions or glorify them, since I witnessed too much butchery. Only a fool like Rivera, who was in France during the revolution can carry on about revolution.

You came here in 1927 looking for artistic opportunities?

Yes, the mural commissions had dried up, so I came to the United States. I spent seven years here, they were difficult, I didn't make much money, yet they were important for my work as a painter. When I came here Mexico was the fashion. Everyone wanted pretty pictures of Indians. Now they like Tamayo.

What about your paintings of New York scenes?

I never liked the industrial forms of the city, be it underground trains, skyscrapers or anything else. I did use them as themes for paintings, not just because of the powerful forms but because it was the reality around me, what I knew. You

know my paintings of New York were not well received, they wanted me to paint Indians with flowers, like Rivera. I think I captured something of the brutality of the city in those New York paintings, they are not pretty pictures.

Maestro, the last time you were in the city, almost six years ago, you painted the mural Dive Bomber and Tank at the Museum of Modern Art. What is this work about?

I wrote a small pamphlet for the museum where I explained what the work is about....[he laughs]It is about war, the terror of the world then, today and tomorrow.

How do you see the world situation?

It is important that fascism was defeated. But now we have other tensions. I am a little afraid of a pax americana, at least as it refers to Latin America. Let me emphasize that I am not political like Rivera and Siqueiros.

How different do you find the New York of today from the one you knew before?

Very different, in the thirties even with the economic crisis there was a different atmosphere. There was an interest in mural painting that is no longer. Today the interest is in easel painting and abstraction.

Do you think you will return to New York?

I don't believe so.²¹

²¹ Unpublished, typed manuscript of Orozco interview by José Gómez Sicre, 13 February 1946, pp.1-3. José Gómez Sicre papers, Washington, D.C.

¿Maestro, cuales son sus recuerdos de la Revolución Mexicana?

Personalmente yo no la pase mal durante la revolución, pero ví mucha brutalidad, destrucción, traiciones ... Yo estaba con las fuerzas de Carranza y ví sus victimas vencidas como los infelices campesinos Zapatistas que traian para ser fusilados. Habia algo suicida en esos Zapatistas, como su jefe estaban marcados para la tragedia, la muerte al final ... en fin yo no le tengo confianza a las revoluciones ni las glorifico, pues he visto

mucha carniceria. Solo un idiota como Rivera, que estaba en Francia durante la revolución puede chiflar y chiflar sobre la revolución.

¿Usted vino aquí en 1927 buscando oportunidades artísticas?

Si, las comisiones de murales se habían desaparecido, entonces me vine para los Estados Unidos. Aquí estuve unos siete años, fueron difíciles, no gane mucha plata, mas fueron importantes para mi obra como pintor. Cuando vine aquí México estaba de moda. Todo el mundo quería cuadros bonitos con inditos. Ahora les gusta Tamayo.

¿Que me dice de sus cuadros con escenas Newyorkinas?

Nunca me gustaron las formas industriales de la ciudad, los rascacielos o nada por el estilo. Los use como temas de mis cuadros, no solo por sus formas poderosas sino porque era la realidad a mi alrededor, lo que conocía. Usted sabe, mis cuadros de Nueva York no fueron bien recibidos, querían que yo pintara indios con flores, como Rivera. Creo que capté algo de la brutalidad de la ciudad en esas pinturas de Nueva York, no son cuadritos bonitos.

Maestro, la última vez que usted estuvo en esta ciudad, hace casi seis años, usted pintó el mural Bombardero y Tanque en el Museo de Arte Moderno. ¿Que significa esta obra?

Escribí un pequeño panfleto para el museo donde doy una explicación de lo que trata la obra ... [se ríe] ... es sobre la guerra, el terror del mundo entonces, hoy y mañana.

¿Cómo ve la situación mundial?

Es importante que el facismo fue vencido. Pero ahora tenemos otras tenciones. Le tengo un poco de temor a la pax americana, por lo menos en lo que se refiere a América Latina. Dejéme enfatizarle que no soy politico como Rivera y Siqueiros.

¿Encuentra muy diferente el Nueva York de hoy con el que conoció antes?

Muy diferente, en los treintas con todo y la crisis económica había otra atmosfera. Había un interés en la pintura mural que ya no existe. Hoy en día el interes es en la pintura de caballete y en la abstracción.

¿Usted cree que va a volver a Nueva York?

This unpublished interview gives us an idea of the artist's frame of mind and way of speaking during his last visit to the City of New York. Although he was clear in his statements, he was at the same time concealing; criticizing the United States while stressing that he was not political like Rivera and Siqueiros. It is interesting that as in one of the letters to his wife, here he mentions touristic Indian pictures in the same breath as Tamayo. For Orozco, Tamayo's pseudo-abstractions were essentially folkloric commodities that gringo collectors liked to hang in their living rooms. Yet, when Gómez Sicre asked him about this time in New York, in spite of his criticisms, he considered the time vital to his work as a painter.

On the 14th of March, 1946, Orozco was back in Mexico City with his wife Margarita.²² He would never again set foot in Gringoland. Yet his name continued to be a part of the cultural discourse in the United States. In the summer of 1947, Time printed a small article where Orozco was quoted. Italian author Giovanni Papini had made statements to the press that Latin America had not produced anything of importance and influence in the realm of culture. Orozco responded:

No lo creo."

²² Interview with Lucrecia Orozco de Herrero and the author, June 27, 1995, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

Boomed Painter José Clemente Orozco, an old hand at cultural warfare: 'Papini is the type that believes that Paris is the unique city where all culture has been centralized. His attitude is that of commercialized Europe, of the French dressmaker.'²³

Once again, the Orozco humor, dry, and acute, was in great form. What I believe is important about this journalistic note is that Time considered Orozco a leading voice for Latin America, and that the artist had a clear anti-Eurocentric position.

When Orozco died on September 7, 1949, his obituary was carried in the major papers and art magazines. The New York Herald Tribune described him thus; "Concerned all this life with the struggle between man and the machine, Jose Clemente Orozco found in the broad dimensions of murals the emotional outlet that other men find in speech. He felt that his paintings expressed his deep conviction of the need for social revolution, and that they needed no explanation."²⁴ The obituary mentioned his important work in the United States, at Pomona, Dartmouth and New York. It also made a point of mentioning his lack of fame when compared with Rivera, stating that this was due to Orozco's avoidance of fiery

²³ "Mexico On the Moon," Time, (June 30, 1947), p. 8.

²⁴ "Jose Orozco, Mural Painter, Dies in Mexico," New York Herald Tribune, (September 8, 1949), p. 19.

debate.²⁵

Art News in its obituary spoke of Orozco as "one of the founders of the modern Mexican school of fresco and mural painting....Through his forceful and monumental frescoes in government and university buildings in Mexico and also in the U.S., his influence made its mark in the thirties on the social-conscious paintings here before it attained international proportions."²⁶

On his death, Orozco was remembered by those sectors of the culture to which in life he had been both attracted and repelled.

Influence

Of Los Tres Grandes, there is no doubt that Diego Rivera's influence was the most direct and immediate upon U.S. art of the 1930s. We have only to look at murals by Victor Arnautoff, Ben Shahn, George Biddle and Hale Woodruff, among others, to see it. Rivera's stylistic linearity and didacticism was what most attracted and influenced these U.S. artists. Siqueiros' influence was more technical and conceptual than formal, in the United States. Jackson Pollock, who worked with Siqueiros at the Experimental Workshop in New York in New York (1936), was definitely

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Obituaries," Art News, (October 1949), p. 66.

influenced in terms of painting process.

The influence of José Clemente Orozco on U.S. art is to be found on many levels. He was after all the first of Los Tres Grandes to arrive in the United States, and settle in New York City for a number of years. Painter and printmaker Will Barnet (b. 1911), recalled:

Orozco's influence in the 30's was prevalent in so many artists of the time. The only time I saw him was at the Artists Congress Against War And Fascism held at the New School for Social Research ... He was to me a distant, mythic figure.²⁷

Leading social-realist painter Jacob Lawrence (b. 1917) met Orozco while the artist was painting Dive Bomber and Tank in 1940. In a recent article in The New York Times, Lawrence remembered:

He finds Rivera's mural of Zapata, and a few galleries away, Siqueiros 'Echo of a Scream' and Orozco's 'Zapatistas'. Mr. Lawrence admires, up to a point, the Siqueiros with its crying child. He says the Rivera, with its big figures flattened and pushed against the picture plane, has always been important to him. It is 'a good painting', he says, 'but when you look at the Orozco, every brush stroke of that work seems to have an energy that I don't find here. You're aware of the skill and control of Rivera. You're looking at his facility.'

About the Orozco, he goes on: 'I often used this work to teach the dynamics of composition and the value of social content, passionately expressed. It's

²⁷ Will Barnet, Letter to the author, dated 15 April 1996.

very close to what I feel about the human condition. With the Mexican muralists, you had both content and form – social content and abstract form – and he was the best of the Mexicans.²⁸

Stylistically, Lawrence's work has usually been discussed in terms of the effect of folk art, Matisse, and Picasso's work on his painting. The more recent literature on Lawrence has made mention of Orozco. A look at a Lawrence painting, such as The History of the American People Series, No. 27 (fig. 68) of 1955-56, is evidence of Orozco's influence. A work depicting a violent struggle between two runaway slaves and two Caucasian men with weapons, the composition is dynamic and highly abstract. The palette is made up of greens and browns, with touches of bright blue and yellow. Tension and horror is evident in both the arched bodies and angry faces. There is no sentimentality or illustrational quality to the work. Orozco's presence is here.

Orozco influenced other African American artists in addition to Lawrence. Boston painter and sculptor, John Wilson (b. 1922) discovered the work of the Mexicans through a book by Lawrence Schmeckebier, while still in high school. In time, he fell in love with Orozco's work. For Wilson, Orozco's paintings were "stark and dramatic, not illustrative

²⁸ Michael Kimmelman, "At the Met and the Modern with Jacob Lawrence," The New York Times, (April 12, 1996), Sec. C, pp. 1-4.

like Rivera."²⁹

Orozco's influence is palpable in the work of other artists such as printmaker and sculptor Elizabeth Catlett (b. 1915). Catlett recalled Orozco's influence on her own work:

His sense of form....Very powerful and solid, the dignity of his figures....He never opts for the easy way out. Orozco is simply profound. His style affected my early prints and sculpture. Politically I may have more in common with Siqueiros, but in terms of art, it is Orozco I connect with.³⁰

Of course, the best known American artist to have been influenced by Orozco was Jackson Pollock (1912-1956). Pollock was a student of Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League when he met Orozco. While both Orozco and Benton were painting at The New School for Social Research, Pollock would either assist Benton or watch Orozco paint.³¹ Even though he worked with Siqueiros in 1936, at that time, Pollock was most interested in the formal innovations of both Picasso and Orozco. He was always talking about those two

²⁹ Interview with John Wilson and the author, 3 October 1996.

³⁰ Interview with Elizabeth Catlett and the author, 6 April 1991. The most complete discussion of the Mexican muralists and their connection with African-American artists is the recent exhibition catalogue In the Spirit of Resistance (New York: The American Federation of Arts, 1996), with essays by Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins and Shifra M. Goldman.

³¹ Telephone interview with Alfonso A. Ossorio and the author, 9 October 1990. The late Ossorio (1916-90) was a close friend, neighbor and confidante of Pollock, as well as a fellow artist.

artists.³² If Benton's influence is clear in Pollock's paintings of 1930-33, such as Departure and The Wagon, we see a reflection of both Orozco's forms and palette later in the decade. Bald Woman with Skeleton, c. 1938 (fig. 69) is evidence of this influence in the bold, dramatic forms and also in the essentially monochromatic palette, highlighted with touches of intense red, acidic yellow and deep blue. Beyond the formal, the work also has some of Orozco's spirit; it is gloomy, critical, apocalyptic.

California painter Rico Lebrun (1900-1964) was influenced by Orozco's work, particularly from 1950 on. One can state that Picasso's Guernica and Orozco easel and mural works in the United States were the elements that transformed the Neapolitan-born painter from an academic virtuoso to a painter referred to by Matthew Baigell as possessing a "high sense of spiritual drama [which] gave his art a Baroque gloss rarely seen in modern times."³³ Lebrun (fig. 70) considered Orozco one of the greatest draftsmen of 20th century art, as well as someone with a profound vision of the human condition. Lebrun was quite taken with the Prometheus at Pomona, but he also studied the easel paintings that were in

³² Ibid.

³³ Matthew Baigell, Dictionary of American Art, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982), p. 206.

the collection of The Museum of Modern Art.³⁴

Chicago-born painter Leon Golub (b. 1922), (fig. 71), also felt the impact of Orozco, particularly after World War II:

Everyone talks of the influence of Hellenistic sculpture in my work, which is true. But after the war Picasso's Guernica and Orozco's paintings were the works I looked at too. The Prometheus moved me when I first saw it. The same of the trench painting at the Modern. I still think the Lenin panel at the New School is powerful. Someone defined it as dramatic forms and that's what they are. At the height of abstraction he offered an alternative, a figuration that was both monumental and tragic.³⁵

Printmaker and sculptor Leonard Baskin (b. 1922), who polemicized against abstraction in the late 1950s and early 1960s, felt that Orozco's work had a profound influence on various artists of his generation:

To me, he is one of the few true giants of the art of our century. I know that as a draftsman he is up there with Picasso. Lebrun and I felt this. Rivera is dated, Siqueiros goes downhill, I guess in the fifties. Anyway, his Stalinism is repulsive. But not Clemente Orozco. He has both the form and the content. He is a universal expressionist, and yet he is profoundly Mexican, like Posada.

³⁴ Telephone interview with Selden Rodman and the author, 9 March 1993. Rodman, a critic and poet, knew Lebrun well. In the 1960s he published Conversations with Artists and The Insiders. In the first book, Lebrun is interviewed, in the second his work is discussed fully in one chapter.

³⁵ Interview with Leon Golub and the author, 3 December 1993.

His work affected mine, it still does.
His work influenced the so-called
Insiders; Paone, Kearns, Cuevas. It
definitely influenced Lebrun.³⁶

For Baskin (fig. 72), the influence of Orozco goes beyond form and into sensibility; his work is tragic, yet profoundly empathetic with the human condition.

In 1959, The Museum of Modern Art opened the exhibition, "New Images of Man," organized by Peter Selz. Although Orozco's name was omitted among the stylistic predecessors (Bosch, Goya and Beckmann) of the artists in the exhibit,³⁷ his ghost is present there in the work of several artists: Baskin, Golub, Lebrun and Pollock. The omission is natural. At this time, Orozco was what we would call today "politically incorrect": an artist associated with the political 1930s, a mural painter, and an "other" from Latin America. Still, starting in the 1930s and beyond, his influence was both formal—composition, color and form, and technical—scale, which affected the abstractionists of the 1950s. Most important in content--his tragic meditation on the condition of man, his battle with technology, found an audience in the disillusioned and "Red Scare" 1950s, as well as today in the ideologically conservative 1990s.

³⁶ Telephone interview with Leonard Baskin and the author, 11 September 1996.

³⁷ Peter Selz, New Images of Man, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1959), pp.11-15.

CONCLUSION

In this study of Orozco's New York years, his work has been interpreted not just in the light of formal issues, but above all within a cultural and sociopolitical context. These years were significant for Orozco; in New York City he produced two important murals, as well as a substantial body of easel and graphic work. While in Gringoland, New York City in particular, Orozco encountered modernity in all its contradictions. It was in Gringoland where Orozco most experimented with his art, and where his artistic vision started to crystalize into what I would call historical pessimism; a pessimism different from the less historically grounded one evident in earlier works such as La Casa del Llanto. This historical pessimism was always critical, never nostalgic or reactionary. With shape and color, he painted what Federico García Lorca expressed in words in the poems of Poeta en Nueva York: troubled visions of reality yearning for redemption.

FIGURES



Fig. 1. Dios Padre, 1923-26
fresco



Fig. 2. Franciscano, 1923-26
fresco



Fig. 3. La Trinchera, 1923-26
fresco

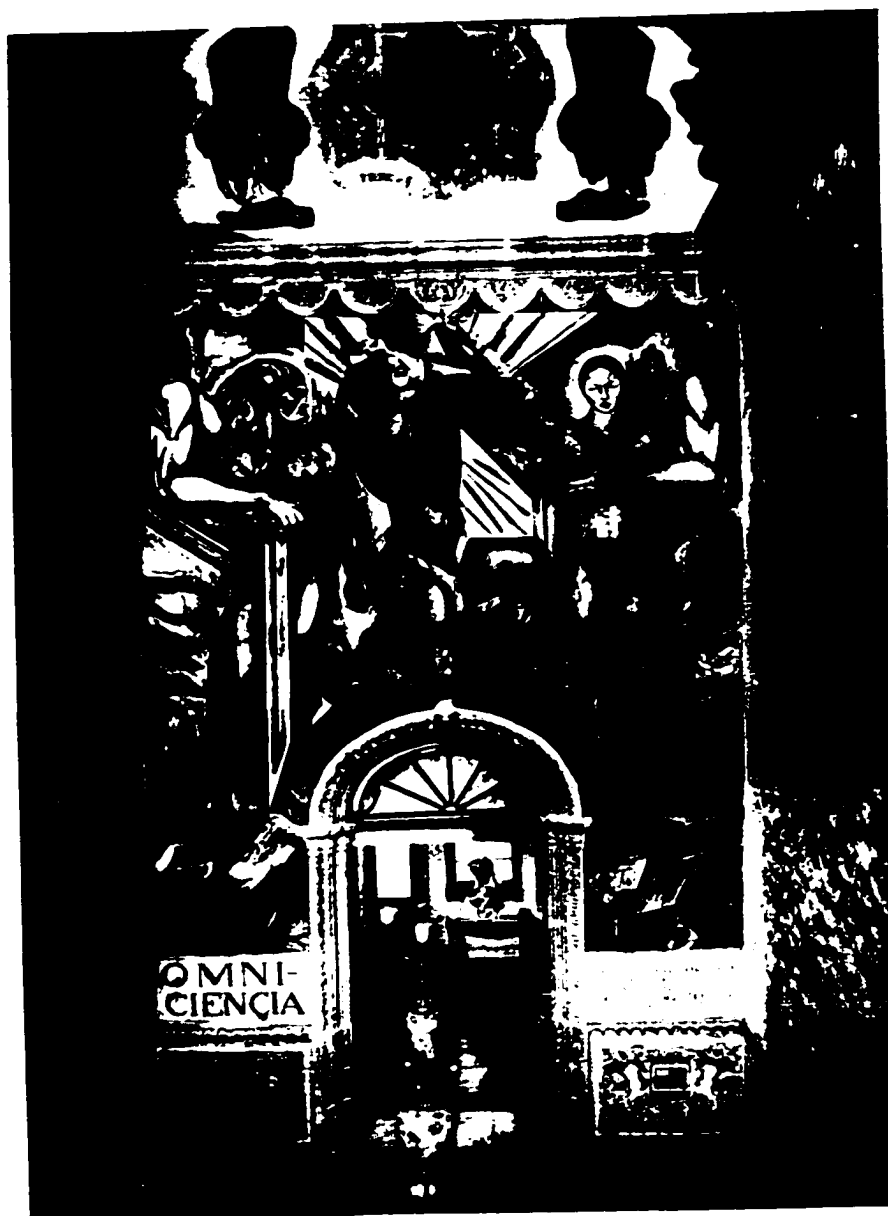


Fig. 4. Omniciencia, 1925
fresco



Fig. 5. Revolución Social, 1926
fresco

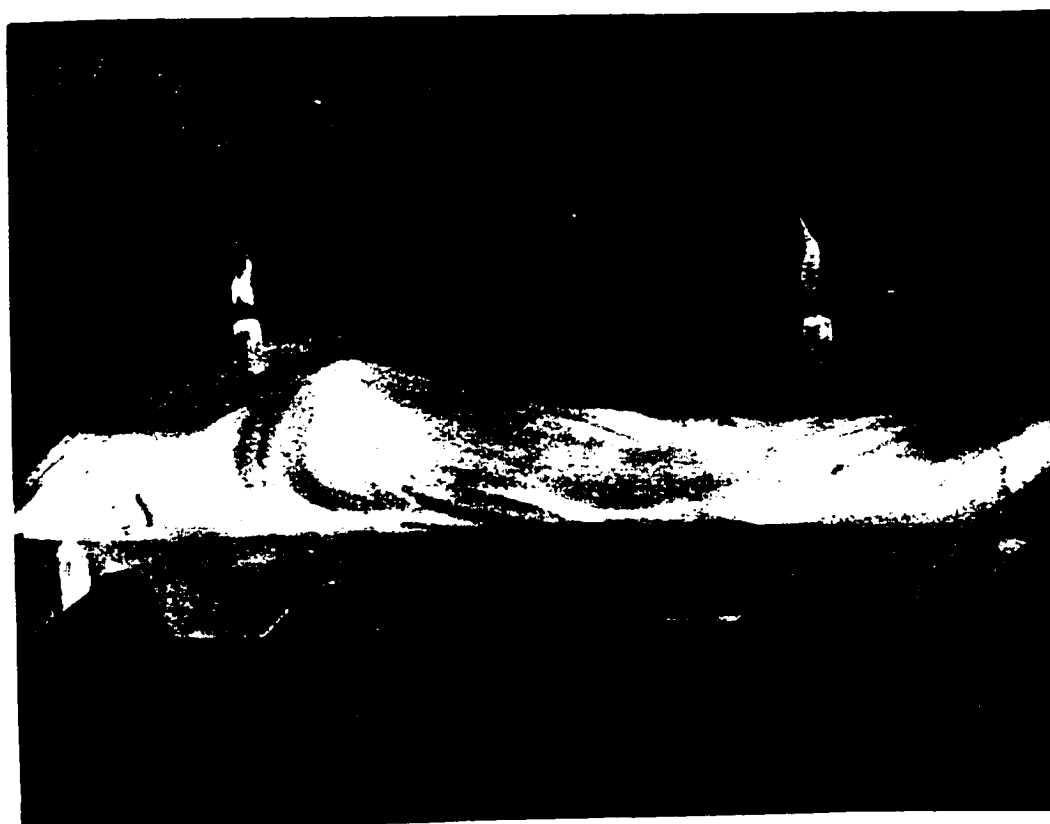


Fig. 6. El Muerto, 1925-28
oil on canvas



Fig. 7. Covers of La Vanguardia, 1915



Fig. 8. Caricature of Morones from L'ABC, 1925



Fig. 9. La Huelga, 1923-26
fresco



Fig. 10. Alma Reed, c. 1928



Fig. 11. George Biddle, Portrait of José Clemente Orozco,
1929, oil on canvas



Fig. 12. Coney Island Side Show, 1928
oil on canvas



Fig. 13. The Subway, 1928
oil on canvas



Fig. 14. Fourteenth Street, Manhattan, 1928
oil on canvas

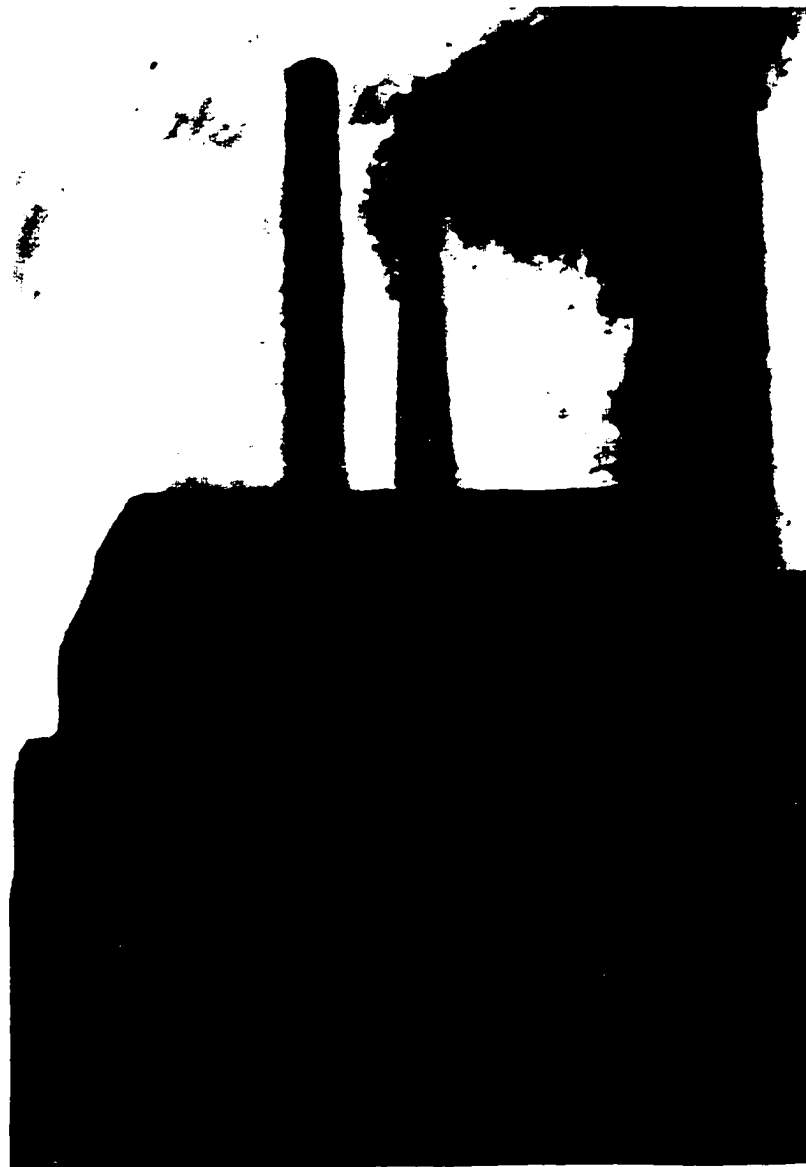


Fig. 15. New York Factory, Williamsburg, 1928
oil on canvas

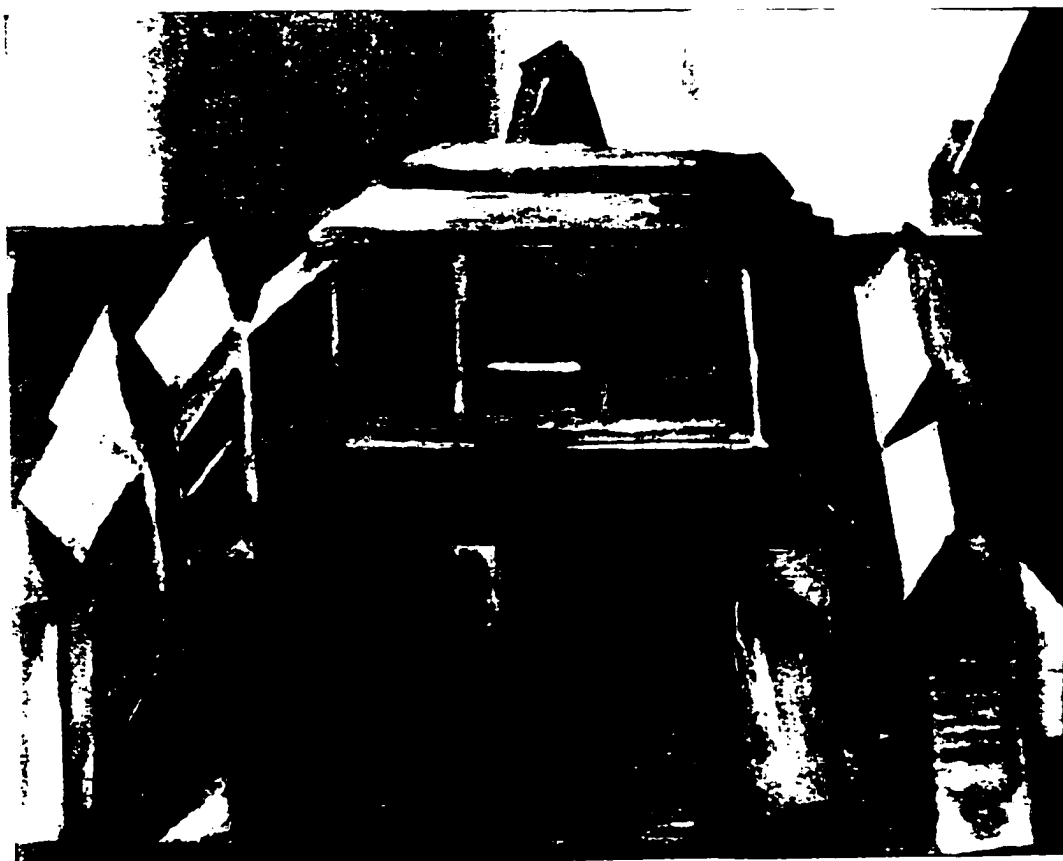


Fig. 16. The Third Avenue Elevated, 1928
oil on canvas



Fig. 17. The Dead, 1931
oil on canvas



Fig. 18. Successful People, 1931
oil on canvas



Fig. 19. Tres Cabezas, 1932
oil on canvas



Fig. 20. Soldados Mexicanos, 1930
gouache on paper



Fig. 21. Soldado Herido, 1930
oil on canvas



Fig. 22. Zapatistas, 1931
oil on canvas



Fig. 23. Barricade, 1931
oil on canvas



Fig. 24. El Cementerio, 1931
oil on canvas



Fig. 25. Pancho Villa, 1931
oil on canvas



Fig. 26. Diego Rivera, Agrarian Leader Zapata
1931, fresco



Fig. 27. Zapata Entering a Peasant's Hut, 1930
oil on canvas



Fig. 28. David Alfaro Siqueiros, Zapata,
1931, oil on canvas



Fig. 29. Casa Quemada, 1930
oil on canvas



Fig. 30. Evisión, 1928
ink on paper



Fig. 31. Tren Dinamitado, 1928
ink on paper



Fig. 32. La Boda del General, 1928
ink on paper



Fig. 33. Los Heridos, 1928
ink on paper



Fig. 34. Guerra, 1928
ink on paper

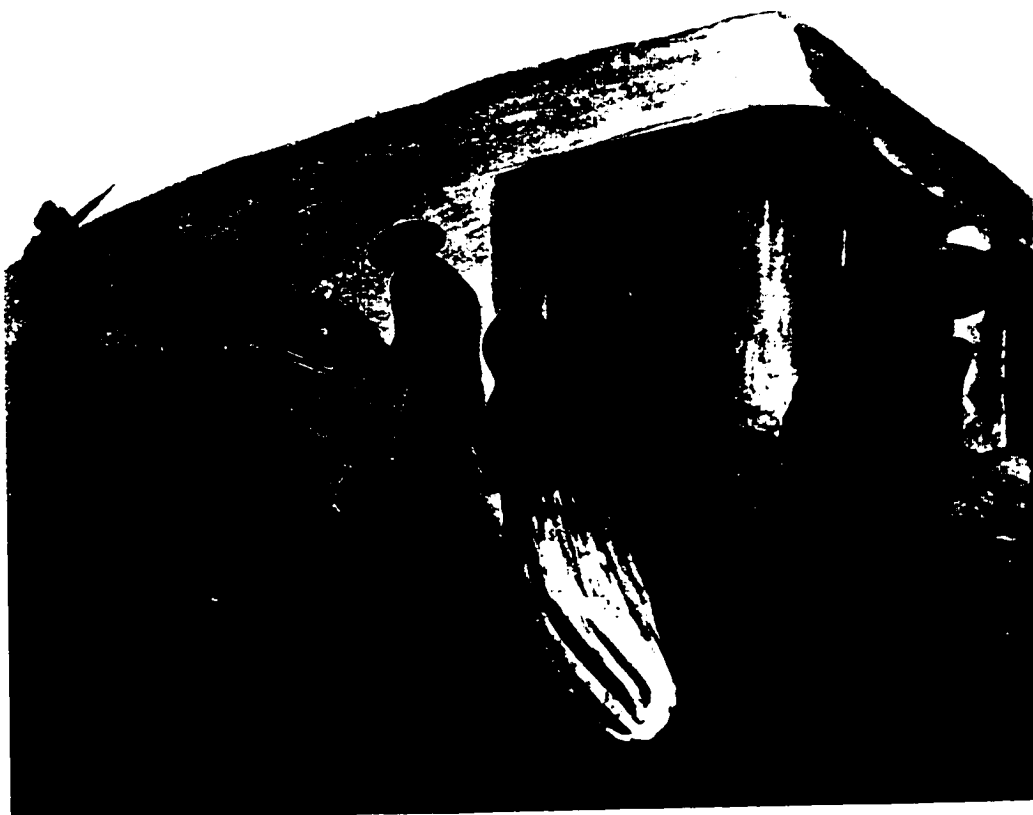


Fig. 35. El Fusilado, 1928
ink on paper



Fig. 36. Illustration for The Underdogs, 1929
ink on paper



Fig. 37. Illustration for The Underdogs, 1929
ink on paper



Fig. 38. New York Subway, 1929
charcoal on paper



Fig. 39. The Committee on Art, 1932
ink on paper

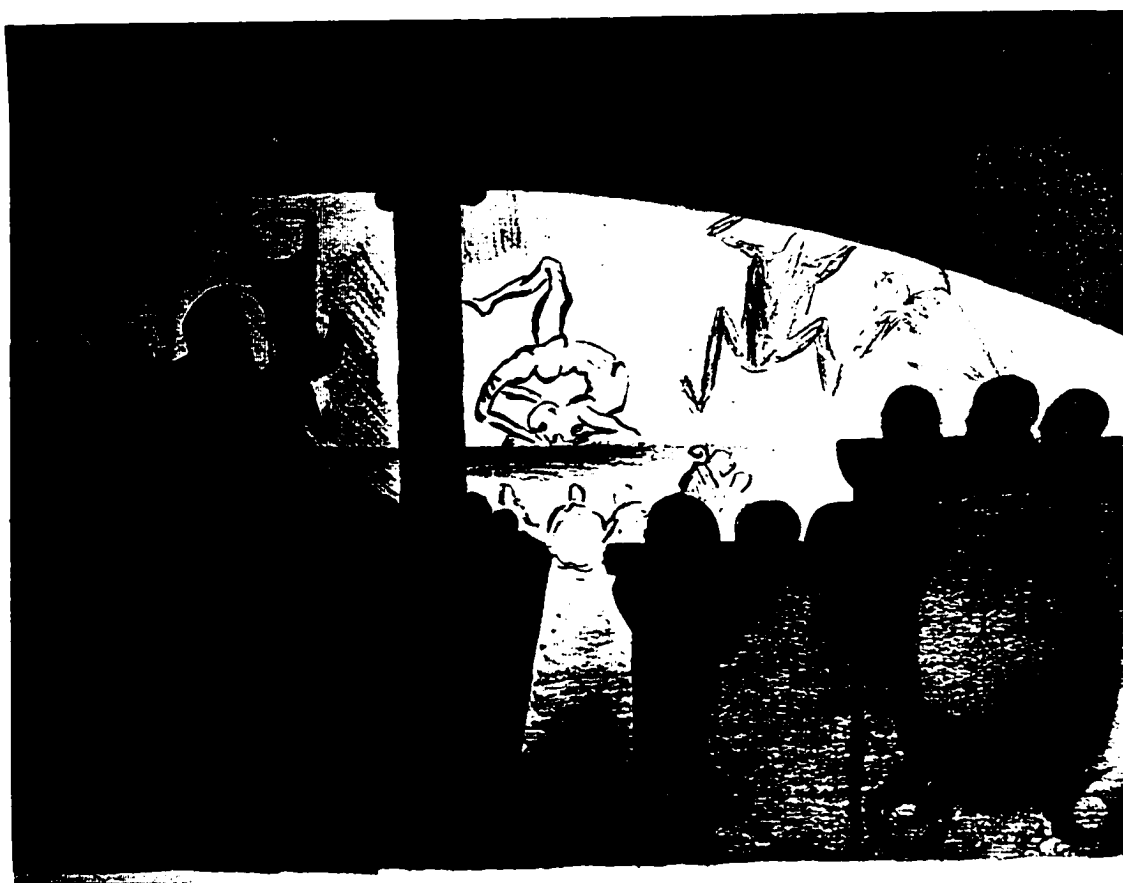


Fig. 40. Vaudeville en Harlem, 1928
lithograph



Fig. 41. Requiem, 1928
lithograph



Fig. 42. Inditos, 1929
lithograph



Fig. 43. Franciscano, 1930
lithograph

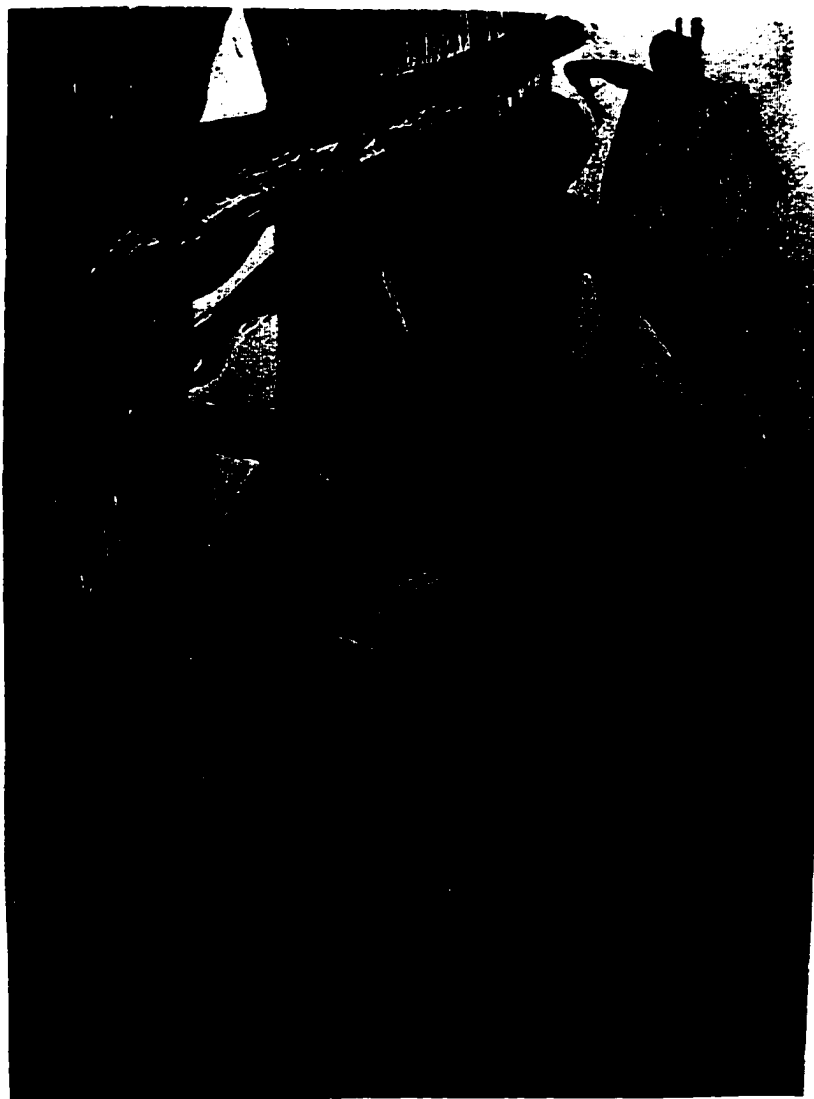


Fig. 44. Negros Ahorcados, 1930
lithograph

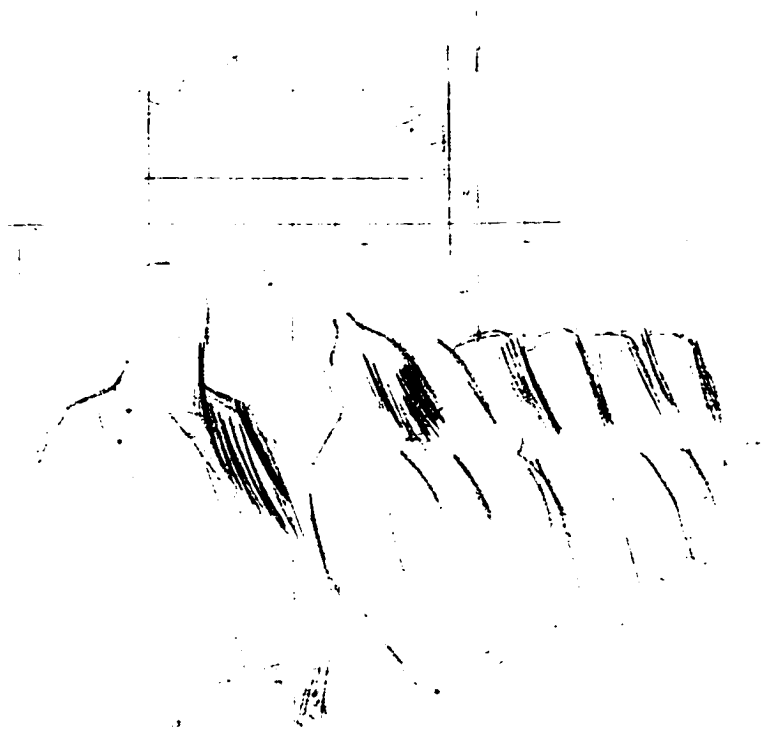


Fig. 45. Sketch for The New School for Social Research murals, 1930, pencil on paper



Fig. 46. Sketch for The New School for Social Research murals, 1930, pencil on paper



Fig. 47. Sketch for The New School for Social Research murals, 1930, pencil on paper



Fig. 48. Sketch for The New School for Social Research murals, 1930, pencil on paper



Fig. 49. Science, Labor, Art, 1931
fresco

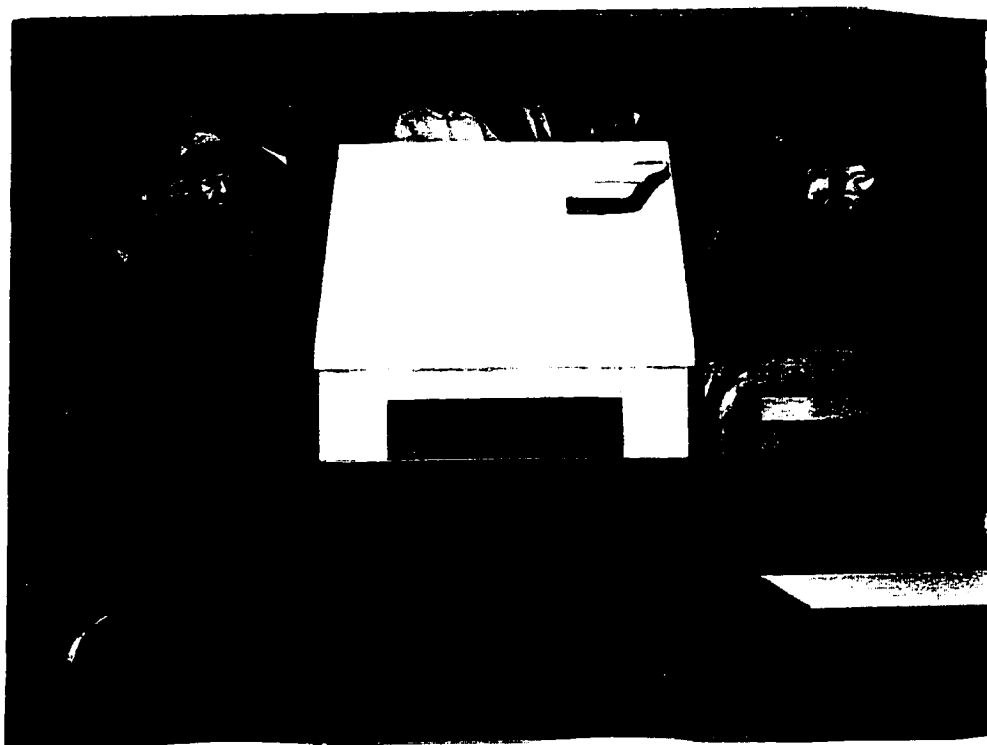


Fig. 50. Table of Brotherhood, 1931
fresco



Fig. 51. Struggle in the Orient, Ghandi and Imperialism,
1931, fresco

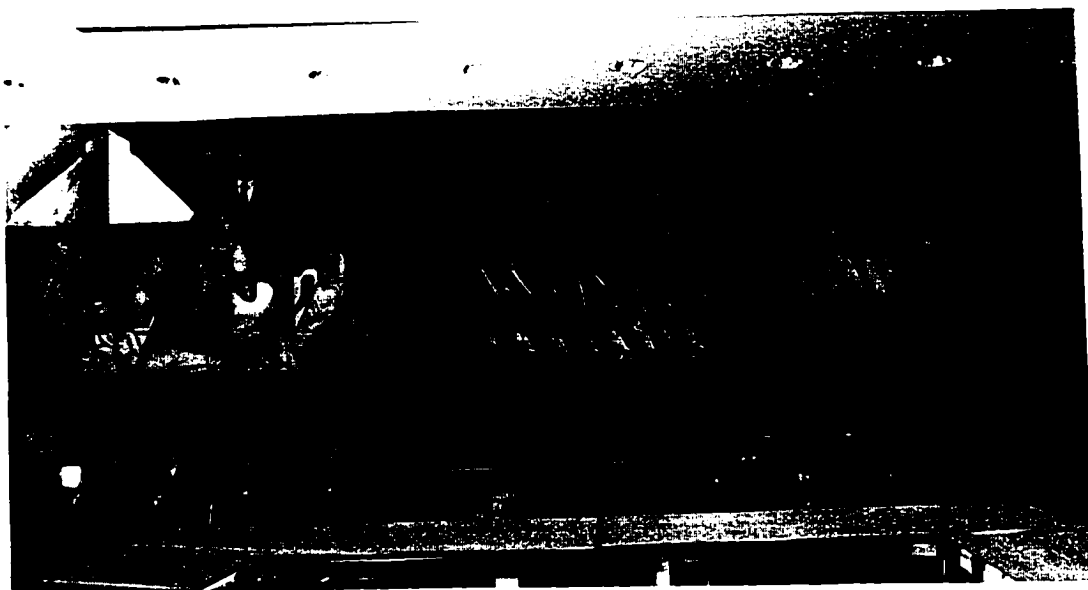


Fig. 52. Struggle in the Occident, Felipe Carrillo Puerto of Yucatán and Soviet Russia, 1931, fresco



Fig. 53. Home, 1931
fresco



Fig. 54. Soviet Russia, 1931
fresco



Fig. 55. The Slaves, 1931
fresco

FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1953

GROZCO, Jose Clemente
Mexico



PROPERTY OF THE
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
1100 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 17, N.Y.

NEW SCHOOL KEEPS HIDDEN MURAL

On the incorporation of the school's board of trustees, Dr. Simons ordered José Martí's concealment of part of the four-part study of "Man's Struggle" because "heavy protests" poured in against the display of what was seen as the glorification of Lenin and Stalin and the Red Army.

The politics-versus-art controversy apparently began when The National Guardian, a leftist magazine, denounced the burning of the mural. Two weeks ago a student committee circulated a petition protesting "what is termed an arbitrary prohibition of the interests of the captive and oppressed workers in the human struggle."

Dr. Simons said the mural despite was a "problem of the school" and did not concern "the outside."

A spokesman for the school said later that Dr. Simons had received "a mass" of protests against the display of the mural in the cafeteria—still called the "Grosoco Room"—including some demands that the panel be destroyed or burned. However, the spokesman added, the school does not plan to do that. He said the protests against the mural greatly outnumbered those against the yellow campaign.

Whether or not Grosoco wanted to embrace the Soviet Union, his autobiography shows that he disliked the Moscow conception of proletarian art.

He did remark that the New School painting of Lenin and the Negro preaching over the head of Haywood had to be removed from the United Negro College. He also mentioned that he had been asked to contribute to the Grosoco Room.

Fig. 56. The New York Times, article, 1953



Fig. 57. Hombre en llamas, 1936-39
fresco



Fig. 58. Diego Rivera painting a portable fresco at
The Museum of Modern Art, 1931



Fig. 59. Diego Rivera, Liberation of the Peon,
1931, fresco



Fig. 60. Diego Rivera, Kneeling Dancer
1939, oil on canvas

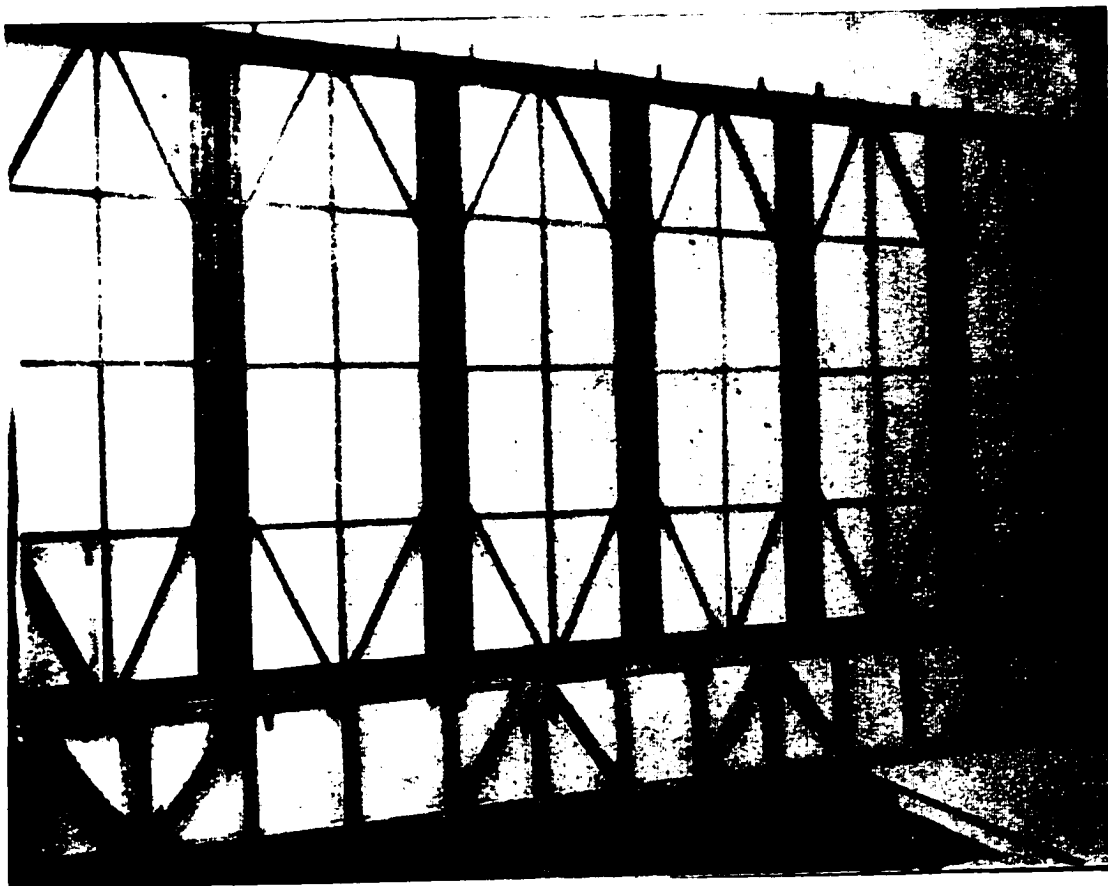


Fig. 61. Movable panels for Dive Bomber and Tank, 1940



Fig. 62. Sketch for Dive Bomber and Tank, 1940



Fig. 63. Orozco painting Dive Bomber and Tank, 1940

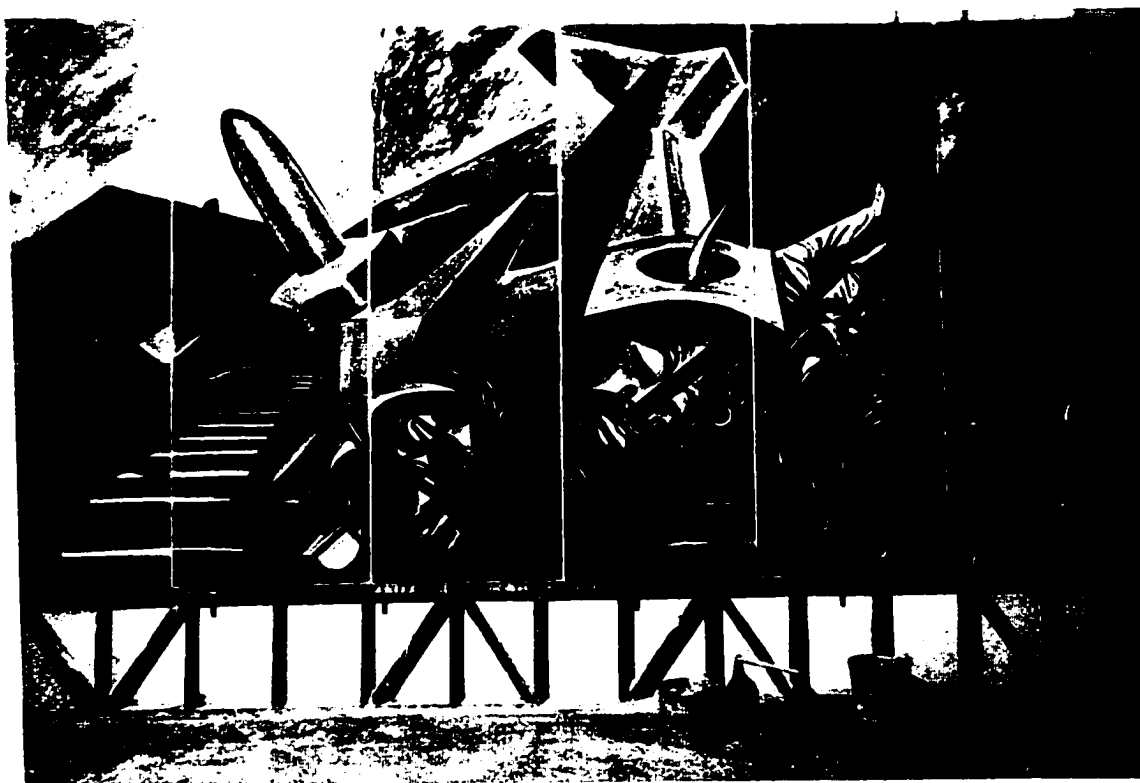


Fig. 64. Orozco completing Dive Bomber and Tank, 1940



Fig. 65. Several arrangements of Dive Bomber and Tank, 1940

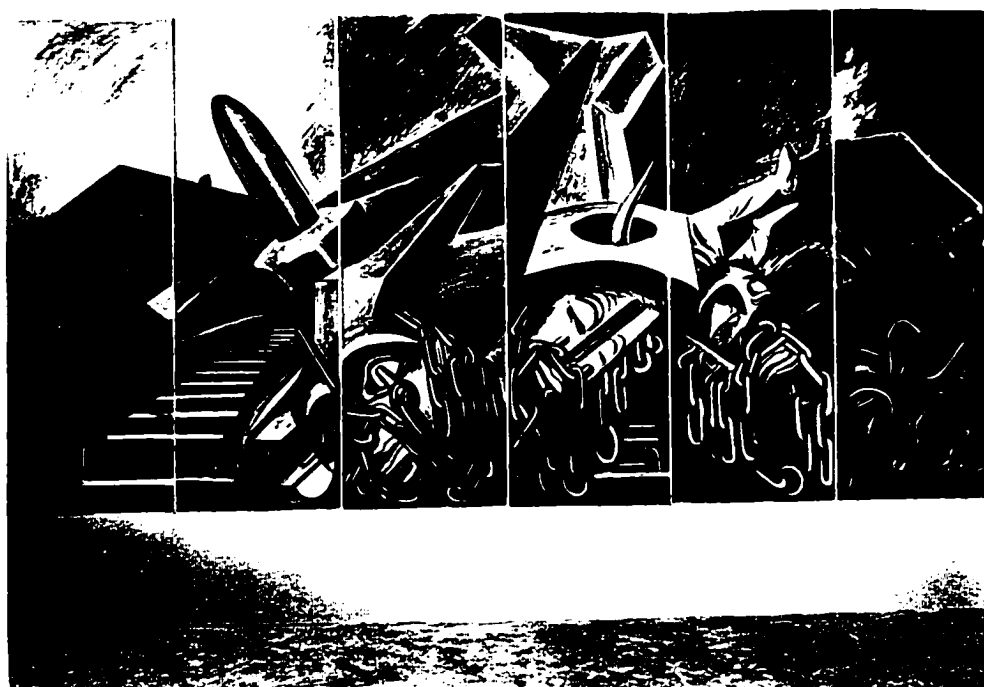


Fig. 66. Dive Bomber and Tank, 1940
fresco



Fig. 67. Autoretrato, 1946
oil on canvas



Fig. 68. Jacob Lawrence, *The History of The American People Series*, 1953, egg tempera on hardboard



Fig. 69. Jackson Pollock, Bald Woman with Skeleton,
c. 1938-41, oil on masonite



Fig. 70. Rico Lebrun, Polly Peacham,
1961, ink on paper



Fig. 71. Leon Golub, Napalm I,
1969, acrylic on canvas



Fig. 72. Leonard Baskin, Poet Laurate,
c. 1950s, ink on paper

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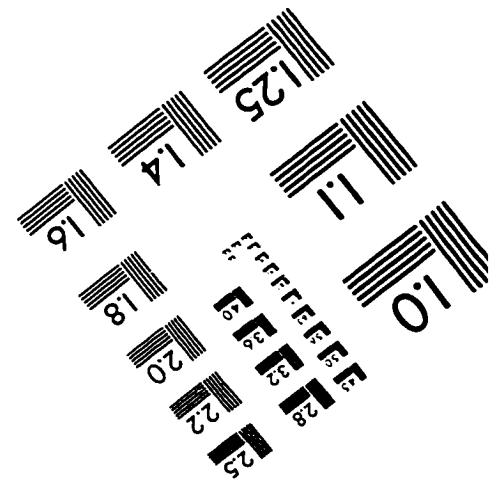
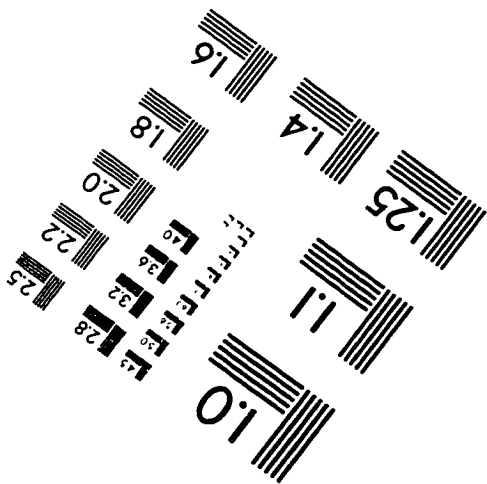
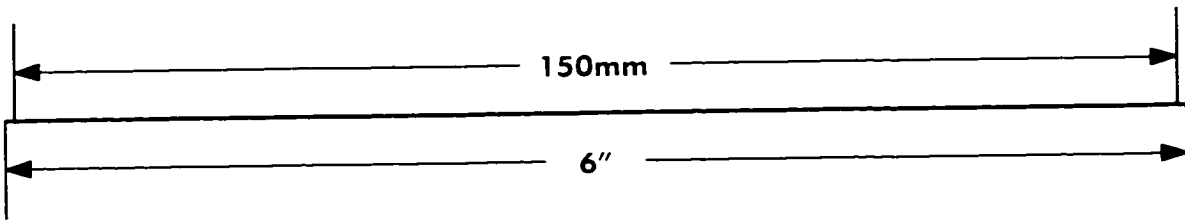
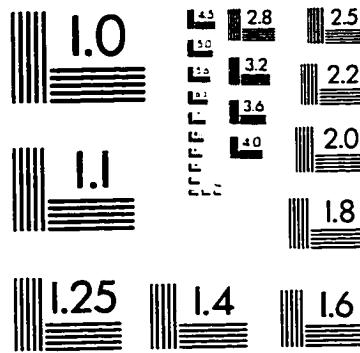
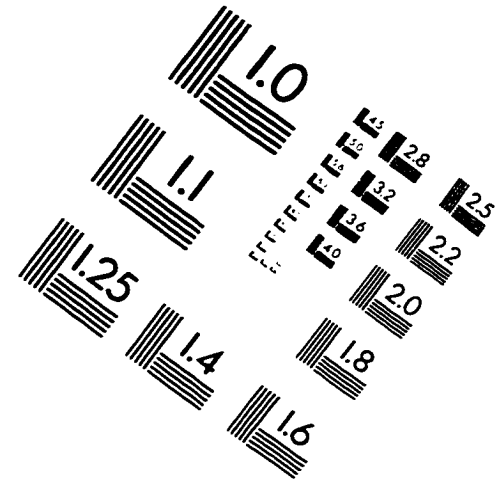
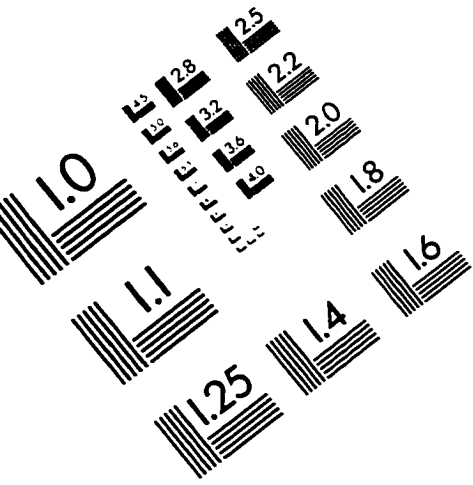
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