

Notes on Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and Latin American Muralism (1910 – Present)

Muralism is the term used to categorize the creation of a **mural** as a work of art placed on a wall or ceiling and applied by a varied of techniques. Often, but not always, a mural artwork is integrated into architectural spaces that use the construction space as an element of the mural itself. Techniques include fresco (water soluble paints with a lime wash) and marouflage (placing a painted on canvas onto a wall with an adhesive).

Murals of various kinds have existed from prehistory to the present. Notice, for example the cave art at Altamira, Spain (18,000 BCE), and Lascaux, France (24,000 BCE). Egyptian tombs (3000 BCE), Minoan (Greek, 1650 BCE), and Roman palaces (200 BCE to 400 CE). In the Middle Ages murals were painted into dry plaster on monastery and church walls. One of the greatest of European muralists was Michelangelo and his Sistine Chapel ceiling in the Vatican.

Perhaps most significant, is the explosion of muralism in the twentieth-century art movement in Mexico, which movement is known as Mexican muralism. Many Mexican artists created murals, especially from the end of the Mexican Revolution (1910 – 1920) until the present. It is important to recall that muralism was a major feature of pre-Columbian Mexico and Mesoamerica from the Mayas to the Aztecs. Furthermore, Mexican muralism spread to Chicano art in the 1960s to the present and to other places throughout Latin America. In Mexico, mural art was centered on progressive social, political, and educational purposes in a manner not dissimilar to the purpose of stained glass windows in European Gothic cathedrals. Hence, Latin American murals have been—deliberately—controversial. Among many examples, in 1948, the Colombian government commissioned Santiago Martínez Delgado to create a mural about the Cúcuta Congress in 1821 at which Simón Bolívar was elected president of the newly founded nation of Gran Colombia. This mural, which angered liberals, and the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the liberal presidential candidate, were the fuse that resulted in the bogotazo of 1948 in Bogotá, a massive riot that ended with vast destruction of the capital itself.

Diego Rivera

1886-1957 For comments about his life and a digital show of a selection of his works, see: => [Diego Rivera Show](#).

Frida Kahlo

1907-1954 For comments about her life and a digital show of a selection of her works, see: => [Frida Kahlo Show](#).

Juan O’Gorman

1907-1954 For murals by Juan O'Gorman on the outside walls of the library building at Mexico's Autonomous University (UNAM), see: => [Juan O'Gorman](#).

Art of the Mexican Revolution (1910-20): 1910-1950

Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1973), Orozco, and Diego Rivera in the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts) in Mexico City, see: => [Bellas Artes](#).

For a monographic presentation of some of Siqueiros’ works, see: => Siquieros.

Chronological presentation of how Mexican artists depicted Mexican themes during the period before, during , and after the Mexican Revolution, see: => Art of the Mexican Revolution.

Alberto Gálvez Suárez (Guatemalan muralist)

1905-1973 For comments about her life and a digital show of a selection of his Guatemalan murals, see: => [Gálvez Suárez Tour](#).

WTL Home

20th Century

Hum 2461