

# Diego Rivera

**Introduction by Frances Flynn Paine. Notes by Jere Abbott**

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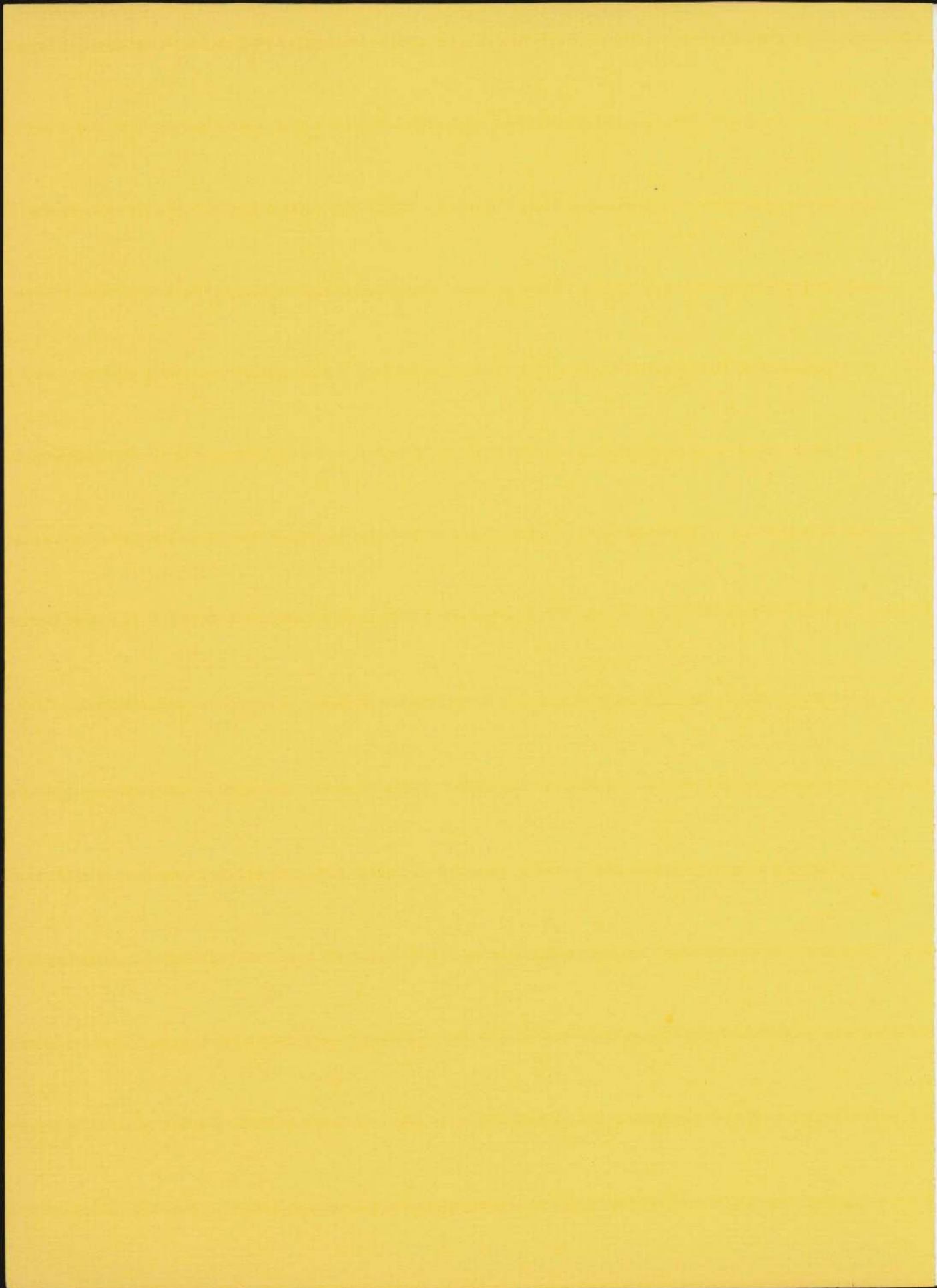
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# DIEGO RIVERA

MUSEUM OF  
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D. Rivera

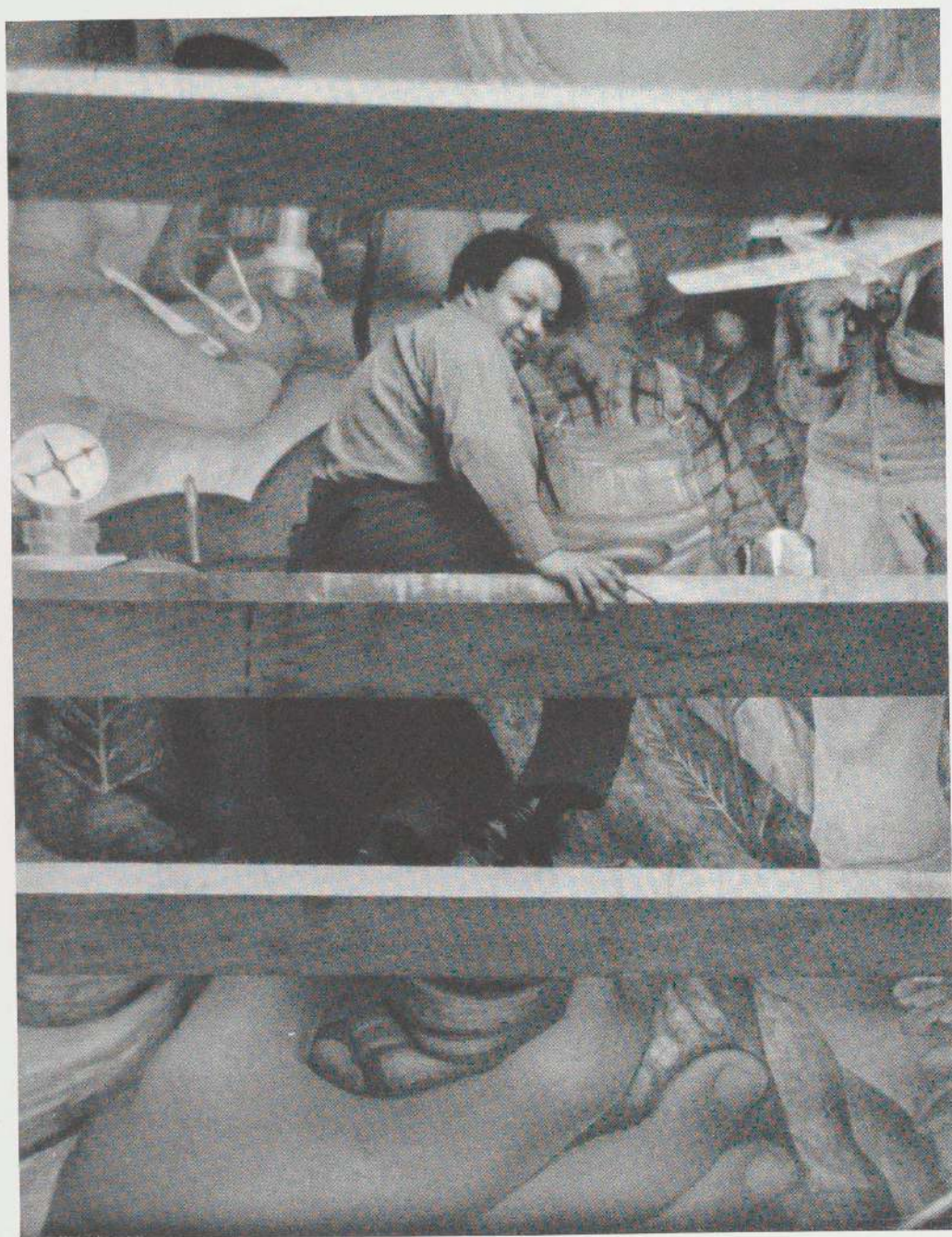








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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

DIEGO RIVERA

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## THE WORK OF DIEGO RIVERA\*

**D**IEGO RIVERA's paternal grandfather, Anastasio de la Rivera, was born in Russia of a Russian mother. His father was Marquis de la Navarro, General in the expedition of Spanish troops sent against Russia by Marquis de la Romana as allies of Napoleon during the reign of Charles IV of Spain.

Diego's paternal great grandfather, de la Navarro, was born in Italy of Spanish Neopolitan parentage. At the time he went to Russia he was a widower. He married a Russian who died when Anastasio was born. The Marquis returned to Spain bringing with him his infant son Anastasio de la Rivera, who, educated in Spain, became a powerful figure in the life of the period.

The last three generations were known for the success with which they had conducted their personal and business affairs. Always on the liberal side, only their great intelligence and personal magnetism saved them from disaster, the inevitable penalty of a too-liberal or revolutionary belief. The Marquis took part in the First Republican Revolution in Spain in 1838. Upon its failure he determined to go to Mexico and settled in Guanajuato where he became interested in the famous silver mines of that district. Within the year he married Ines de Acosta, a Portuguese Jewess. They had nine children, the eldest of whom was Diego Rivera, father of Diego.

The family was intellectual and very advanced for the period. This eldest son upon the death of his father undertook, because of the waning family fortune, to educate the six brothers and five sisters, the sisters becoming professors in the schools, an almost unheard of procedure at that time in Mexico. The boys on the contrary were all adventurous soldiers, consistently on the liberal side.

Diego's mother was Maria Barrientos, also of Guanajuato. Her mother, Nemesia Rodriguez was born in Burgos, Spain. Diego's maternal grandmother was of Spanish Colonial descent, and his grandfather a Tarascan Indian.

Diego's mother and father were married in Guanajuato in 1882. There were eight children. One of whom, Diego Maria Concepcion Juan Nepomuceno, Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos de Acosta y Rodriguez, who is known to us as the painter, Diego Rivera, was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, the 8th day of December, 1886. Diego had a twin brother Carlos, who died when he was two

*DIEGO RIVERA {	Maria Barrientos	{ Nemesia Rodriguez (Spanish Colonial)
	(Mexican)	{ Juan Barrientos (Tarascan Indian)
	Diego Rivera	{ Ines de Acosta (Portuguese Jewess)
	(Mexican)	{ Anastasio de la Rivera (Spanish Russian)



and one-half years old. His sister, Maria Rivera Barrientos, five years younger, now resides in Mexico City. The other children died in infancy.

In spite of all the responsibilities Diego's father had in the education of his brothers and sisters, he was intensely interested in making education universal and available to the Indians, doing everything in his power to establish schools. He was given the position of school inspector and left his post as director of the normal school for this new work. He taught Spanish and was the author of a Spanish grammar which is still used as an authority. While inspector of schools he initiated a signal movement in establishing the first rural schools in Mexico. The Indians looked upon him as a great friend and in consequence he had their confidence to a marked degree.

Señor Rivera (Diego's father) had great confidence that the one remaining silver mine in the family, El Durazno, would develop into a bonanza and replenish the family fortune. Every Saturday the mine foreman, don Trinidad, would disappear with the boy's father for two or three days in the laboratory, which they had arranged in the house, assaying the samples of ore which the foreman brought in weekly, hoping to find evidence of the longed-for values. But Diego noticed after each visit something always disappeared from the furnishings of the house, apparently to carry on the work at the mines.

When Diego was three, his passion to draw was already so great that his father gave him for his own use a huge room from which everything was removed. The walls were then arranged with blackboards at a limit of height that Diego could reach standing on a chair. This was his studio, his absolute domain. Here he spent hours drawing on the walls (the early foundation for his present fresco work) or lying on his stomach surrounded with countless sketches repeatedly drawn, always from his imagination. He had a strange complex, even when a child, of never wanting to draw or paint anything unless he knew what was on the inside, what made it go, what supported it, what gave it form and color. In short, a tremendous and overpowering passion to know the why of things. He took very little interest at this period in the normal activities of playing which children indulge in, but was constantly drawing, painting, asking questions and investigating. In his studio no one disturbed him and he was permitted to work or what was to him play, for hours at a time unmolested. He could paint, draw, sketch, destroy as far as it was in his power everything and anything in the room. He had for his companions imaginary forms with whom he conversed and asked advice. He called them "Aluritatas"; the name



also is imaginary. They were as distinctly real as people and they were an important part in his life. He had one companion, however, a boy body servant Melesceo, 16 years of age, who had been instructed by Señor Rivera to do absolutely everything that his son requested, regardless of what it was. Thus he hoped to help his son develop his mental capabilities in anything which nature might indicate as his natural bent, having a theory that the discipline of matured minds, with their traditional inhibitions, frequently destroys in the young, budding tendencies and talent, which, if not disturbed, may later fully develop. Thus Diego was as entirely undisciplined as it is possible to imagine. Yet his natural tendency to study, his intense interest in his work kept his brain constantly working. The "Aluritas" were like spirits, always at his side. They also took part in animated conversations, sometimes in accord, at other times violently opposed. He always asked their opinion and though in his imagination they did not speak he knew what was in their minds. They either nodded their heads in acquiescence or shook their heads in negation.

Diego's passion for spending his entire time in painting and drawing as a child kept him from the ordinary contact with people and with children. He had a great desire and passion to know nature, animals and plants intimately. When he heard anything discussed that he did not understand he immediately investigated. Books of biology disclosed many of the questions which tormented him. He learned to read them when he was five. His father undertook to go hand in hand with the child and Diego's devotion to him was completely absorbing.

Like most children who enjoy drawing, Diego was constantly creating forms. He was bothered a great deal trying to understand the physical reason for the forms and objects around him. Even at four years of age, he felt an irresistible sensation of inquisitiveness constantly urging him on. He had a passion for toys. He would try to work out in his mind their mechanism, and when the interest to possess a specific machine reached a point impossible to control, he would enter a shop, losing his timidity in the greater urge for the desire of possession and, with the authority of an adult, ask to be shown the toy. He would watch it function, asking questions over and over again until he could work it himself. He would purchase it, and returning home he would take it to pieces, and study it until he could grasp the theory of its mechanism. His mother often surprised him in acts of vivisections on little bugs and animals, which were unfortunate enough to fall into his hands. He performed these operations without any realization of cruelty, compelled only by an insatiable urge to see what it



was all about and how it worked. To him taking apart a toy, a bug or a plant, all seemed about the same thing.

At this time he never drew animals because he did not understand with clarity their internal functioning or articulation. His father gave him books on anatomy to quench his curiosity and Diego studied the atlas, books on physical phenomena, anatomy and biology. They became the center of interest in his life. He began to draw rocks and plants but he would not draw mountains because he, as yet, could not grasp the inner structure of them. Because of this he looked with intense curiosity at the shaft entrance of the mines, which could be seen even from his house appearing like great wounds on the side of the mountains. He begged to be taken to these mines so that he could investigate them for himself and thus be able to draw and paint them.

Señor Rivera was active at this time in helping the Indians obtain lands and to further this work he published a semi-weekly paper, the "Deomocrata." This brought down upon his head the further displeasure of his political opponents in the Conservative party. His wife became nervous and felt that his life was in danger, so, due to her urging, the family determined to go to Mexico City and establish a residence.

#### MEXICO CITY, 1892

The city brought to Diego the sensation of living in a suffocating atmosphere. Never has he overcome his feeling of repugnance at the thought of his life in Mexico City at that period. He stopped drawing. His disposition suffered and his character became most disagreeable. He was a completely changed child. He fought at the slightest excuse with other boys of his own age. He lost his appetite; his health suffered. He longed for his home life in Guanajuato. At this time a warm friendship grew up between him and his great aunt, whom he called Mama Totota. She had a beautiful collection of the arts of Mexico, a thing unusual at the time when little or no attention was paid to the value and beauty of the native Indian work. She possessed fine examples from all of the sections of the country of silver, jewelry, tortoise-shell, mercantiles, pottery, furniture, lacquer, embroideries, and retablos. For months Diego's interest was held by these things. He spent hours digging into mysterious chests of treasures. Then he was taken seriously ill with scarlet fever and typhoid. Scarcely had the dangerous period of these illnesses past, when he contracted diphtheria. During the convalescence, his great aunt Mama Totota read to him books on physics and chem-

istry and he made the simple experiments to which they referred. It was at this time that Diego learned what "books" meant. He devoted himself to the business of learning to read and in three months was quite able to understand what he found interesting.

When Diego was eight years old, 1894, he went to school for the first time. He had asked to be sent. He stayed only three months. His chief interest now was the making of mechanical toys and the reading of history. He found many books on military tactics, the reading of which loosed his imagination and he began drawing for the first time since his arrival in Mexico City, two years before. He drew only things relating to military tactics, plans for battles and masses of men. The men in Diego's family had always devoted themselves to military careers. For the first time in his life he went to many churches to study the religious paintings which he found there. His mother urged him to study art along accepted formal lines, anxious that he should do things in a conventional way. But this was very objectionable to Diego and he again stopped drawing and painting entirely. He continued, however, to study very seriously such subjects as physics, chemistry and mathematics. He was precocious and with the help that his father was able to give him at night he learned much more rapidly than would be expected. He was now about ten years old.

In 1897 he joined the night classes at the Preparatory School and the Academy of Bellas Artes. At this time Diego discovered for himself, at the age of ten, "picturesque Mexico," and he began suddenly to do landscapes in watercolors. He was enthused by the romanticism of the old convents, patios, houses and churches, and he reveled in all this, the only romantic period of his whole life. Now, too, he began his first visits to the National Museum in Mexico City studying its marvelous collection of sculpture from the early civilizations of Mexico.

#### POSADA

Another interest in Diego's life was that of the shop where Guadalupe José Posada worked, situated directly in front of the Academy of Bellas Artes. The two things of greatest importance to Diego at this time were the study of the engravings of Posada and the ancient sculpture of Mexico, which he had found in the National Museum. This was of such superb character and the collection so impressive that Diego had determined at the time he entered the Academy to become a sculptor but the course, as it was then taught at the





Posada Corrido "Santa de Cabora"

Academy, he found to be absolutely ineffective and in the worst European tradition.

But in the windows of Posada's shop were hung the examples of this great artist's work and in the upper right hand corner a fine rare engraving of Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment." Diego would stand for hours and gaze at this through the window. He watched Posada at his work. At last the latter noticed him and one day called him in. "Do you like those pictures?" he asked, indicating the pictures in the window. Diego replied enthusiastically, "Indeed I like them all." Posada then asked, "How is that

possible?" Diego replied, "Because they seem the same sort of thing to me." With that Posada led Diego to the window where the "Last Judgment" hung and took in his hand one of his own engravings, which illustrated a *corrido* or ballad and said, "Now will you please tell me where you can see any similarity in these two." Diego replied emphatically, "Can't you see that in one as in the other the figures seem to be moving—they move about together and they make one fear because they seem even more alive than the other people passing on the street; the figures are placed in the same manner in this engraving and also in yours?" "Imagine, little boy, there is no one else in all the world but you and me who knows this thing," replied Posada. From then on Diego, during the four years that he attended the Academy, seldom let a day pass without going to the shop of Posada.

Diego had the rare good fortune, while attending Bellas Artes, to have as instructor the brilliant Reboul, a superb painter himself and one of Ingres' greatest pupils. Another instructor, Velasco, was a wise and gifted person



and to a marked degree a brilliant instructor in the natural sciences. From him Diego learned perspective in all its possible applications. Even then this instruction was given from the standpoint of its possible use in mural work. That the foundation laid was a thorough one, no one familiar with Rivera's work in contemporary murals can question. Velasco never tried to control or influence Diego's inclination to impressionism. The teachings of Reboul and Velasco contributed greatly to his development as a painter. This instruction, together with his intense interest in the ancient arts of Pre-Colonial Mexico, which he studied every spare moment, gave Rivera the foundation upon which he has built his work today.

At the end of the first year at the Academy, Diego received the second award for the copy drawings he had made. He then selected, as was his privilege, his prize, a small box of oil paints, and he immediately began painting landscapes. It was customary at this time that at the Academy apprentices should learn to paint by copying other paintings, but Diego was permitted to work directly from the plaster cast. He also continued painting from nature. Thus passed another year until he was thirteen, when he again decided to be a sculptor. He started to model with ease. He became more enthusiastic about the study of form and plunged again into the study of anatomy. Diego gladly substituted for the instructor in demonstration dissections. He made many drawings of anatomy as well as carrying on his work in perspective with Velasco, who permitted him to study from the fine collection of drawings in perspective which he himself had made. It was about this time that Diego began to have his first misgivings regarding the structure of painting in general and he began a more concentrated study of the old and contemporary paintings to be seen in the school and in the Museum and to study the engravings and photographs of the paintings of the old masters. A sense of criticism had awakened in him.

The third year in the Academy (he was 14), he began to draw from living nude models in Reboul's studio. Reboul's criticism was interesting, "Well, little son, naturally, it can be seen you have drawn very little from the nude model. I *could* tell you that it is a dangerous thing to indicate forms so definitely but I do not want to discourage you from your intention to look at the form in the large. Please come to my studio tomorrow." He then turned to the other students, "What this little boy may do in a few years I do not know, but at least he looks carefully and he has something in his head," he said. Thus Diego had the good fortune to begin in Mexico City the studies of the classic teachers of



the French, Ingres and David. The following year Diego started to paint under the teaching of Felix Para, an old student of Reboul, and to him Diego owes the technical knowledge that he has of his profession as a painter.

In the Academy, Diego never seemed able to attain any satisfaction with his work until in 1902, when the Catalan painter Antonio Fabres, a fashionable artist according to the tastes of the Diaz régime, was made director of the Academy. This man's influence in the Academy led Diego to change from a docile and earnest pupil to a leader of a militant modern group. Fabres was said by his supporters to be in the nature of a progressive "new blood," a modern as against the academic Velasco, and Reboul. Actually the latter were the classicists in contradistinction to the academic, men of rare intellect and fine sensibility who had given great distinction to the Academy from 1860 to 1902. It is to their very careful training that Diego owes his theory and efficient knowledge of the technique of his profession.

By the end of the year Diego had led manifestations in the school and in the press against Fabres. These activities led to his dismissal from the school. He defended himself with such success that public opinion and popularity in the school itself forced the director to invite him to return. Diego, having justified himself, refused and went to the country to live and paint, traveling through the different parts of Mexico, sketching, painting with all his usual energy and interest. He painted only landscapes and a few figures during this time, 1902 (*Mexican Landscape*, No. 1).

During Diego's seventeenth year his enthusiasm for painting began to wane. A serious anxiety took possession of him regarding the problem of color values. Each shade seemed to mix on his palette. All seemed to him to be black and sour in color. He wanted to use pure colors. He disliked especially burnt sienna, which would produce a nausea, even an active nausea. He felt a great repugnance for all oil painting and for a short time he gave himself up to a preference for pastel. With his return to oil he began to like what he had formerly considered "dirty colors." This was in 1903 and for the first time in his life, at seventeen years of age, his paintings began to produce indignation in the people who saw them. He painted a portrait of his mother who, when she saw it, burst into tears, feeling convinced that he no longer loved her, but about which his more advanced companions were most enthusiastic. Soon, however, Diego became ill and for a time he was convinced that he was losing his eyesight. It was then the desire awakened in him to go to Europe. Recovering

he painted many canvases, and, with the help of Gerardo Murillo and Fernando Galva, arranged his first one-man exhibition. This was in 1907, when Diego was twenty. From the sale of these paintings he made enough to buy his ticket to Spain. The Governor of Vera Cruz, don Teodora Dehesa, a connoisseur interested in the work of Diego, promised to send him a small pension of three hundred francs a month to assist him in his studies in Europe.

#### SPAIN, 1907

Diego prepared to leave for Europe. On his way to Vera Cruz he stopped at Jalapa to make some sketches that he wanted to take with him and found himself in the city in the midst of a serious strike among the textile workers. He was deeply interested by the efforts of the workers. The strike terminated by the killing of many by the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz in 1907. He passed some weeks in Jalapa and then sailed from Vera Cruz. He worked sketching and painting on the boat. In Havana, strangely enough, two plain-clothes men appeared and until the end of the journey molested Diego constantly by their vigilance. Nor did they cease shadowing him for many days after his arrival in Madrid. This adventure put his nerves on edge and was the cause of throwing him into a romantic and infantile anarchism. In Madrid naturally he went to the museums to study the work of Velasquez. These canvases produced not one emotion in him. He worked for a year in the studio of Chicharro in Madrid, but was unsatisfied with everything he did. He disliked the contemporary painting of the country, neither did he want to copy the masters in the museums. He felt himself completely out of accord with his surroundings. During the years that have followed, never has he felt the contemporary art of any country to be so remote. Only El Greco and Goya, especially Goya of the "black manner" exalted him. His health suffered under the constant annoyance of living in surroundings that were esthetically distasteful to him. The delicate sensibility which he had in Mexico diminished. In its place was substituted an extreme realism that contained more and more a disagreeable mixture of audaciousness and weakness. Canvases became small and miniature in conception and without distinction. He had fallen into a style so without interest that one seeing these paintings could not but hope that such an artist would cease painting. If it had not been for the *line* of his paintings he would have given up. This period 1907 marks the lowest ebb of his work. When Spring came, he left for Paris.



#### FRANCE, 1909

In Spain Diego had felt himself entirely out of his environment, but he had gained the friendship of such men as Ramon Gomez de la Serna, the brilliant writer, and Señor del Valle y Inclan.

Early in March, 1909, Diego reached Paris. He went to live in the Latin Quarter in the Hotel du Suisse and began the life of little work and much play as do so many of the newly arrived in that city. But contrary to his experience in Spain, he adapted himself to his surrounding. He had always devoted a greater part of his time to drawing and painting and his present life was a distinct departure. Getting to bed at dawn, joining in the groups of Montparnasse, following the exhibitions and taking part in the political and social discussions of the students of the Beaux Arts, over the theories of Sinn Fein, Communism and other movements was new adventure. His mind received so many new impressions, was occupied to such an extent, that he worked little and badly. Growing restless at this state of affairs, he began to interest himself strongly in Impressionism and Cubism, the then felt "extreme" painting of the day, but his overwhelming timidity persisted and kept him from mingling freely with people or seeking new friendships. On the other hand, there existed a desire to express personally his own reaction to modern painting and create his own work. He began to think of the possibility of combining these new impressions regarding painting which he had acquired in Europe with certain fundamental techniques which were the basis of his work in Mexico. It was a period of wavering.

#### BELGIUM

At this time, 1919, Diego went to Belgium. It happened to him, as to all other young Americans of North and South, who find themselves strangers in Europe and who have developed outside the European tradition, that they cannot grow deep roots in this foreign soil. The environment in which they work is not of their own understanding, and though they try desperately to find what is appropriate for themselves, they are not satisfied with themselves or their work. In the research regarding impressionism that Diego had made, he did not accomplish or find a natural medium for himself. It resulted in forcing himself into a painful effort to produce painting with little character or value during the months he spent in Paris and the following ones in London in 1909.

#### ENGLAND

He went to England to study the work of Turner and other English painters, working there during the Summer and Autumn of 1909. In London he did not paint but he drew and sketched, especially in the industrial sections of the city around the docks. He returned to Paris in November, 1909.

During the season of 1910, in Paris, Diego exhibited with the Independents a group of canvases indifferent in character but which clearly showed the mental distress he was undergoing and how desperately he was trying to clarify and stabilize his mental approach to his work. His feeling of unhappiness and dissatisfaction continued. Again he felt a strong disinclination to mingle or talk with people, but feeling that he must, he went to the night classes at Montparnasse. Among his friends were Russian exiles, Frenchmen, people of all types, who were frequently on the list of those hunted by the police.

Gradually, a certain animation returned to him—he had a desire to work. In painting, now only technical problems took up his time. Day and night he studied composition—the organization of the works of the masters of sculpture, painting and architecture. Whenever he discovered a new harmonic, or a new mechanism of composition, he felt new life, meaning and interest. Little by little the study of construction of these works brought him a feeling that he was beginning to realize and build a foundation. His Russian friends, restless outcasts, insisted that his restlessness was but natural; that there was a change impending in the social order of the universe, and that it was consciously or unconsciously affecting every one. They referred to it as the second order of things. All of this had a profound influence on Diego. The fundamental structure of painting man's emotions in the act of living and accomplishing this great social change that was coming concerned him. For historical material he began to search the past and in returning met again his old self, and with it what he had learned from the ancient plastic arts of his native Mexico.

#### CÉZANNE

In February, 1910, he saw an exhibition of Cézanne's and the impression was such that it gave him, after he spent a day in the studio, a nervous fever. Arriving at his home desperately ill, his friends called a doctor. He diagnosed Diego's very high temperature as produced entirely by a severe nervous shock. The work of Cézanne had opened up for Diego the possibilities in modern art.



He became almost fanatical in his admiration for his painting. One day, walking by the gallery of Ambroise Vollard, he saw in the window two canvases by Cézanne. This was about 9:30 in the morning. At midday when Vollard came out for lunch, Diego was still peering in at the window. When Vollard returned to his gallery about two in the afternoon, Diego was still there. Vollard looked severely at Diego and slammed the door forcibly. He took away the paintings from the window and substituted two more by Cézanne. In a few minutes he took away those and put two more in the window, pretending to be unconscious of Diego's presence. He repeated this operation until nine o'clock in the evening, at which hour, mopping his forehead with his handkerchief, he turned out the lights of his gallery. For this reason one of the persons for whom Diego has the deepest affection and admiration is Ambroise Vollard.

Diego frequented all of the galleries from then on where he studied the paintings of Picasso, Derain, Matisse and van Gogh.

During the months of 1910, which Diego passed in Paris, until June, he did nothing more than study the works of the masters, whom he had so newly learned to admire and think of what and how he might paint in Mexico in an environment where he would feel at ease. He took a trip to Brittany in the Spring of 1910. The paintings there show frankly the influence of the French Barbizon School.

At the end of June, 1910, Diego took steps to return to Mexico, driven by a feeling of anxiety. He was anxious to be near and a part of the life of his own people in Mexico. They had been the subject of many discussions among the young revolutionary Russians who were Diego's friends in Paris. These men he found easy to get along with although his great personal timidity had begun to hamper the progress of his friendships and his association with such men as Picasso, Matisse and Derain, for whom he felt such sincere admiration.

#### MEXICO, 1910

Diego left Paris in June, 1910, returning by way of Spain and arrived in Mexico City October 2nd of the same year. He prepared his 2nd one-man exhibition from the work he had done in Spain, France, Belgium, and England (1907-8-9-10). The exhibition was held in the school of Bellas Artes in Mexico and was opened by Donna Carmen Romero Rubio de Díaz, the wife of the President. The exhibition in general was lamentable, made up, as it was, of



paintings without character, which had lost the good qualities of his early work in Mexico. The exhibition was a typical example of the complete disaster that can overtake a young and promising artist from America who seeks to "learn to paint" by going to Europe. But from a social standpoint it was a great success. Practically all of the paintings were sold. The Academy bought a group and the older persons who recall that period of social life point with pride at these paintings and sigh with regret at the mention of his frescoes. This exhibition opened in November, 1910. On that very day the revolution broke. The terrific and tragic struggle for political regeneration awakened new thoughts and emotions. He saw his country with new eyes. Events took on new aspects and emotions which later were to be the rich foundation from which he could draw material for the great frescoes that he has since painted. He painted hardly at all during this revolutionary period, but what he absorbed at this time has proven ample material for the last ten years of almost super-human production. He did, however, paint two large landscapes and when he returned to Europe in October of 1911 he took these with him. They hung in the Autumn Salon, passing unnoticed in the modest place which they occupied. However, it gave Diego a feeling of slight security that he was again in small measure beginning to paint. He painted in Catalan until December of 1911, when he did his first landscapes in *pointillisme*. In these landscapes the construction and the tone were scrupulously developed, retaining a purity of color within the solid structure that had the quality of mosaic. He was almost frightened by the depth of his desire to construct these paintings in such a way as to satisfy the emotions that he felt. These were his first paintings



Landscape, TOLEDO, 1912





*Adoration of the Shepherds, 1913*

work of Greco. Thus Diego reasoned that it was preferable to study the painting of Greco direct, if one wished to understand and utilize cubism. (Greco's influence is shown in the landscape of Toledo [page 21] painted in 1912.) This was a very serious error for Diego to make. He was working entirely from intellectual attitudes now and this produced a new setback. He fell into imitating. It was at this time that he started the *Adoration of the Shepherds*. However, he suspended the painting before finishing it, desiring to realize something with more reality, but he only succeeded in falling back into the defects of his earlier work in Spain—canvases without unity.

He returned to Paris in the Autumn of 1912, exhibiting with the Independents. Through this exhibition he met many of the modern painters, but Diego wanted to continue step by step in his studies until he reached the goal of establishing cubism in his work through his own effort and understanding. He was entirely in accord with the movement. The appearance of the canvases he had brought from Toledo in this Paris environment clarified his point of view

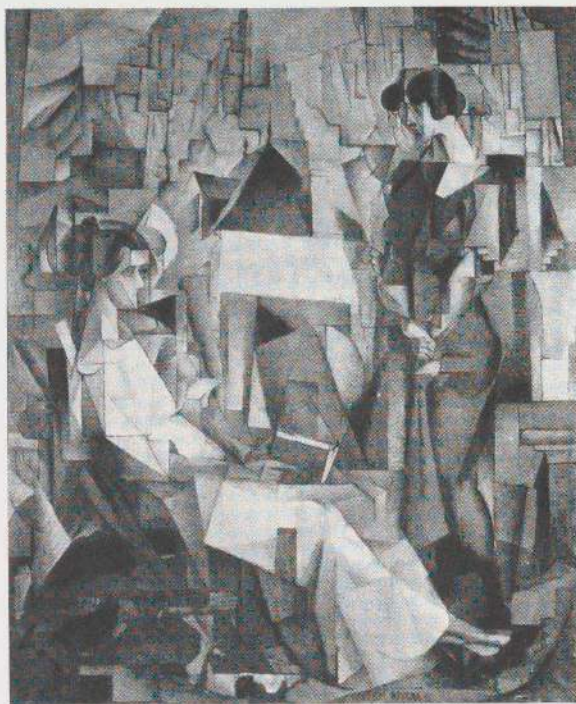
after his experience in the revolution in Mexico. The contact with the people and the earth of his native land had brought back again his sensitivity and his joy in painting. He soon felt, however, the necessity of making clear in a more profound way the plastic expression, urging the element of forms in an analogous manner, to the element of colors within the composition itself. He felt that painting should indicate creative reality more than the physical reality, and he turned his interest to cubism. Unfortunately, he had believed that the root of cubism was in the work of Greco, and that Cézanne's work in turn had the greater part of its origin in the



and made him realize distinctly the backward step he had taken and the penalty he had paid for having ignored his own instinct and listened to artificial reasoning. In Paris he was offered a financial guarantee if he would agree to paint in this pointillist manner for a few years, but in spite of the temptation to accept an offer that brought with it a certain amount of financial security, Diego could not accept. He returned to Toledo and resumed work on the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, which he had left unfinished. He tried to rectify his error on this canvas and to carry it through, re-working the composition, trying to make it simple and solid. However, it constitutes possibly the first instance and indication of Diego taking his first step on the path that he was to follow in the ensuing years. He returned to Toledo with the idea of studying Greco as he believed an understanding of his dynamic construction, color, form and movement would help him reach the point in modern painting that he was striving for. Finishing the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Spring 1913, he started to work with greater facility. The canvases he produced constituted undoubtedly the first period of his work that begins to have value. In them he endeavors to express synchronized movement of forms, sometimes employing a model expressing the contrast of movement in planes in its relation simultaneously to neighboring forms, comparing in that contrast the relative values that follow one another, of the component parts.

He worked in Toledo until September, 1913, at which time he took to Paris his canvases for the Autumn Salon. Among them was *The Crock* (No. 2). This painting contains qualities of composition and construction that recall the modern Spanish school. Without wishing it, Diego found that the result was more reminiscent of Zuloaga than Greco. This realization stimulated him to try from then forward to work entirely from his own observations and not through any intermediary interpretation. After this he painted *Two Women Seated* (page 24), December, 1913. In the Independents Show of 1914, Diego exhibited two paintings, one of which was the portrait of the writer Letchetz. It can be said that his work at this time was as a pupil of Picasso. The other painting exhibited was the *Two Women Seated*. These paintings produced a certain amount of disturbance among the cubist painters because they found them to be in the mood of earlier cubism. In spite of this, never before had Diego's work shown so much personality. It indicated its actual parentage in ancient Mexican art. At this time Apollinaire wrote "Diego is not negligible." Diego continued painting. His work increased in interest. He had a small but furious popularity among the Mont-





*Two Women Seated, 1913*

parnasse group, but more important than anything else, Diego became, at this time, an intense student of Picasso, whose work he studied.

Some of Picasso's young friends told him of what Diego was doing and what enthusiasm he felt for Picasso's work. Picasso became interested and Diego was invited to his studio. "I feel hesitant about intruding and would certainly never dream of going," Diego replied. Picasso then sent word that if Diego would not come to see him he would go without invitation to Diego's studio. Diego was as timid as usual but he preferred going to see Picasso rather than have Picasso come to him and he went in

a state of nervousness that was almost comic. Upon his arrival he and Picasso began a discussion that lasted without interruption until 3 A.M. Picasso went to Diego's studio the following day and examined with interest Diego's canvases, of which there were a great number. Thus Diego became in a very real sense a friend and student of Picasso.

During the months of January and February, 1914, Diego painted, among other paintings, *The Awakener* (No. 8), canvases on which he experimented in the differentiation of textures—smooth surfaces in marked contrast to rough ones. During the month of May, 1914, Diego had his first Paris one-man exhibition.

#### WAR

July of 1914 came and in the midst of the excitement of the declaration of war a group of artists went to Majorca, among them Diego and the sculptor, Leipschitz, of whom Diego had made a cubist portrait. The day they sailed from Barcelona war was declared between Austria and Russia. By the time they ar-

rived at Majorca the European conflict had begun and little by little the members of the group left to join their respective armies in their various countries. Diego painted freely, entirely at liberty to respond to his own feelings, expressing in his canvases the sensation that the country produced and bringing into them an orderliness and construction that had less and less of cubism in it. *Landscape, Majorca* (No. 4), is of this period. The color, too, was becoming distinctly Mexican. Diego left Majorca and returned to Madrid in the Fall.

#### FIRST EXHIBITION OF MODERN ART IN SPAIN, 1914

In conjunction with Marie Blanchard, Diego had an exhibition in Madrid in 1914, which was the first showing of modern paintings in Spain. It produced a tremendous scandal. The introduction to the catalogue was written by Ramon Gomez de la Sierna, the brilliant modern Spanish writer. There were at the time a number of modern painters in Spain, including Marie Laurencin, who bought one of Diego's paintings. After the exhibition, Diego continued to work out his ideas of the simplification of cubism. The canvases painted in Madrid, far from the influence of Paris, took on a character more and more personal and when he returned with them to Paris, in 1915, they created another veritable avalanche of protest. The Parisians then complained that the paintings were too exotic in character.

#### 1915

In 1915, a few days after Diego had arrived in Paris, Picasso returned. He had heard about Diego's latest work and went to see it immediately. He approved completely the research that Diego's paintings revealed. He advised Diego and assisted him in selling some of his paintings. The discussions between the Cubists and Diego became less acute, but others criticised his work on the ground that it was now too hard and Mexican, too cold and too German.

#### PARIS, 1916

The terrific nervous tension under which everyone lived during this time of war, including the men who, because of personal convictions had escaped the life in the trenches, where so many of their brothers were dying, produced an atmosphere that accelerated the evolution of Diego's ideas about painting, making it more real—more radical than it had hitherto been, more in contact with



the new elements in his life. His contemplation of these new, vast, and significant movements drove him further and further away from sympathy with the super-esthetic minorities. This period, however, though difficult and nerve-racking to everyone, was the richest in learning for Diego, for during this time he was really learning to paint. The nervous tension of the war had reduced everyone's vitality, but in this painful period, in a personal sense, he was able to define, clarify, and finally establish his ideas of composition.

Diego wanted to introduce into cubism construction that he himself had striven to develop, the result of an analysis during six or seven years studying organization in composition. The result was disturbing. The work thus weakened fell, a wreck between two esthetics. His individual painting lost much of the quality that it had had in its earlier cubist form. His love for the sensual texture of everything had grown enormously. One day he went with some other painters from Rosenberg's Gallery to make a round of the exhibitions. They passed along the rue La Boétie in front of a fruit shop where, on a huge table, was spread an enormous number of peaches of marvelous color and texture. The sensation that this fruit produced in Diego was immediate and deep. The same intense emotion that he had felt that morning when he had first seen the paintings by Cézanne came back over him. It created a tremendous desire in him, a feeling of profound necessity to find a way to paint so that he could transmit these qualities to canvas in such a manner as to evoke the same emotions aroused by viewing the natural group. From that moment he began to strive for an expression of sensuality in his canvas. Within himself there grew a greater conflict than he had ever before experienced, a conflict between the expression of this sensuality and that of the highly developed intellectualism of cubism.

However, the important factor for Diego was the spectacle of life at this moment—these years of 1916–17 in Paris. The great war, the colossal mobilization of men, the callousness with which war destroyed them, the manner in which it transformed them from millions of individuals into an amazing unity under military discipline—he felt it to be a false doctrine of patriotism which caused this holocaust. Art at the moment seemed dormant, stunned.

Some of his old friends in Paris, an exiled group of Russians, were preparing with feverish activity that Revolution which has since changed the face of things on one-sixth of the earth. Those among them who were friends of Diego were sure that art, as they hoped to express it, could be a vital thing



to the masses—could be “popular.” Diego disagreed with them. He felt that they must experience the emotion of an esthetic and a mental reaction of pleasure in art forms. That they required it as a necessary part of human happiness. That it was further necessary to construct art in such way in the new order of things that they were planning in Russia, that it should nourish this esthetic sense of the masses, as the sensual beauty of the peaches had nourished an esthetic hunger in Diego. He felt the necessity of a painting containing all the technical acquisitions of modern art but simply expressed. Finally Diego felt the necessity of the encouragement of mural painting. He saw that in its very nature it was much more a part of life and in contact with it than any other painting. But in those days life ran more swiftly for him than ever before and not finding within himself the means necessary to accomplish or accelerate this work, he went again to Cézanne, 1917, to study more intensely than ever before. The small study, *Back Yards* (No. 57), shows the influence of the latter. But his paintings of this period did not attain the realization that he had so ardently hoped for. There are reminiscences and reflections of David, of Holbein, and above all echoes of Cézanne, Renoir and Henri Rousseau. He had again lost his personal characteristics and his Mexicanism.

In 1919 he was brought to a point where he faced the situation frankly and he determined deliberately to kill everything in his work which was not his own and to comply with the necessity of finding his own way, for, indeed, at the end of the year, he was in a state of most complete esthetic poverty. In 1918 his Russian friends had offered him the opportunity which, undoubtedly, would have yielded ways and means to experiment further in trying to develop his personal expression but something compelled him to look towards the Americas again at this time. Perhaps it was the war. Whatever it was, he lost his first opportunity to go to Russia.

#### ITALY, 1920

Diego went to Italy and this experience became the means of liberation, preparing the way to a complete definition and development of his personality later in his work in 1921 in Mexico. His Italian trip was the occasion for study of plastic art in its relation to life, architecture, painting and sculpture.

The example of the place of art in the contemporary life of Italy enabled him to clarify the reactions he had accumulated in his years in Europe, to rectify and

correct these impressions so that there came to him almost for the first time a degree of personal tranquility. He received another call to go to Russia at the end of 1919. He did not go but returned to Paris.

In Italy he had seen the frescoes of the Renaissance. He had watched the populace in the grip of Fascist and Communist conflicts. He now began to think and plan in terms of murals. He did more than four hundred sketches. The landscapes and the quality of light were so like Mexico that he felt at home and in his imagination he even began painting frescoes in Mexico. He became more and more convinced that it was absolutely necessary for artists to create a form other than the sophisticated art of Paris to respond to the demand of the Revolutionary workers in Russia, and in general to the new order of things in the world, and that the logical place for this art, understandable and belonging to the populace, was on the walls of public buildings. He left for Mexico in August, 1921.

#### FIRST MURAL ENCAUSTIC, MEXICO, 1921

Once again in Mexico, his eyes and his sensibilities were alert as never before. He was in a constant state of wonderment. Intoxicated with the beauty of the country, he was so moved, so interested, that for a time it did not occur to him to paint. The Revolution that he had seen begun by Zapata was bankrupt, a failure which he had predicted or rather felt to be inevitable, when he had left Mexico in 1911. Ideas for historical painting flooded his mind. He felt the necessity to paint frescoes and he procured, almost by force, permission to paint some of the governmental walls in Mexico City. His first mural, an encaustic, was started in December, 1921, in the Amphitheater of the Preparatory School. Diego took the initiative in forming the Syndicate of Painters at this time and had as helpers and apprentices many of the younger painters, who also did various frescoes in the Preparatory School and later helped in the frescoes in the Ministry of Education. He made numerous sketches for murals for the Amphitheater in the Preparatory School with direct execution. But this part of his work served to demonstrate what he should not do in the future; it was experimental. It was, nevertheless, an escape from all the confusion of his studies in Europe.

His work in the amphitheater served to awaken in some of the younger painters in Mexico a spirit of animation and enthusiasm for monumental painting. Diego utilized the sketches which he had done in the various parts of Mexico,



as well as those made in Italy. They also served the purpose for study for the other workers.

The subject that Diego had determined to use in the murals of the Amphitheater was Mexico, her social, economic and political problems. This subject, because of its familiarity to him, he felt should liberate him and give him a facility in progressing with it in much the same manner that a well-paved road facilitates the progress of an automobile. It was a seething, vital, turbulent period and mural painting was the medium most adequate to express it. But the painting naturally presented difficulties of a technical nature with which Diego was not familiar and for this reason the technique of his first encaustic mural was inferior to his canvases and drawings of the period.

The encaustic mural in the Preparatory School has a character which recalls to a great extent some of the mural paintings of Italy, even though, of course, the expression is Mexican. The finished mural is inferior to the first designs. Diego saw that mural expression has no equivalent in small scale and that the plastic value is not the same when it is placed on the wall as when it appears on paper. For this reason, in subsequent work, he did not again make cartoons in the scale of their execution, except when he could do so directly on the wall on which he was to paint.

For a time the young painters were strongly influenced by the work in the Amphitheater of the Preparatory School. The monumental idea took possession of them. There was an almost comic anxiety to create things that were much alike and the less the distance from which to view the figures the larger they seem to make them. Some of the figures painted by these young followers of Diego in the Preparatory School were impossible to see from any point because one could not get at a sufficient distance from the wall, due to the narrowness of the corridors.

#### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION FRESCOES, 1923

In March, 1923, Diego started his first true fresco. It was in the forward patio of the Ministry. Profiting by his experience in the Preparatory School, he determined to use encaustic, but Vasconcelos, Minister of Education, wanted the work done as rapidly as possible. Diego had made few experiments in fresco, but the material employed in the Preparatory School had not satisfied him. In that work a certain amount of cement had been mixed with sand and lime

and though the surface obtained was good, the mixture dried quickly and obliged the painter to employ colors mixed with a great deal of water, which gave as a result a lack of solidity and a quality of tone which make the fresco appear like a large watercolor, weak and discolored. In the first fresco that Diego painted in the Ministry, he did not obtain a perfect adhesion of the color after the first six hours of work. It was because of this that he decided to employ the ancient Mexican nopal process with which some painters had been experimenting. If the nopal juice (from a specie of cacti) could be successfully used as a binding material, it would permit the rapid covering of a great surface. As time passed it was found, however, that the juice of the nopal produced opaque stains due to a decomposition of the organic matter and so after much experimenting with different media Diego returned to the traditional Italian fresco technique. This process he used in the painting of the frescoes at Chapingo and in all of the remaining panels of the Ministry of Education.

Diego decided that in place of painting scenes from the unsuccessful bourgeois revolution and the actual counter-revolution, he would choose as subject matter a revolutionary program based on the popular aspirations expressed in the *corridos*, or ballads sung by the peasants and workers. The sentiments involved are social and political and the frescoes have been a storm center from the very moment of the completion of the first panel. On the part of the peasants and workers there has always been an intense interest shown in the work, in the subject matter and in Diego personally.

Diego was then a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. They kept very close vigilance over him, and when they formed their block in Mexico, the delegates in great numbers came from various parts of the country, bringing an expressed mandate to nominate him as their candidate for the Presidency of the Republic. This great mass of peasants upheld the candidacy of Diego with much vehemency. They did not know him personally nor did they know his political program. They knew nothing of him except what they had seen and what they had known of him through his frescoes. They continued to look upon Diego as their ally, hoping and trusting that he would find a solution to some of their problems. They nominated him Speaker of their Committee.

#### CHAPINGO, JUNE, 1923

In the frescoes in the Agricultural School of Chapingo, Diego was able to realize a work much more complete technically than that in the Ministry of Edu-



cation. Conditions were better; there was an abundance of materials, better pay and more helpers.

The frescoes were started June, 1923. Diego painted at Chapingo as well as at the Ministry during this period. There were numerous interruptions but the work in both buildings was completed in August, 1927.

The work on the fresco in the Ministry progressed amid the violent protest of what was called "the public" in Mexico, a protest raised because of the treatment of the political situation as portrayed in the frescoes and the "modern" manner of the painting. Every one felt it incumbent upon himself to launch anathemas against the painters, especially against Diego. Even the newspapers, without exception, published daily articles against him. In the midst of all these attacks, the students of the Preparatory School of Jurisprudence started an offensive against the murals by defacing and scratching the frescoes, mutilating them in a serious manner. The difficulties under which the painters worked at this time were many.

#### PEASANT SUPPORT, 1927

In 1927 several thousand peasants mobilized under the banner of the Agrarian Party and other left wing groups, including the Communists, to put General Obregon in the Presidential chair. They marched through the streets of Mexico and Diego, passing the Avenue Madero, where there were several thousand gathered, heard a voice call "Diego, here at last are your paintings." Traditionally it was natural that Diego should be in sympathy with their cause because of the affection and cordiality the workers felt for him. He was invited to join their group and accepted with the idea of offering to put his painting at the service of the workers. For this reason also he accepted an invitation from the Commission of Public Education of Soviet Union to go to Moscow with the idea of arriving there for the tenth anniversary of the inauguration of the Russian Revolution. He left Mexico on the 1st of September, 1927.

#### RUSSIA, 1927—PAINTING VERSUS POLITICS

Diego arrived in Moscow in time for the celebration November 7, 1927, following the invitation and the urging of his Communist friends, who wanted him to paint in Russia.

There was no solicitation on Diego's part nor on the part of the Soviet Gov-

ernment for him to work in Russia, but this did not lessen in him the tremendous emotional experience of this spectacle of a new world. Diego painted and sketched. It was at this time that he did the sketch book of forty-five water-colors (No. 65) that give such a vital portrayal of his impressions of May Day. Other paintings (*Russian Soldier*, No. 60 and *Moscow, 7th of November*, No. 33) show his reaction to the Soviet régime.

At this time the delegation from America drew up a petition to the Soviet Government to permit Diego to paint a fresco before he should leave Russia. But though Lunacharsky, the Commissioner of Public Education, recalled to the attention of the full assembly of delegates that he had known Diego in Paris, a year passed before Diego was invited by the members to paint in the Metallurgical Club of Moscow and in the "Red Army House." Unfortunately he could not start the work because of the impossibility of painting frescoes in the cold Moscow winter.

#### MEXICO, 1928

Diego left Moscow in June, 1928, stayed a month in Berlin, and returned to Mexico in August, 1928. He began immediately to work in the second patio on the third floor of the Ministry. Just at this time the assassination of Obregon occurred. There was great political unrest. Carrying out of public works became uncertain, but Diego finished the frescoes on the third floor and began work on the National Palace frescoes in May, 1929. At this time he also painted the Salubridad frescoes.

The political situation now grew more tense. A presidential campaign was in full swing. Diego was the President of the B. O. C. "or workers and peasants block." Differences of opinion made dissension between Diego and the Central Committee of the Communist party in Mexico. The Central Committee of the Communists hunted for a pretext to expel him. They intentionally misconstrued his having accepted the direction of the National School of Fine Arts and the fact that he was at the time painting the stairway and the fresco of the National Palace. He was "trading with the enemy." But Diego having accepted the commission to do the stairway of the Palace with the full sanction of the Central Committee felt perfectly justified in finishing the fresco that he had started. He had also been invited by the student body of the Academia de Bellas Artes to become their director; they having gained their freedom from governmental supervision were no longer under the Department of Education. Diego



had accepted because he was convinced it was important for the development of the plans in relation to the Fine Arts. The actual reason for the Central Committee hunting a pretext to expel Diego lay in the deep fundamental differences of principle respecting the policy of Communism in Mexico. The ensuing events have confirmed the justice of Diego's view-point. Diego knew, however, that no matter how many arguments and accusations he vanquished, there would still be more and for the first time he felt a terrific conflict between two vital things in his life, his membership in the Communist party and his life and career as a painter. He had believed that if he had any use or value at all to the Communist party, it was precisely because he was a fresco painter. In consequence if the party instead of using him as a painter created difficulties around his development as a painter, he had better choose then and there between painting and the party. He had offered his painting to be used to benefit the masses. But he was painter first, last and always.

Diego painted directly and simply with great power the Story of the Revolution in a way that the rank and file of the masses understood perfectly. Many might disagree as to whether it was good work or bad but none failed to understand what the painting said. Diego, confronted with the necessity for choosing between his party and his art, pondered the matter deeply. He acknowledged to himself that in reality he had changed little since he first began to draw pictures in his studio of his childhood days in Guanajuato. His real interest and his greatest happiness was to paint and sketch the greatest number of hours possible. He acknowledged to himself that the great political economic movements of the day interested him in their human aspect and as vital subject matter for his painting. He would have asked nothing better of life than to paint frescoes that might help in "Liberating the Masses." But he also felt himself perfectly within his rights to prefer to paint instead of making political speeches. Finally a vote was taken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Diego was expelled.

Some weeks after this Diego was informed that Ambassador Morrow was contemplating a gift to the City of Cuernavaca and that he was considering the advisability of asking Diego to paint a fresco. Diego welcomed the opportunity for many reasons and accepted the commission. Ambassador Morrow offered him absolute liberty for the selection of his subject and the manner in which it was to be treated. He started work in December, 1929, in the Palace of Cortez. The fresco was to cover the three walls of the corridor, the fourth side being entirely open to a view of the valley. He chose as his theme the Conquest of

Mexico. For the first time in Mexico, Diego's work was to be adequately paid for and he was able to prepare for it properly from the very foundation. He had everything necessary. The painting of the fresco caused great excitement and interest among the peasants and workers of the State of Morales. They came in pilgrimages to see this Story of the Conquest in fresco. The difficult problem of design was aggravated above all else by the proportion of the corridors, as the height of the wall was twice that of the width of the corridor. Diego created a background of landscape that would be common to the entire fresco, and which would help in giving unity in the composition. It would further permit him to put small figures on the highest portion of the wall near the ceiling, thus creating an illusion of vertical perspective that allowed him to conserve the horizontal plan of the fresco. This perspective of superimposed zones, owing to the short distances from which they must be viewed, gives a sensation of great depth. Thus this disposition of the design compensated for the distance at which the large figures in the first plane had to be viewed. The tonality of the frescoes changes in accord with the landscape that is to be seen from the loggia and the elements of the composition are in accord with those that compose the actual landscape. The view from the corridor is of overpowering importance, one of the most superb in the world. Looking at the panorama there is seen at the left the Pyramid of Teopanzolco and the fresco composition beginning at one end of the corridor has as its central motive a pyramid to correspond to the one to be seen in the real landscape. The calm and profound grays that are used contrast with black and white to sustain the shock otherwise felt between the fresco and the actual landscape of the city with its house and walls which are painted in such lively and brilliant colors. Diego's work had to be adapted to all of these circumstances and there had to be carried out a certain change in the geometrical constructive mediums which he had heretofore used. Three of the frescoes that Diego has painted in New York for his exhibition here are inspired by those at Cuernavaca and illustrate the technique and tonality which he used there.

#### SAN FRANCISCO, 1930

At the completion of the Cuernavaca fresco, Diego went to San Francisco where he was to paint a fresco in the Luncheon Club of the Stock Exchange (No. 111). Here new problems confronted him. Except for one hurried trip across the United States on his way to Europe, he had not previously visited the country.



The United States was for him a motive for new work; there was so much to see; so many impressions. From the first he liked California and Californians. The color of the landscape enchanted him with its mass of ochre, red and orange yellow but he liked the cities above all for the plan on which they were laid out. The industry of the orchards; masses of fruit trees and the factories to preserve the product interested him. In all of these elements he felt the possibility of creating something autonomous. He felt the urge to paint. The frescoes would contain the natural elements of America, employing for their language not the familiar elements of the picturesque and romantic, but elements, rigid and hard. Diego painted the frescoes in the Fine Arts Building of San Francisco and in Mrs. Stern's residence with an enthusiasm resulting from profound emotion. His sensations were now orderly and he adapted his eye to the new life and his lungs to the new air. He constructed the compositions with the same animation and happiness with which at three years of age he had drawn houses and mines.

Diego's very spinal column is painting, not politics. Every inclination of his life has led to painting. The political movement interested him because it was to him a vital part of contemporary life. We are living in a time of intensive upheaval and reconstruction. The great war loosed human emotions, creating new problems. Modern sciences have developed the possibility of international contacts and painting, Diego feels, in its formal sense on the canvas, has become the plaything of the super-sophisticated and the few. It has little to do with the ordinary problems of the masses of human beings throughout the world. To him it is the reason for the development of many "isms" that we find today, something to stimulate the jaded intellectualism of the leisured class; fed and pampered by the artists themselves. It has, he feels, developed to a point where it speaks now a language of interest and use to a very limited number. Such art has become perfectly cold; it has little to say to people who live simply and directly. But fresco used as Diego uses it has tremendous power in its simplicity—power to move and power to direct. It is of the past and of the future. It speaks a language of great purity and beauty, a simple language that all can understand.

FRANCES FLYNN PAINE

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## NOTES ON THE STYLE OF DIEGO RIVERA

Diego Rivera had the good fortune to begin his study of painting under the firm and exacting hand of the classical tradition. To this in part he owes his ability to survive the eclectic confusion of his student days abroad. His work divides itself mainly into three periods—the youthful days in Mexico, an apprenticeship in Europe terminating in an Italian journey, and a final period in Mexico after his return in 1921.

There are three dominant influences at work in the early Mexican period. From his earliest years he first had to understand the thing he drew—tree or hill, he must know what was “inside”—what lay under the surface. He rarely copied, he constructed. This fundamental element of his character was of more help than any other in guiding him safely through the wavering later years in Europe. Next in importance was the influence of two men, his drawing master, Reboul, a pupil of Ingres, and his friend, Guadalupe José Posada. Thus we find on one hand the restraining, exacting influence of the classical tradition and on the other an early social enthusiasm fired by an artist whose political drawings were famous.

The small, early *Landscape*, 1902 (No. 1) of this period shows little promise of the future power of the man, but there is a sturdiness about it not to be overlooked, a well-thought-through sense of form. It is of necessity much later, in the more mature period of 1918, that such masterly drawings as the *Still Life* (No. 82), the *Portrait* (No. 81), and the *Studies of Hands* (No. 89) indicate clearly how thorough had been Diego's early draughtsmanship.

The apprentice period in Europe, from 1907 to 1921 (there was a short return journey to Mexico in 1910), brought with it an interesting change. Europe proved troublesomely strange to this young Mexican and through the following years of experimentation there grew more and more in his mind a concern over his lack of understanding, frankly acknowledged to himself. In Spain he studied Greco's highly dynamic system of organization and while the view of Toledo (page 21) shows the influence of that Greek, *The Crock* (No. 2) reminds one more of Zuloaga with one reservation—such solidity, simplicity and beauty of drawing is not frequently combined in twentieth century Spanish painting.

Out of the contacts of this period—Henri-Rousseau (*Edge of the Forest*, No. 11), Renoir (the composition in the later *In the Vineyard*, No. 14), Picasso, Cézanne, the neo-impressionists, Greco, Goya—Greco, Cézanne and Picasso

contributed most to his work. His essays into Cubism were not wholly successful (*The Two Women*, 1913, page 24)—and to find a reason for this we must perhaps look to his later style. Form, for Diego, has always implied a flowing continuity (*The Grinder*, No. 17). Thus the somewhat arbitrary breaking up of this form into cubic units seems to him to savor too much of an intellectual game. In the *Two Women* the form is continuous and weakens the effect. His surest work in this phase is to be found in his less complicated canvases—*Eiffel Tower* (No. 7), and *The Awakener* (No. 8). How closely he retained his Mexican sense of color can be seen by comparing the latter (No. 8) with *The Canoe* (No. 46) of 1931. He drew gradually away from Cubism—*The Aqueduct* (No. 10)—and by 1918 we find him studying wholeheartedly the work of Cézanne, whose painting had long interested him (*Back Yards*, 1918, No. 57), the *Portrait of Elie Faure* (No. 12). The *Three Studies of Horses* (No. 86) greatly reminds one of Cézanne in the style of the penciling. But we also have at this time, as a reaction to Cubism, a series of amazingly proficient, realistic drawings—*Self Portrait* (No. 83) and *Still Life* (No. 82). The effect of this wavering European period was to direct Diego's mind to one conclusion. Sophisticated art had no vital importance, at least as he saw it, as an influential factor in a mass civilization. Thus he reasonably excused to his own satisfaction the confusion of this period.

He went to Italy in 1920, perhaps the most important event in his career. In Italy he saw the frescoes of the old masters and in these an art that he felt to be simple and direct, an art understandable to the people. It was the first European painting that reminded him in its directness of his boyhood years. From then on his style simplifies, clarifies. He made drawings after the masters—*Three Studies of Horses* (after Uccello), 1921 (No. 86)—and the frescoes of Giotto and the Byzantine mosaics claimed his close attention. Of this order we have an amazing series of drawings (Nos. 94 and 90). The studies of this period paved the way for such arbitrary later compositions as the *Bathers*, 1925 (No. 23), conflicting in no wise with Diego's love of ancient Mexican art, its early pottery and masks. The little *Head of a Boy* (No. 15) shows strongly the influence of the latter. Also in this period are the extremely simplified line drawings of which *Italian Town* (No. 95) is an example. This ability to indicate a plastic form by a single boundary line continues later in his Mexican landscape pencil sketches—*Landscape* (No. 123).

Cubism gave him greater ease in the arbitrary use of form. From Matisse,



Cézanne and Greco had come an increased facility of organization (Diego had from the first a strong plastic sense), and in the end Italy strengthened his conviction of the necessity of returning to simplicity and directness. In short, it justified what had long been in his mind, the right to rebel against a more sophisticated style. He returned to Mexico in 1921.

The work of the last period shows a steady development. Diego set his back to Europe and began to paint the Mexico he knew and felt. The canvases become gradually larger, influenced by the work now being done in fresco. The color, warm and glowing yet somewhat dulled in the early period, clears—*Flower Day* (No. 20)—and a strong plastic feeling, noticeable for its simple handling, returns—*The Grinder* (No. 17), *The Tortillera Maker* (No. 18). After a trip in 1930 to the tropical forests of Tehuantepec a cooler, fresher tonality appears. *The Rivals* (No. 44) and *The Canoe* (No. 46) have a brilliance lacking in the early paintings. The organization of form becomes frequently highly stylized, as in *The Canoe*. The simplicity of such painting as *The Balcony* (No. 19) shows a wide departure from the European period while this same directness and simplicity lends to the children's portraits a gentle awkwardness completely convincing. Of this later period the *Portrait of John Dunbar* (No. 43) has plainly a strong plastic feeling closely akin to Cézanne but far from imitative of that master's work.

Since the Renaissance no one has perhaps equaled Diego in the mastery of fresco painting. It is his greatest work. Here one feels the culmination of his direct simplicity—the tremendous sense of form, the sure, forceful drawing, the flow in the interplay of movement, the purity of color. The tragedy of the *Liberation of the Peon* depends upon no false dramatic push. Rather has it a tempered moderation—a suggestion of the slow inevitable movement of fate, even a quietness of expression which adds so immeasurably to the emotional appeal. For while this work is surely in the tradition of the XIV century, it carries on—it does not follow. Diego gives to these frescoes the vitality of a great artist who feels so keenly the problems of his native Mexico.

J. A.





## FRESCO PAINTING

Because of its rather complicated nature the technique of fresco painting is perhaps less well understood by the layman than many of the other arts. True fresco painting may be said to be the application of earth colors, oxides of iron and manganese on a surface of wet plaster. The color is thus incorporated in the plaster when it dries.

In the present exhibition it was necessary to meet the problem of a portable fresco. For this reason the frescoes are done on plaster applied to a base of steel netting supported on a steel framework rigidly braced. This method allows the fresco to be set into the wall in sections giving the appearance of being *in situ*, or to be moved from one place to another. The frames are carefully made to guard against any possibility of bending and if steel is not used a heavily galvanized iron must be substituted so that rust will not work through the damp plaster to contaminate the surface of the fresco. This method of building up a fresco with units of matched steel frames, if the area be very large, is an important one in the development of a modern method of fresco painting for it permits the use of this medium in buildings which are relatively temporary since the destruction of the building, the fresco being movable, does not necessarily mean the destruction of the fresco.

The first step in fresco painting is the preparation of the plaster. The sand which is used in the plaster must be absolutely free from salt as salt ruins the color. Furthermore, it must be free from fungus of any kind which, unless this care is observed, sometimes breaks out in a growth on the surface of the finished work. Equal care must be exercised in the selection of the lime. Lime which has been coal burnt cannot be used as the sulphur from the coal may contaminate the lime and cause discoloration of the fresco. The best lime for the purpose is wood burned lime which has been slaked for at least three months. No trace of activity must remain in the lime as this will have a disastrous effect upon the color.

The plaster is applied to the wall or, in this case, to the frame. A minimum of three coats of plaster is necessary. There are two basic coats. The first coat is the rough coat, the second coat is called the "brown coat." The third coat is the thin finishing coat. Gradation from the rough first coat to the smooth finishing coat may be made, however, through as many as eight successive stages. The finishing coat in the frescoes shown in this exhibition is composed of lime

and marble dust, the latter being used in place of fine sand. Marble dust gives a white, pearly texture to the surface.

Rivera in these frescoes has followed his more recent practice of making only small studies for the design. He has done this to allow a freer change in design upon enlargement. The small sketch is first enlarged to scale on paper to the size of the section to be covered by the fresco. The paper is then pierced with fine holes along the lines of the drawing. The pierced paper is then placed over the surface of the "brown coat" and the outline of the design is dusted onto the plaster by the use of colored chalk which sifts through the small perforations in the design, leaving on the "brown coat" the enlarged drawing. The artist then freely corrects or modifies this transferred drawing seeing it for the first time in relation to surrounding detail and in relation to the limits of the particular section of the fresco. When the design on the "brown coat" has been corrected and enlivened to his satisfaction a careful tracing of this finished drawing is made on tracing paper.

The artist is now ready for the final stage of the plastering. Since he can work upon the plaster only while it contains a certain amount of moisture, *only that section of the design on the "brown coat" is covered with plaster which he can complete during the day.* This area depends in part upon the rapidity with which the plaster dries. It also depends upon a factor of design, the necessity of bringing the day's work to completion at a place where the new plaster of the following day can be pieced on without this joining appearing in the fresco. In other words, the design itself must be so thought out that certain lines in it can be used as boundary lines in plastering. The units of these finishing coats of plaster must so join together that their joints do not cut plain painted surfaces and thus become conspicuous divisions in the finished work. A section, then, of the design on the "brown coat" is covered with the thin finishing coat of wet plaster. Since this plaster covers the design the drawing is re-traced upon the wet plaster from the tracing which has previously been made. This re-tracing is done with a sharp point which grooves the wet plaster lightly along the lines of the *drawing*. The surface is now ready to paint upon. It is needless to state that the degree of moisture in the plaster must be carefully judged before the painting starts.

Rivera in the frescoes which are here exhibited follows the practice of blocking in the drawing and modeling the high-lights first in blacks and grays. When these accents have been carried to the proper point the color is applied.

The palette of the fresco painter is of necessity a limited one. In the main it



must consist of earth colors, of oxides of iron and manganese. These colors are ground on a marble slab with a small amount of water to form a paste. They are then applied with a brush moistened in water much as watercolors are applied.

The palette which Rivera has used in these frescoes consists of the following colors:

Vine black. Calcined seeds of  
grapes.

Ultramarine

Cobalt blue

Emerald green

Burnt sienna

Almagre Morado. A Mexican earth;  
a red oxide of iron

Pozzuoli. An Italian red earth.

Dark ochre

Raw sienna

Yellow ochre

J. A.





## DIEGO RIVERA: CHRONOLOGY

Parents married	1882
Diego born, Guanajuato, December 8, Mexico	1886
Twin brother died	1889
Diego started to paint, 3 years of age	1889
Went with family to live in Mexico City	1892
Attended first school, 8 years of age	1894
Entered Bellas Artes, night school	1896
Met Guadalupe Posada	1896
Entered Bellas Artes as day student	1899
Dismissed from Bellas Artes	1902
Traveled and painted in Mexico until his First Exhibition (one-man) in Mexico City	1907
Sailed for Spain (first trip to Europe)	1907
First trip to Paris—March	1909
First trip to Belgium	1909
First trip to London—Summer and Autumn	1909
Returned to Paris—November	1909
First picture hung in Paris	1909
First showing with Independents, Paris	1910
First trip to Brittany	1910
Returned to Paris	1910
Returned to Mexico—October	1910
Second one-man show (work from Europe—1907-8-9-10), Mexico City— November	1910
Returned to Paris	1911
Two Mexican landscapes in Autumn Salon, Paris	1911
Returned to Spain (Barcelona)	1911
Returned to Toledo—Fall	1912
Autumn Salon, Paris	1913
Went to Majorca	1914
First Exhibition of Modern Art (Blanchard-Rivera), in Madrid, Spain	1914
Returned to Paris	1915

Invited to go to Russia to paint. Did not accept	1918
First trip to Italy	1919
Invited again to go to Russia. Did not accept.	1919
Returned to Paris from Italy	1920
Left Paris in August for Mexico	1921
Started Painting Mural in Preparatory School, Mexico City—December	1921
Finished Painting Mural in Preparatory School, Mexico City—December	1922
Started Frescoes, Ministry of Education, Mexico City	1922
Started Frescoes, Agricultural School, Chapingo, Mexico	1923
Finished Frescoes, both buildings—August	1927
First trip to Moscow, Russia—September	1927
Tenth Anniversary, Inauguration Russian Revolution—November 7th	1927
Left Moscow in June	1928
Arrived in Mexico—August	1928
Started Fresco, National Palace, Mexico City	1929
Painted Fresco, Salubridad, Mexico City	1929
Started Fresco, Palace of Cortez, Cuernavaca—December	1929
Finished Fresco, Palace of Cortez, Cuernavaca—November 7th	1930
First trip to San Francisco—Arrived November 13th	1930
First one-man exhibition in United States, San Francisco—November- December	1930
Started Fresco, San Francisco Stock Exchange—January 17th	1931
Finished Fresco, San Francisco Stock Exchange, February 17th	1931
Started Fresco, Stern Residence, Fresno, California—April 2nd	1931
Finished Fresco, Stern Residence, Fresno, California—April 23rd	1931
Started Fresco, California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco—April 24th	1931
Finished Fresco, California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco, June 3rd	1931
Returned to Mexico City—June 8th	1931
Started work again on fresco of National Palace—June 9th (which is not yet completed)	1931
Arrived New York—November 13th	1931
Painted frescoes for exhibition until opening of one-man show, Museum of Modern Art, New York City—December 23rd	1931



## CATALOG

AN ASTERISK BEFORE A CATALOG  
NUMBER INDICATES THAT THE  
PAINTING IS ILLUSTRATED BY A  
PLATE WHICH BEARS THE SAME  
NUMBER.





## DIEGO RIVERA

- \*<sub>1</sub> MEXICAN LANDSCAPE, 1902  
Oil on canvas, 10 x 18 inches  
Collection the Artist
  
- \*<sub>2</sub> THE CROCK, 1912  
Oil on canvas, 78 x 64 inches  
Collection Mrs. James Murphy, New York
  
- <sub>3</sub> TWO WOMEN, 1913  
Oil on canvas, 78 x 60 inches  
Private Collection, New York
  
- \*<sub>4</sub> LANDSCAPE, MAJORCA, 1914  
Oil on canvas, 35 x 43 inches  
Collection Señora Guadalupe Marin de Cuesta, Mexico City
  
- \*<sub>5</sub> THE ARCHITECT, 1914  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches  
Collection Señor Lic. Genaro Estrada, Mexico City
  
- <sub>6</sub> THE BLACK CAT, 1914  
Oil on canvas  
Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City
  
- <sub>7</sub> EIFFEL TOWER, 1914  
Oil on canvas, 46 x 35 inches  
Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City
  
- \*<sub>8</sub> THE AWAKENER, 1914  
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches  
Collection Señora Guadalupe Marin de Cuesta, Mexico City
  
- <sub>9</sub> LANDSCAPE, 1916  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection Mrs. Charles Liebman, New York

- 10 THE AQUEDUCT, 1918  
Oil on canvas, 21 1/2 x 25 1/2 inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- \*11 EDGE OF THE FOREST, 1918  
Oil on canvas, 24 x 35 inches  
Collection Solomon Hale, Mexico City
- \*12 PORTRAIT OF ELIE FAURE, 1918  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 35 inches  
Collection Dr. Elie Faure, Paris
- \*13 THE OPERATION, 1920  
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches  
Collection Dr. Jesus Marin, Mexico City
- \*14 IN THE VINEYARD, 1920  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 22 inches  
Collection Frances Flynn Paine, New York
- \*15 HEAD OF A BOY, 1921  
Oil on canvas, 12 x 15 inches  
Collection the Artist
- \*16 THE FRUIT VENDOR, 1921  
Oil on paper, 25 x 19 inches  
Private Collection, New York
- \*17 THE GRINDER, 1924  
Oil on canvas, 42 x 48 inches  
Collection Señor Lic. Emilio Portes Gil, Paris
- \*18 THE TORTILLERA MAKER, 1925  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 38 inches  
Collection Dr. Leo Eloesser, San Francisco
- \*19 THE BALCONY, 1925  
Encaustic, 35 x 24 inches  
Collection Señor don Roberto Montenegro, Mexico City



- \*20 FLOWER DAY, 1925  
Encaustic, 60 x 48 inches  
Collection The Los Angeles Museum
- 21 WOMAN WITH CORN, 1925  
Encaustic, 26 x 20 inches  
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Walter Frank, New York
- 22 PORTRAIT OF HERMINA, 1925  
Encaustic, 16 x 12 inches  
Collection Captain Robert J. Kennedy, New York
- \*23 BATHERS, 1925  
Oil on canvas, 28 x 22 inches  
Collection Miss Frances Toor, Mexico City
- \*24 LUPÉ, PORTRAIT OF SEÑORA GUADALUPE MARIN DE CUESTA, 1926  
Encaustic, 26 x 20 inches  
Collection Jackson Coles Phillips, New York
- \*25 CHILD SITTING ON PETATE, 1926  
Encaustic, 27 x 20 inches  
Collection Mrs. Sigmund Stern, San Francisco
- \*26 PORTRAIT OF PICO RIVERA, 1926  
Encaustic 28 x 22 inches  
Collection Señora Guadalupe Marin de Cuesta, Mexico City
- 27 GREGORIO, 1926  
Encaustic, 35 x 24 inches  
Collection Sara Bard Field, San Francisco
- 28 PORTRAIT OF A CHILD, 1926  
Encaustic  
Collection Sara Bard Field, San Francisco
- \*29 THE FLOWER VENDOR, 1927  
Encaustic, 20 x 14 inches  
Collection Solomon Hale, Mexico City

- \*<sub>30</sub> PORTRAIT OF CAROLINE DURIEUX, 1928  
Oil on canvas, 26 x 20 inches  
Collection Mme Caroline Durieux, New York
- \*<sub>31</sub> FIESTA TEHUANAS, 1928  
Oil on canvas, 79 x 64 inches  
Collection Mrs. James Murphy, New York
- <sub>32</sub> PORTRAIT OF AUREA PROCEL, 1928  
Oil on canvas, 14 x 10 inches  
Collection Solomon Hale, Mexico City
- \*<sub>33</sub> MOSCOW, NOVEMBER 7, 1928  
Oil on canvas, 18 x 22 inches  
Private Collection, New York City
- <sub>33A</sub> MARKET PLACE, 1929  
Oil on canvas, 39 x 31 inches  
Collection Mrs. Charles Liebman, New York
- \*<sub>34</sub> TEHUANTEPEC COSTUME, 1929  
Oil on canvas, 35 x 28 inches  
Collection Alfred Honigbaum, San Francisco
- \*<sub>35</sub> PORTRAIT OF MRS. J. STOGDELL STOKES, 1930  
Oil on canvas, 40 x 35 inches  
Collection Mrs. J. Stoddell Stokes, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania
- <sub>36</sub> MEXICAN CHILDREN, 1930  
Oil on canvas, 16½ x 13½ inches  
Collection R. H. Thayer, New York
- \*<sub>37</sub> PALMS, TEHUANTEPEC, 1930  
Oil on canvas, 33½ x 26 inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- \*<sub>38</sub> PORTRAIT OF ROBERTO ROSALES, 1930  
Encaustic, 22½ x 14 inches  
Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York



- \*39 FOREST, TEHUANTEPEC, 1930  
Oil on canvas,  $33\frac{1}{2}$  x 26 inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- 40 PORTRAIT OF A GIRL WITH YELLOW RIBBONS, 1930  
Oil on canvas,  $22\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 inches  
Private Collection, New York
- \*41 THE CHECKERED DRESS, 1930  
Oil on canvas,  $22\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 inches  
Private Collection, New York
- \*42 PORTRAIT OF A CHILD, 1930  
Encaustic, 24 x 18 inches  
Collection Carl van Vechten, New York
- \*43 PORTRAIT OF JOHN DUNBAR, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 78 x 60 inches  
Collection John Dunbar, New York
- \*44 THE RIVALS, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches  
Private Collection, New York
- \*45 THE OFFERING, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 49 x 59 inches  
Private Collection, New York
- \*46 THE CANOE, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 64 x  $78\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
The Arensberg Collection, Los Angeles
- \*47 LA FIESTA DE LAS FLORES, 1931  
Encaustic, 64 x  $78\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York
- 48 THE SHAWL, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 25 x 20 inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York

49 CACTUS, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 49 x 59 inches  
Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

50 PORTRAIT OF A CHILD, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 35 inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York

\*51 THE WOUNDED SOLDIER, 1931  
Oil on tin, 12 x 14 inches  
Collection Frances Flynn Paine, New York

51A CHILD IN PINK DRESS  
Oil on tin, 14 x 12 inches  
Collection Mrs. O'Donnell Iselin, New York

\*52 CACTUS ON THE PLAINS, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 34 x 28 inches  
Collection the Artist

53 SEATED CHILD WITH SHAWL  
Oil on canvas, 25 x 20 inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York

54 CACTUS ON A HILLSIDE, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 23 x 31 inches  
Collection the Artist

55 MEXICAN BABY, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York

\*55A STANDING CHILD, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 35 x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York

#### WATERCOLORS

\*56 STILL LIFE, 1918  
Watercolor, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 18 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York



- \*57 BACK YARDS, 1918  
Watercolor,  $14\frac{1}{4} \times 19\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- 58 THE BLUE MOUNTAIN, 1921  
Watercolor,  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 6$  inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- 59 FACTORIES, MOSCOW, 1927  
Watercolor,  $23\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- 60 RUSSIAN SOLDIER, 1927  
Watercolor,  $23\frac{3}{4} \times 18\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York
- 61 RUSSIAN GIRL, 1928  
Watercolor,  $7\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York
- \*62 RUSSIAN MOTHER AND CHILD, 1928  
Watercolor,  $6\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York
- \*63 INDIANS MAKING FIREWORKS (RACKETEERS), 1928  
Watercolor,  $11 \times 16$  inches  
Collection Alfred Honigbaum, San Francisco
- 64 CALLA LILIES  
Watercolor  
Collection Mme Caroline Durieux, New York
- \*65 THE MAY-DAY SKETCH-BOOK OF DIEGO RIVERA, MAY 1, 1928, MOSCOW  
A series of forty-five watercolors, each  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 6$  inches  
Private Collection, New York
- 66 LANDSCAPE, 1930  
Watercolor,  $6 \times 8\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York

- 67 GOLD DIGGER, 1931  
Watercolor, 19 x 28 inches. Study for fresco for San Francisco Stock Exchange  
Collection Mr. William Gerstle, San Francisco
- \*68 EL ALBA, 1931  
Watercolor, 9 x 12 inches  
Collection John Dunbar, New York
- 69 EL SACRIFICIO, 1931  
Watercolor, 9 x 12 inches  
Collection John Dunbar, New York
- 70 LAS PREUBAS DE XIBALBA, 1931  
Watercolor, 9 x 12 inches  
Collection John Dunbar, New York
- 71 MOUNTAINS IN NEW MEXICO, 1931  
Watercolor, 12 x 18 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection the Artist
- \*72 HOUSE IN VERA CRUZ, 1931  
Watercolor, 6 x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection the Artist
- 73 CHIHUAHUA, 1931  
Watercolor, 10 x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Collection the Artist
- 74 HILL IN ARIZONA, 1931  
Watercolor, 10 x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Collection the Artist
- \*75 ARIZONA, 1931  
Watercolor, 11 x 15 inches  
Collection the Artist
- \*76 MESA, ARIZONA, 1931  
Watercolor, 11 x 15 inches  
Collection the Artist



77 MOUNTAIN RANGES, 1931

Watercolor, 11 x 15 inches  
Collection the Artist

78 THE VOLCANO, 1931

Watercolor, 11 x 15 inches  
Collection the Artist

79 JAGGED MOUNTAIN, 1931

Watercolor, 11 x 15 inches  
Collection the Artist

80 TROPICAL FOREST, 1931

Watercolor,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  x  $12\frac{1}{4}$  inches  
Collection the Artist

DRAWINGS

\*81 PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN, 1918

Pencil, 18 x 11 inches  
Collection Paul J. Sachs, Cambridge

\*82 STILL LIFE, 1918

Pencil, 17 x 13 inches  
Private Collection, New York

82A STILL LIFE, 1918

Pencil  
Private Collection, New York

83 SELF PORTRAIT, 1918

Pencil,  $13\frac{1}{4}$  x 9 inches  
Private Collection, New York

\*84 STANDING FIGURE, 1920

Pencil, 12 x  $8\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

\*85 ARMOR, 1921

Pencil,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  x  $8\frac{3}{8}$  inches  
Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

86 THREE STUDIES OF HORSES (*after Uccello*), 1921

Pencil,  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$  inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

87 STUDY OF A SLEEPING WOMAN, 1921

Pencil,  $23 \times 18$  inches

Collection Paul J. Sachs, Cambridge

88 HEAD, 1922

Sanguine,  $24 \times 18\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Collection The California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco

\*89 STUDIES OF HANDS, 1922

Sanguine,  $24 \times 18\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Collection The California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco

A series of nine studies of hands for the murals in the Preparatory School, Mexico City

\*90 TWO HEADS, 1921

Crayon on brown paper,  $14\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{3}{8}$  inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

91 REFRESHMENT, 1921

Pencil with some color,  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 12$  inches

Collection the Artist

92 TWO DRAWINGS OF MEXICAN POTTERY, 1921

Pencil,  $10\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

93 HEAD, 1921

Crayon,  $15 \times 9\frac{1}{8}$  inches

Collection the Artist

94 STUDY OF A MOSAIC, 1921

Pencil with color,  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

95 ITALIAN TOWN, 1921

Pencil,  $12 \times 8\frac{1}{2}$  inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City



- 96 THREE STUDIES OF HORSES WITH ARMOR, 1921  
Pencil study after Uccello,  $8\frac{1}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City
- 97 PORTRAIT OF A MAN, 1921  
Pencil,  $12 \times 8\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City
- 98 GIRL STANDING, 1921  
Pastel,  $17\frac{7}{8} \times 11$  inches  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- \*99 HEAD OF A HORSE, 1923  
Pencil,  $13\frac{3}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York
- 100 TEXTILE WORKERS, 1923  
Pencil,  $18 \times 24$  inches  
Study for a fresco in the Ministry of Education, Mexico City  
Collection Ralph Stackpole, San Francisco
- 101 LANDSCAPE, 1923  
Pencil,  $9\frac{1}{4} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$  inches  
Collection the Artist
- 102 TWO STUDIES FOR FRESCO IN THE NATIONAL PALACE, MEXICO, 1925  
Pencil with color,  $21 \times 14$  inches  
Collection the Artist
- \*102A FEAST OF THE DEAD  
Study for fresco in the Ministry of Education, Mexico City  
Private Collection
- \*103 RECLINING NUDE, 1925  
Charcoal,  $19 \times 24\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York
- 104 MURAL STUDY, CHAPINGO, 1927  
Sanguine,  $7\frac{1}{2} \times 10$  inches  
Collection E. Weyhe, New York

\*105 MURAL STUDY, 1927

Sanguine,  $9\frac{3}{4}$  x  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Private Collection, New York

\*106 SAWING RAILS, MOSCOW, 1927

Pencil,  $24\frac{3}{4}$  x 19 inches  
Private Collection, New York

\*107 COMMUNISTS OF PARIS, 1928

Cartoon, 22 x 16 inches  
Collection Dr. Hubert Herring, New York

108 FIRST SKETCH FOR THE FRESCO, SAN FRANCISCO STOCK EXCHANGE, 1930

Pencil, 17 x 23 inches  
Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco

\*109 MAN ON HORSE-BACK, 1927

Pencil, 19 x  $24\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection Detroit Institute of Arts

\*109A INDIAN FAMILY, 1928

Pencil  
Private Collection, New York

110 BURBANK, 1930

Pencil, 24 x 18 inches  
Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco  
Sketch for fresco, San Francisco Stock Exchange

111 SECOND SKETCH FOR THE FRESCO, SAN FRANCISCO STOCK EXCHANGE,  
1931

Pencil, 17 x 23 inches  
Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco

THREE STUDIES FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO STOCK EXCHANGE, 1930

112 MECHANIC WITH AEROPLANE

Pencil, 24 x 18 inches  
Collection The California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco



113 ENERGY

Pencil, 24 x 18 inches

Collection The California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco

\*114 MARSHALL, DISCOVERER OF GOLD IN CALIFORNIA

Pencil, 24 x 18 inches

Collection The California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco

115 HEAD OF WOMAN, 1931

Sanguine, 24 x 18½ inches

Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco

THREE SKETCHES FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO STOCK EXCHANGE, 1931

\*116 MAN PLASTERING

Charcoal, 24 x 18½ inches

Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco

117 THE PLUMB LINE

Charcoal, 36¼ x 20 inches

Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco

118 PNEUMATIC CHISELING

Pencil, 23¾ x 8 inches

Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco

FOUR PENCIL DRAWINGS FOR A FRESCO, 1931

*Collection Mrs. Sigmund Stern, San Francisco*

119 GIRL WITH APPLE

18½ x 23½ inches

120 CHILDREN WITH A BOWL OF APPLES

10 x 17¼ inches

121 BOY

18½ x 24 inches

122 KNEELING BOY

25 x 19 inches

123 LANDSCAPE, 1931

Pencil, 11 x 15  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches

Collection the Artist

124 HELEN WILLS, 1931

Pencil, 10 x 21  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

Collection the Artist

124A PORTRAIT, 1931

Pencil, 23  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 17 inches

Collection Albert Barrows, San Francisco

DRAWINGS IN CHARCOAL FOR FRESCOES—THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO, PRESENTED TO  
MEXICO BY THE LATE AMBASSADOR MORROW, PALACE OF CORTEZ,  
CUERNAVACA, MORELOS, MEXICO, 1930

*Note: All drawings unless otherwise noted are from the collection of  
Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera*

125 CONQUEST OF MEXICO BY SPANIARDS

Cartoon to scale.

126 CORTEZ DISEMBARKING IN VERA CRUZ IN 1519

62 x 32 inches

127 CORTEZ, MALINTZIN AND AGUILAR TALKING TO THE AMBASSADORS  
OF THE EMPEROR MOCTEZUMA, 1519

62 x 32 inches

128 CORTEZ, MALINTZIN, XECOTENCATL, CHIEF OF TLAXCALTECA, ALLIES  
OF CORTEZ

80 x 32 inches



- 129 CORTEZ AND HIS TLAXCALAN ALLIES CLOSING IN ON TENOCHTITLAN  
JUST BEFORE THE SECOND CAPTURE  
32 x 160 inches
- 130 TORTURE OF CUHUATEMOC, COYOACAN, MEXICO  
32 x 80 inches
- 131 DEATH OF CUHUATEMOC  
32 x 22 inches
- 132 INDIAN WORKERS IN THE MINES  
32 x 80 inches
- 133 FRIAR BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS—THE FRIEND OF THE INDIANS  
32 x 23 inches
- \*134 FRIAR VASCO DE QUIROGA, FRIEND AND SOCIAL ORGANIZER OF THE  
INDIANS  
32 x 62 inches
- \*135 FIRST INSURRECTION AGAINST THE SPANIARDS IN 1600  
32 x 62 inches
- 136 EMELIANO ZAPATA AGRARIAN LEADER OF THE MEXICAN REVOLU-  
TION FROM 1910 TO 1919  
89 x 32 inches wide
- 137 JOSE MARIA MORELOS, HERO OF THE WAR OF MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE  
IN 1810  
89 x 32 inches
- 138 TWO FIGURES, MEXICAN ARMED PEASANTS, 1910 IN STATE OF MORELOS  
(OVER EACH FRESCO)  
40 x 160 inches
- 139 THE SACK AND ENSLAVEMENT OF THE INDIANS BY SPANIARDS  
Pencil, 24 x 18 inches  
Collection E. Weyhe, New York

140 CORTEZ TAKING POSSESSION OF THE LAND

Pencil, 24 x 18 inches

Collection E. Weyhe, New York

141 CORTEZ RECEIVING TRIBUTE AND ENFORCING CONSTRUCTION OF THE  
PALACE BY THE INDIANS

Pencil, 24 x 18 inches

Collection E. Weyhe, New York

142 EXPLOITATION OF THE INDIANS ON THE SUGAR CANE PLANTATIONS

24 x 18 inches

Collection E. Weyhe, New York

143 FIRST SKETCH FOR THE CUERNAVACA FRESCOES

24 x 54 inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

FRESCOES

The Museum of Modern Art invited Diego Rivera to New York to paint seven frescoes for the exhibition, these frescoes to be in the style of his Mexican work with the possibility that two might be of United States subjects. Of necessity, since these frescoes were under way when this Catalog went to press, only three completed at that time can be illustrated and indicated.

\* AGRARIAN LEADER ZAPATA. An adaptation of one of the frescoes at Cuernavaca. Presented to Mexico by the late Ambassador Morrow.

\* SUGAR CANE. An adaptation of one of the scenes in the Cuernavaca frescoes. Presented to Mexico by the late Ambassador Morrow.

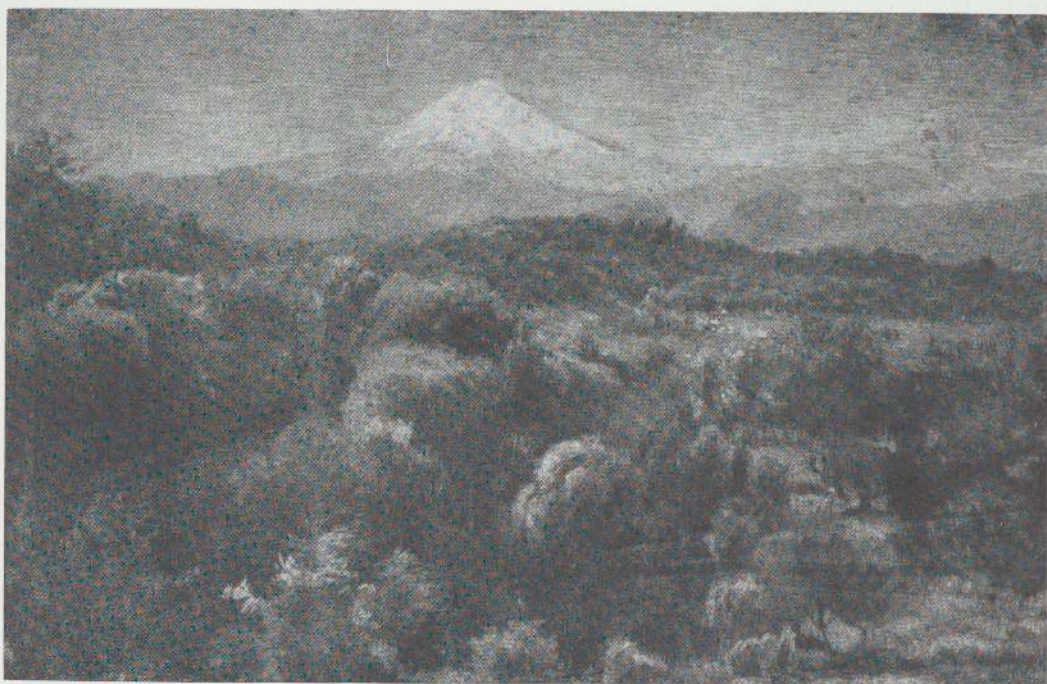
\* LIBERATION OF THE PEON. Revolutionary troops burning the hacienda and rescuing the Indian who has been bound and flogged. An adaptation of a fresco in the Ministry of Education, Mexico.



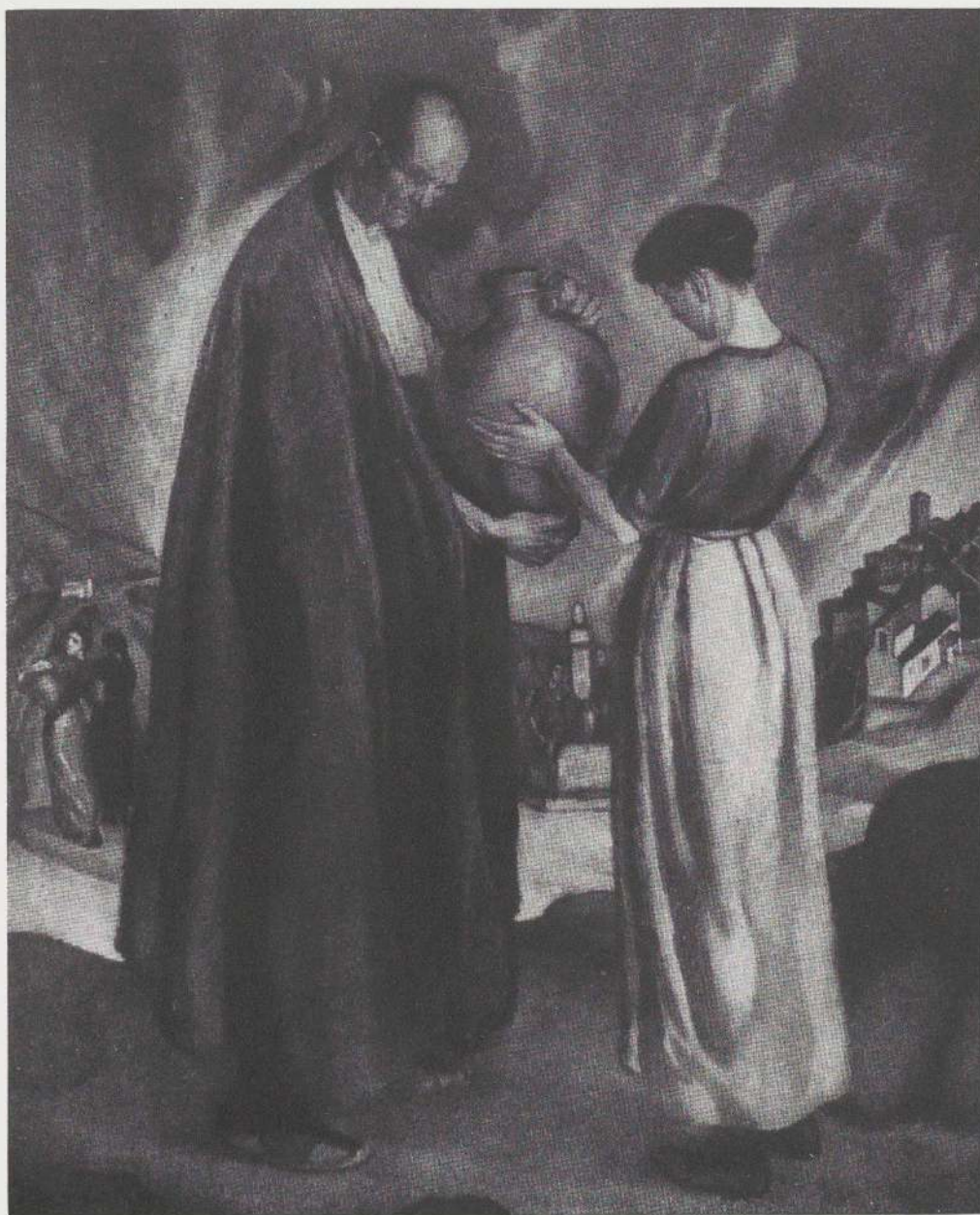
## ILLUSTRATIONS







1 MEXICAN LANDSCAPE, 1902  
*Oil on canvas, 10 x 18 inches*  
Collection the Artist



2 THE CROCK, 1912

Oil on canvas, 78 x 64 inches

Collection Mrs. James Murphy, New York





4 LANDSCAPE, MAJORCA, 1914

*Oil on canvas, 35 x 43 inches*

Collection Señora Guadalupe Marin de Cuesta, Mexico City



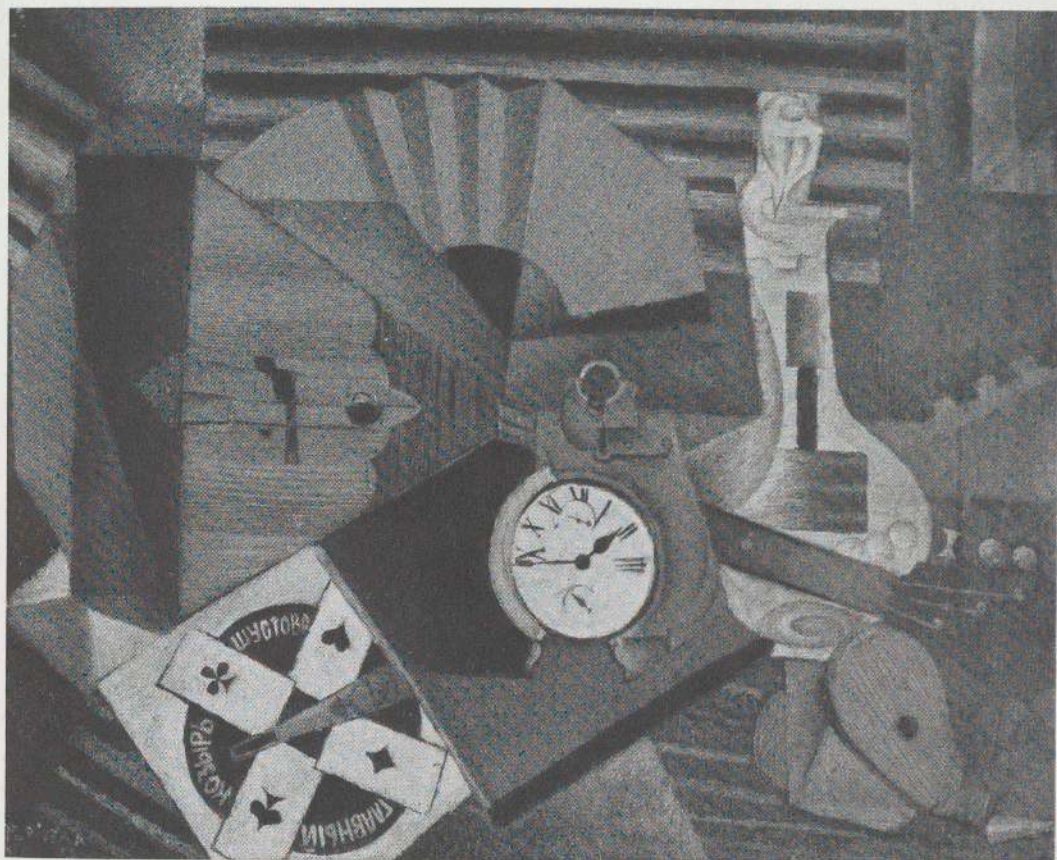


5 THE ARCHITECT, 1914

Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches

Collection Señor Lic. Genaro Estrada, Mexico City





8 THE AWAKENER, 1914

*Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches*

Collection Señora Guadalupe Marin de Cuesta, Mexico City





11 EDGE OF THE FOREST, 1918  
*Oil on canvas, 24 x 35 inches*  
Collection Solomon Hale, Mexico City





12 PORTRAIT OF ELIE FAURE, 1918

*Oil on canvas, 48 x 35 inches*  
Collection Dr. Elie Faure, Paris





13 THE OPERATION, 1920

Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches

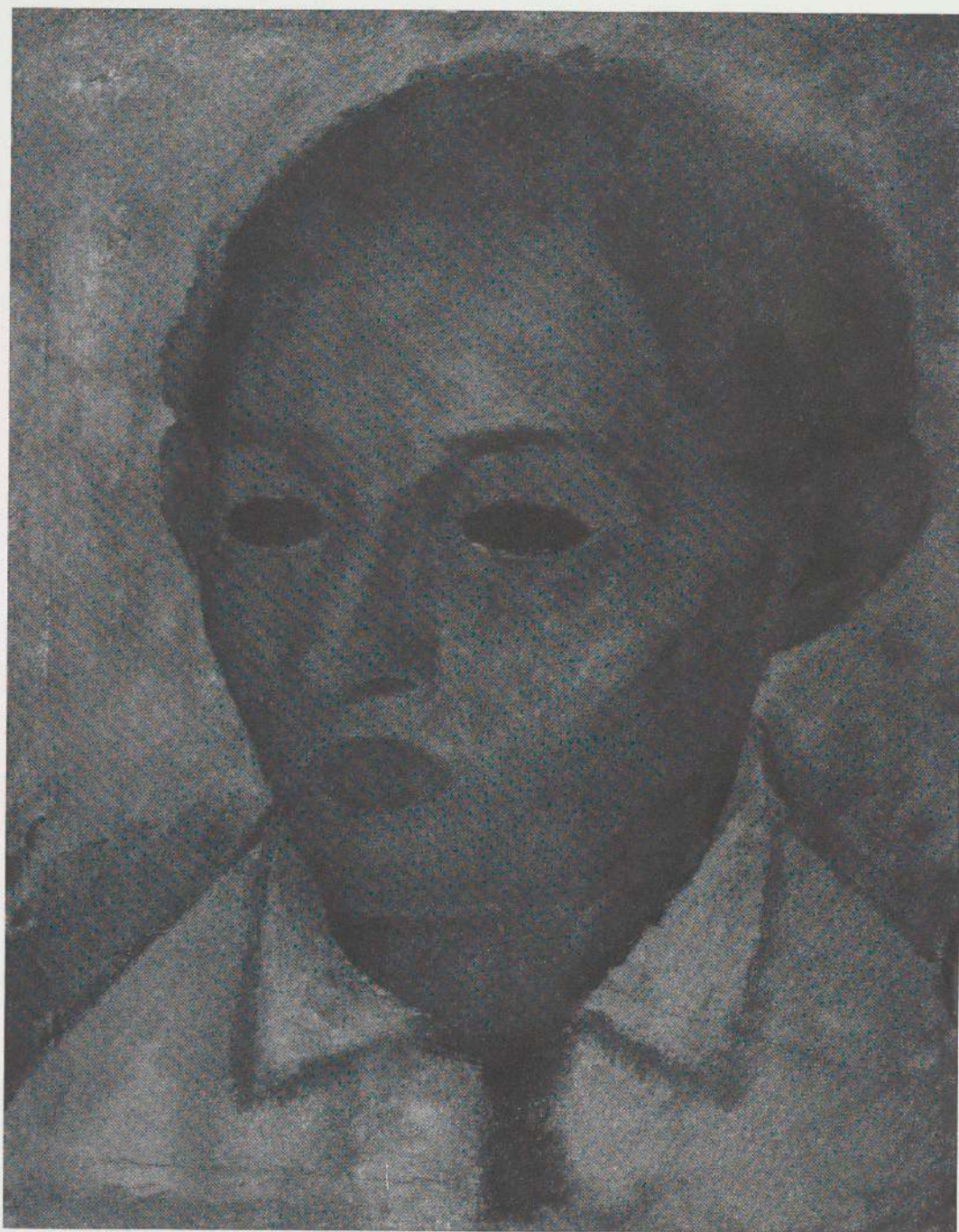
Collection Dr. Jesus Marin, Mexico City





14 IN THE VINEYARD, 1920  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 22 inches  
Collection Frances Flynn Paine, New York





15 HEAD OF A BOY, 1921

*Oil on canvas, 12 x 15 inches*

Collection the Artist





16 THE FRUIT VENDOR, 1921  
Oil on paper, 25 x 19 inches  
Private Collection, New York





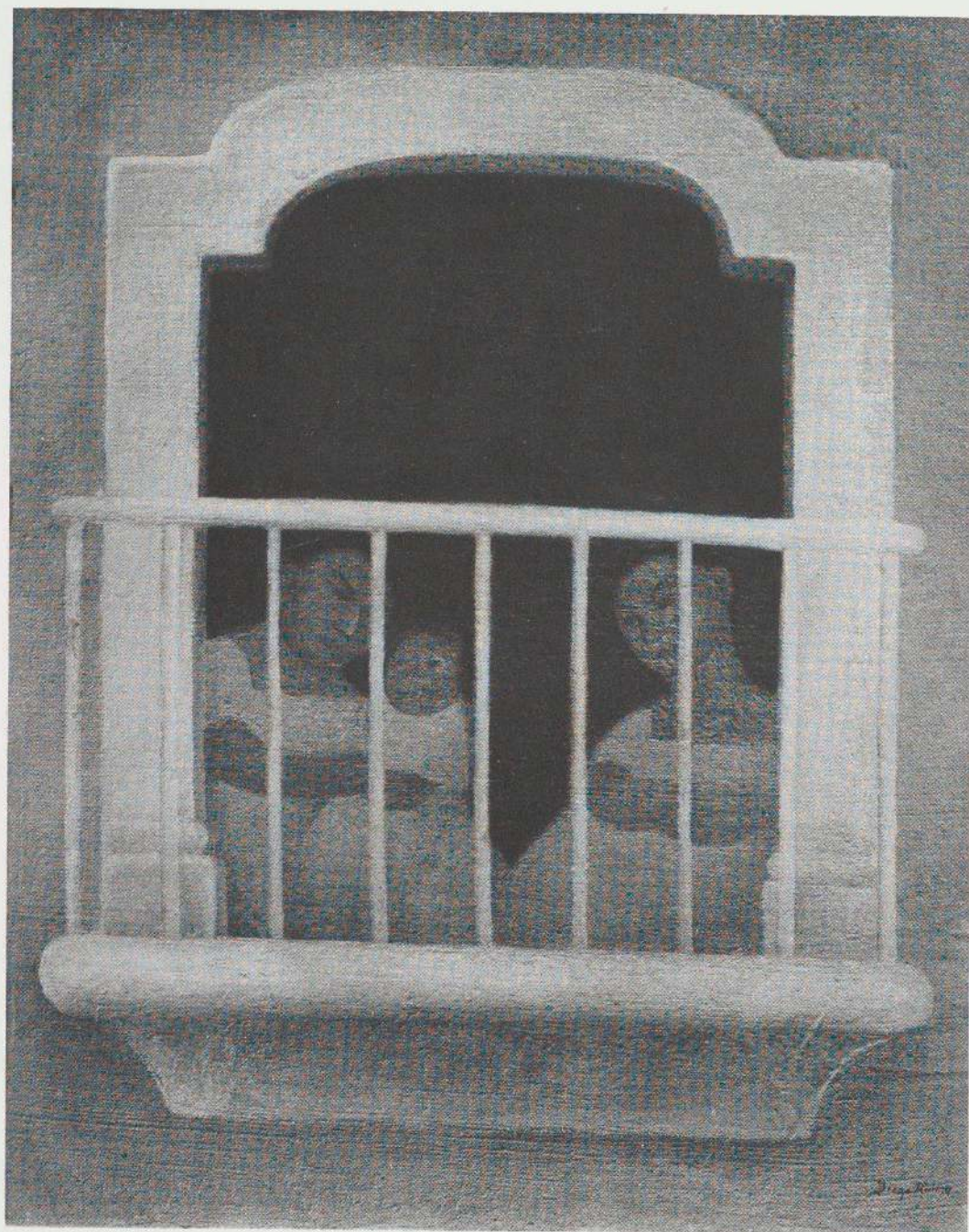
18 THE TORTILLERA MAKER, 1925  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 38 inches  
Collection Dr. Leo Eloesser, San Francisco





17 THE GRINDER, 1924  
Oil on canvas, 42 x 48 inches  
Collection Señor Lic. Emilio Portes Gil, Paris



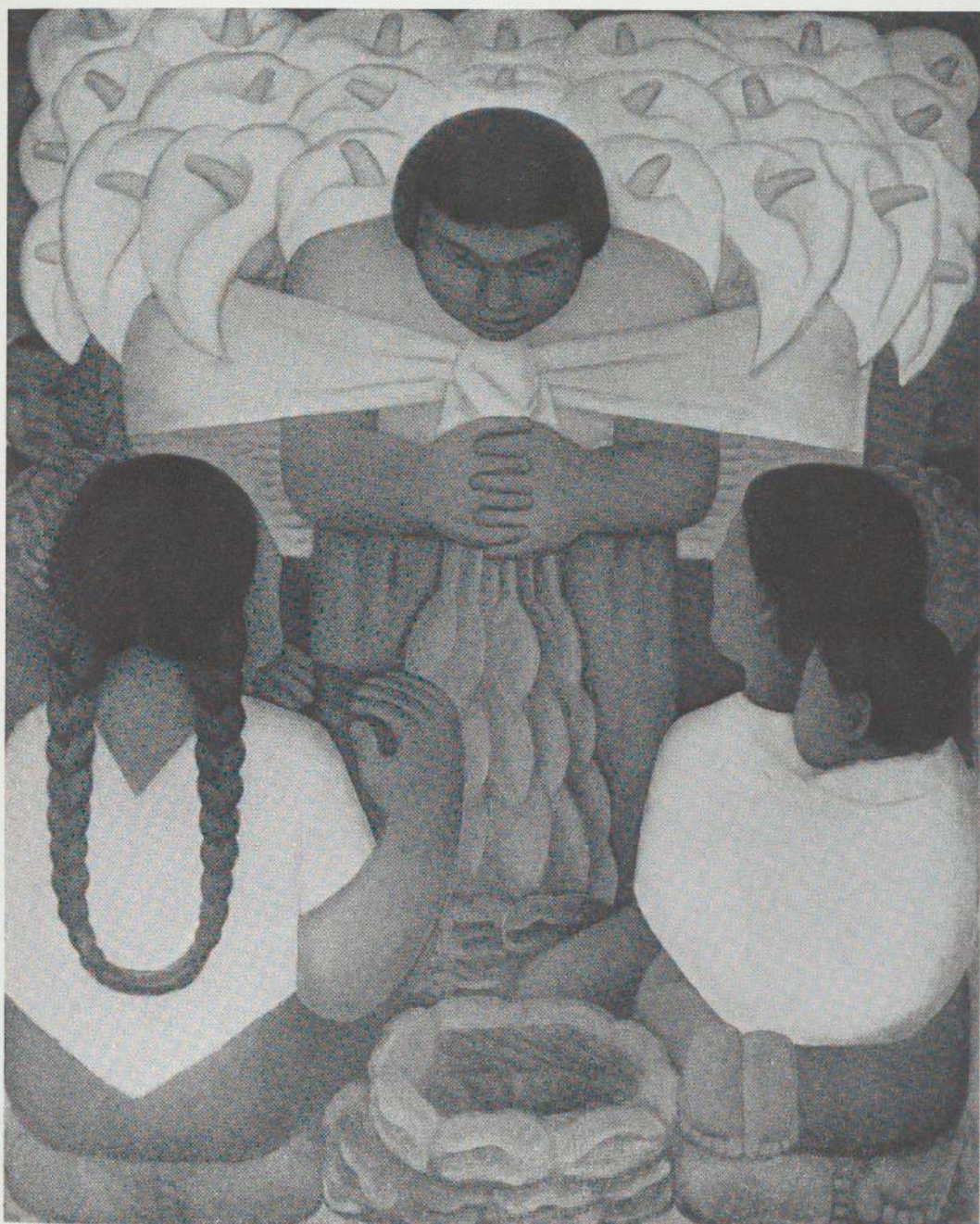


19 THE BALCONY, 1925

*Encaustic, 35 x 24 inches*

Collection Señor don Roberto Montenegro, Mexico City





20 FLOWER DAY, 1925

*Encaustic, 60 x 48 inches*

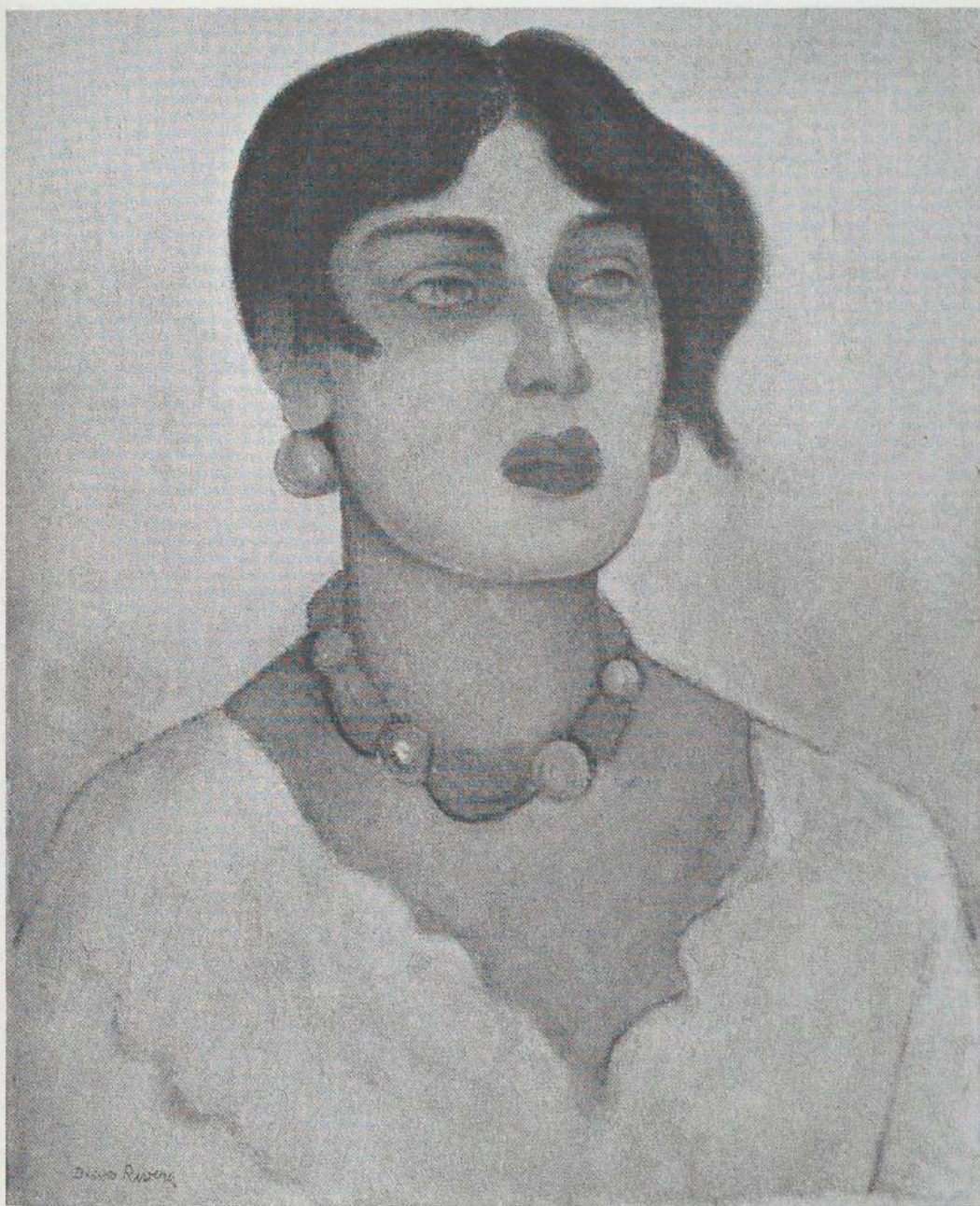
Collection The Los Angeles Museum





23 BATHERS, 1925  
Oil on canvas, 28 x 22 inches  
Collection Miss Frances Toor, Mexico City





24 LUPÉ, PORTRAIT OF SEÑORA GUADALUPE MARIN DE CUESTA, 1926

*Encaustic, 26 x 20 inches*

Collection Jackson Coles Phillips, New York





25 CHILD SITTING ON PETATE, 1926  
*Encaustic, 27 x 20 inches*  
Collection Mrs. Sigmund Stern, San Francisco





26 PORTRAIT OF PICO RIVERA, 1926

*Encaustic, 28 x 22 inches*

Collection Señora Guadalupe Marin de Cuesta, Mexico City





29 THE FLOWER VENDOR, 1927

*Encaustic, 20 x 14 inches*

Collection Solomon Hale, Mexico City





31 FIESTA TEHUANAS, 1928  
Oil on canvas, 79 x 64 inches  
Collection Mrs. James Murphy, New York





30 PORTRAIT OF CAROLINE DURIEUX, 1928

Oil on canvas, 26 x 20 inches

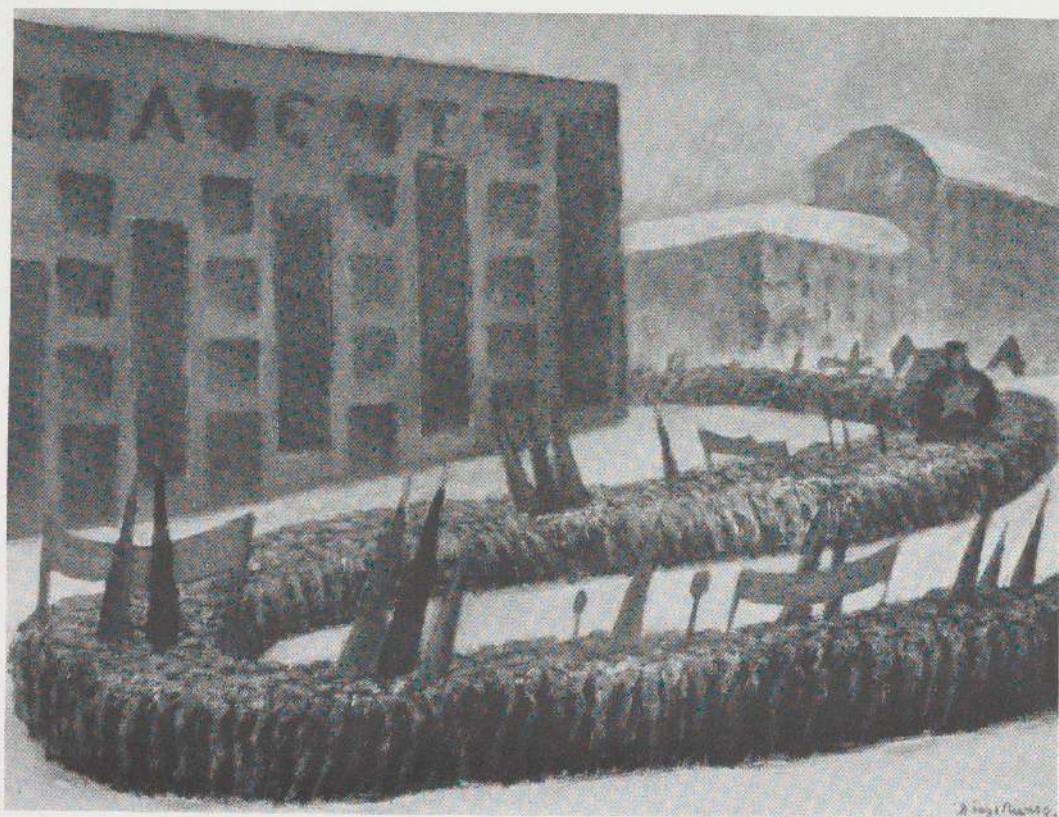
Collection Mme Caroline Durieux, New York





34 TEHUANTEPEC COSTUME, 1929  
Oil on canvas, 35 x 28 inches  
Collection Alfred Honigbaum, San Francisco





33 MOSCOW, NOVEMBER 7, 1928

Oil on canvas, 18 x 22 inches

Private Collection, New York City





35 PORTRAIT OF MRS. J. STOGDELL STOKES, 1930

*Oil on canvas, 40 x 35 inches*

Collection Mrs. J. Stogdell Stokes, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania





37 PALMS, TEHUANTEPEC, 1930

Oil on canvas, 33 1/2 x 26 inches

Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York





39 FOREST, TEHUANTEPEC, 1930

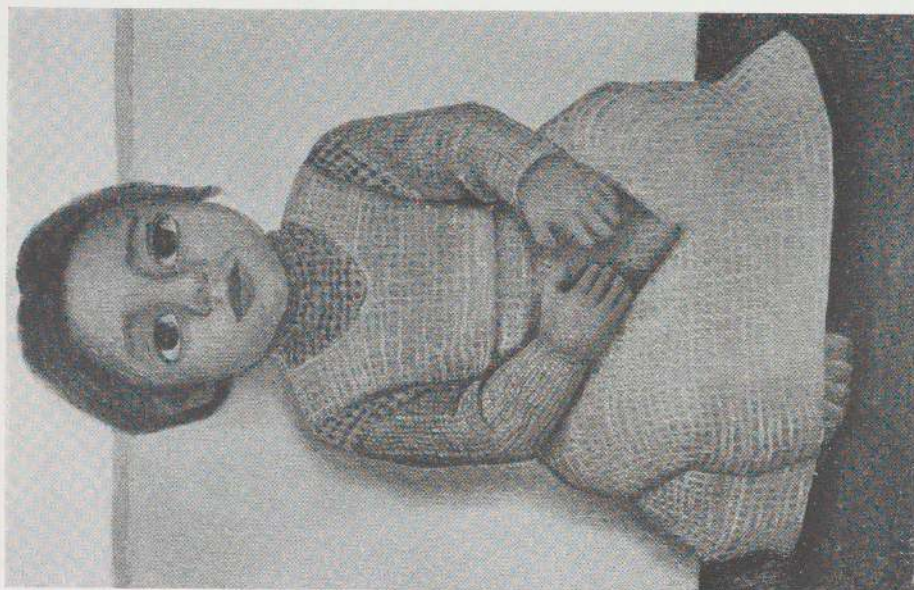
Oil on canvas, 33½ x 26 inches

Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York



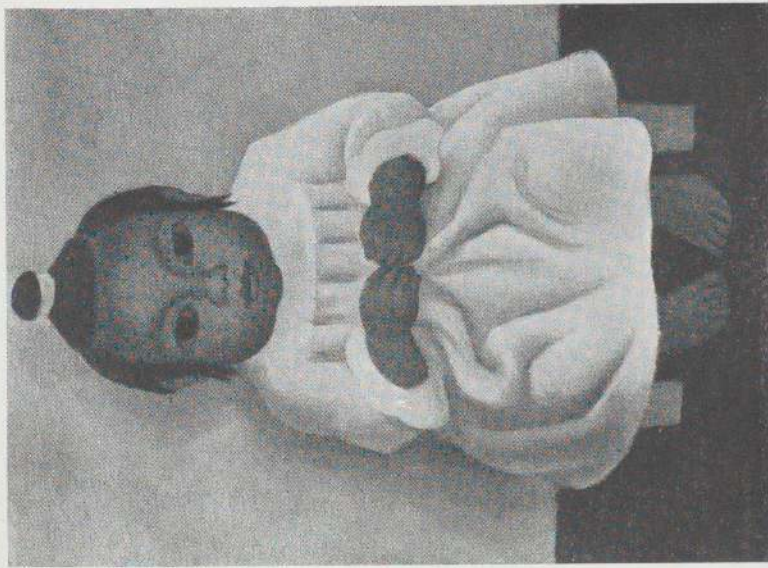


38 PORTRAIT OF ROBERTO ROSALES, 1930  
Encaustic, 22  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 14 inches  
Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York

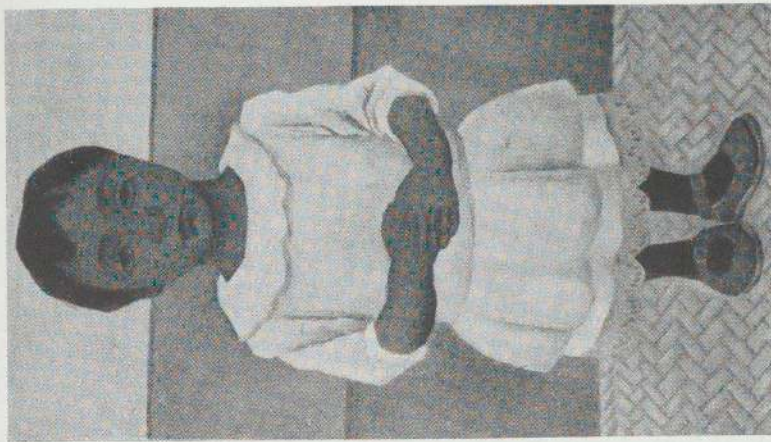


41 THE CHECKERED DRESS, 1930  
Oil on canvas, 22  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 inches  
Private Collection, New York





42 PORTRAIT OF A CHILD, 1930  
*Encaustic, 24 x 18 inches*  
 Collection Carl van Vechten, New York



55A STANDING CHILD, 1931  
*Oil on canvas, 35 x 20½ inches*  
 Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York





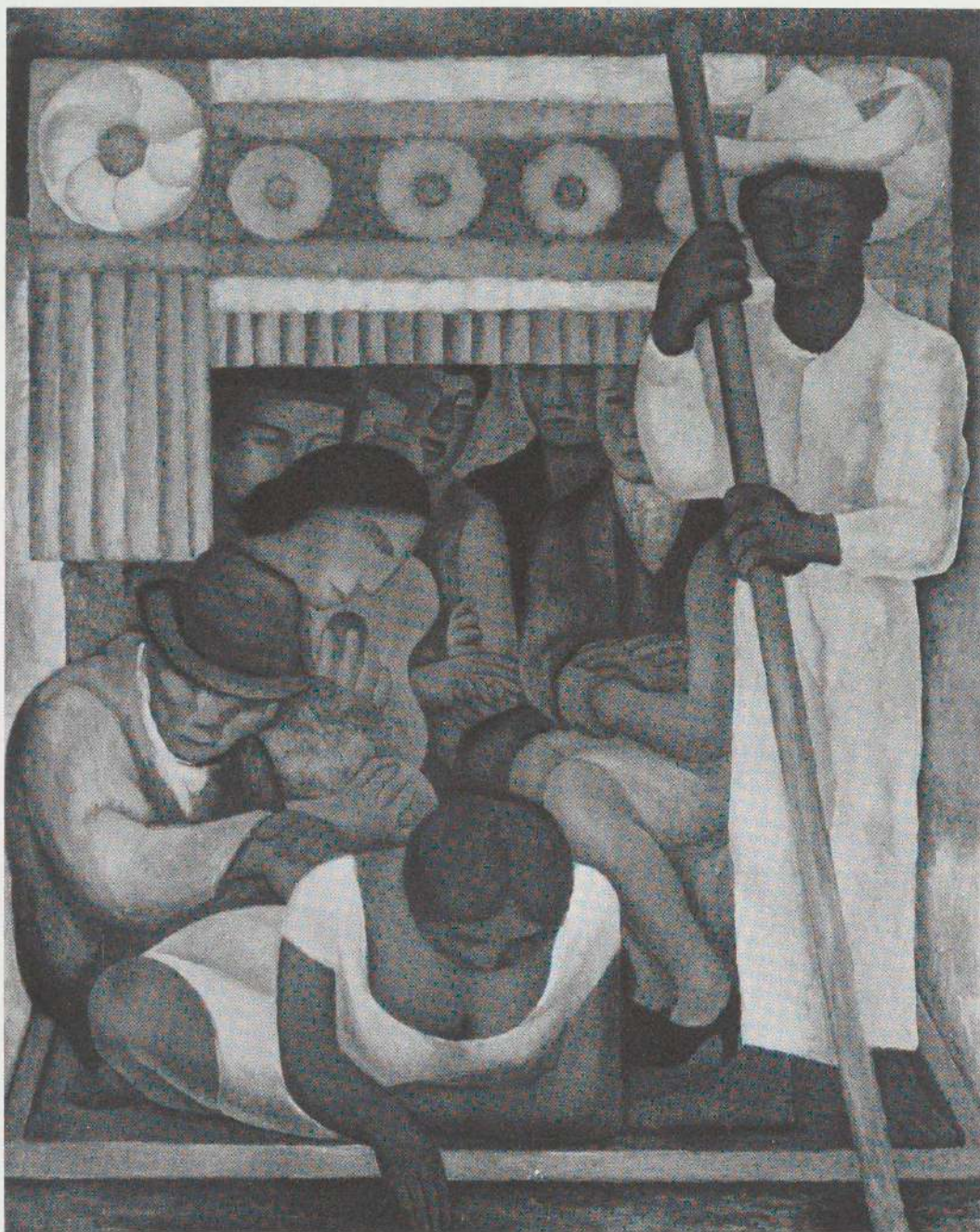
43 PORTRAIT OF JOHN DUNBAR, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 78 x 60 inches  
Collection John Dunbar, New York





45 THE OFFERING, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 49 x 59 inches  
Private Collection, New York





46 THE CANOE, 1931

Oil on canvas, 64 x 78½ inches

The Arensberg Collection, Los Angeles

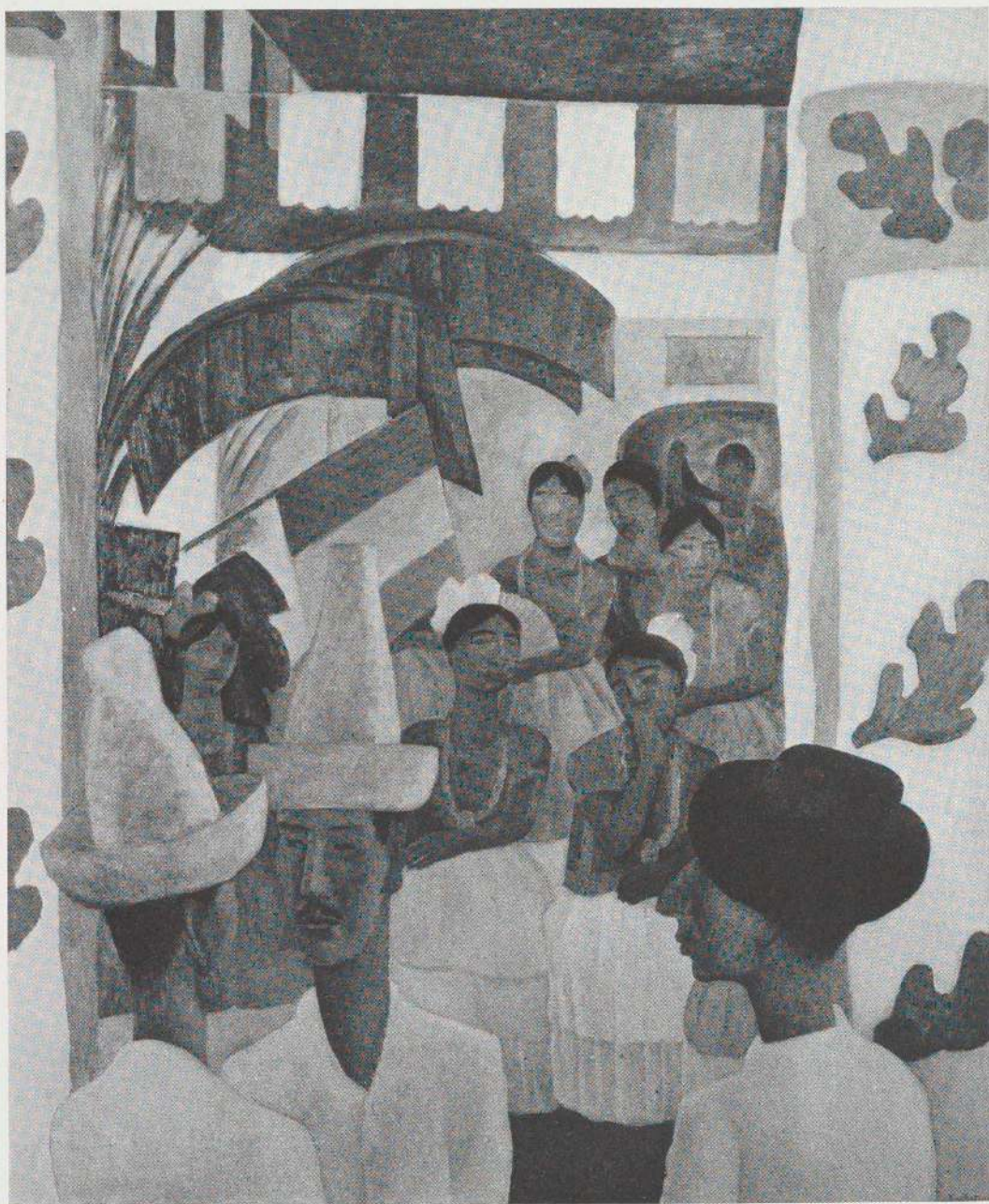




47 LA FIESTA DE LAS FLORES, 1931

Encaustic, 64 x 78½ inches  
Private Collection, New York





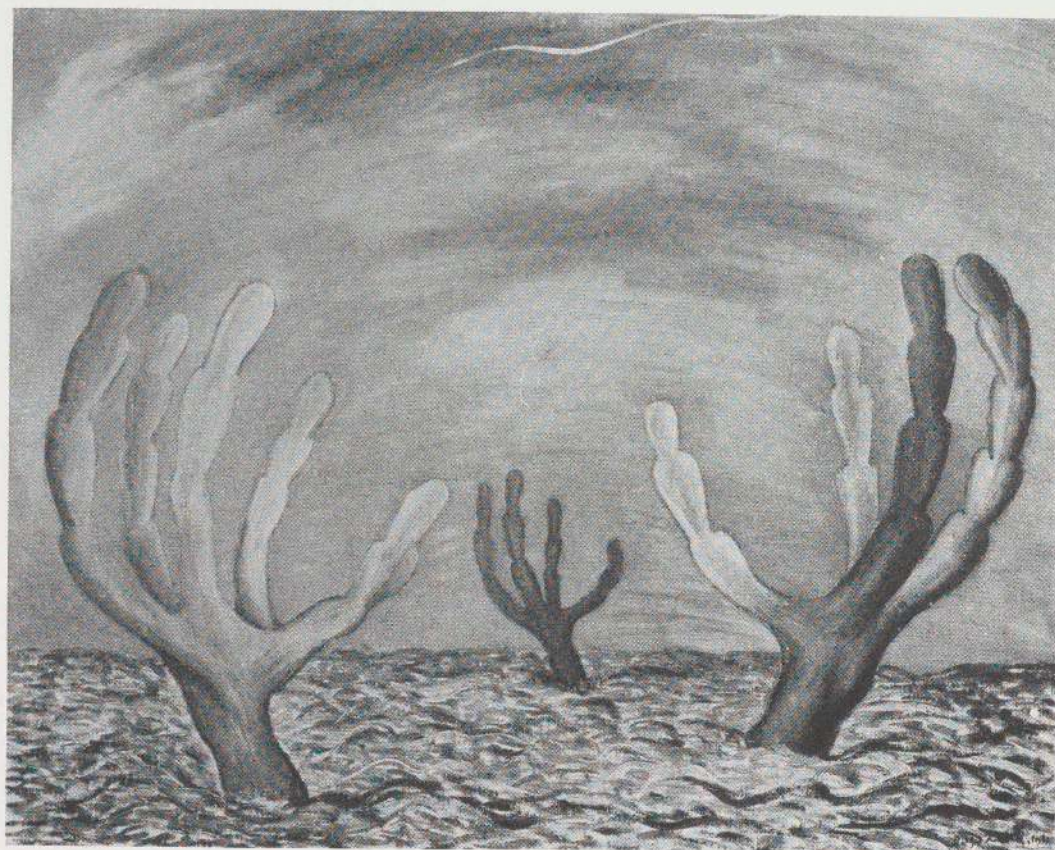
44 THE RIVALS, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches  
Private Collection, New York





51 THE WOUNDED SOLDIER, 1931  
Oil on tin, 12 x 14 inches  
Collection Frances Flynn Paine, New York



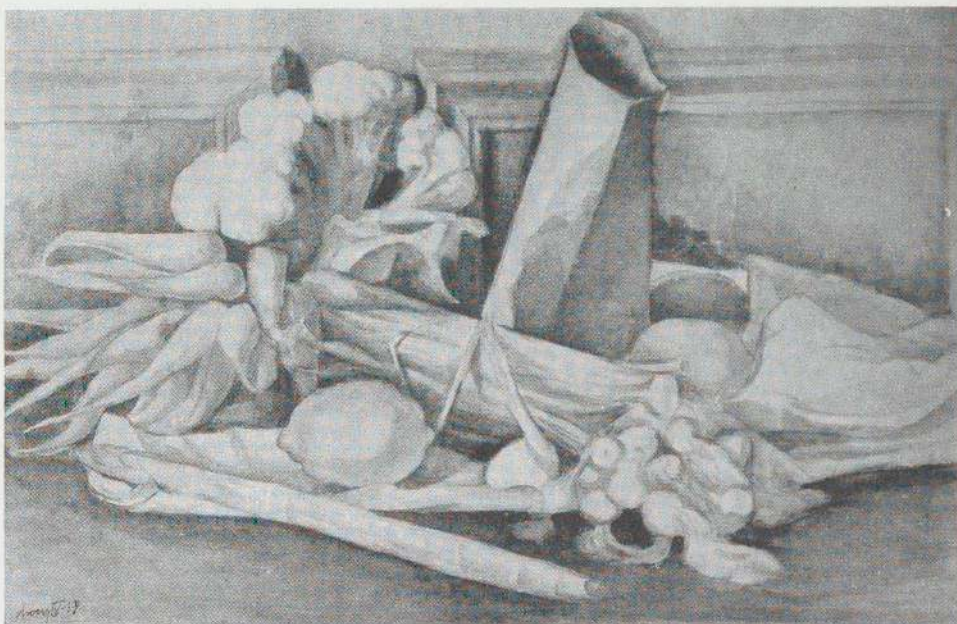


52 CACTUS ON THE PLAINS, 1931

*Oil on canvas, 34 x 28 inches*

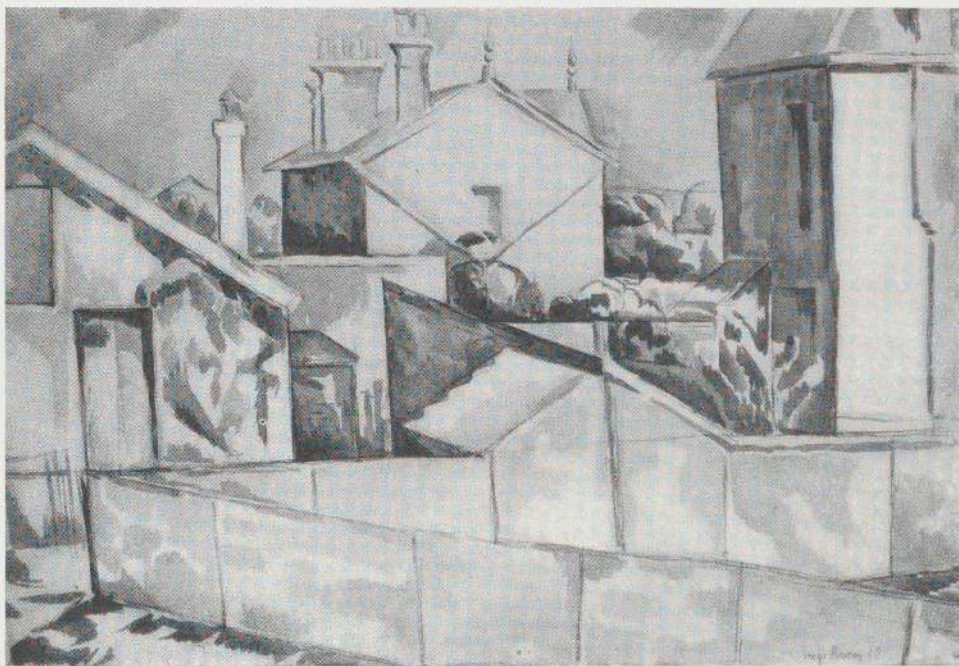
Collection the Artist



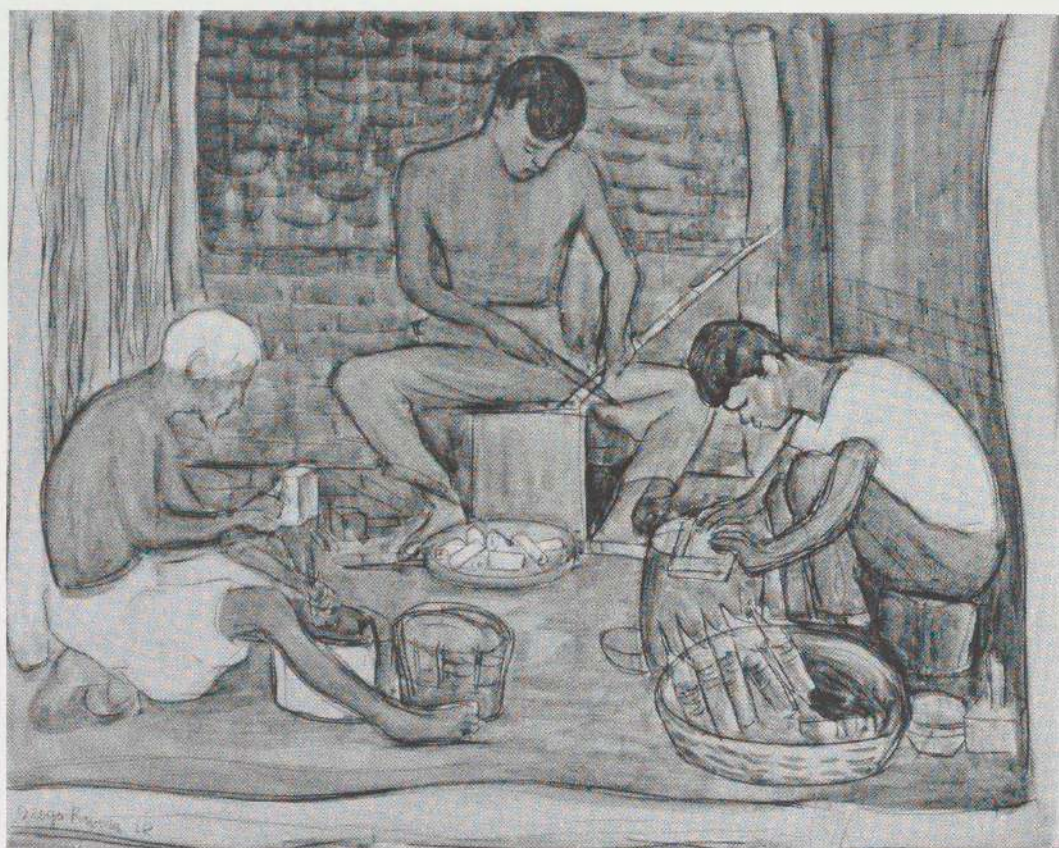


56 STILL LIFE, 1918  
 Watercolor,  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
 Private Collection, New York

57 BACK YARDS, 1918  
 Watercolor,  $14\frac{1}{4} \times 19\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
 Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York





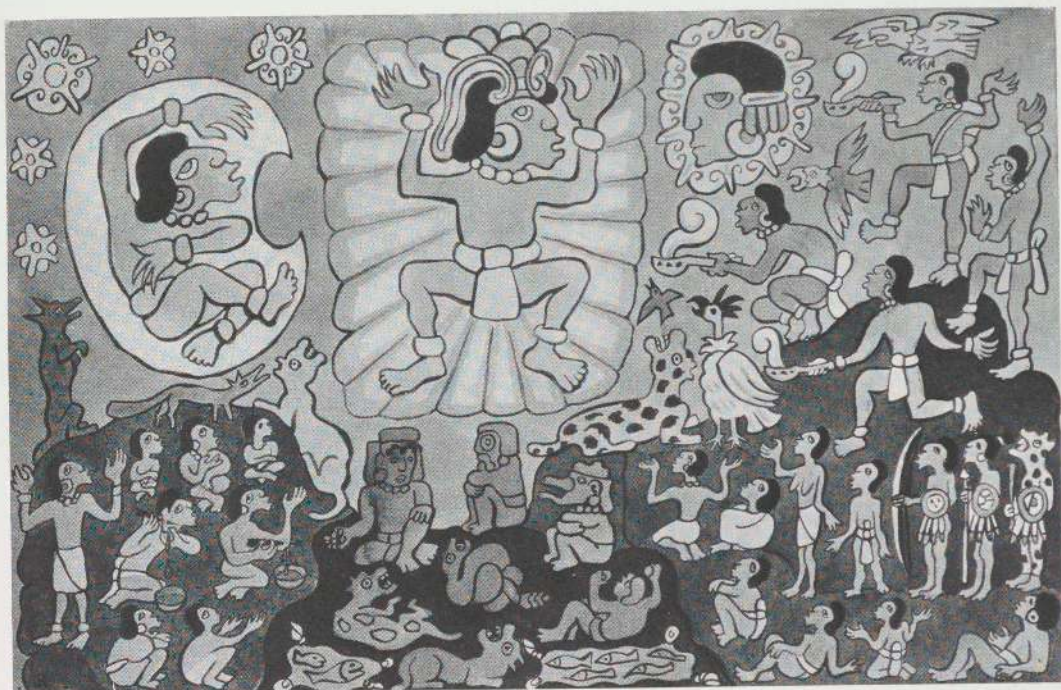


63 INDIANS MAKING FIREWORKS (RACKETEERS), 1928

Watercolor, 11 x 16 inches

Collection Alfred Honigbaum, San Francisco





68 EL ALBA, 1931

Illustration inspired from an old codice

Watercolor, 9 x 12 inches

Collection John Dunbar, New York

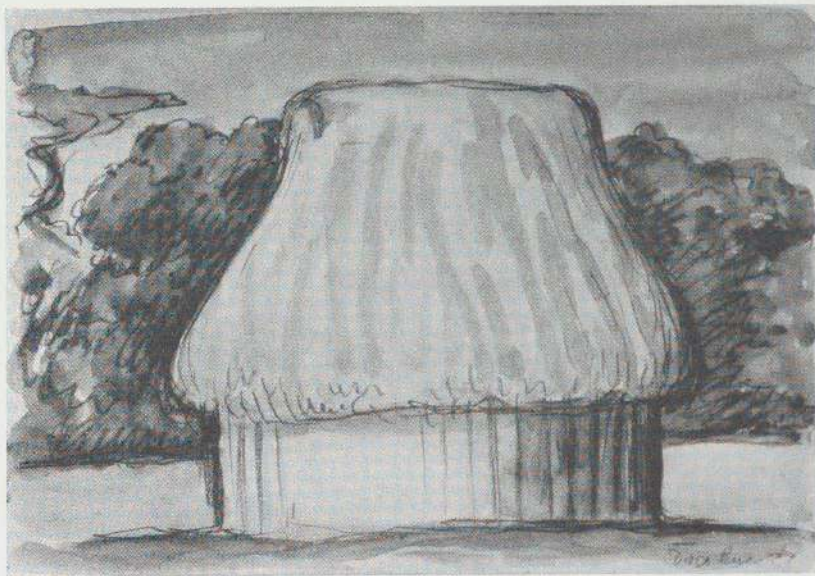




65 THE MAY-DAY SKETCH-BOOK OF DIEGO RIVERA, MAY 1, 1928, MOSCOW  
*Two watercolors from a series of forty-five*  
 Private Collection, New York







72 HOUSE IN VERA CRUZ, 1931

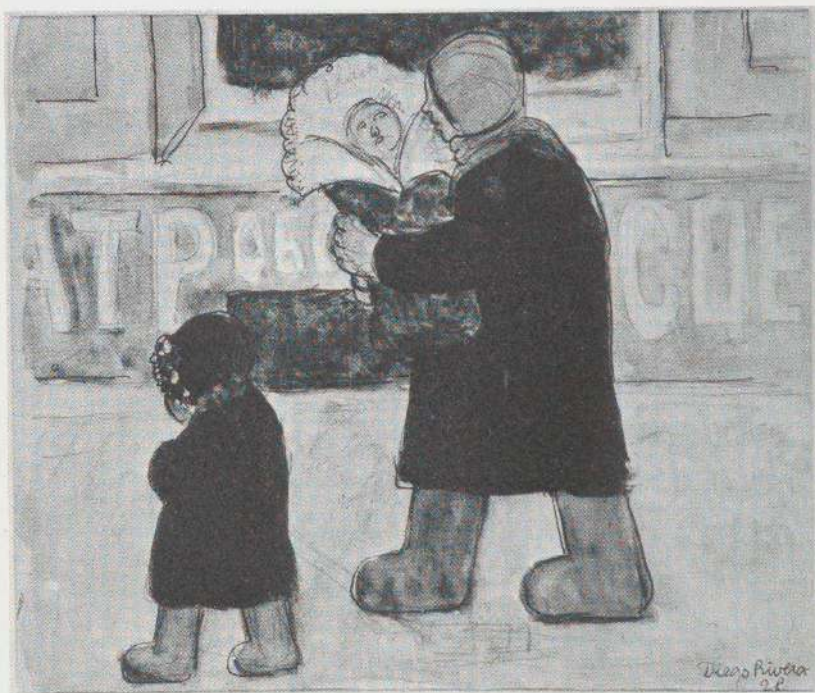
Watercolor, 6 x 8¾ inches

Collection the Artist

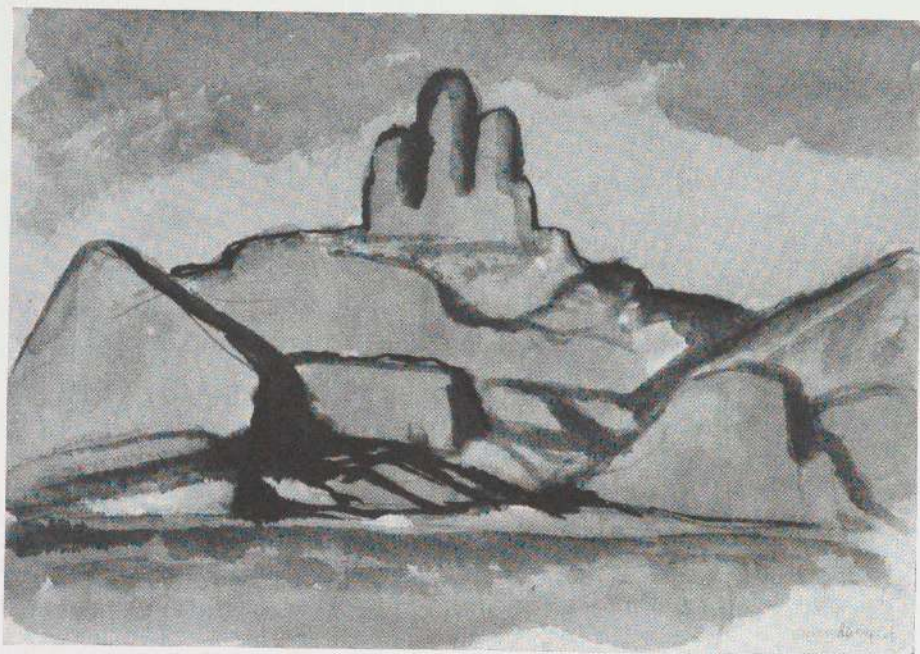
62 RUSSIAN MOTHER AND CHILD, 1928

Watercolor, 6½ x 7½ inches

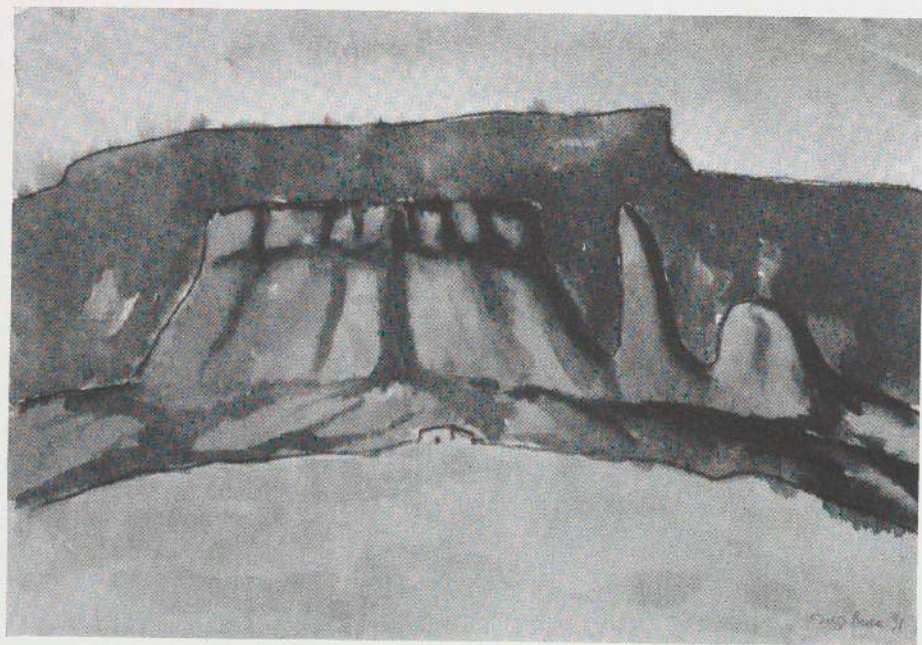
Private Collection, New York







75 ARIZONA, 1931  
 Watercolor, 11 x 15 inches  
 Collection the Artist



76 MESA, ARIZONA, 1931  
 Watercolor, 11 x 15 inches  
 Collection the Artist





81 PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN, 1918

Pencil, 18 x 11 inches

Collection Paul J. Sachs, Cambridge



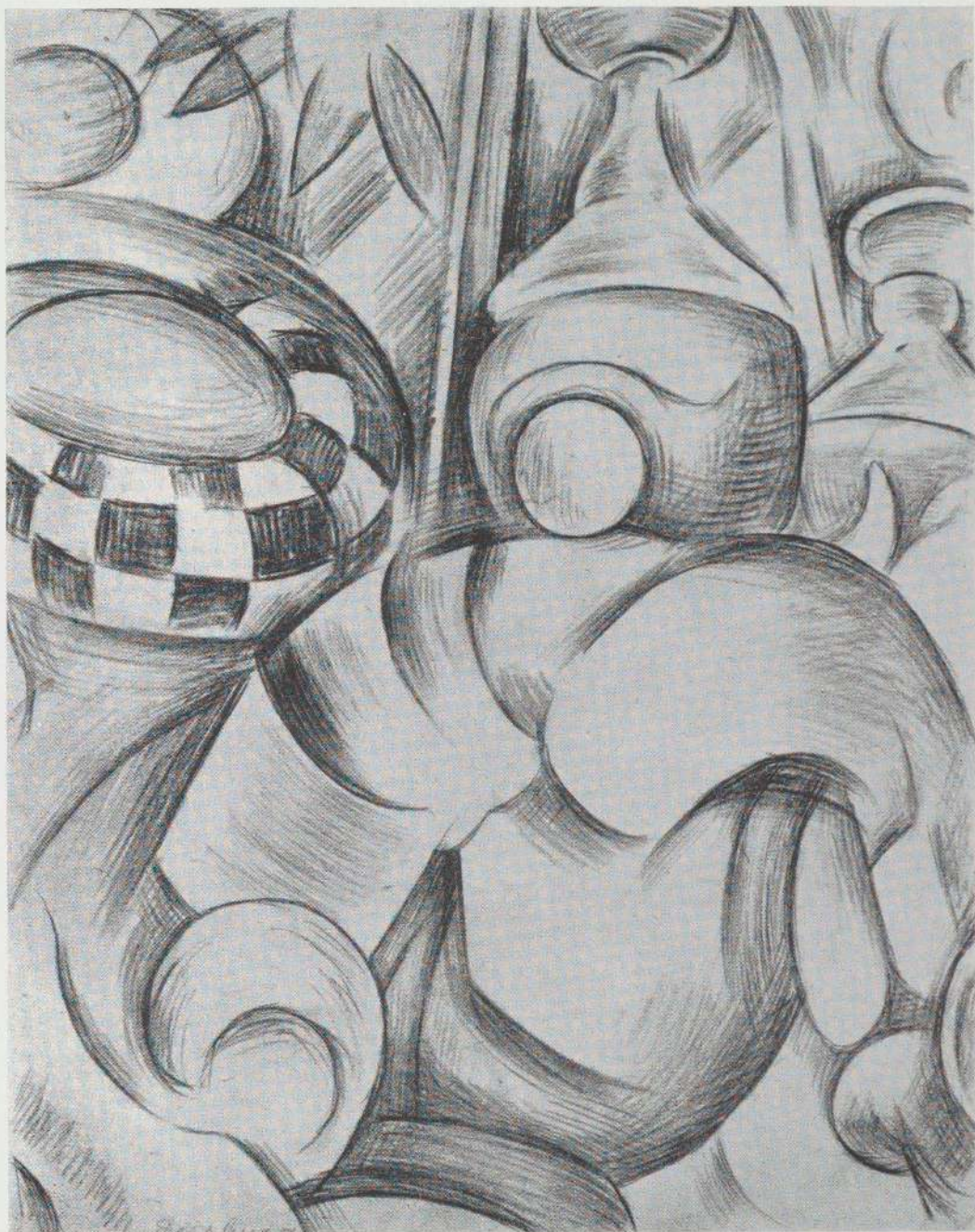


82 STILL LIFE 1918

Pencil, 17 x 13 inches

Private Collection, New York





85 ARMOR, 1921

Pencil,  $10\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$  inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City





89 STUDY OF HANDS, 1922

Sanguine, 24 x 18 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Collection The California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco



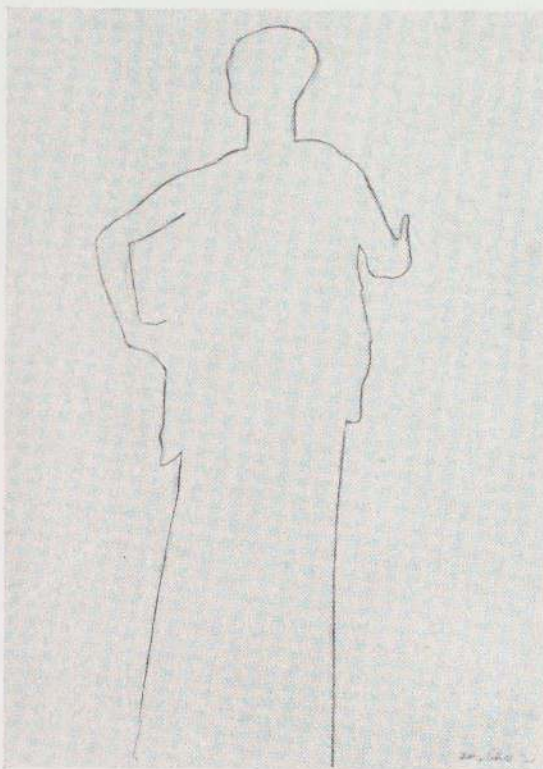


90 HEAD, 1921

*Crayon on brown paper, 14½ x 17⅜ inches*

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera, Mexico City

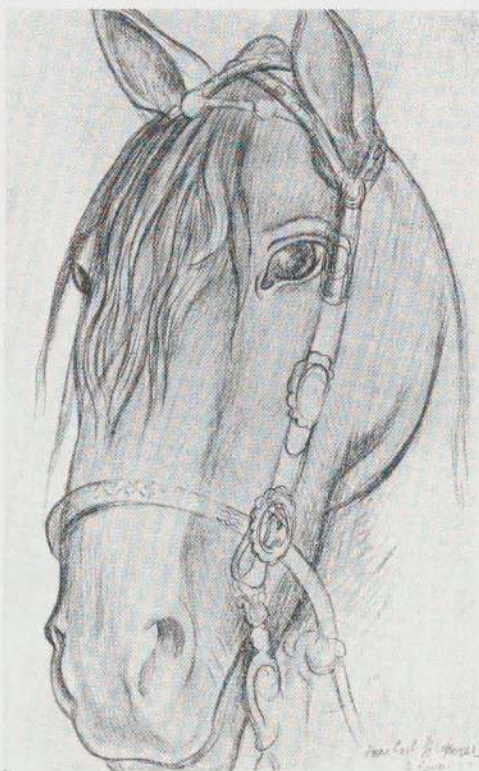




84 STANDING FIGURE, 1920

Pencil, 12 x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Collection Señora Frieda Kahlo de Rivera,  
Mexico City

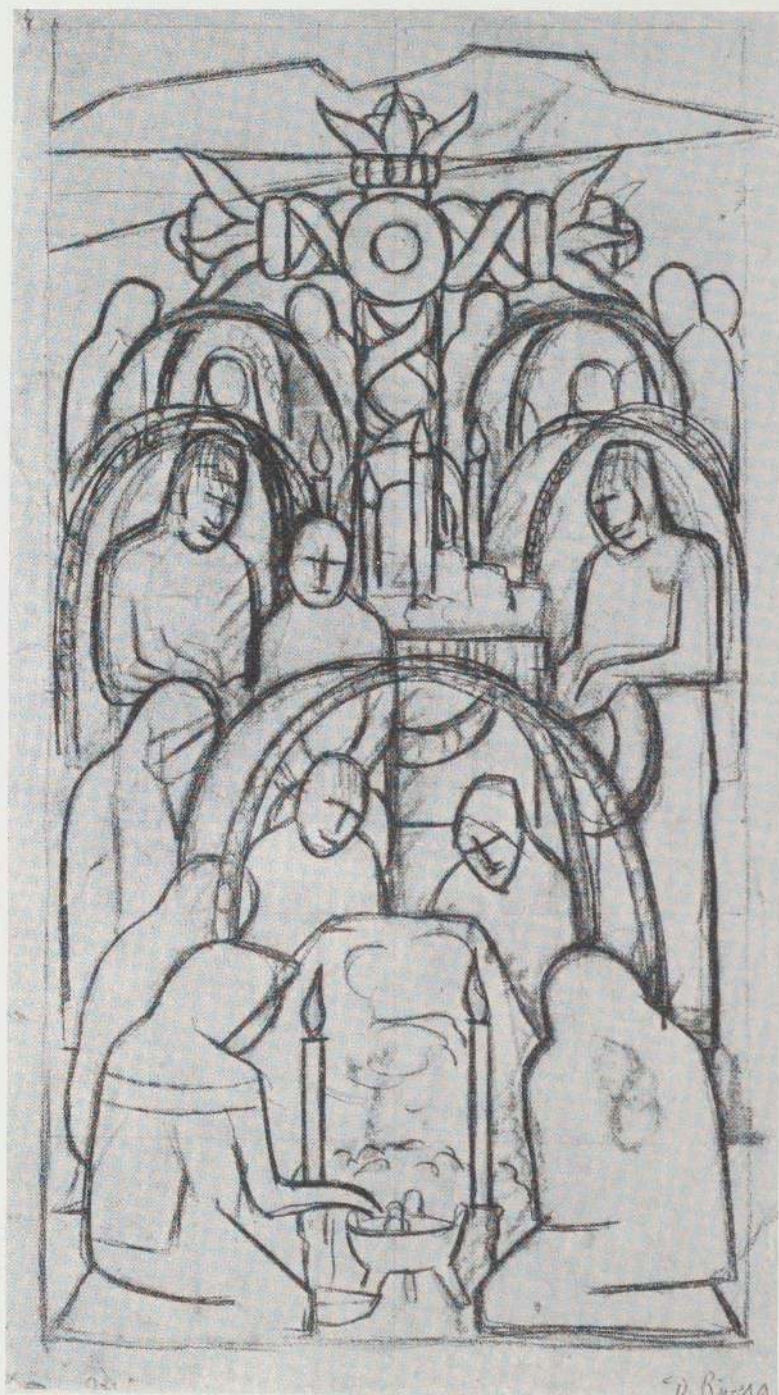


99 HEAD OF A HORSE, 1923

Pencil, 13 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

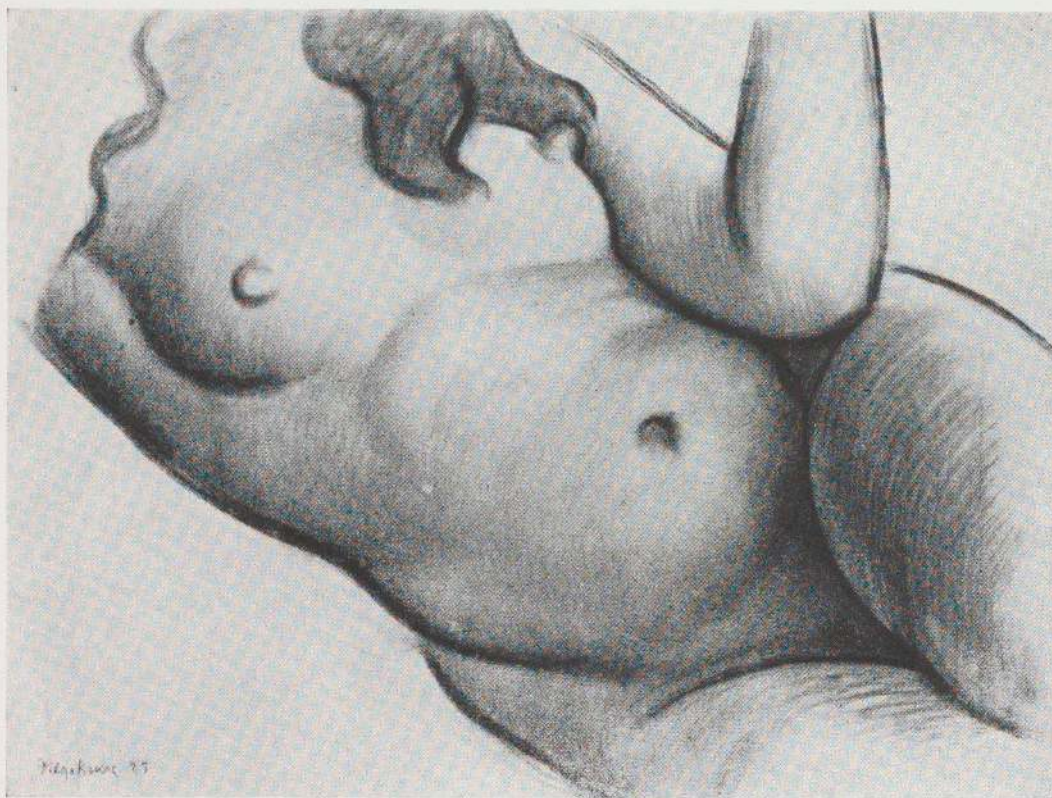
Private Collection, New York





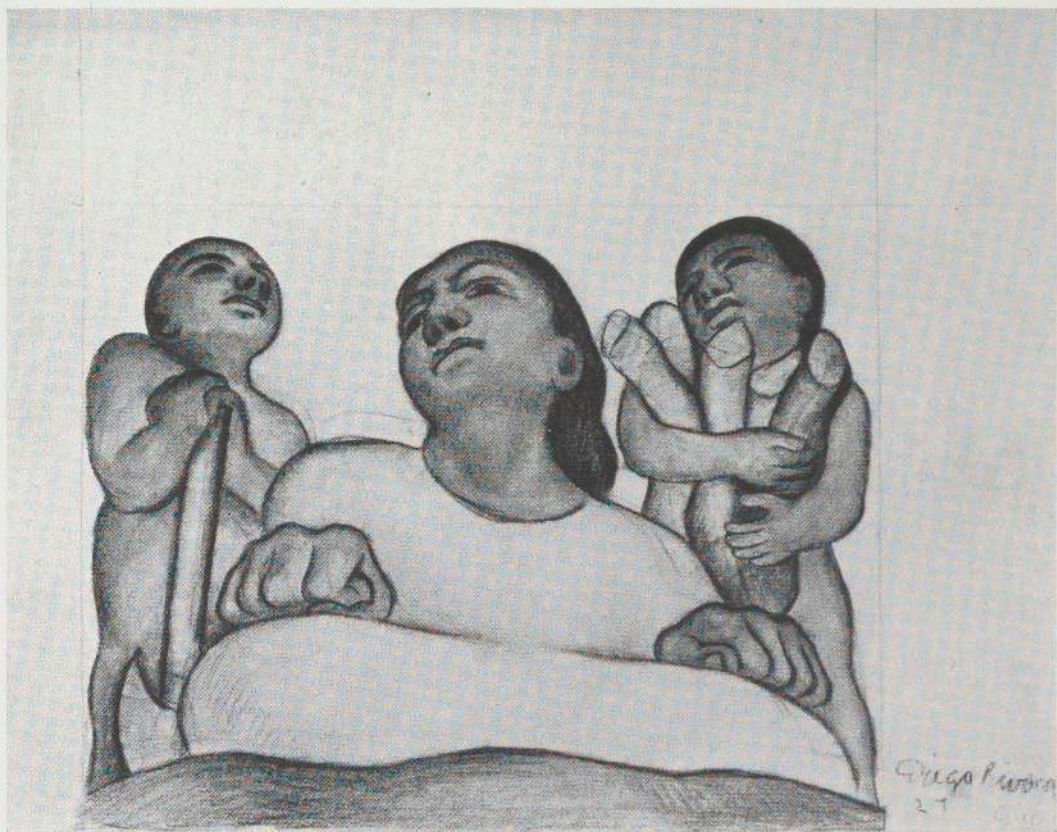
102A FEAST OF THE DEAD  
 Study for Fresco in the Ministry of Education, Mexico City  
 Private Collection





103 RECLINING NUDE, 1925  
Charcoal, 19 x 24½ inches  
Private Collection, New York





105 MURAL STUDY, 1927

Sanguine, 9¾ x 12½ inches

Private Collection, New York





106 SAWING RAILS, MOSCOW, 1927

Pencil Drawing, 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 19 inches

Private Collection, New York



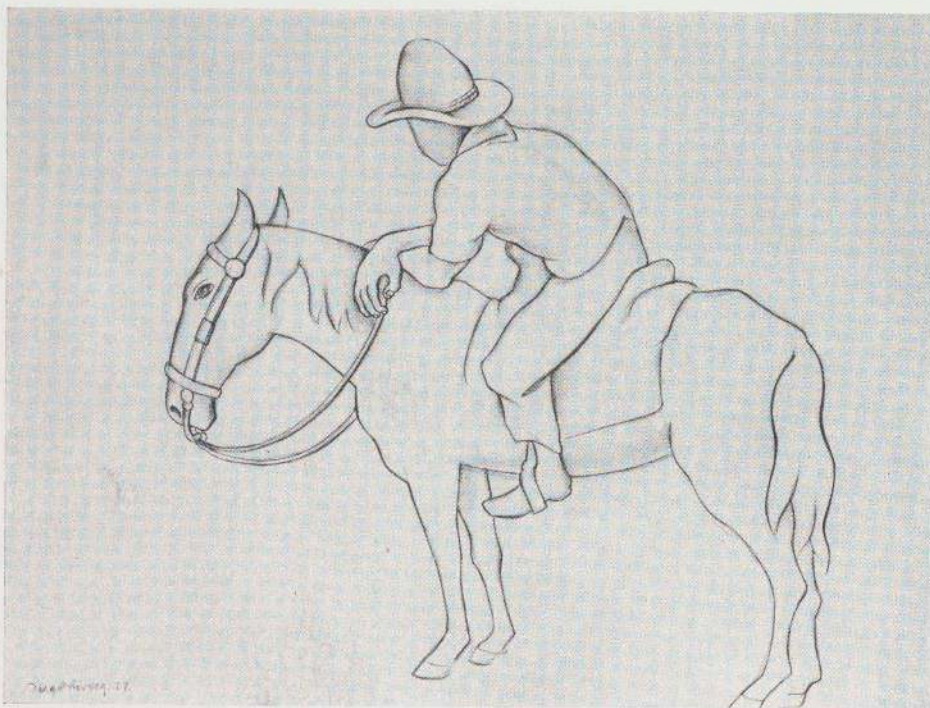


107 COMMUNISTS OF PARIS, 1928

Cartoon, 22 x 16 inches

Collection Dr. Hubert Herring, New York





109 MAN ON HORSE-BACK, 1927

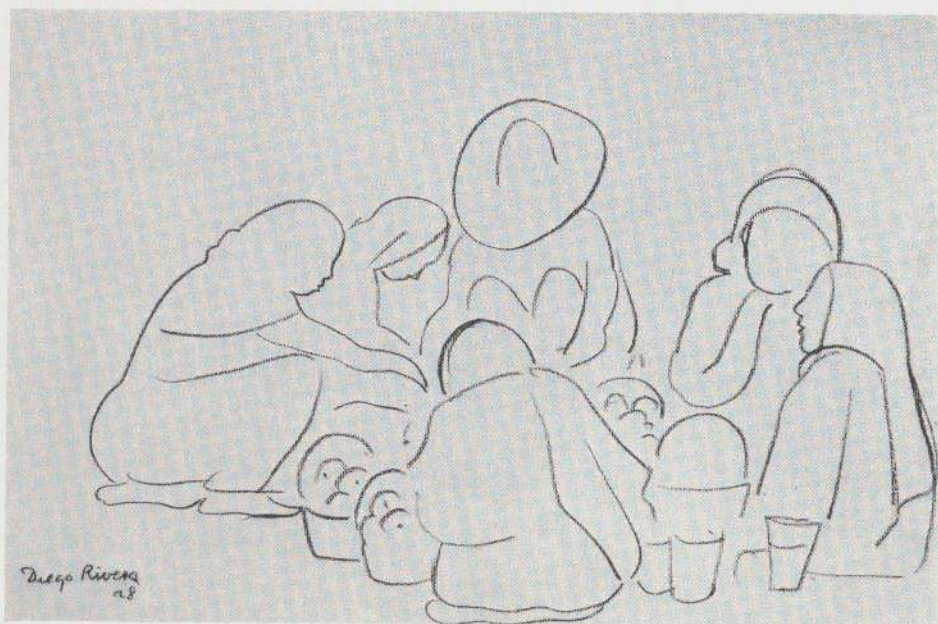
Pencil, 19 x 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Collection Detroit Institute of Arts

109A INDIAN FAMILY, 1928

Pencil

Private Collection, New York







114 MARSHALL, DISCOVERER OF GOLD IN CALIFORNIA

Study for the Fresco in the San Francisco Stock Exchange

Pencil, 24 x 18 inches

Collection The California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco





134 FRIAR VASCO DE QUIROGA  
*Charcoal Drawing, 32 x 62 inches, Collection the Artist*

135 FIRST INSURRECTION AGAINST THE SPANIARDS IN 1600  
*Charcoal Drawing, 32 x 62 inches, Collection the Artist*







116 MAN PLASTERING

Charcoal, 24 x 18½ inches

Study for the San Francisco Stock Exchange, 1931. Collection William Gerstle, San Francisco





DIEGO RIVERA

New York, December 11, 1931





AGRARIAN LEADER ZAPATA

*Fresco, 8 x 5 feet*

Variation of a design from the Cuernavaca series





SUGAR CANE

*Fresco*

Adaptation from a fresco in the Palace of Cortez at Cuernavaca





**LIBERATION  
OF THE PEON**

*Fresco, 5 x 8 feet*

Variation of a  
design from the  
fresco in the  
Ministry of  
Education,  
Mexico City

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