
MURAL ART

Traditionally *art* has been viewed as an exalted form, accessible only to those with high social or economic status. This unambiguous, albeit false, assumption has resonance in the present function of contemporary art. By and large, museums remain reified sites to view privileged objects mostly produced in Europe (or Euro-America). Social historians of art have frequently noted the ethnocentric, gender, and class bias found in most museum collections. In contrast, mural art operates in opposition by allowing community control over public space. Moreover, murals frequently permit the (re)telling of marginalized or oppressed narratives. Unlike easel painting and other fine art techniques, which are entirely about the rarefaction of a single object, the largeness and site-specificity of murals separate them from elite traditions in Western art.

Early in the 20th century, murals, as *in situ* paintings, began to use their particularity of location as direct political messages to those citizens that frequently encountered them. The most recognized revolutionary use of murals—that is, their inclusion of overt political content—materialized in Mexico in the early 1920s when postrevolutionary Secretary of Education José Vasconcelos hired radical artists, such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco (known as “los tres grandes”), to paint the interior walls of public buildings. These murals, inside state-owned architectural space, allowed the competing views of the working and peasant classes (mostly indigenous and *mestiza/o*) to intermingle with those of the state. In fact, these revolutionary murals commenced the dialogical process between the regulations of the state apparatus and the desires of the popular classes.

It is this inter-class dialogue, evoked through visual means, that makes mural art so socially engaging and politically important. Following in the footsteps of *los tres grandes*, murals have played an extraordinary role within global anti-colonial and civil rights movements. In the United States, community murals played an integral part in the black, American Indian, and

Chicana/o movements toward self-determination. Artists such as William Walker, Ray Patlán, and Mario Castillo were active in the Midwest, while collectives such as *Mujeres Muralistas* and *Artes Guadalupanes de Aztlán* were producing murals in the Southwest. Likewise, muralism and community art-making performed a fundamental function in the 1979 Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. Many artists demonstrated solidarity for this movement by forming “mural brigades” and traveling to Central America to create public art.

—Dylan A. T. Miner

See also Chicano Movement; Farmworkers' Movement; Graffiti Art; Mexican Muralists; Poster Art; Rivera, Diego

Further Readings

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MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood, also known as Muslim Brothers, or Muslim Brethren, is one of the most influential modern Islamic movements. Its name is derived from the verse of Qur'an stating that Muslims are nothing but brothers, and as this name suggests, the movement's major objective is to maintain unity and create a sense of brotherhood among Muslim fellows.

Although it has a well-operating organizational structure and detailed membership procedures, because of its broad social base, activist character, and openness to virtually every Muslim, it should be regarded as a movement, or a society, rather than a