

PLANNING A MURAL

Exhibition Focus: *California Mexicana: Missions to Murals, 1820-1930*

Background on Mexican Muralism

Between 1920 and 1970, the commissioning of mural paintings with socio-political, symbolic innuendos throughout Mexico rose to prominence in an effort to create a new, unified national identity after the Mexican Revolution. The three artists credited for spearheading the movement, a.k.a. “the big three,” were Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Together, their mural paintings brought a modernization of color and symbolic significance to many of Mexico’s centuries-old colonial and governmental buildings.

Lesson Overview

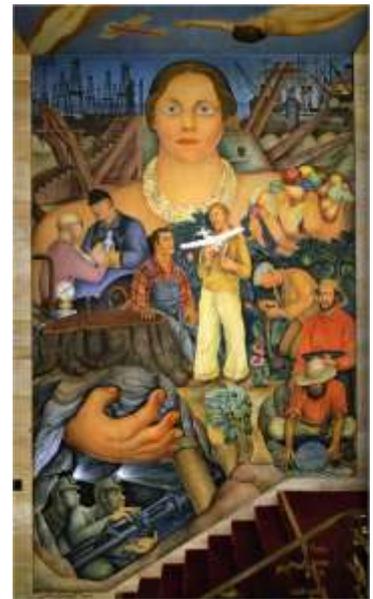
Though murals are most simplistically known as large-scale wall paintings, they usually possess a powerful and intricate symbolic vocabulary which tell us a story beyond the beauty of their artistry alone. Further, the process of translating a mural from its beginning sketches to a full-size masterpiece requires a skillful grid technique called “squaring up,” or the method of enlarging a small design to its full-size version via grid squares. Utilizing Diego Rivera’s *Allegory of California* as an example, students will create their own, personalized version of a mural, implementing their own symbolic ideas of either their town, their community, or of California at large to tell their own story and express their unique perspectives. They will learn both the symbolic integrity and technical mastery of mural-painting by translating their personalized mural from a small-scale, preliminary sketch to a larger-scale, finished product through the “squaring up” technique.

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn the importance of symbolism in muralism.
- Students will learn to produce murals like the pros utilizing the “squaring up” grid technique.
- Students will gain a new appreciation for the symbolic depth and technical production of mural painting.

Materials

- Image of Diego Rivera’s *Allegory of California* for reference
- Pencil and eraser
- Ruler for grid-making
- Small piece of paper for original sketch
- Large piece of paper for final product



Diego Rivera, *Allegory of California*
Fresco, 1883