

Diego Rivera, Art and life.

Picture show given by Erik Somer at the Mexican Cultural Institute, Copenhagen in 1999.



Self-portrait 1930.

Diego Rivera is in vogue to-day. These years a fantastic retrospective exhibition tours the United States and Mexico and later in 1999 there will be another Diego Rivera show at the Kunstforeningen in Copenhagen.

There may be several reasons for this. The end of the cold war makes us look with more tolerance upon great art created by dogmatic communists. Personally I like Rivera because he in my opinion is one of the most spectacular figurative painters of the 20th century - and I like figurative art.

But how was he as a human being?

A biographer of Andrea Mantegna - the renaissance painter whose influence upon Rivera has been mainly overlooked by art historians - said about Mantegna: "Mantegna gives us as many reasons to dislike him as any great artist". The same can be said about Rivera. So, if you don't want to loose

your illusions about the human ideality of great painters you better leave now.... OK.

This self-portrait of Rivera shows him at the age of 44 when he was at his highest.

Rivera was born in 1886 in Guanajuato, a rich silver mining town about 400 km North of Mexico city. It was a very conservative town which did not give him any support until his last years. His father was a school inspector, his mother a very religious woman of partly Indian origin. He was born as a twin, but his twin brother died as a baby. Already as a small boy he was very good in drawing. In his autobiography "My art, my life" he tells fantastic stories about his childhood. He claims, that he at the age of six went to church with his great-aunt Vicenta. During the sermon he went up to the altar and with many subtle theological arguments he expressed his opposition to the church and to clericals. This is the first of many myths in his autobiography. He has been called a mythomaniac and that is a proper term. Actually, we have a letter from him to aunt Vicenta written some years later, where he tells her that he soon has finished a house altar and wants her to make an embroidered cloth for it.

He also claims that he had his first experience of sexual love at the age of nine and that he was offered to join the Military Academy at the age of ten due to his capabilities to operate his army of cardboard soldiers.

In the mean time his family had moved to Mexico City, where Diego joined a Jesuit school. Due to his drawing abilities the schoolmaster recommended him for an artistic education and at the age of 13 he joined the San Carlos School of Fine Arts for evening classes and after further two years he joined the day classes. Most of his work from this period is of a purely academic nature.

The Threshing Floor 1904.



One of his teachers induced him to draw landscapes. This Picture is one that went to his first exhibition in 1906 arranged and supported by Gerardo Murillo, known mostly under his pseudonym Dr. Atl, one of the most active and stimulating personalities of his time, a brilliant painter, a scholarly intellect who had recently returned from a study tour to Europe. He induced Rivera to apply for a grant for studies in Spain. Rivera succeeded to get a scholarship from Governor Teodoro Dehesa of the State of Veracruz and a faithful supporter of the Dictator Porfirio Diaz, while the State of Gunaojuato where he was born declined to assist him.

He went to Europe early in 1907 and after studies in Spain where he felt particularly attracted to El Greco he toured Western Europe.



House over the Bridge, Bruges, 1909.

He painted this picture in 1909 in Belgium, where he studied Flemish masters. Here he met his companion for the next ten years: a Russian painter, Angelina Beloff.

El Greco, The Baptism of Christ.

I have already mentioned that he was inspired by El Greco. This picture painted in Toledo late in the 16th Century is typical for El Greco. Note the elongated, winding figures.





Adolfo Best Maugard. 1913.

This picture shows this influence. It is a portrait of Adolfo Best Maugard, a painter who became an important art educator in Mexico and an inspirator for Rivera's further development there.

In his autobiography Rivera tells that he immediately after his arrival in Paris became devoted to Cézanne. One morning he passed by the Art dealer Vollard and saw a beautiful Cézanne in the window. In the afternoon he still stood in front of the window. Vollard noticed him and eventually took another Cézanne out in the window in stead of the first one. Later on it was exchanged with a third and so on. Late at night Vollard came out and told him: I have no more. Whatever truth there is in the story there is absolutely no evidence of any direct influence of Cézanne on Rivera at this stage of his development. It all was El Greco.

In 1910 Rivera went home to Mexico for a short visit. He held an exhibition which was opened on the same day - November 20 - on which the Mexican Revolution begins. I here quote Octavio

Paz, the Mexican poet and essayist and Nobel Prize winner who wrote about this event: *Rivera did not realize that serious social upheavals were beginning. His exhibition was opened by Porfirio Diaz's wife and shortly after Rivera returned to Paris, again with the stipend of the Governor of Veracruz.*

Against this stands Rivera's story of his active participation in the revolution at the side of Zapata.

Motherhood. Angelina with little Diego 1916.

Little Diego, their son, died a year later. Under the influence of Picasso Rivera became a Cubist painter as you can see in this picture. Rivera once said that when Picasso announced his visit in Rivera's studio, Rivera had to hide all his latest pictures. If not, he would find them on Picasso's easel at his next visit there.

The truth is certainly the opposite: It was Rivera who copied Picasso.

Cubism soon divided into at least four groups which fought fiercely against each other. In 1917 Rivera took part in a discussion with the art critic Pierre Reverdy who attacked Rivera's way of painting. It is difficult to get into all the subtleties of the discussion but it may be explained by reminding that the theory of Cubism was based on a letter by Cézanne which was published after his death in 1906, where Cézanne says that everything in nature can be expressed by spheres, cones and



cylinders. This was taken very literal by most of the cubists, while Rivera maintained that these geometrical figures should go into the construction of a picture and not necessarily be shown directly in the picture. This discussion ended with a bodily attack on Reverdy by Rivera. This happening is known as "l'affair Rivera". It was the immediate end of Rivera's cubist period.



Angelina 1918

This is evident from the next picture he made of Angelina.

There is no trace of cubism here. Actually, the picture is mainly influenced by David's painting of Madame Recamier. He now passed a period where he painted with the palette of Renoir and the pen of Ingres. But finally he becomes totally Cézannesque.



Arcueil 1918.

This is clearly seen in this picture. We will come back to Arcueil in a moment, but let us first look at another of Rivera's relationships..



Marevna, Rue de la Gaité, Paris (about 1915).

This picture is drawn by Marevna, a young Russian painter. Being unfaithful to Angelina, Rivera had a serious affair with Marevna, resulting in a child - Marika. The picture drawn by Marevna shows some of the Bohemians: Rivera is number 3 from the left, Marevna number 4 from the left, Picasso number 2 from the right

Adam Fischer drawn by Rivera in 1918.

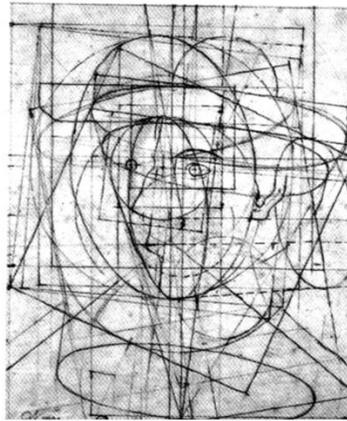
The landscape at Arcueil which we have just seen was painted by Rivera when visiting Adam Fischer who lived there. Adam Fischer came to Paris in 1913 as a painter but changed quickly to become a sculptor. He was married to Ellen, also painter. In 1916 they moved to Arcueil where they lived until 1933, when they returned to Denmark. In 1917 they both started studies at the Art school of André Lhote, but were not to happy about it. One of their colleagues told them: André knows nothing, it's Rivera who knows it. So they went to see Rivera and became his best friends. The Fischer family took care of



Angelina and Marevna after Rivera returned to Mexico in 1921. Rivera soon stopped any contact with the two women. Marika, Marevna's daughter became the playmate of Fischer's daughter. Marika was never formally recognized by Rivera as his daughter. She became a ballet dancer and lives in London. Both Angelina and Marevna continued their career as painters.

Adam Fischer's stele of Rivera 1918.

Adam Fischer made this sculpture in 1918. His daughter presented it to the Danish State Museum of Art. For many years it stood in the lobby of the museum, but now it is in the museum's store. I was not permitted to take a photograph of it, so this a poor slide taken from a publication. I think that this is the only sculpture that exists of Rivera. Adam Fischer was also the first one who told the Danish public about Diego Rivera's art. This he did in an article in the magazine "Klingen" in 1918.

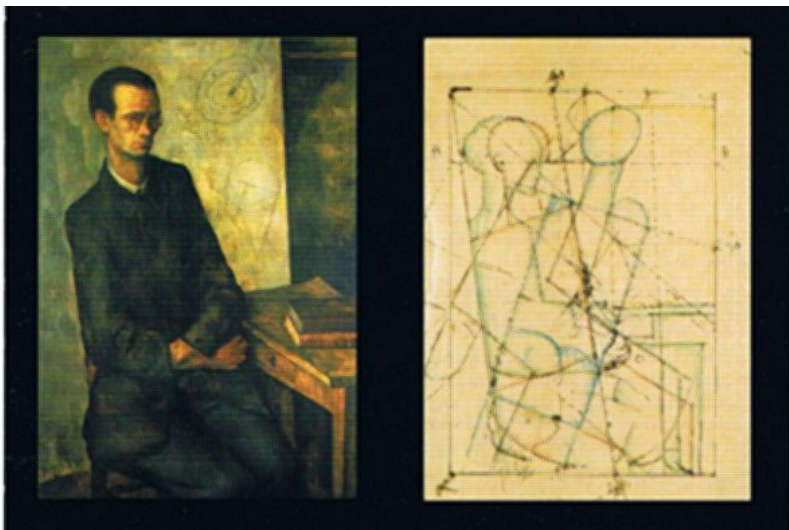


Georg Jacobsen: The Convent Schoolgirl, 1921

Georg Jacobsen was one of Rivera's Danish friends in Paris. Jacobsen was a bricklayer who started to study architecture at the Danish Academy of Art. Soon he changed to painting. In 1919 he went to Paris and built himself a house in Arcueil close to the Fischers. He and Rivera agreed on the importance of a careful construction of a painting -

mainly in the sense of Cézanne. The picture here is shown together with its construction draft.

They had many discussions about this issue. Jacobsen's deep understanding of construction caused Rivera to promise him a professorship at the Academy of Art in Mexico City. After Rivera's return to Mexico Jacobsen had already prepared everything for the move to Mexico, but Rivera did not get any permanent position at the Academy and so nothing came out of it. Both Jacobsen and the Fischers were presented or bought paintings by Rivera. Thanks to them we have a number of Rivera's paintings in Denmark



The Mathematician 1918.

This picture by Rivera is shown here with together with its construction draft. It demonstrates how Rivera applied Jacobsen's principles in his paintings.

José Vasconcelos and Rivera 1923.



Now I must tell you about a person who had the greatest possible influence on Rivera's further development in Mexico. It is José Vasconcelos, who during the Mexican revolution was Rector of the University in Mexico City and after the revolution was appointed Minister of Public Education by president Obregon.

I will introduce him with the words of Octavio Paz: *Our revolution brought forth, as in the delivery of a child, an unknown Mexico. Except that the child that was born in 1921 had existed for centuries: It was the popular and traditional Mexico, hidden by the previous regime... This was the idea that inspired the new regime and particularly the Minister of Public*

Education José Vasconcelos. A man of genius. He believed in the mission of art. He also believed in freedom and therefore forced no aesthetic or ideological dogma on the artists.

Vasconcelos wanted to promote the national identity of Mexicans by showing them the splendour of their past and the possibilities of their future. As a means he wanted to decorate public buildings with paintings to demonstrate this. He supported several painters in their study. He wanted Rivera to familiarize himself with the frescos and other art of the Italian renaissance and ensures a stipend for a years study in Italy. After his return he and other painters went on a study tour through Mexico with Vasconcelos in order to learn about the art of the pre-Columbian past and about folks art.

The Creation 1922-23.

The first important mural after his return is "The Creation" in the Simon Bolivar Amphitheatre of the National Preparatory School in Mexico City. It is an allegorical composition with mythological and religious motifs.

In the niche, where there is an organ, we see a figure reminding of Pantocreator, who opens his arms over a world of animals and plants. At the top



a symbol, which could represent the Divine Trinity with blessing hands. It also follows old Egyptian iconography of Aton, the symbol of the creative sun. At the bottom Eva and Adam. Over them on both sides the nine Muses. And on the next level the Christian Virtues: From the left: Love, Hope and Faith and on the right side: Prudence, Justice and Strength. In the sky Wisdom and Science. Everything is in classical renaissance style, where similar allegories are common. The figures are based on life models. Eva is Rivera's next partner: Guadalupe Marin. Note that the picture does not have any political, ideological tendency. The painting technique is encaustic, which means that the pigments were applied suspended in molten wax. A complicated technique which already the old Egyptians knew.

Ministry of Public Education. Court of Labour.



For five years from 1923 to 28 Rivera worked at the Ministry of Education. The building which originally was a Jesuit convent surrounds two courtyards. The first yard called Court of Labour has frescos symbolizing the political vision of the Mexican people. There are 235 frescos covering about 1600 sq.m.

The Sugar Mill 1923.

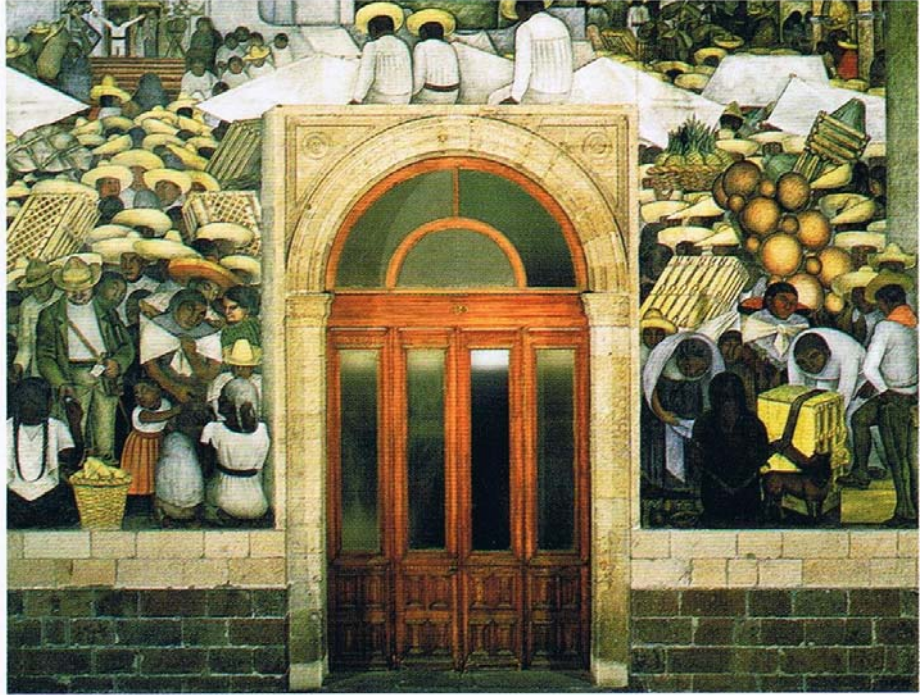
On the ground floor are shown industrial and agricultural activities. This slide is called the Sugar Mill.



Liberation of the Peon 1923.

There are also frescos symbolizing revolutionary and post revolutionary activities. This fresco is called Liberation of the Peon meaning that only death liberates the agricultural work hand. This series is often based on religious iconography. Here the Entombment of Christ.

The Market 1924,
The other courtyard
is called Court of
Fiestas. The ground
floor shows
sceneries from the
festive life of the
Mexicans.
Here a market
scene.



Tina Modotti: Workers Parade. 1926.

The market scene is inspired by a photography taken by Tina Modotti, called Workers Parade. Tina Modotti was a very colourful person, born in Italy, moved to California as a child, became movie star in Hollywood, went to Mexico with the famous American Photographer Edward Weston as his mistress and photographic apprentice. Became a highly skilled photographer herself. We will hear more about her soon.

Siqueiros, Orozco, Rivera 1947.
This slide shows the 3 foremost
muralists who all worked for
Vasconcelos: Siqueiros, Orozco and
Rivera. In 1923 they formed
a trade union of painters and
sculptors. Siqueiros wrote the
manifesto. It is a revolutionary
text like many others that
appeared in those years in various
countries, but it is not a
Marxist text.



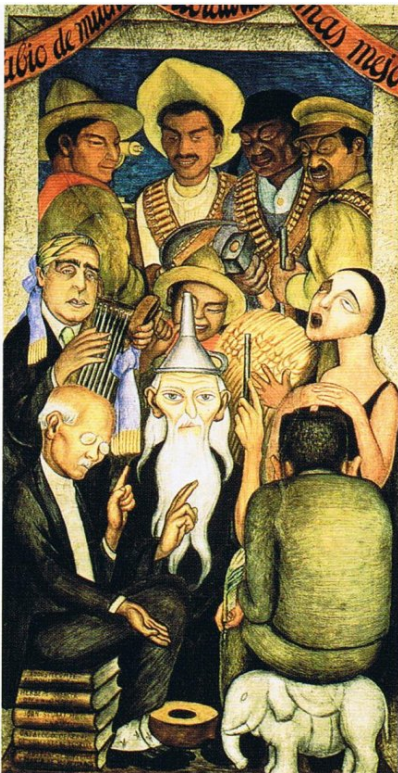


**May Parade of the
Syndicate of
Painters and
Sculptors 1929.**

This photo taken by Tina Modotti shows a parade of the trade union with Rivera and his 3rd wife Frida Kahlo in the front.

Worker reading El Machete, Tina Modotti 1927.

The trade union issued a periodical called El Machete. Let us hear what Octavio Paz tells about it: *Soon El Machete ceased to be an artists' publication and increasingly became an organ for Communist propaganda. The first stage of muralism was coming to an end. Siqueiros joined the Communist Party, to which he remained faithful until his dying day. Rivera too became a convert. With characteristic exuberance, he laid down articles of faith and anathemas against what he had loved and thought only a few months before.*



Los Científicos (The Learned) 1928.

This fresco called "Los Científicos" is a caricature of a number of well known bourgeois intellectuals. On the elephant in the foreground sits Vasconcelos.

Let us continue with the quotation from Octavio Paz: *On a wall of the Ministry of Education he painted a caricature of his benefactor: José Vasconcelos. Cria cuervos y te sacarán los ojos.* (Raise crows and they will pluck out your eyes).

Vasconcelos resigned in 1924 disillusioned about the development of the muralists. His ideas of liberty and freedom were converted by the muralists to dogmatic communism.

The arsenal 1928.



As an example we can look at this fresco, called the Arsenal or Distribution of the Arms situated on the second floor of the Court of Fiestas. It is based on a Corrido, a popular type of song in Mexico written by Rivera and called "So will be the proletarian revolution". We can see the words of the Corrido in the red band on the top.

The central figure is Frida Kahlo, who became Rivera's wife after a separation from Guadalupe Marin. More about that in a moment. Frida hands out weapons to revolutionary soldiers. To the far left Siqueiros. To the right Tina Modotti with her lover Julio Antonio Mella, a Cuban revolutionary who fought the Cuban dictator Machado. A few years later Mello was shot dead while walking in the street arm-in-arm with Tina. Tina was accused of having hired the killer because she was said to have become tired of Mella. She was held by the police. But thanks to the influence of Rivera she was freed. The person with the black hat looking at Tina is Vittorio Vidali, a Stalinist agent, who became Tina's lover after Mella's death. There are strong indications that he was the actual killer of Mella (and later on in 1942 also of Tina). (All this is described in detail in my lecture about Tina Modotti (in Danish)).

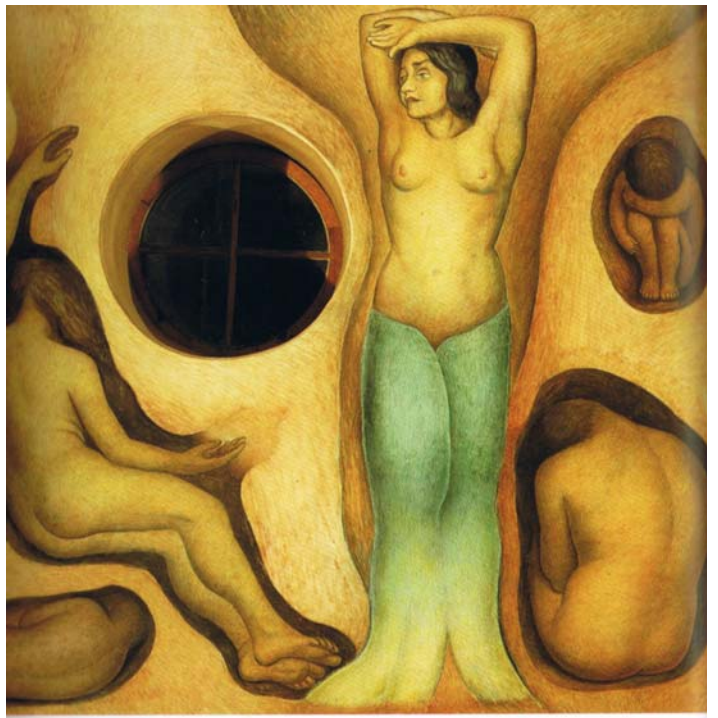


Chapingo. The elements and the technical man. 1926-27.

Before Rivera had finished his frescos at the Ministry of Education he decorated the chapel of the Agricultural University at Chapingo about 40 km north of Mexico City. This beautifully decorated chapel has been called the Sixtine Chapel of the Americas. Here we see the end wall of the chapel with a fresco showing the fecund earth and the elements water, fire, air and earth tamed by man. The person symbolizing the earth is Rivera's wife Guadalupe Marin, who at that time was pregnant with her first child, a daughter also called Guadalupe. Many of you may remember her when she gave a conference here at the institute a few years ago. But Rivera also used other life models.

Germination with Tina Modotti.

Tina Modotti was the model for a fresco at Chapingo symbolizing germination of a seed. As with other of his nude models Rivera became the lover of Tina. When his wife Guadalupe became aware of this it ignited an eruption in the Rivera household. Very quickly Rivera left Mexico for a visit to the Soviet Union. He returned after half a year totally disillusioned about the Soviet bureaucracy and the limitations for artistic expressions there. In the meantime Guadalupe had found another companion and short after his return Rivera meets Frida Kahlo at one of Tina Modotti's weekly parties.





Frida Kahlo: Frida and Diego 1931.

The next year - 1929 - he marries Frida. This picture Frida made after a wedding photography. Let us look for a moment at Rivera's relationship with women:

Lucia Maya: The Elephant and the Dove 1985

This drawing by Lucia Mayo is one version. It is based on the picture we just have seen. Frida is now just a doll in Diego's hand. The drawing is called the elephant and the dove after a nickname used by Frida's family for the relationship between the two.



Frida Kahlo: Diego, Me and Señor Xolotl. 1949 (Detail).



Here Diego is a little baby in Frida's arms. (Señor Xolotl is the dog in the lower left corner).

Rivera: Dream of a Sunday Afternoon at the Alameda 1947-48. (Detail)

We will come back later to this picture - one of Rivera's most outstanding works. For the time being let us only look at Diego and Frida. Here Diego is a little boy whom Frida protects with her hand. Diego has a toad in his pocket. He was often called "toad" as a nickname.



Rivera: Drawing of Diego as a toad.

In this greeting card Diego draws himself as a toad. Both Angelina Beloff and Guadalupe Marin record that Diego always was dirty, wore dirty underwear and had a bad smell.

Let us also hear, what Octavio Paz says about the relationship between Diego and Frida: *Frida had always something of a young man about her: The pronounced mustachelike hair under her upper lip.*

When she was young she was fond of dressing as a man. Frida's masculinity manifests itself also in her bisexuality: Her great passion were women. Her fat, spongy figure was that of a young boy to his



relationship with Diego - a immense, oceanic mother.



Rivera: Natasha Gelman. 1943.

How can a such a person become the lover of some of the world's most attractive women, here Natasha Gelman, the wife of a wealthy film producer. I don't understand it.

Note how her dress and attitude compares to the beauty of the calla flowers. The calla was Rivera's favourite flower.

Hayden Herrera, Frida Kahlo's biographer tells, that many American lady tourists went to Mexico for two purposes: 1. To see the Pyramides at Teotihuacan 2. to go to bed with Diego.

Herera adds: Both attractions were easily accessible.



Diego's house in San Angel.

In 1930 Rivera had a house and studio built for himself and Frida at San Angel in the South of the town. They moved there from Frida's house in Coyoacán. The architect was O'Gorman, who is mostly known for his wonderful mosaics at the Library of the University of Mexico City (see my lecture on Art and Artists at UNAM).

In order to make it easier to have his small escapades the house is divided into two: The blue one for Frida and the other one for himself. Only a bridge connects these two buildings.

Zapata, Palace of Cortés, Cuernavaca 1929-30.



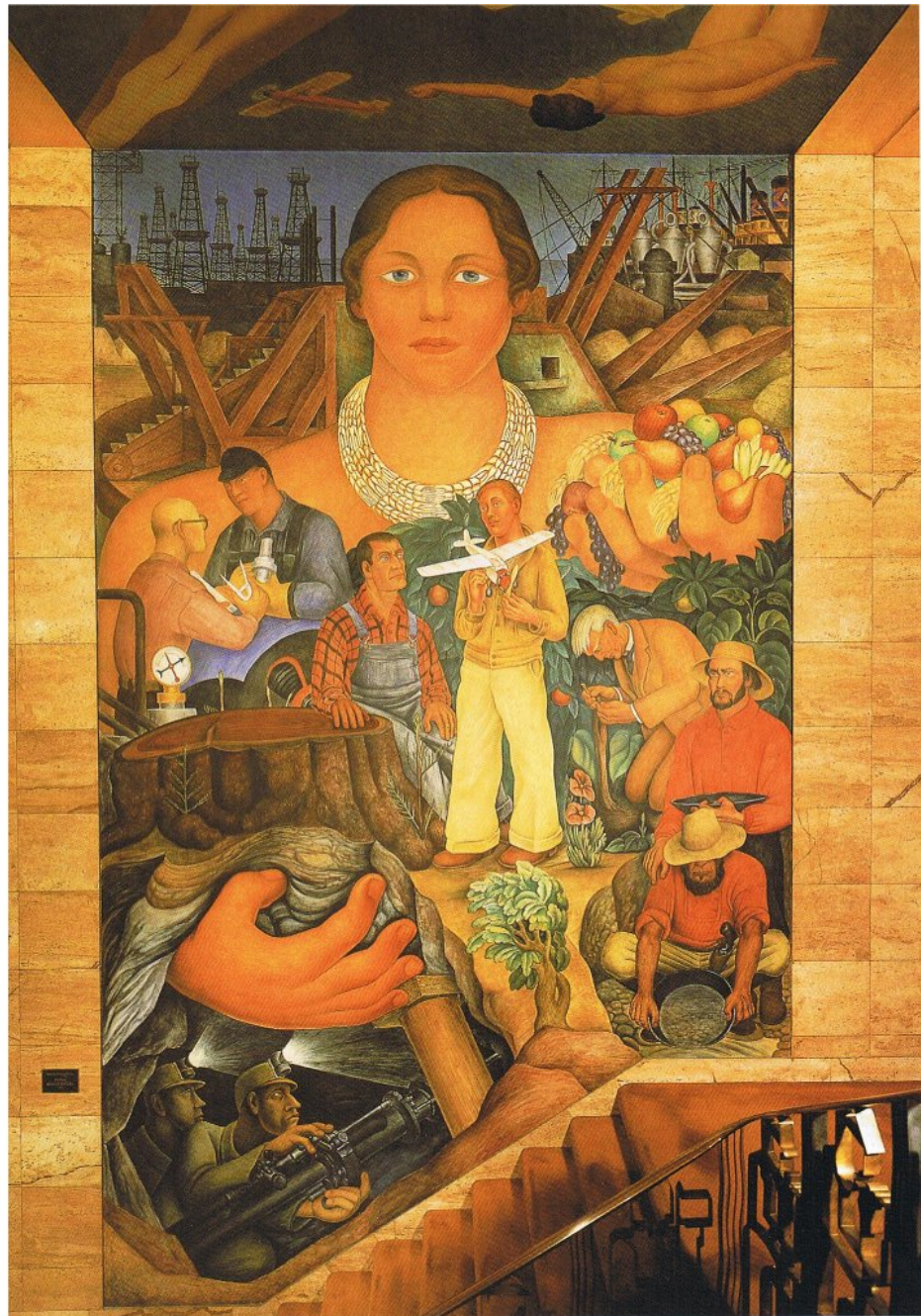
In 1929 the U.S. ambassador Dwight Morrow commissioned Rivera to paint murals for the Palace of Cortés in Cuernavaca as a symbol for the wish of the USA to improve its relations with Mexico. This wonderful fresco of Zapata is part of this work.

In the same year Rivera was expelled from the Mexican Communist party for disobedience to its politics working for the capitalist USA.

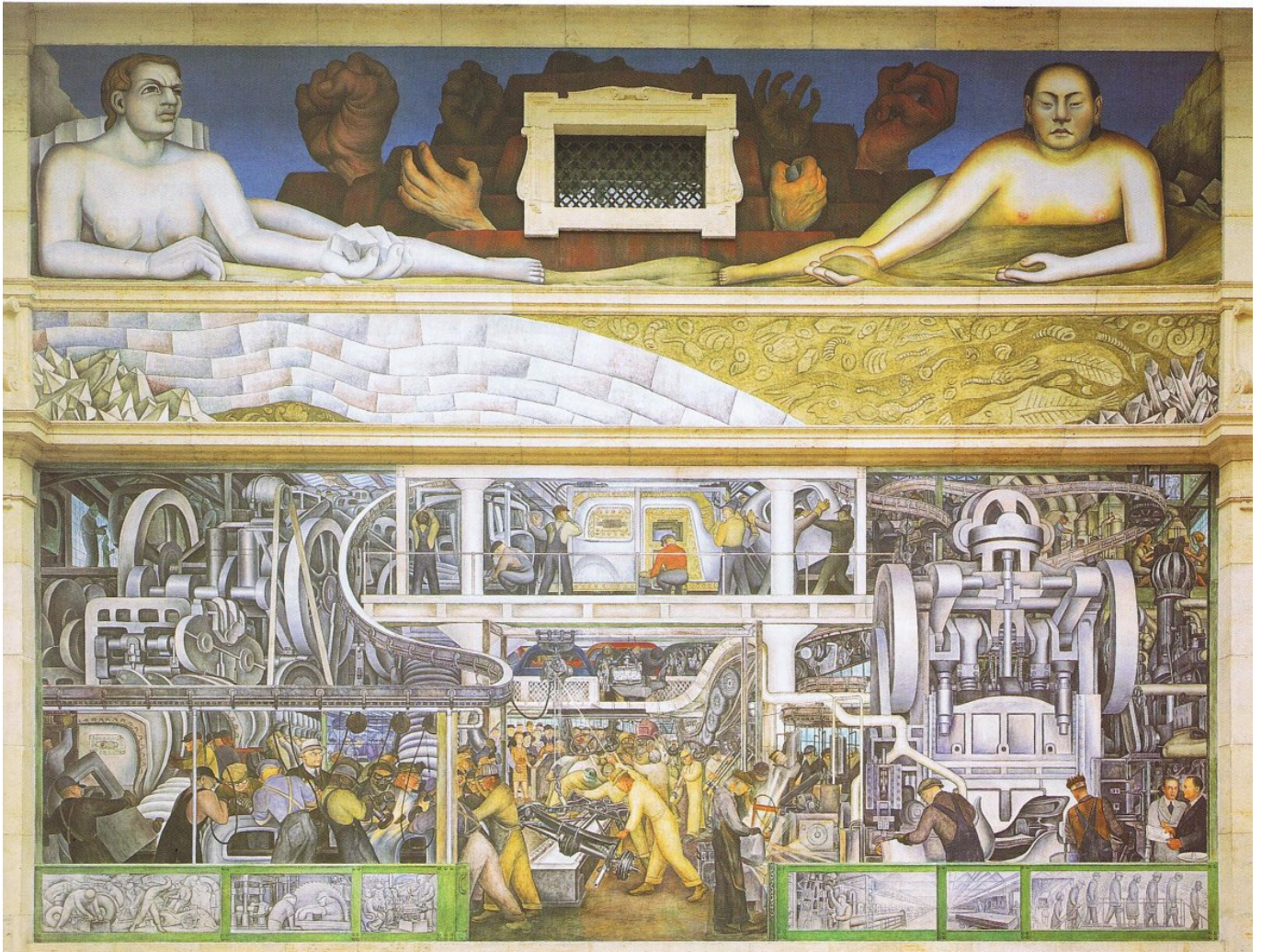
The Cuernavaca murals raised much interest in the USA and Rivera's depart from the Communist Party made it possible for him to accept an invitation to come to the US. In 1930 Frida and Diego arrive in San Francisco where a large retrospective exhibition was arranged for Rivera.

Allegory of California. 1930-31.

He was asked to make a mural for the San Francisco Stock Exchange. This is the result: An Allegory of California. The central figure is after the tennis champion Helen Wills Moody. But there are also other well known figures. To the right below Helen we see Luther Burbank, the famous plant breeder. We also note scientific activities, prospecting, mining, off-shore oil production and port activities. Many felt provoked that he used a tennis star as a symbol of California, but Rivera noted that when he was there she was on every bodies lips. Of course he also had an affair with her.



Detroit Industry 1932-33



His work in San Francisco led to other commissions in the US.

Henry Ford's son Edsel asked him to come to Detroit in order to decorate a hall in the Detroit Institute of Arts. After careful studies in the Ford Motor works he executes the marvellous frescos called Detroit Industry. In one of the few major modern works which successfully incorporate representation of functional machines, Rivera transformed their physical power and practical design into dynamic images and sensual forms. We here see the South wall. The central panel at the top represents the white and Asian races depicting holding limestone and sand respectively - two of the minerals that are used in the making of a car. The North Wall shows similarly the black and red race with other minerals. Below are the geological strata of the materials. The major panel shows the production of the cars exterior. We see conveyor belts and a stamping press. This press corresponds to the monumental sculptural form of an Aztec deity, the Mothergoddess Coatlicue.



Coatlicue



Man, Controller of the Universe. 1933-34.

Now Rivera was commissioned by Rockefeller to decorate the lobby of the Rockefeller Center in New York. The resulting mural has several titles: One is: Man at Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future. During the painting of the mural it was noticed that Rivera had included the face of Lenin. (left centre). Nelson Rockefeller asked Rivera to replace this face with that of an anonymous individual. Rivera refused. He got his payment and was dismissed. Later on the picture was painted over. The next year Rivera painted a replica of the mural at the Palace of Fine Art in Mexico City. Here we see the replica.

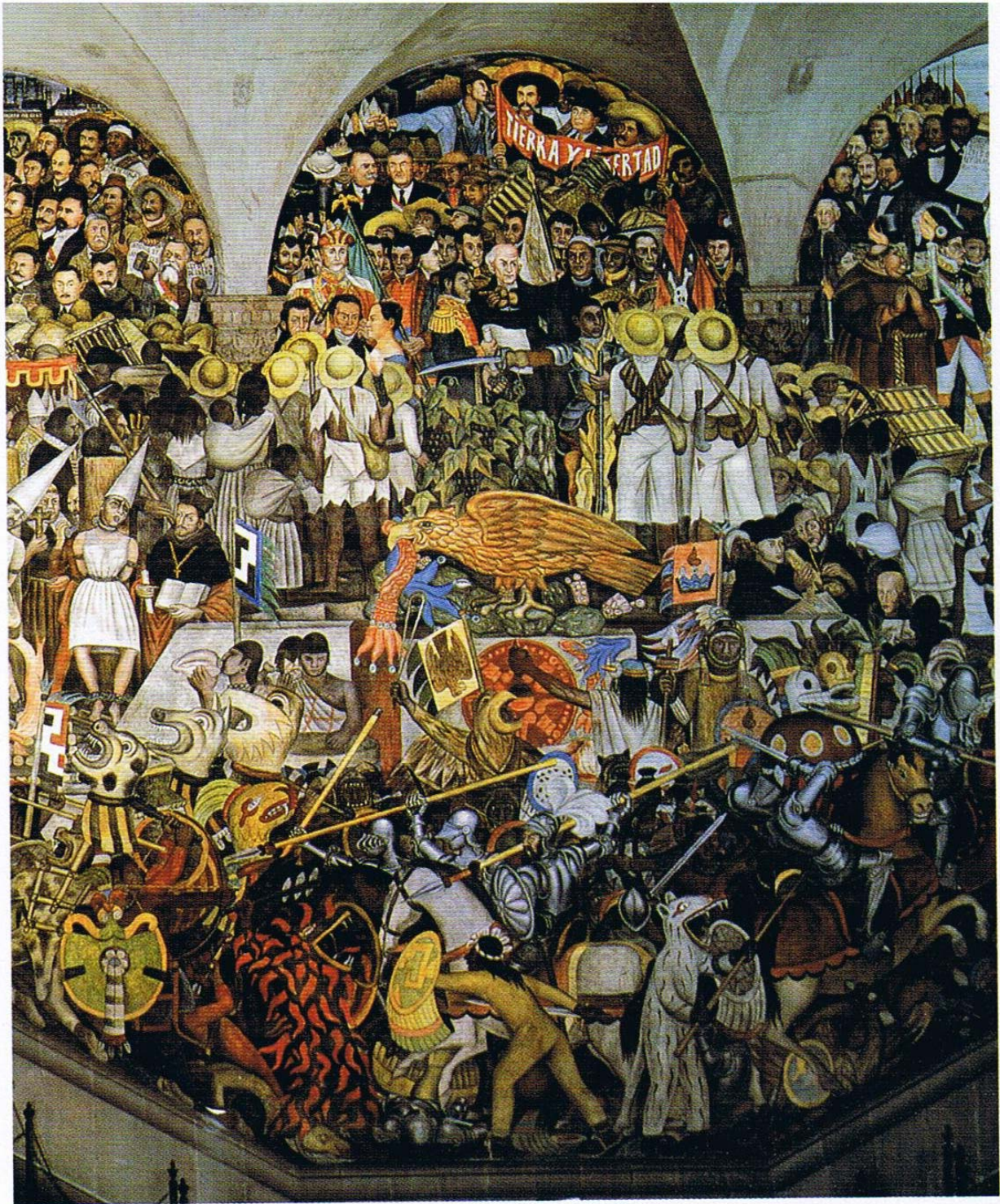
National Palace, North Wall, The History of Mexico. The precolumbian era. 1929 -35.

Already before Rivera left for the USA he was asked to paint murals for the National Palace in Mexico City. The work was carried out with many interruptions between 1929 and 1935.

A series of frescos on the stairway up to the first floor depict the history of Mexico. This picture shows the end of the pre-Columbian era. The central figure is Quetzalcoatl here shown as a white man. We also see Quetzalcoatl in the sky as the plumed snake. Furthermore the picture shows a number of pre-Columbian symbols and rites. The sun at the top is turned upside down foreshadowing the close of the era.



National Palace, West Wall, The History of Mexico, 1929-35.



It is impossible within the framework of this lecture to go into details of this colossal work with many 100 figures and sceneries and an overview picture as this one can only demonstrate this. Just a few details are discernable. We have the Mexican state symbol with the snake eating eagle in the centre. Over the eagle we may be able to see Father Hidalgo, who with his cry in 1810 started the Mexican liberation from Spain. To the left an autodafé of Indians and at the bottom a fight between conquistadores and masked Indians.



Dream of a Sunday Afternoon at the Alameda. 1947-48.

I now return to a picture we have heard about before. This mural was commissioned for the Hotel Prada across the Alameda Park in central Mexico City in 1947. The park is popular for walks on Sunday afternoon and we see here about 100 historical persons on a walk. The Central Figure is Calavera Catrina, the skeleton which appears on many prints made by the engraver José Posada in the beginning of the century. We see Posada to the right of the skeleton. To the left Frida and Diego and then the wife and daughter of the dictator Porfirio Díaz. Díaz himself is seen to the right of the balloon. This slide shows only the central part of the mural.



Dream, Detail with El Nigromante.

Here we see a detail from the left side of the mural. At the top we see Don Benito Juárez, leader of Mexico's liberals and president 1857-72, who fought successfully against the Catholic church, the French invasion and Emperor Maximilian. Under him a person is holding a letter. It is Ignazio Ramirez, called El Nigromante, who in a speech at Letrán in 1836 declared god to be "non-existent". The letter in the mural reads "Dios no existe". This caused terrible protests from the public and from the hotel owner who catered for many

clericals. Rivera refused to delete these words and as a result the mural was covered with a curtain. Many years later, when Rivera felt his end coming near he declared that he was a Catholic and changed the text of the letter to just "The Conference of Letrán 1836". Hotel Prado was destroyed by the earthquake in 1985. However, the mural was saved and a museum built for just this mural in the Alameda Park.

Diego and Posada from a children book.



Diego had never seen anything like Posada's pictures of Mexican legends and everyday events. He thought Posada's drawings were so full of energy and life that they might jump off the page at any moment.

I have to come back to the central figure of the mural: Posada, whose work recently has been exhibited here in the cultural institute. In his autobiography Rivera claims that from his earliest years Posada was his greatest inspiration and this is told by many of his biographers as well as in this children book about Diego Rivera. This again is a myth. There is no evidence in his work or written material that he has been in any way influenced by Posada. Posada appears for the first time in Rivera's painting in one of the frescos in the National Palace painted in 1929 and this happened recently after an exhibition of Posada's work and an article written by a French immigrant artist Jean Charlot, who brought Posada to the attention of his fellow muralists. (There is more about Charlot in my picture show "Art and Artists at UNAM")

Rivera, Trotsky and André Breton 1938.



After being expelled from the Communist Party Rivera turned towards Trotsky who was in fierce opposition to Stalin. When Trotsky in 1936 needed a political asylum, Rivera went to president Lázaro Cárdenas, who agreed to give Trotsky refuge. Trotsky arrived in January 1937 and came to live in Frida's and Diego's house in Coyoacán, known as Frida's house. André Breton, the philosopher of the Surrealists came to see Rivera and Trotsky in 1938. This led Rivera to paint a number of paintings in surrealist manner.



Temptations of Saint Anthony. 1947.

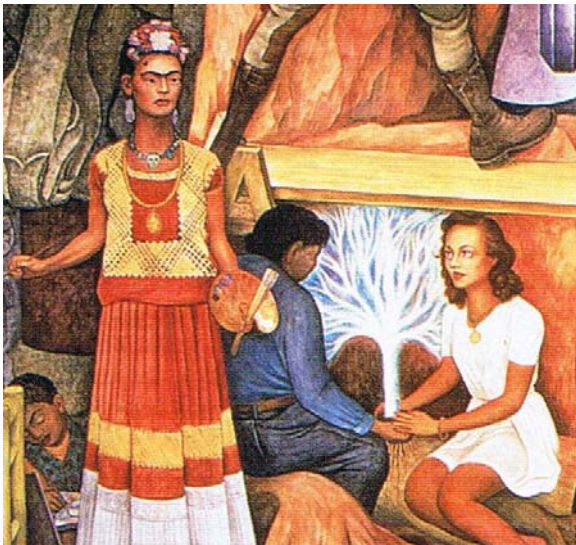
This can be taken as an example of Rivera's surrealist paintings. It shows radishes with different sexual attributes. I consider the radish in the lower right corner to be the Saint and the others his temptation. The painting has a factual background in an annual Christmas competition in Oaxaco, where folk artists compete for prizes with radish compositions showing the Christmas story or other themes.

Trotsky's house with bullet holes.



Eventually personal and political conflicts developed between Trotsky and Rivera. This is partly due to the jealousy felt by Rivera, when Frida had an affair with Trotsky. Trotsky moves into a nearby house converted into a fortress. In 1940 Siqueiros who remained faithful to Stalin leads an assassination attempt on Trotsky. He failed but Trotsky was killed by a Stalinist agent shortly after. Even to-day the bullet holes in Trotsky's house resulting from the Siqueiros' shooting can be seen.

Frida, Diego and Paulette Goddard in Panamerican Unity, San Francisco, 1940. (Detail).



In 1940 Diego and Frida separate and are divorced. Diego goes to San Francisco to make paintings for the 1940 Golden Gate International Exhibition. Here we see a detail of one of the paintings.

Diego sits holding the hand of actress Paulette Goddard with the tree of life between them. Diego had a serious love affair with Paulette, but when she refused to marry him, he wrote to Frida asking her to come to San Francisco. Frida was added to the picture. They remarried in San Francisco in December.

Charlie Chaplin as the Great Dictator. 1940.



Paulette Goddard was married to Charlie Chaplin who is seen in this painting in his role as the great Dictator. Around him are real dictators such as Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini. When Rivera later on applied for re-entry into the Communist Party he was first refused partly due to the Stalin part of this picture. However, later on he was accepted.



Emma Hurtado and Diego 1955.

In 1954 Frida dies. The year after Diego marries Emma Hurtado, his dealer since 1946. We see them here at their wedding. The picture in the background is Diego's painting of Irene Philips Olmedo, the daughter of Dolores Olmedo Patino, with whom Diego had a love affair in 1930 and who became a close friend of Diego.



Diego paints Dolores Olmedo Patino. 1955.

Here Diego is seen painting Dolores Olmedo Patino dressed as a girl from Tehuantepec. Dolores lived in a beautiful estate called La Noria - the Weli - in Xochimilco (South of Mexico City) which after Diego's death was converted into a museum with a very rich collection of paintings by Rivera, Frida and others. Dolores also became director of the Museum in Frida's house.



Dolores Olmeda Patino 1930.

This drawing of her was made in 1930 when Rivera was in love with her.

Anahuacalli.

Dolores Olmeda Patino also became in charge of Diego's house Anahuacalli built 1944 in a lava field south of Mexico City. Anahuacalli houses Rivera's huge collection of pre-Columbian art. Dolores Olmeda Patino died only a few years ago nearly 100 years old. Her daughter Irene seen above is now in charge of the three museums, Frida's house, La Noria and Anahuacalli, which she leads with a heavy hand. When I visited these places recently, I was not allowed to take any photos, even if I had an introduction by the Mexican Ambassador to Denmark. Sub-machinegun armed guards were watching everywhere.



Watermelons. 1957.



In 1957 Diego dies. This picture of watermelons is his last painting.

Frida Kahlo. Watermelons. 1954.



Why did he paint watermelons? Maybe because also Frida's last painting before her death were watermelons. The inscription "Viva la Vida" was her last salute to life.

So: VIVA LA VIDA.