Siqueiros, David Alfaro (1896 - 1974)

(dävēð' ālfä'rō sēkā'rōs), 1896–1974, Mexican painter, b. Chihuahua. Siqueiros was among Mexico’s most original and eminent painters. His career as an artist was always related to his vigorous socialist revolutionary activities. He enlisted in the Batallón Mamá (“Baby’s Brigade”) in the Carranza army and at 17 was a staff officer. As military attaché at the Mexican legation in Paris (1919–21), he came into contact with stimulating contemporary artistic movements. Upon his return to Mexico in 1922, he became a leader of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Artists, and Sculptors and a founder of the magazine Machete, which expounded the principles of a new national “people’s art.” After frequent imprisonment for political activities and extensive travel abroad, Siqueiros served as an officer in the Spanish republican army (1938).

Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco are often referred to as “los tres grandes”—the three greats of Mexican mural painting. Siqueiros's art is one of violent social protest expressed in dynamic, swirling brushwork, dramatic contrasts of light and shade, brilliant colors, and heroic themes. Among his best-known works are murals at the National Preparatory School, Mexico City (1922–24) and for the Plaza Art Center, Los Angeles (1932; destroyed); the mural Portrait of Mexico Today, originally painted in a Los Angeles residence in 1932, is now in the collection of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. His other major murals include the vast Liberation of Chile, at the Mexican school, Chillán, Chile (1942); New Democracy, at the National Institute of Fine Arts, Mexico City (1945); a series at the Polytechnic Institute, Mexico City (1952); and the culmination of his work, The March of Humanity (1968, Hotel de Mexico, Mexico City).

See Myers, B. S., Mexican Painting in Our Time (1956).

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