Contributor: Alice Heeren

**Siqueiros, David Alfaro**

(Born: Chihuahua, Mexico, 1896 – Died: Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1974)

David Alfaro Siqueiros was one of the founders of the mural movement in Mexico. Together with Diego Rivera and Jose Orozco, Siqueiros joined the struggles of the Mexican revolution by fighting in the front lines, participating in political groups, and depicting the ideals of the movement in his murals. His art reflects his engagement with both Marxism and modern technology. Being influenced both by Futurism and the compositional and thematic concern of artists such as Michelangelo and Francisco Goya, Siqueiros’ murals are a unique mixture of traditional and modern. Murals such as the *Proletarian Victim* (1933) express the impact of oppression on the lower classes, while *Echo of a scream* (1937) on another hand, shows the suffering at the level of the body and the mind, and highlights the suffocating and overwhelming character of modern technology. The latter work’s evocation of trauma, and the effect of trauma through generations, was an important theme in Post-Revolution Mexico. The impact of modern life and its technological changes is also central in Siqueiros’ work. More than just depicting modernity, Siqueiros’ use of modern materials and pictorial techniques such as synthetic paints and spray guns was revolutionary. Through his teaching in Latin America and the USA, Siqueiros introduced these new materials and techniques to a myriad of artists, and having an extensive impact on art in North America. More than propagandistic, Siqueiros’ works are important aesthetic statements with their forced perspectives and multiple viewpoints, as well as their affective colour arrangements.



Echo of a Scream (1937, 122x91cm)

<http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=80144>

Although Siqueiros was one of the most famous and enthusiastic mouthpieces of the Mexican Revolution, his ideas, and consequently his artworks, were not always in line with the interests of Mexican leaders. As such, Siqueiros’ career often alternated between moments of exile and imprisonment, and large and important commissions. Siqueiros also took his social ideals beyond the borders of Mexico. Particularly in the 1930s, he went to the USA, where he produced murals that questioned the conflictive and exploitive relationship between the USA and others in Latin America. Siqueiros did not relent in his commitment to his political ideals, and continued his anti-Fascist campaign by producing murals such as *A New Day for Democracy* (1943), *Death to the Invader* (1941-42) and *Fraternity Between the Black and White Races* (1943) throughout World War II. At the end of his life, Siqueiros was a strong supporter of Fidel Castro’s regime in Cuba, as well as an acid critic of the USA’s war in Vietnam.

**Further Reading:**

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