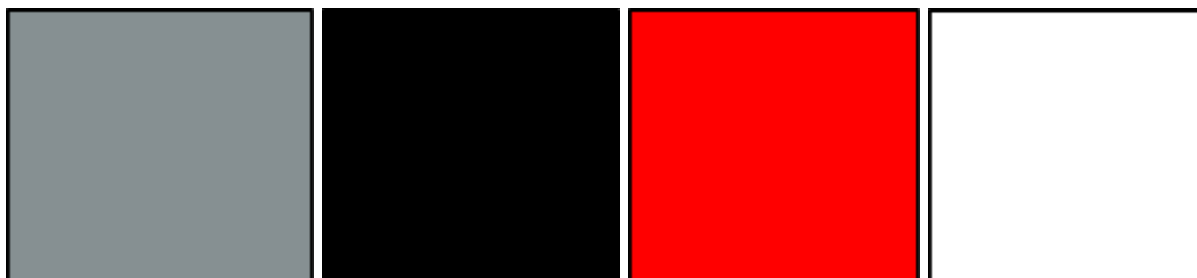


Kristen Korfitzen  
HIST 657  
Design Rationale

My website is targeted to an informed art historical audience, as well as the average museum goer. The content of my website is specialized but still accessible to a wide audience. The optimal visitor will have some familiarity with the artists discussed but may not be familiar with the exhibitions and events that make up the narrative of my thesis. For my website design, I have chosen to invoke the “white box” museum aesthetic; a clean modern style reminiscent of a modern art museum. My website uses a limited color palette and large expanses of white space to further reinforce the modern subject matter. This aesthetic is one that a well informed museum visitor would be familiar with, and would signal a non-conservative yet serious art project. The use of the extended footer plays with the subject of my thesis, walls/murals, without kitch. The full screen layout is optimum for displaying pictures and again calls back to the “wall” and the idea of large form art. Those visiting my website would do so to explore the research and analysis I’ve undertaken in writing my thesis, and for this reason I’ve chosen to have the content (my writing and images) take up the majority of the screen space without added buttons, boxes, navigation menus or background images.

# THE WRITING ON THE WALL MOMA, MEXICO, AND AMERICAN MURALS

I use two different fonts on my site, Helvetica and a Istok Web (<http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Istok+Web>). Helvetica is used extensively in museum exhibition design. Its clean and easy to read. The title/logo is done in Helvetica and the body is Istok Web. The colors of the title/logo and its arrangement again reference the “wall”, stacked and solid. The subtitle in red, and the use of red throughout the site, is a reference to the Marxist artists and murals discussed in my thesis. The particular grey that I used, was taken from Ben Shahn’s mural *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*.



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# THE WRITING ON THE WALL

MOMA, MEXICO, AND AMERICAN MURALS

BEFORE 1932 AFTER ARTISTS AUTHOR

*"What is meant by a National School of Mural painting is not a school sponsored by the government but a free vital renaissance of American painting. We believe that greater technical freedom of expression and the assignment of mural work by the government to the younger, nationally recognized modern painters might result in such a vital renaissance."*

*The Writing on the Wall: MoMa, Mexico and American Murals* is the MA Thesis of Kristen Korfitzen an Art History graduate Student at George Mason University. *The Writing on the Wall* takes a closer, case-study driven look at the American mural movement of the early 1930s. While scholars have begun to re-assess the federally commissioned murals of the great Depression, little work has been done on the years directly preceding the relief programs when the idea of the "American mural" was still being formed. The thesis exams a series of events and works of art that were crucial in shaping what would become the standard iconography of a federal mural, the most central of these events was the 1932 Museum of Modern Art Exhibition *Murals by American Painters and Photographers*, where the debate over the function and form of American murals came to a head. Equally important are two events concerning the Mexican Artist Diego Rivera, his 1931 MoMA retrospective, and his 1933 commission for Rockefeller center. *The Writing on the Wall* argues that the dialog surrounding these three events lays out the basic theoretical structure of 1930s American murals, including; appropriate subject matter, location and access to the public, and methods of production.

## The Website

This website serves as the online companion to *The Writing on the Wall*. With this site I hope to share my research with the larger academic community, and explore new ways of presenting an Art Historical narrative. This site also allows me to showcase content related to, but not included in, the final thesis.

## The Project



here is some text!

# THE WRITING ON THE WALL

MOMA, MEXICO, AND AMERICAN MURALS

BEFORE 1932 AFTER ARTISTS AUTHOR



here is some text!

# THE WRITING ON THE WALL

MOMA, MEXICO, AND AMERICAN MURALS

BEFORE 1932 AFTER ARTISTS AUTHOR

## William Gropper (1897 – 1977)

William Victor "Bill" Gropper (December 3, 1897 – January 3, 1977), was a U.S. cartoonist, painter, lithographer, and muralist. A committed radical, Gropper is best known for the political work which he contributed to such left wing publications as *The Revolutionary Age*, *The Liberator*, *The New Masses*, *The Worker*, and *The Morning Freiheit*. His parents were Jewish immigrants from Romania and Ukraine, who were both employed in the city's garment industry, living in poverty on New York's Lower East Side. His mother worked hard sewing piecework at home. Harry Gropper, Bill's father, was university-educated and fluent in 8 languages, but was unable to find employment in America in a field for which he was suited. This failure of the American economic system to make proper use of his father's talents doubtlessly contributed to William Gropper's lifelong antipathy to capitalism.

In 1920, Gropper went to Cuba briefly as an oiler on a United Fruit Company freight boat. He left the ship in Cuba and spent some time there observing life and working as a supervisor on a railroad construction detail. He was forced to return home sooner than expected, however, owing to the terminal illness of his father. In January 1921, editor Max Eastman formally made Bill a special contributor and member of the staff of *The Liberator*.<sup>[11]</sup> His time at the publication was not harmonious however, as many of the unpaid and underpaid artists and writers greatly resented Eastman, who collected a relatively opulent paycheck of \$75 a week for, as Gropper later recalled, "lying on a couch and composing poetry and reading books." A little

