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| Stridentist Movement (1921-1928) |
| Movimiento Estridentista |
| The Stridentist Movement [Movimiento Estridentista], founded by poet Manuel Maples Arce (1898-1981), was the only avant-garde Mexican literary and artistic group in the 1920s. The movement was centred in Mexico City from 1921-1925 and in Jalapa, Veracruz from 1925 until it disbanded in 1927. Stridentist writers wrote poetry characterised by formal and linguistic experimentation, which were illustrated by Stridentist artists. In this way they developed a style specific to the movement. They produced illustrated books, magazines, pamphlets and manifestos, in which text and image work together in a symbiotic fashion that shaped the political and artistic character of the movement. Like the Futurists, their aesthetic embraced such symbols of modernity as skyscrapers, aeroplanes, telephones, railroads and electric wires. Their influences were Cubism, Spanish Ultraismo, German Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism and Constructivism. In an unusual combination of artistic internationalism and political nationalism, the Stridentists saw themselves as revolutionary, both artistically and politically, and their works included themes of the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath. Unique in Latin America at this time, the sophisticated appearance of the group, the Cubo-Futurist fragmentation and the dynamism that characterised the portraits, epitomise the inventiveness of the Stridentist vision. |
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In an unusual combination of artistic internationalism and political nationalism, the Stridentists saw themselves as revolutionary, both artistically and politically, and their works included themes of the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath. Unique in Latin America at this time, the sophisticated appearance of the group, the Cubo-Futurist fragmentation and the dynamism that characterised the portraits, epitomise the inventiveness of the Stridentist vision.  The movement began with a one-page manifesto by Maples Arce, *Actual Número Uno: Hoja de Vanguardia Comprimido Estridentista de Manuel Maples Arce* (*Now: Number One. Manuel Maples Arce’s Leaflet of the Avant-Garde Stridentist Pill*), posted upon the walls of Mexico City in December 1921*.* The manifesto was a call to artists and writers to join a movement initiated with this action. He generated a fictional sense of internationality in the arts in Mexico; the text consisted of a prologue, fourteen numbered paragraphs, and a ‘Directory of the Avant-garde,’ a list of artists and writers in Europe, the United States and Latin America. Its design is typical of future publications, with letterpress typeface in an artful arrangement around a photograph of Maples Arce creating a sense of modernity. Its interplay of language, font, layout and photography give it a visual and textual force that came to characterise the movement.  Over the next year others joined the movement. In addition to Maples Arce, Germán List Arzubide (1898-1998), Salvador Gallardo (1893-1981), Luís Quintanilla (1900-1980), Xavier Icaza (1892-1969) and Arqueles Vela (1899-1977) wrote plays, novels and poetry, and artists such as Ramon Alva de la Canal (1892-1985), Germán Cueto (1883-1975), Jean Charlot (1898-1979), Fermín Revueltas (1901-1935) and Leopoldo Méndez (1902-1969) created works in the Stridentist spirit. Paralleling the Mexican Muralist Movement**,** instead of painting walls, they created easel paintings, drawings and prints. Cueto’s Dadaist-inspired masks were an innovation in Mexico, and other artists used woodcuts to illustrate Stridentist writings. They envisioned the Mexican Revolution as an international phenomenon, contemporary, modern and technological, and they imagined post-Revolutionary Mexico as urban and cosmopolitan, an approach that distinguished them from the muralists.  In Mexico City the group met in the Café Europa, which they renamed the Café de Nadie. In this period they produced the magazine *Irradiador* and books of poetry with simple graphics distinguished by modern design and innovative layout. Revueltas’s woodblock prints are Cubist-looking compositions, and Diego Rivera contributed his Apollinaire-derived *Calligramma* to the first issue. The cover of the third, and last, issue included a photograph by Edward Weston, his 1922 *Armco Steel*, expressing the Stridentist fascination with technology and industry. In 1924, Maples Arce created *Urbe: super-poema bolchevique en 5 cantos*, illustrated with Charlot’s woodblock prints. This letterpress book demonstrates the Stridentist admiration of the city and positive attitudes toward the Russian and Mexican Revolutions.  When Maples Arce was hired as secretary to the Governor of Veracruz, General Heriberto Jara, in 1925, most of the group moved to Jalapa. Alva de la Canal promoted the Stridentist vision in works such as his 1926 *Edificio, movimiento estridentista* (Building, Stridentist Movement), distinguished by its German Expressionist distortions and angular lines. They published the journal *Horizonte* in ten issues, with cover illustrations by Alva de la Canal and Méndez, and revolutionary themes became more pronounced. They also established a press and published books such as List Arzubide’s *Zapata exaltación* (Zapata Exaltation*)*. Illustrated with woodcut illustrations by Méndez, this was the first book about Emiliano Zapata to present the revolutionary leader in a favourable light. In 1926, List Arzubide wrote *El movimiento estridentista* (The Stridentist Movement), describing the group’s accomplishments. However, Jara was deposed in 1927, and the Stridentists Movement came to an end.  Alva de la Canal painted a group portrait, *El* *Café de Nadie*, in two versions. The 1924 version has disappeared, known only through a photograph in *El movimiento estridentista*, but the artist repainted it in 1930. Both images portray Maples Arce surrounded by the rest of the group, and the 1930 portrait includes collaged excerpts from Stridentist publications, emphasizing the intertextuality inherent in the movement.  Fig. 1: café al nadie  Ramón Alva de la Canal, El café de nadie, 1930, oil on canvas. (Located in the Museo Nacional, Mexico City) Source: https://www.google.com/search?q=el+cafe+de+nadie+ramon+alva+de+la+canal&client=firefox-a&hs=nQz&rls=org.mozilla:en- |
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