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Siqueiros and Three Early Murals in Los Angeles

SHIFRA M. GOLDMAN

A vision of Latin America as a tropical paradise where happy mortals lie beneath palm trees whose fruits drop of their own accord into waiting mouths may have enchanted Americans on the northern side of the Rio Grande, but it was no part of the vision of Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros when he came to Los Angeles as a political refugee in May 1932.¹ During that visit he painted three murals in different locations of the city, of which only one exists intact today. The largest of the three, *Tropical America*, painted on the second-story outside wall of a building in Olvera Street (original site of the city) has almost completely disappeared beneath the coats of whitewash applied in 1932 and 1934, and the exposure and neglect of over 40 years. Despite the thousands of tourists who visit historic Olvera Street annually, the very knowledge of the mural's existence had almost vanished until new interest was generated by plans to have the mural restored several years ago.²

Interest in possible restoration was nationwide but nowhere so strong as in the large Mexican-American community of Los Angeles, particularly since these are the only murals Siqueiros ever painted in the United States. What were the circumstances surrounding the creation of the outdoor murals *Street Meeting* and *Tropical America*? Of the existing privately owned mural *Portrait of Mexico Today*? Why were the former two destroyed? What did they look like originally? These questions—and the implications inherent in the existence and destruction of the murals—have become pressingly topical when one considers the current search of the Chicano in the southwest for self-identity, a political voice, and economic justice, things which were of profound concern to the artist when he created his murals. For the growing Chicano art movement, the aesthetics of Mexican muralism coexist with the most avant-garde manifestations to express the particular life experience of the urban Chicano.

A more general, but equally urgent, imperative to reclaim these murals for the history of art is the splendid pictorial qualities of *Tropical America*, lost to sight for almost a half century.

The three murals marked an important turning point in Siqueiros' development. They mark the release and outpouring of a large creative energy denied walls to paint on for almost 10 years. In this first encounter with the great industrial resources of the United States, his search for a new art style expressive of his revolutionary ideals was augmented by technical means to change the methodology of muralism itself—a methodology that had been fixed since the Renais-

sance. Important innovations of this period included the development of a dynamic pictorial surface for the moving spectator, and experimentation with cement and the airbrush for fresco application—innovations that resulted from the desire to create exterior murals “beneath the sun, beneath the rain, facing the street” and the passing multitudes—and were tremendously consequential for his mature work.

As the third major Mexican muralist to come to the United States, Siqueiros had been preceded by José Clemente Orozco, who had painted his monumental fresco *Prometheus* at Pomona College, Claremont, in 1930, had completed a series of murals in the New School for Social Research in New York, and had just been commissioned to do the great mural cycle at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, during the time Siqueiros was in Los Angeles. Diego Rivera had painted murals at the San Francisco Stock Exchange, the California School of Fine Arts, and a private home, and had been commissioned to do *The Portrait of Detroit* by the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts. The famous “battle of Rockefeller Center” which terminated in the destruction of Rivera's mural was not to occur until the following year; however, it, along with the almost simultaneous destruction of Siqueiros' murals, seemed to reflect a shift toward the right in the political currents of the day. Controversy had surrounded, and continued to surround, the activities of all three muralists.³ One particularly blatant example of provincialism and chauvinism is the following: “Mexican art in Mexico is indigenous and entirely appropriate; . . . they like the graphic delineation of suffering and agony; they sympathize with and cherish the old pagan, primitive religions which took bloody sacrifices and required strange and physical rites.” The writer could not understand why we “should imitate it and adopt it in our country whose traditions are entirely alien to it all” or “put it on the walls of an educational institution [referring to Chouinard Art School] where youth is imbibing its inspirations and ideals for life” or make it part of “our national expression when it is not and never can be.” Ironically the article recognized Olvera Street as the place “where the old Mexican beginnings of Los Angeles are cherished”!⁴

Siqueiros' political and artistic baptism started long before his trip to Los Angeles. At 15 he participated in a student strike at the San Carlos Academy in Mexico demanding an abandonment of outmoded methods of art instruction. He served as an officer in the Mexican revolution before going to study in Europe. In 1922 he became a principal organizer of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors

which sparked the mural renaissance, and was author of its manifesto which hailed the Indian soldier who gave his life "in hope of liberating your race from the degradation and misery of centuries." Siqueiros had always considered his art a political tool and a vehicle of revolutionary thought, with concepts inseparable from aesthetics: "... the makers of beauty," he said in the manifesto, "must invest their greatest efforts in the aim of materializing an art valuable to the people," with "beauty that enlightens and stirs to struggle."⁵ Almost 30 years later he was of the same opinion: "My mural [*Tropical America*] was the mural of a painter who had fought in the revolution."⁶ It is within this context that the 1932 murals must be understood. It forms the basis for his plastic expression, for his ceaseless technical and aesthetic experimentation to create a transformation of pictorial technique consonant with his views of the social and scientific developments of our time.

In 1932 the United States was in the throes of the great depression. Los Angeles was a city of over two million people emerging from its rural status under the impact of its most important industries: agriculture, oil, and the movies. Politics were highly polarized and volatile. Upton Sinclair, the Socialist and Communist parties, and members of the movie colony provided a fulcrum of left-wing activities. Labor conflict was widespread and often violent, particularly in the rich agricultural Imperial Valley where many Mexicans were employed. Los Angeles (unlike San Francisco) was an antiunion town; it boasted a police anti-Red Squad led by a Captain Hynes; its constituency included thousands of retired old people who were impoverished by the depression but remained set in their political conservatism.⁷ In the months of Siqueiros' stay, Los Angeles newspapers reflected the tremendous difficulties and confrontations of the period: the Hynes Red Squad prohibited a speech by the Communist presidential candidate; a "slave block" auction, selling the labor of unemployed citizens to the highest bidders, was held in a local park; the unemployed panned exhausted gold deposits in San Francisco streams; the government investigated the vast holdings of the J. P. Morgan empire.⁸

Of particular significance to the artist, and of direct import to his choice of a theme for *Tropical America*, were the mass deportations of Mexican nationals⁹ and the wretched conditions of Mexican migratory workers whose efforts to organize for collective bargaining were repeatedly crushed by vigilantes and repressive laws.¹⁰ There is little doubt that use of this theme—strikingly repeated throughout the southwest today—contributed to Siqueiros' own expulsion when his six-month visa expired.¹¹

Word of Siqueiros' presence quickly spread (with the aid of Mexican artists Alfredo Ramos Martinez and Luis Arenal) in the small, tightly knit Los Angeles art world. Joseph von Sternberg, flamboyant director of the movie *The Blue Angel*, patron of artists, and collector "of the most violent modern art," helped him bring his detained paintings and lithographs across the border, and commissioned his first portrait. Painted in Sternberg's office at Paramount Studios on 40" x 48" coarse canvas with quart cans of paint and housepaint brushes, it showed "von Sternberg at his desk, ugly, intent, commanding... yet curiously... like him."¹² On May 9th an exhibition of Siqueiros lithographs opened at the Jake Zeitlin Bookshop in downtown Los Angeles and, four days later, 50

paintings, lithographs, and mural designs were exhibited in the Stendahl Ambassador Gallery.¹³

Siqueiros' work of the preceding period (1929-1932) was very dark and almost devoid of color. "He felt the times were so bad color should not be used," says Arthur Millier, former art critic of the *Los Angeles Times*.¹⁴ His paintings at the Stendahl Gallery, wrote Millier in 1932, were "dark and unframed. The massive forms and heads emerge from an aura of blackness. The first impression is of brutality and darkness, of an absolute absence of all 'charm,' of that pleasant manipulation of pigment which is so significant for the English and Americans. There is, nevertheless, something more; a brooding sense of tragedy."¹⁵ The somber paintings and sorrowful subjects did not recommend themselves to all critics: the huge canvases were felt to have "primitive subject matter" stirring "emotions of revulsion, horror, and other elemental feelings equally unprofound." Though Carl Zigrosser had written favorably of Siqueiros, said the reviewer, she found the "lack of pleasing color, stark outline, and untextured surfaces" were distasteful.¹⁶

Then, as later, Siqueiros was not satisfied with portraits and easel paintings; he longed for walls. Even in his easel paintings he used burlaplike canvas coated with lime upon which he painted with a mixture of oil, gum, honey, and paint, which produced a semifresco effect.¹⁷ The scale of the figures was enormous. Many later Siqueiros works give this same impression: figures thrust from the surface, their huge size and energy seeming to violate the frame as if seeking a larger context.

In early June (following an exhibition at the Plaza Art Center and an honorary dinner by the California Art Club) Siqueiros was contacted by Millard Sheets, an impressive young watercolorist and a Chouinard Art School teacher, to conduct a fresco class. Among various practice techniques, Siqueiros had the group make fresco panels of their own design, using plywood frames and chicken wire covered with layers of plaster. These were later exhibited as "fresco blocks." The group was composed of 10 professional artists, each of whom paid a \$100 fee. As a result of Cubism, many artists had become interested in the Renaissance, and no information was available about fresco except from the Mexican muralists¹⁸ who had revived its practice (and that of encaustic) 10 years earlier. By mid-June a wall of Chouinard Art School, at 743 So. Grandview, had been obtained from Mrs. Nelbert M. Chouinard and the 10 artists, as well as graduate art students, now designated as the Block of Mural Painters by Siqueiros, began painting a 19' x 24' outdoor mural called *Street Meeting* in the sculpture court of the school. "He worked out of his head," recalls Millard Sheets, "very exciting for us because we were accustomed to the idea of a very finished sketch. He started at the top of the mural and worked his way down."¹⁹

Within the unprecedentedly short time of two weeks, the mural was almost complete, with the exception of the key figure in the lower portion. On the upper portion of the wall, which could be seen from the street, were painted two scaffolds filled with massive figures of construction workers, arms intertwined, looking downward intently, and casting long dark shadows between the windows which pierced the wall surface. Stylistically the composition was strongly related to the 1931 painting *Accident in the Mine*.²⁰ What were the workers looking at? To whom were they listening? No one

knew. To all questions Siqueiros laughed and said, "Wait a little while. The best is yet to come."²¹ Millier recalls, "Siqueiros professed tiredness. They all went home. When the group returned in the morning the job was finished. A red-shirted orator harangued the hungry people." On either side of the soapbox, listening intently, were a black man and a white woman, each with a child.

Eight hundred people attended the July 7th unveiling, lecture, and art exhibit sponsored by the Art Committee of the Association for Founding a New School for Social Research in Los Angeles.²² Public reaction to the mural was mixed: some thought it a bold and powerful painting unlike anything previously done in Southern California; others attacked it for political connotations, as in the case of *California Arts & Architecture*: "the art of fresco in this country will languish until it is able to free itself from the sorrows of Mexico and the dull red glow of Communism."²³

There is disagreement as to the fate of the mural. Merrell Gage recalls that police (officials?) descended on the school to inform Mrs. Chouinard the mural had to be removed, and she had it painted over. Sheets, Paradise, and Millier claim the experimental airbrush technique used was so faulty the colors either chipped or ran from the wall with the first rain and had to be whitewashed.²⁴ In either case (or both) the mural was covered within the year and we can judge its merits only from reproductions. Despite its weaknesses its importance as a seminal work for pictorial techniques is considerable.

Experimentation was integral to the new mural possibilities Siqueiros was seeking in Los Angeles and *Street Meeting* was the guinea pig for this experimentation. Los Angeles offered numerous modern buildings with concrete walls requiring, according to Siqueiros, a new method of execution complementary to the architecture and the dynamic activity of contemporary life. Of particular importance was the desire to make murals truly public by moving them out-of-doors where, however, traditional fresco surfaces of lime and sand could not be used. After consultation with architects Richard Neutra (then newly arrived from Germany and employed by Chouinard) and Sumner Spaulding, Siqueiros experimented with waterproof white cement. The rapid drying caused him to turn to the airbrush for accelerated application of fresco color (Fig. 1; note airbrush compressor at Siqueiros' feet). Metal and celluloid stencils were used to give outlines to the "smoky effects" of the airbrush. The lower half of the mural was coated with encaustic applied with a blow torch—originally pioneered by Diego Rivera 10 years earlier. Thus an entire gamut of experimental techniques evolved with this first mural in California, recorded by the artist in an article written during the actual painting of the mural:

After making our first sketch we used the camera and motion picture to aid us in elaboration of our first drawing, particularly of the models. To draw our figures from posing models, would be like reverting to the ox cart for transportation.

To replace the slow and costly method of pencil tracing and pounce pattern projection we used the camera projection. A method of enlarging our drawing and thereby projecting our design directly to the wall.



Fig. 1. Siqueiros (left) working on *Street Meeting*. (Photo courtesy Mary Lee Murphy.)

In the preparation of our walls we adopted the pneumatic drill to roughen the wall surface and give greater adhesion to the finished coating of plaster, which was applied with an airgun. The airbrush we considered an essential instrument in the plastic production of our decoration.²⁵

Street Meeting ended the first phase of Siqueiros' contact with the United States. Though stylistically tied to his earlier work, it nevertheless represented an incomplete but aggressive thrust toward modernizing the technology of muralism. After leaving the United States for South America, he produced his first works with pyroxilin paint in the search for a satisfactory outdoor material that could resist sun and rain.

An opportunity to experiment further soon presented itself. Shortly after completion of *Street Meeting* Siqueiros was offered a contract by F. K. Ferenz of the Plaza Art Center in Olvera Street to paint a mural called *Tropical America*. Since few funds were available, materials were contributed by individuals and local companies, equipment was borrowed, carpenters erected scaffolds, and electricians wired lights for work which went on day and night. A much larger group of assistants composed the team assembled to paint the enormous 16' x 80' second-story wall of the old Italian Hall. A key figure was Dean Cornwell who had just completed a five-year mural project for the Los Angeles Public Library rotunda.²⁶ A contemporary account recreates the event for us:

Plaza Art Center is the scene of a busy group of artists, who under the direction of Siqueiros, with Dean Cornwell as patron saint, are

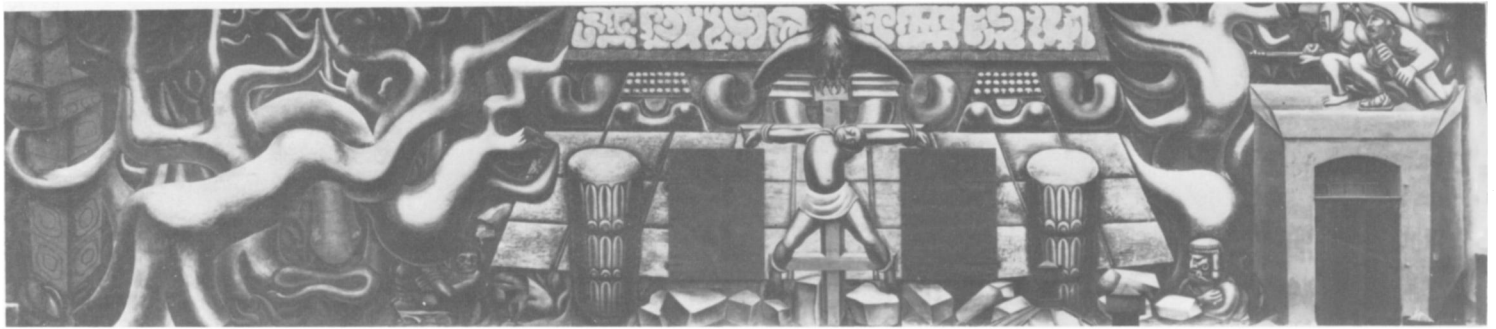


Fig. 2. *Tropical America*, 17 × 80', 1932. (Photo courtesy John Weiskall.)

covering an outside wall with fresco. It was a dream of Mr. Ferenz even before the Chouinard School . . . made its decoration. But what to use for money in this bereft period? It needed plasterers, carpenters and cement mixers as well as artists. . . . As design it will be tropical Mexico, with Mayan ruins and a few figures. As each end of the wall will be seen from the streets below, it is planned to make them a complete picture, at the same time preserving a general unity of design.²⁷

To Siqueiros, an outdoor wall in Olvera Street, located in a part of downtown Los Angeles then known as Sonora Town (because of its large Mexican population), close to the railroad terminal and City Hall, literally available to the "flow of traffic and millions of people," must have been especially attractive. He quickly signed the contract. However, his vision of tropical America differed sharply from prevailing folkloric ideas: instead of painting "a continent of happy men, surrounded by palms and parrots where the fruit voluntarily detached itself to fall into the mouths of the happy mortals," he said, "I painted a man . . . crucified on a double cross, which had, proudly perched on the top, the eagle of North American coins."²⁸

Starting in late August, work on *Tropical America* continued for over a month. All accounts agree that Siqueiros did most of the painting himself, assigning to his assistants the tasks of roughing the brick surface with drills, applying coats of white Portland cement, squaring the wall, blowing up the design for the final cartoon, and painting small sections.²⁹ The day before the unveiling the key figure was still a mystery. "Again," says Millier, "'Tired. Let's all go home.' At 1:00 A.M. that night in a dead Olvera Street I found Siqueiros sweating in an undershirt in the cold air, sitting on a scaffold, painting for dear life the peon bound to a double cross."³⁰

Great crowds attended the unveiling. Millier wrote in the *Times*, "When the scaffolding finally came down . . . onlookers gasped. No one but the author had been able to visualize the close-knit powerful design so long shaded and concealed by those scaffolds"³¹ (Fig. 2). Not only was the wall much larger than Chouinard, but the concept had been expressed with great clarity in brilliant color. Despite the welter of billboards, posters, store fronts, and gas tanks with which it had to compete, it would have had no trouble attracting attention.

Siqueiros' composition had to deal with a door and two metal-shuttered windows which penetrated the wall, forcing a slight asymmetry. The stark geometry of the Maya-like pyramid and two cylindrical stelae inscribed with feather

forms are counterpointed by great twisting trees and the curved body of the Indian. Blocks of stone fallen from the pyramid and pre-Columbian sculptures scattered among the trees speak of the destruction of ancient Indian civilization, while the screaming eagle with spread wings dominates this modern Calvary. The traditional spirit of passive Christian mourning is lacking. Two armed snipers menace the eagle from the roof of an adjacent building.

Central to the design is the crucifixion itself (Fig. 3) which establishes the dynamic rhythms of the composition. We are caught by the circle circumscribed by the wings of the eagle, the spread arms, and the loin cloth of the Indian (Fig. 4). Semicircular repetitions appear in shell-like shapes on the pyramid, the semicircle below the eagle, and the torso of the Indian, and are reinforced by the ellipses of the stelae. The truncated shape of the pyramid is echoed in the geometric elements of the pyramid frieze and the Indian's legs.

Of the three murals there is no doubt that *Tropical America* was by far the most powerful and original and a clear departure from earlier work. It established Siqueiros as a master of monumental form. *Tropical America* is the final affirmation of the break with "folklorism" and "picturesqueness" which started with his murals in the National Preparatory School in Mexico. Speaking of the latter, but prophetically applicable to the Olvera Street mural, Jean Charlot said, "Until these murals were done, Indianism had been synonymous with folklore or folk art. . . . Siqueiros was the first to erect a naked Indian body as removed from picturesqueness as a Greek naked athlete, a figure of universal meaning within its racial universe."³²

Most powerful of the influences at work in this painting is the Baroque style, especially admired by the artist's father.³³ Sinuous forms, sculptural plasticity, strong chiaroscuro, and dynamic spatial movement, all mark the impact of the most spectacular style of colonial Mexico. Appearing for the first time in this mural is a leit-motif of much later work: the recessive pyramid.

Italian Futurist theories such as multiple points of view and prismatic perspective (which interested Siqueiros when he went to Europe in 1919) can be found in *Tropical America* despite disclaimers from the artist such as appeared in *Script* (see fn. 25). Note the interior perspective of the pyramid, including the slight incline of both sides of the base creating two planes which enhance the plasticity of the forms in front of the lower pyramid; the vanishing points of the stelae and the building of the snipers; and the perspective of the upper cross. Dynamic sensations derive from the rhythm, inclination, and movement of each object. The mysterious curved forms



Fig. 3. Detail of *Tropical America*.

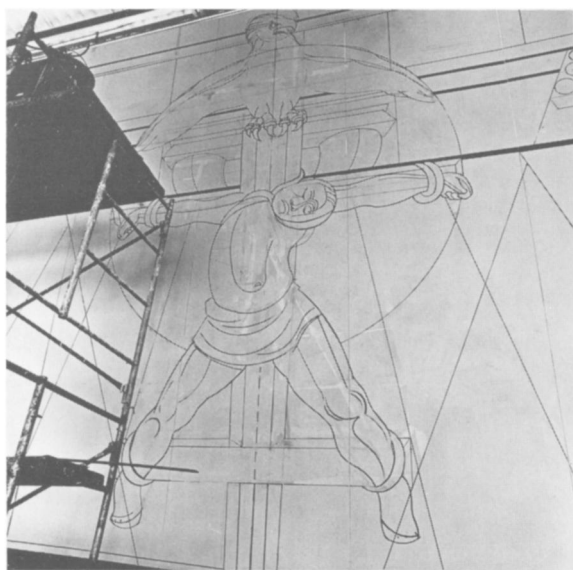


Fig. 4. Design detail, *Tropical America II*, 1973. (Photographer: Hector Garcia.)

on the pyramid are a connective between the writhing, flamelike horizontals of the trees at either end of the composition. Siqueiros was particularly intrigued with movement; he later developed curved-surface paintings with multiple-exposure figures in which the moving spectator served the function of a “switch” to set the work in motion,³⁴ a



Fig. 5. Olvera Street in 1934 showing partially whitewashed mural. (Photo courtesy *Los Angeles Times*.)

pictorial idea reinforced by his meeting in Mexico with pioneer film maker Sergei Eisenstein in 1931. The spectator, rather than passively receiving moving images, substitutes for the active role of the movie camera.

Veteran Los Angeles artist Lorser Feitelson, recalling the response to *Tropical America* in 1932 says, “The reaction in the art world was wonderful. In the case of Siqueiros we may not know what certain forms are, but they’re magnificent as forms. He brought tenebrism, illusionism, and also this architectonic quality; it had guts in it! It made everything else of the time look like candybox illustrations. Many of the artists said, ‘My God! This is a wonderful vocabulary.’”³⁵

High quality and enthusiasm were not enough to save the mural however. Its powerful indictment of U.S. imperialism and exploitation could not be tolerated. After its completion and the deportation of the artist, Mr. Ferez was forced to paint over the portion of the mural visible from Olvera Street (Fig. 5), though he saw to it that a harmless covering was used. “There was provocation in the political hue of the painting, regarded by many observers as Communist propaganda . . .,” noted the *Christian Science Monitor* (April 27, 1935). Several years later, Mrs. Christine Sterling (the “mother” of Olvera Street, according to Millier) would only renew the lease of the upstairs club, which had become a bar, on condition the fresco was completely covered. We are forced to conclude that Clive Bell’s “modernist” thesis (very popular in the 1920s and 1930s) dismissing subject matter as irrelevant in consideration of “significant form” was not applicable to a painting with explicit controversial content. It would seem that art *does* function within a specific social milieu rather than in the realm of pure aesthetic. It should also be recalled that only five years separate *Tropical America* from Picasso’s *Guernica* and both were monumental protests against inhumanity, though differently treated.

By 1973 the years of rain and sun on the unprotected outdoor mural have taken their toll, removing both the whitewash and finally most of the color beneath (Fig. 6). The final verdict of two restorers who came from Mexico in 1971 to examine the mural is that restoration is impossible.³⁶

Very little information is available about the third mural



Fig. 6. *Tropical America* in 1971. (Photo courtesy KCET-TV.)



Fig. 7. Detail of *Portrait of Mexico Today*, 1932. (Mr. & Mrs. Willard Coe.)



Fig. 8. Detail of *Portrait of Mexico Today*.



Fig. 9. Detail of *Portrait of Mexico Today*.

known as *Portrait of Mexico Today* (originally *Delivery of the Mexican Bourgeoisie Born of the Revolution into the Hands of Imperialism*). It was painted in the covered patio of the Santa Monica home of movie director Dudley Murphy.³⁷ Dividing the wall surface in thirds are two painted columns behind which appears the familiar recessive pyramid. On the steps are a child and two women (Fig. 7), apparently widows of the assassinated men painted on a contiguous wall (Fig. 8). To the left of the pyramid is the seated figure of a revolutionary soldier, with sombrero and rifle, whose fallen red mask reveals the features of former Mexican president Plutarco Elías Calles. Two bags of gold at his feet represent the betrayal of the Mexican people (Fig. 9).

One can envision the color properties of *Tropical America* by reference to the well-preserved *Portrait of Mexico Today*. Blues, browns, greens, reds, and yellow ochres enhance the sculpturally modeled abstracted figures. Though not as dynamic a composition as *Tropical America* (the size is only 172 square feet), the Santa Monica mural maintains a fine balance between baroque sinuosity and geometric structure. Particularly poignant and rhythmic are the horizontal figures of the two dead men.

Today a whole new generation of artists is demonstrating its interest in Mexican muralism. Street murals—many showing the influence of Siqueiros and Orozco—have mushroomed in New York, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Santa Fe (New Mexico), San Francisco, and Los Angeles, particularly in the Black ghettos and Puerto Rican and Chicano *barrios*. Among the active participants in these popular movements are former Siqueiros disciples.³⁸

The city of Los Angeles was recently animated by the

prospect of receiving a repainted *Tropical America II* on 11 movable wooden panels, 16' x 40', as a gift from the artist to the people of Los Angeles. It was to consist of the central portion of the mural (the pyramid and the crucified Indian) recreated in the original size (Fig. 4 is from the new mural). These plans were aborted by the unfortunate injury of Siqueiros in April 1973. The death of the artist in January of this year has put an end to the hopes that the 1932 mural could be resurrected to inspire future muralists in the southwest. ■

¹ At that time Siqueiros was in a delicate political situation. Upon release from jail in Mexico City, he was practically imprisoned in Taxco for many months. He considered the trip to the U.S. as a form of liberation given the political conditions of his own country. Interview between Siqueiros and Jesús Salvador Treviño, June 4, 1971.

² Initiated by the author in 1969 and documented in Treviño's KCET-TV film *América Tropical* in 1971. Treviño kindly made his research available to me. The only complete photograph of the mural was discovered by the author in the possession of a member of the original painting team. For newspaper coverage, see Jack Jones, "Disputed Mural May Emerge From Hiding," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1971; "Bricks of Downtown Conceal a Classic," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, May 17, 1971, p. 8.

³ The "Publisher's Comments" of *California Arts & Architecture*, June 1932 p. 7, contain a mild version of a chronic complaint deploring the vogue for Mexican muralists while "our own capable American artists who have mastered the technique of fresco look on wistfully. . . ." Such comments, often more acerbic, reflect both the problems of the Depression (which left many artists unemployed) and holdovers of post-World War I isolationism.

⁴ Madge Clover, *Saturday Night*, Oct. 15, 1932, p. 2.

⁵ Guillermo Rivas, "David Alfaro Siqueiros," *Mexican Life*, Dec. 1935, quoted in Bernard S. Myers, *Mexican Painting in Our Time*, New York, 1956, p. 29.

⁶ David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Mi Respuesta*, Mexico, 1960, p. 32.

⁷ Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*, New York, 1968, p. 411.

⁸ In sequence: "Police Win Court Fight to Block Red Speaker," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1932, front page; "Humans to be Sold in Park," *Los Angeles Record*, July 6, 1932, p. 2; "10,000 Jobless Comb Streams Seeking Gold," *Record*, July 8, 1932, p. 8; "Morgan Power Combines Due for Early Quiz," *Los Angeles Examiner*, Oct. 7, 1932, p. 3.

⁹ The *Los Angeles Record* story "1500 Mexicans Leave," July 7, 1932, p. 2, dealt with the deportation of nationals lacking self-support and not entitled to county charity.

¹⁰ Bean, *California*, p. 411.

¹¹ Conversations with Ruth Hatfield, Dalzell Hatfield Galleries, and Mrs. Alfredo Ramos Martinez revealed that many were concerned he would be deported before finishing *Tropical America*. Federal agents were very anxious to deport him because they considered his art propaganda, wrote Don Ryans in the *Illustrated Daily News*, Oct. 11, 1932; Walter Gutman in his column "News and Gossip," written after Siqueiros' departure for South America, stated that U.S. authorities refused to extend his permit probably due to his politics, *Creative Art*, Jan. 1933, p. 75.

¹² Arthur Millier, "Von Sternberg Dotes on Portraits of Himself," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1932, pp. 13, 19. Portrait reproduced in *Script*, July 2, 1932, p. 5. Current whereabouts unknown.

¹³ Conversations with Jake Zeitlin and Alfred Stendahl confirm that catalogues (now lost) were issued. Works displayed are listed in Raquel Tibol, *David Alfaro Siqueiros*, Mexico, 1969, p. 298. Most of the works date between 1930–1931. The portrait of Marguerite Brunswig (Staudé) was painted in L.A. Mrs. Staudé says she visited Siqueiros in his downtown hotel to learn lithography and he locked his door to prevent her leaving and painted an uncommissioned portrait which was later refused by her family as "ugly" (conversation with Mrs. Staudé, April 1973). Present whereabouts unknown. The portrait of Blanca Luz Brum, Uruguayan poet who accompanied Siqueiros, was purchased by a now unknown L.A. collector.

¹⁴ Interview with Arthur Millier, July 1973. Unless noted, all comments by Millier derive from this interview.

¹⁵ Arthur Millier, "The Pictorial Ferment of Mexico Agitates Present Day Los Angeles," *La Opinion*, June 30, 1932, p. 4.

¹⁶ Prudence Woollett, *Saturday Night*, May 21, 1932, p. 2.

¹⁷ "An International Portfolio: Mexico," *Arts & Decoration*, June 1934, p. 24.

¹⁸ Interview with Phil Paradise, July 1973.

¹⁹ Interview between Treviño and Millard Sheets, May 1971. The *equipo* (team) was composed of Millard Sheets, Merrell Gage, Paul S. Sample, Phil Paradise, Donald Graham, Katherine McEwen, Barse Miller, Henri de Kruif, Lee Blair, and Tom Beggs. Sheets, Sample, Miller, Paradise, and Blair were founders in 1921 of the well-known California Water Color Society; Beggs was art director of Pomona College. The idea of a "team," or artists' collective, was an important part of Siqueiros' ideology, however the murals bear the vigorous stamp of his own artistic personality.

²⁰ *Street Meeting* was most clearly reproduced in *California Arts & Architecture*, July–Aug. 1932, p. 2; both it, and *Accident in the Mine* appear in Raquel Tibol, *Siqueiros: Introdutor de Realidades*, Mexico, 1961, Figs. 22, 25.

²¹ Blanca Luz Brum, *El Universal*, Aug. 17, 1932, quoted in Tibol, *Siqueiros*, 1969, pp. 244–246.

²² Affiliated with the New York institution that commissioned murals from Orozco in 1930. The L.A. Art Committee for Siqueiros included, among others, Mrs. Chouinard, Millier, Gage, Zeitlin, Richard Neutra, Sumner Spaulding, and F. K. Ferenz, director of the Plaza Art Center. From copy of invitation in author's possession.

²³ *California Arts & Architecture*, p. 2.

²⁴ 1973 conversations with Gage, Paradise, Millier. For Sheets, see fn. 19.

²⁵ David Alfaro Siqueiros, "The New Fresco Mural Painting," *Script*, July 2, 1932, p. 5. These ideas were expanded in a lecture to the John Reed Club of Hollywood, Sept. 2, 1932, quoted in Tibol, *Siqueiros*, 1969, pp. 101–115. A conversation with Leandro Reveles in April 1973 revealed that Dean Cornwell used an electric projector to transfer drawings to the mural surface. Conceivably this was the source for Siqueiros' innovation.

²⁶ In addition to Cornwell, the team included, among others, artists from the movie industry: Wiard Boppo Ihnen, Richard Kollorsz, Martin Obzina, Tony and Leandro Reveles, Jeanette Summers, and John Weiskall; practicing artists Luis Arenal (later Siqueiros' lifelong associate), Jean Abel, Victor Hugo Basinet, Arthur Hinchman, Murray Hantman, Reuben Kadish, Myer Shaffer, Stephen de Hospodar, and Sanford (Pollock) McCoy, older brother of Jackson Pollock. (This list corrects and augments the fuller listing in Tibol, *Siqueiros*, 1961, p. 55.) There is reason to believe that Jackson Pollock may have seen (or even worked on) the Olvera Street mural during a summer 1932 trip, in which case it would be his earliest known exposure to Siqueiros predating his and Sanford's participation in the 1936 Siqueiros Experimental Workshop in New York. Siqueiros mentioned Jackson Pollock in connection with 1932 in conversations with the author in 1971 and 1973. See Francis V. O'Connor, "The Genesis of Jackson Pollock: 1912 to 1943," *Artforum*, May 1967, p. 23, n. 9 and passim.

²⁷ Madge Clover, *Saturday Night*, Aug. 27, 1932, p. 2.

²⁸ Siqueiros, *Mi Respuesta*, p. 32.

²⁹ Conversations with Kollorsz, Ihnen, Leandro Reveles, Weiskall, 1971, 1973.

³⁰ From copy of Millier letter to Jack Jones of *Los Angeles Times*, May 1970. Reproduction of unfinished mural in the *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 9, 1932, p. 1, captioned "Great Art Work to be Unveiled: Ceremony for Siqueiros's [sic] Fresco Scheduled for Tonight," and probably photographed Oct. 8th, shows no sign of the Indian.

³¹ "Power Unadorned Marks Olvera Street Mural," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 16, 1932, pp. 16, 20.

³² Jean Charlot, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance: 1920–1925*, New Haven, 1967, p. 207.

³³ Tibol, *Siqueiros*, 1961.

³⁴ Interview with Siqueiros, Aug. 1965.

³⁵ Interview with Feitelson, July 1973.

³⁶ A cursory examination of the mural was first made by Ben Johnson of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Nov. 1968, but no final decision was made. In April 1971, restorers Jaime Mejía and Josefina Quezada spent a week minutely examining the mural, at which time it was ascertained that the mural could be preserved but not restored, and Siqueiros declined preservation. The restorers' report revealed a single coating of cement over the base (instead of traditional coatings) causing the color to fix immediately on the surface without penetrating. By 1971, cracks and wall separation had occurred.

³⁷ See "White Walls and a Fresco," *Art & Decoration*, June 1934, p. 29. The house was purchased in 1949 by Mr. & Mrs. Willard Coe who kindly permitted the author to photograph the mural. It has been restored twice, the last time by Roland Strasser in 1960.

³⁸ Arnold Belkin (New York) and Mark Rogovin (Chicago). See Raquel Tibol "Otra vez, muralismo en e.u.," *Excelsior*, Diorama de la Cultura, p. 3; and *Cry for Justice*, Chicago, Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, 1972. For other mural activities see Melvin Roman, "Art and Social Change," *Américas*, Feb. 1970, pp. 13–20; Eric Kroll, "Folk Art in the Barrios," *Natural History*, May 1973, pp. 56–65; Elsa Honig Fine, *The Afro-American Artist*, New York, 1973, pp. 198–203.