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SECTION II

PLACING THE FOREIGN IN THE ARTS OF THE U.S.

PUBLIC ART AT THE GLOBAL CROSSROADS: THE POLITICS OF PLACE IN 1930S LOS ANGELES

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The relationship of art to place is pronounced in Los Angeles. A world center for the production and projection of visual culture, the city has a long history of investing in its own representational imagery for the purposes of civic promotion and regional boosterism. The pursuit of a unifying civic identity premised on classic conceptions of high art, and grounded in assumptions of white Anglo homogeneity, has led to a fraught public art history as excluded cultural groups, understanding the civic pursuit as a hegemonic exercise in dominance, have also sought a stake in Los Angeles' self-representation.¹ Struggles to assert what Dolores Hayden has called "the power of place—the power of ordinary urban landscapes to nurture citizens' public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory," have produced art controversies and art censorship that violently mark the cultural landscape and political history of the city.² While these struggles continue today, and have a significant history throughout the twentieth century, the 1930s offer a particularly ripe moment when provincial civic imagery appeared increasingly obsolete in the face of direct political and cultural challenges from artists with transnational and multicultural experiences of Los Angeles. In effect, civic efforts to project a specific sense of place globally resulted in radical reinterpretations of place locally. The 1930s provide us with a cultural crossroads when artists from different ethnic and immigrant backgrounds collided with the expectations of the civic imagination, laying bare the sharper edges of the city's history and making urban geography a site for critical dialogue.

Art became tied to the social production of place in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century when citizens concerned about the city's cosmopolitan status and urban aesthetics founded the Municipal Art Commission in 1903 and made art, both in its physical form as paint on canvas and as a conceptual product of cultural capital, a useful tool for creating images of Los Angeles as fruitful, ever-growing, and prosperous. Even before Hollywood's movie and television studios transmitted artful fantasies of Los Angeles around the world, newspaper magnates, real estate lobbies, and members of the Chamber of Commerce promoted civic imagery grounded in classical concepts of fine art and high culture.³ Together, loosely associated art clubs and elite business leaders interested in building cultural status forged a civic arts movement. While some of their efforts went toward fundraising for museums, art collections, and municipal beautification projects, much energy went into booster propaganda intended to build the city a cosmopolitan reputation. Thus the Los Angeles County Civic Bureau of Music and Art would write in 1927 that "one must be convinced that Los Angeles

county is the center of a vigorous art culture, which is broadening and enriching the lives of her citizens and is destined to add worthy records to the history of the spirit of man."⁴ Such hyperbolic fantasies about the region's artful possibilities dominated promotional rhetoric and underscored commercial representations of southern California. Numbering in the thousands, citrus shipping crate labels, brochures, billboards, and train placards featured gorgeous labor-less fields, exoticized Mexican bodies, and *nature morte* horns of plenty in colorfully-rendered landscapes suggesting sentimentalized history, social harmony, and a prosperous future in a racially exclusive Eden. These images might have been ephemeral, often printed on cheap paper or taking some other disposal form; they nevertheless powerfully underscored Los Angeles' conservative civic imagination.

Figure 1



Citrus crate label, ca. 1910. Collection of the author.

As effective as these images were in promoting the region as a specific type of place, and in attracting over a million residents, the 1930s marked a transition in the relationship of art to Los Angeles. Whatever the tastes and desires of a predominantly white Protestant elite, immigrant and ethnic American artists were also drawn to the city, often bent on producing monumental works that forcibly reframed the relationship of art to place. A celebrity artist such as Mexican muralist David Siqueiros was intrigued by a city steeped in the star power of the film industry but wrought havoc when his artistic representation of place did not promote the civic agenda. Invited to Los Angeles in 1932 and commissioned to paint a reassuring mural in a commercial tourist district, Siqueiros instead produced a brutal symbol of United States imperialism, and was sent back to Mexico in short order.

Other artists, like Myer Shaffer, worked within their own ethnic community. Shaffer, a young Jewish American painter and Siqueiros protégée, assisted the

Mexican master with the production of the notorious mural *América Tropical* and afterward launched his own career as a WPA muralist, focusing his energy on the walls of local Jewish hospitals and sanitariums. Some of his murals were funded by activist trade unions keen to unite labor to social programs and the creative activity Michael Denning has described as the cultural front.⁵ Dedicated to social justice and racial equality, Shaffer painted political works that were both critical of Los Angeles' syrupy self-image and reflective of a utopian world vision. A prodigy of the 1930s mural movement, Shaffer's youthful promise was dampened by the whitewashing of all his major works and the loss of much of his painting and personal history from the public record.⁶

Figure 2



Citrus crate label, ca. 1920s. Collection of the author.

Meanwhile, Sabato Rodia, an unassimilated Italian immigrant drawn to Los Angeles in the 1910s because of its offerings of plentiful wage work and cheap land, worked anonymously on the fringes of the city, building the region's most famous public artwork, the Watts Towers. Purchasing property in Watts in 1921, Rodia began to draw attention from neighbors and newspaper reporters in the 1930s when his towers pushed past the sightlines of his street. When he abandoned his property in 1954 because of old age and the deterioration of the neighborhood, Rodia left behind seven towers built of urban detritus, the tallest a hair shy of 100 feet. The masterful work of bent steel, cement, and found objects represented one man's re-imagining of urban geography as he built an alternative city in his backyard. Unlike Siqueiros and Shaffer, Rodia worked in relative obscurity until his towers became the subject of grassroots preservation activism in the 1960s and launched him into posthumous global fame as an outsider artist of unmatched skill and drive.

These three artists, 1930s contemporaries, shared an intellectual and intuitive understanding that art on a monumental scale was tied irrevocably to the urban space in which it was produced and that, to be effective, the space must be historically and culturally contextualized by the artwork itself. In so doing, historical meaning could be restored to local places, the local could shed its chauvinistic provincialism, and only then, once harnessed to the local power of place, could the artwork gesture toward global connections to other histories,

places, and publics. In this regard, the work of Siqueiros, Shaffer, and Rodia was really quite different from many of the murals of the Federal Arts Project that referenced epic historical events and icons far afield the specific local context of a city, a hospital, or a complex multicultural neighborhood.⁷ The reasons for the loss of locality in Los Angeles public art was certainly related to the frequent censorship of explicitly political WPA murals. For example, well-known modernists, Lorser Feitelson and Helen Lundeberg, avoided their usual provocative styles and instead recreated conventional scenes like the signing of the Magna Carta or the landing of Cabrillo, the first Spaniard to arrive in California. Southern California Regionalism's leading proponent, Millard Sheets, promoted depictions of rural life, preferring representational forms to abstract ones in order that art might appeal to the broadest possible public. Many WPA artists working in Los Angeles tried to include labor and social inequality as themes in their work as part of their commitment to Popular Front politics but Stanton Macdonald-Wright, the regional director of the Federal Arts Project in southern California from 1935 to 1940, found their efforts so appalling that he painted out political symbols and references himself.⁸ Thus, while 1930s public art is generally known for the mural projects of the New Deal, it is prudent to look at Los Angeles' public art during this decade as a transition from the place-making fantasies of the civic elite to the rigorous examination of place by non-Anglo artists who gestured, albeit in different ways, to more complex socio-political relationships between creative imaginings and social life on the ground.

David Siqueiros's Hollywood: Making a Place for Anti-Imperialist Critique

In 1932, Los Angeles' art community hosted the celebrated Mexican mural painter, David Alfaro Siqueiros. An outspoken Communist, Siqueiros unapologetically and relentlessly challenged United States foreign policy, California's racist labor system, and Los Angeles' elite civic leadership in three giant wall paintings created during a productive six-month period. The largest and best-known of the murals, *América Tropical*, overlooked a busy commercial tourist district near the city's downtown plaza, a spatial vestige of Los Angeles' eighteenth century Spanish colonial origins. Clearly intended to highlight the artist's anti-imperialist political stance, the centerpiece of the mural was a stylized American eagle standing over a tortured Indian body bound to a double-lathed cross. Shortly after its unveiling, the mural was whitewashed and Siqueiros unceremoniously deported when his visa expired. For decades the mural deteriorated and, hidden under the whitewash, largely disappeared from both the urban landscape and the city's collective memory. In the 1970s, the mural emerged from under peeling paint, a marvelous icon for a Chicano movement claiming Los Angeles as Aztlán, the spiritual homeland of Latin America's indigenous people. Political activists interpreted the mural's resurrection from under the whitewash as a return of the oppressed, the emergence of a younger and louder politicized Mexican presence in Los Angeles, and an ethnic reclaiming of a public space previously reserved for Anglo visitors.⁹

Part ideological exercise, part cultural front experiment, and part civic enterprise, *América Tropical* is exemplary of the contentious relationship between public art and the meaning of place in the city of Los Angeles. The mural's commission was part of an effort to encourage private investment in

Figure 3



Reproduction of David Siqueiros' *América Tropical* by Agustín Espinosa on the Olvera Street site of the original mural. Photograph by the author.

civic art projects. As anticipation of hosting the 1932 summer Olympics grew in Los Angeles, concerns about urban design, infrastructure, and aesthetics also intensified, leading the civic arts movement to push for more prominent cultural institutions and a more beautiful city. By the late 1920s, business leaders Harry Chandler, Louis B. Mayer, and William May Garland increasingly became involved in the sponsorship of the arts hoping that a patina of cultural sophistication would promote urban investment, attract upper middle-class residents, and make the city look good on the world stage. Siqueiros was a monumental figure, one of the “Big Three” Mexican muralists along with José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera, and Los Angeles was glad to have him. Newspapers celebrated the presence of such a heavyweight intellectual and covered his visit as they would a visiting dignitary.¹⁰ Though now remembered as the aggrieved painter of *América Tropical*, at the time Siqueiros was welcomed by both civic elites and Hollywood leftists, and he reveled in the attention.

Precisely how Siqueiros came to be in Los Angeles is unclear. Certainly Diego Rivera's successful mural commissions in San Francisco the previous year must have stimulated competitive interest from patrons and artists alike.¹¹ Some scholars suggest that Siqueiros was in danger for his life and came to the United States as a political refugee. Word of his presence spread throughout the southern California art community and through various Hollywood and civic connections, ended up meeting faculty at the Chouinard Art Institute (one of the two most prominent art schools in the city), possibly Millard Sheets, who invited him to paint his first of three Los Angeles murals.¹² Others have subsequently argued that it was Mrs. Nelbert Chouinard's personal invitation to Siqueiros to teach a fresco course that brought him to Los Angeles. Chouinard met the artist in

Taxco, Mexico, and, wishing to move her school in a more progressive direction, commissioned the painting of an exterior mural that would include the training of a small class of students.¹³

We do know that while internally exiled in Taxco he met many American and United States-based artists including Russian director Sergei Eisenstein, who was on location filming *¡Que Viva Mexico!*¹⁴ The epic film was heralded in leftist circles as a deep contemplation of Mexican history, the damage of colonialism, and the immense beauty of the natural landscape.¹⁵ Eisenstein, captivated by the painterly aspects of the Mexican landscape and visually influenced by the work of Rivera and Orozco, understood the filmic technique of montage as critical for the artful exploration of dialectics. Mexico, as Eisenstein saw it, with its sharp juxtapositions between the modern and the ancient, nature and industry, was a perfect setting for pushing the limits of revolutionary avant-garde aesthetics.¹⁶ Deeply influenced by the film director's political connections between artful practice and geography, Siqueiros began writing about the revolutionary potential of large-scale exterior murals using the newest industrial technologies: film projectors, airbrushes, spray guns, waterproof cement, and blowtorches used in designing and building movie sets.¹⁷ The space and the tools necessary to execute his innovative vision of political modernist art were concentrated in Los Angeles, the center of the U.S. film industry. Mexican politics may have created the impetus, and Nelbert Chouinard the means, but it was Siqueiros' desire to improvise and devise what he called the "vehicles of dialectic-subversive painting" that made Los Angeles the optimal destination.¹⁸

In the meantime much of Los Angeles art world seemed attracted to Siqueiros' dark vision and his celebrity. The California Art Club fêted him, the Plaza Art Center exhibited his work, and Hollywood loved him.¹⁹ If Eisenstein inspired Siqueiros' interest in film technology, other industry members found the visiting artist equally compelling. Josef von Sternberg, a modern art collector and director of *The Blue Angel* and *Blonde Venus*, films that made Marlene Dietrich internationally famous, helped Siqueiros get himself and his artwork over the border and into the United States.²⁰ Once Siqueiros was in Los Angeles, von Sternberg commissioned a portrait of himself to be hung in his private collection at Paramount Studios.²¹ Through these Hollywood friends, Siqueiros met avant-garde film director, Dudley Murphy, for whom he painted an interior mural in his home. Major film equipment firms like Otto Oleson, the company that provided the giant floodlights for movie premieres, contributed scaffolding and other equipment to the mural endeavor.²²

The star-struck reception did not end there. The Hollywood chapter of the John Reed Club invited Siqueiros to give a lecture on his experiences painting the Chouinard mural. He spoke about the work of his twenty assembled painters, a group he called the Bloc of Mural Painters. The group mostly included Chouinard students and faculty but also other local artists and art club members who wanted to learn Siqueiros' fresco technique.²³ According to Siqueiros, the bloc was participating in a "technical revolution" of painters "struggling in an organized way for the supremacy of monumental [mural] painting over easel painting."²⁴ Following Siqueiros' lead, the bloc painted directly onto the wall rather than producing the work on a large canvas and later attaching it. Siqueiros viewed direct application of the paints and cement as fundamental for creating significant political art because the work could never be removed or sold. An

affixable mural, on the other hand, could be taken down and distributed while its media of oil and canvas made it “spurious and fragile.”²⁵

In fact, the production of the Chouinard mural, titled *Workers' Meeting*, would prove quite fragile as an experiment in the modernization of mural technology. The wall (24 ft. by 19 ft.) was in the courtyard of Chouinard Art Institute, with its top portion visible from the street. The wall was divided by windows, which Siqueiros incorporated into the mural's design of workers sitting on scaffolds listening intently to a speaker below. The means Siqueiros employed were technologically innovative. He used film projectors to create a massive stencil that allowed him to perfectly incorporate the architectural idiosyncrasies of the wall. Pneumatic drills created a roughened texture to which waterproof cement could properly adhere. Then airbrushes (using an electric compressor) sprayed colored paint into the plaster. In effect, Siqueiros was adapting the ancient fresco process of painting watercolor into wet sand and lime to a contemporary context. What normally would have taken months was completed in two weeks, and what could only have survived historically on an inside wall could now, presumably, have a long life outdoors, in the city, amid the traffic, and “abandon itself entirely to millions of people.”²⁶ The moving of an indoor art form outdoors, the deployment of ancient techniques together with modern technology, the evolution of a bourgeois and religious art form into secular political art for the masses, made the Chouinard exterior mural precisely the vehicle of dialectic-subversive painting that Siqueiros sought.

Unfortunately, neither the public reception nor the materials themselves proved steady enough to sustain the artwork. When it was unveiled in July 1932, local art critics and newspapers reported that the mural of a labor union meeting was too political and too closely resembled agitprop art.²⁷ Within a year, the mural was whitewashed although it is unclear precisely why. Sculptor and bloc painter, Robert Merrell Gage, has said that local police told Mrs. Chouinard the mural had to be covered, while other bloc members claim that Siqueiros' experimental fresco technique failed to survive its first southern California rain, chipping so badly the wall was painted over.²⁸

Whatever the reason for whitewashing the Chouinard mural, Siqueiros' radical artist persona captivated Los Angeles' civic imagination. While still working on *Workers' Meeting*, Siqueiros accepted an invitation from F.K. Ferenz, director of the Plaza Art Center, to paint an even larger mural (18 ft. by 82 ft.) on the second-story wall of the Italian Hall on Olvera Street.²⁹ The hall, according to William Estrada, was the center of social, cultural, and political activities for the city's Italian community. Its presence in a historically Mexican and Chinese neighborhood reflected the ethnic polyglot of the city's plaza area and pointed toward its political complexity as the building had been a rallying place for Italian and Mexican radicals during the early years of the Mexican Revolution.³⁰ As politically revolutionary a site as the Italian Hall was in the nineteen-teens, Ferenz was evidently uninterested in Siqueiros's own radical politics. Estrada argues that Ferenz leaned toward the fascist right and merely wanted to take advantage of Siqueiros' celebrity status to promote his facility.³¹

The Italian Hall's physical location on Olvera Street was also significant. Backed by *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harry Chandler and San Francisco socialite Christine Sterling, the opening of Olvera Street in 1930 was part of civic efforts to “beautify” a neighborhood considered blighted by city leaders.

Figure 4



Olvera Street post card, ca. 1950s. Collection of the author.

Figure 5



Olvera Street post card, ca. 1950s. Collection of the author.

The beautification displaced hundreds of residents to create a commercial urban attraction where Mexican Americans reenacted their Mexican and colonial “pasts” for the benefit of Anglo tourists. As historian Phoebe Kropp has persuasively argued, Olvera Street’s new appeal typified Anglo nostalgia for an idealized golden age of ranchos and missions. But this was not a benign effort to sentimentalize history; a mythologized Mexican past performed on the urban landscape naturalized exploitative social relations during a brutal era of labor disputes and repatriation.³²

Produced with the assistance of the Bloc of Mural Painters, this new mural, to be painted on a rooftop several stories above the street below, was initially lauded in the newspapers as a well-chosen aesthetic complement to Olvera Street’s commercial theme of a gentle and scenic Mexican past. The *Times* ran photographs of young pretty woman artists demurely standing on ladders while art columnists promised a “Mexican tropical jungle... [in which] Indians will form colorful notes amid the green foliage.”³³ The mural presumably would assure Anglo visitors that “Mexicans on Olvera Street were docile rather than dangerous,” a concern underscored by the federal government’s repatriation campaign that was prompting angry protests in the plaza.³⁴

Siqueiros, however, had other themes in mind than a decorative tropical landscape with parrots, pumas, and colorful natives. The wall overlooking Olvera Street gave him the remarkable opportunity to paint in a genuinely public place (as opposed to a private school’s courtyard) and once again try out his ideological style of dialectic-subversive painting. The wall, while huge, was perpendicular to the street below and best seen from a distance. He thus painted a giant tropical jungle whose roots were portrayed thick as flesh and lithe as serpents as they surrounded an ancient temple. In the upper right-hand corner of the mural a Peruvian Indian and Mexican campesino prepare their firearms for an attack on the American imperial eagle perched above the mural’s startling centerpiece: an Indian tightly bound to a double cross. Temple ruins and pieces of statuary litter the ground. Siqueiros’ point was not subtle, nor did he intend it to be. He described *América Tropical* as a purposeful anti-imperialist statement: “It is the violent symbol of the Indian peon of feudal America doubly crucified by that nation’s exploitative classes and, in turn, by imperialism. It is the living symbol of the destruction of past national American cultures by the invaders of yesterday and today. It is the prepatory action of the revolutionary proletariat that scales the scene and readies its weapons to throw itself into the ennobling battle of a new social order.”³⁵ Siqueiros condemned the United States as the controlling

Figure 6



Reproduction of David Siqueiros' *América Tropical* by Agustín Espinosa. © 1989 J. Paul Getty Trust. All rights reserved.

force of Latin American colonialism and economic imperialism abroad and the exploitative employer of Latin American labor at home. Savage acts lay behind the United States nineteenth century occupation of Mexico that continued in the 1930s through brutal labor practices and the repatriation of Mexican and Mexican-American workers. Siqueiros saw the act of producing the mural to be as significant and political as its content. Its value was in the collectivity of its production, its size, its public accessibility, and the historical relevance of the site.³⁶

América Tropical was finally unveiled on October 9 under a shroud of secrecy, as Siqueiros let none of his students or the press see the central figure.³⁷ According to *Los Angeles Times* critic Arthur Millier who attended the unveiling, the audience gasped at the shocking scene before them.³⁸ The mural's rooftop placement prevented close-up scrutiny of the images by passers-by but ensured broad visibility from a distance. Ferenz promptly painted over the fifteen feet of the mural visible from the street below but left the rest of the mural intact, including the central image of the bound peon, symbolic of "the oppressive double cross of the people of Hispano-America."³⁹ Though the rest of the mural would be whitewashed a couple of years later, Siqueiros took pleasure in producing it and provoking the city officials who, anonymously it seems, ordered that *América Tropical* be covered.⁴⁰ His writings later in life reflect concession to the political climate in 1930s Los Angeles, accepting that an obviously anti-imperialist, anti-racist statement would be read as anti-American and would unlikely survive the

Figure 7



David Alfaro Siqueiros, *América Tropical* under whitewash, ca. 1933. ©2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City.

whitewash brush. The real value of the mural was in its execution. It was huge, it was truly public, it was produced through a collective effort, and the very reaction that destroyed it laid bare the value of monumental, dialectical political art.

While Ferenz felt compelled to paint out the mural, contemporary artists and critics loved it. Critic Arthur Millier followed Siqueiros throughout his Los Angeles stay and concluded that *América Tropical* “is a Mexican’s picture of this own troubled land.... Interpret it anyway you like, it is a work that first arrests and then holds the mind through the strength and simplicity of its forms....”⁴¹ Though Millier would change his tune later, arguing that murals were no place for personal convictions and Siqueiros’ work little more than communist propaganda, at the time *América Tropical* was revealed, he believed it to be a fine and important work of art.⁴² Leftist artists, of course, were thrilled to have a revolutionary voice booming from a place like downtown Los Angeles. Seymour Stern, Hollywood editor of *Experimental Cinema*, marveled at Siqueiros’ audacity in bringing his radical philosophy “to life on the walls of one of the most conservative art asylums in the United States.”⁴³

As well connected as Siqueiros became in Los Angeles, his supporters could neither keep the mural from being whitewashed nor could they prevent his November departure.⁴⁴ Before leaving, however, Siqueiros painted one more Los Angeles mural, a private project for film director Dudley Murphy.⁴⁵ Eisenstein had introduced the two and, with an expired visitor’s visa, Siqueiros was in need of a reprieve from the social limelight. Murphy offered up his Malibu home and Siqueiros, together with Fletcher Martin, Luis Arenal, and Reuben Kadish, painted a smaller mural (8 ft. by 32 ft.) on Murphy’s garden patio. The painting,

Figure 8



David Alfaro Siqueiros, detail, *Portrait of Mexico Today*, 1932. ©2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City.

Portrait of Mexico Today, revisited anti-imperialist themes, depicting Mexican President Calles as a masked bandit and J.P. Morgan as one of the critical forces of corruption in Siqueiros' country. The mural's centerpiece included two women and a child with a young revolutionary soldier on the sidelines, rifle drawn to protect the oppressed from the corrupt and aging figures on the right.⁴⁶ It was an optimistic revolutionary vision. And, because it was privately commissioned, *Portrait of Mexico Today* is the only one of Siqueiros' Los Angeles murals to survive intact. It was eventually donated and moved to the Santa Barbara Art Museum where it was publicly unveiled in October 2002. Its survival in southern California, on Murphy's property, suggests a conflicted relationship between public and private spaces. In private arenas, members of Hollywood's culture industry encouraged socially progressive art. When Siqueiros produced work for the public gaze, it was deemed too controversial by civic leaders to survive.

Siqueiros' challenge to civic leaders deeply influenced artists in the city, some of whom took up the mantle of political protest and were punished for their efforts. After his departure, the Bloc of Mural Artists lent their support to the campaign to free the Scottsboro Nine, black youths in Alabama facing death sentences for trumped-up rape charges. The bloc produced a series of portable mural panels depicting racial violence and bound black bodies, which were to be publicly exhibited in Barnsdall Park. The night before the show, the Los Angeles Police Department Red Squad confiscated the unveiled mural panels and returned them full of bullet holes.⁴⁷

Myer Shaffer: Painting/Placing a Critique of Los Angeles' Self-Image

Siqueiros' legacy in Los Angeles, ultimately, was to sharpen the contradiction between the civic imagination and the political and cultural realities of the city. For some artists, this forced a rethinking of the meaning of place to history and elevated the important role public art could play in excavating narratives of the exploited and the oppressed. One such artist was Myer Shaffer. A former Chouinard student and member of the bloc Siqueiros assembled to create *América Tropical*, Shaffer was heralded in the local Jewish papers as one of the best new talents in southern California. The praise followed the 1936 unveiling of twenty-three year old Shaffer's *The Social Aspects of Tuberculosis* (7 ft. x 18 ft.) in the library of the Los Angeles Tuberculosis Sanitarium, produced with the support of the American Artists' Congress, the Federal Arts Project, and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.⁴⁸ The large, three-panel mural suggested that a larger political economy of illness was responsible for the persistence of tuberculosis in Los Angeles, a critical position that undermined regional myths about the essential curative powers of the climate and silenced shrill voices blaming the poor for their own deleterious health.⁴⁹

Unlike many WPA muralists who painted anonymous subjects or, as historian Michael Kammen has pointed out, imagined suitable subject matter without doing the research to support their choices, Shaffer spent time with patients in the historic sanitarium, established in Duarte by the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Association (JCRA) in 1913, consulting with them about their experiences as tuberculosis sufferers in southern California.⁵⁰ The JCRA itself was founded on the humanitarian principle of universal care and treatment of tubercular patients, extending its own resources to heal anyone with the "white plague," whether or

not he or she was Jewish or had the means to compensate the sanitarium. This mission of universality deeply influenced Shaffer, who incorporated themes of social justice and global unity into all of his 1930s public works.⁵¹ Emphasizing the class dimensions of illness rather than desert climate cure-alls for the wealthy, Shaffer's murals undermined traditional booster images of the region as a health resort and challenged the idea of the sanitarium as an upper middle-class refuge. Southern California's value to tuberculosis sufferers as a dry sunny place had been exploited by regional promoters since the 1870s, when the southwest belt from Texas to the Pacific coast became a haven for middle and upper class consumptives and health seekers. Shaffer, repelled by the sentimental reading of the illness as it played out in booster lore, focused his viewers' attention on the human bodies who bore the brunt of the disease; bodies that lived impoverished lives, twisted by overwork, exhausted, and nutritionally deficient.⁵²

In July 1937, Shaffer completed another Federal Arts Project commission, this one at the Mount Sinai Home for Chronic Invalids. At four hundred square feet, *The Elder in Relation to Society*, was much larger than the tuberculosis series though, like the sanitarium mural, Shaffer used his artwork to draw attention to social crisis, this time that of eldercare. He explained in the *Hollywood Citizen-News* that he placed biblical figures Judas Maccabee and King David in the foreground to illustrate "that age does not incapacitate."⁵³ Yet the mural delivered a much stronger social message; in the upper detail of the fresco Shaffer painted five figures depicting different racial and ethnic groups and a sixth figure representing death. The mural implied that since age and death did not discriminate perhaps people should not either. A writer for the *Jewish Community Press* noted that the mural extended "a plea for united understanding and a closer brotherhood of the white, black and yellow races."⁵⁴ Shaffer's message of universal brotherly love was apparently too much for the convalescent hospital because several months later the administration whitewashed the mural. Shaffer sued the facility for \$100,000, but it is unclear how the suit was resolved.⁵⁵ In 1938, Shaffer returned to the Los Angeles Sanitarium and completed another three sections of *The Social Aspects of Tuberculosis*, this series entitled *Allegory*, further illustrating the class dynamics of the fight against the disease.⁵⁶ With the suit pending against Mount Sinai, Shaffer pushed the envelope when he incorporated into the sanitarium mural the international protest symbol of a raised, clenched fist, an image associated in the 1930s with supporters of the beleaguered Spanish Republic.⁵⁷ The fist, encircled by a chain, did not last long as the sanitarium administration required Shaffer to paint it out.⁵⁸ The entire mural would disappear by the end of the 1938, although the specific details of its whitewashing are also unknown.⁵⁹

As a contemporary of Siqueiros, Shaffer was not surprised by his own murals' uneasy reception and, like his mentor, probably anticipated a negative reaction. Shaffer credited the Federal Arts Project with encouraging public art in the city but kept track in the *Jewish Community Press* of the increasing number of murals painted over by the Board of Education and other local authorities.⁶⁰ Shaffer specifically noted that one of the problems with civic art in Los Angeles was its lack of historical accuracy or relevance and its uncritical celebration of its colonial past. Wincing at Los Angeles' regional provincialism, Shaffer wrote that a "fallacy that we find in numerous murals is the disregard of the truth of historic events. A mural should be as powerful and moving as a symphony...., not a pretty melody in paint."⁶¹

Figure 9



Myer Shaffer, *The Social Aspects of Tuberculosis*, 1938. Courtesy of City of Hope, Duarte, California.

Myer Shaffer was directly influenced by Siqueiros, learning from the Mexican painter that the relationship of art to place could be made visceral and immediate by highlighting the historical context of the space in which public murals were produced. The geography, even the building in which the mural was painted, in fact, made the art relevant: “a mural should not be an abstraction in thought or color, but carry a message combining both form and content [and, as such] a mural should respect and blend with its architectural surroundings.”⁶² When given the opportunity to paint in a tuberculosis sanatorium, Shaffer seized it to produce a work of social criticism that directly addressed both the politics of disease and the politics of regional myth-making, rather than create an innocuous visual salve that obscured the significance of place. The risk, of course, was that the critical relationship of the artwork to place seemed to ensure the artwork’s destruction.

Sabato Rodia: Making Art From Place/Making Art and Place Matter

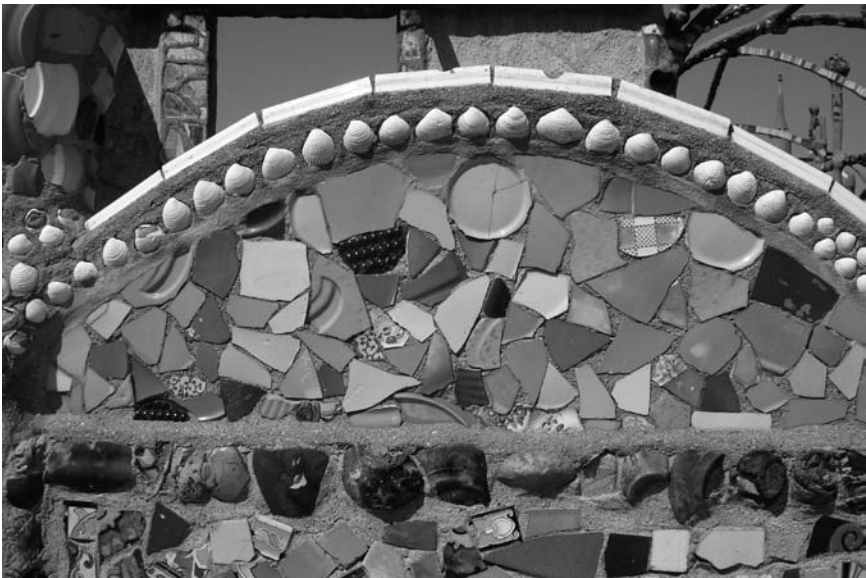
While neither part of the official art world, nor a participant in the Federal Arts Project, no one had a stronger sense of the relationship of art to place in 1930s Los Angeles than Sabato Rodia, the solitary builder, architect, and visionary of the Watts Towers. Wanting to build something “big,” in 1921 Rodia purchased a triangular shaped piece of land near two railroad lines on East 107th Street and began to erect a complex of seven towers, two cactus gardens, a kiln, a boat, a gazebo, and two fountains, all surrounded by an elaborately decorated wall. The towers, and the surrounding smaller structures, are built from steel rebar that Rodia bent into his desired shapes by placing it under the nearby railroad tracks and bending it with his body.⁶³ The shaped rebar was overlapped with heavy wire

Figure 10



Sabato Rodia, *Nuestro Pueblo* (Watts Towers), 1921-54. Photograph by the author.

Figure 11



Sabato Rodia, *Nuestro Pueblo* (Watts Towers), 1921-54. Photograph by the author.

and wrapped with another layer of chicken wire to secure the joint. Rodia then created his own unique mixture of durable cement with which he encased the wire wrapped joint and pressed broken glass, dishes, tiles, shells, found objects, and tools into the mortar. Most of the objects were left to stick permanently while others, like tools and household objects such as faucet knobs, fire screens, and baking tins, were used to create imprints and removed, leaving Rodia's signature heart and floral designs in the 140 foot wall and along the cement floor. Spelled out several times throughout the structure is "Nuestro Pueblo," Spanish for "Our Town," Rodia's way of honoring his Mexican neighbors. Rodia worked on his fantastic backyard creation until 1954, when he abandoned the property to a neighbor, left Los Angeles for northern California, never to return.

The towers are startlingly beautiful, made extremely colorful by the patterns of tile pressed into the mortar, but what is even more remarkable is the intensity of the human labor that reverberates throughout the artwork. Rodia built his towers without scaffolding, blowtorch, or power tools. Instead he used a window washer's belt and devised a system of pulleys that he used to haul himself, and thousands of pounds of cement, up and down the metal towers as he wrapped the joints and stabilized each level before moving on to the next. Rodia built ladders into the towers' form to facilitate his movement, possibly a foresight of the maintenance the structures would constantly require. When Rodia was not working on *Nuestro Pueblo*, he labored for a tile company, collecting the leftovers of expensive tile used in homes in more affluent parts of the city, or gathered broken glass, shells, and miscellaneous objects from the neighborhood and the beach.

Other than his neighbors who likely thought he was a madman obsessively building upward, few were aware of Rodia and his towers in the early 20th century. This changed in the 1930s, when local newspapers began reporting on the Italian immigrant and his backyard monument as it became increasingly visible from passing trains. Some interpreted the towers as an immigrant's homage to an adopted homeland, a gift to America.⁶⁴ A 1939 *Los Angeles Times* piece reported that the project was a type of therapy that helped Rodia fight his alcoholism, his new sobriety meaning he no longer gathered his own bottles but those of other drinkers.⁶⁵ The speculative nature of the 1930s reports would echo in most accounts of Rodia's lifework. A native of Ribottoli, a village twenty miles east of Naples, who came to the United States in the 1890s to work in the Pennsylvania coal mines, Rodia kept most details of his personal history purposefully vague.⁶⁶ Two folklore scholars, I. Sheldon Posen and Daniel Franklin Ward, suggested in the 1980s that Rodia's towers closely resembled the ceremonial towers carried during the Feast of St. Paulinas, an Italian American festival that took place each June in Brooklyn, New York. The highlight was the carrying of a three-ton, six story tower called a *giglio* through the streets on the shoulders of over one hundred men while other festival participants carried a giant galleon.⁶⁷ Rodia's own origins in a town not far from Nola, the southern Italy origin of the St. Paulinas legend, and his inclusion of a boat in his complex of structures, lends credibility to the argument that he was recreating the *gigli* of his youth. And, in fact, a 1937 *Los Angeles Times* article suggested that the structures were "modeled after quaint towers which Rodilla [sic] remembered from his native Italy," but does not elaborate on what those "quaint towers" might be.⁶⁸

Given Rodia's reluctance to say definitively what *Nuestro Pueblo* meant, I have argued elsewhere that the Watts Towers are perhaps most significant for

their complicated relationship to the space they inhabit -- the scene of two urban uprisings in 1965 and 1992 -- and for their life in a globalized popular culture that interprets Rodia's work as everything from a commercial trope of urban American blackness to postmodern folk art.⁶⁹ Ironies abound, but one of the most profound contradictions in the long life of the Watts Towers is that they are internationally famous, luring thousands of foreign visitors, and yet the City of Los Angeles has left them to deteriorate while local Angelenos often do not know they exist at all because a culturally and socially cultivated fear of Watts has obscured the neighborhood from white middle-class view. The 1959

Figure 12



Sabato Rodia, *Nuestro Pueblo* (Watts Towers), 1921-54. Photograph by the author.

campaign by the Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts, a citizen's group of artists, students, and engineers, to save the work from the municipal wrecking ball was successful, but it necessitated the symbolic severing of the towers from their urban context in order to celebrate them as art. Thus photographs from the late 1950s and early 1960s, shot from the ground up, obscure the surrounding neighborhood and obliterate the relationship of artwork to place.

After the 1965 Watts riot, however, it was impossible to sever the towers from their urban context. Even now, much of the Watts Towers' life in contemporary popular culture, from the sprinkling of towers' images in Boost Mobile and Levi's ads, appearances in hip-hop music videos and album covers, a feature in the video game *Grand Theft Auto* and, most recently, in an episode of the short lived television show *Southland*, reassert the relationship of the artwork to place. But the reattachment of art to place in the devastated context of a neighborhood best known for two race-based uprisings has created an iconic symbol that is too easily co-opted by agencies of gentrification, community redevelopment, and consumer capitalism seeking authenticating street credentials. The Watts Towers continue

Figure 13



Sabato Rodia, *Nuestro Pueblo* (Watts Towers), 1921-54. Photograph by the author.

to be underfunded and the neighborhood continues to be poor; yet, the artwork's fame continues to grow. There is an uncomfortable relationship between the local realities of life on the ground and global projections of the towers as a commercial trope of black urban America; now, of course, Watts is predominantly home to immigrants from Latin America.

Rodia did not live to see the Watts riot or its aftermath; he died a month too early in July 1965, and he never profited from the attention the towers received. Excluded from the civic imagination of leisure culture and white Anglo wealth that Los Angeles' promotional imagery captured, unassimilated into American society, isolated from his family and homeland, and functioning on the margins of the socio-economic mainstream, Rodia used art to make his place in the city meaningful. That the towers have marked the U.S. cultural landscape in significant ways speaks more to the political economy of race than any intention Rodia might have had as an artist. But build a monument he did, whether it is interpreted as a monument to his childhood, a monument to his neighbors, or a monument to Los Angeles; in any event, Rodia claimed a part of the city, overlooked by most, and gave it cultural value.

Monuments, and the spaces they occupy, are troubling for social critics as they usually serve as key visual elements in the construction of public memory while being produced within a dominant system of values that tends to defuse cultural diversity and obscure resistance to social injustice. Theorist Henri Lefebvre, in his 1970 critique of urban society, *The Urban Revolution*, struggled with the problem of cultural representation in the city and finally concluded that "in their very essence, and sometimes at the very heart of a space in which the characteristics of a society are most recognizable and commonplace, monuments embody a sense of being *elsewhere*."⁷⁰

But what if we want art to relay a sense of being *here*? And *now*? Lefebvre suggested that the relationship of art to place is inherently problematic because in its very survival a cultural monument projects some other place and time with its meaning often lost to modern-day audiences. And, if a cultural site (be it public space, public art, art institution, or urban monument) retains too timely a political and social meaning, the site is often simply erased. Siqueiros and Shaffer understood the problem as their political and representational artworks, so carefully and painfully contextualized in contemporary time and space, disappeared under whitewash. In contrast, Rodia literally built an artwork out of the place in which he lived and designed it to occupy as much space as possible, offering, to the broadest public he could reach, an alternative and ambiguous civic vision without the political impetus of his muralist contemporaries. Because of the Watts Towers' eclectic construction and their staunch resistance to the usually ephemeral nature of urban detritus, they are able to offer their audience a visual experience outside nostalgia's artificial fixity of time; they are incredible for their own sake and their timeliness is rendered irrelevant. But precisely because of the specific place and time they ultimately inhabit in historical memory, whatever the artist's intent, the Watts Towers are likely (and ironically) the most politically fraught artwork in the city, simultaneously deeply meaningful and physically vulnerable, overlooked but also tenaciously visible.

Siqueiros and Shaffer directly challenged the exclusionary civic imagination in large-scale visual representations that referenced specific political concerns, especially those of the exploitative labor practices and racialized social injustices of the Depression era. Siqueiros, a foreign visitor and Shaffer, his ethnic American protégé, subverted Los Angeles' finely-tuned, globally-projected self-image by brazenly revealing the political meanings (and possibilities) of local places. Meanwhile, Rodia, an immigrant laborer and a cultural outsider, broadened the civic imagination to include anyone who took the time to see his backyard phantasmagoria. In effect, Rodia deployed the local, expressed through objects found in his neighborhood's trash, to produce an internationally recognizable symbol of Los Angeles, albeit one far removed from any civic booster's intent. While 1930s Los Angeles was not hospitable to artistic challenges to its civic identity, it nevertheless attracted artists with strong desires to insert themselves, and their monumental visions, into the urban landscape, leaving behind evidence of the contentious relationship of art to place but also poignant reminders of the need to make place matter.

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ENDNOTES

Many thanks to Christina Cleary for her assistance in translating Siqueiros's papers at the Getty Research Institute and for the insightful critique and tireless commentary offered by Julia Foulkes and an anonymous reader in the preparation of this article. I am grateful too for the indispensable research assistance of Susan Douglass Yates, chief archivist at City of Hope, formerly the Los Angeles Tuberculosis Sanitarium.

1. For a history of Los Angeles's art controversies from the early 20th century through the early 1970s, see Sarah Schrank, *Art and the City: Civic Imagination and Cultural Authority in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia, 2009).
2. Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, 1995), 9.
3. See Schrank, *Art and the City*, and Schrank, "The Art of the City: Modernism, Censorship, and the Emergence of Los Angeles's Postwar Art Scene," *American Quarterly* 56 (2004): 663-691.
4. Civic Bureau of Music and Art of Los Angeles, *Culture and the Community* (Los Angeles County, 1927), 3-6. Department of Special Collections, California State University, Long Beach.
5. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1997).
6. The erasure of Myer Shaffer from Los Angeles' cultural landscape is essentially complete. The major murals were long ago destroyed and there are scant references to Shaffer in histories of the WPA. One of the few catalogs that indicate Shaffer's participation is *New Deal Art: California*, (Santa Clara, 1976), 104-105.
7. For a discussion of 1930s mural controversies nationwide, see Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis, 1982), Marlene Park and Gerald Markowitz *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia, 1984); Bruce Bustard, *A New Deal for the Arts* (Seattle, 1997); Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago, 1991); Jonathan Harris, et. al. *Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (Oxford, 1995); Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley, 1999); and Michael Kammen, *Visual Shock: A History of Art Controversies in American Culture* (New York, 2006), 119-148.
8. Interview with Stanton Macdonald-Wright by Bettie Lochrie Hoag, Pacific Palisades, April 13, 1964, p.1, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.
9. This is a famous episode in the history of Los Angeles and it has been carefully documented by the art historian Shifra M. Goldman and other scholars who have followed her lead. People are still intrigued by Siqueiros' mural and the experience of an unrepentant legacy of the Left it elicits in its viewers. The generative work on Siqueiros' southern California visit is Shifra M. Goldman, "Siqueiros and Three Early Murals in Los Angeles," *Art Journal* 33 (1974): 321-27. Goldman's important study followed the rediscovery of *América Tropical* in the late 1960s and the start of efforts to restore the mural. Goldman played an instrumental role in calling academic and activist attention to the mural in the 1970s and encouraging the broader study of Latino arts in Los Angeles. The mural's second life continues today as a complicated conservation exercise fostering high hopes that the Getty Conservation Institute project will soon be open to the public. The Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department has recently hosted colloquia focused on *América Tropical* and has also partnered with non-profit organizations to raise the money to continue the conservation. Other significant historical inquiries into Siqueiros' short but fascinating stint in Los Angeles include Laurance P. Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (Albuquerque, 1989), and Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists* (San Francisco, 1993). A 1971 film by Jesus Treviño, *América Tropical*, also tells the story of Siqueiros in Los Angeles as well as showing conservators' assessment of the mural's condition.
10. Arthur Millier, "Brush Strokes," *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1932, B14; Millier, "Mexico's Art Ferment Stirring in Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1932, B13; Millier, "Von Sternberg Dotes on Portraits of Himself," *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1932, B13; " 'Guns' Turned on Patio Wall," *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1932; "Out of Town," *New York Times*, July 17, 1932, 28.
11. For more on Diego Rivera's mural painting in San Francisco, and its relationship to 1930s muralism in U.S. cities, see Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley, 1999).
12. Goldman, 321-327; Hurlburt, 283, no. 29.

13. David Alfaro Siqueiros, "The Vehicles of Dialectic-Subversive Painting," 1932, folder 2-32, file no. 960094, David Alfaro Siqueiros Papers, Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
14. Hurlburt, 206.
15. Agustín Aragón Leiva, "Eisenstein's Film on Mexico," *Experimental Cinema* 4 (1932): 5.
16. Sergei M. Eisenstein, "The Principles of Film Form," *Experimental Cinema* 4 (1932): 7-12; Morris Helpin, "Que Viva Mexico!: Eisenstein in Mexico," *Experimental Cinema* No. (1932): 13-14.
17. Hurlburt, 206; Siqueiros, "The Vehicles of Dialectic-Subversive Painting."
18. Siqueiros, "The Vehicles of Dialectic-Subversive Painting."
19. Goldman references an exhibition at the Plaza Art Center, an exhibit also referenced in the Siqueiros Papers, and mentions that the California Art Club hosted a dinner in the artist's honor.
20. Goldman, 322.
21. Arthur Millier, "Von Sternberg Dotes on Portraits of Himself," *Los Angeles Times*, B13.
22. David Alfaro Siqueiros, folder 3-20, file no. 960094, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
23. The Bloc of Mural Painters included Luis Arenal, Lee Blair, Dean Cornwell, Robert Merrell Gage, Philip Guston, Murray Hantman, Reuben Kadish, Harold Lehman, Fletcher Martin, Barse Miller, Phil Paradise, Paul Sample, Myer Shaffer, Millard Sheets, among others.
24. David Alfaro Siqueiros, "The Vehicles of Dialectic Subversive Painting."
25. Ibid.
26. David Alfaro Siqueiros, folder 3-32, file no. 960094, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
27. Rochfort, 146.
28. Goldman, 323.
29. David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Technical Revolution," series 2, Los Angeles, 1932, folder 3-14; "Fresco Unveiled," folder 3-20, file no. 960094, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
30. William David Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (Austin, 2008), 156-157.
31. Estrada, 209. Estrada's study reveals that Ferenz was indeed a Nazi propagandist, publishing pro-Hitler essay collections. Estrada also cites an interview with Shifra Goldman in which she states that Ferenz was only interested in the publicity the mural could generate.
32. Phoebe S. Kropp, "Citizens of the Past? Olvera Street and the Construction of Race and Memory in 1930s Los Angeles," *Radical History Review* 81 (2001): 35-60.
33. Arthur Millier, "Huge Fresco for El Paseo," *Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 1932, 15.
34. Phoebe Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley, 2006), 240-241.

35. David Alfaro Siqueiros, "América Tropical," series 2, Los Angeles, ca. 1932, folder 3-22, file 960094, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
36. Ibid.
37. Goldman, 324.
38. Arthur Millier, "Power Unadorned Marks Olvera Street Fresco: "Tropical Mexico" Painting by Siqueiros is Strong Tragic Conception of His Native Land," *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 1932, B16.
39. David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Mi Experiencia de Hacer 20 Años en Arte Público," *Arte Público*, February 1953, folder 2-16, file 960094, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
40. It remains unclear who ordered *América Tropical* whitewashed although historical rumor suggests Harry Chandler of the *Los Angeles Times*, anxious to put down growing angry protests over the repatriation campaigns, and Christine Sterling, wanting to retain Olvera Street's festive atmosphere, put economic pressure on Ferenz to cover it. Laurance Hurlburt has suggested that perhaps the Los Angeles Police Department's Red Squad, known to have destroyed political paintings after Siqueiros' departure, may have had a hand in the mural's destruction as well.
41. Millier, "Power Unadorned Marks Olvera Street Fresco," B16.
42. Arthur Millier, "Mural Rows Due to Artists' Failure to Understand Job," *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 1935, A6; Millier, "Critic Looks Back at 30 Years of Art in L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1956, E6.
43. Seymour Stern, *Experimental Cinema*, ca. 1932, Siqueiros Papers, *Experimental Cinema*, series 2, Los Angeles ca. 1932, folder 3-22, file 960094, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
44. E.F.P. Coughlin, "Deportation Looms for Noted Mexican Artist on Eve of Greatest Triumph," miscellaneous newspaper clipping, October 8, 1932, and Myer Shaffer, "Murals in Southern California," *Jewish Community Press*, September 3, 1937, 153-54. Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.
45. Rochfort, 147.
46. Hurlburt, 213-15.
47. Ibid.; Philip Stein, *Siqueiros: His Life and Works* (New York, 1994), 80-81; Harold Lehman Biography, haroldlehman.com/siqueiros/html, accessed July 8, 2007.
48. Myer Shaffer received acclaim the previous year when his painting, *Barmitzvah*, was selected for display by the region's most prestigious juried show, the Los Angeles County Museum's annual exhibition of painters and sculptors. Program, *The Sixteenth Annual Exhibition of Painters and Sculptors, April 25-June 6, 1935*, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park. Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.
49. "Mural Attracts Widespread Attention Here," *The Signal*, October 19, 1936, Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.
50. Martin Wark, "The Sanitarium Murals: Graphic Indictment of Tuberculosis Causes," *Jewish Community Press*, August 19, 1938, Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.; Michael Kammen, 119.
51. Dr. Leon Shulman, "The California Consumptives' Relief Association," *The Sanitarium* 6 (1913): 38-39. City of Hope Archives, Duarte, Calif.

52. Wark, "The Sanitarium Murals."
53. Myer Shaffer, quoted in "Artist Completes Mt. Sinai Home Fresco," *Hollywood Citizen-News*, July 16, 1937, Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.
54. Martin Wark, "'Elder in Relation to Society' Noted for Clear-Cut Symbols," *Jewish Community Press*, n.d., 14, Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.
55. "Mt. Sinai Art Suit Asks \$100,000," *Los Angeles Examiner*, March 11, 1938.
56. "Mural is Finished," *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1938: section III, p. 7.
57. "Artist Paints Clenched Fist Out of Mural," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1938.
58. "Mt. Sinai Art Suit Asks \$100,000," *Los Angeles Examiner*, March 11, 1938; "Artist Paints Clenched Fist Out of Mural," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1938, Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.
59. Correspondence with Susan Douglass Yates, archivist, City of Hope, Duarte, Calif., May 1, 2009.
60. Myer Shaffer, "Murals in Southern California," *Jewish Community Press*, September 3, 1937, 154, Myer Shaffer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, West Coast Regional Center, San Marino, Calif.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. Jeanne Morgan, "Rodia's Towers: Nuestro Pueblo, A Gift to the World," *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments*. Ed. Daniel Franklin Ward. (Bowling Green, 1984), 80.
64. For a study of the towers' meaning as an immigrant intervention into the American cultural landscape, see Teresa Fiore, *Pre-occupied spaces: re-configuring the Italian nation through its migrations* Ph.D. dissertation. University of California, San Diego 2002.
65. Joe Seewerker and Charles Owens, "Nuestro Pueblo: Glass Towers and Demon Rum," *Los Angeles Times*, sec II, p.2. 28 April, 1939.
66. Goldstone and Goldstone, 25-28.
67. I. Sheldon Posen and Daniel Franklin Ward, "Watts Towers and the Giglio Tradition," *Folklife Annual* 1985 (Washington, D.C, 1985), 143-157.
68. "Flashing Spires Built as Hobby," *Los Angeles Times*, part II, p. 2. 13 Oct. 1937.
69. See Sarah Schrank, "Picturing the Watts Towers: The Art and Politics of an Urban Landmark," in *Reading California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900-2000*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Ilene Fort, and Sheri Bernstein (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 373-86; Sarah Schrank, "Nuestro Pueblo: The Spatial and Cultural Politics of Los Angeles' Watts Towers," Gyan Prakash and Kevin Kruse (ed), *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*, (Princeton, 2008), 275-309; and Schrank, *Art and the City*, 135-64.
70. Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (1970; Minneapolis, 2003), 22.