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Mexican Muralism

Lead: At the root of the explosion of graffiti on American public spaces was the revolutionary artistic movement known as Mexican Muralism.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Murals have been around since prehistoric times, but the modern genesis of the term in part originated with the Mexican "muralista" art movement. In the years following the Mexican revolution, during the 1920s and 1930s, native art, often with a

powerful political message, began to decorate blank walls all over Mexico. Varying in quality, murals helped turn the cities into works of art. Muralists used open public spaces to call attention to a troubled society's dreams, needs and hopes, revealing the need for social transformation. These murals could not be quickly eradicated, though the authorities tried. They were in-your-face, provocative, and demonstrated insistent demands by the artists for social justice.

The three founders of the muralist movement were all Mexican natives. They were David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, and Diego Rivera. Born in 1896, Siqueiros was a

political activist whose murals began to appear in Mexico City in 1922. His most famous mural, *Burial of a Worker*, depicted a woman mourning the death of a man, obviously a victim of social struggle.

The second of the triumvirate was José Orozco. Originally, he was driven by sympathy for peasants and workers, but later focused his attention on what he saw was the Roman Catholic Church's corrupt alliance with entrenched power.

The most famous of the three was Diego Rivera. His works were huge, controversial, and inspiring to those who admired him. Perhaps his most famous mural is in the National

Palace in Mexico City which features an artistic survey of Mexico's history.

Accompanying Mexican immigration, the muralists moved north of the border and inspired the Chicano movement and American graffiti that, for good or for ill, helped express dissatisfaction with late 20th century conditions in the United States.

Research by Linda Venema, from Richmond, Virginia this is Dan Roberts.

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