

Pan-Americanism and the Art of Diego Rivera

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San Francisco Museum of Modern Art



*The Marriage of the Artistic Expression of the North and
of the South on this Continent (Pan American Unity),
Diego Rivera, 1940*

- “Western Hemispheric solidarity in relation to social, economic, cultural, and political issues.”
- Earliest roots in the philosophy and independence efforts of Simón Bolívar (El Libertador)
- Evolved from emphasis on Latin American unity to a U.S.-dominated reality in the Americas
 - Monroe Doctrine (1823)
 - “Good Neighbor Policy” (1933)
- Increased solidarity during and after WWII, punctuated by U.S. efforts to control Latin American governments

What is
Pan Americanism?

- Art's role in “basic human needs”
- “Keeps alive man's desire for independence, freedom, and resistance”
- Artistic works of the Americas
“the work of free men, endowed with extraordinary vitality”
- Usefulness of art in cultivating Pan American unity, “a democracy that will put an end to semi-colonial goals, imperialist pride and abuses, racial discrimination, and national divisions”

Rivera on Pan Americanism in Art

- Move from cubism in his early career towards Mexican folk art traditions
- Rivera co-authored (with Andre Breton and Leon Trotsky) “Towards a Free Revolutionary Art” in 1938
- Radical art in SF, partly facilitated by earlier Rivera residency
 - Victor Arnautoff and Bernard Zackheim
 - Chinese Revolutionary Artists’ Club
 - Mine Okubo
- Rivera contending with inter-Communist politics
 - Alliance, and later break, with Trotsky (assassinated just after Rivera comes to SF)
 - “Communist revolution leads only to totalitarian dictatorship,” “Democracy is the only way.” (Sep. 1940)

Political Context of *Pan American Unity*



Pan Americanism in
the *Pan American
Unity* mural



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