

# CONTRIBUTORS

RENÉ HUYGHE is chief curator of paintings at the Louvre.

HORACE H. F. JAYNE, vice director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has recently returned from China, where he completed a mission for the State Department.

JAMES THRALL SOBY's article is a chapter from a forthcoming book to be published by Alfred A. Knopf. He was formerly director of the department of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art.

STANLEY MELTZOFF was recently released from the Army, after spending two years in Italy as a member of the staff of STARS AND STRIPES. Previously, he received the master's degree in the history of art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

JEAN CHARLOT is now in Mexico where he is working on a history of Mexican mural painting.

CHARLES HOWARD, the painter, lives and works in San Francisco, California.

GEORGE HOWE recently resigned from his position as deputy commissioner for design and construction in the Public Buildings Administration, Washington, D. C.

## FORTHCOMING:

"The Violent Art of Hanging Pictures", by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., a discussion of some recent installations.

## The American Federation of Arts

FOUNDED 1909

### OFFICERS

ROBERT WOODS BLISS, *Honorary President*  
HUDSON WALKER, *President*  
JULIANA R. FORCE, *First Vice-President*  
GEORGE HEWITT MYERS, *Second Vice-President*  
GRACE L. McCANN MORLEY, *Third Vice-President*  
HARRY L. GAGE, *Treasurer*  
THOMAS C. PARKER, *Director and Secretary*

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

To Serve to 1946

Richard F. Bach  
Agnes Rindge Claffin  
Rene d'Harnoncourt  
Harry L. Gage

Joseph Hudnut  
William M. Milliken  
Duncan Phillips  
Eloise Spaeth

To Serve to 1947

Philip R. Adams  
Juliana R. Force  
Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr.  
Horace H. F. Jayne

George Hewitt Myers  
Charles H. Sawyer  
L. M. C. Smith  
Hudson D. Walker

To Serve to 1948

Robert Woods Bliss  
Lloyd Goodrich  
Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.  
Milton Lowenthal

Grace L. McCann Morley  
Henry E. Schnakenberg  
James Thrall Soby  
Matthew Woll

### Honorary Members of the Board

Florence N. Levy  
C. C. Zantzinger

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Lloyd Goodrich, *Chairman*

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.  
Jacques Barzun  
John I. H. Baur  
Donald J. Bear  
Serge Chermayeff  
Sumner McK. Crosby  
Rene d'Harnoncourt  
Guy Pene duBois  
Talbot Hamlin  
Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr.  
Joseph H. Hudnut

Horace H. F. Jayne  
Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.  
A. Hyatt Mayor  
Grace L. McCann Morley  
Daniel Catton Rich  
E. P. Richardson  
Agnes Rindge Claffin  
Gilbert Seldes  
James Thrall Soby  
Franklin C. Watkins  
Carl Ziegrosser

# MAGAZINE OF ART

A National Magazine Relating the Arts to Contemporary Life

JOHN D. MORSE, *Editor*

LIBBY TANNENBAUM, *Assistant Editor*

VOLUME 39

FEBRUARY, 1946

NUMBER 2

Rubbing from a tile that once decorated the interior of a Han dynasty tomb. Excavated at Chêng-Tu, Szechwan. Museum of Mr. Huang Hsi Ch'eng, Chêng-tu . . . . .	Cover
"Protective Custody"? . . . . .	42
Some documents relative to the recent deposit in the National Gallery, Washington, D. C., of 200 paintings from German museums.	
Letter from Paris. The Presence of the Past. <i>By René Huyghe</i> . . . . .	43
The reopening of the Louvre.	
Mr. Huang's Museum. <i>By Horace H. F. Jayne</i> . . . . .	46
". . . to find a private collector in China attaining the philosophy that his collections should perform a public service is as unique as it is stimulating and encouraging."	
Italy: Two Movements and Two Paintings. <i>By James Thrall Soby</i> . . . . .	49
"A comparison between Boccioni and de Chirico serves to point up the chronic conflict between the present and the past as sources of inspiration for modern Italian artists."	
Italy: Report on Recent Painting. <i>By Stanley Meltzoff</i> . . . . .	52
". . . a minor art filled with the gray lassitude of hopeless unoriginality."	
Renaissance Revisited. <i>By Jean Charlot</i> . . . . .	58
"The present state of the walls painted over twenty years ago, contrasting them with the latest crop of murals, mostly still in the making in the winter of 1945-46."	
What Concerns Me. <i>By Charles Howard</i> . . . . .	63
"I look more than I paint, and I struggle with the paint and with myself."	
Master Plans for Master Politicians. <i>By George Howe</i> . . . . .	66
"Political action must be the architect-planner's first interest."	
New Books . . . . .	70
Letters to the Editor . . . . .	80
Calendar of February Exhibitions . . . . .	Back cover
Where to Show . . . . .	Inside back cover
Previous issues are indexed in <i>Art Index</i> and <i>Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature</i>	

PUBLISHED BY

## THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

THOMAS C. PARKER, DIRECTOR

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: BARR BUILDING, WASHINGTON 6, D. C. PHONE NATIONAL 8178

The MAGAZINE OF ART is mailed to all chapters and members of the Federation, a part of each annual membership fee being credited as a subscription. Entered as second class matter October 4, 1921, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions: United States and possessions, \$5.00 per year; Canada \$5.50; Foreign \$6.00; single copies 75 cents. Published monthly, October through May. Title Trade Mark Registered in the U. S. Patent Office. Copyright 1946 by The American Federation of Arts. All rights reserved.

All Mss. should be sent to the Editor, MAGAZINE OF ART, 22 E. 60th St., New York City 22. Unsolicited Mss. should be accompanied by suitable photographs (no sepia prints) of first-class quality required to illustrate them, and must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, to insure return. The Editor assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited material. Payment is made on publication.

Articles in the MAGAZINE OF ART represent many points of view. We do not expect concurrence from every quarter, not even among our contributors; we believe that writers are entitled to express opinions which differ widely. Although we do not assume responsibility for opinions expressed in any signed articles appearing in the MAGAZINE OF ART, we hold that to offer a forum in our pages is the best way to stimulate intelligent discussion and to increase active enjoyment of the arts.—EDITOR.

*Editorial Offices:* 22 E. 60th St., New York City 22, N. Y. Phone ELdorado 5-1050.

*Representative for Art Dealers' Advertising:* Peter Magill, 625 Madison Avenue, New York City, Telephone: Wickersham 2-0537.



David Alfaro Siqueiros: DEMOCRACY BREAKING THE CHAINS OF FASCISM, cellulose paint on celotex, 1944, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City. In this building "Los tres Grandes" scream at the top of their lungs to see which can outshout the others.

## RENAISSANCE REVISITED

By JEAN CHARLOT

MEXICO has never offered the traveler the patented and framed tableaux that await him in lands that pride themselves on a well-packaged tourist trade. Mexican sights are in a continuous state of mutation. As early as 1840 the Marquesa de Calderon de la Barca, a pioneer sightseer from the United States despite the *hispanidad* of her husband's title, complains of the changes, and deftly notes what she believes to be the fast disappearing traits of lovely old Mexico.

Lovely old Mexico is still fast disappearing today, and will as long as Mexicans insist on following their own counsel, regardless of what the tourist says. Even painters are more concerned with today's work than with past successes. Though their murals are listed as a must in traveler's handbooks and provide a modest living for a few garrulous guides, the artists refuse to feel enshrined; as a result, Mexican painting is far from static.

The mural renaissance started some twenty-five years ago in June 1920, when José Vasconcelos, then President of the University and later Secretary of Education, commissioned Roberto Montenegro and Xavier Guerrero to decorate the walls of the ex-church of San Pedro y Pablo. Painted in tempera, the mural extends charming garlands of stylized birds and flowers over arches and pilasters. Rivera called it "potted" rather than painted, as the scheme leans to the curlicues found on much Mexican pottery.

Diego Rivera returned to the *patria* in July 1921. Painted in encaustic, patterned after the Byzantine mosaics he had admired in Italy, his first mural was completed by March 1923.

In May 1922, Lombardo Toledano, Director of the Escuela Preparatoria and future labor leader, commissioned a group

of younger men, de la Canal, Revueltas, Leal, Cahero, myself, to paint murals in the school. That of Cahero, an encaustic, and mine, a fresco, were completed by the end of 1922.

In September 1922, de la Cueva and Siqueiros arrived from Europe. Siqueiros set to work in the same staircase of the same school, beginning to paint in encaustic, later switching to fresco. In July 1923, Orozco began his first mural, a fresco, on the walls of the main patio. Both works were violently brought to a halt by an uprising of students in June 1924 that left them stoned and mutilated.

The brand new Ministry of Education was turned over to the artists in March 1923; Rivera was ordered to paint the first court, while de la Cueva, Guerrero, and myself were given the second court to decorate, a first try at communal work.

With an urge to brush time against the grain, I revisited the buildings where the movement started. To point the changes, this short survey describes the present state of the walls painted over twenty years ago, contrasting them with the latest crop of murals, mostly still in the making in the winter of 1945-46.

San Pedro y Pablo, dedicated by Vasconcelos as a public hall, has been transformed again, this time into a public library. This new function has blocked the decorative walls of the nave with tiers of bookcases and superimposed balconies of dark wood that slice the verticality of the polychrome columns, still rich with garlands of pomegranates, bluebirds, blackbirds, cornflowers, and camelias.

The workshop of the mural group was the cubicle of the back of the auditorium of the Preparatoria. On the low thick round columns, patches of discoloration on the gray stone still mark the spots where our first fresco trials were made in 1922.

In the auditorium proper Rivera's first mural, *Creation*, is scarcely any longer a truthful witness of the seething élan that saw it born. The distinguished geometric planning is still perceived, but the wax mixed with the pigment has opaqued, dulling the once intense chromas.

The Orozco patio is of course beautiful, only it seems that time has frozen to a stop what once had depth and movement. To recapture the thrill of the work in the making, one should be able to discern under a mortar become translucent the layers of superimposed subjects that succeeded each other on the same stretch of wall as the artist worked, wrecked the work, and tried again, bent on an expedition to reach the *toison d'or* of style. Only *The Strike* obeys the rules of a plastic palimpsest, disclosing over the red banner held by two workers a fragment of the earlier theme, the giant head of the destroyed *Christ Burning His Cross*.

Going up the main stairs, I pass the fresco that I painted there twenty-four years ago; I can look at it objectively as it is not mine anymore, but rather the work of an adolescent who dreamt long and deep before the battlepiece of Ucello, hidden at the time in the small room where Italian primitives were side-tracked by curators of the Louvre, who far preferred Carlo Dolci.

The fresco is intact, except for the exertions of unkind students. The light washes and reserves of white mortar proved too much a temptation to scribblers. A generous quota of mustaches and eyeglasses has been added to faces; the despair in the eyes of the massacred Indians is underlined by a Niagara of teardrops coarsely sketched in chalk.

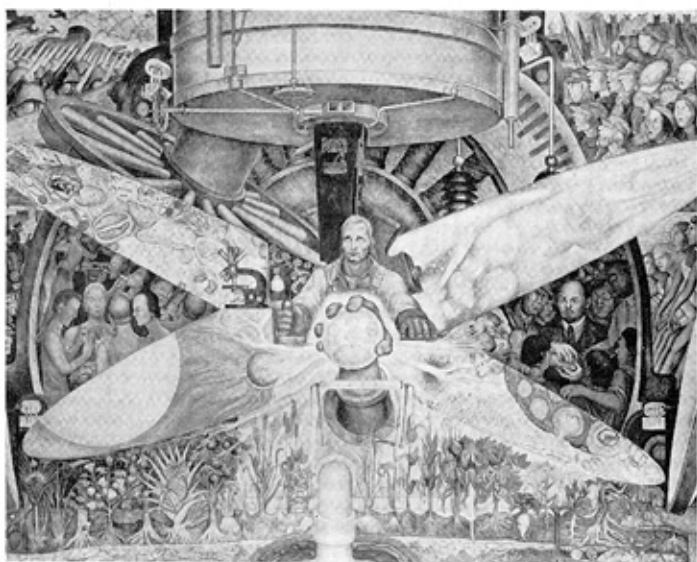
On the top floor the Orozco frescoes on revolutionary themes are as maculate with *graffiti* and doodles as if they were not revered by critics, widely reproduced and admired. On this visit *Rearguard* and *Adieu to the Mother* were disfigured by blatant slogans to insure the election of a college queen, "*Pompeia para reina*". A zealous janitor rubs off such offending additions, but not always with the light hand of a mural devotee.

The staircase of the last court still testifies to the action directed against the first Siqueiros frescoes, when enraged students bent on championing "beauty" stoned the ugly giants. Today the more mutilated portions have been neatly chiseled out. What remains of the mat frescoes, delicately modeled brown on brown, contrasts with the oily and varnished texture of the makeshift repairs.

In the Ministry of Education, the open archway that divided the inner court into patios is being torn down to make room for an opaque box-like partition that will hide elevator shafts. It is as awkward as it must be exceptional to see architecture shot from under the mural that rides it. Because sound mural painting obeys the optical rules that the architecture dictates, the change will negate originally correct formulations of scale and color.

The ground floor frescoes, painted "*a la mode Teotihuacana*", by Rivera—brushing pigment mixed with nopal juice on a thin film of pure lime—have suffered from this unusual technical departure. The sand packed underneath has burst through the film of painted lime, each grain leaving a microscopic patch of white. As a result, the early Tehuantepec and mining scenes fade as if seen through a thickness of tracing paper. The later *Corrido* series on the top floor, done in the sounder Italian medium, have suffered in turn from the weakness of the architecture. The walls are rent with cracks that also split apart the painted personages. To add confusion, each crack is scientifically recorded, bridged by dated paper stickers, some already burst as the cracks widen.

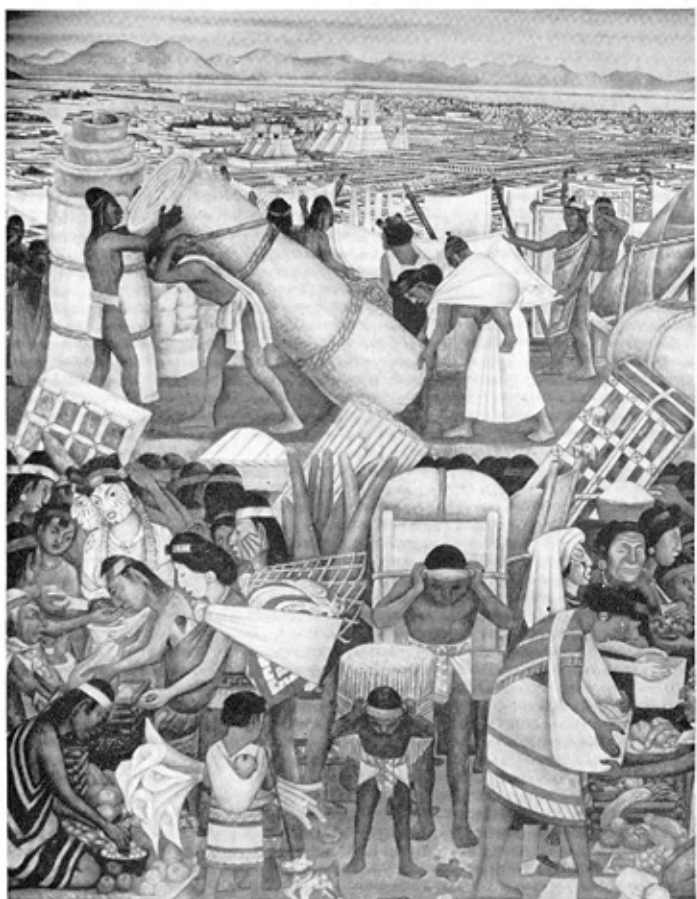
These walls have also met with doodlers, would-be wits, and



Diego Rivera: MAN AT THE CROSSROADS OF SOCIALISM AND CAPITALISM, fresco panel, 1934. Now in the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Below: Early Rivera frescoes on the first floor of the building of the Ministry of Public Education, Mexico City.



Rivera: PREHISPANIC MARKET OF TLATELOLCO (detail), fresco panel, 1945. National Palace. Data from recent excavations.





*Siqueiros: Work in progress in the Treasury Building, Mexico City. The scaffolding with its widely placed planks affords two advantages: "It allows the daylight to filter in from under, and keeps out chicken-hearted admirers after their first visit."*

*Jose Clemente Orozco: VISION OF THE APOCALYPSE (detail), fresco, 1944, Church of Jesus, Mexico City. "Shrouded and desperate forms."*



plain defacers. A crop of scratched-in swastikas answers the painted crop of red stars; jokes of the privy type thrive on nude allegories.

The second patio, originally given to Amado de la Cueva, Xavier Guerrero and myself for a first attempt at communal painting, is crammed with building material, just as it was when we were at work. Scaffolds sprout from eviscerated floors, planks, crates, and rolls of *petates* pile high against the frescoes. I rather liked the implication: People feel more concern for a near future than an academic interest in the near past. And, at least the day I was there, not a sight-seer besides myself.

Among the plentiful crop of new murals, those of Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros can be singled out, their names being best known in the United States.

In Boston the Lowells talk to the Cabots and they only to God. In Mexico, "*Los tres grandes*" scream at the top of their lungs in a contest to see which can outshout the others, in the three neighbouring panels that fate, or a witty sponsor, commissioned for the Palacio de Bellas Artes. This execrable building did put all three in bad humor. A polychrome art-nouveau interior, with enameled orange cupolas and peacock blue skylights, it reeks of the blatant assertions of world fairs long ago sold to the wreckers. The building offers only cramped mural space, behind pilasters and balconies, finely visible only at arm's length.

Ciceroni lie in ambush before the murals, tempting the tourist with chairs strategically facing the wall and a memorized patter. Favorite is the Rivera, a shrunken replica of the destroyed Radio City Fresco, in front of which the New York scandal is rehashed. The many careful portraits, pyramiding like apples on a tray, the skimpy bodies hiding behind loquacious streamers and slogans, remind one of 19th-century French political cartooning. Despite the size, the craft remains exquisite. In a public lecture held on the premises this past August, Rivera disclosed to his baffled audience that the panel contains a detailed prophecy of atomic power. As to frescoes of his colleagues, not denying their artistry, he dismissed that of Orozco as representing "men without shirts clubbing men with shirts", and that of Siqueiros, *Democracy Breaking the Chains of Fascism*, as "one giant commonplace."

The bulk of Orozco's mural work is to be seen in Guadalajara, capital of his native state. The major ensemble is that of the ancient *Hospicio*; the robust architecture cringes from his brush as from an earthquake. From the cupola falls a flaming cadaver Prometheus or Icarus. On the vault, a colossal Cortez embodies mechanical war and conquest, on the walls savage redskins and mechanized robots pound the ground, gray monochromes more blatant than flags. In twin half-lunettes, caravels glide over a turquoise ocean, blown by an inhuman wind towards the black void ahead.

This terrifying sermon addresses itself paradoxically to the only lodgers on the giant premises, state-endowed orphan children who pay no heed to the loud Cassandra, but instead lazily people the old patio, pile pebbles, chew fingers, scratch their heads, or merely lie in the bountiful sunlight.

In Mexico City Orozco has for lack of an inclusive contract, left unfinished the decoration of the Church of Jesus, annex of the ancient hospital that Cortez himself endowed. On its vaults the scarlet Prostitute rides the apocalyptic Beast, the monstrous grasshoppers with manes like women's hair chew the world naked. Desiccated limbs, headless torsos, shrouded and desperate forms crawl under a sky become heavier than the earth, pregnant with a hail of twisted steel girders scattered by the hoofs of the four horses, their riders hidden by the animal bellies distorted as storm clouds.

Rivera has staked for himself the whole of the National



*Orozcó: EARTH, AIR, FIRE, WATER, 1938. Fresco in the dome of the Orphanage (Hospice) of Guadalajara.*

Palace, and, with a caution born of previous mishaps with buildings that split apart and patrons in revolt, chose to do true fresco on false walls. The mortar is trowelled into shallow metal troughs, half sunk into the wall, but movable if the need arises. As they fail to fit the scalloped outline of the door frames, the panels, despite the compositional care of the painter, suggest a show of easel pictures, beautiful ones, huge and heavy ones certainly. The main drawback is that this precaution opens the way for the future removal of the frescoes from the walls, and their eventual disposition, shorn of their natural habitat, in a mere museum.

In the staircase of the same palace, painted over a decade ago, the artist modeled in black before applying the local color; now the film of gray comes through to disturb the polychrome balance. Today Diego Rivera paints with pure color, the transparent washes made more intense as the mortar hardens to marble white. For contrast, the high dado of the new work is of cement of a normal putty value, painted with monochrome false bas-reliefs.

What Rivera is painting in the National Palace keeps the archeologists breathless. The first two panels relate to archaic cultures, of whose remains the painter has a copious collection, preferring them to the sophisticated Maya culture, and to the later socially stiffened theocracies of the Mexican plateau.

Just finished, the third panel, breath-taking in its scope,

resurrects the merchants and buyers who thronged the market of Tlatelolco, after data furnished by recent excavations of the site. The background is a panorama of the pre-Hispanic capital, based on aerial photographs of the modern city, so close is the identity of plans from a height where a church cannot be told from the pagan temple it supplanted, nor a main artery from the antique waterway.

A motley crowd mills in front of the risen Tenochtitlan, herb merchants, dog butchers, witch doctors, tattooed prostitutes and cannibal priests. Lower still, at our eye-level and most exquisite of all in treatment, are tiny objects and shreds of refuse that litter the foreground, bitten, spat and trampled fruit pulp, a toy clay dog on wheels, the only use known for this device in an otherwise wheel-less civilization.

Rivera is so bent on completing his record of Mexican history, that story-telling has no more plastic terrors in store for him. Paris may frown on his present work, sophisticates sniff at its matter-of-fact craft, fans of abstraction sneer that photography is just around the corner. Rivera doggedly pursues his way to a conclusion that may mean a truly American style.

Siqueiros has published much of late; his opinions may be summed up by the statement that murals are closer to moving pictures than to easel painting. While the latter presumes a single point-of-view, films move in front of an



David Alfaro Siqueiros: EL DICTADOR SANTA-ANNA, detail of unfinished mural.

immobile onlooker, and murals though immobile, attract a spectator in motion. Thus, the idea that the mural is serf to architecture is replaced by that of the mural as a dynamic unit that forcefully provides itself with room in its otherwise inert habitat.

Siqueiros is practising his theories in the Treasury Building. In spite of its moneyed title, it is an old colonial palace, of a stylistic simplicity that borders on the primitive with marks of a soothing *laissez-faire* everywhere. The painter has fallen heir to a vaulted ceiling between two open courtyards, curved both in width and in length, that promises perspective deformations aplenty, to be countered by drawing deformations. The two end walls are V-shaped to fit a floor plan that is a maze of diagonals, a staircase with 90 degree turns and bifurcating slopes that blur both plumb and level. The plan lends itself ideally to further twisting and the optical illusions that are the means of Siqueiros' modern baroque.

At this stage, the walls are upholstered with celotex, rough side outwards, none too rough for the rough treatment still to come. A small model that duplicates in scale the complexities of the architecture is painted concurrently with the mural—added to, subtracted from, complete one day and whitewashed the next, in accord with a pioneering optical research that recognizes no precedent. A rickety ladder takes one to just under the high ceiling to a false floor of planks, so widely spaced that a body might easily fall between them to certain maiming on the stone staircase, way below. A device with two advantages, it allows the daylight to filter in from under, and keeps out chicken-hearted admirers after their first visit.

Siqueiros does not use the much advertised Duco anymore. A need for authentically mat surfaces, essential to the great size and double curvature of the wall, leads him to prepare his own paint, blended with sugar cane fiber to intensify the roughness of the texture. This search for tactile strength removes Siqueiros from his early heroes; Masaccio and the uniform smoothness of *fresco buono* he deems archaic, and tags Ingres as too exclusively an intellectual planner.

The rape of the architecture is begun; the ceiling is split in two by compositional lines and, hinged at the end walls, opens skywise to prolong their vertical towards an infinite. From this illusive stratosphere down one side falls a hail of crystal shapes and cylindrical forms outlined in white on the red background. Bold color strokes begin their metamorphosis into a maze of men entwined with horses, the roll call of Mexico's traitors and collaborationists doomed by the painter to an unspecified hell. On the opposite wall another mess of manes and torsos speeding upwards will symbolize the national heroes that the artist ushers to some Marxist paradise. The completed subject thus will function when the two contrasting currents are joined, like a gigantic wheel of fortune, to carry vertically, in water-wheel fashion, the *personae* of Mexican history, horses, swords, epaulettes, loves and hatreds and all, to a zenith of glory, and dump a corresponding load to an underworld.

For Mexicans, news of the art season is not the frescoes being painted, a routine long since taken for granted, unless they be by foreigners, as in the case of George Biddle, whose new fresco in the Supreme Court Building has raised an animated controversy. The rediscovery of the mid-19th century muralist Juan Cordero also has aroused much comment. A show of his easel work at the Palacio de Bellas Artes led to a reappraisal of his tempera murals in the churches of the capital, painted with zest on walls and cupolas as large as those painted today. Like all important work, that of Cordero divided the critics. Rivera championed it in a public lecture, while Siqueiros attacked it in magazine articles. The fact remains that his work bridges with honor one of the weakest moments of Mexican tradition, when the magnificent crop of colonial murals had long been gathered in, and the modern renaissance was not foreseen.

Thus, adding a new stratum of murals to an already substantial sum of works, this year adds also to the woes of critics who think it is high time for the renaissance to stay put, so as to give them a chance to utter definitive estimates.