

Contents	Page
Form and the Consumer <i>Rudolph Arnheim</i>	2
Contemporary Art in Japan <i>Erica Beckh</i>	10
Art and the Artist in Communist China <i>Arnold L. Herstand</i>	23
Jules Pascin in the New World <i>Alfred Werner</i>	30
Orozco in New York <i>Jean Charlot</i>	40
Cezanne's Use of Perspective <i>Christopher Gray</i>	54
Scholarship in Museums <i>W. R. Valentiner</i>	65
Problems in Sculpture <i>Howard J. Whitlatch</i>	69
Letters	73
Obituaries	74
Poets on Art	75
<i>Still Life Variations</i> <i>Jack Anderson</i>	
<i>Guernica</i> <i>Clayton Eshleman</i>	
<i>Marietta Strozzi</i> <i>Elizabeth Polk Benson</i>	
<i>Man at a Picasso Exhibit</i> <i>Raymond Roseliep</i>	
<i>Botticelli</i> <i>Elizabeth Polk Benson</i>	
College Museum Notes <i>Ellen Johnson</i>	78
Midwestern College Art Conference	84
Special Exhibition at Smith College	85
College Art News	91
SAH Historical Tour of Dublin	94
American Federation of Arts	96
Book Reviews	97
Books Received	117

Editorial Staff

Editor

Henry R. Hope
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

Editor for Book Reviews

Allen S. Weller
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

General News Editor

Mrs. Jason Schoener
5667 Oceanview Drive
Oakland 18, California

Editor for

College Museum Notes

Miss Ellen Johnson
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio

Typography

Henry Holmes Smith

Editorial Advisory Board

Walter L. Creese
Marian B. Davis
S. Lane Faison, Jr.
Stefan Hirsch
G. Haydn Huntley
Alden F. Megrew
Laurence Schmeckebier
Lester C. Walker, Jr.

Advertising Manager

Peter Magill
115 East 57th St.
New York 22, N.Y.

THE COLLEGE ART JOURNAL is published quarterly by the College Art Association of America at 432 Fourth Ave., New York 16, New York. Two dollars a year, single numbers fifty cents. Second-class postage paid at New York, New York and at additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.A.

OROZCO IN NEW YORK

Based on his letters to the Author

Jean Charlot

Between December 1927 and February 1929, Orozco wrote me from New York the thirty-six letters that are the core of this study. They reached me either in Mexico City or, between January and June, 1928 in Chichen Itza, Yucatan, where I was draftsman to an archeological expedition. Most of the letters are concerned with a bleak interim in Orozco's life, after he had left home, and before the first stirrings of the international fame that was the lot of his later years.

Orozco left a country in turmoil. President Calles had just brought to a harsh climax his persecution of the Church, November 23, 1927, with the shooting of the Jesuit, Father Pro. That October, a General Gomez had engineered one more military revolution. Peasants roamed in armed bands, part underground heroes, part bandits. In March, 1928, my mother wrote, from Cuernavaca:

"The revolutionaries encamped between Jiquilpan, Sahoya, and Zamora. . . . They just looted a neighboring hacienda with such refined cruelties towards men and women both that it seems a throwback to the days of Attila. Battles are a daily occurrence at places I so well know, with many dead and wounded on both sides. One sorrows at the thought that these poor peasants die only because they ask for the return of their priests. . . ."

Rome had placed Mexico under interdict. Priests were in hiding and churches were closed.

Orozco left Mexico an embittered and a lonely man. He had concluded his cycle of frescoes at the Preparatoria School despite the jeers of a majority of teachers and students, and the physical destruction of much that he had previously painted. Painful had been to him the defection of Rivera, a fellow muralist, in his hour of need. Rivera's friend, Salvador Novó, published an article that all but justified the vandalism. In it, Orozco was referred to as a pupil of Rivera, and a quite unworthy one at that.

December 11, 1927, Orozco boarded the evening train for Laredo at the Colonia Station. I was the only friend present to bid him Godspeed. Our plan was for me to join him in New York within the coming year. Ten years before, on his one previous trip to the States, American custom officers con-

Mr. Charlot, well known as a mural painter himself, has been for several years resident artist at the University of Hawaii, and is currently living in New York.

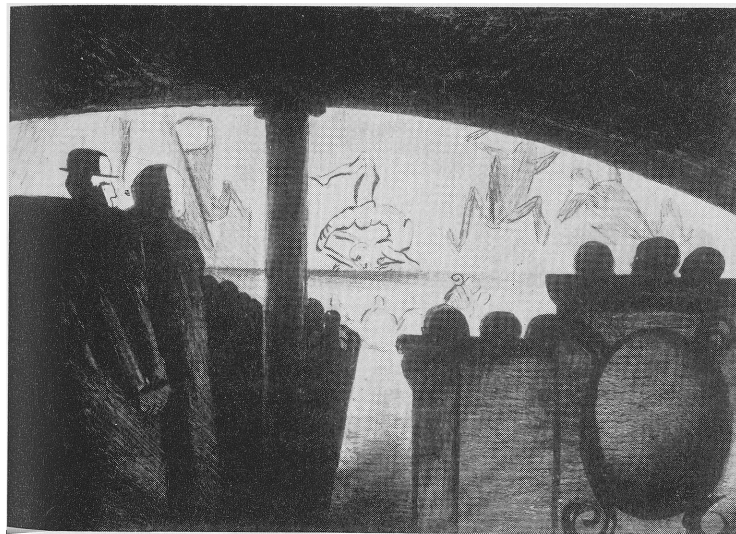


Fig. 1. Orozco, *Vaudeville in Harlem, 1928*, lithograph. Collection of Mrs. Edith Gregor Halpert, courtesy of the Downtown Gallery.

fiscated and destroyed most of his paintings as immoral. Fearful of a similar fate for his present works—the now famous wash-drawings of the Revolution—Orozco had beforehand entrusted twelve of them to Anita Brenner, who reached New York in September. This time, Orozco took with him only a change of linen packed in a small valise.

Orozco travelled coach to avoid extra fare, "Some trains have individual seats that are extensible, exactly like those of barbershops. One may sleep in them not too uncomfortably. I slept that way for two nights, very well."

December 21, "Only now have I a chance to write since I arrived last Friday. It was night. I felt deadly tired and the cold has been frightful. . . ."

"I crossed the border as an immigrant: declaration under oath and an additional ten dollars, eighteen dollars in all. They scolded me because that last time, I stayed two years instead of six months. I argued that it had been the fault of the Revolution. This time, I am allowed to live here as long as I wish.

"Material expenses are *forbiddingly high*, even more than before. . . . What costs a silver dollar in Mexico is worth here an American dollar, plus ten per cent."

The next letter gives a return address, 316 West 23rd Street.

January 3, "I did no more than to settle down and to survey the city. I visit

galleries and museums, and battle against the cold that seems to me awful, coming as I do from Mexico."

January 4, "What pleasure it would be to have you here! There are lots of sights, local as well as imported. Through the sheer power of money, Europe is carried over here bit by bit. One of these days they will plant the Eiffel Tower in Central Park, close by the obelisk. One should see the machinery with which rock is scooped out, and planted the steel frames to uphold a skyscraper. Ten minutes away there is a collection of El Grecos, and Egyptian tombs thirty-five hundred years old."

In March, Orozco moved to a new address, 431 Riverside Drive.

"My studio is now in a most elegant part of town, Riverside, close to the Hudson River, a block away from Columbia University. There is a private entrance direct from the street and a fantastic hall, painted dark red, with black linoleum. On my own, I rounded out the effect with a skull and crossbones. It had been the studio of a German lady painter who left for Europe. It is like a cellar, but with a good light. It is furnished, has gas, a bath, and above all total independence.

"You will find me here if by then I have not died of hunger. I have enough left for another two months, but after that, who knows?"

Poverty became a leit-motiv:

June 8, "Now I cannot think of art or any such things. I must look for work, any kind of a job. The situation is rather tight here, and also at home in Mexico. You know how awkward I am in regard to practical pursuits but, willy-nilly, one must live."

July 21, "These days, my financial situation worries me exceedingly. Nobody offers help, either here or in Mexico. I do not know what I am going to do. *Please do not stop writing me.*"

August 16, "I too have been going through unbearable moments, but guts will have to make up for lack of heart."

One of Orozco's first visits on arrival was to the artist and art critic, Walter Pach, who had befriended him while in Mexico:

"I went to see Pach. Most amiable. Magnificent studio. Lectures at the Metropolitan Museum. Does NOT take me seriously as a painter. Is a rabid admirer of Picasso."

"He told me that he is writing a book, *Ananias or the Bad Painter*. It appears that this Ananias was a biblical character who gave Saint Peter half of his wealth, but hid the other half. The bad painters of our day are like Ananias. They wish to side with the moderns who fight for beauty, etc. . . . However, when at home, they manage their business, give little parties with the critics for guests. You see why I exclaimed instantly, 'I say, is it a book about Diego Rivera?' Pach got mad at that, and maybe for keeps. From what he said I should make out that, 'We, the failures, let us kneel before the Masters.' Rivera, then, is on a par with Picasso; the latter much appreciates the former. Pach has a set of photographs of the [Rivera] murals. Granted that they show many influences, Picasso too has stolen galore. Let us kneel before the Masters! Hosanna!!"

Another friend, Miguel Covarrubias, had been, in Mexico, an adolescent camp

follower, encamped at the foot of the muralists' scaffolds. In New York, while still in his teens, he had made meanwhile a lightning success as cartoonist for *Vanity Fair*, under the aegis of Frank Crowninshield.

"Covarrubias had a show at Valentine and sold over three thousand dollars. . . . It is said that it does not please him at all when more painters arrive from Mexico. That I can well believe, given the way in which he received me. Not even as a courteous gesture did he suggest that he would introduce me to people or help me in anything. God repay him! He is making pots of money."

These and similar experiences put Orozco in a black mood:

"So-called friends do not exist for me. In New York, one meets only with selfishness, duplicity, and bad faith. I stand quite alone. I count only on my own strength of which, as luck goes, there is still much left."

"As to the so-called friends I had here, I sent them to the devil. They received me with shame and humiliated me. I find myself totally alone. Just as well, as I have no use for patrons, tutors, managers, critics, panderers, trainers, or helpers. All of them are but a bunch of double-faced egotists. All they see in one is material for exploitation."

Come summer, the few people Orozco still talked with left town, and his solitude increased:

"All activities stop in summer. The little that remains is so trifling as to be hardly worth sampling. No theaters, concerts, or art shows, or any such things. . . . Worst of all, civilized people leave for the countryside, or Europe, or Mexico, for anywhere at all. . . ."

"New York is physically dead at this time, even its business. For entertainment, obsolete movies with few patrons, and those in shortsleeves. Only we, the most unlucky ones, stay put, while even poor people manage to go on vacation."

"I have not heard from Pach. Probably he left town. If not, he is in hiding, because, come summer, such a well-known person cannot stay in New York for fear of ridicule."

I wrote Orozco that I had no news of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, where the coming archeological season was planned. He attempted to reassure me:

"Americans are responsible people in winter but, come summer, they slip back into childhood and forget all else. They play golf, or fish, as does Coolidge now who is fishing in Wisconsin. The pool is stocked for the occasion. Underwater, a diver is kept busy hooking fish onto the Presidential fishhook.

"Summer over, the fishing stops and back he goes to the White House, there to bother anew the Nicaraguans.

"Rest assured that your bosses at the Carnegie are also fishing, or maybe spinning tops! Do not feel disheartened and write me!"

I mentioned that I was painting a "Tiger Hunter," a scene from the Yucatan jungle:

"An excellent thing this thinking about tiger hunters. That is what

you will have to do here, as you come face to face not only with tigers, but with all kinds of wild beasts, most infamous and ferocious."

"I wonder why you failed to write me of late. If it is due to your feeling low, then buck up and smile! They have that saying here, '*Keep smiling.*' It holds good even when one happens to be in the worst possible of fixes, for example on the gallows. I swear that neither is New York exactly a bed of roses."

Being Mexican, Orozco well knew the circumstances in which the expression was coined: Cuauhtemoc, last of the Aztec Emperors, thus attempted to console one of his courtiers, while both had their feet roasted on glowing embers by the treasure-hungry Spaniards.

In Mexico, Orozco had studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts. There, he graduated from student to professor. As he left for the States, he apparently neglected to ask for a formal leave of absence. February 1, he repaired the omission, belatedly asking from New York for a six months leave without pay, "... for the purpose of opening an exhibition of his works."

Characteristically, despite poverty and a lack of present and future prospects, he decided in mid-year to let go of the only job he had:

June 3, "It is time I got busy with some means of living. Mine are getting pretty low as usual. . . . I sent my resignation as professor. They are reluctant to accept it but I insisted forcefully."

Before Orozco's arrival, Anita Brenner had contacted art dealers on his behalf. Their reaction to the set of drawings of the Revolution had been indecisive to say the least. A tentative plan to show the set at the Whitney Club came to naught.

Now it was Orozco's turn to make the rounds of art galleries and to contact art dealers:

"I managed to have Kraushaar come to my studio. He is quite a personage and the owner of one of the best galleries. I went to see him. He said 'NO,' but that he would see my paintings. Days later he came. I showed him the drawings. He did not like them! 'Show me the oils!' From then on his interest was aroused. He likes the paintings but the subject matter horrifies him. He said that such topics are not for the American public. I must paint other things and see him again next Autumn, when he returns from Europe. . . .

"I forgot to mention that Zigrosser also came. He is in charge at Weyhe and a great booster, agent, and devotee, of 'that other one' [Rivera]. I asked him to come as a kind of a lark. He saw everything and said nothing. I asked him if he was planning one more show of 'that other one.' He said he didn't know, that he had no news from Russia. . . . He seemed disappointed and totally at a loss."

In New York, Orozco contacted for the first time on a generous scale the modern masters of the School of Paris. Museums rounded up the lesson with their display of Old Masters. Perhaps too subjective to be valid art criticism, Orozco's comments *à la diable* and in the first flush of recognition rate high in the story of his own evolution.

By birth and training, Orozco felt at home with the Spanish Masters. In February, they were gathered in a major display:

"At last, I have seen painting! A stupendous exhibition of Spanish painting, with El Greco, Goya, Velasquez, etc. . . . The pictures are loans from collectors in the millionaire class, at the Metropolitan Museum. Sixty-seven pictures, of which thirteen are El Grecos. How can I put into words the impression received? Among the moderns, there may be 'great men,' or 'great masters', but El Greco is a god.

"As to Goya, what can one say? Against Velasquez I had certain prejudice, but before the proofs, one must bow. If to paint is to cover a plane with pigments, his mastery and perfection in so doing is matched only by his peers. One of them is Goya. There is a picture of his, a portrait, 'Pepe Hillo.' The Goya who did it is not the Goya of the anecdote, but a Goya who does a job-like labor of laying a mortar of pigment. Here Goya is a workman. Before this, admiration, pleasure, study as well, all are out of question. Indeed, the only feeling one dares feel is humility, as if one was confronted by a storm, a planet, or any other one of nature's spectacles."

Orozco went to the Hispanic Museum with high hopes. They were not all betrayed, but he could not stomach the mural room:

"A great hall decorated with great (?) murals by Sorolla. What an idiot! This fellow confused painting with flamenco yodeling. Ole! and thirty feet away, El Grecos, Goyas, and Velasquez."

For still another Spaniard, Picasso, Orozco had mixed feelings. His first contact, it is true, was with his neo-classical style, at Wildenstein:

"Drawings. Figures copied, or so it seems, from Greek vases seen in museums. Two lines, or three at most; quite repetitious. Pen-and-ink drawings with 'lots of volume.' I made desperate efforts to enthuse, but in vain. You and I have drawings a hundred times better."

For Orozco, Picasso was to become an acquired taste:

"More Picassos. He disconcerts, disquiets, wounds, impassions, repulses, only to suddenly attract forcefully. One cannot forget him."

"New drawings by Picasso. After seeing gallery after gallery of tired and mediocre pictures, a drawing by Picasso is like a glassful of water, cool, limpid, but oh! so desirable. It is water to be rated above the plethora of elaborate banquets."

Orozco felt at home with the Spanish Masters, but a stranger to the School of Paris, then in the full flush of fashion. French art imposed a re-appraisal, even though it signally failed to weaken Orozco's faith in his own tougher 'provincial' idiom. After a visit to the Gallatin Collection, displayed at New York University:

"One of the Matisse's was something new to me. Its color was extraordinary and so fine, so fine, that it could have been crepe paper or the sheen of silk. Yet, never did it lose its plastic identity."

After seeing a joint show of Matisse and Derain, at Valentine's:

"For the first time I did look at modern art, art of today, without missing ancient art. Pure painting without flourishes. Grace. Natural. Joy. To look at these pictures gives much pleasure. One remains at peace and happy for the rest of the day.

"Those are painters who dwell in a garden where their girl friends join them for the five o'clock tea. A drawing room with good society, good drinks and a good bed. As to us, we are the revolutionaries, the cursed ones, and the hungry ones.

"Here in New York, French art means the cream of the cream. It stands for the ideal, is tops, most prestigious, the paragon. To praise anything, one compares it to the French. It is most exquisite.

"We, the Mexicans, perhaps will come to have later on some sort of influence, but it will have to be along other lines. Nothing about us is exquisite. *Do you know what I mean?*"

Reporting on a one-man show of Jacques Villon, at Brummer's:

"The painting of Villon is truly beautiful: small pictures of great simplicity. Obviously, they are the fruit of a milieu of which I know nothing: Paris. Nor do I know the reason why they are made that way. Doubtless, behind it are many doctrines and intellectualities, but in spite of it, they please me. They procure a pleasant moment, without shakes or shocks. Everything is sweet, elegant, 'nice,' 'peaceful.' Imagine that you bypass a group of girls. They are young and pretty. They smell good. You greet them. They smile. That done, you do not give them another thought."

Orozco felt closer to Rouault:

"Georges Rouault has some aquatints that are stupendous, and a unique self-portrait. After seeing it I began to study feverishly etching and aquatint. Already I have much information, some copper plates, acids, etc. . . . I visited some workshops and I now know etching from A to Z."

"Tell me: did Rouault come in contact with Mexican things, like the santos in the churches, the flogged Christ of Holy Week, folk pennysheets, or pulqueria murals?"

Of the nineteenth century French Masters, not all rated equally:

"A show of lots of Degas. He hardly enthuses me." "Degas by now bores me. I refuse to look at any more Degas, whatever the pretext."

"More and more do I detest Mr. Degas. He should hang in some barbershop in Peralvillo. Impressionists are increasingly hard to suffer. I agree they have a place in art *history*, but do they have any place whatsoever in *Art*? What the devil am I doing in art *criticism*! Curses! Forget it!"

Lautrec did not fare better, "What idiot said that Lautrec is a painter. He is not even a newspaper illustrator." Renoir at first pleased him, seen at Durand-Ruel:

"Renoir impressed me deeply, pleased me in extraordinary manner. One hour and a half went by looking at five or six small pictures. The rest, not so good, must be sketches or youthful work."

"I cannot forget Renoir. Could I only own one of his small paintings!"

"The second or third time one looks at Renoir, disillusion sets in. Why?"

Cézannes gathered by Rosenberg and presented by Wildenstein:

"A few days ago, another very important exhibition of twenty-four Cézannes, half loaned, and half owned by Rosenberg. I went there eight days in a row every morning to study Cézanne. Perhaps very close to El Greco. The good man Matisse vanishes."

A group show of French Masters, at Durand-Ruel:

"Returning to Durand-Ruel, I received a lesson in painting as obvious as it was final. It seemed done on purpose: a still-life by Cézanne side by side with one by Manet, same subject matter, same size. The one by Cézanne is like a closed fist. The one by Manet disintegrates. The former *lives*, the latter is dead.

"A man full-length painted by Cézanne and another by Manet. The Cézanne is as solidly planted in the ground as a rock. The Manet is falling down: he stands on one foot, *leans on a cane* (O irony!) and is out of place in the picture!"

The figure paintings Orozco mentions are Manet's *Jeune Homme en Costume de Majo*, and Cézanne's *Jeune Homme Nu*.

Seurat, seen at Wildenstein:

"The first Seurat I ever saw. He must have been a man pure of heart and simple. One feels guilty and sinful before this luminous painting. Other pictures appear dirty, even Cézanne, Renoir even.

"If there was any necessity—for sure there is none—for religious art, Seurat would be the man, instead of the ugly daubs one sees on the altars. Religious art, altars and religion, what place have they in this hellish world."

A show of Old Masters, at Reinhart:

"Best of all, a small Chardin, so subtle, so gracious, so beautiful, that its very presence seemed a mirage, something like our first illusions, when one is eighteen and sighing for the first loved one."

Jotted down as instantaneously as they were felt, Orozco's opinions nevertheless fall into a sort of informal pattern. Pure painting attracts him. He admires, as he forcefully expresses it, "the job-like labor of laying a mortar of pigment." He remains keenly sensitive to qualities at the opposite of his own: peacefulness, goodness, purity, a delight in balance and light. In contrast, he curtly dismisses these masters that seem to us closer to him: Degas, with his cruel probing of the form divine; Lautrec, punning pitilessly at the expense even of the models he liked best. To this implied pattern, Rouault is the exception.

New York had first seen a group show of Mexican artists at the Independents of 1923. The impact had been nil. February, 1928, a second group show, collected by Frances Paine, opened at the Art Center. Still, the reaction was cool; Orozco writes:

"Exhibition Art Center: a total failure, absolute, final. Facts: the gallery is bad; for beginners and amateurs only. The hall is dark. The Director is an idiot. Complete disorder. A week after the opening the catalogues were not ready. They mixed all the pictures and, because those

of Pacheco and Montenegro were the largest, they hung in key places. Also present, wax dolls and dressed fleas, by Hidalgo. Those who came joked and mocked, or felt disappointed."

"In the fatigued and sinister exhibit at the Art Center, the Director, Bement, told me that the Brooklyn Museum wanted to buy the painting that *Times* reproduced, *Soldiers and People on the March*. Fact is nothing happened, and Bement never explained. Now, Mrs. Paine says that Bement told the Director of the Brooklyn Museum that the picture was painted on very cheap canvas, and that is why they did not buy.

"Worse still, they ruined my poor picture. To fit it to an old frame that was too small, they had no scruple in paring it down. You may cut an impressionist picture at wish, but one based on composition is wrecked, once it is cut."

The heartbreak was heightened by the success of a one-man show by "that other one," Rivera, at Weyhe:

"Diego Riveritch Romanoff is still very much of a threat to us. Deeply rooted is the idea that we all are his followers. To speak of 'Indians,' of 'revolution,' of 'Mexican Renaissance,' of 'folk arts,' of 'santos,' etc. . . . is all the same as to speak of Rivera. . . . Even the 'syndicate' (?), 'proletariat,' 'Maximo Pacheco,' 'agrarians,' etc. . . . all those terms are synonymous with Diegoff. Perforce, we must with every means at hand rid ourselves of this hot potato of Mexicanism of which Mrs. Paine and Anita Brenner are today the prophets.

"I heard that, up to now, people were kindly inclined towards things Mexican . . . but that is all ended with the Art Center show. I rejoice, should it mark the beginning of a new era, wherein each one would be appreciated at his own worth, rather than for the *exotic-picturesque-renaissance-Mexican-Rivera-esque*.

"The *Mexican fashion* or *mode de Mexique*, whatever you wish to call it, or more simply this joke, is over. Proof of it is the exhibition they gave Diegoff at the Gallery Weyhe, so-called, or Wyhe. It is more like a bookstore . . . a sort of flea market in miniature where one may find something of everything, even old irons. In season, their shows are at the rate of one every three days. You imagine the quality. One show was of Diegoff, and I saw there his cubist follies. One canvas had a toothbrush glued to it. Another was in the style of Zuloaga. Water colors there were, in the style of Cézanne.

"Of course, the newspapers reviewed the show kindly. They brought out the Mexican Renaissance, Indians, and the Revolution. They dubbed him 'many-sided' and 'great man.' Renaissance with a toothbrush!!!!!!

"I doubt if he sold any."

"As to potentate Rivera, here the problem is worse than in Mexico. The amount of publicity is incredible, and deeply rooted the idea that he is the great creator of everything, and that all others are his followers. Each time that one is introduced as 'a painter from Mexico,' they say, 'Oh! then! You know the great Rivera, don't you?'"

Absorbing new sights and new attitudes, the sufferings of a displaced person, the round of galleries and museums, were but the passive side of Orozco's days. Soon, he went to work, translating into his own idiom the lessons received and the sights absorbed:

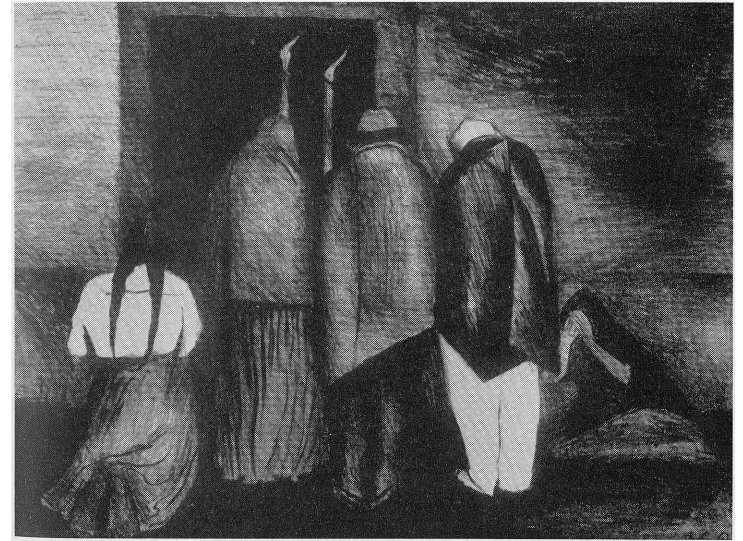


Fig. 2. Orozco, *Requiem*, 1928. lithograph. Collection of Mrs. Edith Gregor Halpert, courtesy of the Downtown Gallery.

"*Lithography*: I am going to do some. It is easy. There is no need to do it on stone, but instead on specially prepared plates. Already I have two. There is a Mr. Miller who owns a lithographic workshop. He prints plates for the art galleries. The plates I bought (9 x 15") cost fifty cents apiece. To print them costs ten dollars for the first twelve proofs and twenty-five cents each for the following ones, plus the cost of the paper. For me it is dear but I will chance it and try to pay."

"My first lithograph! It came out lovely. Two others are drawn and I will bring them tomorrow to the printer. The new technique enchants me. It is a most entertaining toy and will last me for a spell."

This first lithograph "that came out lovely" was *Vaudeville in Harlem* (fig. 1). Two more prints—mentioned as drawn but not yet printed—would be *Rear Guard*, and *Requiem* (fig. 2).

Orozco also painted in oils. Here is the genesis of the haughty self-portrait peering through thick lenses, since then often reproduced:

"A month ago, Mrs. Paine let me know through Anita that Eastman, the Kodak millionaire, wished for a good portrait of himself. Many had been painted but none suited him: there was an opportunity for me.

"Because I lacked samples of portraits, I painted a self-portrait just for the pleasure. Very bad it is and Rembrandtesque. Now Mrs. Paine came

to say that after all it is off, Eastman having left for Europe. What do I care!"

Other oils of the period: *Coney Island Sideshow*, *Eighth Avenue*, *The Elevated*, *The Subway*.

Orozco's major handicap in 'selling himself' was a lack of mural documentation. Friends attempted solutions to the dilemma, at times unusual ones:

"Mrs. Paine says that you and I should do mural decorations. She will propose to I know not what society of local architects that we decorate—on paper—one of their halls, 'to see if they take heart!?!?!?'"

Good photographs of existing murals, together with preparatory drawings, seemed to Orozco a more dignified solution. I would bring the drawings with me. As to the photographs, spurred by Orozco's detailed letters and telegrams, Tina Modotti and I worked hard on the project. The task was not easy, sloping ceilings, stairwells, and barrel vaults, forcing camera and photographers alike into difficult positions:

"In a letter sent to Cuernavaca—I do not know if it reached you—I asked as a favor from you to see which ones of my drawings remain in Coyoacan [where Orozco's home and studio were located]. Choose among them those that are best to bring me if it is not too much bother. . . . So take a little walk towards Coyoacan, and delight in the green foliage along the path."

"See if it is possible to take one or two photos of the beautiful portal of *El Generalito*, with the arches. On one side, *The Strike*, and on the other the so-called *Trinity*. . . .

"Also try the door that gives on San Ildefonso Street, the main door, with the decorations overhead.

"See what other ways there may be of including the arches of the patio with the frescoes behind them. Main interest should be the architecture. One should realize that it is a *decorated building*. The pictures as such are of *no importance*."

"I sent you a telegram asking for photos with architecture. Ninety per cent architecture and no more than ten per cent painting. That is because no architect can get interested in the monkeys unless it be as a detail of the building."

Slowly the tide turned. Orozco wrote in April:

"By now, I have a small circle of friends and American admirers, all of them artists. Three nights ago, they gave me a supper party at 'El Charro,' the restaurant of the brothers De la Selva. Toasts were drunk in excellent whisky to the health of *the great painter Orozco*. A Rumanian gentleman, Iliescu, told me without my asking him anything that here everybody rated me higher than 'that other one.'"

In August he writes, "For us *an epoch comes to an end and another begins*, initiated in this monstrous New York. I hope it will prove more propitious."

In September, Orozco found trusted friends among members of the Delphic Movement. His first mention of their antics may lack seriousness, but

he soon realized how sincere they were, and how well-meaning towards him:

September 10, "Indians from Greece shall be introduced to civilization. Same as in Mexico, the same worn-out cliché. Greek folk art shall be fostered—Their sarapes are just like ours—Dancing there shall be at the tune of Greek bagpipes. All of that will happen in Delphi, plus Olympic Games, and for a finale, a play, 'Prometheus.'

"Thus plans an aged lady, an American millionairess, wed to the poet Sikelianos. . . . A beautiful woman, Miss Alma Reed, is active in the goings-on. She admires me and bought one of the tragic drawings.

"The other evening, there was a get together at her house. Mrs. Sikelianos, gowned in a Greek robe and shod with Greek sandals, danced one of the parts from Prometheus, singing in Greek meanwhile. Admirable! Claude Bragdon, of the Fourth Dimension and the Tertium Organum, was present. . . . He has the face of a deluxe pill-barker. Also present, two dozen dowagers, theosophical and Greekophile."

September 25, "Yesterday I received the photos and they pleased me much. They came at the right time as, minutes after, I left my apartment for that of Alma Reed, for a private showing of Orozco's works. Propaganda galore, notables present from the New York art world, writers, Greek poets, delegates to a congress of archeology. . . . Most amusing, a Greek poet felt so deeply for the corpses in my pictures that he hugged me tearfully. I managed to avoid a kiss: *the pig!*

"Greek wine and lots of fun."

October 2, "Jean, to give you the news of great triumphs. There is no time for details but in short: October 10, my first show in one of the best galleries, in a group with Matisse, de Segonzac, Forain, and three other Frenchmen. Next year, in April, an exhibition sponsored by the New York Architectural League, with the set of drawings that you will bring with you, and the photographs. *Ample photographic documentation*. . . . I told my beautiful and gracious manager, Alma Reed, that I had a companion in this affair, Jean Charlot. . . ."

October 8, "There was no time to tell you in detail what I did of late, but here it is in short. The exhibition at the house of Alma Reed, though informal, brought great and magnificent results. Many of the best people came to see it. Such were the compliments that a Greek poet even composed verses for me and recited them before an elegant gathering. That was the comical angle.

"What was serious is that an exhibition of the now famous 'horrors' [the set of drawings of the Revolution] is assured in one of the most exclusive of 57th Street galleries, that of Marie Sterner, in a group with six Frenchmen, Matisse included. A good introduction to the innermost circles of painting.

"I already mentioned that in April we will be able to show photographs of murals and fresco cartoons in the annual show of the Architectural League.

"I am painting a portrait of Mrs. Sikelianos, with whom Alma Reed lives. It is something novel, a complex color range and a mural treatment. The model is a most interesting woman of fifty-five, with golden hair and Greek vestment. A person most cultured."

Only sour note in this relative happiness:

"Frances Toor came to see me three days ago. The first thing she did was to inventory the corners of the studio. Now, for gossip, a little story. You know that I gave a small show of my work at Alma Reed's, with such success as I shall tell you. Toor went there and seeing how well I was with them offered Alma Reed to give a talk on Diego Rivera! Not even three thousand miles away is one allowed to relax."

The Marie Sterner show opened in October. Art News reviewed it: "Orozco shows at Sterner Gallery . . . conveying bitterness by the fewest lines. Such works as *Los Sepulcros*, should move even those adverse to propaganda in any form. . . ."

October 15, "By my *success* I just mean that I am working *hard* at paintings to my liking, and that I meet people who *truly count*. In my last letter I told you that I am painting a portrait. Up to now it goes well, pleasing both myself and my model.

"I sold one of the paintings that came from Mexico, the one with a white house; cheap indeed but a step to cement new friendships.

"The exhibition at Marie Sterner has been an artistic success. The same gallery owner suggests that the set of drawings be sent to Paris, and it was agreed upon. Mrs. Sikelianos will take them with her. . . .

"Mrs. Sterner likes the drawings immensely. She states that she is not interested in the subject matter, but in the rendering. Forain had to be hung in another room, and others too. Such is the explosiveness of things Mexican! . . .

"Best is for you to come and join in the fray. When will it be?"

This letter was the last to reach me in Mexico. My mother and I received our passports October 18, arriving in New York the 27th. In our trunks were more photographs of Orozco's murals, the remainder of the drawings of the Revolution, and charcoal studies for the Preparatoria frescoes.

January, 1929, I left New York for Washington, there to correct the proofs of my report on the Yucatan diggings. It was in Washington that I received the last letter of the series. Enclosed was a full-page clipping from the *Philadelphia Ledger* of February 17, "Emotional Attitude versus Pictorial Aptitude," with impressive reproductions:

February 19, ". . . Some Philadelphia ladies invited me to send an exhibition of Mexican paintings. Great success! A nice gallery that does not charge commissions. This past Wednesday we went there, Alma and I. There was a great reception with the best of Philadelphia society. George Biddle gave a talk on Mexican painting, fresco, and my biography. He had been on a drunk for days and you can imagine the things he said. I was introduced, gave thanks, received applause. That evening, an elaborate supper at the home of George Biddle's brother, more drinking, and return to New York. I am showing everything there, including drawings and photos. . . . [see postscript —Ed.]

"Exhibition at the Downtown Gallery March 26, with paintings of New York *that are not yet painted*. In April, a show at the Art Students League with everything, and at the Architectural League with a mural *that*

is not yet painted. The drawings will be shown in Paris, the show to open February 24 at the gallery 'Fermé la Nuit,'; have you heard of it?"

"The lithograph *Requiem* was chosen one of the 'fifty best prints of the year.' . . .

"Included are a number of little pictures newly painted in the worst of folkloric vein, done at the last minute in all haste. . . .

"I send you the only lithograph left. Only two were sold. The rest I used as handsome Christmas gifts, and for the New Year with a calendar pasted on.

"George Biddle did a great portrait of me that makes me look like Lincoln."

The following year, 1930, Orozco received his first great mural commissions in the United States, the Pomona *Prometheus* and in New York, the decorations for the New School for Social Research.

Postscript: A letter from George Biddle

"Until shortly before his death, I saw something of Orozco from time to time and considered myself on very cordial relations with him. I had the greatest admiration for his work. Walter Pach introduced me to him just before my sailing to Mexico in 1928. Orozco gave me a letter to Dr. Atl, the dean of the mural movement. I remember the postscript which Orozco wrote in this letter, 'Viva, Mexico, el pais del sangre y del amor.'

I think it was in 1930 that we were both together in New York. He sat for me for a portrait—now owned by Sturgis Ingersoll. He was very hard up and, I think, unhappy. Bill Spratling and I did what we could do to help him. I tried, unsuccessfully, to get Frank Rehn to exhibit his work. I think it was the same winter that Mary Collum, who directed a very progressive little gallery in Philadelphia organized an exhibition for him. She asked me if I would introduce him with a talk about him and about the Mexican mural movement. I might easily have said that he was one of the greatest or most important mural painters since the Renaissance. I thought so. This is the occasion to which he refers.

I last saw Orozco in 1945, at the time the Mexican Government had commissioned me to do a mural in their Supreme Court Building. He came to the Hotel where I was staying, asking me if I could do something to get a scholarship—or some sort of financial assistance—for a young American girl painter in whom he was interested. It was the last time we met. Friends of his—Mexican artists—told me he had tried to get the Government to break my contract. I didn't pay too much attention to this. In Mexico, as in other countries, there is often a certain amount of professional jealousy among artists."

GEORGE BIDDLE
New Delhi, Spring 1959