

Diego Rivera's America Brings Together Over 150 Artworks from Pinnacle of the Artist's Career

Rivera's Vision of Mexico and the United States Comes to Life in Paintings, Drawings, Murals and Projections



DIEGO RIVERA'S AMERICA
July 16, 2022–January 2, 2023

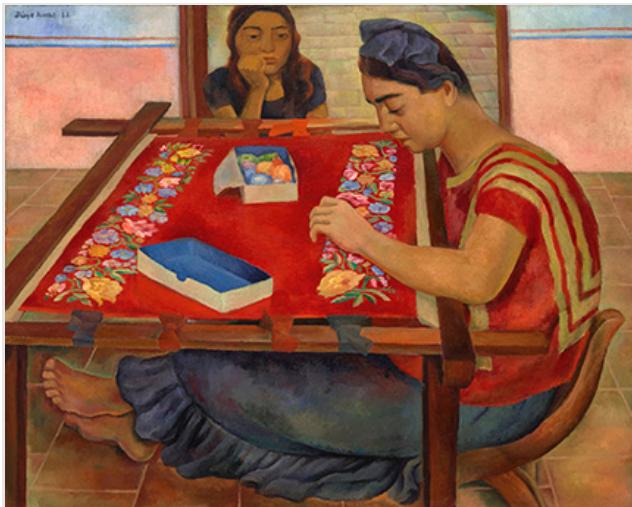
Press Preview: Wednesday, July 13, 2022, 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (March 8, 2022; Updated May 18, 2022)—The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) announces ***Diego Rivera's America***, the most in-depth examination of the artist's work in over two decades. *Diego Rivera's America* brings together more than 150 of Rivera's paintings, frescoes and drawings—as well as three galleries devoted to large-scale film projections of highly influential murals he created in Mexico and the U.S. On view from July 16, 2022–January 2, 2023, the exhibition focuses on his work from the 1920s to the mid-1940s, the richest years of Rivera's prolific career. During these two key decades, Rivera created a new vision for North America, informed by his travels in Mexico and the United States.

“Rivera was one of the most aesthetically, socially and politically ambitious artists of the 20th century,” notes guest curator James Oles. “He was deeply concerned with transforming society and shaping identity—Mexican identity, of course, but also American identity, in the broadest sense of the term. Because of his utopian belief in the power of art to change the world, Rivera is an essential artist to explore anew today, from a contemporary perspective.”

EXHIBITION SCOPE

Diego Rivera's America builds on SFMOMA's collection of over 70 works by Rivera, one of the largest in the world. It also features paintings, drawings and frescoes borrowed from public and private collections in Mexico, the U.S. and the U.K., reuniting many for the first time since the artist's death. Iconic and much-loved works, such as *The Corn Grinder* (1926), *Dance in Tehuantepec* (1928), *Flower Carrier* (1935) and *Portrait of Lupe Marín* (1938), will be shown alongside paintings that have not been seen publicly since leaving the artist's studio.



The exhibition is the first to examine Rivera's work thematically, with galleries dedicated to places like Tehuantepec and Manhattan that captured his imagination, and to his favorite subjects, such as street markets, popular celebrations and images of industry. It begins with Rivera's first mural commission, *Creation* (1922–23), a project that—like much of his work—looks to past artistic traditions while also embracing avant-garde strategies. In the 1920s, working mainly in Mexico, Rivera established his mature style, distinguished by rounded forms, intense colors, and increasingly dense compositions. He cemented an interest in allegory, popular culture, family, labor, and the proletarian revolution, themes that would be central to his famous murals in San Francisco, Detroit and New York of the early 1930s, and that would resonate in his paintings and drawings through the 1940s.

The culmination of the exhibition is Rivera's last U.S. mural, a colossal work measuring 22 feet high by 74 feet wide, painted for the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco in 1940. *The Marriage of the Artistic Expression of the North and of the South on the Continent*—commonly known as [Pan American Unity](#)—is free to all visitors to view in SFMOMA's Roberts Family Gallery. This 10-panel portable fresco, on loan from City College of San Francisco until 2024, explores his vision of a shared history and future for Mexico and the U.S.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS & THEMES

Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886–1957) believed in the power of art to educate, inspire action and transform society. He considered art an essential weapon in the utopian struggle for greater social equality and justice. Paintings such as *The Tortilla Maker* (1926) and *Weaving* (1936) illuminate Rivera's desire to focus on everyday people as the protagonists of national narratives. From the early 1920s to the mid-1940s, he reimagined Mexican national identity on a vast scale, embraced the industrial age in the U.S. and conceived of a greater America in which unity, rather than division, was paramount.

Rivera's idea of "America" was hemispheric and transnational, and did not refer only to the United States, as he stated in 1931: "I mean by America, the territory included between the two ice barriers of the two poles. A fig for your barriers of wire and frontier guards." Above all he believed that the U.S. and Mexico shared a similar historical foundation in which a rich Indigenous past had been suppressed by colonial violence. He also believed the countries shared a creative force and revolutionary impulse that distinguished them from Europe. *Diego Rivera's America* invites audiences to reflect on the shared histories and challenges that connect us across political borders.

The exhibition proposes new interpretations of some of Rivera's most famous paintings, including *Flower Seller* (1926), on loan from the Honolulu Museum of Art, and a 1938 surrealist landscape from the collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. A suite of his humorous designs for the modernist ballet *H.P. (Horsepower)*, on loan from The Museum of Modern Art, New York, will be presented together along with the first recreations of Rivera's costumes from the ballet since 1932. The presentation also unveils paintings lost to scholars or never exhibited before, among them a stunning double portrait commissioned by the mother of Jane and Peter Fonda in 1941.

The galleries devoted to Rivera's U.S. murals feature large-scale preliminary sketches and cartoons for works such as his censored Rockefeller Center project of 1933, as well as two fresco panels painted in New York. His timely invitation to return to San Francisco in 1940 to paint a large mural in front of a live audience at the Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island allowed him the ideal opportunity to envision a collective American response to a world collapsing again into war.

DIEGO RIVERA IN SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco was particularly important to Rivera; it was the first place he painted murals in the U.S. Likewise, his work was deeply influential to artists and muralists across the Bay Area. Through their work, Rivera and his wife Frida Kahlo became deeply connected to local cultural figures. San Francisco was also where Rivera and Kahlo remarried in 1940, after their brief divorce. The exhibition will present portraits of their wide circle of friends in San Francisco, including three important paintings by Frida Kahlo.

Diego Rivera's America features two galleries dedicated to Rivera's San Francisco projects, with preparatory drawings for two murals from 1930–31: *Allegory of California* and *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*. The exhibition will also incorporate Rivera's portable fresco *Still Life and Blossoming Almond Trees* (1931), originally painted for a private home and now in the collection of the University of California, Berkeley. Brought together for the first time, these works provide unparalleled insight into Rivera's time in San Francisco and highlight the artist's role in helping to establish a legacy of politically engaged muralism that remains an indelible part of the city's identity and built environment.

Diego Rivera's America spotlights paintings that depict life in Mexico and in the U.S. and concludes with the vast *Pan American Unity* fresco that unites both countries. Rivera's work invites us to consider the past while also asserting the power of art to envision solutions to cultural, economic and political challenges and shape the present.

CATALOGUE

Diego Rivera's America is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue that serves as a guide to two crucial decades when Rivera was at the peak of his international fame. Essays by leading experts on Rivera and modern Mexican art devote attention to iconic paintings as well as works that will be new even to scholars—revealing fresh insights into his artistic process. The book features more than 300 illustrations, with essays by James Oles, Maria Castro, Claire F. Fox, John Lear and Sandra Zetina, and

contributions by Michelle Barger and Kiernan Graves, Dafne Cruz Porchini, Jennifer A. González, Rachel Kaplan and Adriana Zavala. The catalogue is edited by James Oles and published by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in association with University of California Press.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Audiences are invited to explore the themes of *Diego Rivera's America* through a robust range of engaging public programs and events.

SFMOMA's Free Community Day on Sunday, July 17, 2022, will celebrate the opening of *Diego Rivera's America* by offering free admission as well as music, performances and other activities throughout the museum. In addition, from 1–8 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month, Bay Area residents can enjoy SFMOMA for free. First Thursdays in August, September and October will celebrate the Rivera exhibition with live performances, readings and music.

In September 2022 the Mini Mural Festival returns with free events inspired by Rivera's *Pan American Unity* and the Bay Area's lively mural-making tradition. This year SFMOMA will host student artists to live paint murals in the outdoor corridor adjacent to the museum between Howard and Natoma Streets. Partner organizations are San Francisco Art Institute (September 10) and Youth Art Exchange (September 11, as part of Free Family Day). On Sunday, September 11, families are also invited to come to the Koret Education Center on Floor 2 for hands-on artmaking with Youth Art Exchange and to pick up a family kit with a sketchbook and a treasure hunt exploring Diego Rivera's artwork.

Beginning Thursday, October 6, 2022, Acción Latina will be the community partner in residence in the museum's free-to-visit Koret Education Center. The exhibition will feature a new mural commission by Elizabeth Blancas and explore the history of the Latinx community in the Mission District of San Francisco in the 1980s through the archives of the bilingual newspaper *El Tecolote*. Acción Latina is a nonprofit organization based in the Mission that serves Latinos in San Francisco through community media and cultural arts programming.

Public Art and Protest, a three-day symposium October 7–9, 2022, will bring together local artists and scholars in a discussion of the community mural movement in the Mission, in conjunction with the museum's new digital publication, *Proyecto Mission Murals*. On Thursday, October 27, 2022, in partnership with City College of San Francisco (CCSF), SFMOMA will present a talk with artist Esteban del Valle at the CCSF Ocean Campus, part of an ongoing lecture series on artists and social change. At the museum, a series of programs in front of Rivera's *Pan American Unity* mural over the fall will explore intersections between art and labor, co-organized by CCSF's Labor and Community Studies chair James Tracy, featuring poetry readings, songs by the Rocking Solidarity chorus and talks on the history of resistance movements, racism and organized labor.

On the occasion of Diego Rivera's birthday, the museum will present Will Maynez's play *Frida Interview: March 1941* on December 8, 2022. The play, performed by Maynez and Jean Franco, is an interview with Frida Kahlo about her life with Diego Rivera in Mexico and San Francisco up to 1941, including during the creation of the *Pan American Unity* mural.

AUDIO GUIDE

The audio guide for *Diego Rivera's America* features artists Yolanda López and Enrique Chagoya in dialogue with curator James Oles on Rivera's life and artistic legacy. The audio guide will be available in Spanish and English at the museum, online and on the free SFMOMA App.

PROYECTO MISSION MURALS

In the 1970s the Mission Muralism Movement began a tradition of activism, expression and community building through public art, which continues today. In tandem with *Diego Rivera's America*, SFMOMA has released [*Proyecto Mission Murals*](#), a new bilingual digital publication that examines the origins of the community mural movement in San Francisco's Mission District from 1972 to 1988. [*The Mission Muralismo Audio Zine Vol. I*](#) is part of this multimedia project, taking listeners on an audio stroll through the Mission District to learn about the murals and the artists who collaborated to create them. In this 48-minute audio story narrated by Camilo Garzón, local writers Olivia Peña and Josiah Luis Alderete interweave their perspectives on the history of the Mission Muralismo movement with stories from the muralists themselves. The audio zine was nominated for a 2022 Webby Award for Arts & Culture podcasts.

Also coming out in June is *Mission Muralistas* [working title], a film centering the voices of women artists and muralists whose works cover the walls of San Francisco's Mission District. Directed by Javier Briones and edited by Claudia Escobar, in partnership with SFMOMA, this 25-minute film will be screened locally in Summer 2022.

VENUES & DATES

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA): July 16, 2022 – January 2, 2023
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art: March 11 – July 31, 2023

ORGANIZATION

Diego Rivera's America is curated by James Oles, guest curator, with Maria Castro, assistant curator of painting and sculpture, SFMOMA. The exhibition is co-organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

ADMISSION & HOURS

Annual membership begins at \$120, and members enjoy free admission and priority ticketing for special exhibitions with advanced reservations, as well as complimentary guest passes (varies by membership level). Adult general admission to SFMOMA is \$25; admission for seniors 65 years and older is \$22; and admission for visitors ages 19 through 24 is \$19. The special exhibition *Diego Rivera's America* has an additional surcharge for all visitors 19 years and over: \$10 weekdays, \$12 weekends and holidays (prices subject to change). Guests who purchase their tickets online in advance will receive a \$2 discount. Members presale tickets are available on sfmoma.org on June 7, 2022. General public tickets are available on June 14, 2022.

General Admission and special exhibitions for all visitors 18 years and younger is free. For local Bay Area residents, SFMOMA's First Thursdays offer free admission and no surcharge from 1–8 p.m. on August 4, September 1, October 6 and November 3, 2022. On Free Family Days, general admission to the museum is free for up to four adults accompanying one child or teen (18 and younger). For City College of San Francisco students, staff and faculty, admission to *Diego Rivera's America* is free with CCSF ID. Participants in "Discover & Go" and "San Francisco Museums for All" programs receive free admission with no surcharge. Special exhibition tickets will need to be reserved on-site and will be available first come, first served, depending on gallery capacity and ticket availability.

Starting Tuesday, July 5, 2022, SFMOMA will be open 10 a.m.–5 p.m. on Tuesdays. Museum hours will be 10 a.m.–5 p.m. on Fridays through Tuesdays and 1–8 p.m. on Thursdays (closed Wednesdays). Current visitor information can be found at sfmoma.org/visit.

SUPPORT

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San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

151 Third Street

San Francisco, CA 94103

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary art in the United States and a thriving cultural center for the Bay Area. Our remarkable collection of painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, design and media arts is housed in a LEED Gold-certified building designed by the global architects Snøhetta and Mario Botta. In addition to our seven gallery floors, SFMOMA offers 45,000 square feet of free, art-filled public space open to all.

Visit sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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