



Murals & Political Art

Subjects Social Studies, History, Art

Grades 4-7

Brief Description

Students are introduced to the Mexican mural painting tradition through the works of Diego Rivera, Nora Patrich and Juan Sanchez. They explore the use of art as historical and social commentary by creating their own mural. This activity may be done in conjunction with a history lesson on indigenous peoples, art, activism and political struggle.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn to use a database to find the correct archival images
- Learn about a Mexican mural painting tradition
- Analyze murals with Canadian content painted by Nora Patrich
- Develop and plan a mural based on contemporary politics in Canada, their province, city or school.
- Create their own mural using large poster paper and paints

Keywords

Mural painting, Diego Rivera, Mexico, Political Art

Materials Needed

- access to the *¡Hola Canada! The Latin-American Collections at the Simon Fraser University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology* web site
- access to a printer (black and white is fine)
- large drawing surfaces, a solid fence or wall is best, but large sheets of paper will do
- paint
- brushes and other painting tools

Lesson

Research the works of Diego Rivera on the Internet. Examine his bold use of blocks of color and large simplified human figures. Rivera included some of the indigenous people of Mexico in his murals, making political statements about social conditions during the early 1900s. We can see that he drew on the artistic traditions of the ancient Mayan carved stone panels in some of his works.

Have the students locate images of ancient murals in the image database and compare them to Rivera's murals. (The images can be located by searching for 'Murals' under the 'Subject' Category in the **Archival Images Database**). What is the same? What is different?

View the video called 'Murals' – an interview with muralist Nora Patrich. She and others are continuing the Mexican muralist tradition in Canada. Nora Patrich discusses the use of mural painting to transmit an idea or a time in history to the general public.

View the images of Nora Patrich's murals that are shown in the video.

- What images has she brought from Mexico? (The style of clothing and the depiction of the people, the corn, etc.)
- What elements of these murals arise from her Canadian experience? (The Raven in a modified Northwest Coast art style, for example.)
- What ideas do you think she is trying to transmit to the public? (The unity of indigenous peoples from the British Columbia coast to Mexico, and by extension, all native Americans, perhaps? The importance of corn? The importance of family and children?)
- How does this mural show the legacy of new Canadians?
- How does it build multicultural awareness?

Have the students review their recent history or contemporary society lessons, and design a mural with a political message arising out of that lesson.

Evaluation

Students are graded on their participation in the discussion, ability to understand the concepts of political struggle and the skill of execution of their mural painting.