

Books

Diego Rivera in New York

Irene Herner de Larrea y otros: *Diego Rivera, Paraiso perdido en el Rockefeller Center*. FCPS de la UNAM-EDIPUCES, S.A. de C.V. %131 ilustraciones y hemerografía\*. México, 1986, 216 pp.)

This book was prepared by the UNAM's School of Social and Political Science to commemorate the centennial of Diego Rivera's birth, a tribute to the painter's vitality. Rivera's artistic genius and revolutionary nature are both set in the historical perspective of his time, and the so-

cial message of his work is contrasted with contemporary ideas in an attempt to rescue the value and importance of popular culture.

*Paradise Lost in Rockefeller Center* bears witness to the rediscovery of Rivera's "Americanist" identity in the midst of his complex Marxist ideology. Author Irene Herner de Larrea and her team plunged into the period between the two world wars to examine the political and ideological effects of Rivera's work through one of the most important moments in his development: his work in the foyer of Rockefeller Center. Rivera was forced to come down off his painter's platform and stop work on the mural he had been engaged to paint: painting Lenin's image as a symbol of labor leadership on the walls of the New York City building which is virtually a monument to capital, was seen by owners, customers and allies alike as a socialistic political provocation.

On the morning of February 9, 1934, a year after Rivera had been fired, Nelson Rockefeller ordered the fresco destroyed. This in turn fueled a controversy in which Rivera denounced the cultural vandalism perpetrated by "the enemies of the workers."

Thus, the Mexican muralist's work in the United States somehow mirrors the political forces that pitted Hitler and Mussolini's

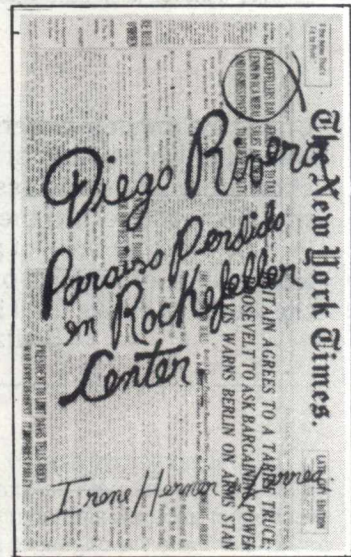
fascism, the socialism of Stalin and the scientific-technical-industrial take-off of North America against one another. Rivera's period in the U.S. also synthesizes his own pictorial school, developing since his return to Mexico in 1921, following 10 years of dialogue with European painting.

The diversity of form and color recaptured from Mexican and American culture, as opposed to the traditional European style, led to the combination of cubist and futurist features in "an intellectual movement that sought to develop those aspects most characteristic of Mexico," and to redeem the exotic, in order to return to the oppressed the culture that had been denied them.

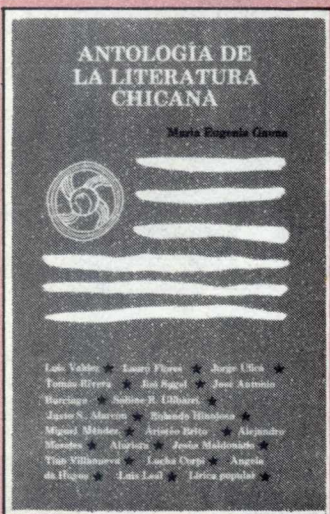
In the face of the 1910 (Mexican) and 1917 (Russian) revolutions, Rivera joined the Mexican Communist Party in 1922. He shared the mystical structure of the hero figure, the "Marxist missionary." While he was incapable of really going beyond the malinchismo\* deeply-rooted in the national consciousness, in his art he took up the utopian defense of a paradise that combined the pre-Columbian and the modern, the Indian and the proletarian.

Up until the 30's, Rivera developed his artistic career, while at the same time living through the ups and downs in his life as a

party member, motivated less by the in-depth study of Marxist theory than by his eclectic genius, keeping his distance from Stalinist cultural policy and his own party's line on the matter, while at the same time speaking out in favor of Leninism and being openly sympathetic to Trotsky's ideas. The importance he attributed to mass propaganda, freedom for artistic creativity and his belief in the political nature of art, all led Rivera to muralism. These views also contributed to his expulsion from the Party in 1929, while other muralistas, such as David Alfaro Siqueiros and Xavier Guerrero, decided to go into politics full-time.



Anthology of Chicano Texts



Antología de la literatura chicana (An Anthology of Chicano Literature), by María Eugenia Gaona. Centro de Enseñanza para Extranjeros, UNAM, 1986.

In order to help Mexican-

American students overcome their difficulty in writing in Spanish, in 1979 María Eugenia Gaona devised a series of teaching materials for learning Spanish as a second language.

These in turn served as a basis for organizing the course in Chicano Literature she has taught since 1980 at the UNAM's Center for Foreign Students (the CEE, Centro de Enseñanza para Extranjeros), and which continuously yields new insight into the theory, criticism and literary traditions of Chicano origin. The demands of Ms. Gaona's course led her to produce this anthology of literary texts.

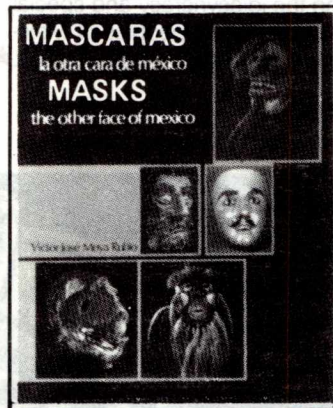
María Eugenia Gaona, professor of Spanish and Literature at the CEE, majored in Hispanic Language and Literature and has specialized in Mexican Literature. She is also a literary critic and has published numerous articles on the subject.





## Bilingual Edition on Mexican Masks

**Máscaras: La otra cara de México** (*Masks: Mexico's Other Face*), by Victor José Moya Rubio. Third bilingual edition (Spanish-English), UNAM, Mexico, 1986.



That other face, the mask, has existed as a cultural expression throughout time. There are masks of all sorts: ceremonial, ritual, for funerals, for war, for use in magic as practiced by the peoples of Africa, India, Polynesia and by American Indians, including Mexicans.

"The look that looks and doesn't see," as Mexican writer Octavio Paz described masks, has been used as a symbol by man to transform himself and as a magical instrument to help him achieve his desires.

*Masks: Mexico's Other Face* was put together by Victor José Moya using his own magnificent collection, acquired over the years, from all parts of Mexico, and which forms part of his assemblage of masks from five con-

tinents. A sample of the complete collection consisting of 750 masks, was exhibited in museums in Mexico, the United States, England, Germany, France, Poland and Japan, among other countries.

This bilingual edition is illustrated with black and white and color photographs and includes an interesting study on the subject of masks. Overall, it presents an excellent description of Mexican masks, covering several different regions, peoples and traditions, providing valuable insight into the wealth and peculiarities of the nation's culture.

We have here the history of masks from pre-Hispanic times to the present, both in graphics and in text. We learn that in pre-Hispanic times masks carried special importance, and both their social and artistic implications have been extended and superimposed among the practices of contemporary ethnic groups.

Throughout history and today, masks have been an important factor in the lives of Mexicans. They are used in dances, carnivals and religious *fiestas*, and in addition to their symbolic quality, masks are an art form practiced by people of all ages.

Sacred dances appeared among the earliest inhabitants of what today is Mexico, and were dedicated to the Moon and Sun. The martial, mystical and ritual dances that are still enacted today in many religious *fiestas*, developed at later dates. In all of them masks are an important component of the costume. Among the dances carried out in different parts of the country we can cite the *Archeros*, or archers. This is a variation of the Moors and Christians dance developed during the colonial period, and three types of masks are used: Señor Santiago, Captain Savario and the *Archers*, who represent the heretics. In the

weighted down by the "resonance of disenchantment," at a time when the "red hope has become a reality that has little to do with the illusion of paradise," and "the proletarian paradise is collapsing."

Yet the sources cited throughout this essay reveal that rather than being skeptical about the individual's subjective role in life, she aims to bring out a demand being voiced strongly in Mexico today: autonomy for popular cultural expression *vis a vis* the State, even though officialdom has made such extensive use of Rivera.

Diego Rivera lost a legal battle at Rockefeller Center, but the point is that the infringement of an artist's rights cannot be forgotten, nor is the past or present supremacy of monopoly over the artist admissible, says the author, since the artist can exert his moral right to create, complete and protect his work.

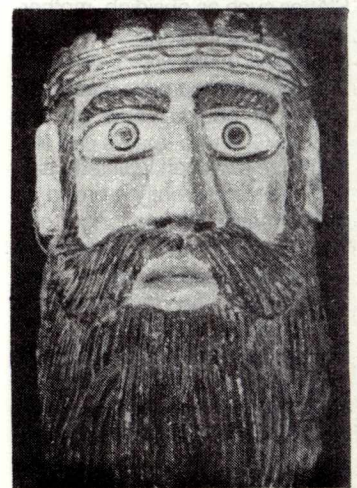
It was impossible to silence the Rockefeller affair. The Detroit Institute of Art houses a mural painted during those same years

and was also hounded for political reasons. And Rivera conquered a space for another mural on the same theme, this one in Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes.\*\* What did prove impossible, though, was to settle the differences between his committed school of art and the pictorial current of so-called pure art, defended against Rivera mainly by French painter Henri Matisse.

\* Rejecting what is national and admiring all that is foreign.

\*\* Palace of Fine Arts.★

Tania Palencia



Irene Herner believes that when Rivera arrived in the United States in 1930 he saw himself as the artist with a redemptive mission. This in turn made him influential among U.S. intellectuals anxious to find the popular artistic forms that went with "America for the Americans."

Once in the United States, the Mexican muralist proved "capable, in the first place, of surrounding himself with people who, even in a time of world crisis, could pay for and promote the creation and sale of works of art," and this despite the criticism of his communist detractors. Rivera moved into this world to express the beauty of industrial progress through "a human dream that was more mythical than political and historical." Diego Rivera's artistic authority survived the controversy with the Rockefellers, bolstered by defense committees set up by North American students and painters and by political groups who shared his concept of art.

The author recognizes Rivera's skill at mass propagan-



da, shown in the audacious way he used modern means of communication to reach out to the public, such as what he attempted at Rockefeller Center —once he understood that the colossal piece of architecture held over 20,000 people and would be visited daily by another 40,000 or so.

Nonetheless, Irene Herner sets Rivera's internationalist, anti-fascist spirit, distrustful of so-called "finished revolutions," in the context of his magical and passionately artistic way of thinking. The author notes that this way of thinking is outmoded and perhaps no longer valid today,