

DOLORES OLMEDO PATIÑO

"Following the example set by my mother, María Patiño Suárez viuda de Olmedo, who always told me, 'Whatever you have, share it with your brethren,' I leave this house with all my art collections, the result of my life's work, for the enjoyment of the people of Mexico." These words are inscribed at the entrance to the museum named after Dolores Olmedo Patiño. Someday, they will be the only witness to the effort, dedication and fortune that she invested in gathering the most important collection of paintings of the famous muralist Diego Rivera, a collection which, including other im-

portant pieces, she later donated to the people of Mexico.

Dolores Olmedo Patiño was born in Mexico City December 14, 1920. Her mother, a school teacher, was very fond of music and painting, and was a habitue of the important intellectual, artistic and political circles of her time. Dolores, then, grew up in a milieu that fostered her sensitivity and love for the different cultural aspects of Mexico. She studied philosophy, law, music and art history in Mexico, and anthropology, museology and art history in Paris. She went into the construction business very young and rapidly became very successful.

The intense labor of those years allowed her to spend time and money on an activity that had fascinated her since her youth: collecting. Her passion for collecting was born of her love of beauty, but found its *raison d'être* when she met Diego Rivera, one of this century's most famous Mexican painters, thus beginning a lifelong friendship between the two. Diego advised her in the acquisition of beautiful pre-Hispanic pieces, and his own paintings became the main item she collected. Her admiration and affection for Diego were also behind her acquisition of an important number of



Diego Rivera, *Portrait of Dolores Olmedo (In Tehuana Dress)*, 1955 (oil on canvas).

works by two very significant women in his life: Frida Kahlo and Angelina Beloff.

Dolores Olmedo also played an important role in Mexico's public and cultural life. Her interest in preserving and disseminating different aspects of Mexico's culture and art prompted her to organize Mexican art exhibits and to allow her own collections to tour abroad. She also contributed to reestablishing the tradition of placing offerings on the Day of the Dead, or All Soul's Day, a national custom which was beginning to be displaced by Halloween, and she fought against the pillage of Mexico's national patrimony. In 1958, President Adolfo Ló-

pez Mateos declared Diego Rivera's work part of the nation's cultural heritage thanks to prompting from Dolores and Diego's daughter, Guadalupe Rivera Marín.

In 1955, Olmedo was named lifetime director of the Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera (Anahuacalli) Museums and president for life of the Technical Committee of the Diego Rivera Trust. The trust was set up by the painter himself through Mexico's Central Bank in order to donate all of his and Frida's work in his possession as well as their enormous collection of pre-Hispanic objects and personal effects. The trust's founding document specifically forbids the removal of the pieces from their museums, and Dolores Olmedo has seen to it that this wish is strictly complied with.

In 1994, Olmedo herself decided to donate to the people of Mexico her collection of Diego Rivera (the world's most important), Frida Kahlo and Angelina Beloff, more than 600 pieces of pre-Columbian art, many pieces of folk art, as well as her own home to hold them. The Dolores Olmedo Museum is a beautiful testament to generosity as well as to our country's great visual and folk art. **Wi**