What is street art?

- Graffiti tends to connotate any illegal art.
- Street art tends to connotate art made with permission on outdoor walls.
- Arbitrary terms!! Cannot be pigeonholed.
- I will be focusing on street art, although some of the art I studied would generally be considered graffiti.
Los Tres Grandes

- Iconic figures in Mexican history and culture
- All 3 artists began creating murals in the 1920s
- Most art made between 1920s-1950s, government sponsored, set tone for all future movements and created a visual vocabulary of muralism.
- All muralists included themes of politics, indigenism, and Mexican culture.
- Painted in the United States, Mexico, Chile, and even Cuba. For this project, I will be focusing on the murals painted in Mexico City.
Diego Rivera (1886-1957)

- **Diego Rivera (1886-1957)**: murals very pro-indigenous, often utilized pre-Columbian imagery directly from archeological artifacts. Communist. Didactic. Idealistic.

*The History of Medicine in Mexico by: Diego Rivera*

- Tlazolteotl, Aztec goddess of filth
- Toci-Tlazolteotl from the Codex Borbonicus
- Childbirth, healing herbs, enemas, in touch with natural processes
- Vs. cold and clinical modern/ Western influenced medicine
- Pro-indigenous
José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949)

José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949): Very critical of modern world (mechanical destruction, rather than the popular idea of mechanization being a positive accomplishment of society.), paintings often centered around Mexican Revolution with stark realism and emotion, non-partisan politically

- Painted in Chapultepec Castle
- enormous portrait of Benito Juárez, one of Mexico’s highly regarded presidents, served office in the mid-19th century.
- European men vying for power in Mexico carrying the mummified corpse of Maximilian I, (French-backed puppet emperor of Mexico)
- symbolism of Benito Juárez, an indigenous man, breaking tradition of white European rulers marked an important chapter in Mexican history
- Themes of indigenism, politics, cultural heritage (flag)

Juárez, the Church and the Imperialists by: José Clemente Orozco
David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974)

- **David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974):** Common theme of his murals was the Mexican Revolution- its goals, its past, and the current oppression of the working classes. Communist. tended to paint in metaphor and symbols and his obsession with mechanics that stemmed from his fascination with the Italian futurist movement.

*Portrait of the Bourgeoisie*
*by: David Alfaro Siqueiros*

- commissioned to paint for the Mexican Electric Workers Syndicate headquarters on stairwell
- largely informed by his time fighting in Spain for Republicans during Civil War
- anti-capitalist and anti-fascist, socialism is the solution to the violence and terror brought on by such capitalist, fascist regimes
- weapons of destruction, fire, and marching fascist soldiers in gas masks. The mural itself was a kind of machine
- political
The Current Wave of Mexican Muralism

- Greatly influenced by Los Tres Grandes
- Art may be commissioned by corporations, small businesses, normal people. May also be done voluntarily by artist with or without permission.
- My research focuses on the themes of politics, indigenous/pre-columbian, and cultural heritage. Many themes intersect.
Theme 1: Politics

- “Never again a Mexico without us” (indigenous women)
- Comandante Ramona, a Zapatista leader, famously made statement, “Nunca mas un Mexico sin nosotros,”
- Artist changed nosotros to nosotras
- Feminist statement, include women in the indigenous narrative
- triple oppression: “of being a woman, indigenous, and poor.”
- Also indigenous theme!
Theme 2: Indigenous/ Pre-Columbian

- Bathroom stalls in Maen Park in Condesa neighborhood
- Two highly stylized Aztec warriors: a female jaguar warrior, which never actually existed, and a male eagle warrior
- Aztec imagery: pyramidal temple in the foreground, Jaguar knight wears the skin of the jaguar.
- Jaguar and eagle warriors formed part of a highly elite professional warrior guild
- Overall style of art is not typical of Aztecs, artistic liberty. Neo-pre-columbian
- Not aiming to be anthropologically or historically accurate.
Theme 3: Cultural Heritage

- “Los dos Fridas”
- Frida the rescue dog during devastating 2017 earthquakes in CDMX (saved 35 lives) and Frida Kahlo. Both cultural icons.
- Renace= rebirth, reconstruction after disaster
- To right there are raised fists, represent the solidarity of people who took to the streets to help those affected, since gov. Historically was slow to respond to earthquakes, or not at all.
- Also political!
Conclusion/ Thesis

The contemporary muralist movement consists of political, indigenous, and cultural themes which is greatly informed by the visual vocabulary of the initial muralist renaissance of Los Tres Grandes.

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