



Together with José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, dubbed “*El Coronelazo*” (The Great Colonel), is one of Mexican muralism triumvirate. What set him apart from his peers was his passion for such political issues as justice and well-being for everybody. He himself would be the protagonist of his gigantic murals.

David Alfaro Siqueiros’s life was intense, to say the least. Inspired since his early years by a strong passion for social justice, motivated by the Marxist views of liberty and social participation, he lived them out concurrently with his artistic vocation. It never occurred to him that the two could be practiced independently and accordingly devoted himself to the painting of murals as one of the means of art to come within the reach of everybody and make it part of their surroundings, based on his theory of spectators on the move and the optimal dynamism of planes and spaces.



His initiation in politics goes back to his student days at the San Carlos Academy, now called the National School of Plastic Arts, where he involved himself in the strike of 1911 designed to modernize the conservative teaching methods. During those years he was an active member of one of the factions of the Mexican Revolution; after years as active combatant he attained the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. In 1919, he went to Paris, where he found Diego Rivera. Together they developed the idea of a monumental heroic painting that should be based on the great pre-hispanic traditions of America.

While in Europe he stayed some time in Spain. In 1921 published the first and only issue of the magazine *Vida Americana*, (American Life) signing the article “New Directions for the New Generation of American Painters and Sculptors”, an entreaty for the creation of a protagonic and public art, a denouncement of bourgeois painting, and a plea for an expeditious socialization of art.

He returned to Mexico and animated by these ideas, he organized the Union of Revolutionary Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers. Now he became a member of the Mexican Communist Party and together with Diego Rivera and Xavier Guerrero, founded the newspaper *El Machete*. Precisely, this is when he worked on his his first murals.

In 1922, now fully engrossed in art (despite of thinking that easel painting is elitist, he finished countless pictures to practice colors and techniques), he involved himself in the revival of fresco painting under the sponsorship of the Aztec government that was interested in the decoration of public buildings. Against this backdrop Siqueiros painted “The Elements” and “Myths” in the staircase vault and stairwell of the first floor of the National Preparatory School, and later on, “*The Burial of the Martyred Worker*” (1923) and “The Call to Freedom” or “The Angels of Liberation”.

He traveled to Argentina in 1933 and supported by Antonio Berni and Lino Spilimbergo painted the mural “Proletarian Victim” in the residence of the journalist Antonio Botana (Greater Buenos Aires, sector Don Torcuato). This mural is well conserved and on display at the New York Museum of Modern Art.

He then went to the United States of North America, and while in New York he founded an experimental workshop where he innovated his technique by substituting oil paints with pyroxylin, bakelite, masonite, duco, and several plastic materials. Moreover and among others, he produced the mural "Tropical America – Opressed and Destroyed by the Imperialists", that prompted his return to Mexico as deportee.

After a sojourn in his country he returned to Spain and married Angélica Arenal in 1937. Presently he joined the Popular Army of the Spanish Republic, which initiated the rebellion against the Franco régime. Siqueiros attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of the 29th Division. From then on he was dubbed "*el Coronelazo*", the Great Colonel. After fighting in the Army of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, Siqueiros resumed his creative inspiration and created *Ethnography*, considered one of his masterpieces. dub

In 1940 Siqueiros created a mural in the Library of the School Mexico of the city Concepción in southern Chile. Back in Mexico in 1942 he founded the Center of Modern Realist Art. The exhibition of "Seventy Recent Artworks" took place five years at the Palace of Fine Arts. The Mexican government sentenced him in 1962 to eight years in prison for promoting extreme left-wing student riots; but he only served two years being pardoned on account of services rendered to the nation. After his release he created one of his largest artworks, "March of Humanity", mounted on 4,500 square meters of hinged panels. He also painted "From the Dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz to the Revolution", in the Museum of Natural History in Mexico City. Worth of special mention also are such important works as "Accident in the Mine"(1931); "The Great Colonel"(1945); "New Democracy" (1945) and "The Torment of Cuauhtémoc" (1950).

In 1966 he was awarded the National Prize for Arts of Mexico and the Lenin Peace Prize. He died on 6 January 1974 in Cuernavaca and was inhumed and then deposited to rest in the Rotunda of Illustrious Persons. The Presidential Decree of 18 July 1980 declared his artwork National Patrimony of the Arts, thus proving that his art -the "art of a painter of the people" - had been recognized as such.