



Diego Rivera - Detroit Industry Murals
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Name of Property: The *Detroit Industry* Murals, Detroit Institute of Arts
City, State: Detroit, Michigan
Period of Significance: 1932-1933
NHL Criteria: 1 and 2
NHL Theme: III. Expressing Cultural Values
 1. Educational and Intellectual Currents
 2. Visual and Performing Arts
 IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
 1. Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories
Previous Recognition: 1983 Cultural Center Historic District, National Register
National Historic Context: American Latino Heritage Initiative
 Painting and Sculpture Theme Study Workshop, June 10-14, 1991
 U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
 XXIV. Painting and Sculpture
 I. The Second Generation, 1920-
 K. Supporting Institutions

NHL Significance:

- Between July 1932 and March 1933, Diego Rivera, a premier leader in the 1920s Mexican Mural Movement, executed the United States’ finest, modern monumental artwork devoted to industry. The *Detroit Industry* mural cycle depicts the City of Detroit’s manufacturing base and labor force on all four walls of the Detroit Institute of



Detroit Industry Murals

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Art's garden court, since renamed the Diego Court.

- As Rivera's greatest work in the United States, *Detroit Industry* is an exemplary representation of the introduction and emergence of Mexican mural art in the United States between the Depression and World War II.
- Rivera's technique for painting frescoes, his portrayal of American life on public buildings, and the 1920s Mexican mural program itself, directly influenced President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal mural programs.

Integrity:

- The *Detroit Industry* frescoes retain a high degree of integrity despite a period of neglect that resulted in a lack of professional care. In 1987 and 1988, mural cleaning, under the guidance of the Institute's Conservation Services Laboratory and two of Rivera's former assistants (Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff), revealed that the frescoes were in remarkably good condition.
- In the late 1980s, the courtyard skylight was renovated, the fountain removed, and the terrazzo floor replaced with ceramic tile matching the original floor in the adjacent Great Hall. These changes yield a slightly more contemporary courtyard, however, the majority of the courtyard's essential physical features—the murals, skylights, and the architectural detailing that actually define the frescoes' panel sizes—are intact.
- No changes have been made to the lobby or the Great Hall leading to the courtyard. The building is in its original location and maintains its feeling as a 1927 Beaux-Arts public

building despite the later addition of north and south wings, which are set back from the building façade.

Owner of Property: City of Detroit

Acreage of Property: 16 acres

Origins of Nomination: This nomination was written under the American Latino Heritage Initiative. Funding for this nomination was provided by the American Latino Heritage Fund of the National Park Foundation.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Designation of these murals will raise awareness of the contribution of a major twentieth-century Mexican artist to the art and culture of the United States.
- NHL designation could assist in the ongoing preservation of the murals.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Mills moved, Dr. Allan seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 04/05/13):

Resolution Supporting The Nomination of the Diego Rivera Mural “Detroit Industry” to Be a National Historic Landmark, City of Detroit, Michigan

Advisory Board Recommendation: