

THE EPIC OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION MURALS, BAKER LIBRARY

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: *The Epic of American Civilization Murals, Baker Library, Dartmouth College*

Other Name/Site Number: Baker-Berry Library

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 6025 Baker-Berry Library

Not for publication:

City/Town: Hanover

Vicinity:

State: NH County: Grafton Code: 009

Zip Code: 03755

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: ___

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: ___

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

___ buildings

___ sites

___ structures

___ objects

___ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Education Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Library Work of art: mural
Current:	Education Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Library Work of art: mural

7. DESCRIPTIONARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th century and early 20th century revivals: Colonial Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Stone
Walls:	Brick
Roof:	Metal
Other:	Wood

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Summary

Painted as true fresco in 1932-34, the Epic of American Civilization” is nationally significant not only as an individual work of art but also as one of the more important works of art created during the early twentieth century. In this fresco, Orozco was reacting to the horrors of World War I and the Mexican Civil War in a vision that portrayed the negative impacts of nationalism and the rapid pace of industrialization on the human spirit. The prescient nature of this mural anticipated the rise of militaristic ideologies leading to World War II. At the same time, he was a major figure in bringing Mexican art and culture to the forefront of North American artistic consciousness, leading to the mural movement of the New Deal. The location of these frescos in a New England College that had originally been founded to educate Native Americans was intentional as Orozco sought to develop a vision of America which highlighted “two cultural currents, the indigenous and the European.” The Epic of American Civilization, Orozco argued, was intended to reflect “an American idea developed into American forms, American feeling, and as a consequence into an American style.”¹

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**Baker Library and the Dartmouth College Quadrangle**

Baker Library is in the historic center of Dartmouth College at the end of a long open quadrangle known as the Green. At the south end of the Green is Hanover’s central business district. Wheelock Street, on the south end of the Green, separates the campus and the central business district. College Street and North Main Street constitute the east and west sides of the Green, while Wentworth Street marks the north end. The earliest surviving campus buildings occupy an elevated site overlooking College Street on the east side of the Green. Prior to the construction of Baker Library, the north end of the Green consisted of an accretion of buildings. A church, two houses and the old Butterfield Museum cluttered the vista looking north. To this group was added a product of the first effort at master planning, Webster Memorial Hall. This neoclassical building, (now Rauner Library) was completed in 1907 and is the only earlier structure that still stands at the north end of the Green, partially blocking Baker’s commanding visual presence in the heart of the campus.

Baker Library is connected to Sanborn House, built for the English department, and Carpenter Hall, built for the fine arts department. All were designed by Jens Frederick Larson (1891-1982), then the Dartmouth College architect. Larson’s work at Dartmouth launched his career as an independent architect who specialized in college campus designs based upon traditional Georgian Revival style architecture.² Thus while Baker is architecturally distinct, it is part of an ensemble of buildings by Jens Larson. Both Carpenter and Sanborn were completed in 1929 and face North Main Street on the west side of Baker Library. Sanborn is connected to Baker by a brick arcade, while Carpenter is joined by a two-story wing. In a hallway of that connecting wing is the first fresco José Orozco designed for the college.

Exterior

As the setting for the murals, only the original portion of Baker Library and a hallway of the wing to Carpenter Hall are included in the nomination. The H-shaped design of Baker Library consists of a center section with a clock tower, a design patterned on Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The façade and flanking wings embrace Baker Lawn, an open extension of the Green that reinforces Baker’s position as the principal landmark in the center of the campus. Baker Library is faced with red brick and four stories high with a five-stage clock tower

¹ José Orozco quoted in Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists; Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, 100.

² Thomas C. Jester, “Jens F. Larson 1891-1982”. *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine*, Vol. VI, 1991. An occasional series published by Maine Citizens for Historic Preservation.

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constructed of wood above the first stage. The windows are large with multi-pane lights. The main entrance through the base of the clock tower is surmounted by a Palladian window. Subsidiary entrances, also surmounted by Palladian windows, are located in the two flanking wings on the facades facing North Main and College streets. The center section has gable roofs covered with standing seam metal while the two wings have flat roofs hidden by low parapets. The enclosed corridor between Carpenter and Baker also has a flat roof and large windows with multi-pane lights. While this connector is still visually distinct, the rear sections of Baker and Carpenter have been significantly subsumed by major additions.

On the north end of Baker Library are large additions that were designed so as not to impact the architectural integrity of the south, east and west elevations. In 1941 the rear of the H was filled with space for stack expansion. Subsequent additions in 1957-58 and 1967 (Berry Library) did not extend to the east and west beyond the flanking wings of Baker Library. The final addition in 2000-02 (Carson Hall) formed a long rectangular wing that terminates the extensions formed by the earlier additions. For Baker Library, the primary façade facing the Green, as well as the north and south elevations of the perpendicular wings, remain visually intact as originally designed.

Interior Plan

The long center section of the building features grand reading rooms on two levels. The perpendicular wings contain reading rooms and offices. As described in a guidebook on the campus architecture, Baker Hall “is an undergraduate research library in the form of an English country house, supplying everything that students will find useful for a liberal education—from open stacks to comfortable armchairs to memorializations of students of the past.”³ The entrance vestibule at the base of the clock tower leads directly into the first story hall. This space is elaborately finished with Georgian Revival style woodwork and plaster moldings. This rectangular space is directly above the Reserve Book Reading Room, located in the basement. Accessed by functionally designed staircases in the east and west wing of Baker, the Reserve Book Reading Room is the location for The “Epic of American Civilization” murals by José Clemente Orozco.

The Orozco murals are true fresco, that is, painted on new wet plaster (after having removed the plaster only recently constructed when Baker Library was finished).⁴ Art critic E.M. Benson, writing when the work was partially finished, noted that the murals are part of the structure. “The fresco muralist works in a technique that prohibits revisions after his colors have dried into the damp plaster base; he is dealing with large surfaces that are structural components of the interior architecture. The graphic pattern underlying the plastic one must therefore be simplified or a conflict is set up between the mural and the confining spatial area of the room.” Benson then analyzed the work in terms of the manner in which the composition conformed to the space of the Reserve Reading Room.⁵ In painting the murals, Orozco adopted his own style and experimented with the different panels. Although he was assisted by artist Leo Katz, the composition is entirely the work of Orozco.

The Epic of American Civilization

A preliminary fresco, which is part of this nomination, is a small panel above a doorway in the original hallway that connected Baker Library with Carpenter Hall. Called “Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life,” this was Orozco’s first work at Dartmouth and was begun before the idea of a larger work in Baker Library had been decided upon. According to a press release issued by the artist on May 25 1932, the fresco

³ Scott Meacham, *Dartmouth College An Architectural Tour* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 51.

⁴ In a short article written several years later, Orozco described his own technique for frescos. “Orozco Explains”, *Bulletin, New York Museum of Modern Art*, Vol. VIII, August 1940.

⁵ E.M. Benson, “Orozco in New England,” *The American Magazine of Art*. Vol. 26, no. 10, October 1933, 449.

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“represents man emerging from a heap of destructive machinery symbolizing slavery, automatism, and the converting of a human being into a robot, without brain, heart, or free will, under the control of another machine. Man is now shown in command of his own hands and he is at last free to shape his own destiny.”⁶

While this panel serves as an introduction to the larger work, its location in a basement hallway, partially obscured by a lowered ceiling height as you approach from Carpenter Hall, diminishes its impact as the artist’s first design for Dartmouth. Access from this hall is through one of several doors that provide access to the Reserve Book Reading Room. Thus, while this first panel is in relatively close proximity to the rest of the murals, its location is not readily apparent to visitors in Baker Library.

The Orozco murals that form The Epic of American Civilization occupy all four walls in the Reserve Book Reading Room, although the principal body of the work is on the north wall and extends 150 feet. As there is no central entrance to this space, one can enter from multiple entrances, both single and double doors. The entire space is primarily lighted by two banks of basement windows on the south wall with deep window wells that provide considerable natural light. In the center on the north wall is the book delivery desk. This desk divides the murals on the north wall in two sections, and Orozco took advantage of that division to provide a logical break in the narrative. In the words of one scholar, “His use of sequential images forms a loose chronology of events.” While he “brilliantly unifies past with present,” he was not portraying a heroic struggle. “The unity that Orozco creates is that of a mirror in which events of the past reflect themselves in the present and vice versa.”⁷

While there is no single formal entrance to view to murals, they do have a logical progression that begins on the west wall. Flanking double doors on the west wall are the panels, “Migration” and “Ancient Human Sacrifice.” Above the doors is a small rectangular panel, “Snakes and Spears.” In Migration the panel is filled with human figures representing the first peoples on the American continent. Ancient Human Sacrifice provides a grisly scene that represents the dark spirits that can motivate civilization. Snakes and Spears add appropriate symbolism to that theme.

The long north wall begins with “Aztec Warriors,” representing the martial society that characterized the Aztec Civilization. Acknowledging this side, Orozco’s next panel is “Coming of Quetzalcoatl,” representing the positive influence of the traditional Aztec deity. With no accepted figural representation, Orozco followed legend and interpreted him as a bearded, blue eyed, white robed figure not unlike a traditional deity of Western Civilization. This leads to “The Pre-Columbian Golden Age,” the height of civilization before the arrival of Europeans. The third panel on this wall, equally large as the previous two, is “Departure of Quetzalcoatl” and this image, marking a decline of civilization, suggests that the Aztec spirit was also in decline before the arrival of the Spanish *conquistador* Hernando Cortez.

Aztec tradition prophesized the return of Quetzalcoatl and in a small panel that completes the west half of the north wall Orozco provides “The Prophecy.” Anticipating the baleful consequences of the Aztecs’ failure to recognize the threat in Cortez, this panel shows the arrival of Christianity armed with horses and armor, both unknown to the Aztecs.

A link to the east and west halves is provided by two twin panels, “Totem Poles” on one side and “Machine Totems” on the other.

⁶ Cited in Jacquelynn Baas, “The Epic of American Civilization: The Murals of Dartmouth College 1932-1934,” Niles Nadeau, editor *Orozco At Dartmouth College The Epic of American Civilization* (Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College/Dartmouth College Library: Dartmouth, 2007), 5.

⁷ Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros* (London: Laurence King, 1993), 105.

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The eastern half of the north wall begins with "Cortez and the Cross." Here is a traditional image with Hernando Cortez at the center, matched in size only by a large cross. The famous burning of his ships in the background and dead bodies convey the appropriate image of relentless conquest.

The panels up to this point conform to traditional Western views of Aztec Civilization. The next panels challenged everything Americans held dear. "The Machine," which contains no human figures, is, in the words of Lewis Mumford, "mechanistic hell" and warns that technology will not save the human spirit. Human figures dominate the next two panels, "Anglo-America" and "Hispano-America." The former is a negative view of traditional views of New England, dominated as it is by a female school teacher who seems to demand conformity from the children, supported by the adults in the background. The second panel acknowledges the horrific oppression brought to Mexico by wealthy capitalists, supported by the military and the church.

The images become more disturbing with "Gods of the Modern World," academia in the form of skeletal figures presiding over the birth of dead ideas. The small panel that ends this wall, "Symbols of Nationalism," drives home the point by representing the militaristic basis of many nationalistic movements.

Turning the corner on the east wall there are two panels flanking the double doors. "Modern Human Sacrifice" is the contemporary counterpart to Ancient Human Sacrifice on the opposite wall. Here the figure of the unknown soldier is surrounded by flags, politicians, and monuments. The "Modern Migration of the Spirit" is the rise of a Christ-like figure, but standing over a broken cross, a rejection of formal religion.

On the south wall there is a respite, anti-climactic in some respects. With windows along this wall, there is less room but Orozco's three panels show man working with civilization, the dominant figure being a reclining man reading with a steel building under construction in the background. Orozco does not provide a rejection of civilization, but refuses to promote utopia.

Integrity

The murals have been well maintained by Dartmouth College since their completion. In the summer of 1968 they underwent a substantial cleaning by Oliver Brothers of Boston. The cleaning included minor repairs to fill small holes and cracks, and the coating of the entire work with a light spray of polyvinyl acetate. By this time curatorial responsibility had been transferred from the library to the Hood Art Museum. The murals continue to be maintained with a high degree of integrity.

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Summary Statement of Significance

“The Epic of American Civilization,” located in Baker Library of Dartmouth College, is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 as an exemplary representation of the introduction and emergence of Mexican mural art into the United States. Commissioned in 1932 and completed in 1934, The Epic of American Civilization has been characterized by art historians as “a pivotal work in the career of one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century,” José Clemente Orozco. Although a Mexican national, Orozco spent considerable time in the United States. Along with Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, Orozco was at the forefront of a movement in which “civic boosters and arts patrons from California to New York commissioned Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco to bring their varied mural styles to the United States---eventually inspiring the New Deal arts programs of the Roosevelt Administration.”⁸ While the works of Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros were very much products of Mexico and the Mexican Revolution, “supporters of the Federal Arts Project looked to the Mexican mural movement as a model for a new democratic, radical art.” During the late 1920s and 1930s, the “nationalistic imagery [used by these three artists] captured the imagination of the art-viewing American public.”⁹

The commissioning of works by these Mexican artists coincided “with a broader popular fascination with Mexican culture” in America; as scholars have noted, “of all Latin American countries, Mexico has long dominated the American imagination for reasons political and cultural.”¹⁰ During the first few decades of the twentieth century, “scorn and condescension gave way to romantic awe” as “critics extolled both Indian art and...Mexican art” seeing in these traditions elements that might “restore an authentic ‘American Rhythm.’”¹¹ The reasons for these shifting perceptions of Mexico, Mexican culture, and its ties to America are varied and reflect the economic and political tensions of the 1920s and 1930s in the United States; American intellectuals’ fascination with the Mexican Revolution; and even the relatively recent absorption of new territories, with large Latino or Hispanic populations, into the United States. More broadly speaking, this period also witnessed the emergence of a gradual shift in how Americans perceived of themselves and their traditions. Although Spain’s long tenure as a colonial power in North America greatly shaped American culture as well as America’s relations with Mexico and other Latin American nations, perceptions of Hispanic influence and culture had been overwhelmingly negative throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and Americans had often downplayed the cultural ties and connections between the United States and Latin America. This “unique complex of pejoratives that historians from Spain came to call the Black Legend, *la leyenda negra*”¹² began to shift during the early twentieth century. While many Americans continued to view Mexico, Mexican culture, and American citizens of Mexican descent through a negative lens, this shift paved the way for a more complex and nuanced understanding of both the legacy of America’s connections with Latin America, specifically Mexico and the ongoing connections between these two countries.

Painted as true fresco in 1932-34, the Epic of American Civilization” is nationally significant not only as an individual work of art but also as one of the more important works of art created during the early twentieth century. In this fresco, “Orozco wished to confront not a specifically national history so much as a North American one.”¹³ The location of these frescos in a New England College that had originally been founded to educate Native Americans was intentional as Orozco sought to develop a vision of America which highlighted “two cultural currents, the indigenous and the European.” The Epic of American Civilization, Orozco argued,

⁸ *Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Orozco*, 3-5.

⁹ Anna Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco*, 1.

¹⁰ Anna Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco*, 1.

¹¹ Frederick B. Pike, “Latin America and the Inversion of United States Stereotypes in the 1920s and 1930s: The Case of Culture and Nature,” in *The Americas*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (October 1985), 137-138.

¹² David J. Weber, “The Spanish Legacy in North America and the Historical Imagination,” *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (February 1992), 6-7.

¹³ Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, 100.

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was intended to reflect “an American idea developed into American forms, American feeling, and as a consequence into an American style.”¹⁴

The murals are located on the walls of the Reserved Reading Room of Baker Library in Dartmouth College where they are seen by virtually every student, as well as visitors to this institution. Administered by the Hood Museum of Art, the murals and their setting in Baker Library retain a high degree of integrity and represent one of the most important artistic contributions by a Mexican artist in this country.

José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949)

Born in Zapatan, Mexico in 1883, José Orozco received his artistic education in Mexico City. After losing his left hand in an accident, Orozco gave up the study of architecture and, in 1906, entered the Academy of San Carlos to study painting. While a student he set up a studio in the city where his subject matter typically featured images of the life of the lower class. Orozco’s schooling coincided with the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. This protracted, bloody struggle had a profound impact on Orozco and his work. Although he was not ideologically committed to a particular political movement, his experiences during the Civil War are connected to the images of death that figure prominently in his work.¹⁵ While he opposed the Diaz dictatorship, Orozco did not believe in the democratic pretensions of the new president, Francisco Madero. He criticized the Madero regime through “social cartoons.” During the internecine struggles that followed the assassination of Madero in 1913, Orozco did not support revolutionaries like Poncho Villa or Emiliano Zapata. This distinction is significant in that his work features images highly critical of contemporary social orders, but does not suggest solutions through ideological struggle.¹⁶

As one scholar has argued, Orozco’s style of painting had its roots in the Mexican tradition of graphic art, which was directly tied to his published drawings during this period. In 1910 Orozco was editor of *Testerazos*, and soon after produced zinc relief etchings for *El Ahuizote*. While some of his prints directly attacked the Madero regime, works such as “Free Press” and “Mexican Suffrage,” challenged the lack of democracy in Mexico regardless of who was in power.¹⁷

Between 1916 and 1919, while the Civil War was still underway, Orozco lived in the United States. This was his first trip to America and he went first to San Francisco where he designed movie posters for income. He then spent time in New York City, living with Mexican artists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros and Juan Olaguibel. He returned to Mexico at a time when the Civil War was ending. This is usually marked with the election of Alvaro Obregon president in 1920.

The Mexican Muralists

José Vasconcelos, the new Secretary of State for Public Education, initiated what has been called the Mexican mural movement by commissioning artists to paint public murals. The art produced in Mexico in the next decades contrasted with public art produced by totalitarian regimes in Italy, the Soviet Union, and later Germany. Mexico had no imperialistic ambitions and there was no cult of personality. Instead, in Mexico a revolutionary nationalism nurtured the work of native artists who followed their own visions. These Mexican

¹⁴ José Orozco quoted in Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists; Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, 100.

¹⁵ Jacquelynn Baas “Dartmouth College and The Epic of American Civilization,” op. cit., 144.

¹⁶ Renato González Melo “Orozco in the United States: An Essay on the History of Ideas,” Renato González Melo and Diane Miliotes, editors, *José Clemente Orozco in the United States, 1927-1934* (New York: Hood Museum of Art/Dartmouth College and W.W. Norton, 2002) ,23-25.

¹⁷ Joyce Waddell Bailey, “José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949): Formative Years in the Narrative Graphic Tradition,” *Latin Studies Research Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1980), 73-93.

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muralists were not, however, completely divorced from Mexican society or politics as their work was created for the public and showcased in public spaces where it could not be moved.

In both Mexico and the United States, government-sponsored art preserved artistic freedom without major upheavals to the existing social order. According to scholars, the genesis of the New Deal mural programs originated in a letter from the artist George Biddle to Franklin Roosevelt in May 1932. Biddle noted that, "The Mexican artists have produced the greatest national school of mural painting since the Italian Renaissance."¹⁸ This influence also explains why Americans commissioned three Mexican artists known as *los tres grandes* and widely considered the leading practitioners of this art form---Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros and José Orozco---to construct various works of art during this period. Scholars believe that the art work of these Mexican artists and the Mexican mural tradition influenced work sponsored by the Federal Art Project in America.¹⁹ The absence of an American tradition of mural art has meant that the influence of Mexican artists is significant.

Upon returning to Mexico, Orozco developed what has been termed "revolutionary themed" murals, drawings, and oil paintings. Orozco was not, however, a radical in the manner of his contemporary Diego Rivera. In fact, although his political views were not evident in his art, he essentially had a conservative temperament. Rather than simply challenging existing political norms, Orozco's art challenged everything and, in the process, often antagonized sponsors. In 1923-1924, for example, Orozco was commissioned to paint murals for the National Preparatory School where he also taught. Once his patron Secretary Vasconcelos left office, Orozco's unconventional approach led to his dismissal before the murals were completed. Although the Civil War had ended, the tension between the conservative power structure and revolutionary ideals remained.

While living in Mexico during this period, Orozco met Anita Brenner. The daughter of an Eastern European Jewish émigré who was raised in Mexico and Texas, Brenner was a great promoter of native artists. Her support led to the publication of Orozco's *The Horrors of Revolution*, a collection of drawings that had a very obvious parallel to Goya's "Disasters of War" in its portrayal of atrocities.²⁰

Orozco and Dartmouth College

Orozco returned to the United States for a prolonged second stay in December, 1928. His artistic philosophy was expressed in his 1929 book, *Creative Art* in which he promoted a new art in mural paintings rather than slavishly copying either European culture and drawings, or native Mexican traditions.²¹ In addition to Anita Brenner, he came to know another promoter of Mexican art, Alma Reed. Reed became Orozco's *de facto* agent. He also became involved in the Delphic Circle, an international artistic salon run by Eva Sikelianos. Members included Dartmouth professor Artemus Packard. In 1942 Packard would have a book published by the Delphic Society that promoted efforts to engage the common man in fine arts.

In 1930 Orozco began the first of three mural projects he would complete in the United States. This was a mural called "Prometheus" painted for the dining hall at Pomona College in California. It was also the first mural project by any Mexican artist in America. The painting consisted of a decorated niche, 10x28.5 and featured a central panel, side panels, and a ceiling panel. This was followed by murals for the dining hall in the New School for Social Research in New York City. Completed in the New School building in January, 1931,

¹⁸ Karal Ann Marling *Wall-to-Wall America A Cultural History of Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 31. Biddle produced his own mural, "Society Freed Through Justice," painted in the Department of Justice Building in Washington, D.C. in 1935.

¹⁹ Leonard Folgaroit . *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1998), 2-9.

²⁰ Melo, *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, 29.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 35

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these murals were based upon the theme of universal brotherhood. There were four panels in a room 30.7x32. Although the work included an image of Lenin, this mural was viewed as less threatening than Diego Rivera's image of Lenin in his Rockefeller Center painting, which was seen as a direct affront to the Rockefeller family and was destroyed before it was completed.

Orozco was hired for the Dartmouth murals at the same time that Rivera was at work on his "Detroit Industry" mural in Michigan. Rivera was much better known than Orozco, and he was considered for the Dartmouth murals as well. Upon completion of Carpenter Hall at Dartmouth in 1929, the chairman of the art department, Artemas S. Packard, and faculty member Churchill P. Lathrop began planning ways to hire either Rivera or Orozco to paint murals in their new arts building. The consideration of two Mexican painters with radical reputations for permanent work in the very traditional architecture of the new buildings at Dartmouth was a surprise to many. President Hopkins articulated a less sanguine rationale in a communication to the college treasurer:

You doubtless have heard that we are bringing the latest sensation in mural painters, or at least one of the two latest sensations, to Hanover in the person of Orozco. I have offered to utilize \$500 of the Rockefeller tutorial money to pay for his presence, partly because he may be that useful to the Department of Art and partly because of Mrs. Rockefeller's enthusiasm about these two Mexicans."²²

Carpenter Hall, the site of the first panel, and Baker Library were designed by Jens Frederick Larson, a Boston architect who had established a reputation for very traditional college campus design. Larson's career as an architect had begun in 1919 when he was hired by Dartmouth as an architect in residence. For several years Larson maintained a partnership with Harry Wells, the superintendent of buildings and grounds. In 1926, Larson was hired as an instructor in modern art and architecture at the college. Larson was hired to design Baker Library (1926-1928), Sanborn Hall (1927-1928), and Carpenter Hall (1928-1929). These buildings are designed in the Georgian Revival style that became Larson's specialty.²³

College president Ernest M. Hopkins, who would be a steadfast supporter of the mural project, articulated what was probably an important factor for supporting Orozco personally over Rivera. In a letter defending the decision to select Orozco, Hopkins indicated that a member of the school's Board of Trustees even visited Mexico to inquire about the two painters. Hopkins stated that Rivera was "one of the kings of the racketeers" characterizing him "as sensationalist, and [one who] actually makes big money by the controversies which he arouses. Orozco, on the other hand, is sweet, gentle, and unacquisitive [*sic*]; convinced that the world needs betterment, but entirely unwilling to ascribe individual responsibility or collective responsibility to any group for the fact that we do not improve faster than we have done."²⁴

The choice of Orozco was also supported by American artists, including Thomas Hart Benton. Benton, who had completed his own mural cycle, "The American Historical Epic" in 1924, had visited Dartmouth when he recommended Orozco. Benton had also produced a mural for the New School, "America Today" in 1930. Benton's work, in fact, contrasted with Orozco's in that the former is, in the words of one scholar, an "anti-epic" that portrayed the life of the common man.²⁵ Benton's later murals in the Missouri State House also

²² Hopkins to Hasley Edgerton, April 28, 1932. Cited in Laurance P. Hurlburt *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 57.

²³ Thomas C. Jester, "Jens F. Larson 1891-1982", op. cit. Larson designed the entire new campus at Colby College in Waterville, Maine following beginning in 1930.

²⁴ Hopkins to Roy F. Bergenren, June 29, 1933. Cited in Jacquelynn Baas, "The Epic of American Civilization", 348 fn. 18.

²⁵ Baas, "The Epic of American Civilization", 145-146. Benton's mural is in the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri.

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illustrate this contrast. In 1935-1936 Benton painted "The Social History of the State of Missouri" in which he chronicled important events and people in the history of the state. Although this work was controversial as well, this controversy stemmed simply from the fact that Benton included historical events and personages that many people in Missouri would have preferred to forget.

Orozco felt that Dartmouth College was an appropriate setting for a mural on American civilization because the college was founded to educate Indians and was, therefore, part of the long story of interaction between the native peoples and Western civilization.²⁶ Orozco's intent was to examine and contrast the impact of two civilizations on the North American continent. Alma Reed acted as a *de facto* agent for Orozco in negotiations with Professor Packard.

But even after Orozco had been selected, there were difficulties in raising funds. When the painter offered to travel to Dartmouth at his own expense to discuss the scope of the project, faculty members hit upon the idea to hire him as a guest lecturer; he would demonstrate the art of fresco painting on a small panel. In what turned out to be the first panel at Dartmouth, Orozco painted "Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life" in March 1932. This panel is in a corridor of Carpenter Hall, the Art Department. During this first visit Orozco saw the basement room in the adjoining Baker Library. This room had what Orozco termed the "walls of my dreams." Following Orozco's visit and with the support of librarian Nathaniel Gadish, funding was obtained for a large work to be located in the reserve room of Baker Library. The initial contract with Orozco was for \$5,200, which included travel expenses and room and board. With the expansion of the scope of work, he was eventually paid \$10,000. Although almost twice the original contract, this was much less than what Diego Rivera could command (although Rivera's clients were in the private sector).²⁷

While these changes in the projected scope of work were being made, Orozco embarked upon a three month trip to Europe, his first and only trip to that continent. Orozco was most interested in seeing the frescoes at Pompeii and the work of El Greco.²⁸ However, in Europe Orozco witnessed the effects of World War I on the population, particularly the many maimed soldiers throughout Europe. He also witnessed the rise of fascist movements and their militant ideology.

Work began in the fall of 1932 and was completed on February 14, 1934. Notice of this project was picked up in the regional newspapers as early as May 1932. The *Boston Evening Transcript* featured a photograph of the first mural in Carpenter Hall, along with a two-column account. In this account the writer commented that since coming to America, Orozco's work "has weakened, for its message is no longer as vital." This view, however, was based upon the single test panel in Carpenter Hall that few found objectionable.²⁹ Early public accounts of the mural project generated response from the Dartmouth College community. When Matt B. Jones of Boston wrote to say that murals by a Mexican artist, regardless of the nature of the composition, would be as out of place in Baker Library as they would have been in an old Colonial American church, librarian Nathaniel Gadish replied that the Reserve Reading Room was a plain space with no architectural detail, and, therefore, the murals

²⁶ Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States*, 62.

²⁷ Orozco's own feelings toward Rivera were those of a competitor, and in deference to him the amount he was paid was not heavily publicized. Baas, "The Epic of American Civilization", 159-160.

²⁸ Baas, "The Epic of American Civilization", 150-155. According to his autobiography, Orozco was particularly impressed by the frescos at Pompeii, and the work of El Greco. Cited in Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States*, 78.

²⁹ Albert Franz Cochrane, "Dartmouth Assigns Mexican 'Artist of the Revolution' to Do Largest Fresco", *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 25, 1932, 4. A similar notice was provided in a major New York art magazine. "A Vast Fresco", *The Art Digest* June 1, 1932, p.5. There was also negative reaction to the hiring of a foreign artist over an American. This was articulated by the National Commission to Advance American Art, a group formed largely from membership to the American Academy of Design. See "Dartmouth Scored in Alien Art Row", *New York Times*, June 10, 1933, 15. In opposition to this view, the Society of Independent Artists was formed. *New York Times*, June 11, 1933, 7.

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would not be out of place. Gadish also rejected the notion that Orozco should not be hired for an American building. "Orozco, after all, is," Gadish insisted, "an American rather than a European, both in birth and training, which has been true of relatively few of our artists. His work is intensely American. His idea for our mural is the meeting and fusing of European and American (Indian) cultures, and the possible outcome."³⁰ The fact that the murals were potentially controversial, both for the expense involved and the hiring of a non-American artist, prompted the college to release a pamphlet, "Orozco at Dartmouth A Symposium" in May 1933.³¹

A few months later, in October 1933, E. M. Benson provided a descriptive account of the undertaking in a Washington, D.C. art journal, although at that point only the early panels that deal primarily with Aztec civilization had been completed.³² Similarly, Albert Franz Cochrane of the *Boston Transcript* followed up his earlier account with a visit to the work in progress and an interview with Orozco. The artist maintained a distinction between art and propaganda, stating that the latter is literature found in the written word. Art, in contrast, exists only in the mind of the viewer. Cochrane did not accept this distinction, but granted Orozco's sincerity. Significantly, the murals had progressed as far as a partial completion of one of the most controversial panels, "Anglo America" with its image of New England. Cochrane found this particular view distorted and was convinced Orozco would repaint it.³³

Upon completion of the murals in February 1934 Edward Alden Jewell of *The New York Times* wrote a long review. Although not a detailed account, Jewell concluded that "These murals are instinct with genius and, again all things considered, they represent, very possibly, the finest mural accomplishment to date, from any hand, in the United States."³⁴ Over the next several months, entirely different reactions, public and private, poured in.

President Hopkins stated that "there is nothing regarding College policies nor College actions that has aroused the bitterness of controversy or made the College the recipient of vitriolic comment as these murals have."³⁵ Indeed, Hopkins had to cope with criticism before the work was completed with at least one alumnus sending his son to another school. In a letter received in June 1932, the murals were condemned for their content as well as for being inimical to the Georgian Revival style architecture.³⁶ Hopkins' initial defense was that the murals were a "pure and unadulterated piece of demonstration of our students."³⁷ Later, Hopkins responded with a ringing defense of artistic freedom.³⁸

The *Boston Evening Transcript* published an article by Dr. George Van Ness Dearborn, "an eminent neuropsychiatrist" on the "Academic Education" panel and its "probable effects on the minds of youthful students of the rather gruesome panel ridiculing education by depicting it being still-born form [of] a skeleton attended by other skeletons clothed in academic robes." In a second long letter to the newspaper, Dr. Dearborn was even more disturbed by the "Modern Human Sacrifice" panel that he described as "an outrage which this un-American Mexican gentleman imposes on a long-suffering world as 'art.'" In this instance he felt the panel

³⁰ Nathaniel Gadish to Matt B. Jones, June 3, 1932, Dartmouth College Archives, DL-34.

³¹ Kimball Flaccus, editor, "Orozco at Dartmouth A Symposium". Kimball Flaccus, editor. Hanover, New Hampshire: The Arts Press, 1933.

³² Benson, "Orozco in New England," *The American Magazine of Art*.

³³ Albert Franz Cochrane, "Orozco the Mexican in Dartmouth Hall," *The Boston Evening Transcript*, November 4, 1933, 8.

³⁴ Edward Alden Jewell "Vast Epic: Civilization in the Western World", *The New York Times*, February 25, 1934, 12.

³⁵ Cited in Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists*, 85.

³⁶ Clarence McDavitt to Hopkins, June 14, 1932, Dartmouth College Archives. Cited Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists*, 58.

³⁷ Hopkins to McDavitt, June 16, 1932. Cited Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists*, 58

³⁸ Hopkins to Mrs. Franklin C. Lewis, March 8, 1934. Cited in Baas, "The Epic of American Civilization," 162.

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mocked the sacrifice of Allied soldiers in the Great War, stating that it did not portray truth or reality, but rather “destructive, subtle, propaganda tending toward Communism and chaos”.³⁹

A competing newspaper, *The Boston Sunday Post*, followed with a color spread that reproduced the most controversial panels under the title, “Bitter War over Dartmouth’s Murals.” While purporting a neutral view toward the murals, this reporter, like many, could not see beyond the images that seemed to attack everything most Americans held sacred.⁴⁰ Negative responses also came from the art world. When Dartmouth published a booklet, “The Orozco Frescoes at Dartmouth” with an introduction by the artist, a response was published in the New York magazine, *The Art Digest* by Harvey M. Watts. Orozco stressed that in his concept of art, there is always an idea, never a story. Watts, however, would have none of this, stating that, “through these murals a New England institution has allowed a Mexican painter to satirize English-speaking traditions, spiritual and educational and academic while forcing on the college the extremely tiresome traditions of an alien and somewhat abhorred civilization of the Toltec-Aztec cults.” The same journal excerpted defensive responses from the Dartmouth publication, stating that “The work is an epic interpretation of the constructive and destructive forces which have moulded the patterns of life on this continent. Choosing not to confine himself to the literal representation of historical incident, Orozco has concentrated vastly large meaning into pictorial symbols.”⁴¹

The most vigorous defense came from art and architectural critic Lewis Mumford who stated that “There is no doubt in my mind that we are confronted here with a major work of art: even the resistance and the agonized opposition it provokes bear evidence to this fact.” Mumford analyzed the murals and concluded that, “The evils of modern civilization constitute part of the reality that Orozco sought to express: better that we should see them than that they should take us unawares.”⁴²

The finished murals might have received even more publicity if they had not coincided with the destruction of the Rivera murals at Rockefeller Center. Once again, Rivera managed to become the primary focus of attention.

The Epic of Civilization Mural Cycle

Orozco articulated the thematic basis for his cycle in a statement published in the Dartmouth *Alumni Magazine* in November 1933. Rejecting a historical theme, he stated that his work interpreted the evolution of civilization in the northern hemisphere, employing the “living myth “of Quetzalcoatl as a symbol for the conflict between Europeans and indigenous civilizations impacted by European settlement.⁴³ The contrast with his earlier work at Paloma and the New School could not have been starker. For the Prometheus panel at Paloma, Orozco had painted a heroic figure who sacrifices himself for the good of mankind. At the New School his work had focused explicitly on the idea of the brotherhood of man and revolution. This approach was also reflected in his first panel at Dartmouth in Carpenter Hall where mankind is depicted as being saved from the destructive influence of mechanized society.⁴⁴

³⁹ *Boston Evening Transcript*, March 10, 1934, 8; April 14, 1934, 6.

⁴⁰ John F. Goggsell, “Bitter War over Dartmouth’s Murals,” *The Boston Sunday Post*, April 22, 1934, 3-4.

⁴¹ Harvey M. Watts, “Orozco’s ‘American Epic’ at Dartmouth Starts a Controversy”, *The Art Digest*, Vol. VIII, No 20, September 1, 1934. The same journal later commented on the Orozco murals invidiously by comparing them to thirteen panels by William Yarrow painted in the gymnasium at Princeton University. “A foreign artist usually fails to have our viewpoint...In Dartmouth College we find little if anything in the murals by Orozco to uplift and inspire American youth.” *The Art Digest*, March 15, 1935, 30.

⁴² Lewis Mumford, “Orozco in New England,” *The New Republic*, October 10, 1934, 231-235.

⁴³ Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists*, 61

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 58

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In contrast, the work at Baker Library offered little comfort to those who assumed the upward progress of civilization. The cycle begins on the west wall with two panels, “Ancient Human Migration” and “Ancient Human Sacrifice.” The former represents primeval humans advancing in the settlement of North America, while the latter portrays an early indigenous civilization in which the individual is sacrificed to the needs of the state. Along the north wall is the main part of the mural cycle, divided by a doorway into east and west sections.

The west section begins with “Aztec Warriors,” and the “Coming of Quetzalcoatl.” Quetzalcoatl had originated as a sea and wind divinity and then evolved to become a major deity for indigenous civilizations. Orozco chose to represent Quetzalcoatl in the image of a man in white, perhaps an intentional similarity to the Christian God. The panel called “The Pre-Columbian Golden Age” represents the height of indigenous civilization, while the “Departure of Quetzalcoatl” shows the decline of Toltec civilization in the tenth century and the rejection of Quetzalcoatl.⁴⁵

With “The Prophecy” Orozco created a powerful image of the European invasion with native peoples crushed by armored weapons and the use of horses, as well as a kind of weaponized cross. This is a prelude to the next panel, “Cortez and the Cross.” Cortez, whom the Indians mistakenly first believed to be the returned Quetzalcoatl, is shown as a powerful, unforgiving conqueror, again with the cross sharing the focus of attention. As one scholar has noted, this contrasts with a more sympathetic portrayal of Cortez by Orozco in his work at the Mexican Preparatory School in 1923-24. Flanking the conquest panel is “The Machine.” Writer Lewis Mumford viewed this in the most negative light: “He gives its glitter, its bulk, its automatism, its suppression of the personality, and even in the splintering metallic forms, the piercing whir and whine of machines in operation. There is not a single identifiable contrivance in the whole pattern: it is just cold metallic hell.”⁴⁶

The next two panels, “Anglo-America” and “Hispano-America” represent European and Latino societies, neither of which is depicted in a completely positive light. Although the former is shown as an ordered, peaceful society, it demands conformity. Orozco was not hostile to his New England hosts, but he understood the pressures of complacency and conformity. The Hispano-American panel reflects the long years of violence since Mexican independence. Only the Zapata-like figure of the peasant revolutionary offers an alternative to the rapacious attributes of modern society. “Gods of the Modern World” shows a world dominated as it is by men who destroy all they come into contact with in the name of religion and nationalism. According to Professor Packard, the artist described his apparent attack on academia, in a mural on the campus of one of America’s elite colleges, as “dead minds concentrating on futile things instead of live subjects.”⁴⁷ Over the adjacent doorway and the opposite doorway on the south wall are “Symbols of Nationalism” and “Chains of the Spirit.” These panels reinforce the images presented in the important panels on the east wall.

The east wall features two panels “Modern Human Sacrifice” and “Modern Migration of the Spirit.” The former reiterates the theme of modern sacrifice under the banner of nationalism. A background of band instruments, public speakers, and representational monuments suggest traditional responses to sacrifice are inadequate. The second panel shows the Quetzalcoatl/Christ figure rising above the baleful influences of civilization, implying that spiritual redemption is possible.

The major panel on the south, “Modern Industrial Man II,” offers ambivalent images of man coping with industrial civilization. One interpretation is that it conveys the potential for harmony between man and his material achievements. “It is left to the viewer, or to modern society more broadly, to work out the

⁴⁵ Ibid, 64-68

⁴⁶ Mumford, “Orozco in New England” Cited in Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists*, 71.

⁴⁷ *Boston Sunday Post*, April 22, 1934, cited in Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists*, 73.

accomplishments that might follow this new beginning. Painting against the didactic mural art in the 1930s, Orozco deliberately holds any easy utopianism in check without sacrificing hope.”⁴⁸

Return to Mexico and Influence on American Art

After returning to Mexico Orozco was invited to by the state government of Guadalajara to paint three large frescos in public buildings there. One is in the auditorium of the state university, the second in the state capitol, and the third in the state orphan asylum. These paintings have been called his greatest work.⁴⁹ He returned to the United States in 1940 at the invitation of the Museum of Modern Art to paint a fresco panel. Called “The Dive Bomber,” this work reiterated the theme of the human spirit oppressed by mechanized modernity.

The controversy over the Orozco murals abated by the end of the decade. This was noted in an article in *The Christian Science Monitor* published in 1941. “History has caught up with them. What Orozco depicted in 1932 seems no more brutal or horrifying than many of the cartoons and photographs to which we are subjected in the news today. In 1932, Orozco seemed unnecessarily sordid, unreasonably cynical. He would not accept the machine for its conservation of human energy and for the comforts and alleviations it bestowed: no, he was agitated by its more basic threat, a tyranny over mankind, degradation, and enslavement.”⁵⁰

Perhaps one important indication of a growing acceptance of the Orozco murals can be found in a travel brochure issued by the Esso Oil Company in 1941. Included among the sites recommended to the motorist touring New England is the “arresting and disturbing” murals at Dartmouth College.⁵¹ Since then a consensus has developed regarding the significance of this work. Following Orozco’s death in 1949, Justino Fernandez provided a Mexican perspective on Orozco’s work:

“He thought about and expressed the idea of the Conquest in terms of all mankind, not in terms of likes and dislikes, of equally discredited ideas of Spain or of the Indian; he saw from the meeting of diverse cultures as from a painful birth, there emerged a new world. He never played politics with this theme, for he was trying to see clearly the truth about ourselves, not to raise monuments to one group or another, so that his work becomes a monument to America.”⁵²

As early as 1940 the influence of Orozco on the American mural art of the New Deal was noted.⁵³ Although Orozco, as a Mexican national, was obviously not one of the artists associated with the Federal Arts Project (FAP), scholars have pointed to the creation of this program as being integrally related to the emergence and presence of *los tres grandes*—Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros—in America. During the FAP, hundreds of murals were produced for public buildings across the United States; while the work of these muralists varied widely reflecting a range of stylistic influences, the program’s genesis was rooted in the presence of these three artists in America. Unfortunately, in looking to the Mexican muralists for inspiration for the FAP, Biddle had ignored “the radically different political climate of the neighboring nation.”⁵⁴ The subversive nature of both

⁴⁸ Mary K. Coffey “An American Idea Myth, Indigeneity, and Violence in the Work of Orozco and Pollock”. *Men of Fire José Clemente Orozco and Jackson Pollock*. (Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, 2012), 28.

⁴⁹ Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists; Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros* (London: Laurence King, 1993), 111.

⁵⁰ Dorothy Adlow, “Decoration at Dartmouth Takes On New Significance,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 28, 1941, 10.

⁵¹ Colonial Esso “Road Atlas”, Vol. 8, No. 4, August 15-September 15, 1941, p. 4.

⁵² Justino Fernandez, “Orozco, Genius of America” *College Art Association*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter, 1949-1950, 143. This article was first published in *Cuadernos Americanos*, No. 6, 1949.

⁵³ James D. Egleston, “José Clemente Orozco”. *Parnassus*, November 1940, 6.

⁵⁴ Grey Brechin “Politics and Modernism: The Trial of the Rincon Murals,” in Paul Karlstrom, ed., *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900-1950* (University of California Press, p. 72-73. Within California, *Prometheus* was completed “despite

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Orozco's and Rivera's work was, according to Grey Brechin, sufficient to influence artists funded under the FAP.⁵⁵

The emergence of World War II re-shifted the focus of many of the projects sponsored by the FAP as artists were enlisted in a larger propaganda effort to promote patriotism and support the war effort. While the program formally ended midway through the war in 1943, muralism has continued to be an important art form in America. During the 1950s African American artists such as Charles Alston and John Biggers used this art form to explore issues relating to social and economic injustices; similarly, Latino communities have drawn on this tradition throughout the second half of the twentieth century to explore a variety of different social and political issues.

Comparable Properties:**Prometheus, California, José Clemente Orozco
Revolution and Universal Brotherhood, New York, José Clemente Orozco**

During his time in the United States, Orozco completed three murals---Prometheus at Pomona College, Revolution and Universal Brotherhood at the New School for Social Research and The Epic of American Civilization at Dartmouth College. Critics have agreed that of these three murals, The Epic of American Civilization was the grandest in terms of its scope and design.

While the murals Orozco completed at the New School for Social Research in 1931 were "the first example of Orozco engaging in an ideological dialogue with the cosmopolitan modern age using the mural form," scholars have assessed these murals as "awkward and rigidly conceived" and "by means his most important works."

The American Historical Epic, Thomas Hart Benton

Thomas Hart Benton is widely recognized as one of the important American muralists of the twentieth century and his work, in conjunction with the works of the Mexican muralists, is often linked to the creation of the FAP. One of Benton's most famous works, *The American Historical Epic*, explored a similar theme as Orozco's work, although from a radically different perspective.

Although often described as murals, this work was not created as a true fresco and, therefore, is outside the scope of eligibility as a National Historic Landmark.

Detroit Industry, Diego Rivera

Considered by both critics and Diego Rivera to be his most outstanding work in America, the *Detroit Industry* was created as a tribute to Detroit's labor force and manufacturing base. A true fresco, this property qualifies for eligibility as a National Historic Landmark and is currently being considered for nomination.

vigorous attacks by college trustees and local newspapers alarmed by what they perceived as their revolutionary content."

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 72-74. The destruction of Rivera's work by Rockefeller was at the forefront of this political agitation.

Tropical America, David Siqueiros

Street Meeting, David Siqueiros

During the 1930s, David Siqueiros created three murals in Los Angeles, California. Two of these were public murals on a par with those executed by Rivera, Benton, and Orozco both in terms of the theme, impact, and innovative techniques used.

Street Meeting was created on an exterior wall of the Chouinard Art School. For this work, Siqueiros developed a series of innovative techniques to combat rain and sunshine while ensuring that the paint could be applied to the concrete walls of the building. Completed in 1932, this work met with a mixed response. Although the work met with extensive criticism, the mural “allowed [Siqueiros] to incorporate a whole range of innovative techniques, materials, and methods into his working practices, some of which neither he nor other mural painters had used before.”⁵⁶

Created on an exterior wall of the Plaza Art Center in Los Angeles, *Tropical America* was Siqueiros’ second commission in the United States. Stretching over eighty feet long, this mural was located in the center of Los Angeles’ Mexican community. Drawing on the innovative practices Siqueiros had created with his first American mural (*Street Meeting*), Siqueiros created an overtly political mural reflecting “our land, our America, of undernourished natives, of enslaved Indians and Negroes...and as a symbol of the United States’ imperialism.”

Neither *Street Meeting* nor *Tropical America* has been maintained. *Street Meeting* may survive under layers of plaster, paint and tile, but no conservation efforts have been undertaken. *Tropical America* was covered in whitewash soon after it was completed. Since 1988 the City of Los Angeles and the Getty Museum have been working to “conserve, protect, interpret and present the mural to the public again”, and the work is scheduled to be completed in October 2012.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Mexican Muralists*, p. 146.

⁵⁷ Communication to Roger Reed from Leslie Rainer, Getty Conservation Institute, August 22, 2012.

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Boston Transcript, November 4, 1933. "Orozco the Mexican in Dartmouth's Hall" by Albert Franz Cochrane.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	18	718420	4842480

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the nominated property are shown on the attached site map of a portion of Dartmouth College campus titled "Orozco Murals in Baker Library."

Boundary Justification:

The designated property is the building footprint for Baker-Bass Library, Dartmouth College that contains the historic frescos by Jose Orozco. As noted on the site map, the frescoes occupy two locations in the basement of Baker Library. The fresco "Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life" is in a hallway leading to Carpenter Hall. "The Epic of American Civilization" mural is located in the Reserve Book Reading Room. Excluded from the boundary are two buildings fronting North Main Street, Carpenter Hall and Sanborn Hall. These buildings were constructed as separate structures linked to Baker Library only by minimal connectors.

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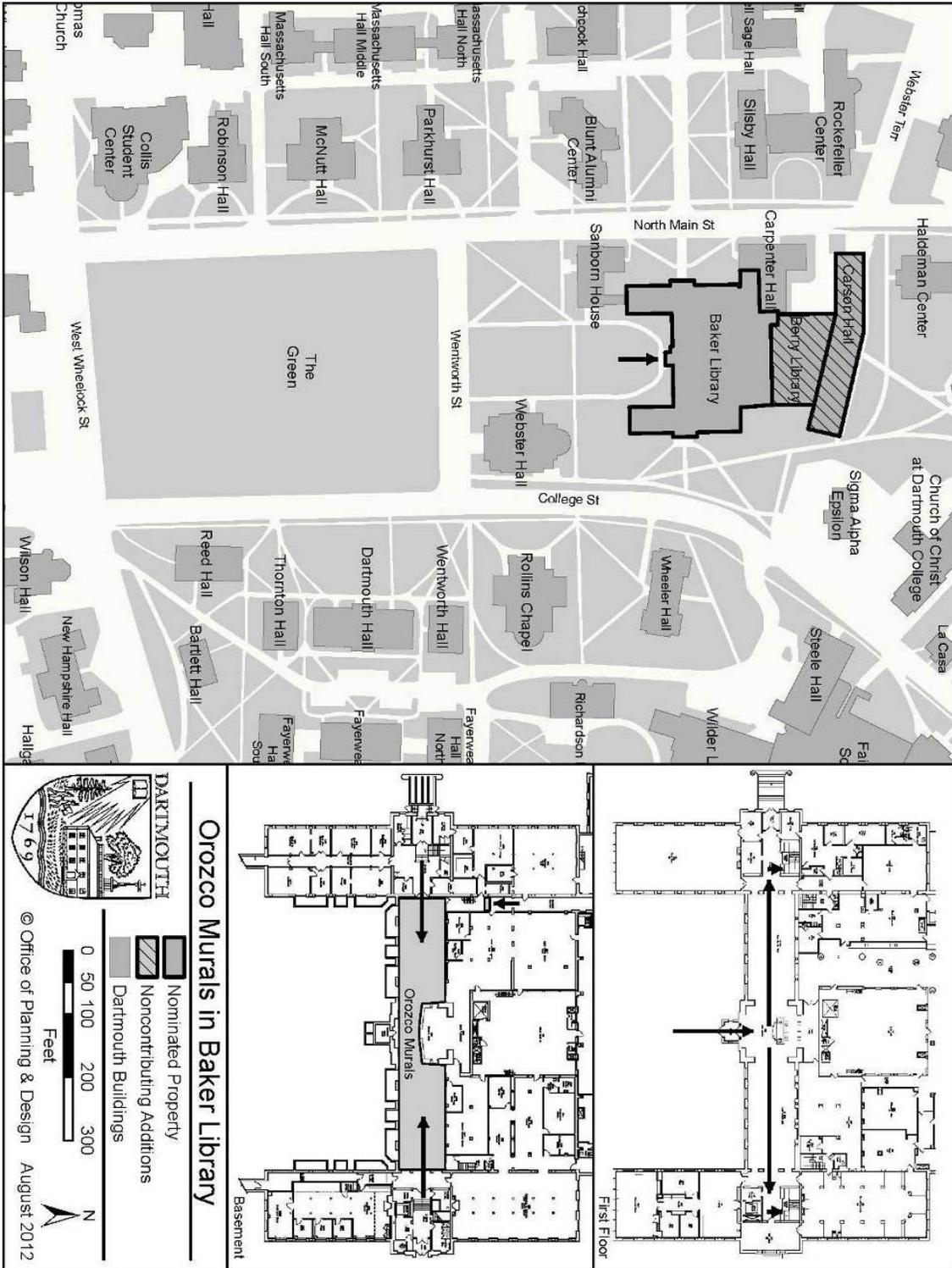
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM
August 31, 2012

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Photos

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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Baker Library, Dartmouth College
South Façade
Roger Reed, April 2012



Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life
Preliminary panel in basement hall connected to Reserve Reading Room
Roger Reed, April 2012

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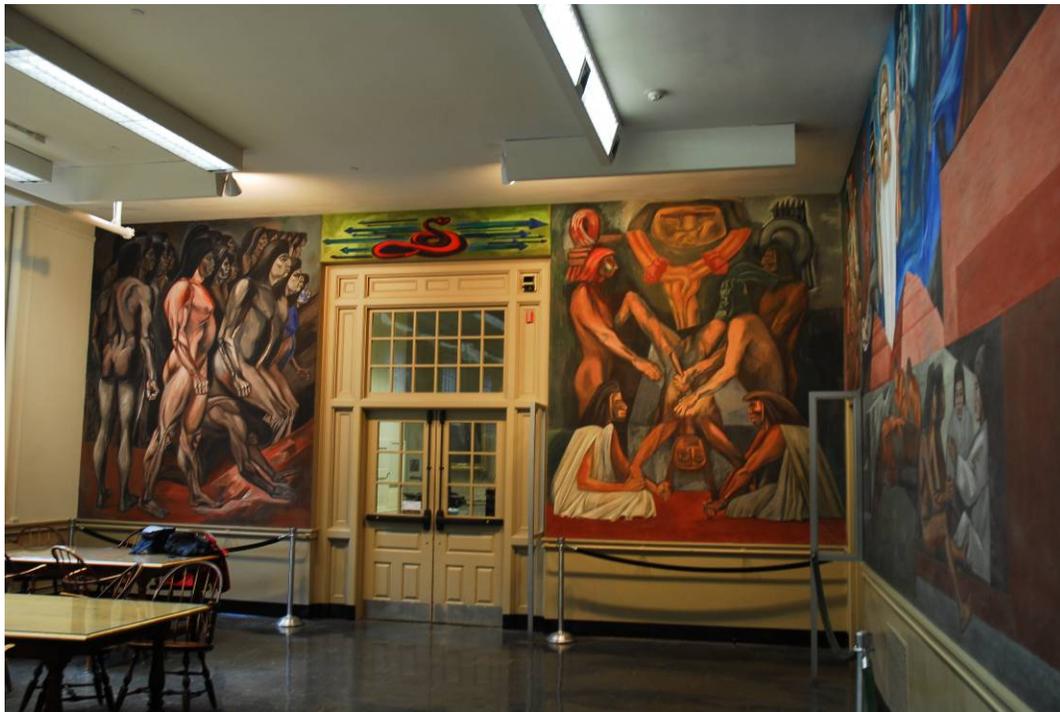
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View of Reserve Book Reading Room
North Wall Looking East
Roger Reed, April 2012



West Wall: Migration, Snakes and Spears, Ancient Human Sacrifice
Roger Reed, April 2012

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North Wall: "Aztec Warriors" (left above door), "Coming of Quetzalcoatl" (right)
Roger Reed, April 2012



North Wall: "Departure of Quetzalcoatl"
Roger Reed, April 2012

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North Wall: "The Prophecy"
Roger Reed, April 2012



North Wall: "Cortez and the Cross" (left), "The Machine" (right)
Roger Reed, April 2012

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North Wall: "Anglo-America" (left), "Hispano-America" (right)
Roger Reed, April 2012

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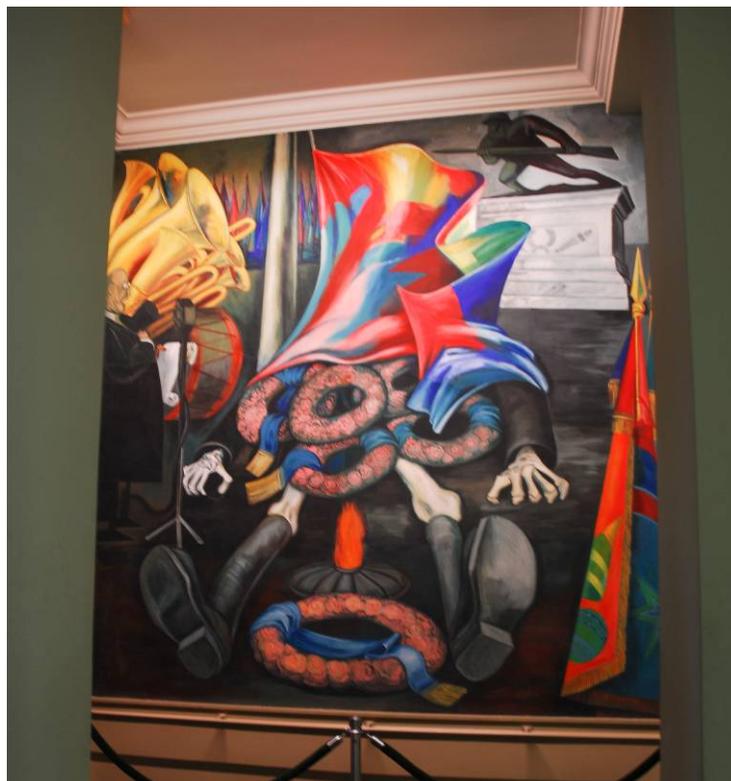
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North Wall: "Gods of the Modern World"
Roger Reed, April 2012



East Wall: "Modern Human Sacrifice"
Roger Reed, April 2012

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East Wall: "Modern Migration of the Spirit"
South Wall (over door): "Chains of the Spirit"
Roger Reed, April 2012

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South Wall: "Modern Industrial Man I, II, III"
Roger Reed, April 2012

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