



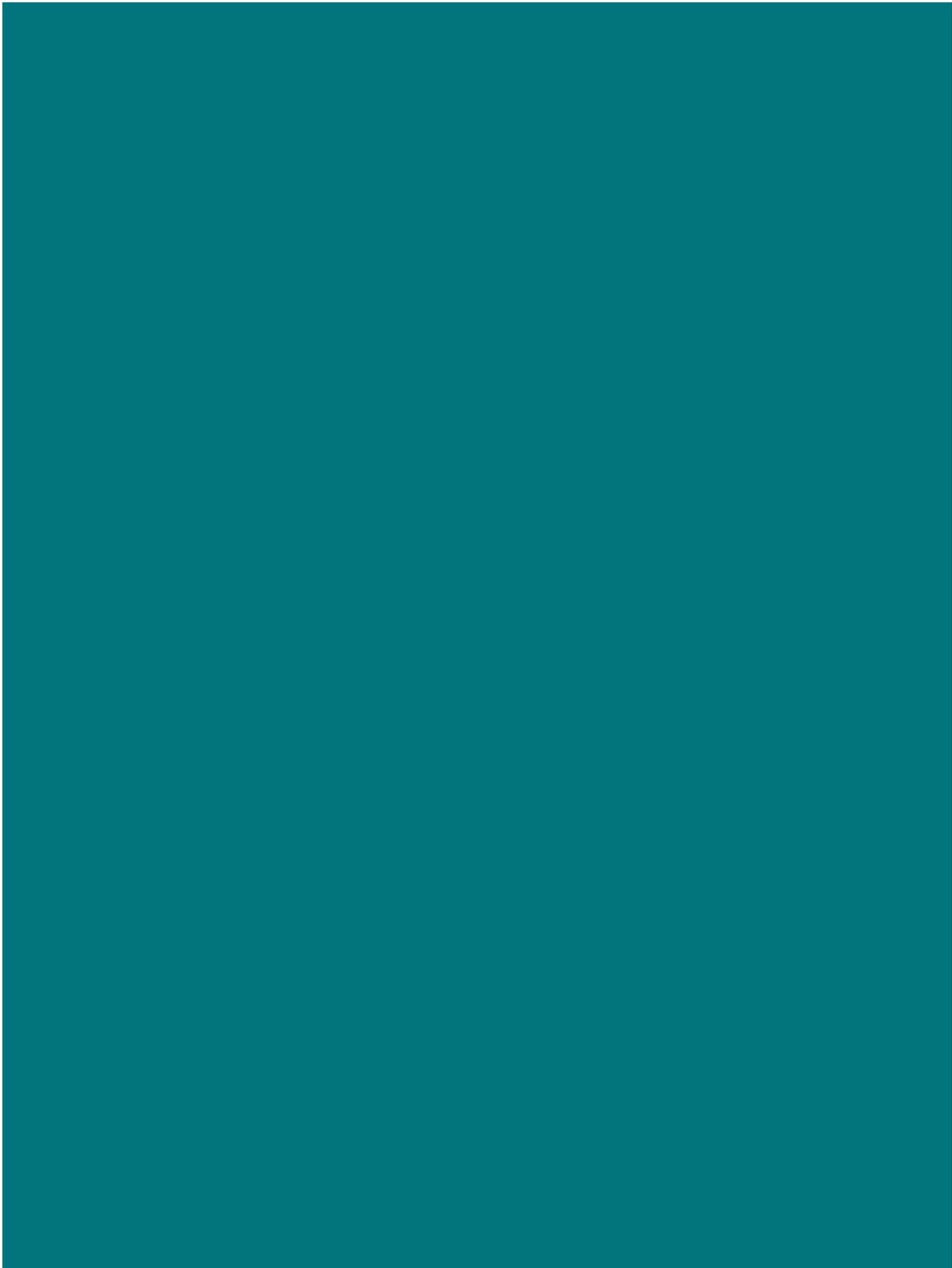
TALLER de GRÁFICA POPULAR A.C.

TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

CROSSING BORDERS

MEXICAN MODERNIST PRINTS

**BALTIMORE
MUSEUM OF
ART **BMA****



Dear Teachers,

This resource is designed to introduce you and your students to the rich holdings of Mexican prints in the collection of The Baltimore Museum of Art. Works by artists Elizabeth Catlett, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros are featured in this guide.

Four lessons in this resource contain the following:

- Full-color images of artworks
- Key Words: A list of important concepts in the text
- Close Looking: An exploration of the visual elements of the central artwork
- Technique: How the print was made
- Artist Spotlight: Biographical information on the artist
- Art in Context: Information about the multiple contexts (historical, art historical, social, economic, geographic, etc.) in which the art was produced
- Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting: Activities recommended for various grade levels that lead students in close looking and engage them in important ideas and techniques related to artworks. Each activity is tied to relevant standards from the National Core Arts Standards.

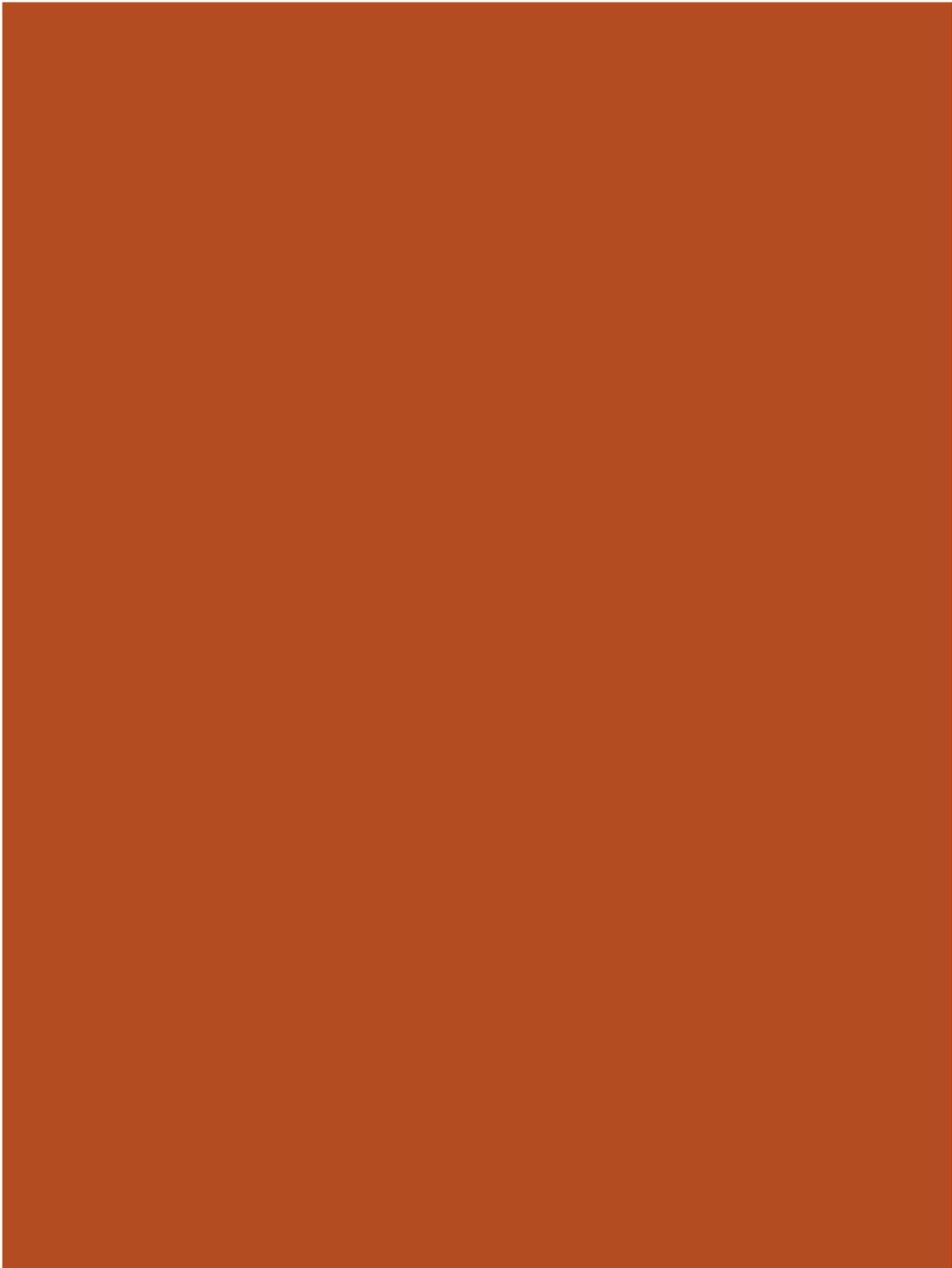
Lessons support the following 21st Century Skills:

- Communication and Collaboration
- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Leadership and Responsibility
- Productivity and Accountability
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills

Please keep in mind that the *Crossing Borders* exhibition closes to the public on March 11, 2018. After that date, the artworks will be taken off view. However, these images and many others may be found by searching our website at www.artbma.org. Tours of the exhibition may be scheduled by completing a tour request form at www.artbma.org/educators/index.html.

We hope this guide provides inspiration and helpful strategies to engage you and your students with four of the artists and their work included in the *Crossing Borders: Mexican Modernist Prints* exhibition.

SUZY WOLFFE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Baltimore Museum of Art Teacher's Guide to the *Crossing Borders: Mexican Modernist Prints* exhibition has been made possible by Wilmington Trust.



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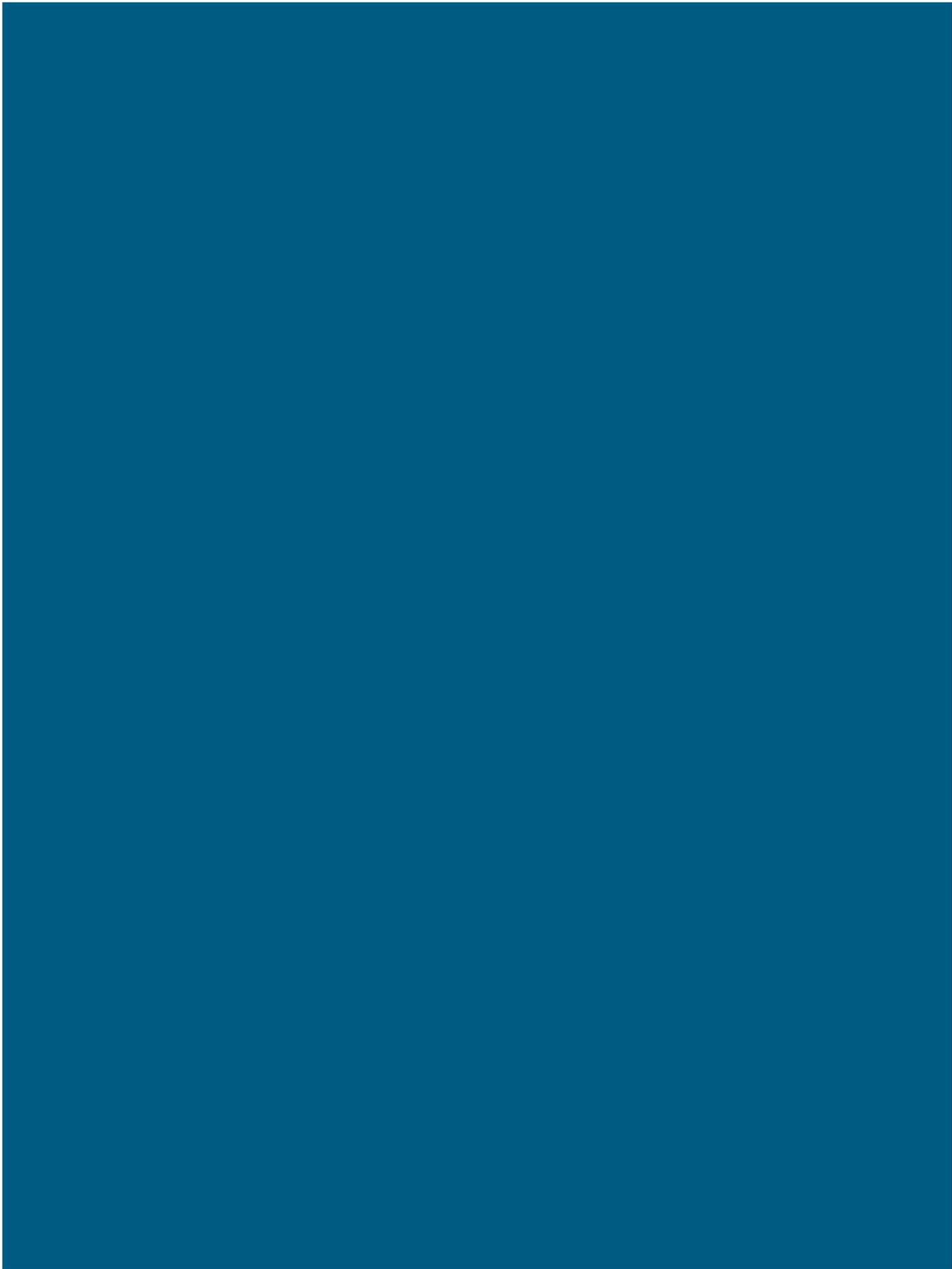


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GETTING STARTED

KEY WORDS

- Artist Prints
- Prints of Protest
- Prints of Solidarity
- Civil War



Façade of Taller de Gráfica Popular, Mexico City.
© 2017 Google

WHAT IS THE TALLER DE GRÁFICA POPULAR?

Taller de Gráfica Popular (People's Graphic Art Workshop) was established in Mexico City in 1937 by and for artists from Mexico and abroad, regardless of social class. Prints produced at the *taller* (workshop) promoted literacy, social issues, and political causes that were often left-leaning. Artwork supported organized labor, denounced the abuse of Mexico's urban and rural poor, praised the contributions of ordinary citizens, and lauded heroes of the Mexican Revolution.¹

Prints were generally realistic in style and inexpensive to disseminate to the public. Artists created their own prints and artists' books that were exhibited internationally, and they helped local community organizers produce printed materials for various causes. Artist Elizabeth Catlett gave a glimpse into the day-to-day operation of the *taller*:

People would come to the workshop if they had problems: if students were on strike; or trade unions had labor disputes, or if peasants had problems with their land, they would come into the workshop and ask for something to express their concerns. We would then have collective discussion about what symbolism would be effective in expressing those concerns. The artists at the taller would volunteer to do the work together or individually; after the preliminary sketches were made they were put up for more collective discussions.²

¹ "Gráfica Popular," <https://collections.lacma.org/node/580931>

² Rebecca Schreiber, *Cold War Exiles in Mexico: US Dissidents and the Culture of Critical Resistance* (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2008), 39.

WHAT WAS THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION (1910–20)?

Mexico had a long history of favoring wealthy factory owners and landholders over poorly paid laborers and farmers. In 1910, conditions finally ignited a bloody civil war, during which an estimated one million people were killed. Finally, in 1920, after 10 years of war and the end of the 30-year dictatorship of president Porfirio Díaz, the Mexican Revolution ended. By that time, 95 percent of villagers had lost their lands, and the remaining peasants were considered squatters.³

The biggest steps toward reform occurred under president Lázaro Cárdenas. Upon his election in 1934, he immediately passed the Agrarian Code, which accelerated land reform. The government redistributed over 45 million acres of land,⁴ guaranteed workers' rights, and sought to honor the traditions of indigenous people and *mestizaje* (ethnic and cultural mixes of people). Progress was slow, however, and people sought avenues for dissent. One way to deliver messages of protest was through inexpensive prints, posters, and flyers made in graphic workshops such as the Taller de Gráfica Popular.



Francisco "Pancho" Villa was a Mexican revolutionary general and one of the most prominent figures of the Mexican Revolution. He and his soldiers fought against the Federal Army, which was the military branch of the Mexican State. In 1920 the government reached an agreement with him to cease hostilities. Villa was assassinated in 1923.

Bain News Service, Publisher. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ggb2006005296/>. (Accessed October 27, 2017.)

WHAT WAS THE MEXICAN ART RENAISSANCE?

Shortly after the Mexican Revolution ended in 1920, the Mexican government established an art initiative to promote national unity during a period of enormous social and political change.⁵ The effort ushered in a time of great artistic creativity that came to be known as the Mexican Art Renaissance. Because the majority of the population couldn't read, messages of solidarity were conveyed visually in a number of ways, including through murals and printed materials created at workshops such as the taller.

³ Emilio H. Kourí, "Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico: The Unexamined Legacies of Andrés Molina Enríquez," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82:1 (2002): 70.

⁴ John Dwyer, "Diplomatic Weapons of the Weak: Mexican Policymaking During the US-Mexican Agrarian Dispute," *Diplomatic History* 26:3 (2002): 375.

⁵ "What Was the Mexican Renaissance? Post-Revolutionary Murals and Messages from Kahlo, Rivera, and More," http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/book_report/phaidon-art-in-time-mexican-renaissance-54556

GETTING STARTED



Façade of Taller de Gráfica Popular, Mexico City. © 2017 Google

GETTING STARTED

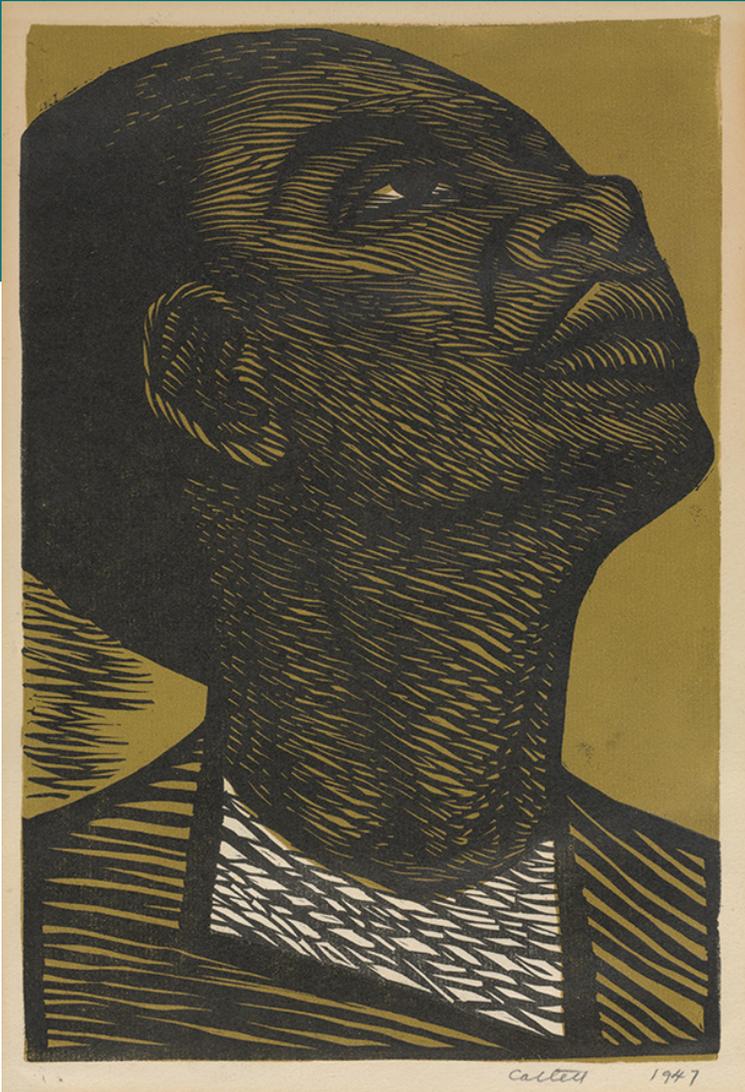


Pancho Villa and his staff. Bain News Service, Publisher. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ggb2006005296/>. (Accessed October 27, 2017.)

ELIZABETH CATLETT

KEY WORDS

- Linoleum-Cut Print
- Impression
- African American Oppression
- Mexican Art Renaissance



My right is a future of equality with other Americans

Plate 15 from the series "The Negro Woman"

Elizabeth Catlett (Mexican, born United States, 1915-2012)

1946-1947

Linoleum cut printed in green and black.

Sheet: 273 x 206 mm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/8 in.)

Image: 226 x 151 mm. (8 7/8 x 5 15/16 in.)

The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased as

the gift of Jeffrey A. Legum, Baltimore, BMA

2013.5. Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/

Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

CLOSE LOOKING

Elizabeth Catlett's *My right is a future of equality with other Americans* is the final image of 15 linoleum-cut prints (linocuts) that form *The Negro Woman* series. In this print of a woman with a close-cropped upturned head, the background, garment, and face were rendered with green ink. Her hair, shadow, fabric patterning, and thick outlines were printed in black. Narrow black lines in various directions, shapes, and sizes create the illusion of three-dimensional facial features. The white of her eye and her collar were left uninked.



TECHNIQUE

Catlett made the image by cutting or “incising” lines into a linoleum block with a V-shaped chisel or gouge. For each color that was printed—green and black—a separate linoleum block was cut. First, avocado-green ink was carefully applied to one block with a roller (called a brayer). The ink covered the block everywhere except for the areas of the eye and collar. Paper was then placed on the inked block in a press so that the green pigment transferred to the paper. Once the sheet dried, the second linoleum block was inked with black pigment, and the same piece of paper was carefully lined up on that block. Pressure was again applied, resulting in an impression of *My right is a future of equality with other Americans*. The process can be repeated, and multiple impressions can be made.

Above: A hand-held gouge cuts a design into a linoleum block.

Image by Zephyris, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

Left: After a linoleum plate is inked, paper is placed on the plate, and pressure is applied by a press. Paper will pick up ink on high, uncut surface areas. Because the paper cannot pick up ink in deep gouges, those areas remain ink free.

Image by Zephyris, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

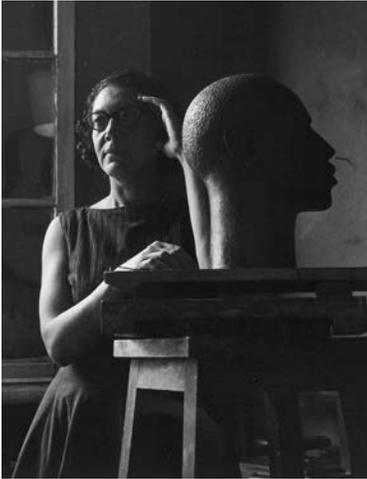
If an Image Can Be Printed Multiple Times, Why Is Each Impression Considered an Original Work of Art?

Prints are made by impressing an image from a woodblock, linoleum block, lithographic stone, or copper plate (called a matrix) onto a two-dimensional surface, most often paper. If the artist desires, the matrix can be re-inked, and multiple impressions can be made. Each print has variations in ink color or ink thickness, for example, that make it unique. These singularities cause each print to be considered an “original,” not a “copy.”

The trial impressions an artist makes to check the state of the plate and the quality of the image are called “artist’s proofs.” Once an artist approves the proof, multiple impressions can be made, each of which is numbered. Numbered prints form an “edition.” In an edition of three prints, for example, the first impression is numbered 1/3, or one of three, the second 2/3, and the final impression 3/3.⁶

⁶ An excellent resource on printmaking techniques can be found on the website of the International Fine Print Dealers Association: http://www.ifpda.org/glossary_term/3309

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Elizabeth Catlett sculpts a head (called a bust) in Mexico City

Mariana Yampolsky, *Elizabeth Catlett*, c. 1949 (printed c. 1990). Gelatin silver print. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. © Mariana Yampolsky

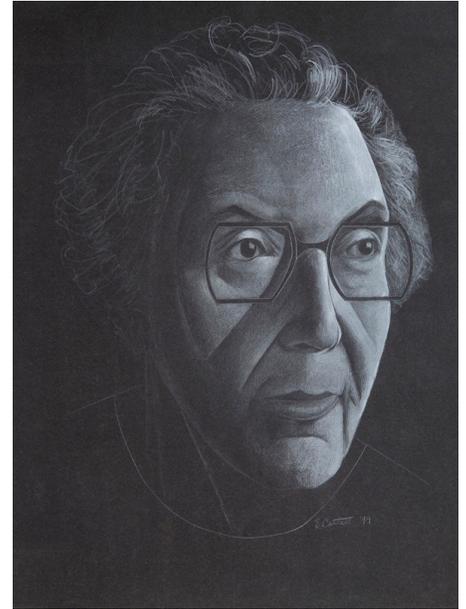
In 1946, after receiving her MFA at the University of Iowa, Catlett traveled to Mexico City. She made her first prints at the Taller de Gráfica Popular (People's Graphic Art Workshop), where she created "The Negro Woman" series. In Mexico City, she met artists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, three artists central to the Mexican Art Renaissance.

Because many artists working at the *taller* were members of the Communist Party, the workshop was thought to have party ties. Catlett's association caused her to be watched closely by the United States embassy in Mexico. Following her arrest for supporting railroad strikers in Mexico City in 1949, Catlett was declared an undesirable alien by the US State Department. She renounced her United States citizenship in 1962 and became a Mexican citizen. In order to attend the opening of her one-woman exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1971, Catlett was forced to request a special visa. Until her death in 2012, the artist continued to teach and live in Mexico City.⁷

ART IN CONTEXT

Much of Elizabeth Catlett's work as a graphic artist and sculptor focused on African American women's struggles and achievements, themes she drew upon from her own experience as a black woman in the United States. In Mexico, Catlett identified with the classist and racist treatment of poor, indigenous people, particularly women.

Together these themes helped shape *The Negro Woman* series, created soon after her arrival in Mexico. A portion of the 15 prints represents one part of a narrative of oppression. *My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land*, for example, illustrates a woman behind barbed wire. *I have special reservations* features a woman seated on a bus behind a "Colored Only" sign. Another print, titled *My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized*, presents a courageous black woman calling together four male factory workers. Catlett herself spent time in Mexico organizing railway and factory strikes and supporting the fight for literacy among the dispossessed.⁸



Self-Portrait

Elizabeth Catlett (Mexican, born United States, 1915-2012) 1999

Silver pencil on black paper. 24 x 17 7/8 in. (60.96 x 45.4025 cm.) Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Art by Women Collection, Gift of Linda Lee Alter, 2010.27.5. Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

⁷ "Elizabeth Catlett, Sculptor with Eye on Social Issues, Is Dead at 96," <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/04/arts/design/elizabeth-catlett-sculptor-with-eye-on-social-issues-dies-at-96.html?mcubz=0>

⁸ "Elizabeth Catlett (1915-2012)," <http://galeriemyrtilis.net/elizabeth-catlett-bio/>

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CREATING, PRESENTING, RESPONDING, AND CONNECTING THROUGH NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

These activities are appropriate for students in grades 3 and above. Exercises may be adapted based on grade level.

CREATING

Recommended for grades 3 and above.

Styrofoam printing is an inexpensive way to simulate linoleum-cut printing techniques used by Elizabeth Catlett. Students should follow these steps:

Begin with a thick Styrofoam plate or tray, and cut off its rim.

With a dull pencil draw deep lines into the plate or tray.

Pour a small amount of ink on a non-porous surface such as Plexiglas or a cookie sheet, then roll a thin, even layer on the carved Styrofoam.

Lay a piece of paper over the inked surface and press evenly to transfer the image to paper.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

Styrofoam plate or tray
Dull pencil
Ink
Plexiglas or cookie sheet
Roller
Paper

PRESENTING AND RESPONDING

Recommended for grades 9 and above.

My right is a future of equality with other Americans is one of fifteen prints in Elizabeth Catlett's "The Negro Woman" series. Each print illustrates a sentence or phrase from the following narrative written by Catlett:

I am the Negro Woman.

I have always worked hard in America

In the fields.

In other folks' homes.

I have given the world my songs.

In Sojourner Truth I fought for the rights of women as well as Negroes.

In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom.

In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery.

My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized.

I have studied in ever increasing numbers.

My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land.

I have special reservations.

Special houses.

And a special fear for my loved ones.

My right is a future of equality with other Americans.

Read Catlett's narrative to the class, and invite students to write one descriptive sentence about their own lives. What is important to them? What issues do they feel strongly about? What obstacles do they fight to overcome? Ask each student to illustrate his or her idea. Have students post their artworks and sentences. The class should consider the sentences as a group narrative. What do the responses say about the group's beliefs, values, and priorities?

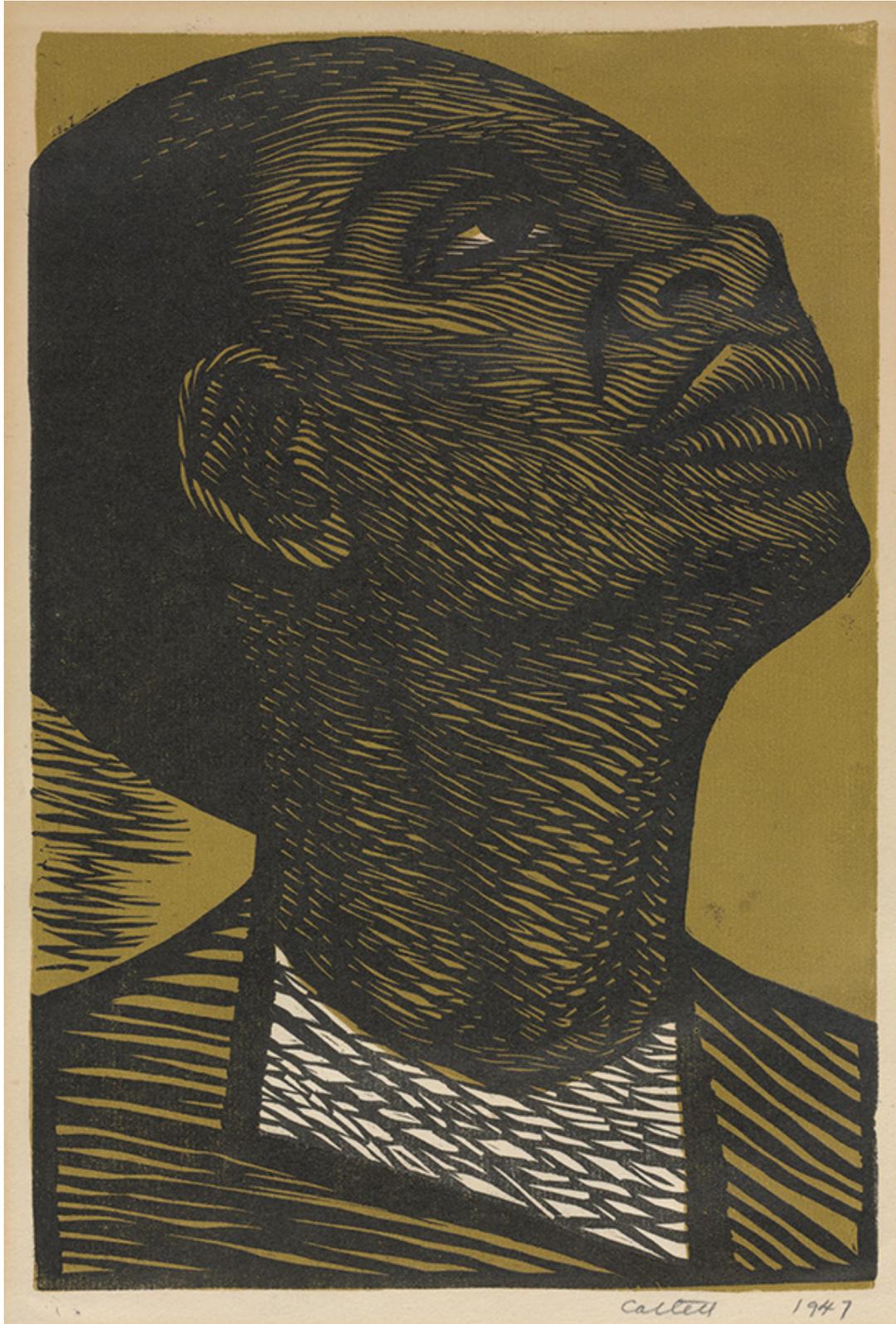
Print from the internet and post Catlett's fifteen images. Students can compare and contrast her images and narrative to their own. How is their narrative similar to Catlett's? How do they differ?

CONNECTING

Recommended for grades 9 and above.

Elizabeth Catlett was sensitive to the treatment of oppressed persons. Because of her conviction that people should be treated equally, she helped organize railway and factory strikes in Mexico. To deepen understanding, students can research reasons why workers strike. Students can work independently or in small groups to focus on one issue, such as low wages, long hours, lack of representation, or unsafe working conditions.

ELIZABETH CATLETT



Elizabeth Catlett (Mexican, born United States, 1915-2012). *My right is a future of equality with other Americans*. 1946-1947. Plate 15 from the series "The Negro Woman". Linoleum cut printed in green and black. Sheet: 273 x 206 mm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/8 in.) Image: 226 x 151 mm. (8 7/8 x 5 15/16 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased as the gift of Jeffrey A. Legum, Baltimore, BMA 2013.5. Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



After a linoleum plate is inked, paper is placed on the plate, and pressure is applied by a press. Paper will pick up ink on high, uncut surface areas. Because the paper cannot pick up ink in deep gouges, those areas remain ink free. Image by Zephyris, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0



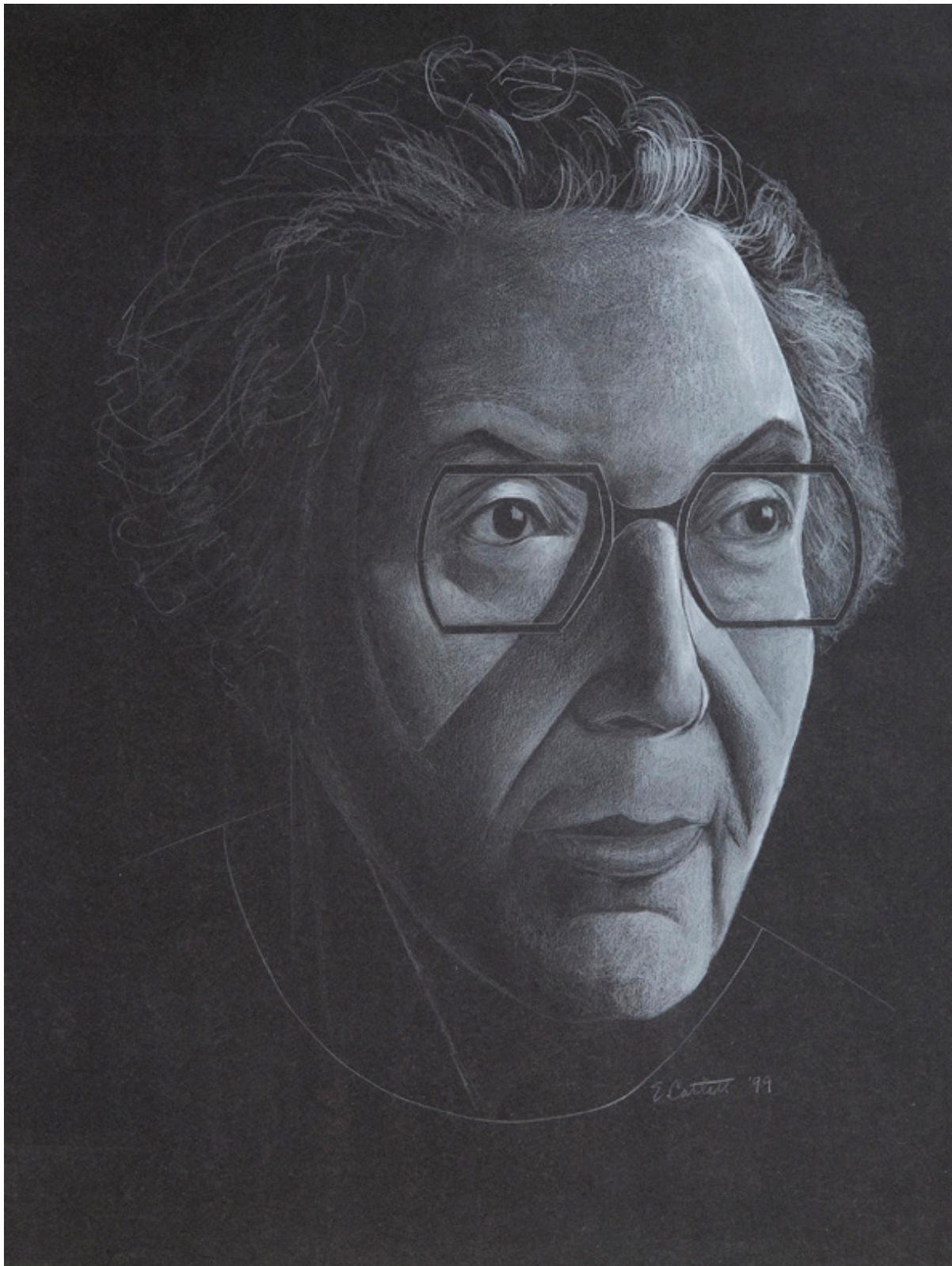
A hand-held gouge cuts a design into a linoleum block. Image by Zephyris, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

ELIZABETH CATLETT



Mariana Yampolsky. *Elizabeth Catlett*. c. 1949 (printed c. 1990). Gelatin silver print. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. © Mariana Yampolsky

ELIZABETH CATLETT

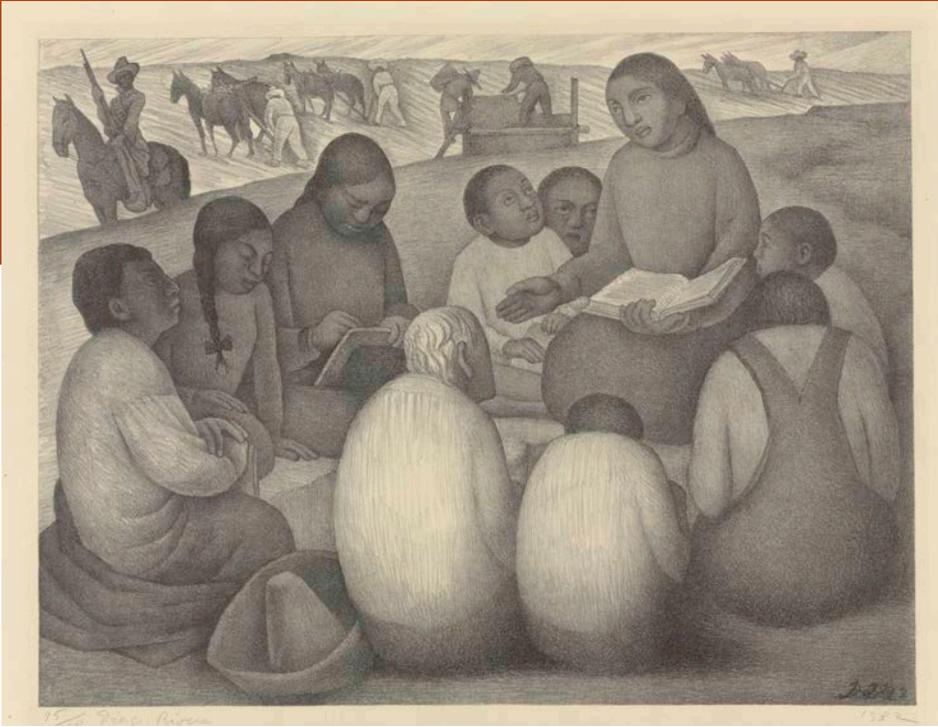


Elizabeth Catlett (Mexican, born United States, 1915-2012). *Self-Portrait*. 1999. Silver pencil on black paper. 24 x 17 7/8 in. (60.96 x 45.4025 cm.) Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Art by Women Collection, Gift of Linda Lee Alter, 2010.27.5. Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

DIEGO RIVERA

KEY WORDS

- Lithograph
- Open-Air School
- Los Tres Grandes (The Three Great Ones)
- Education Reform



Open Air School

Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886-1957)
1932

Crayon lithograph. 12-1/4 x 16-1/4 in. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler, BMA 1932.28.3. © 2017 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

CLOSE LOOKING

Nine people of various ages sit in a field around a teacher. These students look down at books or writing slates or gaze intently at the instructor as she speaks with an outstretched hand. Their proximity to the laborers in the background suggests that the students are peasant farmers.

The scene is divided into three zones from darker in the foreground to lighter in the back. Behind the students, five farm workers plow or haul materials. A mounted, armed man stands guard. Small lines directed up and to the left create what look like plowed rows. In the far background, light lines facing up and to the right indicate a distant field.

An outdoor space for education in rural areas, where much of the population was illiterate, was called an open-air school. Diego Rivera placed great importance on the education of disenfranchised people, as is suggested here by the sheer size of the figures and their prominence in the foreground.

TECHNIQUE

Rivera created *Open Air School* in 1932, in an edition of 100, while living in the United States. The lithograph is based on part of a mural that he painted in Mexico City in the 1920s. To create the lithograph, the artist drew the image with wax crayon on a limestone block. The stone was treated with acid that etched areas not protected by the wax. When the stone was wetted, water flowed into these etched areas. Because of the natural repulsion of water and oil, when oil-based ink was applied to the stone, it stuck only to the original wax drawing. Finally, a sheet of paper was laid over the block, which was run through a press, and ink transferred from the stone to the paper.⁹



Lithography stone and print made by an unknown artist at the Taller de Gráfica Popular.

Photography by Yadín Xolalpa

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Diego Rivera and artist Frida Kahlo, his wife.

© Peter A. Juley & Son Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum

At the age of 21, Diego Rivera traveled to Europe and spent 14 years studying art. He returned to Mexico in 1921 after the revolution. Upon his return, the new government commissioned him to create public art that served to unify a war-torn country. Subjects of his large-scale public murals included Mexican history, indigenous heritage, and the contributions of rural workers and the working class.¹⁰

Rivera was proud of Mexico's past and optimistic about its future and the role that technology could play. His work cemented him as a central figure in the Mexican Art Renaissance along with

David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco. Though communist-leaning, Rivera never openly crossed the line to criticize the Mexican government in his art.

Between 1930 and 1934, the artist lived and worked in the United States, where he was encouraged to use printmaking as a means of disseminating his work to the American public. He continued making murals and created a 27-panel fresco about Detroit's manufacturing workforce that is still on view at the Detroit Institute of Arts.



Self-Portrait

Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886-1957)
1930

Crayon lithograph. Sheet: 512 x 381 mm.
(20 3/16 x 15 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler, BMA 1931.41.3.
© 2017 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

⁹ A helpful website that explains the lithography process is <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/arts/artwork/stone-lithography.htm>

¹⁰ Sylvie Francois, "Notes from the Catalogue: Diego Rivera's Printmaking Career," <http://www.swanngalleries.com/news/2014/10/diego-rivera-printmaking-career/>

ART IN CONTEXT

Before the Mexican Revolution, the Catholic Church provided much of the country's education, but the rural poor received very little instruction. After the war, the first head of Mexico's Ministry of Education, José Vasconcelos, appointed in 1921, began a literacy campaign with volunteer teachers who were meant to "uplift the poor, the oppressed, and the uneducated."¹¹ Thus the open-air school movement was born in Mexico. Teachers traveled to laborers to give instruction where they lived and worked and, during labor disputes, helped illiterate villagers write demands for reform.

Left-leaning, Rivera championed educational reform and workers' rights and, for a time, taught at an open-air art school.¹² The artist's print of the subject is based on one of 235 fresco panels that he painted for the Mexican Ministry of Education.

Who Were *Los Tres Grandes* (The Three Great Ones)?

Three artists who promoted a modern Mexican identity following the revolution were Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Together called *Los Tres Grandes* (The Three Great Ones), they used art as a powerful tool for cultural and social revolution. Their work focused on class struggle, the plight of the oppressed, contributions of indigenous populations, acknowledgement of mixed race (*mestizo*) identity, and pride in Mexico's history from pre-Columbian times through the revolution.¹³ The artists praised modernity, technology, and industry, but never at the expense of the working class.

¹¹ Dan La Botz, "The Mexican Teachers' Long Struggle for Education, Workers Rights, and Democracy," <http://newpol.org/content/mexican-teachers-long-struggle-education-workers-rights-and-democracy>

¹² José Antonio Navarrete, "*La Escuela de Aire Libre* (Open Air School)," <http://www.luag.org/collection-item/la-escuela-de-aire-libre-open-air-school/>

¹³ "All You Need to Know about Mexican Muralism and Muralists," <http://www.widewalls.ch/mexican-muralism-muralists/>

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CREATING, PRESENTING, RESPONDING, AND CONNECTING THROUGH NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

These activities are appropriate for students in grades 6 and above. Exercises may be adapted based on grade level.

CREATING

Recommended for grades 6 and above.

In this project designed to teach students about the lithographic process, aluminum foil over Plexiglas is used in place of a limestone block. Students should follow these steps:

With masking tape, tightly secure the four edges of a piece of foil shiny side up on the Plexi.

Lightly sand the foil using sandpaper and a little water.

After sanding, wipe the plate with vinegar to remove dust.

Draw an image on the foil with a soft, wax crayon.

When finished, pour cola slowly over the design. (The acid sensitizes the drawn areas so they accept ink.)

Pour a small capful of vegetable oil on the foil and buff away the image using a sponge. (What is left is called a ghost image.)

With another sponge, wet the foil with water.

Roll grease-based ink on the foil. The ink will be drawn to the ghost image and repelled by water.

Place a piece of paper over the foil and press evenly to transfer the ink to the paper.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

Aluminum foil	Vinegar	2 sponges
Plexiglas	Paper towels	Grease-based ink
Masking tape	Wax crayon	Roller
Sandpaper	Cola	Paper
Water	Vegetable oil	

PRESENTING AND RESPONDING

Recommended for grades 9 and above.

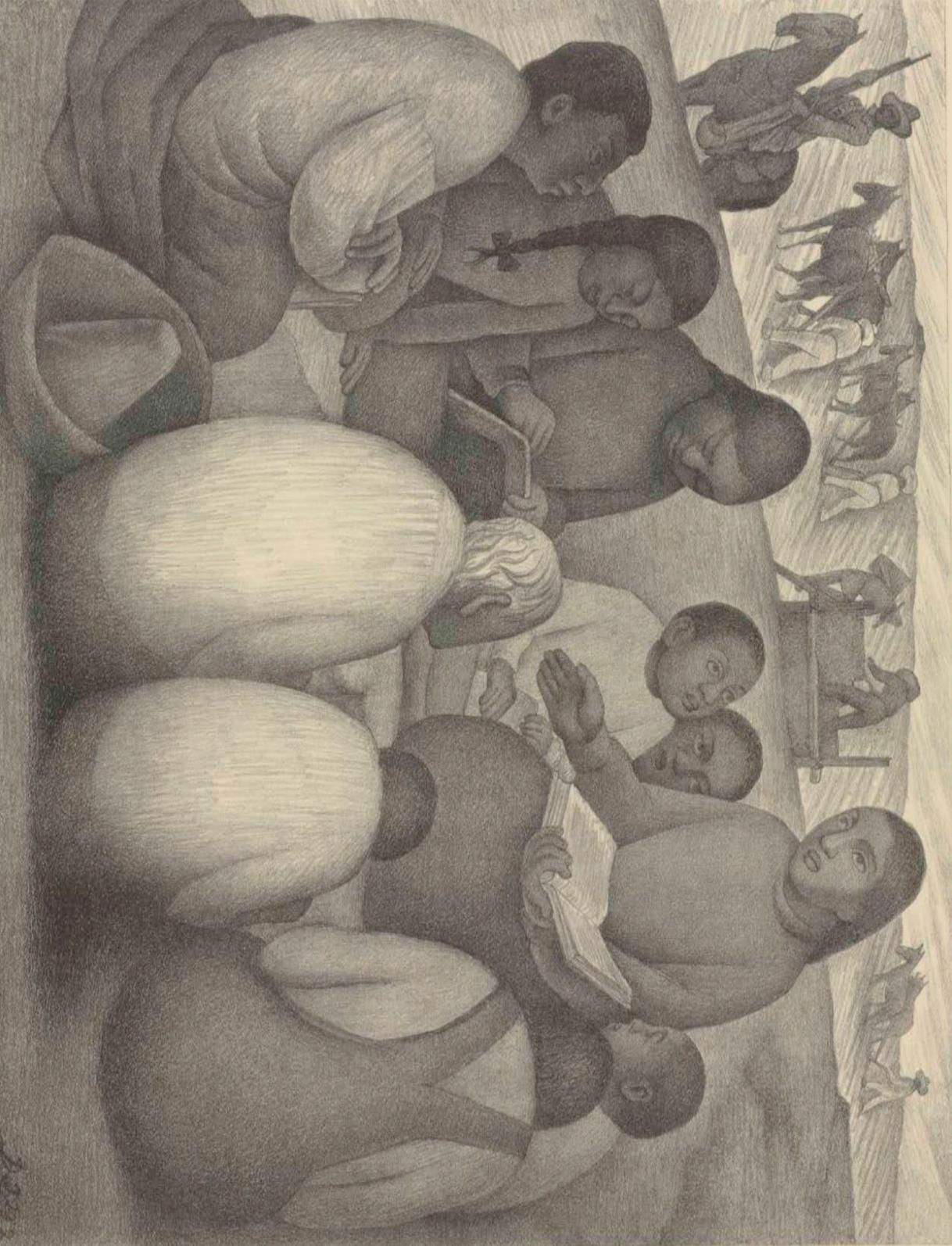
Ask students to write personal responses to *Open Air School* using the following questions as prompts: What are the pros and cons of having a teacher travel to you? What would it be like to learn in a field? What are the advantages and disadvantages of that location? What would it be like to be part of a learning group of different ages? What would it be like to study with people of various reading, writing, and math abilities? What impact, if any, has *Open Air School* had on your understanding of the treatment of Mexican laborers in the 1920s and 1930s?

CONNECTING

Recommended for grades 9 and above.

In the 1920s, volunteers traveled to teach in open-air schools. How has modern technology changed the ways in which people can be taught in remote areas? Divide students into small groups to research this question and share their findings with the class.

DIEGO RIVERA



Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886-1957). *Open Air School*. 1932. Crayon lithograph. 12-1/4 x 16-1/4 in.
The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler, BMA 1932.28.3. © 2017 Banco de México
Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

DIEGO RIVERA



Lithography stone and print made by an unknown artist at the Taller de Gráfica Popular. Photography by Yadín Xolalpa

DIEGO RIVERA



Diego Rivera and artist Frida Kahlo, his wife. © Peter A. Juley & Son Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum

DIEGO RIVERA

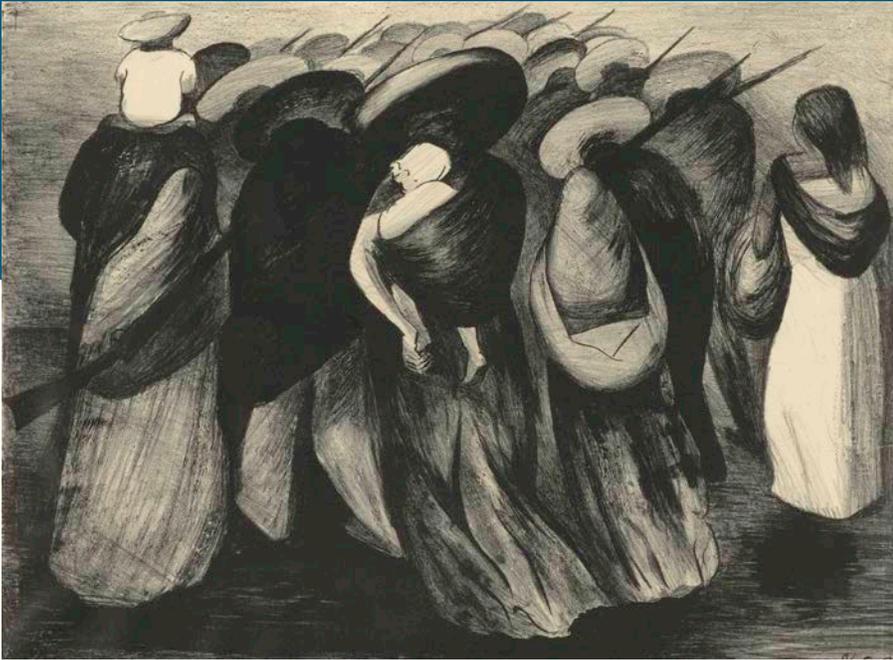


Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886-1957). *Self-Portrait*. 1930. Crayon lithograph. Sheet: 512 x 381 mm. (20 3/16 x 15 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler, BMA 1931.41.3. © 2017 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO

KEY WORDS

- Tusche
- Rear Guard
- Soldaderas
- Injustice



Rear Guard

José Clemente Orozco (Mexican, 1883-1949). 1929

Crayon lithograph. Sheet: 392 x 540 mm. (15 7/16 x 21 1/4 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler, BMA 1929.17.21.64. © 2017 Jose Orozco/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ SOMAAP, Mexico

CLOSE LOOKING

A large band of people, some carrying young children, are shown from behind as they walk. The majority of figures appear to be female as, historically, most Mexican rear guard members were. The artist, José Clemente Orozco conveys movement through the curved lines of the women's skirts, which seem to sway as the guard journeys. Guns, carried for protection, are suggested by sharp diagonal lines that point up and to the right. The anonymous crowd moves as a single unit creating a human shield for soldiers. Later, such a guard would serve as an advance team to set up and tend camp.

Sympathetic to the danger and displacement that a rear guard faced, Orozco creates a somber mood using dark shadows and downcast heads.¹⁴ In the center of the composition, a mother makes a poignant gesture by tenderly holding her baby's foot. In this perilous undertaking, will she and her child survive?

TECHNIQUE

Used in stick or ink form, tusche is a combination of grease, soaps, and pigments that penetrates deeply into a stone. When printed, tusche produces rich lines and shapes that are darker than they appear in a drawing.

¹⁴"José Clemente Orozco: The Rear Guard/Retaguardia," <http://www.mmoca.org/mmocacollects/artworks/the-rear-guard>

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Portrait of José Clemente Orozco

Edward Weston. (American, 1886-1958).

1930

Gelatin silver print. Image: 24.9 × 19.8 cm (9 13/16 × 7 13/16 in.)

Mount: 38.1 × 25.7 cm (15 × 10 1/8 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. © 2017 Center for

Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

In 1904, José Clemente Orozco lost his left hand and wrist in an explosion. Because of his injuries, he could not serve in the Mexican Revolution. He instead worked as a political caricaturist, opposing the fight. The artist did, however, witness suffering, cruelty, inequities, and governmental oppression during and after the revolution. These issues became themes to which he returned.

Unlike Rivera, who expressed pride in Mexico's history and optimism in the future of post-war Mexico, Orozco took a darker view. He feared humankind's growing dependency on technology and critiqued a post-war government that he viewed as unjust. The artist was criticized for his radical views and his condemnation of institutions such as Mexico's judicial system, which he expressed openly in murals.¹⁵

From 1927–34, Orozco lived in the United

States and continued to paint murals and produce prints for the US market. It was during this period that the lithograph *Rear Guard* was printed. In it, he paid tribute to the large number of people, primarily women and children living in poverty, who were displaced or ill-treated in the revolution.

ART IN CONTEXT

Soldaderas (military women) served during Mexican wars in a number of ways. A few were commanding officers and soldiers, but the majority followed troops and set up encampments, cooked, maintained weapons, and nursed the injured.¹⁶ Most were blood relatives of soldiers and were poor, rural *mestizo* (mixed-race) or indigenous women. *Soldaderas* either willingly followed soldiers, believing it safer than remaining at home, or were coerced into joining the fight. In some cases, they were captured by enemy troops and forced to serve the opposition.

Following the revolution, the new government insisted that *soldaderas* performed only domestic chores during the war. In that way, the government reduced the already-paltry compensation awarded to female veterans.¹⁷



José Clemente Orozco's self-portrait appears in his book *Autobiografía*, published in Mexico in 1945.

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Soldadera, 1910. Mexican *soldaderas* (military women) fought and set up camp, prepared meals, cleaned weapons, and nursed the injured.

¹⁵ "José Clemente Orozco: Man of Fire," <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/jose-clemente-orozco-career-timeline/83/>

¹⁶ Gabriela Cano, "Soldaderas and Coronelas," in *Encyclopedia of Mexico* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), 1357–60.

¹⁷ "The Mexican Revolution and the United States in the Collections of the Library of Congress: Viewpoints on Women in the Revolution," <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mexican-revolution-and-the-united-states/viewpoints-on-women.html>

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CREATING, PRESENTING, RESPONDING, AND CONNECTING THROUGH NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

These activities are appropriate for students in grades 6 and above. Exercises may be adapted based on grade level.

CREATING

Recommended for grades 6 and above.

Ask students to think about the mood of José Clemente Orozco's *Rear Guard* and share their ideas. Is the mood joyful and light? Is it somber and dark? Does it convey a different mood? There is no right answer; however, students should support their ideas with visual evidence in the lithograph. If they were making lithographs about *soldaderas*, what mood would they create? What messages would the mood convey about the emotions of the *soldaderas*?

PRESENTING

Recommended for grades 6 and above.

If students were to display the print *Rear Guard* at their school, what additional objects or written materials would they add to help contextualize the subject for their audience? Whose perspectives would be important to include?

RESPONDING AND CONNECTING

Recommended for grades 9 and above.

Ask students to research tasks performed by *soldaderas* during the Mexican Revolution. How were military women treated during the revolution? After the war? What impact, if any, did *Rear Guard* have on students' understanding of the emotions that willing, coerced, or captured people may have felt as they followed soldiers?

Like many Mexican artists of the time, José Clemente Orozco created prints that brought attention to the plight of people living in poverty and those suffering, displaced, or ill-treated. Ask students to think about their communities. What are important humanitarian issues that the public should pay more attention to? Ideas may include racism, poverty, access to education, or hunger.



José Clemente Orozco (Mexican, 1883-1949). *Rear Guard*. 1929. Crayon lithograph.
Sheet: 392 x 540 mm. (15 7/16 x 21 1/4 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler,
BMA 1929.17.21.64. © 2017 Jose Orozco/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SOMAAP, Mexico

JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO



Edward Weston. *José Clemente Orozco*. July 1930. Gelatin silver print. Image: 24.9 × 19.8 cm (9 13/16 × 7 13/16 in.)
Mount: 38.1 × 25.7 cm (15 × 10 1/8 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. © 2017 Center for Creative
Photography, Arizona Board of Regents / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Soldadera, 1910. Mexican *soldaderas* (military women) fought and set up camp, prepared meals, cleaned weapons, and nursed the injured.

DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS

KEY WORDS

- Photo-Transfer Lithograph
- Political Art
- Union Organizer
- Government Repression



The Child Mother

David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974)
1956

Phototransfer lithograph. Sheet: 895 x 670 mm. (35 1/4 x 26 3/8 in.) Image: 768 x 584 mm. (30 1/4 x 23 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Promised gift of a MAD Gathering to The Baltimore Museum of Art, BMA R.17731. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City

CLOSE LOOKING

With a baby on her back, a large-scale figure of a young girl walks barefoot while holding the hem of her ripped and soiled dress. The dark background is a cacophony of lines, shadows, and textures that appears to surround and loom over the children. A foreboding setting and the children's concerned expressions and downcast eyes create an ominous mood.

Printed in Mexico in 1956, *The Child Mother* is based on David Alfaro Siqueiros' 1936 painting of the same name. Mothers holding children was a subject Siqueiros returned to throughout his career, making 34 prints and many paintings on the theme.

TECHNIQUE

The first step in making a photo-transfer lithograph is to project a photonegative onto a piece of gelatin-covered, light-sensitive paper. The intensity of the light shining through the negative affects the paper in different ways. Brighter areas of the projection cause the gelatin to harden and become receptive to greasy ink. Darker areas are receptive to water.

Once the light projection is complete, the paper is pressed face down on a lithographic stone and removed. The stone is then washed with water, and oil-based ink is applied, which affixes to the image and is resisted by the rest of the lithographic block. The artist can alter the image by scraping away areas of ink. Finally, paper is pressed over the block, and ink is transferred to make a print.¹⁸

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



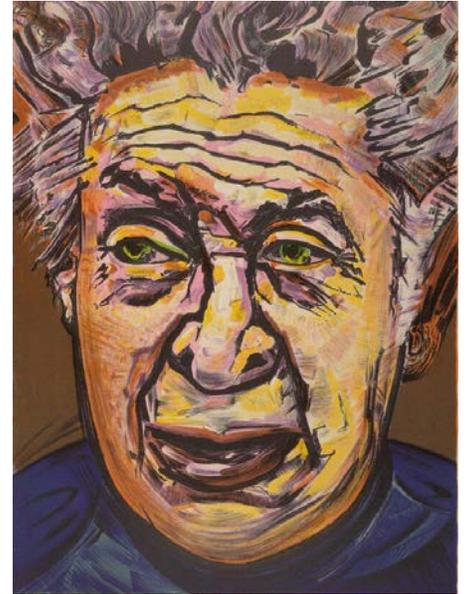
David Alfaro Siqueiros in Lecumberri, México, D.F., 1960. Photograph by Héctor García. © Galería Fundación Héctor García /Wikimedia Commons/ CC-BY-SA-3.0.

David Alfaro Siqueiros' impressive murals, made post-revolution, promoted a modern Mexican identity. Believing that art needed to be political to be relevant, the artist created work that focused primarily on government repression and social issues. As a soldier in the Mexican Revolution, he met workers, peasants, and indigenous people whose stories influenced his political views. After joining the Communist Party, Siqueiros headed a national union of teachers, farmers, miners, and factory and railroad workers.¹⁹

The artist's political leanings and union connections caused him to be harassed and jailed numerous times. Considered a "political

problem" by the Mexican government, Siqueiros was granted permission in 1932 to travel to the United States to continue his work as a muralist. Many of these murals were later whitewashed because of their radical messages, one of which positioned the United States as an oppressor of Latin America.²⁰ He was deported, returned to the United States, and then left to fight in the Spanish Civil War.²¹

During his career, the artist made 25 lithographs intended for US collectors. He also made woodcuts for political magazines in Mexico and hundreds of preparatory drawings for murals and other artwork.



Self-Portrait

David Alfaro Siqueiros (Mexican, 1896-1974) 1965
Color lithograph on paper. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; the Ruth Bowman and Harry Kahn Twentieth-Century American Self-Portrait Collection. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City

For each color in Siqueiros' lithograph, a separate stone was prepared, and the printmaker repeated the printing process for each hue.

¹⁸ Bamber Gascoigne, *How to Identify Prints* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1986), 41a–b.

¹⁹ "David Alfaro Siqueiros Biography," <http://www.abcgallery.com/S/siqueiros/siqueirosbio.html>

²⁰ Laurance Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 213.

²¹ Helena Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 234.

ART IN CONTEXT

Sympathetic to those displaced during the Mexican Revolution, Siqueiros' images of mothers and children spoke to the hardship and horrors families experienced as they followed soldiers fighting in the war. Though accompanying the troops may have been safer than staying at home, innocent children were subjected to the stresses of being relocated and perhaps orphaned. Many lives were lost, and in a number of Siqueiros' artworks on the theme, mothers scream in anguish over their sons' and daughters' dead bodies. Those who lived faced shortages of food and lack of housing and employment in the aftermath of the revolution.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CREATING, PRESENTING, RESPONDING, AND CONNECTING THROUGH NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

These activities are appropriate for students in grades 6 and above. Exercises may be adapted based on grade level.

CREATING

Recommended for grades 6 and above.

Prints and murals by Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros affirmed cultural identity, delivered messages of harmony, or protested unfair treatment. In this exercise, using paint or markers on large sheets of paper, groups of students will make communal murals that critique social issues or affirm elements of their communities.

Divide students into small groups to brainstorm ideas. Ask students what they like about their neighborhoods. What would they like to change? Groups do not need to reach consensus. Each student should write a few sentences and sketch to help formulate an idea. Ask students in each group to present their ideas to each other and brainstorm ways to intertwine the ideas into one mural. When each group's mural is complete, invite students to present it to the class. What are its messages? If this were a full-scale mural, where in their communities would they paint it? Why?

PRESENTING AND RESPONDING

Recommended for grades 6 and above.

In this exercise, students will write personal responses to *The Child Mother* using word banks. Ask students to spend 2 minutes looking carefully at the lithograph and then writing 15 words that best describe what they see and feel. These words can include colors, nouns, emotions, moods, adjectives, verbs—whatever strikes them. Invite the class to use their word banks to aid in writing a personal response to the artwork. Ask students to share their writings. How did hearing other responses deepen their personal understanding of *The Child Mother*?

CONNECTING

Recommended for grades 9 and above.

Large-scale murals communicate powerful messages to a broad audience. Ask students to research murals where they live. Baltimore has many rich examples to study, if the communities in which students live do not. Ask students to share examples of murals that promote unity in a time of discord, assert ethnicity, or celebrate cultural pride.

DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS

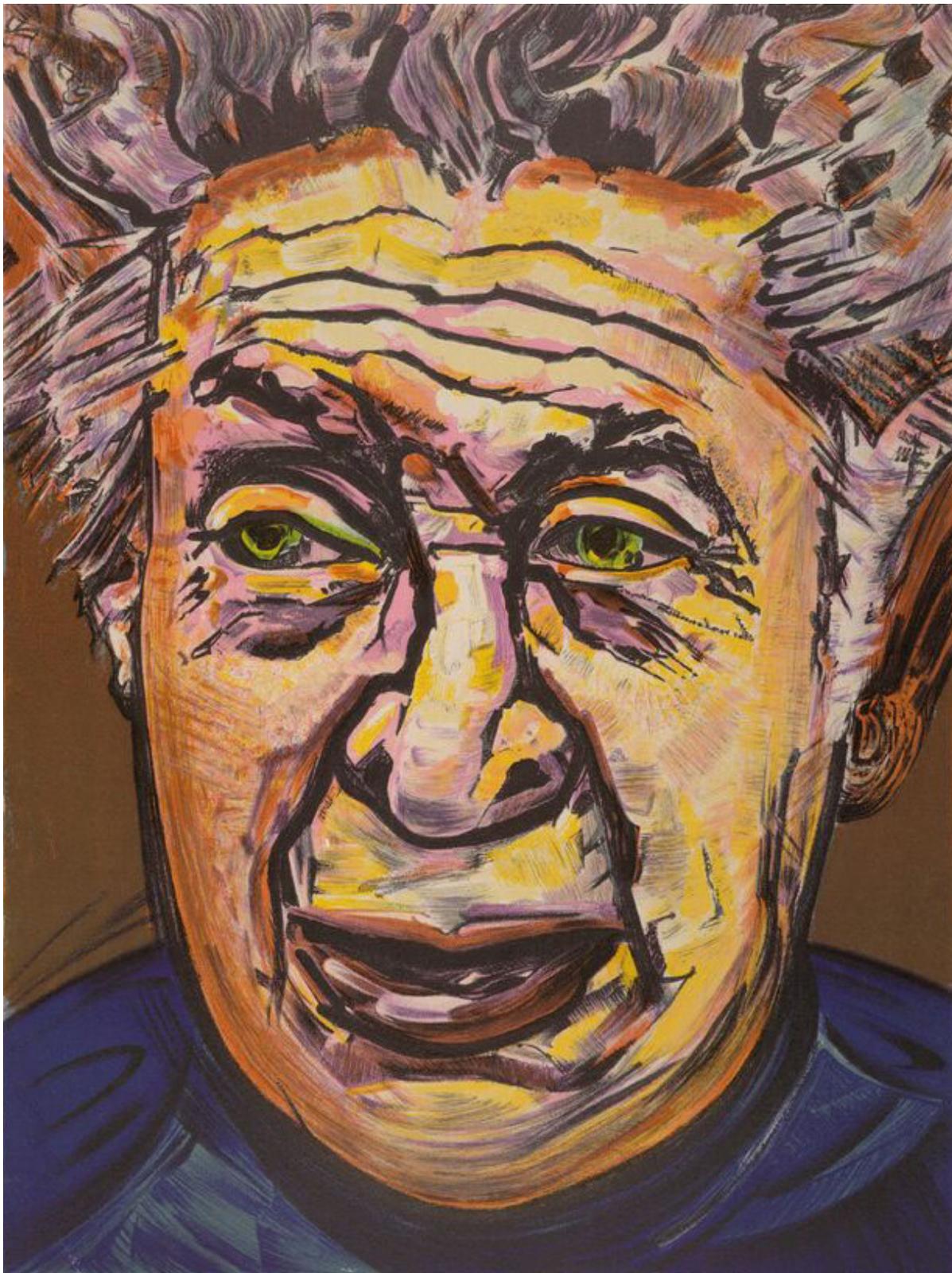


David Alfaro Siqueiros (Mexican, 1896-1974). *The Child Mother*. 1956. Phototransfer lithograph. Sheet: 895 x 670 mm. (35 1/4 x 26 3/8 in.) Image: 768 x 584 mm. (30 1/4 x 23 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Promised gift of a MAD Gathering to The Baltimore Museum of Art, BMA R.17731. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City



David Alfaro Siqueiros in Lecumberri, México, D.F., 1960. Photograph by Héctor García.
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DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS



David Alfaro Siqueiros (Mexican, 1896-1974). *Self-Portrait*. 1965. Color lithograph on paper. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; the Ruth Bowman and Harry Kahn Twentieth-Century American Self-Portrait Collection. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City

