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MEDIA CONTACTS

Melissa Abraham
Getty Communications
(310) 440-6861
mabraham@getty.edu

Vicki Curry
City of Los Angeles
(213) 978-0741
vicki.curry@lacity.org

SIQUEIROS' INFLUENTIAL MURAL *AMÉRICA TROPICAL*, CONSERVED BY THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE, ON VIEW TO THE PUBLIC OCTOBER 9

The City of Los Angeles and the Getty Conservation Institute Are Set to Unveil América Tropical 80 Years After David Alfaro Siqueiros First Painted the Mural



Getty Conservation Institute conservators working on the *América Tropical* mural. © J. Paul Getty Trust.

LOS ANGELES— *América Tropical*, the only surviving public mural by **David Alfaro Siqueiros** in the United States still in its original location, is set to open to the public on October 9, 2012, 80 years after the mural was first painted by Siqueiros.

The influential work has been conserved through an ongoing public-private partnership between the **City of Los Angeles** and the **Getty Conservation Institute (GCI)**.

"*América Tropical* has been an inspiration to numerous artists, educators, and social activists about the importance of freedom of expression since its unveiling in 1932," said Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. "This project tells the story of Siqueiros' incredible artistic talent and his unwavering commitment to people, of censorship during a period of great political upheaval,

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and of its preservation and enduring presence. I'm proud that the City and the Getty Conservation Institute have come together to make this important investment in public art."

Tim Whalen, director of the Getty Conservation Institute, said, "Providing public access to *América Tropical* has been central to this project. From the Getty Conservation Institute's initial involvement in 1988, it has been a persistent advocate for the conservation of the mural, and the construction of the shelter, and a public viewing platform. We are so pleased to bring *América Tropical* back to the people of Los Angeles."

David Alfaro Siqueiros, one of the great Mexican artists of the 20th century, painted *América Tropical* in 1932 on the second story exterior wall of the Italian Hall on Olvera Street, in the area of downtown Los Angeles known as El Pueblo.

The mural depicts a Mexican Indian tied to a double cross with an American eagle above him, and revolutionary soldiers—one aiming at the eagle—closing in. Controversial from the start, within a few months the mural was partially whitewashed, and it was completely obscured by whitewash within a decade. The work was virtually forgotten until the 1960s, when the rise of the Chicano mural movement brought a renewed interest in *América Tropical* and Siqueiros.

Now conserved, the mural boasts a new protective shelter spanning the south wall of the Italian Hall—a canopy with sun shades on each side to protect the mural from direct exposure to sun and rain. A rooftop platform also has been constructed to allow public viewing. The América Tropical Interpretive Center (ATIC), managed by El Pueblo, is located on the ground floor of the historic Sepulveda House and its exhibits explore the history and techniques used to create *América Tropical*, the conservation process, and the artistic legacy of David Alfaro Siqueiros.

The \$9.95 million public-private investment—a \$3.95 million commitment from the Getty and \$6 million from the City of Los Angeles—is the culmination of years of effort to present and conserve *América Tropical*. The ongoing advocacy and expertise of the Getty Conservation Institute has been central to the endeavor to save the work, as has the generous financial support of Friends of Heritage Preservation, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the community support represented by Amigos de Siqueiros.

Owing to the early whitewashing and ongoing exposure to the elements, the mural's pictorial surface is significantly deteriorated and its colors have become faint, but the power of the image and Siqueiros' composition remain as strong as ever. The GCI has worked to conserve and stabilize the mural to honor and protect the artistic legacy which remains from Siqueiros' own hand.

The GCI also has carried out extensive research, documentation, and conservation treatment, including plaster stabilization, cleaning, and consolidation, and GCI scientists have conducted scientific studies to identify the materials originally used by Siqueiros to create the mural. The GCI will share this information to inform the conservation of other Siqueiros works.

Following the completion of the conservation project, the GCI has committed to maintaining and conserving the mural for the next decade. The long-term stewardship of the mural and the América Tropical Interpretive Center rests with the City of Los Angeles.

Architectural firm Brooks + Scarpa oversaw the design and construction of the shelter, platform, and Interpretive Center for the city of Los Angeles' Bureau of Engineering. The design firm IQ Magic developed the concept for the Interpretive Center, under the guidance of the City and Amigos de Siqueiros.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Malibu.

The Getty Conservation Institute works internationally to advance conservation practice in the visual arts—broadly interpreted to include objects, collections, architecture, and sites. The Institute serves the conservation community through scientific research, education and training, model field projects, and the dissemination of the results of both its own work and the work of others in the field. In all its endeavors, the GCI focuses on the creation and delivery of knowledge that will benefit the professional conservation community through scientific research, education and training, model field projects, and the dissemination of the results of both its own work and the work of others in the field. In all its endeavors, the GCI focuses on the creation and delivery of knowledge that will benefit the professionals and organizations responsible for the conservation of the world's cultural heritage.

Additional information is available at www.getty.edu.

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AMÉRICA TROPICAL RELATED PROGRAMMING



Roberto Berdecio, a close associate of Siqueiros during the 1930s, stands in front of *América Tropical* shortly after completion.

© 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SOMAAP, Mexico City. Photo: The Getty Research

A number of celebratory events are planned leading up to and after the opening of Siqueiros' *América Tropical*, including film screenings, mural tours in downtown Los Angeles focusing on the Chicano mural movement, a two day symposium, a festival at El Pueblo, and more. See below for details.

Thursday, September 27, 2012 – 7 p.m.

***Under the Stars* – with Gregorio Luke**

El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument
Father Serra Park, 125 Paseo de la Plaza

Free, no reservation required. For more information, visit <http://www.amigosdesiqueiros.org>

Gregorio Luke, an expert in Mexican and Latin American art and culture, presents his popular outdoor multimedia show that looks at the life and work of David Alfaro Siqueiros.

Organized by Amigos de Siqueiros, with the support of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

Thursday, October 4, 2012 – 7 p.m.

Letters to Siqueiros

Includes screening of Jesus Treviño's film, *América Tropical*.

Pico House, El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, 424 N. Main Street

Free, no reservation required. For more information, visit <http://www.amigosdesiqueiros.org>

Award-winning filmmaker and author Jesus Treviño will screen *América Tropical*, his 1971 documentary about David Alfaro Siqueiros. He will be joined by artists Wayne Healy, Barbara Carrasco, and John Valadez, each reading a letter to Siqueiros describing his impact on them personally and in their work, a letter none had the opportunity to send to Siqueiros during his lifetime.

Organized by Amigos de Siqueiros, with the support of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

Friday, October 5, 2012 – 7:00 p.m.

Siqueiros in Los Angeles, a lecture by Dr. Irene Herner Reiss

Pico House, El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, 424 N. Main Street

Free, no reservation required. For more information, visit <http://www.amigosdesiqueiros.org>

Celebrated author, historian, and Siqueiros expert Dr. Irene Herner Reiss will present a lecture about the time Siqueiros spent in Los Angeles and the roll of the mural as a cultural artifact in a city where the past is often forgotten.

Organized by Amigos de Siqueiros, with the support of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

Tuesday, October 9, 2012 – 12 pm

Opening of América Tropical

El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, Sepulveda House, 125 Paseo de la Plaza

Opening of the América Tropical Interpretive Center and the mural to the public.

Tuesday, October 16 and Wednesday, October 17

***The Siqueiros Legacy: Challenges of Conserving the Artist's Monumental Murals*
A Two-Day Symposium**

Oct. 16 morning at the Getty Center, afternoon at El Pueblo/ATIC; Oct. 17 at the Getty Center
For more information, visit www.getty.edu

A group of international speakers will present the many different aspects of conservation, transportation, installation, and presentation associated with some of Siqueiros' most important murals in Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Southern California.

Saturday, October 20 and Saturday, October 27, 2012 – 9 am to 1 pm

Continuing the Siqueiros Legacy: A Mural Tour of Eastside LA

Departs from América Tropical Interpretive Center

El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, 125 Paseo de la Plaza, entrance on Olvera Street

\$20, \$10 students; Reservations available as of September 20, 2012. For more information visit www.getty.edu.

Artist Raoul De La Sota will lead a bus tour of Los Angeles murals, including works by East Los Streetscapers, Judy Baca, Kent Twitchell, and many more. Tour begins with a viewing of the mural *América Tropical* by David Alfaro Siqueiros at the América Tropical Interpretive Center. Wear comfortable shoes as there will be some walking as we disembark and re-board at key murals along the way.

Organized by the Getty Conservation Institute

Saturday, November 3, 2012 – 12 pm to 7 pm

¡América Tropical! A Festival Celebrating Siqueiros

La Plaza de Cultura y Artes and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

501 N. Main Street, Los Angeles

Free admission. For more information, visit www.getty.edu

Eighty years after it was first painted, the mural *América Tropical* by David Alfaro Siqueiros – one of the great Mexican artists of the 20th century – is again on view to the public. Bring your family to this festival celebration and explore the artistic, social, and historical significance of *América Tropical* through food, music, dance, children's activities and more.

Organized by the Getty Conservation Institute, La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

OTHER RELATED SITES:

América Tropical Interpretive Center

Sepulveda House, 125 Paseo de La Plaza

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Open Tuesday–Sunday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.