

Notes on Mexican Art
March 16, 2005

“Moses” by Frida Kahlo

- Responses
 - overwhelming
 - confusing because identities of characters are not clear
 - portrait of the mind
 - surreal mind landscape
- Items of notice
 - historical figures, e.g. Hitler, Jesus, the Devil, Gandhi
 - Jesus, Hitler, and the Devil all in same general vicinity
 - female anatomical structure
 - Moses centered among famous people
 - skeletons on both sides
 - diagram of mitosis
 - surroundings based on historical beliefs
 - philosophers below a skeleton
 - sun above Moses
 - free-form association
- Ideas
 - importance of birth
 - purpose of life
 - society based on scholarship, religion, and civilization
 - the circle of life
 - life of the whole world from different view points
 - Christianity is connection to the world and its thinkers
 - convergence of native culture with Christianity
 - unification of two religions (i.e. Christianity and native) through conflict
 - Moses as the original leader, taking people to God
 - sun demonstrates strong foundation provided by native beliefs
 - Why is painting centered on Moses and not Christ?
 - torn between two religions
 - rebellion against giving up tradition and completely accepting Christianity

“Diego y yo” by Frida Kahlo

- third eye -> wisdom?
- Diego as Frida’s third eye -> Diego sees her all the time
- Diego is key to wisdom for Frida (?)
- Diego was a problem, remained influential
- Diego as bad husband
 - obsessed
 - driven in art
 - pushes Frida away

- life would have been better for Frida if Diego were not around (?)
- Frida is always compared to Diego
 - Diego is a brand on Frida (?)
 - causes opposition/conflict between Diego and Frida
- hair around neck symbolizes suffocation

“Echo of a Scream” by David Siqueiros

- possible modern interpretation -> stance against illegal abortions
- Mexican revolution left people lonely
- Latin Americans tearing themselves to shreds
- child represents most basic human instinct -> just want to scream
- echo because things haven't stopped, things go on and on
- infant is suffering abandonment from all that can be perceived
- petroleum industry is beginning to develop

Woman Grinding Corn by Diego Rivera

- Mexicans are hard-working people
- living off the land
- women have been excluded from social and economic developments
 - exclusion continues
 - women must continue with tradition
- women expected to do the chores
- women have no identity
- women “equal” to men but remain subservient

“Wall Street Banquet” and “Our Bread” by Diego Rivera

- poor vs. rich
- items of importance appear in center of painting
 - position frequently occupied by Jesus
 - “Wall Street Banquet” – safe and ticker-tape machine
 - “Our Bread” – person holding bread, large group of people
- sense of community in “Our Bread”