

“Close-Up on Art: Study Paper – Diego Rivera’s “Bathers”

By: Deborah Pascavage



“Bathers” (a study for El Bano on Tehuantepec - mural for Secretaria de Education Publica, Mexico City)

Diego Rivera, Mexican, 1886-1957

Gift of the Estate of Herbert E. Toor

Oil on Canvas

Completed approximately 1925, Mexico City, Mexico

Rivera’s work could be deemed **Social Protest Art**. Social Protest Art is art that addresses political and social issues, as well as power structures in society. A good example of Social Protest Art is “Guernica” by Picasso, where he used his painting to make a powerful political statement about the Nazi’s bombing of the town of Guernica in Spain.

Rivera often glorified the working class, and portrayed the excesses of capitalism and other political themes in his work. “Bathers” is a study that shows us Rivera’s interest in poor, working people. It gives us a glimpse into his love of folk art and the indigenous cultural history of Mexico.

“Close-Up on Art: Study Paper – Diego Rivera’s “Bathers”

By: Deborah Pascavage

Rivera was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, to a middle class family. He studied art as a child. After secondary school, he traveled to Europe to further his art education. The Post Impressionists, as well as Italian Renaissance frescoes, influenced him. He returned to Mexico to participate in a government sponsored Mexican mural program.

He was part founder of the Revolutionary Union of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, and he joined the Communist Party. His murals deal with Mexican Society and reflect the Mexican 1910 Revolution. He was deeply committed to social change, and his interest was in creating art for the masses, particularly the working class.

Rivera used his position as an artist, and his ability to create large-scale murals to make social statements and political commentaries.

Stylistically, his art is a fusion of Pre-Columbian, Folk and Modern Art. His large, simplified forms and patches of color reflect the influence of the Cubists and Paul Cezanne, both of which he was exposed to and enthusiastically embraced. His bold colors indicate an Aztec influence. He exaggerated scale.

I selected this artwork for many reasons. It appeals to me visually – I love how it is flat but conveys movement, in a personal, intimate way, like Degas’s ballerinas. I like to see studies that artists have done for future works. I don’t know very much about Rivera, and I think this is a nice piece for discussion about processes artists use to prepare for their final piece. Rivera is an interesting artist and his work (and life) invites comparisons with Picasso, Anselm Kiefer, etc.

Sources:

www.diego-rivera-foundation.org

Wikipedia.com

History of Art, H.W. Janson and Anthony Janson

Deborah Pascavage 11/30/18