

Siqueiros and Surrealism?

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In 1937, the image of a painting by David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Collective Suicide* (1936),¹ appeared in the catalogue of the “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” exhibition in New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), edited by Alfred H. Barr Jr., with two essays by Georges Hugnet. It was listed as object thirteen in the exhibition guide together with other works by Paul Klee, Oscar Dominguez, Yves Tanguy, an image of the strange architecture of the mailman Cheval, and a collage by Karl Schwitters, works all grouped under the title “Creation of Evocative Chaos,” and illustrated in a chapter titled “Artists independent of the Dada-Surrealist movements.” Arranged alphabetically, the chapter includes works by CC. Beall, Peter Blume, Alexander Calder, Federico Castellón, Walt Disney, Arthur H. Dove, Walker Evans, Lorser Feitelson, Reuben Lucius Goldberg, Julio Gonzalez (Catalan artist), Wyndham Lewis (English), Knud Merrild, Georgia O’Keeffe, Wallace Putnam, Pierre Roy (French), André Smith, James Thurber, and Kristians Tonny (Dutch). This group of works, mostly by American artists, amongst them photographers, painters, cartoonists, writers, graphic artists, is as varied and different as can be, and the selection is in itself worthy of research.²

In April 2009, the Tate Modern in London exhibited another work by Siqueiros: *Cosmos and Disaster* of 1936, in its variegated permanent exhibition, “Surrealism and Beyond. Poetry and Dream.”³ Both paintings by Siqueiros are apocalyptic visions of the approaching Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Although Siqueiros is better known as one of the three greatest Mexican realist muralists of the twentieth century, it is strange, though indicative, that two of his works are recognized in such different moments of the history of modern art— in

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1936 and in 2009—as Dada/surrealist expressions. Indicative, because one cannot forget historical Surrealism’s fundamental involvement with Communism during the 1930s, nor with the concept of art as a revolutionary endeavor in and of itself.

To be a militant of the Communist Party during the thirties was quite different than before or after the decade. Siqueiros’s militancy at that time had to do with the idea that the world can be changed. But it also related to the idea that art is a testimony of hopes and horrors and that mural paintings could provide collective therapy for self esteem. While painting, he fulfilled a militant duty. Siqueiros insisted in 1943, during the Second World War, that art “...can be a combat weapon as powerful and efficient as the most powerful and efficient physical weapons used in military war. Art is a weapon that penetrates the eyes, the ears... the deepest and subtlest human feelings.”⁴

Siqueiros refers to his own experience during the first thirty years of the twentieth century in Mexico: “We (the revolutionary artists of Mexico) had initially come forth as artists, but we have actually become leaders of the workers’ movement. Without ceasing to be artists, we continued to be artists without ceasing to be leaders. We Mexican painters were the leaders of miners’ strikes, as well as the leaders of the railroad workers’ strike in Mexico City in 1929, and of the *Confederación Sindical Unitaria*.”⁵

Siqueiros’ involvement as a soldier in the Mexican Revolution, had convinced him, as he put it, “that art has played an important social role in all important periods of history, whether as an art of the State or as subversive art created against the State.... It seemed obvious to us, although it was shocking to the aesthetes— those embryos of art purism—that Christian art had been nothing more or less than propaganda.”⁶

In Mexico, muralists developed juxtapositions of pre-Columbian and indigenous significance with modern artistic approaches that painters brought back from Paris. This allowed them to transcend the limits of Greco-Roman classicism, to recover archaic mythical significations of Mesoamerica and New Spain, and to generate by means of works of world-renowned value a cultural renaissance that related to a nationalist, independent, and sovereign Mexican cultural identity and that encompassed the whole country. However, at the beginning of the 1930s, the Mexican muralists also assimilated machine aesthetics, integrating the forms and rhythms of the myth of progress into their art. They found that despite the cultural differences between Mexico and the U.S. their idea of paradise coincided with the model of the “American Dream.”

In spite of the great diversity present in their works, the muralists were united in constructing an original mestizo formal synthesis. Beyond their innovations in

modern art, these artists were part of a Eurocentric circle of fine art that contributed to the millennial Panorama that invoked the *Zeitgeist* of Western civilization. Siqueiros devoted his entire life to fulfilling the aspirations he shared with his American friend the writer Hart Crane, whom he met in Taxco in 1931. He shared Crane's belief that "new conditions of life generate new forms of spiritual articulation."⁷ Siqueiros lived in political exile in Los Angeles, California for almost the entire year of 1932, after suffering part of 1930 in jail, and spending 1931 in home confinement in the mining town of Taxco for his political commitment to communism and his clashes with the Mexican government. In Los Angeles, he escaped the rage of President Calles, once his friend and comrade as a soldier in the Mexican Revolution. In Los Angeles Siqueiros painted the first modernist exterior murals.⁸ At the end of 1932 he was deported by the U.S. immigration authorities because one of his murals depicted a large figure of a crucified Mexican worker beneath the eagle of the dollar bill. For the next few years he moved between Uruguay and Argentina.

As soon as he arrived in Los Angeles, Siqueiros gave a talk at the John Reed Club, sponsored by the American Communist Party, where he stated that "...new social conditions create corresponding means of plastic expression. [...] Played with a church organ, even the most baroque 'danzón'⁹ becomes a sacred chant," he told the press.¹⁰ Siqueiros realized that changes in awareness imply a new eros, a new sensuality or a different sensitivity, a different way of seeing. "What is a creator but a discoverer?" Siqueiros asked his friend Julio Scherer in an interview in Lecumberri jail in 1965, "and what is a discoverer but man before infinity, with infinite possibilities to create the worlds he pleases, the men he pleases, the suns he pleases; to cover the mountains with lava or snow, to make fertile wasted valleys, to mold flowers that never wilt, to make Spring or Autumn eternal?"¹¹

Towards a Technical Revolution of Painting

Siqueiros later asserted that in the United States he faced "...unexpected physical realities which led me to conclude that all the techniques and methodologies of contemporary pictorial production are archaic and thus anachronistic. I learned that the process of pictorial technique, and of technique in general, is the fundamental premise of all transcendental artistic production. I learned that tools and artistic production processes had a generic value which fertilized aesthetic expression."¹² Siqueiros was convinced that "only a mechanical and dialectical technique is capable of integrally expressing the revolution..." Art in the age of the machines aspired "towards a Technical Revolution of Painting"¹³ involving not just "a technique and a style that sympathizes with the Revolution, but an art that is revolution in itself."¹⁴

His friend Fernand Léger, also a communist sympathizer, had been experimenting with film since the twenties. By 1934 Léger had realized that the defining element of the era was speed, and that an innovative mural movement was needed to revolutionize the forms of the past. In order to be simultaneously popular, collective, synthetic, and contemporary, murals had to be made from rich and innovative modern artistic materials. Léger pronounced that “Today’s scientific achievements have opened for us an unlimited field of previously unknown visual forms.”¹⁵

In the Museum of Modern Art catalogue *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism*, Georges Hugnet states in his chapter on Dada that the twentieth-century landscape of artistic endeavor had been marked by “confusion of genres, of techniques and media.” He writes that the systematic exploration of every possibility for purposes of plastic representation is characteristic of Dada as is a desire to “wipe out existing notions of beauty.”¹⁶ In his chapter on Surrealism, Hugnet adds that “...very particular [Surrealist] poetry consists in technical inventions and...unprecedented images of reality and unreality mysteriously precise like mathematical magic.”¹⁷

Siqueiros’ Experimental Workshop, New York

Siqueiros founded his Experimental Workshop (hereafter “SEW”) located at 5 West 14th Street near Union Square in New York City, at the beginning of 1936, after the “International Conference of Artists” organized by artist members of the U.S. Communist Party, as part of the “International policy of the Communist Party’s Open Popular Front against fascism and war.” This was before he traveled to Spain to become a soldier. In his New York workshop Siqueiros directed a group of young American and Latin American artists who wished to participate in the Communist party’s antifascist, antiwar propaganda efforts. The International Communist Front allowed non-Communists to participate as long as they were united in their antifascist positions. In 1936 Siqueiros declared, “We in *The Experimental Workshop* do not represent a new union, nor any particular ideological group. The members of this group are artists with several ideologies, interested in working on technical and aesthetic problems within art, with the goal of finding new roads leading to a methodology of functional revolutionary art, produced for the masses, with the corresponding aesthetic control of those masses.”¹⁸

Siqueiros had first visited New York two years before he formed the Workshop, in 1934. He entered the country as an *indocumentado* upon his return from political exile in Uruguay and Argentina. Upon his arrival in Manhattan that year he met with colleagues from the “American Communist Party” and told them that his presence represented an “advance scouting to organize an international team of

‘Modern Visual Arts and Graphics Technicians.’”¹⁹ He brought with him a proposal for a manifesto on public art titled “Hacia la transformación de las artes plásticas” (“Towards the Transformation of the Visual Arts”) and with it he planned to organize a workshop-school of graphic arts. He announced that artists from all over South America had agreed to congregate in New York, rather than in old London or bohemian Paris. By the beginning of the thirties Mexican artists like Siqueiros, and Diego Rivera knew that New York was becoming the new mecca of avant-garde art. Siqueiros declared to his American comrades that he was the advance guard; the rest—including Antonio Berni from Argentina, Tarsila Amaral and Oswaldo Andrade from Brazil, and Luis Arenal and Xavier Guerrero from Mexico—would arrive later. He included three highly representative artists of South American art in this project, even though they never actually arrived in Manhattan.

Back in New York as an illegal citizen in 1936 and writing in the third person, Siqueiros wrote, “Siqueiros has, with renewed vigor, and perhaps with more experience, taken up arms in a country which, because of its industrial character, facilitates the work. Fifteen days of agitation among intellectual circles in New York were enough to give life to the initial nucleus.”²⁰ The work of the Siqueiros’ Experimental Workshop started out in a large loft in Union Square. “Roberto Berdecio²¹, Harold Lehman, Sande McCoy (sic), Jackson Pollack (sic)²², George Cox, Clara Mahl, Axel Horr (sic)²³, Louis Ferstadt, Conrad Vasquez, Luis Arenal²⁴, José Rodriguez²⁵, Antonio Pujol,²⁶ and Jesús Bracho, all assembled around the Mexican master and revolutionary. From New York Siqueiros wrote to his Uruguayan wife and great love, Blanca Luz Brum, whom he had married in Los Angeles but had been separated from for over two years, that the American Communist Party clearly understood the fundamental role played by technically well-done agitprop art that could compete with advertising. He thought that “...in the visual arts material elements have a generic aesthetic expressive value stemming from them, blood of their blood [...] The development of modern visual art production is based on this reality.”²⁷ The center of their creative work was based on Siqueiros’ concept of art that understood it not only as a revolutionary weapon against Franco, Hitler, Mussolini, and William Randolph Hearst and other European, Mexican and American tycoons, but as a revolutionary activity in itself.

In diverse writings of 1936 Siqueiros detailed with fascination his day-to-day discovery of new materials—no more oil colors, but pyroxylin, Duco enamel (a Dupont product) produced by mixing several different cellulose nitrates. The workshop members appropriated paint used for automobiles for art. Harold Lehman, an American artist who took part in all of Siqueiros workshops and activities in the U.S. later remembered going with the Mexican artist to buy car-paint

pigments at the Valentine Paint Co. on 25th Street. In his many letters to Blanca Luz Brum, María Asúnsolo²⁸, Angélica Arenal, and Antonio Gutiérrez, Siqueiros described these explorations.

He also wrote about other experiments in art with mediums, tools and objects taken from the world of construction and industry: “In the United States, you can find the forerunners of commercial art and advertising art, which have developed the use of compressors and spray-guns, those modern tools that are indispensable to the ends we seek to achieve.”²⁹ Several of the Surrealist artists had also explored the use of elements that had been foreign to painting, starting with diverse collage techniques invented by Picasso and Braque. Hugnet wrote that collages “...add the supernatural spark of that anonymous and mechanical liberty which transports painting outside its own limits...” He noted that Max Ernst added what he called *frottage* or rubbing to this process, “by which he reveals with infinite variety the otherwise invisible secrets of objects.”³⁰ Hugnet valued Siqueiros’ contributions in the same way that he admired the other leading Surrealists’ technical experiments. Siqueiros played the same cards, from a different point of view.

In 1939 the English artist Gordon Onslow Ford, who had never met Siqueiros, brought his recent “coulages” to New York. These were small-format paintings onto which he had dripped and splattered Ripolin enamel, allowing juxtapositions of colors to arise by chance through very similar processes to those Siqueiros had been experimenting with since 1936. While in New York Siqueiros simultaneously wrote love letters to María Asúnsolo, Angélica Arenal and Blanca Luz Brum in which he described the artistic experiments performed in the Experimental Workshop. “In this last period, based on my earlier experiences,”³¹ he wrote, “I’ve been up to my ears in a modern artistic medium called nitrocellulose, which is achieving the most profound revolution in artistic materials. [...] This new material has replaced all the traditional means of painting as far as industrial painting is concerned. [...] It is a by-product of cotton, just like the most violent explosives. Its elasticity, its transparency, and its almost instantaneous drying time exceed all the processes and sensualities of its now-antiquated predecessors, while allowing the most innovative and exciting textures.”³²

Siqueiros then discovered ways to visually represent fantastic explosions in experimenting with new pictorial signifiers, such as those produced by manipulating these commercial materials. “In the experimental workshop in New York,” he wrote to Blanca Luz, “we have finally been able to find something marvelous—similar only to the mystery of biological creation, the secret of geological configurations, the mystery of the creation as a whole—through the use of a simple overlaying of colors that through absorption, in a tremendous and inexplicable union, create the

strangest and most glorious visual phenomena.” According to Lehman, the dilution of lacquer with thinner created these fantastic emanations, but their smoky effect resulted from adding more paint to the first thick layer of paint with an air gun. Siqueiros testified that the “first revelation” was produced on a small wooden board dropped on the floor. As Lehman still vividly remembered in 1994, they first made a small hole in the cans, and each poured the paint onto the board, splashing it first with color and then with thinner. “We were able to create the most unsuspected and dynamic things,” Siqueiros told Blanca Luz. “These forms were blended and mutually destroyed, casting the synthesis of their collision into the air. Broken rhythms, rhythms we might call syncopated, come together only for the same dialectical reason that all physical things in life summarize themselves into balance; for the same reason that the cellular scheme is deeply harmonious, as proven by microscopes.”

Axel Horn, a member of the Union Square workshop, published an article in 1966 recalling these initial experiments: “. . . we secretly got hold of a Lazy Susan from one of the tables of a neighboring cafeteria. Fastening pieces of plywood to it, we poured different colored lacquers while we made it spin. The striking combinations of color due to the resulting centrifugal action were immediately introduced into our paintings...”³³ Lehman further remarks that in the SEW “. . . we stopped doing easel painting, whose death Siqueiros had declared” and also replaced “those sticks with hairs,” as Siqueiros called brushes. They either stirred the paint with sticks, or sprinkled it over stencils and patterns, working on wooden, metal, sand, and paper surfaces or on concrete walls, and even on surfaces that were completely alien to art such as floats and silk screens. They also hurled other elements such as nails onto their pictorial surfaces. The paint was applied in thin layers or blended into impasto, and poured, splattered, or pressure-sprayed directly onto the pictorial space. Since the paint dried and hardened almost instantaneously, it could easily be removed, cut, scratched or scraped. Relief-forms could even be modeled with this material.

The only thing Siqueiros had no chance to do in New York was to paint murals. This would have been especially difficult since Rockefeller had banned Rivera and destroyed his mural—Rivera’s communist vision of progress—at the brand new Rockefeller Center in 1933-4. In Los Angeles, Siqueiros had already established the crucial importance of the accidental within painting. Adversity was to be a central creative source. Siqueiros integrated into his visual process the concept that artistic action arose from moments that erupted out of the unconscious, termed “free association,” “automatism” and “critical paranoia”³⁴ by psychoanalysis and Surrealism. It is no coincidence then that the picture *Suicidio Colectivo* was chosen for

the surrealist exhibition at MoMA in December-January 1936-1937.

Toward the Transformation of the Visual Arts

Just how to use this new technique to produce pictorial depth, an element which at that point seemed to him not just a problem of light but also one of “textural vibration, of dynamism in the (painting’s) superpositions,” was a question that concerned Siqueiros. He experimented and soon successfully achieved a sensation of infinite depth: he made holes, slicing the thick impasto, or constructed empty spaces on overlaid materials, like pieces of wood, or on smooth concave or convex surfaces. Thus a dynamic visual, cosmic space was randomly established which would later become an emotional atmosphere divided into receding planes.

To begin the first stage of the creative process, Siqueiros and the SEW members put the entire body and mind into action, because their first step of painting became a ritualistic, unpredictable, and liberating dance. It was a moment when the artist should let his emotions and playful spirit flow subjectively and spontaneously, thus opening the way to chance. There was a great sense of exaltation in the SEW about the completely unexpected possibilities of the pictorial experiments they were performing. Siqueiros believed that in the twentieth century a painter should be capable of arousing emotions in the urban masses while at the same time creating unknown experimental art forms, giving free rein to the desires of the unconscious mind, and aiming for a re-encounter with realist representation at the end of the process.

As Lehman recalled, once the paint was poured and spilled a design sometimes emanated from the similarly capricious forms that had taken shape on the surface. Using a film projector, the SEW members would trace the actual, realist design of the piece onto the surface, cut stencils into several shapes, especially curves and triangles, and then spray everything again with large brushes or compressors. In the early thirties Siqueiros had coined the phrase “controlled accident” as a way to describe his own unconscious processes as the foundation of his creativity. Chance was an important part of his ritual process and would continue to be so throughout his life, whenever he began a new pictorial process. The alternate term “controlled accident” was perfectly suited to describe his experiments with nitrocellulose: “Visual accidents can occur through the directed juxtapositions of several different colors, resulting in the most fantastic and unimaginable details. But accidents are only part of our process, because their plastic (visual) significance in painting will only be achieved as long as we are able to control and direct them.”³⁵ This is why Siqueiros thought that the role of the unconscious in art was accidental and, at the same time, had to be examined and controlled. He would re-elaborate

this expressionistic experimental method throughout his life, and always in relation to his political actions and utopian ideals.³⁶ His method included two clear stages of pictorial creation. The first was concerned with generating completely abstract, pure forms through chance and free association, or the “visual tumult.” Once the pictorial surface—the cosmos of that experimental juxtaposing process—had come about, the symbolic and political contents of the work or his systematized “ravings” were designed and added to that surface.

Siqueiros would never consider himself an abstract or surrealist artist; the communist Mexican artist had a sinner’s guilty conscience, and was fearful that “bourgeois and sensorial” individualist sensuality would interfere with his proselytizing mission. He wrote to his beloved María Asúnsolo from New York: “If you could see how well I can now visually think about political problems! [...] This used to be something almost impossible for me. I was totally dominated by the emotional and sensual aspects of art. A happy texture or an abstractly beautiful form sufficed to make me forget the initial premises of my political thinking...”³⁷ Yet on December 5, 1936, Siqueiros wrote to “comrades Pollack (sic), Sandy (sic), (and) Lehman”:³⁸ “I would like you to remember our last meeting at 5 West 14th St. when we unanimously agreed to temporarily close our workshop as a place for daily production so that I would have time to prepare my personal exhibition...” He further told them he needed to “go into seclusion” and expressed his excitement because “More than ever, I am very interested in the problems of form in art.”³⁹

According to Siqueiros’ own testimony, the first experimental picture to come out of the “New York Siqueiros Experimental Workshop” was *Nacimiento del Fascismo* (Birth of Fascism), a new piece in a series that Siqueiros first produced for an exhibit against fascism and war organized by the nearby New School for Social Research.⁴⁰ The painting achieved “...that superposition of the objective and the subjective, of true realism and mental realism...What lies before our eyes [...] and what hides from them, and yet interferes with vision through thought, memory, and imagination.”⁴¹

Siqueiros/Pollock; Pollock/Siqueiros

Jackson Pollock, at the time twenty-two years old, did odd jobs during Siqueiros’ SEW days, at the side of his protective older brother Sande who, according to Axel Horn, was more political and sophisticated than Jack. In a letter to Ellen Landau,⁴² Reuben Kadish remarks that the most fundamental element in Siqueiros and Pollock’s relationship was the enormous charismatic influence Siqueiros had on the young Pollock. After his timid participation in the SEW Pollock spent nearly two years submerged in severe alcoholism, which finally drove him to seek psychiatric help from Jungian analysts. At a New York State Hospital, he was

diagnosed as an upset young man who needed to calm down. His lack of emotional maturity was “‘starving’ in the search for a defined personality.”⁴³

In 1995, Peter Wollen wrote that Siqueiros’ influence over Pollock was anchored precisely in the young SEW apprentice’s search for personal and cultural identity.⁴⁴ In Siqueiros Pollock had come face to face with a brave figure, capable of killing or dying for his principles, arguably just as the old West’s cowboys had done. Siqueiros was not only a painter, but a militia soldier and an active militant. Pollock heard him recount tales of how Mexican artists had to defend their early mural projects with guns in their belts. At forty, Siqueiros was vehement and knew what he wanted. It seemed that no one could stop the force of his mesmerizing and powerful identity.

Further it had been very exciting for Pollock—whom Siqueiros called *simpático*—to think and talk with Siqueiros, and to get drunk with him. They were once found drunk, trying to choke one another under a table. At the same time he engaged in long discussions with him about the aesthetics of Mexican muralism, that based the future of art on pre-Columbian foundations while avoiding the dangerous territory of imitating its motifs and forms. Siqueiros challenged the young American artists he had met to go beyond the field of European art in order to discover a truly American tradition, and also the dynamism corresponding to the American continent.⁴⁵

According to Ellen Landau, Clement Greenberg thought that Siqueiros’ influence on the young painter the most significant in Pollock’s early work, although other historians and even Pollock himself argued that Orozco was more important in his development, or that “Orozco was the man.”⁴⁶ Orozco’s 1930 Pomona University mural, based on the myth of Prometheus, was the most powerful expressionist work Pollock had seen up to 1932. Pollock’s sketchbooks also reveal what he created after viewing Orozco’s other American murals such as *La épica de la Civilización Americana* (The Epic of American Civilization) at Dartmouth College (1932-1934). Some of his own works, such as *Naked Man with Knife* and a gouache on paper, both dated 1938-1940, bear close relation to Orozco’s murals at the Preparatoria in Mexico City, particularly, *La Trinchera* (The Trench) and *Las Dos Naturalezas del Hombre* (The Two Natures of Man), which Pollock had seen only in photos. While Pollock assisted his teacher, the American muralist Thomas Hart Benton, on his mural at the New School for Social Research, Orozco also painted a mural there. Many different influences became layered, since Siqueiros had also made a detailed analysis of Orozco’s Pomona mural before creating his *América Tropical*.

Kadish remembers that “Pollock had been familiar with Siqueiros’ work at least since 1932...” and that “...the arrival of Siqueiros in L.A. was as significant

as the arrival of the Surrealists in New York during the forties.” According to artist Peter Busa, a close friend of Pollock’s, Mexican artists taught their North American counterparts something fundamental, that “art could be ugly.”⁴⁷ In Landau’s view, Pollock’s 1941 painting *Bird* is a clear testimony of the Siqueiros’ motivating impact on his style. Landau believes that the composition was based both on both the actual viewing, and on photos of, *América Tropical*, a painting which Kadish had shown to Pollock. In this painting Pollock apparently condensed elements by both Orozco and Siqueiros. In *Bird* Pollock recreated the eye of the eagle at the top center that also appears in Siqueiros’ mural. Below it, in the compositional area that is most dynamic in Orozco’s *América Tropical* as well as in his *Prometeo* (Prometheus), that is, where the waist of the crucified man in the painting seems to be surrounded by a concentric movement, Pollock painted two concentric circles. In addition, Pollock also included the bird’s wings and abstracted concentric forms inspired by the realist forms of pre-Columbian sculpture that Siqueiros had painted on either side of the cross. Pollock used sand to achieve a thickened texture.

In addition to his deliberation of Siqueiros’ beliefs concerning cultural roots, Pollock later explored the subject of cultural identity in relation to tradition with John Graham. In his own pictorial work Pollock fused the shamanistic sense of Navajo sand paintings with the most advanced elements of industrial painting. The concept of scale and monumentality that characterized the Mexican muralists’ work definitively influenced Pollock as well, who set himself the task of going beyond easel painting. Greenberg sparked this exploration and encouraged Pollock to work on the monumental scale that Siqueiros had shown him. In 1945, Greenberg argued that Pollock’s work exhibited “...audacity, amplitude, and monumentality.” In his January 1947 joint interview with Pollock and Dubuffet, Greenberg concluded that “Pollock went beyond the easel, beyond mobile and framed paintings on his path towards muralism...”⁴⁸ Shortly thereafter Pollock applied for a Guggenheim grant and specified “...his purpose [was] to paint large mobile paintings as a vehicle between the easel and murals” since “I believe that easel painting is a dying form, and the tendency of modern feeling is towards the wall picture or mural.” However, he considered painting an intermediate means, “...in an attempt to point to the future without completely getting there.”⁴⁹

Greenberg promoted the idea that monumental painting was an excellent option for authentic North American art at the end of World War II.⁵⁰ Pollock “played the Americanist card when he deemed it convenient.”⁵¹ Along similar lines James Johnson Sweeney from the New York Museum of Modern Art, who had been writing about Pollock since 1944, used terms like “volcanic artist,” “explosive work,” “fiery,” “unpredictable,” “risk-taking,” “liberating,” “exuberant” and

“independent, with a native sensibility.” Wollen remarks that U.S. critics apparently described Pollock as if he were a mythic figure of a virile, pioneering, and innovative America.⁵²

The surrealist notion of allowing the revolutionary spirit to spring from the archaic flow of the unconscious through free association was well-suited to express a new and triumphant American cultural identity at the end of World War II. As Trotsky had claimed, artistic activity was in and of itself a political action. According to the art critic Harold Rosenberg—who at the time was also a Trotskyite sympathizer—the “action painter” had ceased to be a contemplative artist in order to become an action hero, that is, a hero of virtual action, since he engaged in psychological battles using artistic spaces as his battlefield. “This new hero in existentialist thinking would be an angst-ridden solitary creator, whose personal conflicts would be worked out in the act of painting—in a battle which in many ways could only be self-punitive.”⁵³ Here Rosenberg expresses a direct relationship, as well as a contrast, between the American and the Mexican way of understanding action painting. The abstract expressionist painter Robert Motherwell compared Pollock’s personality to Marlon Brando’s character in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and some even saw a parallel between Pollock and James Dean—including their tragic fate.

The myth of Western artists’ individual freedom, manufactured around Pollock, included the idea that the unconscious mind was the source of art. “When I paint,” Pollock said, “I am unaware of what I do... Painting has a life of its own.”⁵⁴ Fuller Potter said that Pollock’s work “...from 1947-1951 was so highly appraised and revered that little is said about his background. He has been categorized as a new miraculous entity that emerged from the creative breeding ground of a bohemian and romantic genius.”⁵⁵ This view was reaffirmed by the curatorial decisions made for the New York MoMA’s 1998 Pollock retrospective. Potter also related Pollock’s paintings to Duchamp’s experiments and to the Surrealists: “A man suddenly exploded in these works without resorting to his rational mind. It was like vomiting everything that has been buried within us for millions of years... a material our rational conscience was not aware of. I thought that this man was crazy...but this is where poetry emerged.”⁵⁶

Pollock never openly acknowledged the importance of his encounter with Siqueiros at the time nor later in 1947 when he appropriated the spirit of Siqueiros’ *Revolución Técnica de la Pintura*. After the SEW Pollock’s personal style continued to develop, now imbued with his discovery of Picasso and through encounters with immigrant Surrealists, particularly with Chilean artist Roberto Matta Echauren (1911-2002). For a while one of the fundamental elements in Pollock’s development was his stable, close relationship with his wife, the painter Lee Krasner. According to Axel

Horn, Krasner clearly understood how liberating Siqueiros' range of techniques had been for Pollock, although she detested the Mexican Stalinist since she was a friend of Greenberg's. Greenberg had at first sympathized with the Fourth Communist International led by Trotsky during the 1930s.

After the War, pure art and creative freedom became a fundamental banner for U.S. art sponsors and influential critics. Art evoked myths. Communication between art and the unconscious was reestablished by artists through the mediation of unconventional and individual rituals of creation. A decade after Siqueiros' experiments Pollock had made his famous "dripping and pouring" technique—splattering industrial paints and other kinds of objects and substances over diverse surfaces placed on the floor—his own. These were explorations in tune with the spirit of the time.

Jackson Pollock quite likely painted *Flame*, a small piece dated sometime between 1936 and 1938, after he met Siqueiros. It is not by chance that the curators at the MoMA placed it next to Siqueiros' *Collective Suicide* for years in the museum's permanent collection. In this small-format painting, as in others such as *Composition with Figures and Banners* (1934-1938) and *Overall Composition* (1934-1938), the young Pollock explored monumental painting in small-format scale, one of Siqueiros' specialties. Although he was not as bold as the Mexican artist in his use of materials and tools, he recovered a dynamic violence evocative of that in the sea in *Nacimiento del Fascismo*, along with the volcanic energy of other works by Siqueiros, especially *Collective Suicide*, as well as the bursting flashes of Orozco's *Prometheus*.

Pollock first learned to develop these concentric compositions from his teacher Benton. At the center of *Flame*, for example, amid the fire that completely covers the surface of the painting, one can distinguish a large phallus made of energy that is being flung out from the depths of the lava. This phallus is located in the same compositional position as the aggressive monster giving birth in Siqueiros' *Nacimiento del Fascismo*. The entire space in Pollock's *Flame* is painted as if set ablaze. Another of Pollock's experiments with Siqueiros' methodology is *Landscape with Steer*, a lithograph to which he added paint with an air brush. In this context it is also interesting to consider Pollock's *Man with Polygons* (1934-1938), probably developed from photos of Siqueiros' mural *Ejercicio Plástico*, created in Buenos Aires (1933), that Siqueiros, and Kadish had shown Pollock at the SEW. The two paintings are related because of similarly extremely foreshortened nude figures placed inside a multi-angular architectonic space.

Furthermore, drawings like Pollock's *Composition with Figures* (1938), based on Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* from the Sistine Ceiling and illustrated by Francis O'Connor in *Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Drawings, and Other*

Works, reveal the artist's interest in experimenting with a similar problem Siqueiros had worked on since Argentina, as well as in his mural for the former Santo Domingo customs office, also inspired by Michelangelo's oeuvre. The *Last Judgment* was also studied by Diego Rivera in New York in 1933, and by Burne Hogarth for his Tarzan comic book. Pollock also shared Siqueiros' interest in exploring in cubist/futurist fashion the Florentine's figures in their descent to Hell, as did other young artists like Philip Guston (Goldstein) who had been his student and assistant for the Los Angeles murals.

Controlled Accidents

Pollock's paintings of the thirties, and even up to 1944, were also influenced by Siqueiros' methodology wherein a cosmos is first randomly created and then the form is directed. Pollock later superimposed not ideological themes and realist forms but mythical suggestions: man and woman; man, woman and child; the bird man; the she-wolf; and birth and sacrifice. Working within his own personal style after World War II and like Siqueiros before him, Pollock used cut-outs from his paintings and with them created a particular feeling of empty space. Another fundamental characteristic shared by both painters was their work's ability to capture and express great energy and speed. Pollock would later direct and control his technique. In a 1950 interview, he told William Wright he had developed ways to determine how quickly the paint would flow. Instead of making sketches or studies Siqueiros would make a space for visual accidents to happen, thereby generating "...that organized thing that arises by who knows which terrible laws from within."⁵⁷ Siqueiros continued dripping paint many years later, experimenting with accidents and semi-abstract expressive forms, as he did on the folding screens at the Museo Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros (Mexico City) in pieces of acrylic.

We might recall a seed of Georges Braque's thinking that unconsciously (or only *nachträglich*) developed inside Siqueiros and which unexpectedly flowered between 1932 and 1936. This encounter with Braque, thirty years his senior, took place in Paris in 1920 when Siqueiros was 24. Perhaps inadvertently, Siqueiros had appropriated the core meaning of a text by the French cubist, one that Siqueiros himself published in his magazine *Vida Americana* (published only once, in Barcelona in 1921): "Painters think in shapes and colors; color absorbs or is absorbed, limited means create new styles, engendering new forms and sparking creation. New means, new subjects; painting is a mode of representation. We must not imitate what we seek to create..." In Pollock's time, after encountering Siqueiros and some other contemporary artists, in 1950 Pollock declared (again *nachträglich*): "...new needs require new techniques"; and "...modern artists have found new ways and new

means for their proposals. Each era discovers its own technique.”⁵⁸

However a basic difference between Siqueiros and Pollock was that the former needed to justify the ideological function of art. This is why Siqueiros understood that the role of the unconscious in art was accidental and at the same time had to be examined and controlled through the creation of a utopia—a fantasy in and of itself. For Siqueiros this utopia was also an illusion that could be defended on the battlefield. Pollock, on the other hand, encountered the creative process itself as a liberating ritual. In his view, there was no need for art to contain any rational content whatsoever, since artistic activity was mythical, mystical, subjective, and took part of the “other scene” or the imagery of dreams. For Pollock it was useless to speak of accidents in the context of painting, because painting was an uncontrollable process that flowed out of the unconscious, beyond the realm of will. Pollock declared that in painting “...there are no accidents, there is no beginning, and no end.” The creative process was not an accident but rather, in Jungian terms, a process of symbolization that was both transformational and ordering. Truth would emerge again from chaos and present itself as the result of an interior process.

For Pollock it was necessary to let go of reality in order to unleash and make objective the reality of the soul—one full of presence, and also a personification of desire, his sexuality, and of his demons. Through automatism, the artist plumbed deep and unforeseen dimensions and touched upon the shared archaic within the Jungian collective unconscious.⁵⁹ He could reach as far back as *Romulus and Remus* fed by a she-wolf. He could touch the supernatural, the authentic point of departure of history, where archetypes with nothing but chaos behind them reigned. Pollock died in an accident; he had been drinking in order to lose control completely.

Collective Suicide; Cosmos and Disaster

The style of the two paintings by Siqueiros, *Collective Suicide* and *Cosmos and Disaster*, which have guided our reflections since the beginning of the text, can be defined and summed up with the same type of language used at the time by the Surrealists. The curators of MoMA’s “Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism” exhibition in New York in 1936-7 specifically characterized their style in this way. Both works are almost abstract; they were made with experimental materials, generated strange forms, and developed new techniques. *Collective Suicide* is integrated with pieces of wood, like in a collage, and the many tiny, not more than one-inch-sized figures that are depicted in it were added with stencils. Both works exhibit Siqueiros’s own version of automatism, which, as I’ve noted, he named “controlled accidents,” his own version of automatism. Each one of them gives the impression of an explosive Cosmos, a sensation of chaos.

Collective Suicide is an almost abstract composition. Yet it gives an almost representational testimony to the Spanish Civil War, in which many citizens were ready to sacrifice themselves for their democratic rights. As in many other occasions in world history, the time and space of individuals is marked by one or all four horsemen of the apocalypse. A year later the same nightmare inspired Picasso's *Guernica*. In Siqueiros' picture many men and women, as well as their children and grandchildren, make the horrible decision to commit mass suicide, as their lives have become impossible. They take their own lives for the cause of liberty, fraternity and equal rights. Theirs is a decision to fight authoritarianism, misery, illness, and a lack of freedom, part of the eternal struggle for survival in a world led by diverse utopian visions and ideals for humankind. Here the sacred engagement with life is understood as a dedication and a path. Siqueiros—at that moment a militant and a partisan, preparing for warfare—dedicated himself to expressing this spirit artistically and with an open mind. To do so he appropriated all that Western art traditions offered, along with all that the universe of science and technology was discovering at the time, especially in America.

The great composer George Gershwin, along with his psychiatrist and friend Dr. Gregory Zilboorg, were collectors of Siqueiros' work. They helped him out of various financial difficulties in exchange for pieces like *La Madre Niña* and Gershwin's portrait. Zilboorg later donated *Collective Suicide* to the MoMA. Zilboorg had written an article about suicide, defining it as a preventable and therapeutically remediable result of depressive illness. He had also completed a study of the history of self-destruction in pre-industrial cultures. It is quite possible that when Siqueiros created his own version of a collective suicide, he had not only the Inca and Chichimeca histories in mind but also others, such as the one of the Jews at Masada, that his friend had described. Siqueiros believed that collective suicide and war were, in any case, better options than to abdicate freedom.

Siqueiros's painting *Cosmos and Disaster*, now at the Tate, is largely abstract; only a small flame in the middle of the dark canvas remains after the great explosion. Lines of force center the flame in the composition. The darkness in some parts of this all-over composition is reminiscent of the blackness surrounding van Dyke portraits. But it is constructed over the floor, and juxtaposes layers of paint that combine over the canvas to make strange, unexpected forms. It exhibits the same spirit as Ernst's *frottages*; perhaps that is why the picture currently hangs beside Max Ernst's *Dadaville* of 1924 in London. *Cosmos and disaster* is the actual subject matter of Siqueiros's Tate picture, painted in the same year as another of his impressive apocalyptic paintings, *The End of the World*, in which only one small figure is depicted in the midst of a city in flames.⁶⁰ After the war, the horseman of sickness appears

hand in hand with misery attacking everyone and anything in the midst of the fight of life to renew itself. Will only the horsemen of greed and war remain from the destruction brought by fascism and from all kinds of vertical positions, including Siqueiros' own? Siqueiros allows us to gaze upon horrific images of devastation and total chaos. His paintings of 1936, 1937 and 1939 are no doubt a reminder of the mystery of human and cosmic horror, and very much an expression of a fantastic art as well as surrealist thought.

According to Hugnet, André Breton, the pope of European Surrealism, "proposes to declare allegiance to folly, to dreams, to the absurd, to the incoherent, to the hyperbolic [...] The maps of dreams and of desires still hang on every wall..."⁶¹ Siqueiros wrote, "Thought is often clearer and more objective during dreams."⁶² From his standpoint, figurative painting did not create a space for objectivity but rather for utopia. The clarity of dreams is more about vision than it is about sight. For him it was not a question of imitating reality. Realist artists like him were not copyists, nor were they illustrators. They were creators of fantasies, visions, and statements.

1 David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Collective Suicide*, 1936, Duco Pyroxiline on wood with applied sections, 49 x 72 in., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Dr. Gregory Zilboorg.

2 Barr, the director of MoMA, had not integrated Mexican modern art into his synopsis of modern art in his book on Cubist and Abstract Art (1935), yet integrated this work of the Mexican artist into his Surrealist exhibition. See Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., essays by Georges Hugnet, *Fantastic Art Dada and Surrealism*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936; New York: Arno Press, 1968).

3 David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Cosmos and Disaster*, 1936, Duco Piroxilyn, sand, wood and copper mesh over plywood, approx. 24 x 29 inches. Loaned to the Tate in 2002 by the American Fund.

4 David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Manifiesto: 'In War Art of War,'" *Forma* (Chile, 1943).

5 David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo: memorias de David Alfaro Siqueiros* (México: Grijalvo, 1977), 225. Siqueiros acted as the Secretary General of the CSU between 1928 and 1929.

6 David Alfaro Siqueiros, document, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros (SAPS), "The Vehicles of Dialectic Subversive Painting," lecture, John Reed Club of Los Angeles, California, September 2, 1932.

7 Hart Crane became a close friend of Siqueiros in Taxco 1931. The promising young U.S. artist had gone to Mexico on a grant; however, Crane's alcoholism prevented him from creating the artwork for which he had been awarded. He was seemingly unable to withstand the pressure and committed suicide on the ship on his return home at the beginning of 1932. He wrote about the exhibition presented by Siqueiros in Mexico City's Galería del Casino Español at the end of 1931: "With parallel vigor and refinement, David Alfaro Siqueiros has brought to modern painting the coordinated human content and spiritual axis which had for long remained obscure in continental painting. The abstract

inquiries of Picasso, Braque, and others have probably taught him much. But it is also true that their contribution to his essential vision and ultimate mastery is limited.’

8 Siqueiros, who was a very well informed person, claimed that his murals were the first modern exterior murals. According to various Mexican muralists of the 1920s, artists had to research mural paintings before starting their own. They drew upon two older traditions of interior mural painting: Florentine Renaissance frescoes and Precolumbian murals (the latter tradition continued in the way in which campesino’s painted their kitchens). Only the French artist Jean Charlot, among the artists in the movement, knew something about fresco techniques in 1921. Siqueiros made many notes and wrote about his experience and knowledge of exterior muralism. Because he could not paint in fresco outdoors, he had to devise new tools, techniques and materials, and was inspired by the great advertising billboards of Los Angeles. One mural depicts a full page of the newspaper *El Universal* (1956), published at the end of my first catalogue/book *Siqueiros: El lugar de la utopía* (México: INBA, 1994). Siqueiros deals with exterior muralism as a new artistic and political statement and as an expression of the relationship of art and industrial technology.

9 “Danzón” is a Caribbean dance.

10 Siqueiros, “Subversive Painting,” Siqueiros, “Subversive Painting,” in Julio Scherer, *Siqueiros. La piel y la entraña* (1965)(México: Fondo de Cultura Económica 3rd ed., 2004), 159.

11 Siqueiros, *Siqueiros: La piel y la entraña*, 159.

12 David Alfaro Siqueiros, “Autorretratos de pintores mexicanos,” undated document from SAPS. The relation between Siqueiros and soviet artists, such as futurist poet Mayakovsky, has not been explored.

13 David Alfaro Siqueiros, document, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros CNCA/INBA, “Los vehículos de la pintura Dialéctico-Subversiva,” Speech for the Communist Party, Reed Club Conference in Los Angeles, California, September 2, 1932.

14 Siqueiros, interviewed in the paper *Crítica*, May 29, in document, SAPS, Buenos Aires, 1933.

15 Fernand Léger, *Funciones de la Pintura* (Madrid: Cuadernos para el diálogo; EDICUSA, 1969), 39.

16 Georges Hugnet, “Dada,” in *Fantastic Art Dada and Surrealism*, 23.

17 Georges Hugnet, “In the Light of Surrealism,” in *Fantastic Art Dada and Surrealism*, 39.

18 Siqueiros, document, SAPS; text about the Siqueiros Experimental Workshop, New York, 1936 (letterhead with handwritten corrections).

19 David Alfaro Siqueiros, Doc. Siqueiros/Berdecio Getty Research Institute (GRI), New York 1934. Typed and handwritten pages in the back of the Delphic Studios letterhead (Alma Reed’s Gallery in New York). It is the draft of an “Open letter to the visual and graphic artists of the United States.”

20 Siqueiros, “Open Letter.”

21 Roberto Berdecio, a painter who came from Bolivia and had been working with Siqueiros since 1932 in Los Angeles. Siqueiros entrusted him with his 1930s private documents on art, before he left for Spain. Today these documents are integrated to the archives of the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles.

22 Jackson Pollock was then a young apprentice. Although their relationship was conflictive, the twenty-two-year-old Pollock found Siqueiros fascinating as an artist, a revolutionary soldier, and as a man.

23 Axel Horn, American artist.

24 The painter/architect Luis Arenal became a close friend of Siqueiros. They met in Los Angeles in 1932. The Arenals had immigrated to the States during the revolution. Luis would always be very

near to Siqueiros, and became his brother-in-law in 1938 when Siqueiros married Angelica.

25 José Rodríguez was a Mexican painter who realized his own experiments with paint and new materials for art, which he shared with Siqueiros.

26 Antonio Pujol, a Mexican painter, became a muralist.

27 David Alfaro Siqueiros, document, Siqueiros/Berdecio, Getty Research Institute, New York, 1934 (typed pages on the Hotel Albert, Manhattan, letterhead).

28 María Asúnsolo was a Mexican beauty, the muse of various contemporary Mexican artists and one of their first dealers. Siqueiros had a very important love affair with her in the middle of the 1930s, which expressed itself in the form of a beautiful and interesting correspondence, published later by Raquel Tibol in one of her anthologies of the artists writings.

29 Man Ray, for example, at one time had used air brushes, while the Cubists, and later the Surrealists, likewise experimented with many diverse quotidian materials.

30 Hugnet, "In the Light of Surrealism," 43.

31 Siqueiros is clearly referring to the experiments with industrial colorants that he started in Los Angeles. In Argentina he used Keim, a local experimental industrial color in *Proletarian Victim* (1933), a monumental masterwork also owned by the MoMA. He used this paint, as well as the paint brush, for his mural *Ejercicio Plástico*, painted in a room (the bar) of the house of Argentinean tycoon Fernando Botana, owner of the important journal *El Clarín*.

32 David Alfaro Siqueiros, incomplete document, SAPS, New York 1936. Part of a letter to Blanca Luz Brum dated 9 June. Raquel Tibol included it later in her anthology *Palabras de Siqueiros* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996).

33 Axel Horn, "Jackson Pollock, The Hollow and the Bump," *The Carleton Miscellany* 7, no.3 (Summer 1966).

34 Just as an anecdote, Siqueiros recalls that the seventeen-year-old Salvador Dalí collaborated with him in Barcelona in 1920-21 for his project "La Revista Americana," where he wrote the first of his Manifestos "Tres Llamamientos de orientación actual a los pintores y escultores de la nueva generación Americana," or "Three Calls of contemporary artistic orientation for young painters and sculptors of the new American generation" (my translation).

35 Siqueiros, document, SAPS, "Siqueiros Experimental Workshop."

36 See the second part of my book *Siqueiros del Paraíso a la Utopía* (México, D.F.: CONACULTA, 2004).

37 David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Letter to María Asúnsolo" (Merita), New York, Thursday April 9, 1936 in Raquel Tibol, *David Alfaro Siqueiros* (México: Empresas Editoriales, 1969), 201.

38 David Alfaro Siqueiros, document, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York Branch, Jackson Pollock Papers.

39 This letter is a true jewel and was published previously by the author in Irene Herner, *Nets* (México: INBA; Arvil), note 56.

40 Siqueiros had experimented with Keim, a new industrial paint of Argentina, in 1934 during his stay in Uruguay and Argentina. His painting *Victima Proletaria* and the mural cycle *Ejercicio Plástico* both show this clearly. Also, paintings like *Explosion en la Ciudad* (1935; Museo de arte Carrillo Gil), painted in Mexico, show Siqueiros' explorations with industrial paint and adding cut-outs to the pictures.

41 Siqueiros to María Asúnsolo, in Tibol, *Siqueiros*, 131-132.

42 Courtesy of Ellen G. Landau.

43 Ellen G. Landau, "Jackson Pollock und die Mexikaner," in Jürgen Harten et al, *Siqueiros/Pollock, Pollock/Siqueiros*, vol. 2 (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle; Dumont, 1995), 38-55.

- 44 Peter Wollen, "Männerkunst: Siqueiros und Pollock," in Jürgen Harten, ed., *Siqueiros/Pollock, Pollock/Siqueiros* Vol. 2 (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 1995), 55-67.
- 45 At the doorstep of the Second World War, before leaving New York in 1939 Salvador Dalí declared that America had to recuperate the sacred fountain of its mythology and inspiration. He stressed that the times were ripe to recuperate the historic roots of its original Philadelphia, its symbolic independence; that it was time that the United States challenge, with its imagination, the storm of obscurantism that was menacing the country.
- 46 Reuben Kadish, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York Branch.
- 47 Busa Peter, in B.H. Friedman, *Jackson Pollock; Energy Made Visible* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 29.
- 48 Landau, "Jackson Pollock und die Mexikaner," in Harten, ed., *Siqueiros/Pollock, Pollock/Siqueiros* Vol. 2, 38-39.
- 49 Jackson Pollock, quoted in Francis O' Connor and Victor Eugene Thaw, eds., *Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Drawings, and Other Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 238. In Pollock's request for a Guggenheim Grant in 1947, he writes that for the present moment he does not feel mature enough, to make a radical transition from canvas to mural painting.
- 50 Wollen, "Männerkunst," 55-66.
- 51 Wollen, "Männerkunst," 60.
- 52 Wollen, "Männerkunst," 60.
- 53 Wollen, "Männerkunst," 55-56.
- 54 Landau, "Jackson Pollock und die Mexikaner," 38-55.
- 55 Fuller Porter, interviewed by Jeffrey Potter, in Jeffrey Potter, *To a Violent Grave: An Oral Biography of Jackson Pollock* (Wainscott, N.Y.: Pushcart Press, 1987), 99.
- 56 Thomas McEvelley, "Aspekte des Internationalismus im Werk von Siqueiros und Pollock," in Harten, *Siqueiros/Pollock, Pollock/Siqueiros*,
- 57 Siqueiros to María Asúnsolo, in Tibol, *Siqueiros*, 195-6.
- 58 Jackson Pollock, interviewed by William Wright in 1950, in Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989).
- 59 Sigmund Freud thought differently about this subject: "dreaming is on the whole an act of regression to the earliest relationships of the dreamer, a resuscitation of his childhood, of the impulses which were then dominant and the modes of expression which were then available. Behind this childhood of the individual we are then promised an insight into the phylogenetic childhood, into the evolution of the human race, of which the development of the individual is only an abridged repetition influenced by the fortuitous circumstances of life. We begin to suspect that Friedrich Nietzsche was right when he said that in a dream 'there persists a primordial part of humanity which we can no longer reach by a direct path,' and we are encouraged to expect, from the analysis of dreams, a knowledge of the archaic inheritance of man, a knowledge of psychical things in him that are innate. It would seem that dreams and neuroses have preserved for us more of the psychical antiquities than we suspected; so that psycho-analysis may claim a high rank among those sciences which endeavour to reconstruct the oldest and darkest phases of the beginnings of mankind". Sigmund Freud, "The Psychology of the Dream Processes", *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Modern Library, 1938), 470. Also, in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913) Freud referred to artistic activity as the modern field of magic, the place where dreams come true: "Only in one field has the omnipotence of thought been retained in our own civilization, namely in art. In art alone it still happens that man, consumed by his wishes, produces something similar to the gratification of these wishes and this play-

ing, thanks to artistic illusion, calls forth affects as if it were something real. We rightly speak of the magic of art and compare the artist with a magician. But this comparison is perhaps more important than it claims to be. Art, which certainly did not begin as art for art's sake, originally served tendencies which to-day have for the greater part ceased to exist. Among these we may suspect various magic intentions." Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1918), 149-150.

60 *El Fin del Mundo* was kept at Zilboorg's home in Vermont until 1995 when it was included in the "Siqueiros Pollock, Pollock Siqueiros" exhibit at the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf. It was then sold, through Andrea Marquit and Mary Ann Martin, to a collector in New York.

61 Hugnet, "In the Light of Surrealism," 36.

62 David Alfaro Siqueiros, document, Siqueiros/Berdecio, Getty Research Institute; text about Luis Arenal, probably written in Los Angeles, 1932.