EXHIBITION OF STRIKING POLITICAL ART FROM THE MEXICAN TALLER DE GRÁFICA POPULAR

Vida y Drama de México: Prints from the Monroe E. Price and Aimée Brown Price Collection

October 17, 2014–February 1, 2015

New Haven, Conn., October 1, 2014 – Vida y Drama de México: Prints from the Monroe E. Price and Aimée Brown Price Collection presents a selection of works from the more than 125 Mexican prints and posters given or lent to the Yale University Art Gallery by Monroe E. Price, B.A. 1960, LL.B. 1964, and Aimée Brown Price, M.A. 1963, Ph.D. 1972. Most of the objects were made at the Taller de Gráfica Popular (People’s Graphic Workshop), a collective printmaking workshop in Mexico City founded in 1937 by artists Leopoldo Méndez, Luis Arenal, and Pablo O’Higgins. The collective’s aim was to create art to improve the lives of peasants and laborers and to support social justice – goals of the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) that had not been fully realized. Although many artists at the time in both Europe and the United States had embraced abstraction, the Taller artists deliberately chose a representational style to create clear, direct messages that would reach the widest audience possible, and they used simple and inexpensive media. The exhibition takes its title from a 1957 poster by Alberto Beltrán, announcing an exhibition celebrating 20 years of the Taller de Gráfica Popular.

The 53 prints and posters in the exhibition, made by some 30 artists, represent the Taller’s major concerns. The fight against fascism was paramount during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, and a group of five striking posters advertising lectures against fascism – sponsored by an organization of German exiles in Mexico City – is one of the highlights of the exhibition. After those wars, the Taller artists continued to fight corruption and moneyed interests and to champion causes of those with little power, including agrarian reform, increased literacy, and workers’ rights. In “La risa del pueblo”: El retorno del “automóvil gris” (“The Laughter of the People”: The Return of the “Gray Automobile”; 1939), for instance, O’Higgins alluded to a film from 1919, based on a group of robbers active in Mexico City in 1915. In the image, four known public figures are depicted as gangsters making off with Articles 123 and 127 of the constitution of 1917, which limited corruption and protected workers’ rights. Posters celebrate popular presidents; although Benito Juárez, Mexican president from 1861 to 1872, and U.S. president Abraham Lincoln never met, in 1944 O’Higgins symbolized the
friendship between their two countries by pairing the beloved leaders in the lithograph *Buenos vecinos, buenos amigos* (Good Neighbors, Good Friends). Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexican president when the Taller was founded, whose boldest action was the nationalization of oil production in 1938, was also a hero to the Taller artists, and a poster with four different images renders homage to him. There is no dearth of villains depicted in the show, including Porfirio Díaz, who ruled as a virtual dictator from 1876 to 1880 and from 1884 to 1911, favoring Europeans and the wealthy over indigenous Mexicans and the poor. At the end of his rule, stifled discontent erupted into the revolution.

Suzanne Boorsch, the Robert L. Solley Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Gallery and cocurator of the exhibition, states, “The gift from Monroe E. Price and Aimée Brown Price has significantly enriched the Gallery’s holdings of Mexican works of art, and with this exhibition we are able to showcase numerous highly talented artists previously poorly represented—or not at all represented—in the collection.”

Monroe E. Price, Director of the Center for Global Communication Studies at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, credits his initial interest in collecting Taller prints to being married to an art historian, Aimée Brown Price, who most recently published an authoritative monograph on Pierre-Cécile Puvis de Chavannes (Yale University Press, 2010). The couple lived in Los Angeles for 16 years, getting to know some of the city’s Chicano artists, who viewed the Taller artists as artistic and intellectual models for their own work. Eventually, Monroe and Aimée traveled to Mexico City and visited the Taller, where they were struck not only by the powerful design of the works they saw but also by their political messages. In the words of Monroe Price, part of the attraction in collecting these prints was that they exemplified “so sturdy an effort to deploy art in the service of public interest and intense political purpose.”

As Lucy Gellman, the Florence B. Selden Fellow in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Gallery and cocurator of the exhibition, explains, “These posters and prints are portals into an often overlooked, historically dynamic past, as well as timely sociopolitical texts. Their sharp visual commentary is still relevant in a period of fraught U.S.-Mexico relations, and we hope that the exhibition’s overarching themes will be powerful catalysts for broader discussions.”

**On View**

October 17, 2014—February 1, 2015
Related Programs

Opening Event: Film Screening and Conversation
“The Taller de Gráfica Popular in Context”
Thursday, October 16, 5:30 pm
The screening of An Artful Revolution: The Life and Art of the Taller de Gráfica Popular (2008) is followed by a conversation addressing the complex history and legacy of the Taller workshop.

Exhibition Tours
Friday, October 17, 1:30 pm
Suzanne Boorsch, the Robert L. Solley Curator of Prints and Drawings, and Lucy Gellman, the Florence B. Selden Fellow, Department of Prints and Drawings

Sunday, November 9, 1:30 pm
Suzanne Boorsch, the Robert L. Solley Curator of Prints and Drawings

Gallery Talks
Friday, October 31, 1:30 pm
“Mobilizing Passion through Visual Advocacy: From Taller de Gráfica Popular to Human Rights NGOs”
Sandra Ristovska, Ph.D. candidate, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

Wednesday, December 3, 12:30 pm
“Art and Politics: The Taller de Gráfica Popular”
Elizabeth DeRose, Ph.D. candidate, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Film Screening
Sunday, November 9, 2:30 pm
The Storm that Swept Mexico (2011)
The Mexican Revolution (1910–20) is the first revolution of the 20th century, and the first one recorded on film. This documentary examines the immensely complex historical, social, political, economic, and cultural forces that generated the conflict, determined its trajectory, and influenced its legacy. The revolution not only changed the course of Mexican history but also had a profound impact on relationships between Mexico and the rest of the world. Produced by Ray Telles; 116 minutes.

All programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For more detailed programming information, visit artgallery.yale.edu/calendar.

Film Series at the Whitney Humanities Center
In conjunction with the exhibition, the following film screenings at Yale's Whitney Humanities Center, located at 53 Wall Street, are sponsored by the Mexican Cultural Institute of New York; La Filmoteca de
la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Fundación Televisa; the Film Studies Program at Yale; the Yale Film Study Center, courtesy of Paul L. Joskow; the Yale University Art Gallery; and Films at the Whitney, supported by the Barbakow Fund for Innovative Film Programs at Yale.

Friday, October 17, 7 pm
¡Qué Viva México! (1930/79)
Print courtesy of the Harvard Film Archive. Directed by Sergei Eisenstein; 90 minutes.

Friday, November 7, 8 pm
Redes (1936)
Directed by Emilio Gómez Muriel and Fred Zinnemann; 65 minutes.
El automóvil gris (The Gray Automobile; 1919)
Directed by Enrique Rosas; 111 minutes.

Friday, December 12, 7 pm
Maria Candelaria (1944)
Print courtesy of La Cineteca Nacional de México and Fundación Televisa. Directed by Emilio Fernández; 76 minutes.
Río Escondido (Hidden River; 1948)
Directed by Emilio Fernández; 99 minutes.

Friday, January 23, 7 pm
Los Olvidados (1950)
Print courtesy of the Tim Hunter Collection at the Academy Film Archive. Directed by Luis Buñuel; 80 minutes.
El gran calavera (The Great Madcap; 1949)
Print courtesy of La Filmoteca de la UNAM. The Filmoteca is responsible for the preservation of this title, which forms an important part of Mexico’s cinematic heritage. Directed by Luis Buñuel; 92 minutes.

Friday, January 30, 7 pm
La negra Angustias (1950)
Print courtesy of La Filmoteca de la UNAM. The Filmoteca is responsible for the preservation of this title, which forms an important part of Mexico’s cinematic heritage. Directed by Matilde Landeta; 82 minutes.

**Exhibition Support**
Exhibition organized by Suzanne Boorsch, the Robert L. Solley Curator of Prints and Drawings, and Lucy Gellman, the Florence B. Selden Fellow, Department of Prints and Drawings, both of the Yale University Art Gallery, with the assistance of Nevarez Encinias, B.A. 2014, and Gwendolyn Harper, B.K ’15. Made possible by the Florence B. Selden Fund.
Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, the oldest college art museum in the United States, was founded in 1832 when the patriot-artist John Trumbull gave more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then its collections have grown to more than 200,000 objects ranging in date from ancient times to the present.

In addition to its world-renowned collections of American paintings and decorative arts, the Gallery is noted for outstanding collections of Greek and Roman art, including artifacts from the ancient Roman city of Dura-Europos; collections of early Italian paintings; the Société Anonyme Collection of 20th-century European and American art; modern and contemporary art and design; Asian art; African art; art of the ancient Americas; and Indo-Pacific art.

In December 2012, the Gallery completed a comprehensive expansion and renovation project that united its three buildings—the landmark Louis Kahn building (1953), the Old Yale Art Gallery building (1928), and Street Hall (1866) – into a cohesive whole with a rooftop addition by Ennead Architects (2012). The Gallery is both a collecting and an educational institution, and all activities are aimed at providing an invaluable resource and experience for Yale faculty, staff, and students, as well as for the general public.

General Information

The Yale University Art Gallery is located at 1111 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10 am–5 pm; Thursday until 8 pm (September–June); and Saturday–Sunday, 11 am–5 pm. The Gallery is closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is free and open to the public. For general information, please call 203.432.0600 or visit the website at www.artgallery.yale.edu.

Press Contact

Joellen Adae, Director of Communications, 203.432.0611, joellen.adae@yale.edu or yuagpress@yale.edu