

The Architectural Wall as a Post-Revolutionary Medium:

Process, Politics, and Fragility of Site-Specific Muralism in Central and Southern Mexico

On top of its political and cultural influence to restructure a post-revolutionary society in the 1920s, the Mexican Mural movement was central to envisioning national modernity and avant-garde architecture. During this time, government officials commissioned notable artists such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco (*Los Tres Grandes*) to paint epic murals onto government buildings. From Palacio Nacional (Fig. 03) to Hospicio Cabañas (Fig. 05), architectural walls were depicted with vibrant imagery to promote a cultural history and economic development to an illiterate population. By the 1950s, many government buildings across Central and Southern Mexico had integrated emblematic spaces accessible to the public. Muralists and modernists architects collaborated extensively to produce a synthesis of aesthetics into practice and conceptual understanding.

This RAMSA Travel Fellowship proposal intends to investigate and research the vast relationship between Mexican Muralism and the architectural wall as medium. This phenomenon allowed the possibility of spaces with formal and urban qualities. The architectural wall provided the murals with material, while the murals activated spaces within courtyards, interior hallways, and community plazas (Fig. 05). Both conceived through a lineage of sketches and drawings, architects and muralists shared a process of production by responding to the context of their site. They were both planned, adjusted, and constructed with a specific place in mind. The murals belonged to the buildings they existed on as much as the buildings belonged to their urban placements.

The emergence of this research was influenced by the discovery of the partial demolition of Centro SCOP (Fig. 01 & 02), due to the aftermath of two massive earthquakes that struck Central Mexico (1985 & 2017). Shortly after the second destruction, most of the monumental murals that survived were severely damaged. Today, the proposed relocation of these architectural mediums brings up a series of critical questions regarding the preservation and political entitlement of site-specific murals. In a terrain prone to frequent seismic activity, it is an urgent matter to research the significance of these fragile architectural mediums at an urban level. Their physical variations and specific placements throughout a city enable them to impact a collective memory. Displacing these architectural mediums could inevitably distort their original values, character, and function to a community.

The tentative itinerary covers regions across Central and Southern Mexico in which significant murals continue to exist on government buildings, hospitals, and public institutions. The journey will begin in Guadalajara, Jalisco, and continue towards Mexico City, the site of notable buildings with murals by *Los Tres Grandes*, among many other men and women muralists. The travel will then continue to investigate Palacios and Plazas throughout smaller regions of Veracruz, Oaxaca, and the Yucatán Peninsula. The research will be documented through photographs, hand-drawings on-site, and text that will culminate into a physical book. Using my research abroad, I intend to continue my discoveries to support an ongoing thesis. I wish to encounter and narrate the ideologies, styles, stories, depths, and dimensions of Mexican Muralism derived from historical literature and a contemporary architectural perspective.



Fig. 01 Centro SCOP (c. 1954). Damaged portion of the building after the 1985 earthquake. The building was then lowered from ten floors to seven. In 2017, another massive earthquake (magnitude 7.1) struck central Mexico.



Fig. 02 Centro SCOP, Mexico City (c. 1954) Murals by A.Estrada, J. Best, and others (p. 1954)



Fig. 03 Palacio Nacional, Mexico City (s. 1522) Murals by Diego Rivera (p. 1935)



Fig. 04 Palacio Municipal de Poza Rica, Veracruz (c. 1950s) Murals by Pablo O'Higgins (p. 1959)



Fig. 05 Hospicio Cabañas, Jalisco (c. 1829) Murals by José Clemente Orozco (p. 1935-1966)



Fig. 06 Plaza Principa de Papanltla, Veracruz (c. 1979) Murals by Teodoro Cano García (p. 1979)



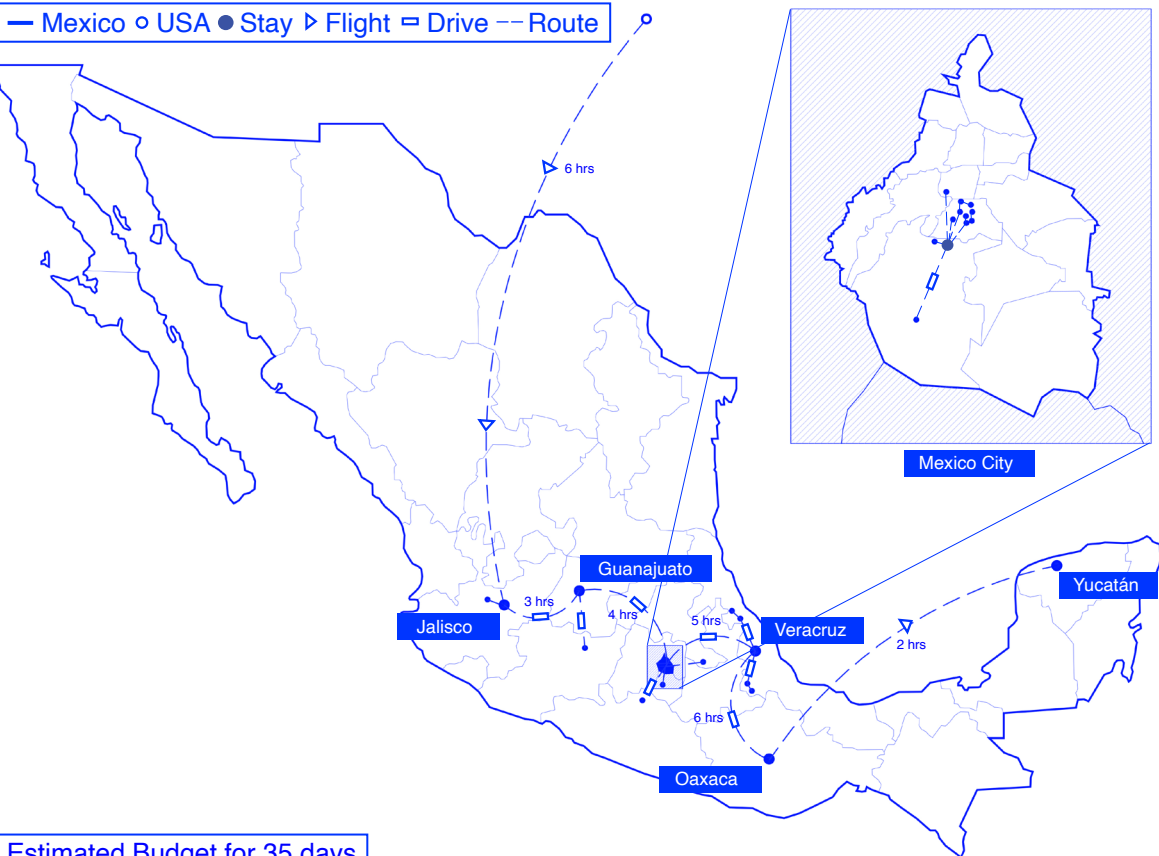
Fig. 07 Alhóndiga de Granaditas, Guanajuato (c. 1809) Murals by José Chavéz Morado (p. 1955-1966)



Fig. 08 UNAM Biblioteca Central, Mexico City (c. 1956) Murals by Juan O' Gorman (p. 1956)



Fig. 09 Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros, Mexico City (c. 1971) Murals by David Alfaro Siqueiros (p. 1971)



Estimated Budget for 35 days

Airfare (international + domestic flights):	\$1,500
Car Rental (incl. toll roads + gas):	\$1,700
Lodging (\$130 per day):	\$4,550
Food (\$40 per day):	\$1,400
Admission / Guide Fee:	\$300
Misc. + Contingencies + Covid Tests:	\$500
Total:	\$9,950

Tentative Itinerary

Jalisco: Days 1 - 5 a. <i>Palacio de Gobierno del Estado Jalisco</i> (c. 1774) b. <i>Hospicio Cabañas</i> (c. 1829)	Government Building Hospital Building *(Fig. 05)
Guanajuato: Days 6 - 10 c. <i>Alhóndiga de Granaditas</i> (c. 1809)	Public Grain Storage *(Fig. 07)
Morelia, Michoacan (day trip from Guanajuato) d. <i>Palacio de Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán</i> (c. 1750)	Government Building
Mexico City: Days 11 - 22 e. <i>Palacio Nacional</i> (s. 1522) f. <i>Plaza de las Tres Culturas</i> (s. 1536 to c. 1966) g. <i>San Ildefonso College</i> (c. 1588) h. <i>Secretaría de Educación Pública</i> (c.1921) i. <i>Palacio de Bellas Artes</i> (c. 1934) j. <i>Mercado Presidente Abelardo L. Rodríguez</i> (c. 1934) k. <i>UNAM Biblioteca Central</i> (c. 1956) l. <i>Centro SCOP</i> (c. 1954) m. <i>Centro Médico Nacional La Raza</i> (c. 1954) n. <i>Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros</i> (c. 1971) o. <i>Museo Mural Diego Rivera</i> (c. 1986)	Government Building *(Fig. 03) Public Square Former Boarding School Government Building Cultural Center Public Market University Library *(Fig. 08) Government Building *(Fig. 01 & 02) Hospital Building Cultural Center *(Fig. 09) Relocated Site for mural
Cuarnevaca, Morelos (day trips from Mexico City) p. <i>Palacio de Cortés</i> (c. 1526) q. <i>La Tallera Siqueiros</i> (c.1965) r. <i>Catedral de Cuarnevaca</i> (c.1534)	Former Residence Workshop / Museum Cathedral
Veracruz: Days 23 - 27 s. <i>Palacio Municipal de Poza Rica</i> (c. 1950s) t. <i>Palacio de Gobierno de Xalapa</i> u. <i>Plaza Principal de Papanltla</i> (c. 1954)	Government Building *(Fig. 04) Government Building Public Square *(Fig. 06)
Oaxaca: Days 28 - 31 v. <i>Palacio de Gobierno</i> w. <i>Facultad de Medicina y Cirugia, UABJO</i>	Government Building Hospital Building
Yucatán: Days 32 - 35 x. <i>Palacio de Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan</i> (c. 1892)	Government Building