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Diego Rivera

Diego Rivera is considered the greatest Mexican painter of the 20th century. He was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, in 1886 and began studying painting at an early age. In 1907 Rivera moved to Europe where he searched for a new form of painting. There he was greatly influenced by the Renaissance frescoes of Italy. Frescoes are mural paintings done on fresh plaster. He embraced this style of painting and returned to Mexico, where he painted many murals.

Rivera was a very controversial political activist. He was a devout Marxist (follower of Karl Marx, the political philosopher and founder of modern socialism and communism), and his paintings reflect his political views. He believed that art should have a political mission and teach the working class people their history.

Rivera's strong political influences and convictions had a very real effect on his career. For example, in 1933 Rivera included a portrait of Soviet dictator V.I. Lenin in a mural at New York's Rockefeller Center, causing the project to be cancelled and his work destroyed. Three years later, Rivera attacked Mexico's leaders in frescoes created for a Mexican hotel, and once again his work was removed.

Fortunately, the majority of Rivera's work has survived and can be seen both in museums and on the very walls where his murals and frescoes were originally created. Louisiana students may not have to travel far to see an authentic Diego Rivera. Rivera's *Indian Woman* resides in the permanent collection of the Meadows Museum of Art at Centenary College in Shreveport.

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