

Exhibition: Pressing Politics: Revolutionary Graphics from Mexico and Germany

On View: October 29, 2022–July 22, 2023

Location: Charles White Elementary School



(image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles, CA—October 20, 2022) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Pressing Politics: Revolutionary Graphics from Mexico and Germany*, an exhibition highlighting the contributions of 20th-century Mexican and German artists to a global iconography of political graphics.

Pressing Politics explores the shared subjects and visual strategies of two key moments in 20th-century political printmaking: the revival of German Expressionist graphics in response to a nationwide revolution in 1918, and the formation of the Taller de Gráfica Popular (People's Print Workshop) in Mexico City in the late 1930s. Although rooted in distinct social and historical contexts, artists in both countries responded to their respective upheavals in print to communicate to a mass audience in forceful visual terms.

During the German Revolution (1918–19), posters, pamphlets, and prints by Expressionist artists encouraged collective action and discouraged unrest. In Mexico City, artists of the Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP), a graphic arts collective founded in 1937, made prints to advance progressive policies initiated by the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) and rally an international community in the fight against fascism.

Examining direct and indirect points of exchange, *Pressing Politics* considers the iconographic precedents for these artists' political imagery, the range of printed

works they produced, and the conditions that gave rise to their art, underscoring the enduring power of the printed image. The exhibition is drawn almost entirely from LACMA's permanent collection (primarily from the Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies and the Latin American Art department) and brings together 76 objects by 31 artists in a variety of formats, including flyers, newspapers, books, posters, and single-sheet prints.

"We are eager to bring together these two important moments in 20th-century printmaking," said Rachel Kaplan, Assistant Curator, Latin American Art, who co-curated the exhibition with Erin Sullivan Maynes, Assistant Curator, Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies. "While German Expressionist graphics and the prints of the Taller de Gráfica Popular are often referenced together in conversations around political printmaking, this exhibition provides a rare opportunity to examine the works side by side and consider the social, historical, and artistic contexts that gave rise to the works. We hope to show the role of art—and especially prints—in effecting change and inspiring audiences."

"We are also excited to share the findings of our colleagues in the Conservation department who conducted specialized research into the paper types and inks used in the production of both German and Mexican prints," said Maynes. "Their contributions provide insights into the practices of both groups of artists and the conditions under which they worked and also offer important guidance for the care and maintenance of these objects long term."

The presentation of conservation findings in the exhibition offers a wider view of the types of research and work museums do to preserve and care for their collections, which may be of interest to students at Charles White Elementary School as well as visitors from Los Angeles County and beyond.

As a site, Charles White Elementary School shares a direct connection with the content of the exhibition. Charles White, for whom the gallery and school are named, visited the Taller de Gráfica Popular as a guest artist in 1946 alongside his then-wife, Elizabeth Catlett. Catlett became a permanent member of the TGP and her work *Sharecropper* (1952) is included in the exhibition.

Pressing Politics is accompanied by a catalogue written by the exhibition's co-curators. It features an introductory essay and 46 original object entries, as well as a technical study by conservator Madison Brockman with conservation scientist Laura Maccarelli.

Exhibition Organization

The exhibition juxtaposes Mexican and German works in sections highlighting their shared themes: revolutionary events, politics and propaganda, and urban and rural labor. A final section centers around the 1943 book *El libro negro del terror nazi en Europa* (The Black Book of Nazi Terror in Europe), a product of direct collaboration between artists of the TGP and German-speaking exiles living in Mexico. This comparative consideration accounts for the distinctive character of German and Mexican graphics while also exploring how similar approaches to political printmaking developed in both countries, contributing to an enduring legacy that continues to inspire socially engaged artists today. The exhibition includes works by Ángel Bracho, Käthe Kollwitz, Leopoldo Méndez, Max Pechstein, and many more.

Related Programs

There will be several public workshops during the exhibition's run that will offer the opportunity for participants to have a hands-on printmaking experience. Additionally, LACMA will host a one-day symposium exploring the role of printmaking in political contexts in the 20th and 21st centuries from a global perspective. The symposium is organized in conjunction with the Association of Print Scholars, with additional support provided by the IFPDA Foundation and the Robert Gore Rifkind Foundation.

A public opening with a printmaking workshop will inaugurate the exhibition on Saturday, October 29, 2022.

For more information, visit lacma.org.

About Charles White Elementary School

Pressing Politics is open Saturdays, 1–4 pm, from October 29, 2022, through July 22, 2023, at Charles White Elementary School (2401 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90057). Admission is free and available on a first come, first served basis.

Visitors may enter the gallery at the corner of Park View and Wilshire Boulevard. Complimentary parking is available in the lot at 611 South Carondelet Street, between Wilshire Boulevard and 6th Street. Street parking is also available in the neighborhood.

[Learn more](#) about visitation requirements and safety protocols at Charles White Elementary School Gallery.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

This exhibition is made possible with support from the Getty Foundation through The Paper Project initiative.

Getty Foundation

Exhibitions and education programs at the Charles White Elementary School Gallery are made possible through the Anna H. Bing Children's Art Endowment Fund.

About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 149,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: Left: Max Pechstein, *The National Assembly: The Cornerstone of the German Socialist Republic (Die National-Versammlung: der Grundstein der Deutschen Sozialistischen Republik)*, 1919, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the Robert Gore Rifkind Collection, Beverly Hills, CA, © Pechstein Hamburg/Tökendorf/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2022, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA; Right: Leopoldo Méndez, *Protest (La protesta)*, 1937, published 1943, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Jules and Gloria Heller, © Estate of Leopoldo Méndez, authorized by Pablo Méndez Hernández, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA; Constantin von Mitschke-Collande, *Freedom*, 1919, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, © Estate of Constantin von Mitschke-Collande, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA; Fernando Castro Pacheco, *Construction Workers (Peones de la construcción)*, 1947, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Jules and Gloria Heller, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

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