

MEDIA CONTACT

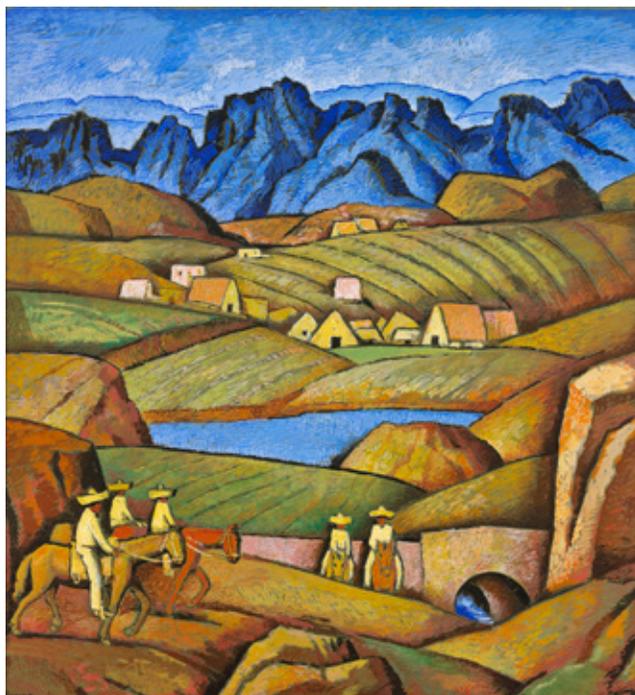
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Picturing Mexico: Alfredo Ramos Martínez in California

January 19 – April 20, 2014



El Lago de Mil Cumbres / The Lake at Mil Cumbres, ca. 1940.
Tempera and Conté crayon on board, 24 13/16 x 23 7/16 inches.
Collection of Lawrence Janss. © Alfredo Ramos Martínez Research
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Pasadena, CA – The Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is proud to present *Picturing Mexico: Alfredo Ramos Martínez in California*, the first comprehensive examination by a museum of this Mexican artist's work produced in California between 1929 and 1946. Known for his distinctive contribution to modernism, the artist received some of his early education in Europe where he became part of a circle of modernist intellectuals, poets, and artists. Returning home to Mexico on the eve of the Mexican Revolution, his work was deeply informed by both the European academic traditions he had absorbed abroad and by the social and populist art that was beginning to take root in Mexico. Although initially hailed as an innovator upon his return, Ramos Martínez was quickly left on the outskirts of the artistic trends that dominated Mexico City in the 1920s when his peers, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaró Siqueiros — *los tres grandes* — and their rejection of Europe and academic traditions, rose to prominence. Seeking opportunities to continue his own academic and modernist styles, he moved to Los Angeles. With the United States on the brink of a depression, much of his work from that period reveals both the economic and cultural climate of the country as well as his individual response to Mexico from Los Angeles. Explored through four sections — "L.A. Stories," "Many Women," "Religious Piety," and "Forever Mexico" — the exhibition highlights the contributions of this remarkable artist and firmly places him alongside his contemporaries in the narrative of early twentieth century art.



Top:

El Defensor / The Protector, 1932. Tempera and Conté crayon on newsprint (*Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1932), 21 x 15 ½ inches. Private Collection, Courtesy of Louis Stern Fine Arts. © Alfredo Ramos Martínez Research Project, reproduced by permission.

Bottom:

Indio del Cactus / Indian with Cactus, 1931. Tempera on paper, 28 ½ x 26 ¼ inches. The San Diego Museum of Art, Museum purchase. © Alfredo Ramos Martínez Research Project, reproduced by permission.

When Ramos Martínez arrived in Los Angeles, the reality of migrant workers being ordered to return to Mexico was in stark contrast to the increasing presence of Mexican actresses, such as Dolores del Río and Lupe Velez, and their image as “exotic beauties” in major Hollywood films. In the section “L.A. Stories,” conflicting visions of Mexican culture are explored through the artist’s often-misunderstood work on newsprint, which he used as the background for his more political work. In particular, the pages of the *Los Angeles Times* offered the artist an opportunity to create startling juxtapositions; he drew images of Mexican workers directly onto the front pages and classifieds, putting advertisements for the superfluous in direct conversation with the struggle of Mexican laborers. Furthermore, his work in Los Angeles suggests the artist absorbed art deco influences from his adopted city.

A devoted Catholic, Ramos Martínez’s use of Catholic imagery, such as Madonna and Child, friars, and nuns, which remain tied to his Mexican heritage, is examined in the section “Religious Piety.” For example, his painting *Christus* is a depiction of a suffering Christ painted in umbers and black in front of a Mexican mountainscape. This section includes a preparatory drawing for the artist’s religious murals, realized for a cemetery chapel in Santa Barbara. While religious imagery is often absent from discussion of modern art, this exhibition puts it front and center by examining the life and work of an artist who took an atypical spiritual path.

From Los Angeles, Ramos Martínez increasingly painted a romanticized Mexico. The works in the section “Many Women” emphasize idealized representations of Mexican women, who are often portrayed by the artist as flower vendors. The final section “Forever Mexico” further examines the artist’s relationship with his native country. Depicted as intrinsically connected to the earth, rather than as contemporary individuals, Ramos Martínez portrays figures set in the rural Mexican landscape with mountain ranges studding the background. Other works in this section reflect the social and political activity of the country, including paintings of groups of workers or revolutionaries, as exemplified by *The Meeting (La Reunión)* and *Men of the Countryside (Rurales)*. Ramos Martínez’s work will be presented alongside other artists active in the U.S. during the same period who shared an interest in similar subject matter such as Everett Gee Jackson, Jean Charlot, Donal Hord, and Henrietta Shore.

While many scholars have studied the influence of Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, *Picturing Mexico: Alfredo Ramos Martínez in California* offers new insight into the artistic relationship between the United States and Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century through an examination of Alfredo Ramos Martínez’s work, and moreover, for the first time. Ramos Martínez’s work will be presented alongside other artists active in the U.S. During the same period who shared an interest in similar subject matter such as Everett Gee Jackson, Jean Charlot, Donal Hord, and Henrietta Shore.

PASADENA MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ART

Picturing Mexico: Alfredo Ramos Martínez

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Picturing Mexico: Alfredo Ramos Martínez in California is curated by Amy Galpin, Ph.D., Associate Curator, Art of the Americas at the San Diego Museum of Art. It is organized by the Pasadena Museum of California Art and will travel to the Nevada Museum of Art, where it will be on view from May 10 to August 17, 2014.

This exhibition is supported, in part, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, the Pasadena Arts and Culture Commission and the City of Pasadena Cultural Affairs Division, and the Robert Lehman Foundation. Additional support is provided by The Hilbert Collection, Robert and Ruth Mirvis, George and Irene Stern, Dwight Stuart, Jr., and Louis Stern Fine Arts.

Media sponsor: *American Fine Art Magazine*



Programs

OPENING RECEPTION

Saturday, January 18, 2014 | 7–9pm

\$5 admission | Free for PMCA members

INSIGHT TALK

Sunday, January 19, 2014 | 3pm

Amy Galpin, curator of *Picturing Mexico: Alfredo Ramos Martínez in California*, leads a walkthrough of the exhibition and discusses the artist's distinctive style within the context of his American contemporaries and in relationship to historic events and artistic trends in Los Angeles during that time.

ARTNIGHT PASADENA

Friday, March 14, 2014 | 6–10pm

Enjoy a free evening of art, music, and entertainment as Pasadena's most prominent arts and cultural institutions swing open their doors.

FAMILY DAY

Saturday, April 5, 2014 | 3–5pm

Participate in fun art projects for the whole family based on our current exhibitions. All ages welcome!

PMCA 123

- 1) Free the first Friday of every month (12–5pm)
- 2) 2pm docent tour the second Saturday of every month
- 3) Free the third Thursday of every month (5–8pm)

All programs are free with admission and free for PMCA members unless otherwise noted. Please visit pmcaonline.org/calendar for additional programs and events.

Museum Information

MISSION

The mission of the Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is to present the breadth of California art and design through exhibitions that explore the cultural dynamics and influences that are unique to California.

HOURS

Open Wednesday–Sunday, 12–5pm; third Thursday of every month, 5–8pm; closed Mondays, Tuesdays, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

ADMISSION

\$7 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students; free for PMCA members and children under 12; free the first Friday of every month (12–5pm); free the third Thursday of every month (5–8pm). Access for people with disabilities is provided.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

The museum is located at 490 East Union Street. From the 210 Freeway, take the Lake Avenue exit. Go south and take a right on Union Street. From the 110 Freeway/Downtown Los Angeles, follow the freeway until its end, then take Arroyo Parkway and turn right at Colorado, then left at Oakland to get to Union Street. Parking is available at the Museum.

DOCENT TOURS AND GROUP RATES

The museum offers docent tours on the second Saturday of each month (free with admission). Docent tours are also available Wednesday–Friday, 12–5pm, to private groups for a fee of \$75. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is due two weeks prior to the scheduled date. Self-guided tours for K-12 students are offered for free. We regret that we are unable to accommodate docent tours for groups larger than 35 people. Before requesting a tour, please check the exhibition calendar to see which exhibitions will be available during your visit.

A discounted group rate of \$3 per person is available for groups of 20 or more (K-12 student groups are free). Please call to notify us at least one week in advance for these special admission rates.

For any questions or to make reservations for a tour or group rate, please call our Bookstore and Membership Associate, Susan Wang, at 626.568.3665 x14 or email swang@pmcaonline.org.

For more information, please call 626.568.3665 or visit pmcaonline.org.