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ORIGINALITY IN MEXICAN ART - 3 PERIODS OF ITS HISTORY

BEATRIZ DE LA FUENTE

In a wholistic view of Mexican art, three summit periods are notably highlighted. Historic circumstances explain these summit moments.

Thus, 1) In 2,500 years of pre-Colombian art, the individual character of colossal Olmec sculpture, the monumental architecture of Teotihuacan, the historic significance of Mayan relief and painting works, and the expressive vigor of Aztec statues are highlighted. The isolation of cultures in Central America from other peoples around the world makes its art notoriously original.

2) In Colonial art two expressive modes emerge above all. I am referring to two kinds of buildings; i.e. fortresses and sites to spread the Gospel, built in the 1500's; and cathedrals built in the 1600's and 1700's. The former result from the need to spread the new doctrine among the Indians and to defend from them. The latter result from the economic and religious power of the Colony. Two historic reasons to understand the originality in the art of New Spain.

3) In modern art, after the hard struggle of the people to find their own identity, the muralism of Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros becomes the absolute expression of that identity. The paintings of the "three great", with an unmistakable educational program, both socially and politically, have given the Country universal fame and an image of its national being. Hence their originality.