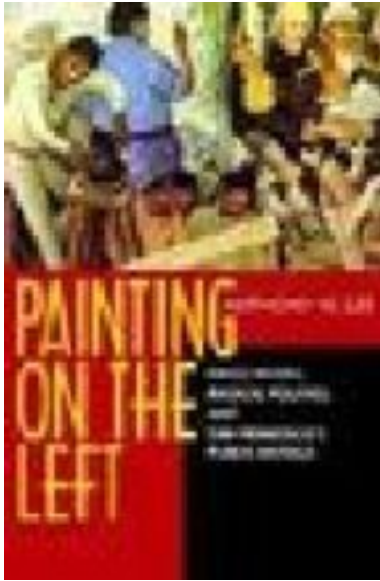


PAINTING ON THE LEFT: DIEGO RIVERA, RADICAL POLITICS AND SAN FRAN CISCO'S PUBLIC MURALS



Nº de páginas:	290 págs.
ISBN:	9780520219779
Año edición:	1999
Editorial:	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Plaza de edición:	EE.UU.
Lengua:	INGLÉS
Autor:	ANTHONY W. LEE
Categoría:	Arte

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"Anthony Lee is quickly emerging as a key figure for a whole new generation of scholars. This book on Diego Rivera is significant not only for the notable new insights it yields, but also for the disciplinary shifts that it signals.

Defly written yet replete with a density of engaged meaning that inspires critical admiration, this new look at Rivera will remain an important stimulus in the field for quite a while."--David Craven, author of "Diego Rivera: As Epic Modernist" "This was a moment when painting mattered! In a deeply divided society, public art was a vector for contestation about what it was to be an American, a committed citizen, a moral being. With care and subtlety, and in fascinating detail, Lee shows how art, especially mural painting, became for a time the primary medium for the brokerage of power in the city of San Francisco itself. We see the murals afresh, we decipher the intense, sprawling, diversifying energies which shaped their now stilled surfaces. We might wish, these days, for a public art of similar consequence."--Terry Smith, author of "Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America" The boldly political mural projects of Diego Rivera and other leftist artists in San Francisco during the 1930s and early 1940s are the focus of Anthony W. Lee's fascinating book. Led by Rivera, these painters used murals as a vehicle to reject the economic and political status quo and to give visible form to labor and radical ideologies, including Communism. Several murals, and details of others, are reproduced here for the first time. Of special interest are works by Rivera that chart a progress from mural paintings commissioned for private spaces to those produced as a public act in a public space: "Allegory of California," painted in 1930-31 at the Stock Exchange Lunch Club; "Making a Fresco, Showing the Building of a City," done a few months later at the California School of Fine Arts; and "Pan American Unity," painted in 1940 for the Golden Gate International Exposition. Labor itself became a focus of the new murals: Rivera painted a massive representation of a construction worker just as San Francisco's workers were themselves organizing; Victor Arnautoff, Bernard Zakheim, John Langley Howard, and Clifford Wight painted panel