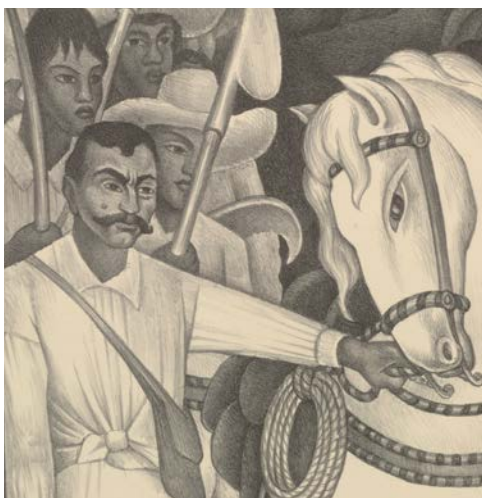




NOVEMBER 2017

FIGHTING BACK FOR LAND

Zapata | Diego Rivera



VISIT THE BMA

and see *Zapata* in the
*Crossing Borders: Mexican
Modernist Prints* exhibition,
on view November 19,
2017–March 11, 2018

Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886–1957). Detail.
Zapata. 1932. Crayon lithograph. 16 1/8 x 13 1/8
inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of
Blanche Adler, BMA 1932.28.5. © 2017
Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo
Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York

Throughout human history, people all over the world have fought to control valuable land. Some disputes are minor skirmishes between neighbors, but intense struggles over land can sometimes lead to revolution or all-out war. About 150 years ago, much of the farmland in Mexico was controlled by wealthy landowners. They had seized small village farms in order to establish grand *haciendas* (estates or plantations) for themselves, leaving the local peasants with next to nothing. In 1911, a strong-willed rebel named Emiliano Zapata mobilized armies of poor farmers to retake stolen farmland that was rightfully theirs.

We see Zapata here, an intense leader with large mustache and furrowed brow. Following closely behind are his band of farmers (*campesinos*) in typical peasant clothing—white shirt and trousers, sandals, and sombreros. They carry farm tools as weapons—a bow and arrow, hoes, and a curved machete for cutting sugarcane. Zapata, too, wears peasant clothing and carries a machete in solidarity with his followers, even though he had a farm and horses of his own. At his feet, the body of a landowner (*hacendado*) lies in the dirt.

And the magnificent white horse? Since Zapata was a skilled horseman, we might assume that the beautiful creature is his. Or perhaps the horse belonged to the defeated landowner, lying on the ground in a dark suit and riding boots. As the steed gazes downward, Zapata steps over his lifeless enemy, trampling his sword as a sign of the peasants' victory over the ruling class. While some considered Zapata a ruthless bandit, Rivera presents him as a fearless revolutionary hero, devoted to helping his powerless countrymen regain their land.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

How does Rivera suggest that Zapata has a large band of followers even though he includes just five *campesinos* in a shallow space?

Rivera told and retold the story of Zapata on a palace wall, an eight-foot portable mural, inexpensive 16-inch lithographs, and small book illustrations. Explore Rivera's portable color mural at mo.ma/2z74eNu. Click on "The Mural In-Depth" to view details. Use the sidebars to see how the image fits into a large mural alongside an arch in a Mexican palace. Compare Rivera's image of Zapata as a peasant with actual photographs of Zapata in fashionable cowboy attire, seated atop his black horse.

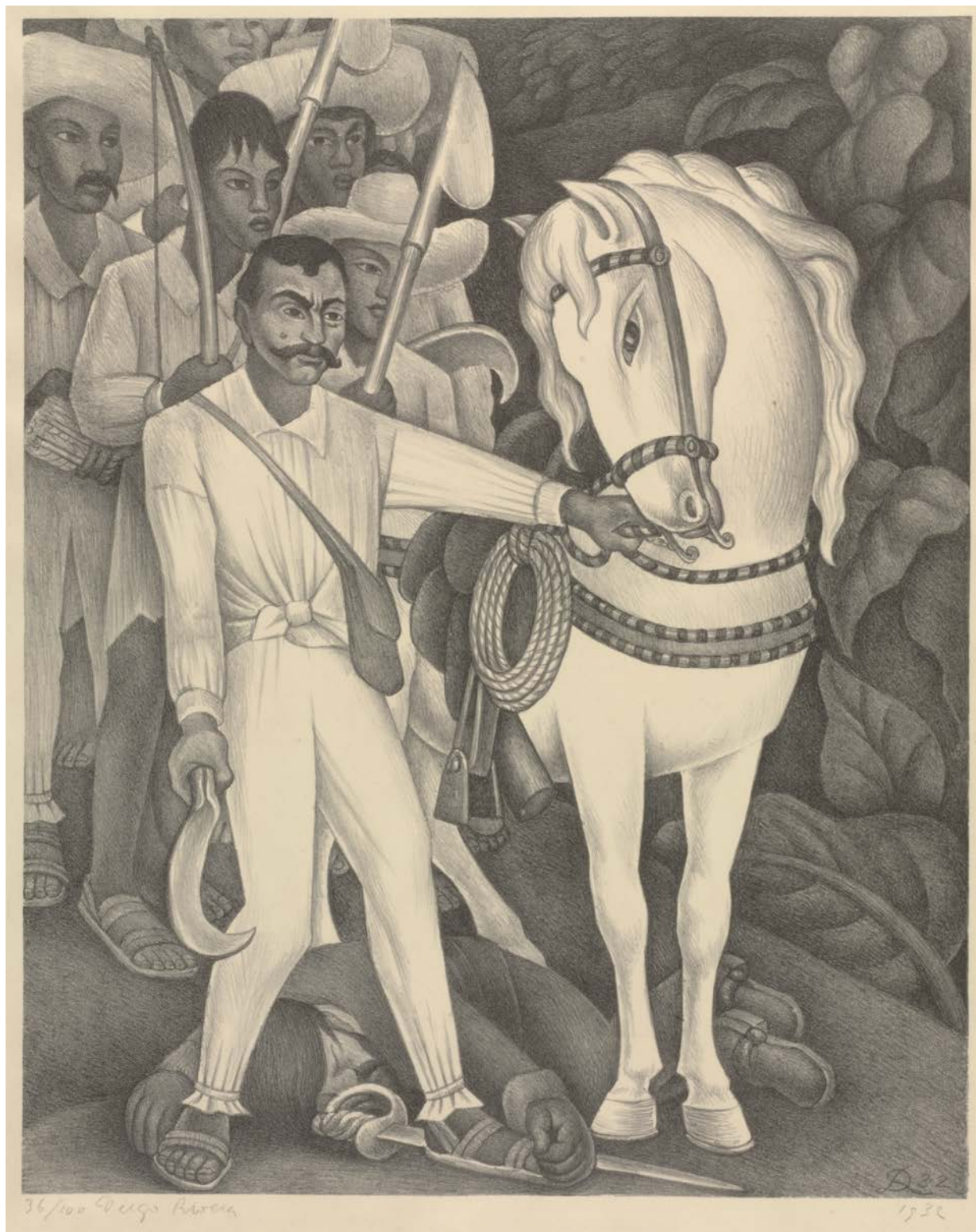
Compare the mood of Rivera's *Zapata* with *Zapata* by another Mexican printmaker, David Alfaro Siqueiros. bit.ly/2z6PDUF

PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.

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Zapata

Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886–1957). *Zapata*. 1932. Crayon lithograph. 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches.
The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler, BMA 1932.28.5. © 2017 Banco de México
Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York