



## Editorial

### *Finally, a Mural Preserved*

This has been a bad year for outdoor murals in Downtown Los Angeles, as prominent works have been obscured or destroyed. Yet even without that context, the city and the Getty Foundation deserve praise for finally coming up with a plan to make a 74-year-old piece by David Siqueiros accessible to the public.

City and Getty officials recently announced the nearly \$8 million plan to preserve and display Siqueiros' "América Tropical," an 80-by-18-foot work created atop Olvera Street's Italian Hall in 1932. It was covered by white paint shortly after it was created. Although the paint (which, ironically, preserved and protected the work for decades) has been removed, officials were never able to cobble together the funding to show it.

Part of this was due to the mural's location high above Olvera Street. But it seems likely that some of the delay stemmed from the piece's controversial theme - it depicted a crucified Indian under the outstretched wings of an American eagle. Siqueiros meant it as a critique on what he felt was the United States' oppressive imperialism.

Getty officials have been working to preserve "América Tropical" since 1988, and have come up with \$3.95 million to help build a viewing platform, a bridge from a nearby building to the mural and an educational component in another nearby structure. This, along with a bit of pressure from Getty officials, finally got the city to pony up \$3.87 million in bond money and other funds. The plan calls for the mural to be accessible by 2009.

This is a welcome attitude in an era when Downtown Los Angeles artworks are suffering. In the two most prominent examples, which both involved artist Kent Twitchell, local creations have been compromised. Twitchell's "Harbor Freeway Overpass" has been obscured by a grove of eucalyptus trees for months now. The most painful example happened earlier this summer when a work crew painted over his 11,000-square-foot "Ed Ruscha Monument," which had looked down from the side of 1031 S. Hill St. for 19 years. A lawsuit has been filed.

Given the disturbing trend toward the destruction of our artistic treasures, it's nice to see that at least one is being saved. Hopefully the preservation effort will become infectious.