Diego Rivera (whose full name was Diego María de la Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodríguez!) was a controversial Mexican painter best known for his murals, politics, and personal life, especially his tumultuous relationship with his wife, Frida Kahlo. Born in 1886, Rivera came of age as an artist during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the Russian Revolution (1917). Both events shaped his beliefs, his life, and his art. His style of art was influenced by time he spent in Europe, where he had a great deal of contact with well-known artists. His monumental frescoes often focused on the downtrodden, the disparities between the rich and the poor, and the promotion of Communism. Because of their political content, some of his murals created in the United States were considered controversial. Commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller, Rivera created murals on the main floor of the then RCA Building and Radio City Music Hall in New York City; the murals were destroyed. His best known mural still existing in America is the Detroit Industry fresco in the Detroit Institute of Art painted in 1932-1933, which paid tribute to the manufacturing plants and people of Detroit.

Rivera’s images were big, colorful, and crowded and usually told a political story. The original image from which The Dream is based is a fresco at a government ministry of education building. The building has 2 courtyards whose walls are covered by 124 murals painted between 1923 and 1928. The fresco that is the inspiration for The Dream actually contains 12 people—the top 6 are awake and part of a class, whereas the bottom 6 are asleep. It is the bottom that is the basis of the lithograph. The color is gone. The distraction of the top is gone. We see a group of people asleep and dreaming. The woman’s outstretched arm supports her child and seems to be begging. The scene is tender, evoking empathy. It is an escape from the cacophony of Rivera’s original mural. It shows how sleep can be an escape from the turmoil of life.

Disclosures

The author has declared that he has nothing to disclose.

Reference


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