

Hood Museum of Art Launches New Website to Enhance Public Engagement with National Landmark Mural by José Clemente Orozco



One of the most renowned art treasures at Dartmouth College is the ambitious mural *The Epic of American Civilization*, painted by Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco between 1932 and 1934 in the reserve corridor of Baker-Berry Library, now the Orozco Room. The fresco is considered one of the finest examples of mural painting in this country by one of the greatest twentieth-century practitioners of public art.

In addition to the finished mural, Dartmouth College and the Hood Museum of Art possess more than two hundred preparatory drawings, compositional studies, and historical photographs that provide invaluable insight into the entire artistic process. Due to their fragility, these materials are not on public view, except for the rare occasion when they are shown in special exhibitions at the Hood.

Now, visitors to the murals, scholars of Mexican art, and audiences beyond the campus will be able to view these important materials through the launch of a new website, Dartmouth Digital Orozco (www.dartmouth.edu/digitalorozco). This interactive tool is designed to allow visitors and audiences worldwide to explore Orozco's monumental mural in conjunction with the preparatory drawings and documents on its making. The website, developed in collaboration with the Neukom Institute for Computational Science, presents the mural as a photographic panorama, in which the user can move virtually through the narrative from left to right, while a lightbox populated with the supplementary materials appears below. The website is designed to

Dartmouth Digital Orozco

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operate through interaction with the touchscreen of a tablet device or the mouse or touchpad on a desktop or laptop computer.

“José Clemente Orozco spent almost two years, from 1932 to 1934, on Dartmouth’s campus as an artist-in-residence,” said Michael Taylor, director of the Hood Museum of Art. “As a result, Dartmouth owns not only one of his most famous murals but also more than two hundred drawings that unlock the mysteries of his process. Now the faculty, students, and general public can explore both the drawings and mural side by side, thanks to this innovative, interactive tool.”

The principal innovative feature of this website is that the viewer may now study Dartmouth’s contextual material in juxtaposition with, and in some cases overlaid upon, the final mural, providing the opportunity to compare preparatory drawings and in-process documentary photographs with the finished product. The site also provides access to original research conducted by Dartmouth students who participated in courses dedicated to learning about Orozco and the Mexican mural movement. This ongoing project will supply more information and documents to this site, as students and scholars add to our knowledge about this important mural cycle.

Dartmouth Digital Orozco began in 2012 as a freestanding application developed for the iPad 2 by James Hughes, a Dartmouth PhD candidate in computer science. This inventive application, which runs locally and does not connect to the Internet, provided the template for the present website. While the original application relied on files and images stored locally on stand-alone iPads, Dartmouth Digital Orozco represents a web-supported, centralized service with remotely accessible, extensible content. It can be viewed anywhere, enhancing the experience of the mural not only for visitors to it but also for a worldwide audience, many of whom will never have the opportunity to travel to Dartmouth’s campus. Visitors to the Orozco Room may borrow an iPad from the reserve desk for use while viewing the mural, or they may use their own devices.

Dartmouth Digital Orozco was developed through a collaboration between the Hood Museum of Art and the Neukom Institute for Computational Science. Funding has been generously provided by the Class of 1960, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Neukom Institute for Computational Science. We also thank the Manton Foundation for their perpetual support of the preservation and interpretation of the Orozco mural.

About the Hood Museum of Art

The mission of the Hood Museum of Art, as a teaching museum, is to create an ideal learning environment that fosters transformative encounters with works of art. This dynamic educational and cultural facility houses one of the oldest and largest college collections in the country, with more than 70,000 objects acquired since 1772. Among its most important works are six Assyrian stone reliefs that date from around 900 BCE. The collection also presents art from other ancient cultures, the Americas, Europe, Africa, Papua New Guinea, and many more regions of the world. The Hood seeks to inspire and educate through direct engagement with original works of art and

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offers access to the rich diversity of its collections through ongoing highlights displays, special exhibitions, an online collections database, and a wide array of programs and events.

About Dartmouth

Founded in 1769, Dartmouth is a member of the Ivy League and consistently ranks among the world's greatest colleges and universities. Dartmouth has forged a singular identity for combining its deep commitment to outstanding undergraduate liberal arts and graduate and professional education with distinguished research and scholarship in the arts and sciences and its three leading professional schools—the Geisel School of Medicine, Thayer School of Engineering, and the Tuck School of Business.

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