Finding Aid for the

José Clemente Orozco papers

1922-2015

Pomona College Museum of Art Archives, Pomona College Museum of Art

Contact Information:

Pomona College Museum of Art.
330 N. College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711
(909) 621-8283
museuminfo@pomona.edu
https://www.pomona.edu/museum/

Processed by:

Finding aid prepared by Benjamin Kersten, 2016

Internet version available:

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José Clemente Orozco papers, 1922-2015

Descriptive Summary:

Title: José Clemente Orozco papers


Creator/Collector: Pomona College Museum of Art faculty and staff

Extent: 3.3 linear feet (8 document cases, 1 slide box)
330 N. College Avenue  
Claremont, CA 91711  
(909) 621-8283  
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**Abstract:** José Clemente Orozco has been hailed as one of *Los Tres Grandes*—the three great Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. The collection consists almost entirely of material related to his 1930 mural commission at Pomona College, which resulted in *Prometheus*. The earliest materials concern José Pijoán’s appointment at Pomona College and the commission of the murals. The collection includes an abundance of material related to conservation of the mural, from the retouches of the 1970s to recent condition reports. A portion of materials dating to the 1950s includes outreach efforts by David and Tírsa Scott to record the history of the mural and track down the preparatory drawings. A significant portion of materials from the 1990s concerns the negotiations around and acquisition of the preparatory drawings associated with the mural, the exhibition of the drawings, and the 2001 publication of *José Clemente Orozco: Prometheus*. Some of the material focuses on particular figures involved in the mural’s commission and scholarship, including José Pijoán, Jorge Juan Crespo de la Sema, David Scott, Renato Gonzalez Mello, and Mary Coffey. The collection includes scholarly and journalistic articles related to the mural and Orozco. Materials also address exhibitions and events that took place away from Pomona College, mostly at Dartmouth College. There are also photographs, transparencies, and slides showing the mural, events in Frary Dining Hall, and damage to the mural.

**Physical location:** Please consult repository.

**Request Materials:** Request access to the physical materials described in this inventory by contacting the Pomona College Museum of Art.

**Language:** Collection material is in English and Spanish.

**Administrative Information:**

**Access:**

Open for use by the public, particularly those affiliated with the Claremont Colleges and qualified researchers.

**Publication Rights:**

Contact the Pomona College Museum of Art for information about reproductions and permissions.
Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], José Clemente Orozco papers, 1922-2015. Pomona College Museum of Art Archives, Claremont, California.

Processing Information

Processed and described by Benjamin Kersten in 2016.

Biographical/Historical Note:

José Clemente Orozco (November 23, 1883 – September 7, 1949) was a Mexican painter and leader of the Mexican muralist movement. His Prometheus mural, painted at Pomona College in 1930, is the first mural painted in the U.S. by a Mexican muralist. The mural represents the myth of Prometheus at the moment Orozco delivers fire to the masses and is demonstrative of Orozco’s complicated humanism.

The fine art collections of Pomona College are housed in the Pomona College Museum of Art, at the Montgomery Art Center, which was inaugurated in 1958 and named for the late Gladys K. Montgomery, Pomona trustee and Los Angeles civic leader. Among important holdings are the Kress Collection of 15th- and 16th-century Italian panel paintings; over 5,000 examples of Pre-Columbian to 20th-century American Indian art and artifacts, including basketry, ceramics, and beadwork; and a large collection of American and European prints, drawings, and photographs. In addition to serving as the basis for exhibitions, the collections, which are always available for individual study and research, are frequently used for classes.

The Pomona College Museum of Art also is the site of an active program of temporary exhibitions throughout the academic year. These include regular faculty and student shows, as well as historical and contemporary exhibitions designed to complement the College's curricula and to expose students to as wide a variety of works of art as possible. All exhibitions open with public receptions and include lectures and related programs for the College community.

Scope and Content of Collection:

The collection contains materials relating to José Clemente Orozco’s Prometheus mural at Pomona College, including its conservation, the acquisition and exhibition of the preparatory drawings, scholarship and journalism surrounding the mural, and Orozco’s other U.S. murals at Dartmouth College and the New School for Social Research. The earliest materials concern José Pijoán’s appointment at Pomona College and initial communication about the mural’s commission. The materials make a large temporal leap to the 1950s, when David Scott made a concerted effort to detail the process of the mural’s commission. At this time, Tirsa Scott also communicated with Margarita Orozco,
inquiring after the preparatory drawings. The materials make another jump to the 1970s, when Ben Johnson cleaned the mural and Gerald Ackerman concerned himself with retouching Prometheus’s genitals. Nathan Zakheim’s lengthy restoration process in the early 1980s provides the collection with many materials. Laurance Hurlburt also reached out at this time, as the 1980s marked two important anniversaries: Orozco’s centennial and Pomona College’s centennial. Marjorie Harth, Evelia Cavalheiro, and David Alexander oversaw an exhibition of works by Orozco presented in Bridges Auditorium, and Dartmouth College hosted an exhibition and symposium on Orozco. The Orozco family lent the drawings to Pomona College for an exhibition in the early 1990s. A large section of the materials dates to the late 1990s and early 2000s, providing detail on the Pomona College Museum of Art’s acquisition of the drawings and production of the book José Clemente Orozco: Prometheus. The collection also includes scholarship by Renato González Mello, articles from The Student Life campus news publication and other newspapers and magazines, and small cards parodying Orozco’s lack of distinct penis circulated around campus in 2015 among other miscellaneous materials.

These papers have been collected over time by the faculty and staff of the Pomona College Museum of Art. Materials have been authored by many different people. Materials are organized into groups based around Orozco at Pomona, including posthumous exhibitions; writing on Orozco and Prometheus, including both journalistic and scholarly material, and Orozco’s writing and correspondence; the preparatory drawings for Prometheus; the production of the 2001 book José Clemente Orozco: Prometheus published by the Pomona College Museum of Art; the conservation of Prometheus; notable figures relating to the mural and its presence on campus; Orozco’s artwork beyond Pomona College; and photographic materials, including photographs, transparencies, negatives, and slides. The materials within each are roughly in chronological order.

Arrangement note:

The papers are organized in 8 series:
Series 1. Orozco at Pomona, 1930-2015;
Series 2. Writing on Orozco and Prometheus and Orozco’s Writing, 1928-2015;
Series 7. Orozco Elsewhere, 1930-2015;

Indexing Terms:

Subjects – Names:

Alexander, David
Baas, Jacquelynn
Beatty, Caroline
Cavalheiro, Evelia
Charlot, Jean
Coffey, Mary
Corso, Miguel Angel
Crespo de la Serna, Jorge Juan
Estrada, Gerardo
Fernández, Justino
Goheen, John D.
González Mello, Renato
Harth, Marjorie “Cricket”
Hurlburt, Laurance P.
Miliotes, Diane
Orozco, José Clemente, 1883-1949
Orozco, Margarita
Orozco Valladares, Alfredo
Orozco Valladares, Clemente
Orozco Valladares, Lucrecia
Pijoán, José
Reed, Alma
Scott, David
Scott, Tirsa
Stanley, Peter
Villa, Elizabeth
Zakheim, Nathan
Zebala, Aneta

Subjects – Institutional Bodies:

Dartmouth College
The Hood Museum, Dartmouth College
Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA)
Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil
The New School for Social Research
Pomona College
Pomona College Museum of Art (Montgomery Gallery)

Subjects – Topics:

Mural painting and decoration, Mexican
Mural painting and decoration—California—Los Angeles
Painting—Technique

Contributors:
Ackerman, Gerald
Beatty, Caroline
Harth, Marjorie “Cricket”
Merritt, Dorothy
Merritt, Earl “Fuzz”
Scott, David
Scott, Tirsa

Genres and Forms of Material:

- 35mm slides
- Compact discs
- Film negatives
- Paper
- Photographic prints
- Photographs, originals
- Transparencies

Related Material:

The following materials are offered as possible sources of further information on the people and subjects covered by the records. The listing is not exhaustive.

Honnold/Mudd Library of the Claremont Colleges, Special Collections

Claremont Colleges Vertical Files collection

Jose Clemente Orozco scrapbook, H.Mss.0448
http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt5k4033qz/

Merritt Collection of Jose Clemente Orozco, H.Mss.1000
http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt438nf0pq/

Scott Collection of Jose Clemente Orozco, H.Mss.0594

Pomona College Archives: https://www.pomona.edu/administration/archives

Container List

Series 1. Orozco at Pomona, 1930-2015

These materials include interpretive texts and brochures for the Prometheus mural; texts about the vandalism to the mural; materials relating to a 1984 exhibition that did not come to fruition; materials relating to a 1987 exhibition; materials relating to the 2002
exhibition of the preparatory drawings; texts regarding Orozco’s time at Pomona, including eye witness accounts by Bo Bob Brown, Shelton Beatty, and Earl Merritt; and lists of archival materials on Orozco and the mural.

**Arrangement note:**

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 1</th>
<th>Prometheus Interpretative Texts and Brochures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 2</td>
<td>Texts About Vandalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 3</td>
<td>1984 Exhibition Planning and Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 4</td>
<td>1987 Exhibition Planning and Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 5</td>
<td>Orozco at Pomona – Payment, Eye Witness Accounts, Misc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 6</td>
<td>Lists of Archival Materials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Series 2. Writing on Orozco and Prometheus and Orozco’s Writing, 1928-2015**

These materials include articles from *The Student Life* about Orozco and *Prometheus*; articles, chapters, miscellaneous writing, and notes about other kinds of engagements with *Prometheus*; Laurance Hurlburt’s writing on *Prometheus*; copies of notes writing by Orozco; copies of letters from Orozco to Walter Pach; a 1940 bulletin from the Museum of Modern Art authored by Orozco; copies of Orozco’s “New World, New Races and New Art” text; and copies made from the book of letters Orozco wrote to his wife Margarita.

**Arrangement note:**

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2, Folder 1</th>
<th>Orozco/Prometheus Student Life Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 2</td>
<td>Orozco/Prometheus News Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 3</td>
<td>Articles, Chapters, and Other Engagements with Orozco/Prometheus (1 of 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 4</td>
<td>Articles, Chapters, and Other Engagements with Orozco/Prometheus (2 of 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 5</td>
<td>“The Prometheus of Pomona College, 1930” in Laurance P. Hurlburt’s The Mexican Muralists in the United States, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 6</td>
<td>Orozco Writing – Notes for Murals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 7</td>
<td>Orozco Writing – Letters to Walter Pach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 8</td>
<td>Orozco Writing – New World, New Races, and New Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 9</td>
<td>Orozco Writing – MoMA Bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 10</td>
<td>Orozco Writing – Letters to Margarita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Series 3. The Preparatory Drawings for Prometheus, 1991-2000**
These materials include copies of and records on the preparatory drawings for *Prometheus*; electronic database entries for the drawings; correspondence about the drawings prior to 1998; and correspondence and documents relating to the drawings from 1999 to 2000.

**Arrangement note:**

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.

- Box 3, Folder 1  Orozco Charcoal Drawings for *Prometheus* (1 of 2)
- Box 3, Folder 2  Orozco Charcoal Drawings for *Prometheus* (2 of 2)
- Box 3, Folder 3  Orozco Charcoal Drawings for *Prometheus* (copies)
- Box 3, Folder 4  Preparatory Drawings – Database Entries
- Box 3, Folder 5  Orozco Drawings Correspondence Through 1998
- Box 3, Folder 6  Orozco Drawing Correspondence and Documents. 1999 – 2009

**Series 4. 2001 Catalogue Production, 2000-2002**

These materials include notes, correspondences, timelines, and press releases; documents on the copyrights for Orozco’s drawings; materials relating to David Scott’s essays and the accompanying images; materials relating to Renato Gonzalez Mello’s essay and the accompanying images; materials relating to Mary Coffey’s essay and accompanying images; information on Carlos Monroy who took photographs used in the catalogue; documents relating to the printing and costs of the catalogue; and lists of and exchanges with recipients of the catalogue.

**Arrangement note:**

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.

- Box 4, Folder 1  2001 Catalogue Production – Notes, Correspondence, Timeline, Press Release
- Box 4, Folder 2  2001 Catalogue Production – Orozco Copyrights
- Box 4, Folder 3  2001 Catalogue Production – David Scott
- Box 4, Folder 4  2001 Catalogue Production – Renato Gonzalez Mello
- Box 4, Folder 5  2001 Catalogue Production – Mary Coffey
- Box 4, Folder 6  2001 Catalogue Production – Carlos Monroy
- Box 4, Folder 7  2001 Catalogue Production – Printing Costs
- Box 4, Folder 8  2001 Catalogue Production – Recipients

**Series 5. Conservation of *Prometheus*, 1969-2001**
These materials concern the various conservation efforts on the *Prometheus* mural, including the initial conversations in the late 1960s and 1970s, Ben Johnson’s conservation efforts, and Gerald Ackerman’s touch ups of the genitals; conservation reports from Nathan Zakheim; proposals and progress reports from Zakheim; information on the applied liquid polymer system used to reinforce the wall; materials regarding the chimney reinforcement; correspondence and meeting notes with Zakheim; reports and proposals regarding Zakheim’s work on *Prometheus* and Rico Lebrun’s *Genisis*; Zakheim’s correspondence with Hurlburt; Zakheim’s correspondence with David Alexander, including contracts and change orders; billing invoices from Zakheim’s work; a technical study of the conservation by Anton Rajer; and invoices, reports, and correspondence with Aneta Zebala.

**Arrangement note:**

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.

- **Box 5, Folder 1** Conservation – 1970s: Johnson, Ackerman, Genitals
- **Box 5, Folder 2** Conservation – Zakheim Conservation Report
- **Box 5, Folder 3** Conservation – Zakheim Proposals and Progress Reports
- **Box 5, Folder 4** Conservation – Zakheim Applied Liquid Polymer Systems
- **Box 5, Folder 5** Conservation – Chimney Reinforcement
- **Box 5, Folder 6** Conservation – Zakheim Correspondence and Meeting Notes
- **Box 5, Folder 7** Conservation – Zakheim Report and Proposal, *Prometheus* and *Genesis*
- **Box 5, Folder 8** Conservation – Zakheim and Hurlburt Correspondence
- **Box 5, Folder 9** Conservation – Zakheim and Alexander, Correspondence, Contracts, Change Orders
- **Box 5, Folder 10** Conservation – Zakheim Billing Invoices (1 of 2)
- **Box 5, Folder 11** Conservation – Zakheim Billing Invoices (2 of 2)
- **Box 5, Folder 12** Conservation – Technical Study by Anton Rajer
- **Box 5, Folder 13** Conservation – Zebala Invoice, Report, Correspondence

**Series 6. Notable Figures, 1922-2016**

This box includes materials relating to various people who have played roles in the mural’s presence on campus. It includes essays by David Scott, Scott’s CV, and correspondence regarding a visit he made to Claremont; David and Tirsa Scott’s correspondence with the Orozco family; David Scott’s correspondence with Jorge Juan Crespo de la Serna; David Scott’s correspondence with John Goheen; David Scott’s correspondence with Alma Reed; David Scott’s correspondence with Justino Fernández; David Scott’s correspondence with José Pijoán and notes on writing by Pijoán; miscellaneous correspondence from David Scott; materials relating to José Pijoán, including news, contact information, and information on Orozco’s portrait of Pijoán; materials relating to Jorge Juan Crespo de la Serna including a biography and correspondence among museum staff regarding the drawings in his possession; materials
relating to Clemente Orozco, including a CV, correspondence regarding an exhibition, and a news article about him; correspondence with Laurance Hulburt; a *The Student Life* article by and correspondence regarding John Goheen; an article on Edward Weston who photographed Orozco; and an interview with Jean Charlot.

**Arrangement note:**

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.

- Box 6, Folder 1  David Scott CV, Essays, Visit to Claremont
- Box 6, Folder 2  David and Tirsa Scott Correspondence with Orozco Family
- Box 6, Folder 3  David Scott Correspondence with Crespo de la Serna
- Box 6, Folder 4  David Scott Correspondence with John Goheen
- Box 6, Folder 5  David Scott Correspondence with Alma Reed
- Box 6, Folder 6  David Scott Correspondence with Justino Fernandez
- Box 6, Folder 7  David Scott Correspondence with Pijoan and Notes on Pijoan
- Box 6, Folder 8  David Scott Miscellaneous Correspondence
- Box 6, Folder 9  Pijoan: Information, News, Contact, Portrait
- Box 6, Folder 10  Crespo de la Serna: Bio, Correspondence, Re: His Drawings
- Box 6, Folder 11  Clemente Orozco
- Box 6, Folder 12  Laurance Hurlburt Correspondence
- Box 6, Folder 13  John Goheen (Modeled for Prometheus)
- Box 6, Folder 14  Edward Weston (Photographed Orozco)
- Box 6, Folder 15  Jean Charlot Interview

**Series 7. Orozco Elsewhere, 1930-2015**

The materials in the box concern Orozco’s artwork and murals outside of Pomona College, including general information on the Dartmouth murals; materials from a 1984 symposium at Dartmouth; info, correspondence, and materials on the exhibition “José Clemente Orozco in the United States, 1927-1934”; materials relating to the catalogue production for the aforementioned exhibition; press regarding the aforementioned exhibition; print outs of webpages on the Dartmouth murals; general information on the murals at the New School; documents regarding the *Omnicencia* mural at the Casa de los Azulejos in Mexico City; lithographs at Mary-Anne Martin Fine Art; and materials from a 2015 exhibition at the San Jose Museum of Art.

**Arrangement note:**

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.

- Box 7, Folder 1  Dartmouth Murals, General
- Box 7, Folder 2  Dartmouth 1984 Symposium
- Box 7, Folder 3  Dartmouth, San Diego, Carrillo Gil – JCO in the US, 1927 –

This box includes photographic materials, including photographs, compact discs, transparencies, and negatives. They are of the central panel of Prometheus; the masses; the west panel; the east panel; the ceiling panel; Frary Dining Hall more generally; damage to the mural in black and white; damage to the mural in color; Zakheim’s conservation efforts; the preparatory drawings; Peter Selz showing a photomural; Clemente Orozco; some of Orozco’s early illustrations; the portrait of José Pijoán; the destroyed murals at the National Preparatory School; the New School murals; and the Dartmouth murals. There are transparencies of Prometheus and murals by Diego Rivera. There are negatives of the Prometheus.

Arrangement note:

Arranged in rough chronological order, with materials on a given topic grouped together.
Box 8, Folder 19  Transparencies – Prometheus
Box 8, Folder 20  Transparencies – Rivera Murals
Box 8, Folder 21  Negatives – Large
Box 8, Folder 22  Negatives – Small