



## MEXICO: FANTASTIC IDENTITY

20TH CENTURY MASTERPIECES

FEMSA COLLECTION

*Mexico: Fantastic Identity* features paintings, photographs, and mixed media works by artists who lived and worked in Mexico just prior to, during, and after the **Mexican Revolution**. It explores the ways that Mexican **identity** changed during this important period and how artists documented those changes through their work.

Use this guide to help you better understand this exciting period!

# THE REVOLUTION



Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, *El rebozo blanco*, 1943. Colección FEMSA

The **Mexican Revolution**, Mexico's civil war, began in 1910. The war arose in defiance of President Porfirio Díaz, who ruled the country for almost 30 years. His decisions often hurt the poorest people and the longer he remained in power, the less popular he became. Soldiers, rebels, peasant farmers and even artists participated in the ten year war.

At the end of the **Revolution**, Díaz left Mexico and a new group of people took charge of the country. They wanted everyone to know that things were going to change. Their plan was to make everyone, rich and poor, proud to be Mexican. They hired artists, writers and teachers to spread knowledge about important historical events. Books were published and **murals** were painted in public buildings that portrayed Mexico and its people in a positive light.



To learn more about the important events and characters of the **Mexican Revolution** scan the code or visit <http://bit.ly/1wWHDdG>



# THE MEXICAN SCHOOL



Flor Garduño, Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, México, 1984. Colección FEMSA

The new artistic style promoted in Mexico by the government was called the **Mexican School**. Artists created portraits of people participating in everyday activities. **Muralists**, like Diego Rivera, painted on public walls where anyone could see them for free. The **Mexican School** was the most popular style of art from the 1920s to the 1970s!

Because the government paid these artists for their work, it was seen as a tool of **nationalism**.



**TRY THIS: ART ANALYSIS** Art can tell stories, share ideas and inspire feelings. Select an artwork and use the table below to analyze it.



**I SEE...**  
(Objects, colors, spaces)



**I THINK...**  
(What is happening here?)



**I KNOW...**  
(My experiences tell me that...)



**I FEEL...**  
(The colors, objects, or ideas make me feel like...)



To learn more about Mexican **murals** scan the code or visit <http://bit.ly/1w59Kfm>

## THE LANDSCAPE



Hugo Brehme, *Iztaccihuatl*, s/f. Colección FEMSA

Another popular subject of the **Mexican School** was the Mexican **landscape**. Paintings and photographs showed Mexico's diverse natural settings. **Landscapes** have always been central to Mexican culture. Many ancient legends take place in the desert, sky and lakes. Volcanoes like *Iztaccihuatl* (known to Mexicans as "Izta") are given human characteristics.

One of the most important **landscape** painters was Dr. Atl. Volcanoes were his main subject. He climbed, painted, and wrote poems about them. He even tried to live in an ancient volcanic crater! He depicted these monuments with intense colors and dynamic brushstrokes. Dr. Atl felt connected to his ancestors through the Mexican **landscape**.



Mexico's two most famous volcanoes have a national park dedicated to them. To learn more about the park and the ancient legend of the volcanoes "Izta" & "Popo", scan the code or visit <http://bit.ly/1GoebFU>

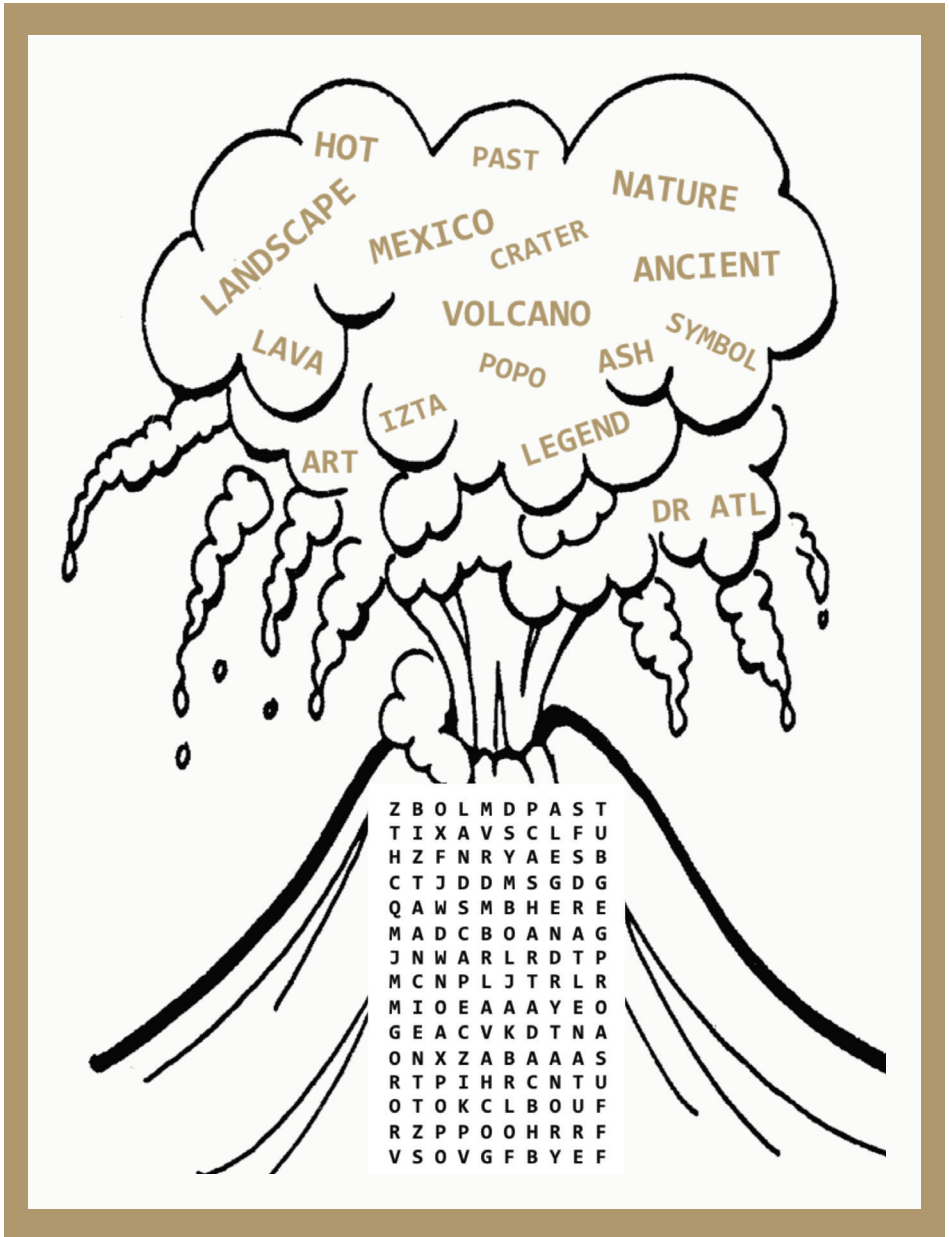


Muralist Diego Rivera called Dr. Atl one of the most "curious personalities" in the Americas. To learn more about this controversial artist and see his paintings, scan the code or visit <http://bit.ly/1Ff0Xr9>



**WORD SEARCH:**

Find words related to Mexican **landscape** painting in the puzzle below.



## SURREALISM & THE FANTASTIC



Agustín Lazo, *Los Remedios*, 1930. Colección FEMSA

As Mexico moved past its **Revolution**, different art styles emerged. European artists, fleeing World War II, relocated to Latin America and brought new ideas with them. In 1940, Mexico hosted its first **Surrealist** art exhibition by international artists.

**Surrealist** artists explore their dreams and memories to create whimsical scenes.

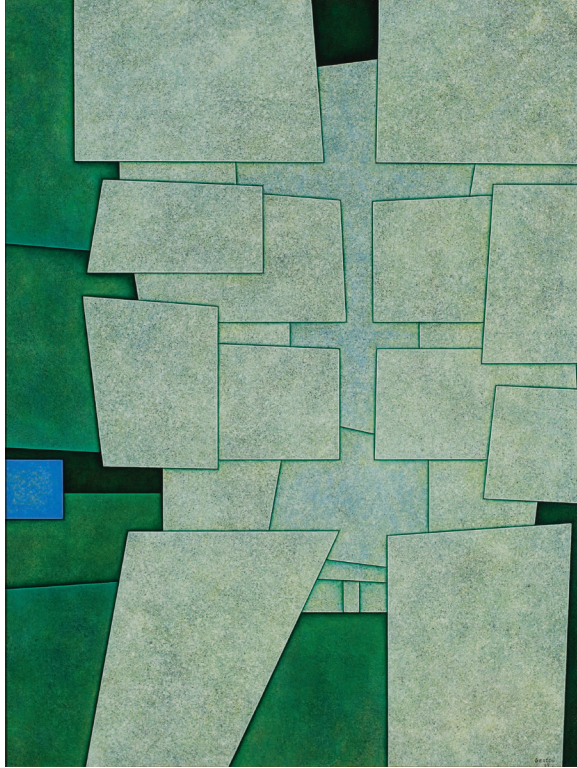
To create these **fantastic** images, artists played drawing and writing games. The results were sometimes silly and sometimes eerie. Mexican artists often used **Surrealism** to explore unusual events in Mexican history, magical traditions and their own fragmented **identities**.



**Try This:** Inkblot Drawing! Tap into your imagination by creating a scene using the inkblot above. What do you see? What can you add to create a story?



## NEW DIRECTIONS: ABSTRACTION AND LA RUPTURA



Gunther Gerzso, *Tlacuilo II*, 1979. Colección FEMSA

As time passed, Mexican artists continued to move away from the **Mexican School**. They saw the movement as a **nationalist** tool that was now useless and outdated.

One new artistic direction was **abstraction**. In **abstract art**, objects, **landscapes** and figures are not portrayed realistically. **Abstract** artists instead rely on colors or shapes to express an idea. Many Mexican **abstract** artists based their works on ancient **Mexica** architecture and indigenous patterns.

The young artists of **La Ruptura** worked on small drawings and paintings that expressed personal feelings and scenes. Their artwork was dark and gritty. They weren't afraid to show the negative aspects of society. They saw their **identities** as being more complex than what was portrayed by the **Mexican School**.



José Luis Cuevas was a leader of **La Ruptura**. His art is expressive and shows humanity's inner struggle. To see some examples of his work, scan the code or visit <http://bit.ly/1B8vRRh>

## KEY TERMS

**Abstraction:** An art movement that uses color, texture, and shapes to show a subject in a non-realistic way.

**Fantastic:** Incredible, imaginative, or fanciful.

**Identity:** How a person defines themselves as an individual or as part of a group.

**La Ruptura:** A young artist-led movement that broke away from the Mexican School. They rejected the political and embraced the personal.

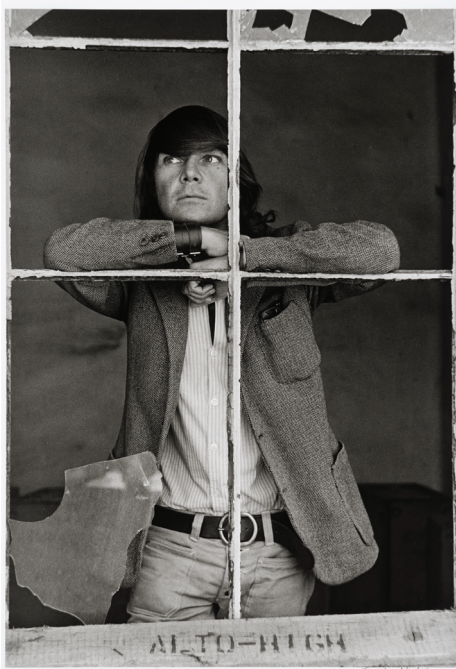
**Landscape:** A picture of an outdoor scene or view.

**Mexica:** The original name of the Aztecs, an indigenous civilization that ruled the Valley of Mexico prior to the Spanish invasion.

**Mexican Revolution:** Mexico's civil war lasted from 1910 to 1920 in defiance of dictator Porfirio Díaz, who had ruled for thirty years.

**Mexican School:** A government sponsored art movement that focused on "Mexican" subjects and stories. It rejected European conventions and embraced indigenous themes.

**Muralism:** A mural is a large painting usually created on a wall. Muralism was a part of the Mexican School and focused on political and national themes.



Graciela Iturbide, José Luis Cuevas, ca. 1969. Colección FEMSA

**Nationalism:** The strong belief that the interests of your particular nation or country are of primary importance.

**Surrealism:** An art and literature movement that uses dreams and fantasy as the main subject-matter. **Surrealist** artists juxtapose images in an irrational or fantastic way.

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