

## Arcs 2023: Moving Diego Rivera's Pan-American Unity: Lessons Learned on a Monumental Scale

Presenters: Bryan Cain, CEO of Atthowe Fine Art Services, and Kieren Graves, Wall Painting Conservator, of Site and Studio Conservation.

The presentation delivered by Presenters Bryan Cain and Kieren Graves provided a detailed account of the monumental move of Diego Rivera's Pan-American Unity mural from City College of San Francisco to SF MoMA. The presenters delved deep into the various challenges and complications that arose during the project, including the sheer size and weight of the mural, the logistics of transportation, and the need to ensure the safety and integrity of the artwork throughout the process. One of the key themes that emerged from the presentation was the importance of collaboration. The presenters explained how they worked closely with a diverse group of professionals, including art conservators, engineers, art handlers, scholars, and university students in Mexico, to develop innovative strategies to safely remove the mural from the walls of City College and transport it across San Francisco to its final destination at SF MoMA.

The presenters emphasized the need for effective communication and coordination among team members, and how this was essential to the project's success. This project timeline was also extended due to the pandemic, which has a silver lining, which allowed them more time to experiment with new techniques. In addition, the presenters shared insights into the use of cutting-edge technology and techniques to ensure the safety and integrity of the mural during the move. For instance, they explained how they used a vibration data logger to monitor the vibration level during the installation and uninstallation. This helped to minimize damage to the artwork as the datalogger was connected to a visual light that signaled to the art handler when they should stop with a light. Photogrammetry data was also used to create accurate condition reports and imaging, and this proved to be an invaluable resource in the project.

I selected this presentation due to my previous experience as an intern with the Mexican Museum of Art; while there, I had the opportunity to witness the early stages of the mural move project before its release to the public. As a registrar, I now fully appreciate the magnitude of the effort involved in successfully executing such a complex undertaking. I am currently assistant registrar at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, which has a very eclectic collection of works that all center around all types of mediums and that illustrate a narrative, while I might not have the opportunity to move a mural like Diego Rivera's this project serves as a valuable case study, offering insights and best practices that can be applied to future projects involving large-scale and delicate works of art.

The presenters highlighted the importance of collaboration and the need to learn from failures, and this is a lesson that I believe applies not only to collections management but can be transferable to any branch of the museum. Overall, the presentation was incredibly insightful and provided a detailed and fascinating account of the complex process of moving a work of art of such historical and cultural significance.

We were also all given a gift from the presenters, the same glove that the electrician in the mural is wearing, which I now have hanging on my cubical wall as a reminder of my time at the conference and a representation that although a task may seem impossible, with teamwork, anything can be achieved.