

**Pablo O'Higgins [formerly Paul Higgins Stevenson] (1904-1983),
artist and art teacher in Mexico**

By Edmundo Murray



Pablo O'Higgins (1904-1983)
(P. Pollack, *Graphic Witness*)

O'Higgins, Pablo [formerly Paul Higgins Stevenson] (1904-1983), artist and art teacher in Mexico, was born on 1 March 1904 in Salt Lake City, Utah, to a family of Irish-American origins. His father was a lawyer and his mother was a farmer. Until 1909 Pablo O'Higgins lived at the family's ranch 'El Cajon' in California. He was sent to primary school in Salt Lake City and high school in San Diego and Salt Lake City.

He received piano lessons, and in 1914 gave his inaugural concert. A year later he was initiated into the field of painting and his family relocated to San Diego, California. In 1922, he abandoned his career as a musician and entered the Academy of Arts in San Diego. He became acquainted with Diego Rivera in 1924, and joined the post-revolutionary artistic movement. For two years up to 1926, Pablo O'Higgins helped Diego Rivera to paint the murals in the former chapel of Chapingo and the Public Education Secretariat. His works were exhibited for the first time in 1925 in San Francisco, California. He contributed artwork to *Mexican Folkways* magazine and sat on the editorial committee.

In 1927 Pablo O'Higgins joined the Mexican Communist Party, and in the following two years worked on Cultural Missions in Durango, Hidalgo, Veracruz, and Zacatecas. His membership of the Communist Party would last until 1947. In 1930, he co-published, with Jean Charlot and Frances Toor, *Las obras de José Guadalupe Posada*, a Mexican engraver. In 1931 O'Higgins founded, together with Leopoldo Méndez and Juan de la Cabada, the Proletarian Intellectual League. This same year he contributed illustrations to the *Daily Worker*, the newspaper of the USA Communist Party. For this work, he was awarded a grant by the Moscow Academy of Arts. By 1933, Pablo O'Higgins was teaching drawing in primary schools. That year he co-founded the Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, LEAR). In 1937, he founded Taller de Gráfica Popular (Popular Graphics Workshop, TGP), together with Leopoldo Méndez, who would be implicated in the murder of Leon Trotsky in 1940. In 1943 O'Higgins's works were exhibited by the Association of American Artists. In 1948 O'Higgins and Xavier Guerrero founded Sociedad para el Impulso de las Artes Plásticas, and the Salón de Plástica Mexicana in 1949. In 1952 he joined the National Assembly of Artists. His paintings were exhibited at the Salón de Plástica Mexicana, whose catalogue included commending notes by Diego Rivera about his work. He also exhibited works at the Gallery of Mexican Arts.

In 1959 Pablo O'Higgins married María de Jesús de la Fuente Casas, a lawyer from Monterrey born in Rayones, Nuevo León. The same year, he was awarded the first prize by the Salón Anual de Pintura, Grabado y Escultura of the INBA for his lithograph 'El chichicuilotero'. In 1961 O'Higgins became a Mexican citizen in honour of his contributions to the national arts and education. During his travels in 1968, he gave courses in mural painting in Moscow and Eastern Europe. In 1971 he received the Elías Sourausky Award in arts.

Pablo O'Higgins died on 16 July 1983, and a funeral was organised at the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts). He was buried in Nuevo León.

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References

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