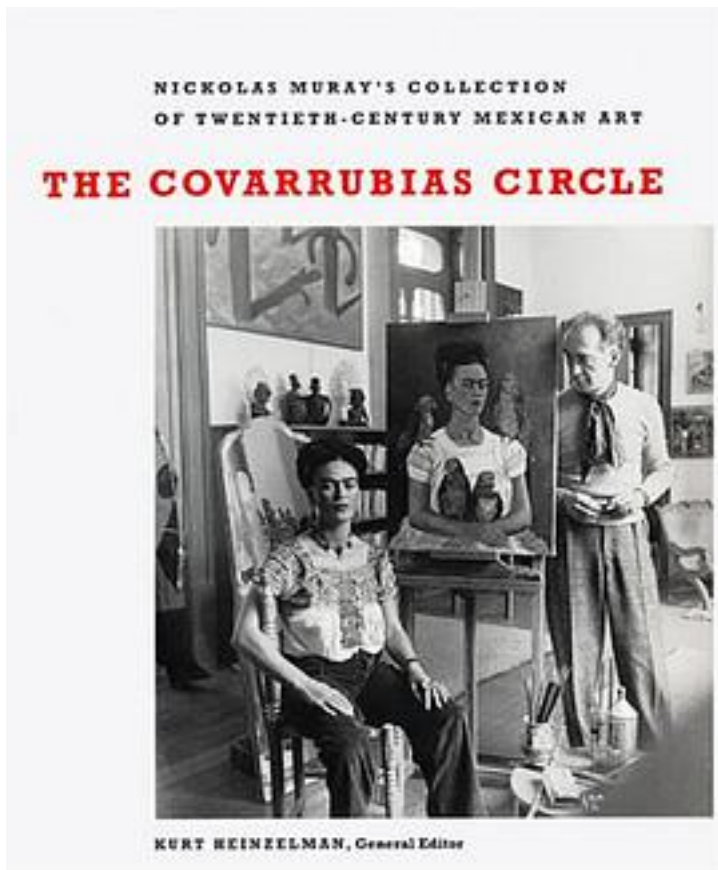


The Covarrubias Circle



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著者:Heinzelman, Kurt (EDT)/ Mears, Peter (EDT)

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New York in the 1920s and 1930s was a modernist mecca that drew artists, writers, and other creators of culture from around the globe. Two such expatriates were Mexican artist and Renaissance man Miguel Covarrubias and Hungarian photographer Nickolas Muray. Their lifelong friendship gave Muray an entrée into Covarrubias's circle of fellow Mexican artists—Frida Kahlo, Rufino Tamayo, Juan Soriano, Fernando Castillo,

Guillermo Meza, Roberto Montenegro, and Rafael Navarro's; whose works Muray collected. This outstanding body of Mexican modernist art, now owned by the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRC) at the University of Texas at Austin, forms the subject of this beautifully illustrated volume.

Produced in conjunction with the Ransom Center's exhibition "Miguel Covarrubias: A Certain Clairvoyance," this volume contains color plates of virtually all the items in Nickolas Muray's collection of twentieth-century Mexican art. The majority of the works are by Covarrubias, while the excellent works by the other artists reflect the range of aesthetic shifts and modernist influences of the period in Mexico. Accompanying the plates are five original essays that establish Covarrubias's importance as a modernist impresario as influential in his sphere as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Jean Cocteau were in theirs. Likewise, the essays reestablish the significance of Nickolas Muray, whose success as a master of color photography, portraiture, advertising imagery, and commercial illustration has made him difficult to place within the history of photography as a fine art.

As a whole, this publication of the Nickolas Muray Collection vividly illustrates the transgression of generic boundaries and the cross-fertilization among artists working in different media, from painting and photography to dance and ethnography, that gave modernism its freshness and energy. It also demonstrates that American modernism was thoroughly infused with a fervor for all things Mexican, of which Covarrubias was a principal proponent, and that Mexican modernists, no less than their American and European counterparts, answered Pound's call to "make it new."

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