At the age of three, local artist Diego Marcial Rios knew what he wanted to be when he grew up. Born in Fresno, CA, he would often visit his father, a professor at the University of Guadalajara in Mexico. It was there that his dad brought him to see Hombre del Fuego (Man of Fire) by Jose Clemente Orozco, a breathtaking, bold fresco that depicts the spiritual awakening of the human spirit, adorning the cupola of the Hospicio Cabanas (now a museum). The site is often referred to as the “Sistine Chapel of the Americas.” Rios’ fate was sealed.

Some 50 years later, Rios has established himself as an internationally renowned artist whose work has appeared in over 500 exhibitions worldwide. His pieces are featured regularly in public collections, including the Museo Nacional De La Estampa in Mexico City and the San Francisco Mission Cultural Center. He also teaches local workshops on making paper mache masks and sugar skulls, two traditional Mexican art forms that he hopes to keep alive. And on top of that, he has numerous speaking engagements throughout the year.

If you had asked a young Rios about the importance of his artwork, he would have just laughed. “Here I was, this poor Mexican...”

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