

COMMUNITY MURALS

SPRING
1983



Study for Figure ONE
UPRISING OF THE MURALS
MAY 2, 1983

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Deadline

Any material for our Fall 1983 issue must be in our hot little hands before Friday, September 16, 1983. If you want to submit something, don't worry about format, just send us what you can, typed if possible, but not necessarily. See top of page for some questions for the next issue.

Editorial Group

Miranda Bergman
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Jo Drescher
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Cover: Front — Study for section of Tujunga Wash mural, Los Angeles, Judy Baca, 1979.
Back — Detail of wall in Luis Alfonso Velasquez Park, Masaya, Nicaragua. Alejandro Conales, design. Photo: © 1982, Betty LaDuke.

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CMM Self Criticism and the Next Issue

We have received some thoughtful criticisms of *CMM*'s two recent sections on "Art & Society". The basic topics are important, but the approach has discouraged muralists from responding in great numbers. The questions actually discourage muralists sharing our wealth of concrete experiences, "our many-sided contacts with people." For people who already see their work as influenced by theory, the questions are fine, but for the much larger group who do not rely on theoretical analyses to influence their practice, the questions — and answers — may miss the mark. "We ourselves and our wealth of concrete cultural experience, our many-sided contacts with the people and peoples of our areas, are left out of the answers. And the answers remain unconvincing, even if largely 'correct', dead bones without the 'this is how it was/is with us, our neighbors, our groups, etc.' that would clothe them in living flesh." The problem is how to ask the questions so that the answers are devoted to *narratives and analyses grounded in concrete examples, with lots of photos.*

What we intend to do for the Fall 1983 issue is to invite readers to respond to the questions/topics already presented, because we realize that we have barely scratched the surface in the two previous issues of *CMM* about nationalism and the women's movement, but we propose specifically for the Fall issue that community artists try to respond with concrete experiences to such questions as:

1. What it has meant to me to do community art (perhaps as an African-American, Chicano, woman, or . . .). What have been the rewards, the problems . . .
2. How has my imagery changed over the past several years, and why?
3. In all cases, please send plenty of illustrative photographs.

COMMUNITY MURALS

SPRING 1983

Editorial

In looking back on five years of our publication, we are struck with the astonishing vitality of the community mural movement and of community arts in general. Given the repressive ways in which our country has historically treated women and people of color, it is especially exciting to see the magnificent images they have created on our public walls. This issue of *CMM* emphasizes the women's movement in particular (see the "Art & Society" section) because the inspiration and strength of women is clearly central to our movement. We salute and celebrate such wonderful contributions to "building a community-based public art movement . . . seeking to create an art of high quality which is freely accessible to the people in their movement against racial, sexual and economic oppression."

But enemies are increasing. The ERA was defeated, by women as well as men, Reaganism encourages a new Cold War and a return of McCarthyism is already begun. A military buildup continues in Latin America, covered by lies from high places and an administration betting on our having a very short memory about Vietnam (not to mention Korea). In San Francisco, murals on Casa El Salvador and on Casa Nicaragua were attacked and destroyed.

Still, with a rise of right-wing hate and militarism there is also the beginning of a response, including "creative defacement" of billboard advertisements. Also, as Chicago muralist John Pitman Weber points out,

The Activists Artists Advance Conference (Los Angeles, June 1982), PADD (Political Art Documentation and Distribution, in New York and Los Angeles), the expansion of NAPNOC (Cultural Democracy network, to which several of us belong), the surge of artists' anti-nuclear war groups are all signs of awakening consciousness, a cultural quickening. Some words of Amílcar Cabral in his 1970 talk, "National Liberation and Culture"* , may be relevant:

The study of the history of national liberation struggles shows that generally *these struggles are preceded by an increase in*

expression of culture, consolidated progressively into a successful or unsuccessful attempt to affirm the cultural personality of the dominated people, as a means of negating the oppressor culture. Whatever may be the conditions of a people's political and social factors in practising this domination, *it is generally within the culture that we find the seed of opposition* which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement. [emphasis added].

Cabral believed that culture does more than "support" social change. He saw it as a vital factor in the success—or the failure—of social movements. Again,

Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships . . . Ignorance of this fact may explain the failure of several attempts at foreign domination—as well as the failure of some international liberation movements.

This idea, and much else in the text, is worth studying.

There is especially, in these troubled times, extra need to study history so that our work may be more effective. *CMM's* new section "Art & Society" is not only a symptom of the upsurge of political energy among artists, but also represents a willingness to assume political responsibility for our own work. We hope this issue of *CMM* helps raise important questions and suggest possible solutions supporting self-determination for all communities of people. ▲

* Amílcar Cabral was a major African leader, and Secretary-General of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands. He was assassinated by Portuguese agents in 1973 after leading struggles for sovereignty in his homeland. His writings often focus on the crucial role of culture in the political arena. This and other short writings may be found in *Return to the Source* (Monthly Review Press, 1973).



Detail of mural commemorating the heroic struggle of the women, men and children of Masaya in the Nicaraguan Revolution. (More on page 27). Photo: © 1982 Betty LaDuke

Dear CMM,

The muralists owe Alan Barnett a debt of gratitude for his indefatigable, in depth, sympathetic documentation. I count myself happy to be among his friends, but unhappily, I must scold him for poor reporting on the CMG in the last issue of CMM. He presented part of an off-the-record casual conversation with me under the heading CMG although I did not work a Chicago project last summer. Lynn Takata, Kathy Kozan, Cindy Weiss, Stacy Farley, Nina Cain and Jose Berrios did. We have more than a dozen other members, including Caton, Guerrero, Carlos Cortez, Olivia Gude and Jon Pounds, among others. It is true that Alan came early in the summer, but the point to be made about CMG was not my (temporary) discouragements (I remain actively on CMG's board), but our continuing activities, our reorganization, the presence of energetic new members, and the passing of day-to-day leadership to Lynn and Cindy. Beth Shadur, an artist we all admire, is not, incidentally, a member and never has been. She did splendid work with us at various times between 1974 and 1978, also doing murals independently through the Chicago Council on Fine Arts. She has devoted herself to studio work for the last two years.

Update on CMG in next issue.

John Pitman Weber

Mural Book Might Arrive This Summer

Community Murals: The People's Art, by Alan Barnett, a book we have mentioned before, is likely to be available this summer from The Art Alliance Press, 4 Cornwall Drive, East Brunswick, New Jersey, 08816 for \$60 per copy. We hope, with Alan, that this publication date is firm, and that we will all finally get a chance to see this work, which has been several years in preparation. It is 520 pages with nearly 600 illustrations, many in color.

FUNDING SOURCES

We call readers' attention to the publication of the fifth edition of the *National Directory of Grants and Aid to Individuals in the Arts, International*, published at \$15.95 by Washington International Arts Letter, P.O. Box 9005, Washington D.C. 20003.

A companion volume, the *National Directory of Arts Support by Private Foundations* is available for \$79.95 in paper. While the price is steep, readers are reminded that the books should be available locally in libraries or foundation grant centers.

Anatomy of a Mural

Anatomy of a Mural is a film about the mural at the Mission Cultural Center in San Francisco painted in 1982 by Carlos Loarca, Betsie Miller-Kusz, and Manuel Villamor. The artists, long active in neighborhood cultural life and teaching in the Mission Cultural Center and nearby New College of California, are allowed the time in the film to develop their discussion of the mural's imagery and procedures. They are not zeroed-in upon for "catchy" quotes by a dominating narrator. Through the film there is a well-edited selection of process shots of the work in progress, and someone can genuinely learn about how a mural is painted from this coverage, and about the intent and collaboration of three very different artists, too. Camera angles from the scaffolding capture the size of the wall as it looms over the artists, and the whole film is given continuity also by salsa music from local bands.

With shots of parks, streets, passers-by and observers, the film establishes the context of the mural, the Mission neighborhood and its Raza culture. This point of connection between a living community and a mural is too often left out when murals are documented in the press or photographs.

The film is 15 minutes, 16mm, color, produced and directed by Rick Goldsmith. It is available for sale, \$225, or rental, \$30, from Goldsmith, 1181 Delaware, Berkeley, CA 94702.

Publications Call for Mural Images

Revista Chicano-Riquena is conducting a national call for works by Latino artists to include in its quarterly issues. Black and white photographs of artwork, 8" x 10" and glossy photostats of line art, 5 x 7 and 8 x 10 preferred, are requested. *Revista* will not accept originals. The photos should be accompanied by the artist's name, title of piece, media, date of work, and a short biographical statement. Receipt of photos will be acknowledged and accepted photos kept on file for use in future issues.

Upon publication of their work, artists will receive two copies of *Revista*, which is a not-for-profit, educational endeavor. Send works to: *Revista Chicano-Riquena*, University of Houston, Central Campus, Houston, TX 77004.

THE MILL HUNK HERALD



412-321-4767

The Mill Hunk Herald is always looking for good cover ideas (wraparound especially). If you want to give them a try, send appropriate photos to *The Mill Hunk Herald*, 916 Middle St., Pittsburgh, PA 15212.

ART PEACE...

AN EXHIBIT OF ARTWORKS FROM ALL MEDIA
BASED ON THE THEME OF A NUCLEAR FREE PLANET
AUGUST 6-9, 1983
The Capital Complex Plaza
Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A.

FOR INFORMATION & ENTRY FORM, SEND
SELF ADDRESSED, STAMPED, ENVELOPE
BY MAY 13, 1983.

ART PEACE...
THE POPULAR ARTS WORKSHOP
P.O. 15052 — LANSING, MI. 48901

We realize by the time this reaches you, the May 13 deadline has passed. If you are interested in participating, contact the PAW for late entry information.

"Art and Culture Of the American Labor Movement"

This is the title of a project sponsored by the New Society for Fine Arts (NGBK) in West Germany. The exhibition opened in Berlin in March 1983, with over 1,000 items such as prints, drawings, watercolors, paintings, silkscreens, collages, posters, leaflets, pamphlets, books, photos, stickers, buttons, and tools. There will also be several slideshows on different aspects of labor in the United States, and a program of 25 labor films.

A 520-page catalogue will include "A Pictorial History of the American Labor Movement" with 500 illustrations and a large selection of labor-related documents. The second part of the catalogue will contain essays about "Art and Labor in the United States", including "Labor and the Fine Arts" by Patricia Hills, "Black Workers and Art" by Andrei Strobert, "Chicano Workers and Art" by Shifra Goldman, "Murals and Labor" by Tim Drescher and Jim Prigoff, "The Artists' Union" by David Shapiro, "Artists and Labor" by Susan Ortega, "Labor and Photography" by Naomie and Walter Rosenblum, "Literature and Labor" by Fred Whitehead, and "Labor Theater" by Bill Shields.

The exhibition will be shown in Berlin until April 24, and then will travel to other cities in Germany. It would be possible to show it in the United States in 1984. If interested, please write to Reinhard Schultz, c/o Neue Gesellschaft fur bildende Kunst, Hardenbergstr. 9, D-1000 Berlin 12 (West).

With luck, the catalogue will be published in English.

Book Reviews

FRIDA

A Biography of Frida Kahlo

By Hayden Herrera

The increased concern with the work of women artists, both nationally and internationally, has provided an appreciative audience for the prolific biography of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. The recent publication authored by Hayden Herrera reveals new information on both Ms. Kahlo's undocumented paintings and little-known personal history. The work is ripe with anecdotal material, as well as critical interpretation of her artwork. For those unacquainted with Frida Kahlo, Herrera explores in depth the nature of Ms. Kahlo's tempestuous marriage to the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Through the use of personal correspondence we are given a colorful and broadened historical context in which to view Frida. Her life story involves the glitterati and intelligentsia of two continents in an epoch of new-found cultural awareness. Ms. Herrera depicts the major characters of the "Mexicanismo" movement in the 1920's and 30's as they pass through the lives of Frida and Diego.

The author's exhaustive research, compiled over a number of years, relies on previous works by Raquel Tibol and Bertram Wolfe, as well as private interviews, correspondences and archival records. The engrossing biography portrays Frida's friends and lovers, even adding new documentation on her artwork. New phases of her work are unearthed as the chronology of her artistic development is extended. Despite the depth of the research and the scope of this biographic portrait, there remain critical issues.

Clearly, Herrera views Frida as a wounded woman incapable of more than a colorful disguise. "Frida flaunted her alegria the way a peacock spreads its tail, but it camouflaged a deep sadness and inwardness, even self-obsession." (Herrera) Undeniably, Frida Kahlo has been depicted by others as an exotic, vivid beauty whose personal experiences rivaled the intensity of her powerful paintings. Yet in Herrera's book we are only occasionally allowed a glimpse of the inner Frida. More often than not we are to be satisfied with the escapades and histrionics, decidedly sexual, of Frida's life. With the themes of health preoccupation and sexual self-absorption, the author seeks to apply pseudo-psychology in analyzing Frida's medical and marital difficulties.

The anecdotal emphasis on sensational revelations rarely leads us to the core of Frida. There is little of the woman who was the anchor in the dynamic career of Rivera, the confidante and nurturer of many greats and near greats of Mexico. Where is the essence of the woman whose wisdom as a teacher and ardor as a political advocate inspired a generation?

Without the privilege of knowing Frida personally, the author must rely on records and impressions from others, as well as her own perspective. Unfortunately, the author's perspective dwells on the neurotic, convinced that Frida's colorful character was only a facade for a self-absorbed suffering. Never more clearly is this seen than in the description of her adolescence. Undoubtedly a crucial time for Frida because of her tragic accident, Herrera dwells interminably on his unhappy period. Herrera's portrayal of Frida's adolescence fastens on the tormented love letters of a young girl traumatized by a serious bus accident, and bedridden while in the throes of young love. The author lingers on this tortured period, revealing letter after letter of her adolescent yearnings. Whereas normal adolescence is a time beset with sexual confusion, body distortion and the hysteria of first love, how many would want to be judged by the ramblings of their first love letters?

In this instance, Herrera overwhelms us with descriptions of Frida's neediness and we are introduced to the psychologizing of the author, which sets themes recurrent in the biography

— the neurotic neediness, the homosexual concern and the hypochondriacal preoccupation.

For those of us who have come to know Frida through study and research, there is a disappointment in the work, a certain absence of heart in the biography. Where is the Frida who daily reviewed the work of Rivera as he waited childlike, ever watchful of her choice? As his help-mate and critic they shared the love of art, the political philosophy of a new Mexico, a mutual pride in their culture. Perhaps my dismay is not in the exciting new-found detail of her affairs and picadillos, or the intricate detailing of her painful adolescence and medical sufferings, but in that which is absent — the missing Frida. Frida whose indomitable will and character withstood decades of physical and emotional pain. Those few who kept her secret vulnerabilities, her weak moments, her cries for help, are revealed here and collectively paint a portrait of near hypochondriacal proportions. Missing are the legions who never knew her illness, who never guessed her pain because of the fortitude of her being.

Likewise, those who kept sexual secrets, the intimate writings of a tortured teenager and the mature expressions of an adult love, all are unmasked, laid bare as though they were the sum of her being.

Such disclosures can give us insight to the needs of Frida, but often, as in the case of her supposed lesbianism, they are fraught with anonymous innuendo. No relationships are revealed, no understanding of her womanhood, only a lurid caricature of her last days, in which she survived distorted in a sea of medication.

Frida, judged by many to be the epitome of womanliness, is described by her friend Lucien Block Dimitroff: "Frida was a total person, frank. There was no hypocrisy about her. She was, of course, a great artist. Frida was a woman and a wife. The best that a woman can be." Yet in the Herrera biography we are confronted not with a vital compassionate woman, but the portrait of a damaged femininity, distraught, desperate for whatever sexual morsels offered.

As each friend gathers across the pages to divulge the most dramatic, bizarre, exciting memory, we lose the Frida of substance. We miss the frugal Frida, the constant Frida tending to her ill friends, filling her casita with flowers, nursing her pets and bringing order and security to the lives of so many.

Perhaps, as in all biographies, the reader demands the new and sensational, and most certainly Herrera's book offers this. We learn of her lover Noguchi, the sculptor, and Nickolas Murray, the photographer. The likes of Breton Du Camp, O'Keefe, Trotsky, and Del Rio are just a few of those who appear.

Decidedly an exciting work, the biography of Frida Kahlo offers arresting reading not only for artists and historians, but those fascinated by the unusual. Yet among all the pages of dazzling historical unveilings, one quote from Emmy Lou Packard captures the other Frida, little seen and little known, "It was these ordinary things of life — animals, children, flowers, the countryside — that most interested Frida." This is just a small glimpse of the core of this unique artist. Clearly, Herrera has devoted great energies to this massive biography and we are grateful for the enlarged view of the passionate life of Mexico's leading woman artist, Frida Kahlo.

Amalia Mesa-Bains

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SPRAY IT LOUD

Spray It Loud is the title of a new book by Jill Posener, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul at \$5.95. It contains a few hundred photographic documentations of "creative defacement" of billboards in England, and of progressive graffiti as well. Posener explains the book's idea as follows:

Graffitiists have changed since the days of Kilroy. Nowadays, they are more likely to be women and men committed to some form of social change, and graffiti provides a public forum for their views. Graffiti often acts as a complement to other action such as demonstrations or campaigns . . . Contrary to the media image . . . the graffiti is usually imaginative and often humorous.

The examples in this volume support Posener's contention. Many photos, showing objections to sexism in advertising, make their point by "completely changing" the idea of an advertisement, such as the billboard for hair coloring saying "Renew His Interest in Carpentry". It shows a woman caressing a tree trunk defaced by lovers' initials. The addition in spray paint suggests a different way to "renew his interest in carpentry," by suggesting that you "Saw his head off."

Of special attention is a section on feminist, lesbian graffiti which indicates the strength and pride (and courage) of its makers throughout England. As Posener says, the pictures (and the graffiti/creative defacement they document) speak for themselves.

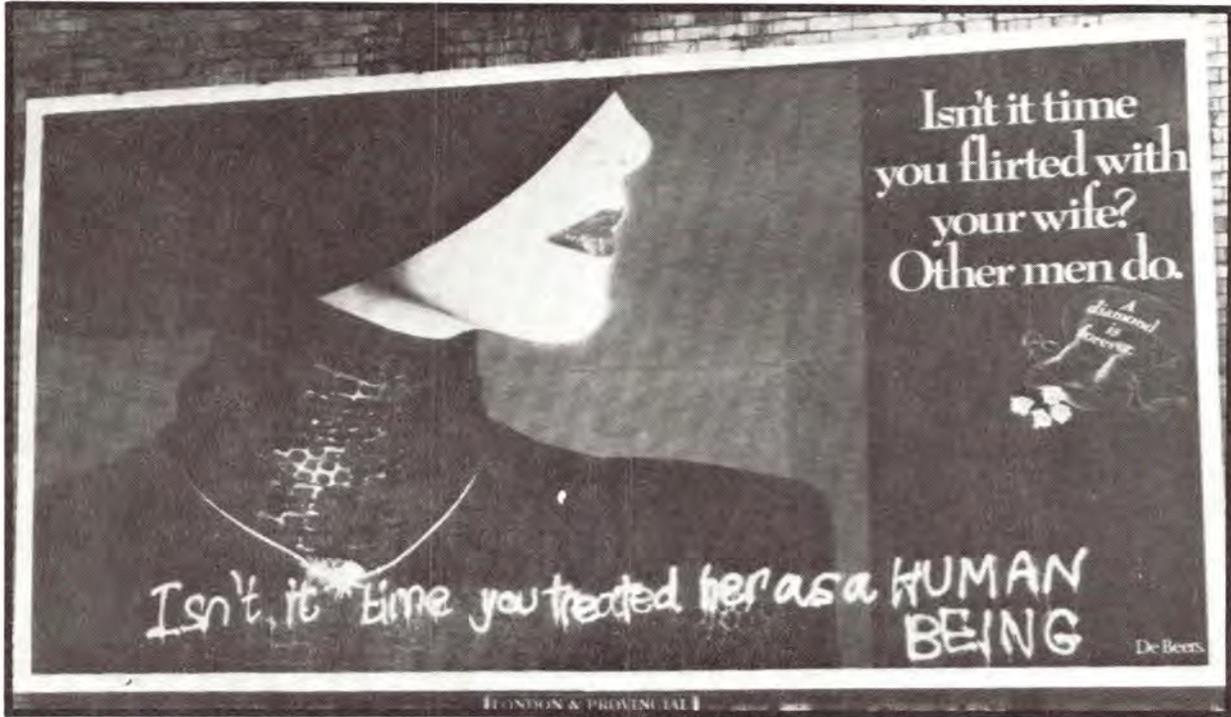


Photo: Jill Posener

Townscape Institute, Inc.

The Townscape Institute, Inc., has published three books which they call "A trilogy toward an ethic for the built environment. The books are: *Place Makers: Public Art That Tells You Where You Are*; *Facade Stories: Profiles of Storefronts and How to Care for Them*, and *On Common Ground: Caring for Shared Land from Town Common to Urban Park*. The latter is available from The Harvard Common Press, The Common, P.O. Box 355, Harvard, MA 01451 @ \$12.95 paper. *Facade Stories* is \$13.95, and *Place Makers* \$9.95 from Hastings House, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

The Institute says about itself that "It provides the necessary accumulation of evidence to show how the design professions and public agencies should operate if we are to create new environments which establish an evident sense of place . . . In *Place Makers* we see a folk art forest of whirligigs planted within the chain link fence of an electric substation which literally transforms that chain mesh from ugly barricade to an arched feature in a blue collar Seattle neighborhood." The books, at least *Place Makers*, the only one this reviewer has seen, appear to accomplish their goals in inspiring fashion, but there is a problem.

The problem for community artists, those who work with groups of people, is that the books define "community" as a place, not a social grouping, and the books further appear to emphasize the role of professionals, such as designers, in stimulating processes of renewal and definition of place. While professionals may well have a role in such matters, the approach of these works places the cart before the horse. That is, the most important aspect of defining a place is the building of a strong social community, which must come first and always be foremost. The whole idea of defining an urban place according to its physical particularities reeks of civic agencies which view communities as buildings or streets to be worked upon, locations to expand or withdraw services, not as locations of people's lives.

The liberal goal which sees ". . . an evident need for design solutions which recognize and reinforce personal identity and which connect people to the experience of others," as the Institute says, simply begins at the wrong end of the process, as do the books, by emphasizing things instead of community-generated social mechanisms, of which "place markers" might be one result.

Tim Drescher

WALL-TO-WALL AMERICA
A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals
in the Great Depression
By Karal Ann Marling
University of Minnesota Press. 348 pp. \$35. Paper \$14.95.

Wall-to-Wall America concerns the 1,205 courthouse and post-office murals commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department between 1934 and 1941, usually for small rural towns. The problems encountered in this ambitious public art project sound awfully familiar — the same ones encountered by many artists and communities today.

Though it was officially recommended, murals were often painted and installed without any community input. For example, lack of communication between artist and locality led to hostility towards the murals in Aiken, South Carolina and Kennebunkport, Maine. The judge in Aiken was never told his court would receive a mural, which to irate citizens then appeared to have a "mulatto" figure representing justice and a "shyster lawyer" freeing a criminal. Officials in Washington had chosen Elizabeth Tracy's Coney-Island-like beach scene for stodgy and beachless Kennebunkport. The artist, who had no contact with the area before, designed and painted a scene more appropriate for the town of Kennebunk, several miles away.

Many communities did not even know they were slated for a new mural under the program until winning designs of the "48 States" competition were published in *Life Magazine*. Muralists sometimes found themselves manipulating stock clichés to please the government funding source, retooling a design the bureaucrats liked so it could be sent to a different part of the country. Cactuses were changed to poplars so "Wild Horses by Moonlight", a design intended for Safford, Arizona could be painted in Schuyler, Nebraska; riders of the "Indian Pony Round" changed with hats and serapes into "Early Spanish Caballeros" when the design was moved from Arizona to California.

In some cases bureaucrats tried to dictate taste in the name of the public. Goshen, New York almost saw the mural it wanted depicting the Hambletonian, the major harness race in the country, quashed by Treasury Department officials who thought horse racing a crude and unfitting subject. Artists who considered themselves open-eyed social realists were surprised to find many locales wanted "American Stuff" — idealized scenes illustrating stories of the towns founding. Sometimes boosterish business interests had their way and a scene emphasizing busy modern industry was painted rather than one of the area's more prevalent agriculture. Though one might expect a community to be proud that it had weathered times of hardship and want that hardship depicted for future generations, no town wanted a Depression scene or anything that could be construed as criticism of local industry and the way of life it determined. A fine but grim "Mine Rescue" by Fletcher Martin never made it to the walls of mining town Kellogg, Idaho, as intended.

"No Modern Art!" was often thought to be the public's sentiment (or at least the Treasury Art Project's), which artists rarely challenged. In the case of New Lebanon, Ohio, though, artist Lloyd Ney worked residents' anecdotes of local history (and even historical gossip) into "New Lebanon Facets" upon the post-office wall. His extra effort in travelling to the town, explaining his work and *listening* to the mural's audience paid off. The result of this compromise, where the community chose *what* to paint and the artist responsible chose *how*, was a dramatic Cubist painting that the town took pride in as uniquely theirs.

Professor Marling's book presents itself not as Art History but as a study in American Culture, the eclectic subject she teaches at the University of Minnesota. She compares the murals to novels, Walt Disney and John Wayne films of the era when appropriate, and the book is written in a breezy — sometimes even flippant — style. From some parts of the book emanate

the unfortunate odor of a certain racial insensitivity. Marling's characterization of scenes of the slave trade as "ho hum . . . scarcely the stuff of mass outrage" without further comment might be uncomfortable to readers familiar with the crucial role of minority people in today's community murals. Another example is in her glib treatment of some of the murals of Indians attacking white settlers. Though this was the one historical "hardship" local communities encouraged showing in "their" murals because it rationalized the brutal treatment of the area's original inhabitants, the one story Marling cites of Indian protest of such a mural is then proven to be a hoax. Again, the book's cover has one such disagreeable mural detail. I wish someone had alerted her to this in the manuscript, for it hurts the book's otherwise friendly tone.

Wall-to-Wall America is good reading for those who paint murals or those who care about them. Besides reiterating time-honored lessons of the importance of community involvement in public art, it shows the roots and persistence of many ideas about art and murals by artists and public. Virtually every mural discussed in the book is pictured; maybe not the world's most significant artworks, but a pleasure to see. Her research from documents of the Treasury Art Project archives appears to be sound, but some indication of which murals still exist would help travellers who might like to seek them out in person. The book is receiving enthusiastic reviews in newspapers and national magazines. Let's hope that enthusiasm will spill over and be of tangible use to the community muralists painting today.

Mike Mosher

Anti-Graffiti Manufacturer Settles Out of Court

On June 18, 1981, No Mar, Inc. of San Mateo, California, was contacted by Daniel Galvez, an Oakland muralist, to apply their anti-graffiti guard onto the newly completed mural *Oakland's Portrait* at 15th Street and Telegraph Avenue in downtown Oakland. The results stemming from the application of No Mar's product, Vand-L-Guard 105, were disastrous. After about one fourth of the mural had been covered, the artists noticed large areas of the mural running with orange drips. One of the figure's purple shirt had turned pale, faded, and was splotted with big runs of orange residue. In another figure, both the skin tones and a bright magenta jacket had turned orange. Application of Vand-L-Guard 105 was halted immediately by the artists. It was being applied by the company, not the artists.

No Mar Inc. had no explanation for this phenomenon after previously assuring the artists that their product would not harm the surface of the mural which had been painted with enamel, oil based, paints. No Mar Inc. balked at making restitution for the damages they had caused, so on August 18, 1981, Galvez, Keith Sklar and Juan Karlos filed suit against the company for the cost of restoring the mural to its original condition. After a year and a half of negotiations and litigation, both parties agreed to an out-of-court settlement. The artists intend to use the money to restore the mural and seal it properly with a compatible product. The settlement, of course, involves no admission of responsibility for the problem, and there is some possibility that it was caused by the Vand-L-Guard being rolled onto the wall instead of sprayed. See *CMM* Fall 1981 and Spring 1982 for articles on this issue.

ART & SOCIETY

Responses to "Questions About the Women's Movement"

The replies to our questions about the women's movement all demonstrated thoughtful experience "on the streets". Some answered all the questions, some just a few. Most included muralists' own statements of experiences or principles which guide their actions. Almost half the respondents were men.

Unfortunately, space limitations prevent our printing all answers in full. We have constructed a synthesis of responses which follows a brief general introduction.

Also, the editors wish to pass on some recommendations for periodicals dealing with women's issues, specifically *Heresies* and *Off Our Backs*. Both regularly contain cultural material, and are worth reading for all progressive people of both sexes.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The central idea many respondents expressed was the importance emphasized by the women's movement of establishing identity, history, and of recovering oppressed traditions. Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, two arts activists from Baltimore, say that

within the realm of arts work, as within virtually every other realm of human endeavor, feminism is a key component of the progressive commitment and is at the same time vulnerable to manipulation. So a feminist analysis of cultural production and distribution points up the shocking and undeniable way in which art history, like other histories, has been laundered to exclude women's contributions. No progressive artist can afford to overlook or deny this, just as we cannot afford to ignore the similar fashion in which the official arbiters of culture have erased the contributions of poor people, minority people, people with unpopular political opinions, and others. Just as part of the emergence of the black liberation movement was a conscious effort — by artists and others — to develop a culture that made a previously-buried history the object of pride, part of the emergence of the women's movement has been an effort by artists and critics to tell the true story of the repression of women's cultural contributions, and to call for new cultural work that redresses the crimes of the past against women.

Regarding women specifically, community artist, educator and author John Pitman Weber from Chicago encourages us to think globally.

The movement for women's equality transcends the limitations of its present, local leadership. It is one of the great worldwide struggles of our century. It is regenerated by the forces of history despite all errors and partial defeats. It is not a movement defined by white middle class young women. Underlying it is the silence of the most oppressed of the oppressed, who are also women. We cannot serve our communities without prompting women's active struggle and leadership.

Leslie Bender, an artist and muralist from New York City, notes some of her observations about many men muralists with regard to how they have related to her. She says that she is convinced of the integrity of their struggles to get their art up in the unsupported art environment that we have here in America; I believe in their struggles to get their particular culture's visions on the maps and minds of our rather narrow-minded capitalistic society; I understand the anger they feel at being snubbed in favor of abstract art in regards grants. But I must say that their prejudices towards women,

as submissive, and for the most part incapable of being great artists, has not been lost on me — I have been forced to take a back seat to "the men, talking" too many times since I entered the profession of Art. It becomes difficult to have sympathy for men who treat women in the same manner they object to being treated themselves.

Kelly Hall, a painter/illustrator, former LVN, and lifetime single parent in Oakland, California, says that

at the root is the question of power and domination to preserve the status quo for those in power. As the old saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall." If the psychological manipulation of a people creates a basic division at the core of their personalities early enough in life, so that their whole adulthood is spent in an attempt at its repair, its reunification, there's hardly enough energy left to make a living, let alone overthrow the system. How better to produce conflict than to deny a person half their psyche? If Jung was primarily correct, and I think he was, our culture would be teaching us how to integrate the positive aspects of our male and female selves, rather than totally denying they exist or seeing only negative associations (i.e., negative being for masculine insensitive, domineering, oppressive, brutal; for feminine, overemotional, passive, parasitical, weak).

Phil Danzig, muralist, architect and community artist in New Jersey, relates much of this to his own immediate experience when he says that he "feels particularly fortunate as a community artist because so many other visual artists must work independently, often competing for gallery space, reviews and sales . . . We work somewhere at the crossroads of the visual and the performing arts, often using a theme suggested by an agency, a design developed by consensus, and utilizing efforts of permanent and transitory, professional and amateur, young and older participants. We work as a team, like stage painters for a school play, or a jazz ensemble, in front of our public, never on speculation, mainly out of doors. Through these projects, we develop ourselves artistically, professionally and socially."

Weber notes a similar experience, and asserts that his own work as a community muralist has been

bound up with the activity of a whole series of strong women artists — Caryl Yasko, Celia Radek, Cynthia Weiss, Justine DeVan, Ruth Felton, Lynn Takata and others. I have grown through their collaboration and criticism.

What has been true in Chicago has certainly been true in other cities as well. Women have played especially crucial roles in two areas to which most of the men in our own movement have been unwilling to make major commitments. One is in building and maintaining organizations. The other is in community art work with children and with elementary schools. Again the "housekeeping" and "nurturing" aspects — perhaps a bit devalued among us, even less than in the general society? Can male muralists deny a certain tendency to avoid these areas of work, so essential, complex, demanding, but which also have little "sex appeal" to the mass media and even less for the art establishment? Some few beg off organizational duties by pleading lack of skills, and by avoiding to learn them, but many underestimate the artistic skills and intellectual grasp necessary to do good work with children. Community artists, of all people, should know better.

From the standpoint of a male muralist, there are distinct advantages to working with a female partner (CMG artists usually work in pairs). Young women are far more active in teams with a female leader. A mixed team can actively put forward women's themes, e.g., *Women's Rights*, led by Cynthia Weiss and Barry Bruner, 1980. It is also true that having a male partner has advantages for a women muralist. Less static. Unfortunately, still true.

Bender offers what may be a common feeling for feminists:

a commitment to feminism for me as a woman includes a commitment to myself as a person with a vision worth sharing. This commitment may be equally there for men, but women struggle under the added burden that women's views and opinions, their logic and reasoning, their thinking processes themselves, have not been considered valid. This has caused many women to doubt that what they perceive and think is valid. This negation of self is the most insidious of destructions to any group of people, for they then are denied access to their selves, wellspring of all creativity.

THE QUESTIONS

1. How is the emergence of the women's movement reflected in the visual arts?

Leslie Bender noted that the women's movement has resulted primarily in more artworks by women being shown in museums, galleries and art publications, areas previously dominated by men. Phil Danzig, to the contrary, noted that "feminism and community arts both distrust historical institutions, and strive to reform [them]," and he cites Susan Shapiro Kiok's goal of "taking art out of the museums and into the streets."

Kelly Hall thought that the primary influence of the women's movement has been the raising of questions and stimulation of explorations, personal and cultural. "The women's movement, in effect, took the gags off so that discussion, responses, explanations, etc. could finally be vocalized."

2. How do progressive images of women affect a viewer's consciousness?

Hall wonders what "are 'progressive images of women'?" and suggests that if this means images of women in roles previously seen as "inappropriate" for them, then the "valued effect would be that the image could challenge the viewer's value system sufficiently to cause internal examination and hopefully a broader definition of what women can be and are!"

Danzig points out that "the core of feminism is not concerned with particular images, establishing alternate exhibition spaces or publications . . . [but] rather as a political approach to the redistribution of power from a hierarchy based largely on gender, class, and national or racial stereotypes to a less formal, cooperative sharing based on individual needs, desires, and talent."

Bender says that

progressive images of women let viewers see women as strong, creative and capable members of human society. This gives women and girls a healthy positive image to identify with so that they can have the strength to reach beyond the myriad difficult obstacles to success in our society. This new portrayal of women also helps male artists, and men in general, to see that a) women are not intrinsically dumb, weak, shrewish, angelic or subservient; b) that they don't use pastels and images of female reproductive organs any more than men do.

3. How does the women's movement relate to itself and to other progressive movements?

Hall felt the women's movement presently fragmented and in transition. "There have been women's groups linked with others around Nicaragua and El Salvador support efforts, but these are the exception . . . Most of the women's movement is too white and middle class, with too much invested in legislative reform and not enough in grass roots support/organizing. I, for sure, don't want any anti-abortion laws passed, but they wouldn't be able to get those pro-life bills on the docket if working class women . . . weren't so ignorant about their bodies . . ."

Bender felt that "it is not only directed at freeing women from masculine dominance, but is freeing men from many misconceptions about masculinity and femininity. I believe the movement is a manifestation of a deep shift in the psyche of humanity."

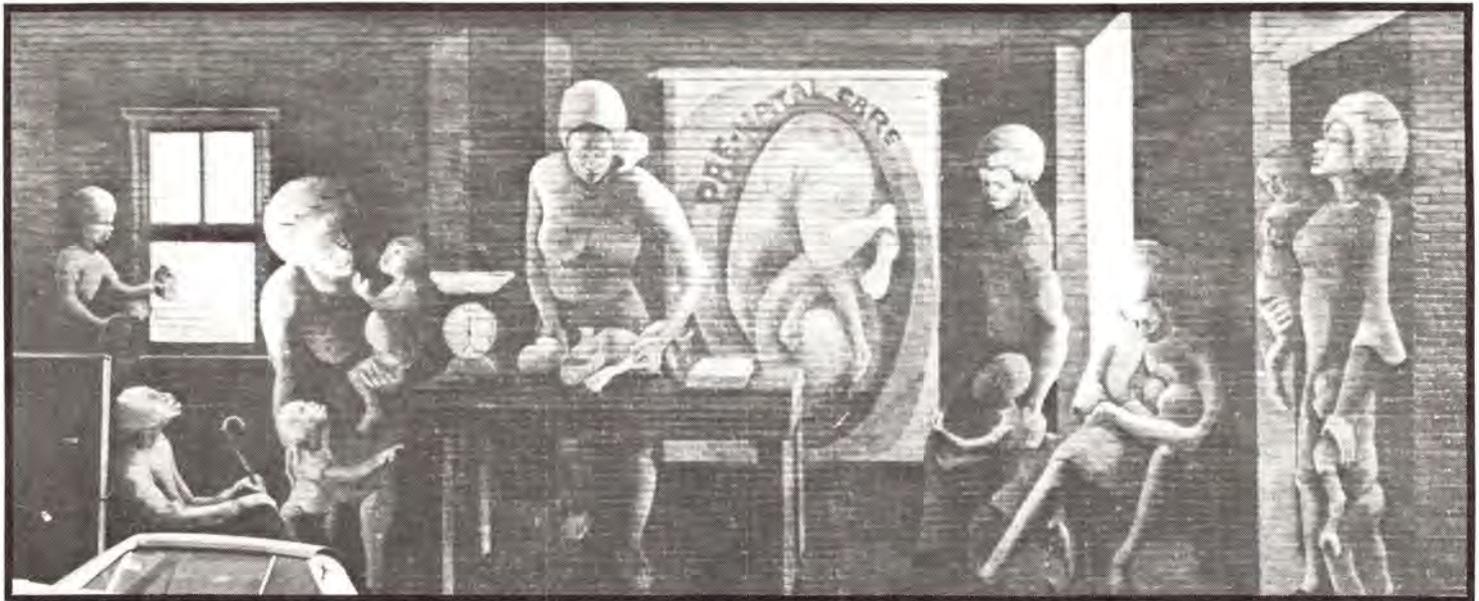
Adams and Goldbard responded to this question with a criticism, pointing out that this and other questions asked by CMM are framed in terms of the women's movement as a whole, "but the answer must be framed to reflect the diversity the women's movement encompasses; the only accurate answer is in many, many different ways, according to the circumstances and persons involved. There are a great many co-existing (and sometimes contentious) tendencies within the women's movement."

4. How is the women's movement being used in reactionary ways?

Hall feels that "the worst tendency is one of isolating parts of itself around those that are like-minded," as in the effort to portray anti-pornography struggles as "a new form of prudish repression."

SO MUCH FOR MACHO





Health of the People, detail; Caryl Yasko with Doug Williams and team, 1973; 47th and Prairie, Chicago, Ill. Photo: Weber

Adams and Goldbard thought this raised the whole question of representation,

probably the most popular organizing strategies of the 70s — getting black people or Chicanos or women or members of some other community represented on boards or commissions or in grants, awards or exhibition rosters. The idea was that if the formerly excluded were proportionately represented in situations that symbolized the allocation of power in the society, they would come to be seen as legitimate parts of “the system”, deserving of its rewards in proportion to their numbers. The first thing that was wrong with this strategy was that the choice of who was to represent women or the members of a particular ethnic group or seniors — whoever — was generally left to the powers that be. So Chicano-Latino arts organizations weren’t asked to elect representatives to the NEA’s “Hispanic American Arts Task Force” — the NEA executives were allowed to make their own choice of “representatives” to the Task Force. Women’s cultural groups are not asked to elect women to sit on the National Council of the Arts — the President is left to decide himself which women should serve. So the representation strategy backfired: people in power were able to find careerists with the right skin color, reactionaries which the correct ethnicity, people of the right sex who were willing to go along in order to get along. While it’s certainly true that some very good people found their way into positions as representatives, and some of these fought valiantly for the communities to which they were accountable, it’s equally true that the people at the top are always able to satisfy the cry for representation to the letter without giving an inch in spirit.

Because of these “loopholes” in the representation strategy, one of the unintended effects of liberation movements has been to help individuals find their ways into the system while the system remains essentially unchanged. So just as we have women diplomats and bank presidents with no noticeable effect on the politics of either the foreign service or the domestic banking sector, we have women museum curators or careerist artists — and women in parallel positions in other art forms — with no noticeable effect on the politics of the establishment arts world.

But John Pitman Weber felt annoyed by the question, and points out that

our movement has erred in another direction, sometimes avoiding the issue, sometimes using narrow “left” positions as a cover for a refusal to advance an all-around struggle for equality. A story: In 1973, Caryl Yasko directed a mural on 47th St. with a local team. *Health of the People* showed women running a “people’s” clinic. Prenatal and well-baby care were emphasized in the image. These are vital needs in Chicago’s black neighborhoods. A white male political friend asked me for a photo of a women’s struggle mural for his newspaper — and then refused to publish the mural on the grounds that the women’s breasts were too big. He cited decisions of another country’s political party to clinch his argument.

5. Is there a need to make distinctions in our work among women in different racial and class positions?

Adams and Goldbard noted that “there is a pronounced tendency in progressive movements to dismiss people with a few simple words . . .” and Sarah Olsen, a Michigan muralist, comments on this same idea with an examination of the perils of labelling in which she notes that while labels help to describe or identify, they also, in the art world, have a male bias. Labels, she notes, “are generally reserved for artists who are not white men. The problem is that a group of artists reflecting the attitudes of a certain sex and color are not given . . . the same categorical treatment as other artist[s].”

Hall says that a valid reason for making distinctions according to race and class is that “I want to know where an artistic expression comes from. If a painting is by a black, female construction worker, I want to be able to appreciate the representation of her experience as fully as possible. That kind of information is critical in dealing with subject matter, narrative content, and even formal content most of the time.” Others disagreed with this idea, such as Adams and Goldbard, who ask, “Shouldn’t our yardstick be practice?” instead of labels or class or racial distinctions? They continue:

Mightn’t a white woman from an upper-class background prove by practice an asset to the movement where another woman, an Asian from a working-class family, falls short of making a contribution because of her own upward mobility? . . . The mural movement doesn’t have to make distinctions among women based on their racial identity and class backgrounds; it can allow people to determine for themselves how these qualities of identity will shape their lives, and make its distinctions on the basis of acts: How do people work? What ideas do they put forward? What do they stand for? These should be the bases of judgments among progressive artists and in the movement for cultural democracy — and not a bunch of labels of coarse and questionable utility.

Some connect this idea, the centrality of *practice*, to, among other topics, the crucial role of child-raising, a feminist issue because it has traditionally been left to women. As Hall says, one of the boons from the women’s movement . . . is the increase in fathers actively raising their children. Everyone benefits from this greatly. The child is healthier, learns more quickly. There is no “stay at home” parent who starts losing their vocabulary and social skills. And both parents get to achieve outside the home, greatly raising their self-esteem and usually income, too. This development alone, if carried across a broad section of the population, could drastically alter the fabric of our society, making feminists of all participants. In other words, it’s

the theory/practice link that makes a feminist, and our art is but one facet of our practice.

Danzig puts it succinctly: "Feminism is so very powerful because it touches all of us, starting with early childhood life which shapes our daughters and sons before they encounter adult institutions."

6. What connections exist between feminist and gay/lesbian cultural production?

The only response to this question was a suggestion that we read an article titled "The Male Nude in Women's Art," by Eunice Golden in *Heresies: The Sex Issue*, Vol. 3, No. 4, issue 12.

7. How does a feminist consciousness affect the way art is produced and distributed? Is the goal creation of a separate system of galleries, publications, events, etc? Or is the goal to make an impact on the already established system?

One response is that "you do it in any way that allows for maintaining personal integrity." Another points out that separate galleries, publications, etc. have already had quite an impact on the established system.

Adams and Goldbard note that

the question is especially interesting vis-a-vis the women's movement, though the issues are virtually identical with those confronting every other liberation movement. Partly it's interesting because the women's movement has seen some of the most successful experiments with both strategies. There are feminist film directors who've cracked at least a corner of Hollywood — whose films have achieved mass-market distribution and some degree of box-office success — and others who've participated in some of the most successful ventures in alternative distribution of independently-produced film. There are feminist rock'n'rollers who've had best-selling albums produced by Hollywood conglomerates, and other feminist musicians who've made a remarkable success of producing, distributing, and marketing their work to a highly-differentiated "women's music" audience which exists almost entirely outside the mainstream systems. The same is true for publishing. This is partly because there have been some feminists with capital — their own business earnings, inheritances, and so on — to invest in these alternative ventures: although their capitalization is tiny compared to the mainstream systems, it has been much more substantial than has been available the other liberation struggles. Black music has been able to make mainstream inroads and to establish independent ventures (even on a grand scale, like Motown), but Black film has been an unproductive uphill struggle against racism, for example.

So it seems that the short answers to *CMM*'s question about mainstream versus alternatives is "both" — let people be working to get into the mainstream systems if they can do so without unacceptable compromise (and that is another whole debate), but at the same time work equally hard to create alternatives over which you have control.

8. Does a commitment to feminism mean use of certain subject matter? Or is the fact that an artwork is created by a woman enough to make it feminist?

The basic answer to whether an artwork created by a woman is enough to make it feminist is "No". Adams and Goldbard supply sufficient proof:

We recently saw a painting of the President astride his horse, dedicated to Mr. Reagan and sent to him at the White House . . . It would be hard to say that this art was feminist, since it glorified a politician whose respect for women and devotion to justice for women are hardly worth mentioning; but the painter was a woman. But we would still say that in the interest of cultural democracy it is better to have more women making art, even non-feminist art, than to leave the process of artistic creation to men only. When we help to free up creativity, to encourage more people to build culture, to take an active role in shaping the stories and images that make up a culture, we always run the risk of having helped into being not only more 'good' art, but more 'bad' art as well. Those are the breaks.

Or, as another muralist put it when contemplating the idea of a nation of Sunday painters, "They'd probably just paint big-eyed clowns anyway . . . (pause) but better to be painting them than simply voting for them."

Bender felt that

having a feminist consciousness does not necessarily mean using certain subject matter, though a feminist will most likely refrain from portraying women in compromising ways. The commitment to feminism may be felt by women or men; it means, in effect, a commitment to high ethics — fairness and respect among human beings.

The real importance of the feminist movement is that women get to express their visions and get shows, grants and other opportunities.

Lincoln Cushing, a silkscreen artist from Oakland CA,

says that women's art (art created by women) is *not* the same as feminist art (created by feminists). A true cross-section of artwork by women reveals few pieces of unequivocal feminist content and in fact tends to replicate patriarchal artworld norms. Exhibits of such works may serve an important function — validation of women as artists — but by their own nature emphasize mastery of form rather than clarity of ideological content. Feminist art, on the other hand, places an emphasis on presenting artwork in such a way that feminist values are communicated. This can be done in a variety of ways, from providing curatorial context to certain aspects of "women's art" (such as historical background and interviews with quiltmakers) to straightforward images of women that challenge stereotypes.

The question, of course, raises other problems, such as the standards by which artworks should be assessed. Adams and Goldbard offer a nice statement of the problem, and an example:

How should artwork be judged, by some set of more or less objective standards, that can apply to all sorts of work, or by a particular set of standards which take into consideration and political, aesthetic and other conditions of its creation? At NAPNOC's Annual Conference this past fall in Omaha, a member who works with a feminist theater criticized the theater piece presented by another member who sees his work as part of the cultural front of the black liberation struggle. She criticized the piece (a one-man show) for its lack of strong, positive women among the many characters depicted, for its implication that men carry the oral tradition of southern black people in the U.S., and for the fact that many of the women characters that were in the piece were victims and objects — where male characters, while also victimized, were portrayed as nevertheless able to act heroically to save themselves and others. These criticisms were made with ample acknowledgement of the shaky ground on which we tread when we criticize each other's practice across long-standing barriers of racial and sexual antagonism, and they were received in the same spirit. But after the conference, when we discussed this criticism, we were moved to recall the last play we'd seen by the feminist company. The company, all women, played many different characters in the course of the piece, a number of them male characters. Yet all the developed characters were women. The male characters were mainly evil, either in the positive sense of conscious villainy, or in the more passive sense that they were in the play to give expression to the banality of evil. None of them were kind, tender, helpful, except in the abstract — all these feelings were reserved for the female characters.

We haven't had a chance yet to talk this over with our friend from the feminist company. Imagining this conversation, we guessed she might say that her company has such a monumental task in balancing the anti-women tradition in the theater that they haven't the time or the inclination to be "fair" to men — and that there are plenty of other plays that portray men with more sympathy than they perhaps deserve as a class. Both these imaginary statements would be true, but they would still leave us feeling unsettled. Aren't we after building a society in which no one is condemned, either directly or by implication, for their sex, race, ethnic heritage, religion, and so on? ▲



Black Woman, Vanita Green, 1970, Chicago. Photo: Tim Drescher

Women in the Community Mural Movement

Eva Cockcroft

The following article, written in 1977, remains remarkably current. The works by women in this and previous issues of CMM document the continuing contribution of which Cockcroft writes. In the years since then, women's roles in the community mural movement have increased, as have the number of feminist images in mural throughout the world. A recent example of Cockcroft's work follows the article.

Women's role in the community mural movement is much greater than is generally recognized. Major city-sponsored mural programs in Boston (Adele Seronde and Summerthing), New York (Susan Shapiro-Kiok and Cityarts), and Los Angeles (Judy Baca and Citywide) have been initiated and directed by women artists, who have given these programs much of their character and philosophy. Women have led school mural projects, mural collectives, and mural-work with street youth. Whether working as individual muralists, members of coalitions, or in collectives, women have increasingly dominated the mural movement as a force for non-elitism, collectivity, and the practice of social philosophies ranging from humanism to Marxism.

Murals on urban walls reflecting the aspirations of neighborhood residents began as part of the more general social upheaval of the 1960s. Artists found themselves dragged into the social arena and forced to consider questions beyond those of pure form. By the late 1960s they could no longer avoid confronting questions concerning the relevance, audience, and uses of their art. A number of movements arose that tried to

enlarge the audience and scope of contemporary art. Minority-group and politically active artists felt both a demand and an opportunity to create an art responsive to their special heritage and relevant to their own ethnic group, community, or movement. Mainstream artists attempted to bring art out of the museums and into the cities in the form of urban supergraphics, environmental sculptures, street-works, and happenings. Out of the coincidence of these social and artistic forces the community mural movement began in 1967-68.

The mural movement took on different forms in different locations, depending on which particular combination of social forces spurred its beginnings. The first mural in Chicago, the 1967 *Wall of Respect*, was painted by 21 Black artists from the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) and celebrated Black history and culture. It was a political-art happening involving musicians and poets who played and read as the painting progressed. Although women artists participated in the *Wall of Respect*, they were not among those who continued the movement in Chicago and went from the OBAC wall to paint in Detroit.

For a long time Vanita Green's *Black Women* (1970) served as the token of women's participation in the Chicago mural movement. Green was 17, a high school dropout, when she saw William Walker painting the *Peace and Salvation Wall of Understanding* near the Cabrini-Green projects where she lived. After watching

for a time, she asked Walker for paints and brushes and on a storage shed nearby painted portraits of famous Black women from Aunt Jemima to Angela Davis. Almost immediately afterwards, the wall was defaced with large splashes of white paint, practically the only defacement in Chicago up to that time. When Green saw what the vandals had done, she commented, "Before, it was just a pretty picture, but it says more now." In general, though, during those early years women found their place largely as assistants and apprentices in one of the two major community-based Chicago mural groups: Public Art Workshop, led by Mark Rogovin, and Chicago Mural Group, a multi-ethnic coalition led by William Walker and John Weber.

In Boston, on the other hand, women played an important role in introducing the mural idea. Boston artist Adele Seronde's proposal calling for the use of neglected city sites to transform the city into a museum was the start. Through the collaboration of Kathy Kane of the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs, the Institute of Contemporary Art, a number of Black artists, and Seronde, Summerthing was launched. It was the largest and most productive of the early mural programs, beginning in 1968 and peaking in 1970. The Summerthing program combined elements of three distinct phenomena which had emerged the preceding year—the renaissance in Black culture (*Wall of Respect*), the "Summer in the City Paint-in Festival" and various clean-up programs, and the desire of environmental artists to work in urban spaces. Summerthing sponsored Black Power murals, children's playground and pocket-park projects, and decorative walls—all within a framework allowing for neighborhood control. Under Seronde's direction, the program emphasized the sociological rather than the decorative aspect of public art. Many impressive walls were painted from 1968 to 1970, especially in the Black communities of Roxbury and South End—including the first women's wall, Sharon Dunn's *Black Women*, painted in 1970.

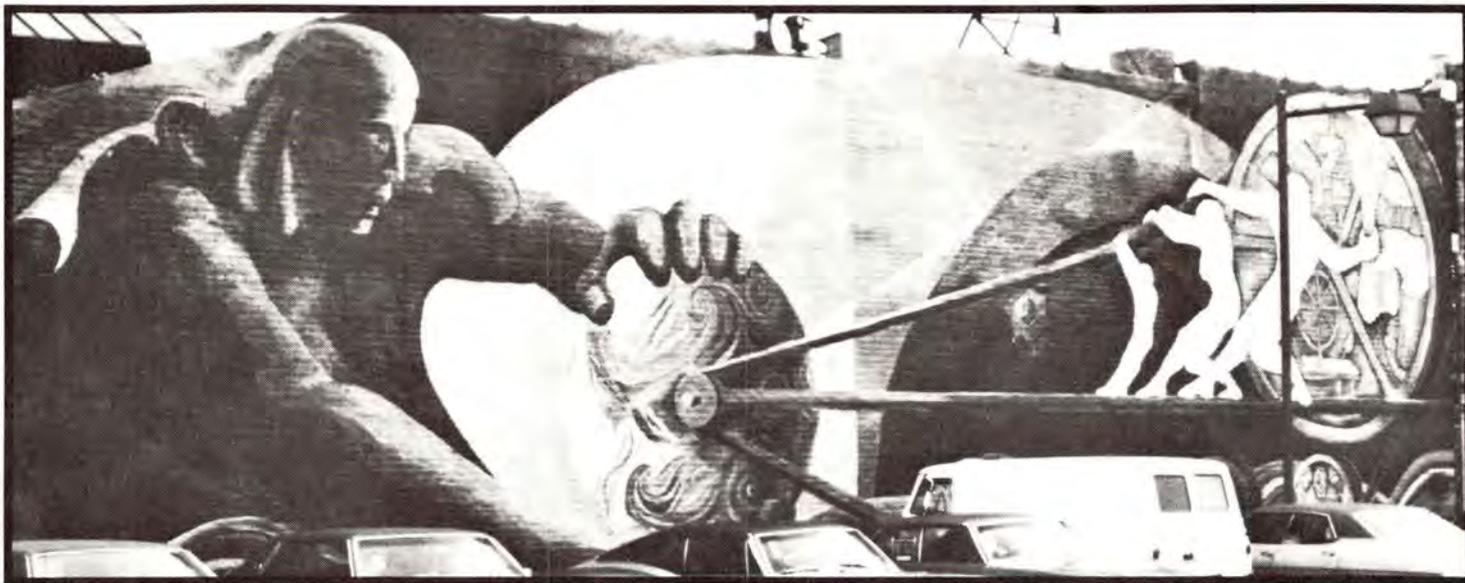
Seronde is only one of many women who have made important contributions as organizers and administrators. Judy Baca, a leading Chicana muralist in Los Angeles, obtained City funding for a similar neighborhood-oriented large-scale mural program (Citywide Murals) in 1974. Shelly Killen heads a program for murals in prisons in Rhode Island, which has operated in the correctional institutions there for the past two years. Sandy Rubin's Alternate Graffiti Workshop in Philadelphia pioneered techniques for developing the artistic potential of graffiti writers; several of her workshop graduates have become muralists in their own right. Ruth Asawa and Nancy Thompson developed the Alvarado School-Community Program in San

Francisco, which brings community artists into the public schools to enrich the school experience and has helped to open the doors to "Artists in the Schools" programs around the country. In fact, at the present time, the majority of the mural programs throughout the nation are directed by women.

The major influx of women artists into the mural movement did not take place until 1971-73 when news about the community walls had become better known outside the actual mural communities. This was also a time of expansion for the Women's Liberation Movement. Many women artists tried mural work, but not all of them became muralists. Community mural work, although highly rewarding, requires a certain kind of openness and great dedication. It also demands physical labor, community organizing, going to meetings, and an ability to deal with the great variety of people who come up to talk or make comments. However, a number of the women who did become involved in the early 1970s now identify themselves as muralists and are recognized for their artistic contributions.

The development of Caryl Yasko, one of the best muralists in the nation and a leader of the Chicago Mural Group, illustrates this process. Like Green, Yasko was introduced to the mural movement through William Walker when she volunteered as a parent-assistant for a mural he was directing with children at her neighborhood school. After this experience, Yasko and her partner in a small art enterprise, Kathy Judge, a ceramicist, worked with small children to paint *Walls of Hope*. Yasko and Judge were then invited to join the Chicago Mural Group. In the summer of 1972, Yasko directed her first major project, *Under City Stone*, a mural that runs throughout the 55th Street underpass in Hyde Park. Painted from Yasko's design with the help of a team recruited from passers-by, it shows hundreds of figures walking around and, above them, the machinery, technology, and pollution of today's city. Yasko painted herself in the crowd—a slim young woman, paintbrushes in hand, a baby on her back.

The following year, Yasko painted in the heart of the Black-Belt South Side with a team of young Black people. Located on a prenatal clinic wall, this mural depicts statuesque, larger-than-life women with their children. In 1974 Yasko broke new ground for the Chicago muralists. Although murals had become commonplace in many areas of Chicago, certain white working-class areas peopled by Polish and other Middle-European immigrants remained untouched. The question of whether murals were valid only for minority-group ghetto areas or would also be meaningful in white working-class neighborhoods was in the air. In those cities where the murals had begun with the



I Am the People, Caryl Yasko, 1974, Chicago. Photo: Tim Drescher

Black Power thrust of the late sixties, a movement toward more general themes was beginning. In 1974 Yasko began a mammoth mural in the Logan Square area of Chicago. The mural uses symbolic figures and images to identify the values of the largely Polish and Bielorussian residents of the area and to depict them working together to maintain control in a highly technical, mechanized world. This major wall has opened the door for a number of other murals in this and similar neighborhoods.

Yasko, however, is only one of many women muralists who have made important artistic contributions. Lucy Mahler's vivid mural at the Wright Brothers School in New York is one of the earliest murals on a public school building. Astrid Fuller, with her distinctive combination of a primitive literalism with surrealist images, has created a series of ambitious underpass murals in the Hyde Park area of Chicago. Holly Highfill, who painted an anti-war mural in the Loop area of Chicago (1973), has gone on to do several succeeding walls with gang youth. Marie Burton, who with Highfill and Rogovin co-authored the *Mural Manual*, works primarily with teenagers. Her *Bored of Education* in Chicago (1971) and the *Celebration of Cultures* in Milwaukee (1975) are among the most impressive of the school murals. And these are just a few of the women muralists working on community walls in a way that might be called the "Chicago model" (others are Justine DeVan, Esther Charbit, Ruth Felton, and Celia Radek).

In the Chicago model, the artist-leader of a mural team, using community and youth input, designs the wall and directs the painting of it. The community participates as a new class of patrons who help to pay for the mural and are consulted on the design. In spite of the change in patronage, and participation of community

people as team members, the Chicago model's emphasis on professionalism is fairly close to the mural tradition through the ages. Murals, after all, have rarely been painted by individuals; mostly they are done by a group of assistants working under a master.

This hierarchical process has been challenged by several developments within the mural movement. One is the experimentation with artists' collectives. A collective is a very difficult and highly unstable form of organization in a society emphasizing individualism, and few last longer than a year or two. Many women muralists have come into the movement as organizers or members of a collective group. The mutual support and shared responsibility the collective offers an individual is often necessary to provide the courage to attempt a first mural (and some of the labor power to finish it). Especially in the case of women this factor can be decisive.

Within the Latin culture, *machismo* often reaches rather extreme forms, yet this is countered by a strong communal tradition. It is not surprising therefore that in 1974 a group of Latin American women muralists—*Mujeres Muralistas*—was formed in San Francisco. Most of the women were students or recent graduates of the San Francisco Art Institute and connected with the *Galeria de La Raza*, the center for Chicano artists in the Mission district. Their philosophy was simple and very positive:

Our cultures, our images are strong. It is important that the atmosphere of the world be plagued with color and life. Throughout History there have been very few women who have figured in art. What you see is proof that women, too, can work at this level. That we can put together scaffolding and climb it. We offer you the colors that we make.



Latinoamerica, Mujeres Muralistas, 1974, San Francisco. Photo: Eva Cockcroft

Their two best-known walls, *Latinoamerica* and the Paco's Tacos Stand mural were both done in the spring and summer of 1974. They celebrate the beauty and richness of the Latin tradition. For *Latinoamérica*, the four women comprising the original core of Mujeres Muralistas—Patricia Rodriguez, Consuelo Mendez Castillo, Irene Perez, and Graciela Carrillo de Lopez—worked together to create the design. Different parts of the mural are painted by each artist in her individual style; yet the mural succeeds as a unified work because of the clear organization, and the distinctively bright, clear color that is characteristic of the group. In the Paco's Tacos mural the unity is more tenuous. The wall divides into two distinctly different halves reflecting the different artistic styles of Consuelo Mendez Castillo and Graciela Carrillo de Lopez. In many ways Mujeres Muralistas was never really a "collective", but rather a group of women who came together to work on a particular wall mural. An almost instant fame forced them into a prematurely formalized existence as a "collective group," while leaving them little time to resolve differences in political consciousness between members of the group, or cultural differences between Chicana and Latin American women. The problem of individualism was never really tackled, although there was an attempt to make decisions by a consensus of the group. Internal differences caused the group to dissolve formally early in 1976. The women who comprised Mujeres Muralistas are now working as individual muralists.

Many mural-painting collectives, including most of those that grew out of the largely white counterculture and anti-war movements, either start with women who then invite male artists in, or simply include both women and men. Often led by women with roots in Marxism and feminism, these collectives tend to be strongly anti-sexist, anti-imperialist, and to use overtly political images in their artwork. One of these groups was the People's Painters of New Jersey, who "muralized" Livingston College from 1972 to 1974. Modeled after the Ramona Para Brigades of Allende's Chile, the People's Painters were concerned equally with the political effects of their murals and with trying to overcome individualism and a sense of personal ego. Their first wall was for the Livingston Women's Center, which was very appropriate since the founders of the group—Julia Smith, Kathy Jones, and myself—considered ourselves activists in the Women's Liberation Movement. We worked on the design collectively, discussing ideas first and then finding the images. We chose to work in a simple style, using heavy black outlines and flat color, so that the women at the Center could help us paint. We also consciously worked over parts of the mural that others had originated to combat the tendency to say at the end of the project, "And this part is mine." While we did not wholly succeed in eliminating our sense of personal ego, we did find that by consciously emphasizing collectivity in our work we could overcome personal insecurities and achieve stronger political and artistic results. We went on to incorporate men

into our group and painted eight other murals before agreeing to disperse in 1974, when some of our members graduated and others decided to go on to other things.

The Haight-Ashbury Muralists in San Francisco, a collective, see themselves as "anti-imperialist cultural workers." Their first mural, *Rainbow People*, was painted in 1972 as part of a large anti-war demonstration. A Haight landmark, *Rainbow People* was repainted and updated in 1974. *Unity Eye* (1973) diagrams the ingredients for creating a revolutionary culture in the United States. The mural shows a revolution peopled and led by women, and was painted by an all-female team. Most recently, the Haight-Ashbury Muralists have been working on a 300-foot-long history of the class struggle in San Francisco.

The most radical and problematic challenge to tradition has been the development of collective murals in which non-artist members of a community work with an artist-facilitator who helps them to create their own mural. While a strong emphasis on community participation characterizes all community mural projects, this particular emphasis reflects an attempt to create a "people's art" in every sense of the word. Simply providing paint and a wall to teenagers and young adults is not the answer. There must be a direction, a method for working cooperatively, and a technique that makes it possible to bypass the need for years of study of drawing and design.

The most complete method, and the model for much related work elsewhere in the nation, was developed by Susan Shapiro-Kiok and the Cityarts staff in New York City. This method begins with a number of concept meetings during which the theme is discussed. In the early

Cityarts Workshop murals, scenes were acted out and developed, photographed, and then projected and traced. When the mock-up was complete, it was enlarged by an opaque projector and painted in. *Black Women of Africa Today* (1971), designed and executed by teenage girls at "The Smith" housing project on the Lower East Side, is typical of the early silhouette style. Later murals became more complex as the technique came to include the use of drawings and slides as well as photographs and the opaque projector. The Jewish ethnic mural at the Bialystoker Old People's Home is a collage of images designed and painted by a group of Jewish teenagers under the direction of Susan Caruso-Green (current director of Cityarts Workshop).

Two other collective walls were painted in 1974 and 1975 by Lower East Side women under the direction of Tomie Arai. *The Wall of Respect for Women* (1974) epitomizes the non-antagonistic type of feminism portrayed on non-white community walls dealing with the theme of woman. Rather than condemning more traditional women's roles (e.g., mother, telephone operator), this mural celebrates all the roles played by women. The second wall, *Women Hold Up Half the Sky* (1975), painted by many of the same women who worked on the earlier wall, as well as some men, portrays women's oppression within the context of the larger social struggle. Although most of the images come from a generalized women's experience, the figures breaking out of oppression are of both sexes. In both walls women are shown performing their traditional jobs and, with few exceptions, this is the way women are portrayed in community walls.

Some murals about women emphasize the



Our History Is No Mystery, Haight Ashbury Muralists, 1976, San Francisco. Photo: Tim Drescher

biological factor, and almost all include the mother-child theme. Yet these would be considered highly conservative images by the Women's Liberation Movement. The use of such stereotypical images of women is not the result of ignorance on the part of women muralists. In part it reflects the goals of Third World feminism, in which women's rights are seen as one part of the more general social struggle, and great care is taken to keep feminism from appearing to be a divisive force.

Within political organizations like the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), political education courses discuss the need to overcome *machismo* and the oppressive role definitions which make it difficult for men and women to work together as *compañeros*. Some of the verses from the song "Quiero decirte" (I Want to Tell You Something), written collectively by Suni Paz, Juana Díaz, and other Puerto Rican sisters in 1972 and often sung at political rallies and community events, state the changes in the male-female relationship for which they are struggling:

*A la mujer me dirijo:
tu también debes luchar
para salir de una vez
de tu gran pasividad.*

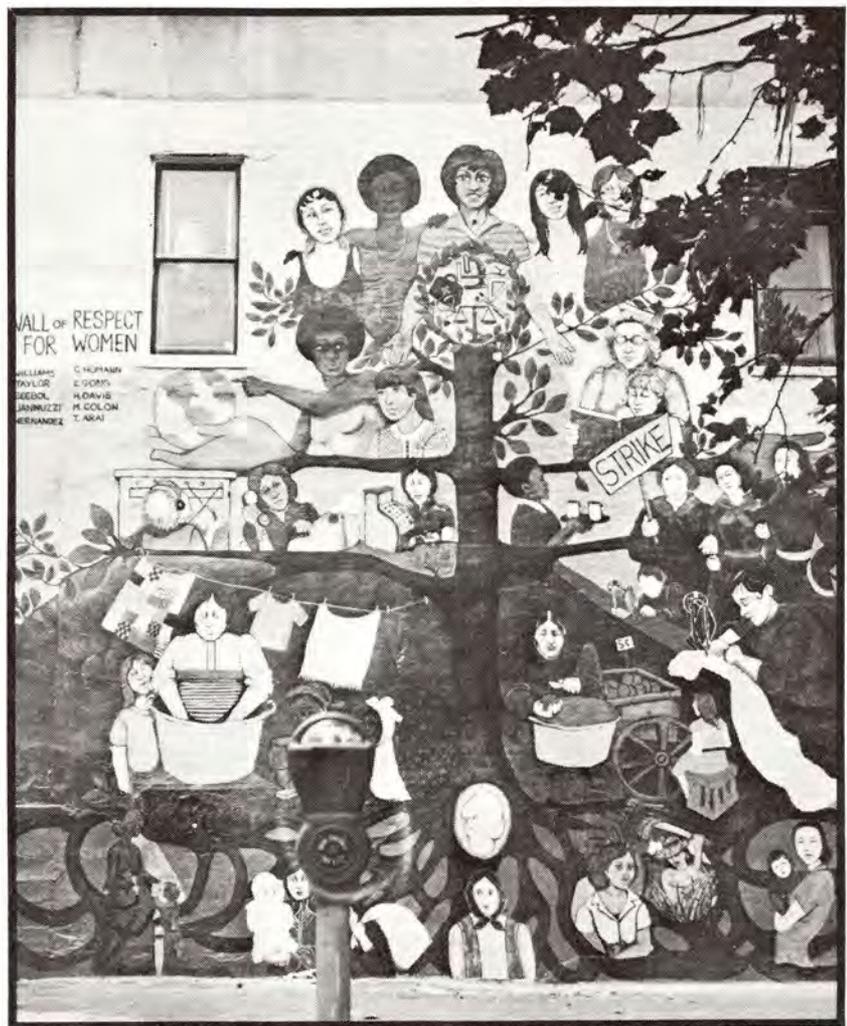
*Al hombre le toca ahora:
entiende que la mujer
sabe pensar y sentir
y tiene derecho a ser.**

*(To the woman I say
you must struggle to abandon
your conditioned passivity
and to leave it behind.)*

*To the man I say
try to understand
that a woman can think and feel,
and has a right to exist.)*

The mother in Latin culture is seen as the moral leader of the household and the authority in the education of her children. The forced sterilization of women by the U.S. government in Puerto Rico and other Latin American countries (as well as the poor at home) has served to intensify the felt need for women to bear children in order to preserve their race. This creates certain differences in attitude about population control and the family structure between Third World feminism and the rest of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Overtly feminist murals are found primarily on Women's Center walls, within the university world, and in certain selected city neighborhoods—Haight-Ashbury, for example—where a base of support exists. Most often, the feminist



Wall of Respect for Women; Tomie Arai, director; 1974, New York. Photo: Cityarts

consciousness of women muralists is expressed by the substitution of female for male as a symbolic or heroic figure, or even by the mere inclusion of women as active figures in any mural.

The problem of responsibility to the permanent audience, those who have to live with the art, is one with which the community muralist is constantly faced. The ideal is to work constantly at the cutting edge of issues—neither too far ahead nor too far behind. This is a continual struggle involving a constant series of difficult decisions and has been a direct part of my own recent experience as a muralist. After several years of working in a relatively radicalized university setting, I undertook some murals in a very different environment—a conservative small town in the Adirondack mountains. My problem was how to paint a bicentennial mural that would be accepted by the permanent residents as their history and yet not violate my convictions, or the truth. Just as I began work in early 1976, the very town authorities who were my sponsors whitewashed a youth mural on

ecology I had directed in 1974, which was critical of the town's dumping sewage into the Schroon River. I conceived my design as a compromise: the ancestors of the present residents are shown as workers in the logging industry, the saw mill, and the textile factories—a working-class history, but one with only positive images. I began painting the wall with great misgivings. It was the reaction of the "locals," and their enthusiastic hunger for their own history, that made me realize that it is not just minority-group people or urban ghetto residents who have been deprived of their history and their right to their own art expression, but every segment of America's working people.

Communication between muralists around the nation has increased greatly since 1974. Three major mural conferences have occurred and the exchange of information and techniques has furthered experimentation. Many muralists who previously worked alone have begun to experiment with collective techniques and vice versa. In 1975, for example, five muralists from the Chicago Mural Group (Caryl Yasko, Mitchell Caton, Celia Radek, Justine DeVan, and Lucyna Radycki) worked on a collectively designed and painted wall. *Prescription for Good Health Care*. The muralists were a mixed group—racially, sexually, and in terms of previous mural experience. This was their first collectively designed wall, although they had helped each other to paint on other walls. The location at 57th and Kedzie is near the headquarters of the American Nazi Party in Chicago. Initially, there was some fear that racial attacks might prevent the group from working, but there were no disturbances during the time the mural was being painted. Acceptance in this white working-class neighborhood of a racially mixed group of muralists reflects the prestige that murals have achieved in Chicago.

The continuing attempt at collectivity and away from the individualistic "genius" concept of the artist prevalent in the art world has been one of the major distinctions pioneered by women in the mural movement; it derives at least in part from the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement. The non-hierarchical structures of the early women's organizations, as well as the direct experience of consciousness-raising groups, with the sisterhood and support they provided, became a part of the outlook of a number of the women muralists. The changes resulting from their individual experiences with Women's Liberation led them to bring the same egalitarian and collective practices to the mural groups they joined or helped found.

While ideas from feminism and Marxism are implicit in the attempt to create a people's art—especially in murals by women—the level of politicization and consciousness among muralists varies greatly. Most community muralists, however, if they were familiar with Mao's words at the Yenan Forum, would agree that:

In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as Art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics.

If that is true, one must choose—and they have chosen.

Heresies, January 1977



People's Wall (partial view), Elliott Erwitt, 1976, City Hall, Corning, New York

*From "Brotando del Silencio" (Breaking Out of the Silence), songs by Suni Paz, Paredon P-1016, Paredon Records, Box 889, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202.

Eva Cockcroft is a muralist and co-author (with John Weber and Jim Cockcroft) of the forthcoming book, *Towards a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement* (E.P. Dutton).



The Flushing Mural

Eva Cockcroft and Suzy Sureck completed the *Flushing Mural* late in the summer of 1982, on Main Street in Flushing, New York. It was sponsored by Cityarts and by the Downtown Flushing Development Corporation, and assistance was given by local teenagers from the Boys' Club, Jobs for Youth, and Pay 7.

The theme is a history of Flushing, which is particularly significant because it was the home of religious freedom in the New World, the home of the Quakers, and has always been a multi-ethnic community. Thus the mural traces and celebrates that rich tradition.

Painted in Bulletin Colors, the mural also offers as a strength a clear understanding of its surrounding architecture, and by incorporating this structural environment into the design the artists have made their images much more powerful and much more compatible with their surroundings.

Two Women's Murals

I have been involved in four women's murals since I began doing murals in 1974. Each experience was totally unique and different. On three of the murals I worked solely with women and on the other, men and women worked together.

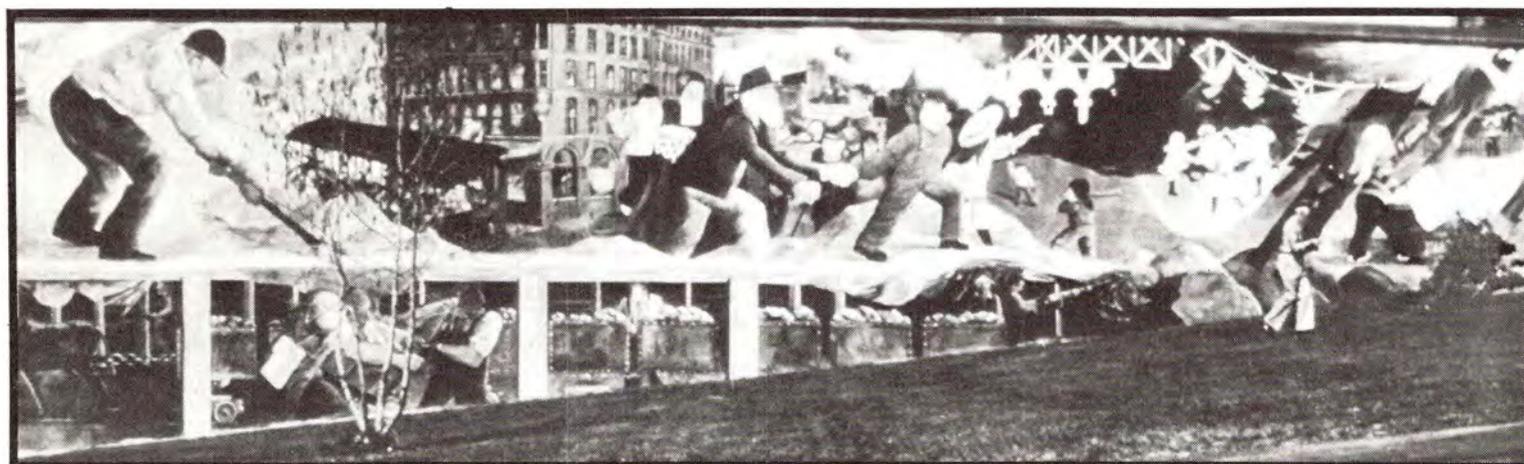
The mural in Madison, Wisconsin was designed and painted by women. We had a grant (small) from the city. Our research led to the development of our images. (We didn't know much about women's history when we started the mural.) In the first panel, a Native American woman is weaving the history. Slaves are picking cotton (the Millet-like figures). Then the cotton is being woven into cloth — an isolated woman sews in the home and a strong woman chops wood in the background. As the industrial age dawns, women and children go to the factory to sew shirts there. The smoke rises out of the chimney and turns into dollars and is caught by the fat, greedy capitalist. On the other panel (of the right back panel) the marching women are lighting matches and sticking them into the shoes of the

capitalist. The signs they carry document important strides taken by women, such as the right to vote, women in non-traditional jobs, freedom to choose. (The signs also tell about the fire in the shirt waist factory and the terrible working conditions women have fought to change. In the present-day section, as history moves along the tapestry, girls are using a hammer, kids are playing and a man is reading a book to a child (book is titled *100 Years of Struggle, 100 Years of Love*). Then a group of multi-racial genies holds a teapot, out of which comes an Asian woman holding a book (education), a black woman breaking out of chains, and holding the torch and an elderly white woman holding a hammer (tools). Together, their arms hold up the world as green foliage winds around their arms and links them all.

The mural was done without *any* drawing beforehand and we invited anyone to just drop in and paint. That accounts for the trouble in composition and value tones. But it was an inter-



Montana Women's History Mural, Helena Artists, 1979, Helena, Montana. Photo: Niki Glen.



Tribute to the People, Niki Glen, Juby Nansel, Carolyn Smithson, 1979; Butte, Montana.

esting experiment in group process and very enjoyable.

The mural in Helena, Montana, 1979, was painted mainly by women (with some men working with them). It is located in the central downtown shopping district and is visible for miles. This was a community mural designed at the public library with much input. Several local women artists then drew up the final design and painted the mural. Financial support was lacking on this mural and made it difficult to finish. Some of the images include Indian women, Suffragettes, a rodeo rider (Fanny Steele), the hardworking farm and ranch women and both traditional and non-traditional women's roles. The area in front of the mural is a bus stop and resting area. The artists doing this mural were Delores Dinsmire, Ann Appleby, and Marilyn Sternberg, with assistance from others.

Niki Glen

N.B. Ida and Victor Sorell, in Washington D.C., note that this mural was printed in *Woman's Day*, Jan. 11, 1983, with a comment by Geraldine Rhoads, who said that it "stands as a corrective to the traditional artists' view that the Old West was populated solely by buffalo, steers, horses and men!"



WHO ARE THOSE WOMEN ON THE WALL?

The article is printed in Spanish and English. CMM thinks this is an excellent policy, and would like to print larger portions of the magazine bilingually, but we need help from readers about how to have the translations done. Please write to us if you have any ideas that might help us.

The scaffolding has been dismantled. The last sticky paint brushes have been cleaned or, so worn, thrown away. Five months of painting, a year of haggling, the energy of women who have come and gone...the second floor of The Women's Building is bold with color. People stop and stare, surprised at its beauty, curious about the place.

The work we do at San Francisco Women's Centers/Women's Building, how we change and grow politically, is often invisible. A drab facade gives no clues as to the internal workings of The Women's Building, nor to the vision of our organization and its workers.

What The Women's Building mural represents is integral to our work. It represents our commitment to struggle against racism side by side with classism, sexism, and imperialism. And it represents the increasing participation of women of color in the broad collective process of the organization.

It is our own people who give us strength to work for what we believe in. The mural reminds us, girls and women of all colors, of what the dominant society does not: we have heroes, thousands of them.

"The mural should be a bridge between The Women's Building and the community it sits in," says Patricia Rodriguez, designer for the mural project. Patricia saw the mural project as a wonderful opportunity to do something visual on the facade of an historical building in the Mission, as well as an opportunity to work to change misconceptions of The Women's Building. "People have stereotypes of the Building," notes Patricia who lives and works in the Mission. "Many women, and men, feel the Building isn't for women of color or isn't for straight women. I hope that this mural will help unite women of color with The Women's Building which is a community center and should be accessible. I am part of the process to make that possible."

Patricia, a Chicana who is both an artist and politically active in the Bay Area, knows from experience that "it is difficult for a minority woman to be easily involved and politically active." "For a white woman," she adds, "it is more automatic. The standards are built in." Nicole Emanuel, who is part of the mural collective, agrees that it is important to see women's accomplishments in the context of their race and history. "Women of color who resist," she says, "rise up against incredible odds of oppression on many fronts."

Five women of diverse artistic experience, age, and background came together to form the collective of women who managed, on those rare sunny days, to complete the mural over the last three months. They are Patricia Rodriguez, Celeste Smeland, Sarah Adkins, Nicole Emanuel, and Miranda Bergman.

Celeste, ex-Arts Coordinator at SFWC/WB and coordinator of the mural project, got involved with the actual painting because she wanted to learn mural-painting and because she was inspired by the subject matter: "to paint images of women is my favorite thing." Though she began the work feeling possessive and protective of the project and wary of the disjointed feeling created by the irregular working patterns of different volunteers and unpredictable weather, she says that a month into the project "it became more like sisters bonded as women painters painting. Once you're up there on the scaffolding, it's wonderful!"

Celeste feels that as she and her co-workers moved from expectations to actual work, they fell collectively into the rhythm of the act. "You get a balance when it's working right: the internal creative aspect of being the artist and the external collective connecting with other people," she says. "There's something universally satisfying about creating with other people very unlike the alienation and solitude of the individual in her studio."

¿QUIENES SON ESAS MUJERES EN LA PARED?

El andamio ha sido desarmado. Los últimos pinceles pegajosos se han limpiado, o, tan desgastados, se han botado. Tres meses de pintar, un año de negociar, la energía de mujeres que han venido y se han ido... El segundo piso del edificio de mujeres está brillante con colores. La gente se detiene y mira, sorprendidas por su belleza, interesada en el lugar.

El trabajo que hacemos en el Edificio de Mujeres, en el Centro de Mujeres de San Francisco, como cambiamos y crecemos políticamente, es invisible a menudo. Un frente sin color no da una idea de los trabajos internos del Edificio de Mujeres.

Lo que el mural del Edificio de Mujeres representa es integral a nuestra labor. Representa nuestra dedicación a luchar contra el racismo, lado a lado con la separación de clases y sexos, y contra el imperialismo. También representa la participación creciente de mujeres de color en el ancho proceso colectivo de la organización.

Es nuestra propia gente que nos da la fortaleza para obrar por lo que nosotros creemos. El mural nos recuerda, niñas y mujeres de toda raza, lo que la sociedad dominante no nos recuerda; tenemos héroes — miles de ellos y ellas.

El mural no es un sueño. Es una declaración y es una bienvenida. "El mural debería ser un puente," dice Patricia Rodríguez, quien diseñó y coordinó la ejecución del proyecto. "Un puente entre el Edificio de Mujeres y la comunidad en que se encuentra."

Patricia vio la obra del mural como una oportunidad excelente para hacer algo visual en la fachada de un edificio histórico en la Misión, tanto como una oportunidad para cambiar las ideas erróneas que podrían existir tocante al Women's Building. "La gente tiene ideas fijas con respecto al Edificio," nota Patricia, quien vive y trabaja en la Misión. "Muchas mujeres, y hombres, piensan que el Building no es para mujeres de color, o para mujeres respetables. Espero que este mural ayude a unir a las mujeres de color con el Women's Building, que es un centro comunal y debería ser accesible. Yo soy parte del proceso para lograr esto."

Patricia, una Chicana que es a la vez artista y activa en la política de La Bahía, sabe por experiencia que, para una mujer de la minoría es difícil estar expuesta a la actividad política.

"Para una mujer blanca," añade ella, "eso es automático. Los medios están ya establecidos."

Nicole Emanuel, quien es parte de la mural colectiva, conviene que es importante interpretar los éxitos de la mujer en el contexto de su raza y su historia. "Estas mujeres se revelaron contra rechazos increíbles de la opresión en muchos frentes."

Cinco mujeres de diversas experiencias artísticas, de diversas edades, de diversos orígenes, se juntaron para formar la unión de mujeres que obtuvieron, en los raros días de sol, completar la muralla en los últimos tres meses. Las llamadas Patricia Rodríguez, Celeste Smeland, Sarah Adkins, Nicole Emanuel y Miranda Bergman.

Celeste, ex-coordinadora de Artes en el CM/EMSF y coordinadora del proyecto del mural, se decidió a pintar porque quería aprender la pintura de murales y porque le inspiraba el tema: "Pintar imágenes de mujeres es mi deleite favorito." Aunque comenzó el trabajo sintiéndose algo dueña y maternal hacia el trabajo, algo tímida del sentido de desconexión creado por los métodos irregulares de las diferentes voluntarias, y el clima incierto, ella dice que apenas pasado un mes de trabajo cuando se vio que "se hacía más como una obra de hermanas unidas, que como pintoras pintando."

"Ya que se encuentra una en el andamio, es una dicha."

A Celeste le parece que, ella y sus colegas al trasladarse de la expectativa al trabajo en sí, se colocaron colectivamente en el ritmo de la actuación.

"Se conmueve una balanza cuando las cosas están trabajando bien: ese aspecto creativo interno de ser artista, y la conexión externa, colectiva con otras personas," dice ella. "Hay algo universalmente placentero de crear algo con otras personas que es muy diferente a la separación y solitud del individuo en su taller."



Photo: Nita Winter

Nicole was also struck by the collectivity of the work which whet her appetite to work with other artists in the future. "Everything about the way we work," she says, "the time talking, time figuring something out; it's always orchestrated, shared. There is a special camaraderie we feel as artists and as women."

For Nicole, the most difficult part of the work was getting used to drawing something that's going to be seen from 30-40 feet away. She learned to over-emphasize and be dramatic with shapes and colors. "It's like a puzzle working itself together. It is only complete when the last little piece is painted on the wall."

Sarah Adkins was walking down 18th Street one day when she spotted the muralists by chance. She had done some mural painting in England but always alone. "I felt instantly at home in the situation," she says.

Miranda Bergman, a muralist dating back to the Haight-Ashbury Muralists, is a neighbor of the Women's Building. Miranda had not worked on someone else's project before and had some criticism of the women Patricia had selected to paint— Polly Bemis both because she is dead while the other women are all contemporary and because she seemed to be more a symbol of survival than one of strength; and Louise Nevelson because she perceives her as upper-class and apolitical. She now feels, having learned more about the five women in the process of painting them, that the mural speaks to the fact that important contributions are made by many different kinds of women. "I was glad to be able to give something back to The Women's Building whose work I've appreciated over the years," she says. "And giving," she adds, "I got back even more myself from the energy of the many women coming in and out from activities at the building while I worked."

Working outside on the scaffolding, the women found they were constantly exposed to public commentary and exchange: honking, waving, shouted conversations, craned heads. "Many people feel it's beautiful, that it really makes a difference," says Nicole. She feels it's important to experience the public while you're working on a community building because it has everything to do with the public. But she hopes the mural serves as something besides being beautiful. "People are going to notice the Building more and think about these women we've painted. There's so much work to be done to make people aware of and not afraid of what women are accomplishing. Women's history is a silent history. It's important to remember what women do."

Nicole también se impresionó con la colectividad del trabajo que le agudizó el apetito de obrar con otras artistas en el futuro. "Todo del modo en que trabajamos," dice ella, "el tiempo platicando, el tiempo de resolver algún problema — todo siempre está orquestado, disfrutado. Hay una camaradería especial que sentimos, como artistas y como mujeres."

En cuanto a Nicole, su mayor problema fué el imponerse a dibujar algo que va a ser visto de treinta o cuarenta pies de distancia. Ella aprendió a exagerar y dramatizar con formas y colores. "Es como un rompre-cabezas, todo encajando en su lugar. No está terminado hasta que el último lugarcito esté pintado en la pared."

Sarah Adkins se andaba paseando por la Calle Dieciocho cuando se fijó en la muralistas por casualidad. Ella había pintado murales en Inglaterra, pero a solas. Dice ella, "Inmediatamente, me sentí en casa con la situación."

Miranda Bergman, una artista desde los pasados días de los muralistas de Haight-Ashbury, es una vecina del Women's Building. Miranda no había trabajado en un proyecto de otra persona y tenía algo que criticar de las mujeres que Patricia había escogido para pintar — Polly Bemis por dos razones: una, que ha muerto, mientras que las otras mujeres era todas contemporáneas y porque parecía más un símbolo de sobrevivir de clase alta, y no política. Ahora, habiendo aprendido más de las cinco mujeres al pintarlas, se da cuenta que el mural demuestra que las contribuciones importantes son logradas por mujeres de toda clase. "Tuve gusto de poder volver al Women's Building cuya obra he apreciado por varios años." Y añade, "Y recibí de la energía de muchas mujeres entrando y saliendo de las actividades en el Building mientras yo obraba."

Trabajando afuera, en el andamio, las mujeres se hallaron continuamente expuestas al roze y comentario públicos: los claxons pitando, los saludos, conversaciones a grito, rostros levantados para ver. "Muchos piensan que es algo hermoso, que de veras tiene que ver," dice Nicole. Piensa que es significativo sentir al público mientras trabajas en un edificio comunal porque tiene todo que ver con el público. Pero ella espera que el mural sirva de algo más que de cosa decorativa. "La gente se va a fijar más en el edificio y pensar más en estas mujeres que hemos pintado. Hay tanta lucha que hacer para que la gente tome nota y no se espante de lo que las mujeres están realizando. La historia de la mujer es una historia muda. Es importante realizar lo que las mujeres hacen."

She hopes the mural makes the statement that what's happening at The Women's Building and what's happening in an evolving women's movement is not only white and middle class. "The mural can start off a whole series of events that will help people get involved in what's being accomplished today at The Women's Building and what will be accomplished." Patricia, happy that the work is now done, feels that the kind of unity expressed in the mural is absolutely necessary. "We think we are free but we have a lot of work to do. We need a support system...together. We can't do it alone."

We invite you to come and see The Women's Building Mural for yourself on March 6 at 11:2 pm for an opening celebration.

Donations for the Mural Project will help pay for the film documentation of the work and stipends for workers. Comments are welcome. Direct both to: The Mural Project, SFWC/WB, 3543 18th St., S.F. 94110.

Special thanks to Deena Clevenson, Nita Winter, and Li Jung Ma, invisible helpers on the project.

Ella tiene esperanza que el mural haga decir que lo que está pasando en el Women's Building y lo que está pasando en el movimiento feminista se desarrolla no únicamente de gente blanca y clase media. "El mural puede desenlazar una serie de acontecimientos que harán a la gente comprometerse con lo que se está logrando hoy y lo que se logrará en el futuro en el Edificio de Las Mujeres."

Patricia, feliz que el trabajo esté hecho, piensa que la clase de unidad expresada en el mural es absolutamente necesaria. "Creémos que estamos libres pero nos falta mucho trabajo por hacer. Necesitamos ayuda — juntas. No podemos hacerlo solas."

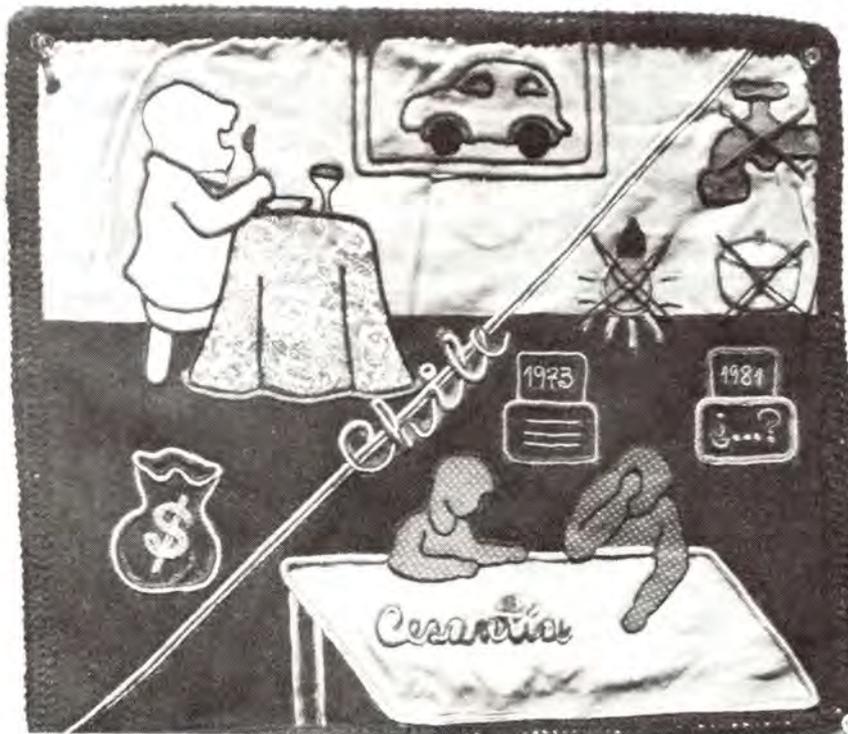
Gracias a Deena Clevenson, Nita Winter y Li Jung Ma quienes fueron invisibles colaboradoras en el proyecto.

Invitamos al público en general a venir y admirar el Mural de "El Edificio de Mujeres" el 6 de Marzo de, 11 a.m. a 2 p.m. para una celebración. Donaciones para el Proyecto del Mural ayudarán a pagar por el documental del trabajo y estipendios para las trabajadoras. Comentarios son apreciados. Dirijan ambos a: The Mural Project, SFWC/WB, 3543 18 St., SF, 94410

San Francisco Women's Center Newsletter, March 1983

CHILE: Embroideries of Life and Death

Though bright-colored threads outline the surface designs of most embroideries produced by Chilean women, their images of reality differ considerably. Poverty is often a common factor in their lives, but only in recent years have many of the urban women of Chile's capital, Santiago, been faced with this circumstance, whereas poverty has been a lifelong reality of the rural, Isla Negra women. Until recently, neither group of women was folk artists, but embroidery has now become their common means of self expression and of earning an income. In the process of creating embroidery, the women are not only adding colored threads to cloth, but are reshaping their own lives and self-images. They are also removing themselves from the isolation of their homes and developing a bond of solidarity with each other.



Estele Hidalgo is a member of the Human Rights Commission, a meeting place for thousands who congregate there daily to learn and share news of their exiled families. The theme of **Estele's arpillera, Cesante**, or unemployed, is developed through gluing a wool outline around her caricature forms, which clearly contrasts a wealthy man gorging himself while the unemployed have neither food, water or electricity.



Living conditions are symbolically expressed in **Dina's arpillera**. A series of box-like homes are lined up in a row, "robbing" the electricity from the major utility poles. In the hands of the man in front of the factory is a paper which tells him that the factory is closed and he is now unemployed. The people below are all families of unemployed who are cooking together and will share a common olla or pot of food.

The embroidery of cloth with traditional, decorative flower motifs has long been a popular folk craft of many Chilean women. The embroidered cloths were often utilized as a covering for certain food items such as cake or sweets. Embroideries were given as gifts to commemorate special occasions or to express a unique feeling toward someone. When presented to a foreign visitor, an embroidery became a special souvenir or memory of Chile. In recent years many of the women have created embroideries with new motifs based on current life.

The women's latent creative energies were activated by different catalysts. In Santiago, the Catholic Church provided the organizing force. In Isla Negra, a single energetic person, **Sra. Leonora Soberino de Vera**, mobilized the women. Besides the compositional contrast of their embroideries, fishing and farm scenes versus city scenes, the women of Santiago are also expressing images that contain a distinct emotional reality based on changes in their lives brought about by the political conditions in their country.

These embroideries with political overtones are called *arpilleras*. They are smaller and are created in a different style than the embroideries of the Isla Negra women. The *arpilleras* measure approximately 12 by 18 inches, and are con-

structed from colorful factory remnants or fabric scraps which are cut into shapes and arranged on a flour sack backing to tell a story. The finished *arpillera* is framed by a bright wool crocheted border. There are three techniques presently used to create the *arpilleras*: the flat or planar method, in which all the fabric shapes are adhered to the surface by a variety of embroidery stitches along the outer edges of the forms.

Embroidery stitches are also used for facial expressions; the raised or relief technique, in which doll-like forms of people and other details, such as an open door, are partially raised from the surface; and the glue technique, more recently developed, in which the fabric shapes are glued to the surface and then outlined with several thicknesses of glued contrasting wool.

The *arpilleras* are made in talleres or artisan workshops. These workshops are among a series of diverse community industries and workshops initiated by the Vicariate of Solidarity, an office of the Catholic church to "contribute to the solidarity of the poor. Everyone must help his neighbor." In these workshops, a variety of items are made, including embroidered blouses, dresses, hand-knit sweaters, hats vests, small craft items, and the *arpilleras*.

Arpilleras are unsigned or anonymous, though occasionally a little pocket is sewn onto the back of an *arpillera*, and a folded paper with the woman's name and a written detailed explanation of the meaning of the particular *arpillera* is enclosed.

In 1975, ten *arpillera* workshops evolved throughout Santiago, with a limit of 20 members. The women meet once a week, learning from each other how to

develop their sewing skills. Each taller (workshop) developed its own preferred style or *arpillera* technique, as well as workshop organization, president, secretary, and treasurer.

The groups often select a common theme which is designed and expressed by each woman according to her creative ability. Sometimes all the *arpilleras* of a similar theme are sewn together forming a large mural, and many decorate the walls of the vicaria.

All of the *arpilleras* of the women in **Dina Loagos** workshop portray themes of their common personal experiences of political repression. Each woman also heads a household because their husbands and sons are among the *desaparecidos* or disappeared one. The *arpilleras* also portray the living conditions of Santiago where more than half the population of eight million live in sub-standard homes and shanty communities constructed from sheets of corrugated metal, cardboard, flattened tin cans, plastic or tarp easily penetrated by the Andean winter. Many homes and districts lack basic sanitary facilities, electricity or water. Most of the inhabitants are unemployed or marginally employed, malnourished, and in need of medical attention.

In the workshops, each woman is permitted to make only one *arpillera* per week or two in cases of extreme economic need. The *arpilleras* are brought once a month to the vicaria, where they are sold. Each woman receives her full payment, apart from ten percent which is kept as a common group emergency fund. The price of an *arpillera* is \$15.

The Santiago *arpilleras* are carried to the outside world, the United States, France, Holland, and Switzerland only by certain "diplomatic means" or by charity organizations, such as OXFAM.

The embroideries of the women of Isla Negra are treated differently than the *arpilleras* of the Santiago women. Isla Negra is a small town located on the Pacific coast two hours by bus from Santiago. Isla Negra women have recently become famous for their **bordados** or embroideries, which were proudly carried to Europe by Chile's poets, Pablo Neruda and Violetta Parra. These embroideries have even been exhibited at the Louvre!

The development of Isla Negra embroideries began through the efforts of Sra. Leonora Soberino de Vera, the 69-year-old wife of a Santiago pediatrician.

"I wanted to see what I could do to help. Many of the families are very poor. I started the workshop with 17 women, 12 years ago," she says.

"The women join two flour sacks together which gives them a large surface. Then they make their drawings and embroider them. Now they completely fill in each shape with wool yarn."

The women meet with Sra. Leonora every other week, in a little house they have constructed themselves for storing wool and other supplies. Sra. Leonora brings the wool with her from Santiago

and it is sold to the women at cost. She views their work in progress, their embroideries of "life," and continues to encourage them.

"I only encourage folk themes, and themes from the past such as: the harvest of potatoes, a horse coral, fishing, village life, and home life. I made a contact with a museum director through a friend. We had our first exhibit of Isla Negra Embroideries at the Santiago Art Museum in October, 1969. Thirty embroideries were exhibited by 17 women. Everything sold in the first half-hour. The women said, 'this is money from heaven.' Every year we make an exhibition. There are not enough embroideries for the demand.

The women make between two and six embroideries per year, and the price for each is \$100 or more. The embroidery technique that the Isla Negra women use is very time-consuming and costly, as the entire surface, the form of each tree, leaf, bird or person is completely filled in by using an embroidery stitch which crosses back and forth over the object, on the back as well as front surface. This technique gives the embroidery the weight and texture of a weaving.

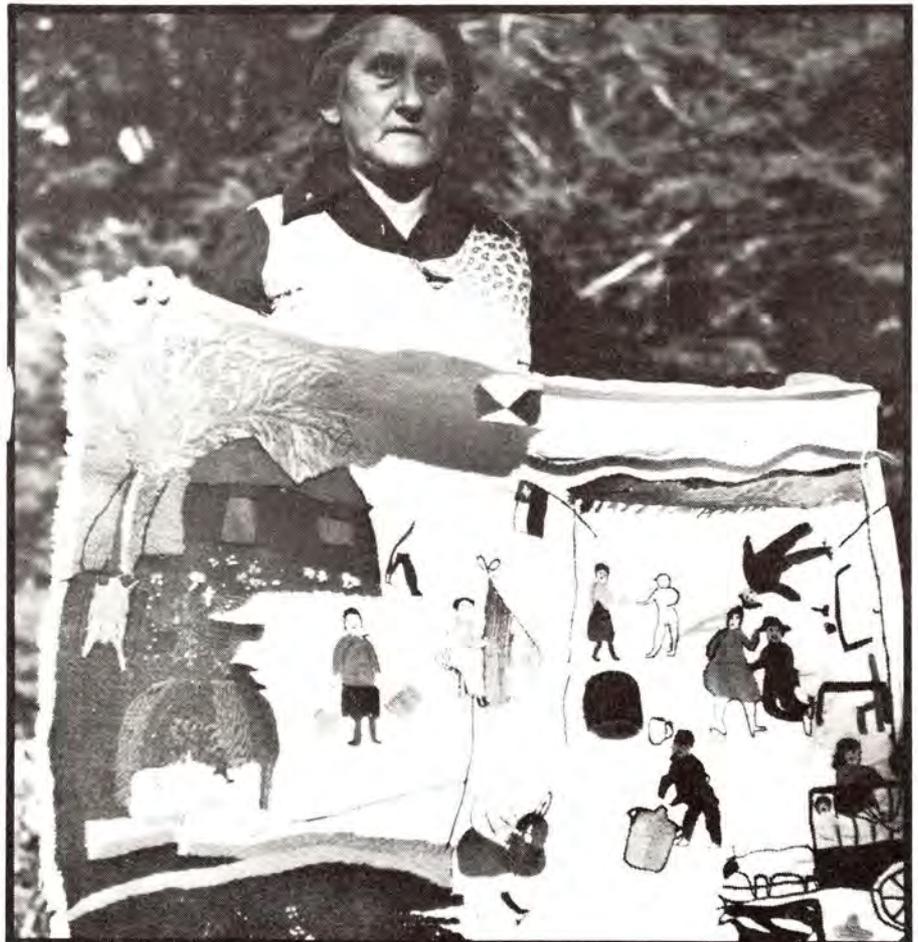
Though economic necessity has been the common catalyst in the development of both the *arpilleras* and Isla Negra embroideries, each expresses a different view of Chilean life. The women of Isla Negra have been directed primarily to develop embroideries that reflect the quiet idealism of rural life, and not private deprivations experienced by their families.

The decorative, colorful patterns of the Isla Negra embroideries offer the artists, as well as the audience, an escape from reality into a bucolic, joyous vision of both nature and life. On the other hand, the Santiago artisans use the *arpilleras* as a symbolic confrontation of art with life, as an interpretation of the political, economic, and social realities of their lives.

Though the styles and contents of the embroideries differ, both groups of women benefit by being involved as producers of art.

© 1982 Betty LaDuke
Photos: © 1982 Betty LaDuke
KSOR Guide to the Arts
Ashland, Oregon, March 1982

Betty LaDuke is a painter and a professor of art at Southern Oregon State College. Her drawings and photographs of women and examples of their art have been organized into a traveling exhibit, **Latin America: Women as Artisans**. This article is a condensed excerpt from her book manuscript: **Latin America: Women, Art and Social Change**.



Nicaragua: Mural Painters

Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, is a wounded city still suffering from the severe and devastating effects of the earthquake of 1972 and the revolutionary war of 1977-1979, when the 44-year-old Somoza dictatorship was overthrown. A "city of roads" is the new name given to Managua by its residents. Like the arms of an octopus, these roads stretch from the skeletal ruins of the former city center to the new businesses, markets and residential sections in the outlying areas. However, along these roads are many bright rectangular areas of color in the form of billboards and murals which proudly reflect the spirit of the "new" Nicaragua.

The production of these large, well-designed murals and billboards are sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, a branch of the government dedicated to the promotion of all the arts. Directed by Ernesto Cardinal, a priest and internationally acclaimed poet, the Culture Ministry's programs reach city and farm populations through its network - Casa Populares de Cultura or Culture Centers. The murals and billboards also connect the urban and rural areas by expressing the visual voice of the artists and their government. Their images and messages are designed to elevate the social consciousness and cultural level of the people.

Some of the popular billboard themes illustrate issues of current concern such as: the recent alphabetization or literacy campaign to eradicate Somoza's legacy of widespread illiteracy which affected more than half of the population; the massive health campaign to inoculate children against common diseases; and the urging of citizens to integrate or join their police force. Other billboards emphasize the historical consciousness of Nicaragua through portraits of revolutionary heroes Sandino and Carlos Fonseca. Posters or smaller editions of the murals are also seen on doors and walls.

Even the common marketplaces now reflect the spirit of the new Nicaragua and especially the militant role of women through banners which read:

"When women are present in the struggle, their work becomes invincible"

"When we become free, we will never return to being slaves."

In the three murals painted on three sides of an elementary school building located in the Luis Alfonso Velasquez Park. This park is part of a recent reconstruction project



since the revolution and is located amidst the skeletal ruins of the earthquake's devastation in the center of Managua. The newly planted trees have not yet reached maturity, but the school walls have blossomed forth in a variety of colors, shapes and themes.

Cerrato's mural is the only one which is not part of a collaborative effort. Painted in an expressionistic style, his mural commemorates the heroic struggle and combative efforts of the men, women and children of Masaya in the revolution. The figures are over life size, painted in massive, rhythmic groups which move from both ends of the wall toward the center. The tender meeting of a soldier and child forms the central image. The wall size is approximately 72 feet wide by 20 feet in height. (See pages 2 and 4)



On the opposite wall, in complete contrast to Cerrato's mural, the open space of a flat white background contains a series of singularly painted, disconnected figures of women and children. This mural was designed by Alejandro Conales and created in collaboration with Genero Lugo, David Espinoza, Freddy Juarez, Romel Beteta and Maria Gallo. One of the images is of a woman reaching longingly to capture a bird, while another sits pensively with her hair floating into an undefined space. This mural's dominant feminine images do not seem particularly Nicaraguan but representative of an archetype or universal spirit of all women.

The mural of Hilda Vogel Garcia and Julia Aguirre is painted on the smaller end wall, approximately 36 feet long and 20 feet high. The theme of this mural is rural life. Julia Aguirre has painted a farm-landscape scene and Hilda Vogel has painted two scenes: one depicting children playing a popular sport, baseball and the other, a traditional bullfight event. In Julia's landscape, one of the street banners reads, "Alfabetizacion es Liberacion" or "Literacy is Liberation."

Both women paint in a primitive style, which means that neither one has had any formal art training. Objects are painted flat, without the use of perspective or shading. Color is applied to outlined forms and much emphasis is given to detail by depicting all the leaves on a tree, rather than suggesting leaf shapes through the use of impressionistic brush strokes or color.

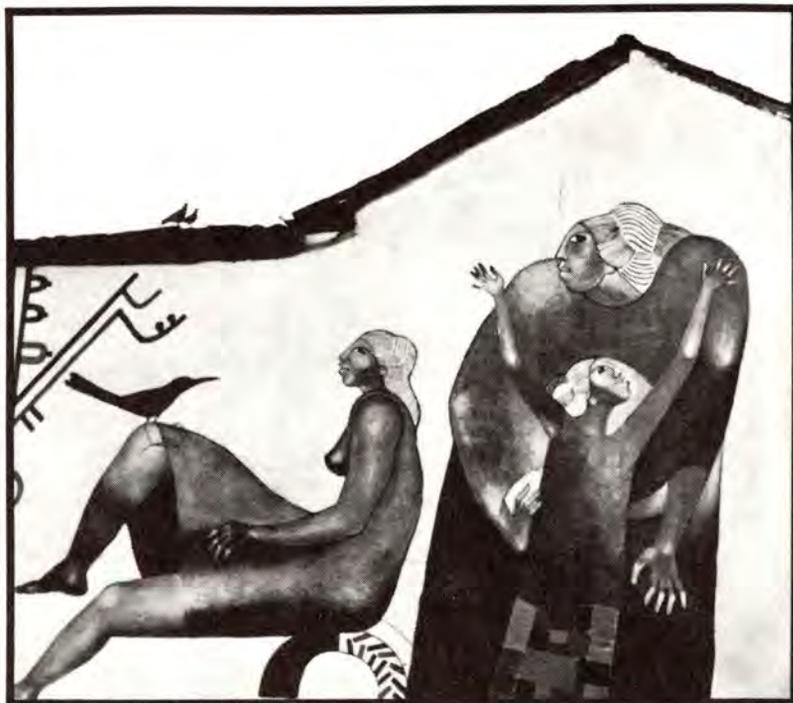
This large painting project was a creative challenge for both women as it was their very first mural painting experience. They, as well as the other artists, received no payment for their time or work, but all the materials were provided by the Cultural Ministry. The women painted intensely for two months, during May and June of 1980, in order to complete the mural in time for Nicaragua's first July 19th celebration of the triumph of the revolution. What is surprising about their painting is the unified appearance of the two separate sections of the mural, in design, form and color. Their use of bright pastel colors and a shared mood of optimism and joy permeates the entire wall surface.

Hilda Vogel explained the significance of the mural's location in the Luis Alfonso Velazquez Park. "This park was constructed as an homage to all children, but especially Luis. He was a very creative child, who participated in the revolution. He was 10 years old when he was brutally killed by Somocistas."

I had the opportunity to meet and interview both artists at the Cultural Ministry and at Hilda's home and studio. Both women have had but a brief few years to develop their talent. However, they each work with an attitude of maturity and dedication. They are also articulate and proud of being artists "integrated within the process of social change in the new Nicaragua."

What is surprising is that Nicaragua, a small and impoverished country, with its revolution still not secure, should recognize and value art, artists, and its cultural traditions, as an inherent part of the contemporary struggle for survival. The Ministry of

Culture is financed by the government and continues to develop and maintain an active program of support for all the arts and artists throughout the country. Also surprising is that the revolution has not limited the artists to a singular viewpoint,



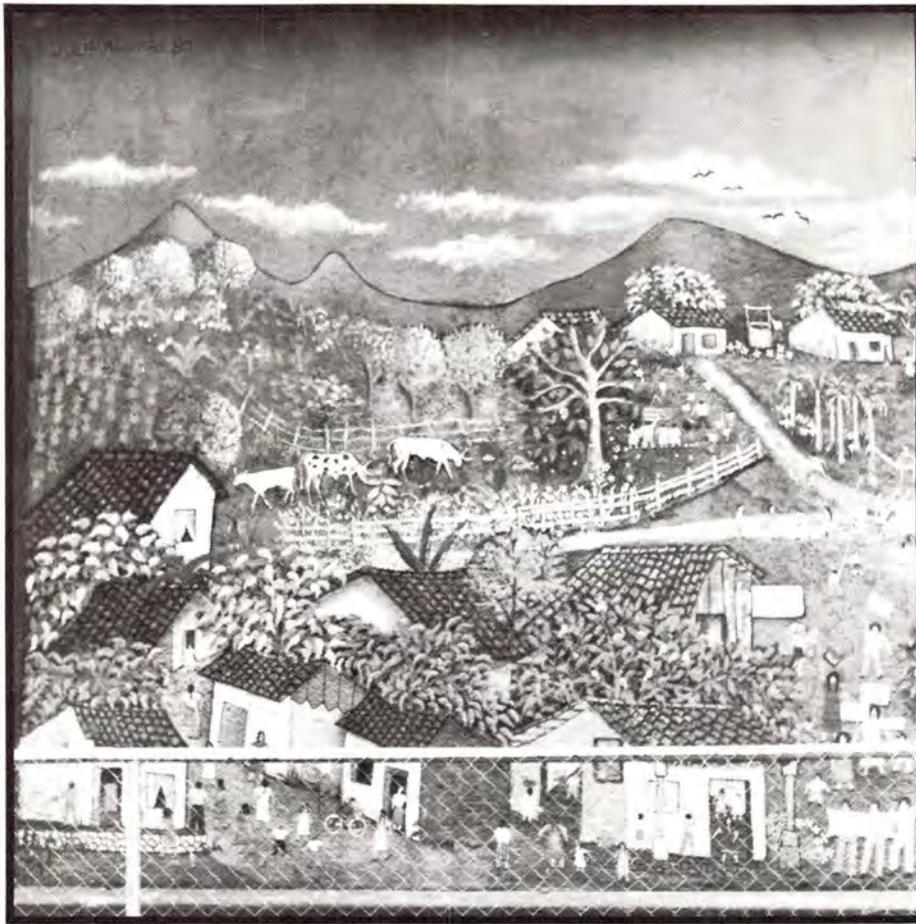
style, or mode of expression.

Pluralism is accepted and encouraged in art expression as well as in one's economic base. Some artists are supported by sales of their work arranged individually or by foreign private galleries; others depend primarily on national and international exhibits sponsored by the Cultural Ministry. Artists are also provided with new challenges such as the painting of murals.

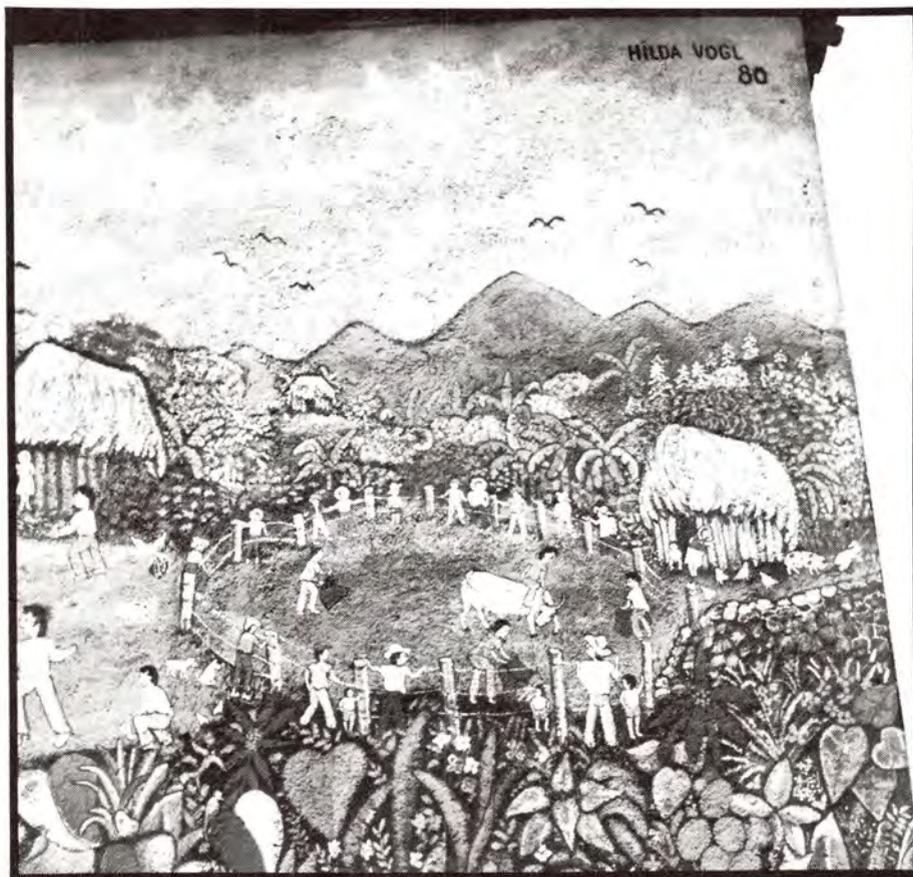
As yet, women form a small percentage of the art students at the only national professional art school in Managua. However, their presence is encouraged and they are no longer considered as art hobbyists, who will retreat to a domestic role, leaving art by the wayside. The active participation of women in AMNLAE, the Nicaraguan Women's Association, assures that women will be able to participate equally with men in all professional spheres.

Hilda Vogel and Julia Aguirre speak with pride of their personal development, their art work and their integration as women and artists into the social-cultural structure of their country. Few women artists in North America can express a similar view concerning their professional lives. Though the new Nicaragua is young, there is much for us to learn from its respect for art and artists.

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Photos: © 1982 Betty LaDuke
Women's Press
Eugene, Oregon, June/July 1982



Julie Aguirre, Luis Alfonso Velasquez Park, Masaya, Nicaragua, 1980



Hilda Vogl, Luis Alfonso Velasquez Park, Masaya, Nicaragua, 1980

Hispanic Art From Outrage

Dedicated to the memory of Terry Santana, Latin activist murdered in December. Santana was the head of *Es-Info* and was a prime source of journalistic information on the war in El Salvador, on rightwing Latin terrorist groups like Omega 7, and on other Latin American issues. She was found after a fire in her apartment, the rug soaked in gas, her body burned beyond recognition (although she was also reported to have been surrounded by

"a pile of documents that espoused support for Fidel Castro and Leftist guerrillas in El Salvador"). FBI agents were present at the discovery of her body. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the U.S. openly supports anti-Sandinist and anti-Castro paramilitary groups in North America as well as the anti-democratic governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. And the mass media continues to ignore and distort news from Central America.



Juan Sanchez, *Untitled*, 1982, oil and mixed media, 6' x 8'.

This section is a collage of statements and images produced around Central American issues by progressive art groups in New York from May to October, 1982. "Culture and Struggle: Hispanic Artists in New York" was a PADD Second Sunday held on May 9, with Juan Sanchez and Catalina Parra showing their work and talking about related political issues, and Daniel Flores Ascencio speaking about plans for an Institute for the Arts and Letters of El Salvador in Exile—now a reality.

In June, the artists' collective Group Material organized an exhibition called "*Luchar!* An Exhibition for the People of Central America" at the Taller Latinoamericano. Sanchez, Parra, Flores and PADD members were among some 50 artists in the show, which also included banners, posters and so-called propaganda from Central America.

On October 10, another PADD Second Sunday—"The Arts and Revolution in El Salvador and Nicaragua" was organized by Jerri Allyn. Flores and Salvadoran musician Armando Martinez spoke on the situation of exiled artists.

Marcelo Montealegre spoke on his experience giving workshops in audio-visual technology in Nicaragua last summer and showed an inventive painted, color Xerox slide/tape piece about the 1973 coup in his native Chile. PADD also received a statement from Noel Corea, from the Nicaraguan Consulate, who was unable to be present.

May 9

"Culture and Struggle" was held on Mothers' Day, an important Hispanic holiday, and Juan Sanchez focused his presentation on the contribution of Puerto-Rican revolutionary women. Quoting Che, "It is easier to kill a guerrilla in the womb than on the battlefield," he cited the involuntary sterilization of one third of the women in Puerto Rico. He talked about the exploitation of Puerto Rican women working as *las operarias* in New York sweat shops and showed slides of his work honoring his own mother and heroines like writer Julia de Burgos, Maria Haydée

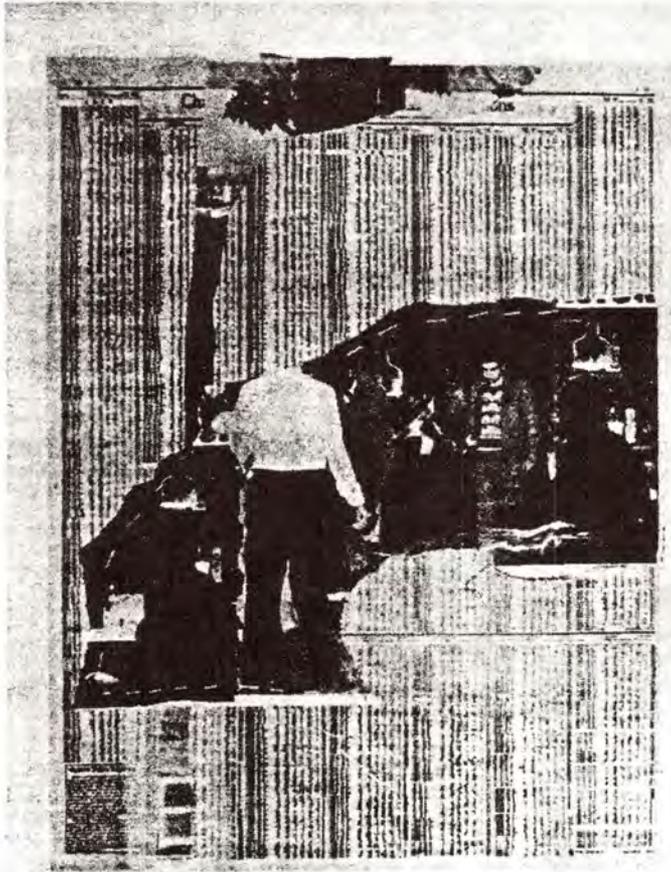
Torres (now in jail as a political prisoner, member of the FALN), Isabel Rosado (a leader of the 1950 revolt who in 1979, in her 70s, was arrested and beaten for protesting the presence of the U.S. Navy base at Vieques), and Lolita Lebron, who said on the eve of her long-term jail sentence: "I love my children very much and I hope they understand how much I love them. . . . They need a mother, but now and later they will need even more to be free." Sanchez sees his art as a way of informing and agitating within the Puerto Rican community and supporting the necessity of national liberation.

my mind of armed guards patrolling the streets (24 hours a day? everywhere?), of IDs being checked, of stern looks on everybody's faces. In short, a Hollywood/videoland version, even though I knew better.

What I did find was a very Latin casualness and a wonderful sense of building a country; a dedication to social values rather than to individual gain; a feeling of contentment in spite of the material shortages that still exist and will probably continue for some time.

The workshops were designed for two distinct groups: people already producing slide and sound programs and people who had never done so. The professionals met in the morning, the beginners in the afternoon. Each session lasted from three to five hours with a break in the middle. The goal was that each team should finish their proposed slide and sound program. Most did.

In the process, they managed to drive me to the ground with their questions and dedication to learning the techniques I brought with me. Their enthusiasm and energy still amaze me—again, stereotypes about siesta-taking



Catalina Parra, *Options* (Jean Seberg), 1981, newspaper, gauze, thread, tape, 24" x 19" (photo: Juan Sanchez).

Catalina Parra spoke of the impossibility of even communicating with family and friends in Chile, her exile here, and showed her ironic sewn and pasted *trabajos* (or collages) about life in America. Flores spoke about the denial and destruction of Salvadoran culture and the need to keep it alive in exile, to develop art for a postwar, revolutionary El Salvador. There was discussion about when the artist should pick up the gun, and when the brush. Flores insisted: "It is very important that when revolutionary victory comes, the artist is part of it and can identify with the process. Art is life, a proof of existence."

October 10

Marcelo Montealegre

First impressions are important even if you change them later, because they have to do with one's prejudices and preconceptions. I went to Nicaragua for five weeks last summer to conduct a workshop on audio-visual production and to do some photography. I didn't know exactly what a revolution would look like. I didn't even have an idea of how it *should* look. There were vague pictures in



Latins as opposed to hard-working North Americans. Somehow they've managed to make very long 8-hour days down there, plus a half day of work on Saturdays.

Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of the workshop was seeing some of the techniques being adopted immediately for programs that would be distributed as soon as they were finished. I was moved not only by people's hunger for the technology, but also by their openness to the notion of culture in everyone's lives and the reclamation of the indigenous arts. In short, Nicaragua is no videoland.

Noel Corea

In a diplomatic victory this year, Nicaragua won a seat on the U.N. Security Council. Father Miguel D'Escoto, Minister of Foreign Relations of Nicaragua, summed up the significance of the 104 votes obtained:

... This is a clear and categorical manifestation of how the majority of the countries in the world support the popular Sandinista revolution, and recognize that it is ruled by the principles of the non-aligned movement and maintains absolute respect for the U.N. charter. In addition, it recognizes our commitment to a policy of peace, and our efforts to make dialogue and negotiation prevail in the search for solutions to regional and world conflicts.

This event has to be seen within the context of complete U.S. opposition to such a nomination. For several weeks, prior to the voting day, the U.S. delegation to the U.N. tried unsuccessfully to block such a nomination.

A month before, Nicaragua had received another vote of international confidence when its Minister of Health, Ms. Lea Guido, was elected the first woman president of the Pan American Health Organization's Executive Committee. . . . Meanwhile, the U.S. continues its hostile position toward Nicaragua; repeated offers by Nicaragua for meetings with the U.S. have been rejected or merely not afforded a response. A joint Mexican-Venezuelan peace plan for the Central American region was boycotted by the U.S. which, instead, patronized a meeting of seven countries in Costa Rica, from which Nicaragua was excluded. Under these circumstances, it is essential that the North American public keep informed about what is going on in Central America so they don't fall prey to Washington's anti-Sandinista hysteria, which could lead to intervention, and to war between neighboring countries.



Scenes from the slide show *Seal of a Commitment*, produced and directed by Marcelo Montealegre.

Daniel Flores Ascencio

Among the many needs that bring about every revolutionary process are intellectual/artistic activity and expression. This implies not only the seizure of cultural patrimony from the enemy, but the recovery of our cultural values and fighting to preserve those that still exist.

The political, social and economic situation in El Salvador has made any serious technical or esthetic development almost impossible. No Salvadoran intellectual has escaped the restraints imposed on the cultural development of the whole country. Sixty percent of the population is illiterate; elementary education is required although there are not sufficient schools; teachers and university professors are persecuted and repressed; the national university, the country's most important cultural center, was the object of brutal control and has been closed since 1980. The level of repression at this point in the war against the democratic and progressive forces has touched every single family and every aspect of our lives.

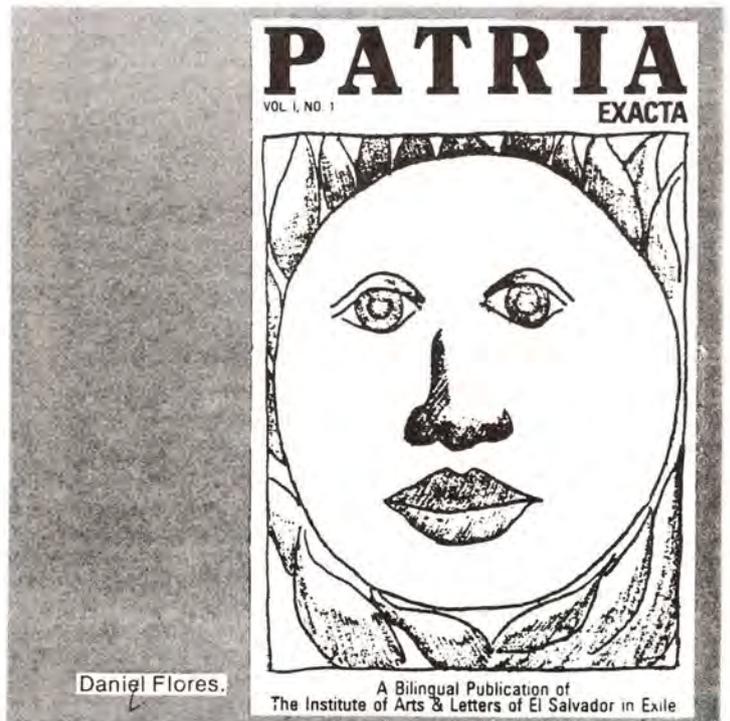
Consequently, artists and intellectuals who have not suffered direct confrontation with the repressive forces are subject to indirect psychological pressure through threats against family and friends. Poets, painters and

writers are condemned to leave the country or to die of stagnation or subjugation, frequently ending in death. Those who have directly confronted repression, prison and torture, and have survived, are either fighting with the *compañeros* or living in exile, working in isolation from other artists or outside their own profession.

These artists in exile are often firm supporters of the cause. They include those who left the country before the war to look for better technical or artistic contexts, as well as those arts students who in many cases had clear political views and identifications but found themselves outside of El Salvador when the war began in earnest. To return meant imprisonment or death. Yet many feel guilt and anger at having to miss the full political process. They feel they have betrayed the revolution. Others are disturbed and distracted about their commitment as partisans and their role as Salvadoran artists in exile. It is not an easy place to be.

Artists in general live a strong emotional life. In isolation and exile, this is dramatically exaggerated. Exiled artists confront problems that directly reflect the political, social and economic contexts in which they have lived and formed themselves. They are disappointed by events, confused as to their effective participation as committed artists, subject to the frictions of political sectarianism, deprived of their own artistic production, and suffering from the psychoses of repression. They are often victims of torture, as well as of censored emotions, afraid that any commitment on their part will lead to increased persecution of their families and friends at home. Abroad, the exiled artists are increasingly dependent on jobs totally foreign to their profession. They suffer from illegal immigration status in the U.S., indefinite refugee status in Europe. They are deprived of their own language and culture. Exiled artists are often afraid to organize, feel extraneous to their own and other communities. Harassment and fear often keep them from speaking openly of their experiences as Salvadoran artists, from confronting the public with their own material and testimonies.

Exiled artists desperately need recognition from intellectuals in their temporarily adopted countries. This is



the best assurance and hope artists and comrades can provide. Solidarity among artists is indispensable. In such times, the culture of a nation is no longer measured by the number of museums, galleries, poets or theaters it maintains. In this century, says the Costa Rican poet Joaquin Gutierrez:

The highest manifestation of culture that a nation has to offer is the active exercise of international solidarity. A nation that closes its ears to the cry of the immense majority of humanity is not a civilized nation. It is a blind and uncultivated nation which cannot understand that without solidarity with other nations, it will be walking into the abyss.

Armando Martinez, music coordinator of INALSE, is one of those Salvadoran artists in exile who has not been intimidated into silence. At the October Second Sunday forum, he told his story—"what it is like to be a Salvadoran artist"—with humor and clarity. It is a simple and terrifying story. As a young man he had a successful career, was in fact a star, playing government-approved Western rock and roll. As a popular hero he was permitted by the police to avoid curfews and had other privileges which gradually eroded as his music began to reject outside cultural influences and to reflect the life he had lived in poor, working class El Salvador. Culture led to politics, and the music then began to criticize the status quo. Martinez ended up jailed and unmercifully tortured.

Who says culture is powerless?

In an effort to recover the cultural heritage of the Salvadoran people, to make it ours, to develop it, the *Instituto de Arte y Letras de El Salvador en Exilio* (Institute for Arts and Letters of El Salvador in Exile) has been founded. We plan a cultural campaign and a series of exhibi-

ized how little I knew about its culture. In a poem written on her return from El Salvador in 1980, Carolyn Forché wrote:

Your problem is not your life as it is/in America, not that your hands, as you/tell me, are tied to do something. It is/that you were born to an island of greed/and grace where you have this sense/of yourself as apart from others. It is/not your right to feel powerless. Better/people than you were powerless./You have not returned to your country,/but to a life you never left.

That feeling of being apart from other peoples is reinforced by being an artist in the U.S., where the mere co-existence of art and politics is problematic and few recognize their common power to move people to emotion and action. Yet it's up to us, as artists, to keep alive the spirit of these embattled cultures no longer able to express themselves in their own lands to their own people. In the U.S. we tend to forget that the heart goes out of a people deprived of its culture, in places where freedom of expression is more openly stifled than it is here. We tend to forget that elsewhere artists are considered dangerous, that the cultural sphere is, in its way, as important as the economic and political spheres and suffers as much under repressive regimes.

I hope tonight is more than the opening of another show. I hope it's part of a process of opening minds, and of opening hearts to the kind of cultural solidarity that was beginning, perhaps too late, in Chile a decade ago. Independent image-making can expand the campaign against U.S. intervention in Central America, reported so miserably in the mass media. As artworkers you can invent complex, subtle, and passionate new symbols of opposition. Our solidarity with Central American artists in struggle is as



¡Luchar! opening at Taller Latinoamericano, June 18, 1982 (photo: John Curtis).

tions of and for Salvadoran culture, to help the Salvadoran artists living outside our country, and to broaden the understanding of our history as people and as a nation. Suggestions and contributions can be sent to: INALSE, 249 West 18th St., New York City 10011.

—D.F.A., Director General, INALSE.

¡Luchar!

Like most of us here, I'd been out in the streets supporting the FMLN in El Salvador for over a year before I real-

crucial on one level as is our solidarity with the FMLN and the FDR on the other. What is beginning here is important not only to Latin artists but to the rest of us, to our own sense of ourselves as socially responsible intellectuals. I find it immensely moving that Salvadoran artists in exile are building an art for the future, preparing a voice and an image for the dreams of a continent, a vision for the revolution when it comes. Here's to a dangerous culture. *Hasta la Victoria Siempre!* —Lucy R. Lippard, excerpts from talk at opening of "¡Luchar!" *Upront*, February 1983

The Politics of Street Painting

What does graffiti become when it moves out of the barrios and into a world of fashion? When it is sold, commissioned, consumed, featured in art magazines, even taken to Documenta? Do you make graffiti the way you would art?

The dominant culture sees graffiti on a wall or a train as an anti-social act. It is an act of possession, theft really, a symbolic reclaiming of turf, because the place marked wall or car, moving or still, does not belong to the person writing on it. To the passerby, it is an assault, a challenge, an assertion of the other, of personality, existence, identity.

In the ghettos of the poor and oppressed, among the residents of the internal colonies, though unorganized, graffiti becomes an assertion of cultural identity, of the I against the system. But what does it become when it moves out of the barrios and into a world of fashion? When it is sold, commissioned, consumed, featured in the arts magazines, taken to Documenta? It is interesting that you don't do graffiti, you make a graffiti just as you make art and those who make enough of it become artists in their own right.

But what about the community murals which also exist in poor neighborhoods? Where do they fit into this picture? Some murals, like the early protest walls were painted on sites that were taken, without consulting the owners or the neighbors. Some muralists have included graffiti names in their work, respecting rather than covering up the statements of the other brothers in the barrio. Some murals are designed and painted by ex-graffiti writers like Alternative Graffiti Workshop graduate, Carleton Baxter who became an abstract painter. Most are painted by kids who also write but want the chance to learn more about art. But community murals, like the big Cityarts Workshop walls in the Lower East Side are not attack art. They are planned in consultation with community residents and painted with the permission and support of the people in the neighborhood and that's why we are not going to talk about them in this context.

As graffiti writers become artists, artists take to the streets. What does graffiti become when it is done by art school graduates, sneaking around Soho after dark, brush, chalk, spraycan, or marker in hand, scarring the city with their tags?

Even when it is frothy and light, as mild and inoffensive as cotton candy, (and Alex Vallauri's images could hardly be less offensive) it is still an intrusion into public space. Vallauri's images: the telephone,

guitar, alligators and birds, witches for Halloween and turkeys for Thanksgiving try to be witty and charming, asking only to make you smile. Yet they are still where nobody asked for them, invading or beautifying the public space—it depends on your point of view.

On a greeting card, perhaps you wouldn't notice at all. But on the sidewalk, on someone else's wall, you are puzzled, perhaps intrigued. Perhaps for a moment you were amused and your day was brightened. That's all that Brazilian artist Alec Vallauri intends with his street stencils, nothing heavy. No more consciously political than the graffiti writer's tag. In Brazil, when the heavy repression under the military dictatorship eased up a few years ago, political slogans reappeared on the walls. But students also put other messages, poems, pictures—and that's when Vallauri started to put his greetings on the walls.

A number of street artists have wanted to do big works in addition to little stencils. Vallauri put all his stencils together to beautify the bandstand at Tomkins Square Park for his neighbors many of whom are more concerned with gentrification as they wrote on the bottom. Keith Haring, known for his chalk drawings in the subways, also wanted to try out a larger format in a fluorescent paint mural on a freestanding wall on Houston St. Since the wall was not attached to anything, he figured he could use it. Some people like it and some hate it. The ones that don't like it throw dark paint, not white, as was done to deface the early black power walls.

It may not be relevant, but the street-painters with whom we talked (except for the anti-nuclear stencil group which is a collective) are young, white male and ambitious. And their street art is an integral part of their artistic expression whether in or out of the gallery. Two of them, Haring and Hambleton have achieved a kind of art world stardom through their street work. Most have been working on the streets for from two to five years.

Like other young East Village artists, Haring was consumed by the question of "why was he making all these things if no one was going to see them?" One day when he saw the black panels in the subway, he thought of the thousands who would pass

by every day. He bought some chalk and began to draw. The early drawings were of humans and animals. Often the drawings commented visually on the ads next to them. As he worked social elements came into his drawings: TV sets, nuclear reactors, UFO's—a symbol for destroying systems.

Haring doesn't consider this work political. He has progressive ideas, he told us, but he doesn't use political images in his work. "I may raise possibilities," he says, "but I don't give answers." The "label" political artist was seen as something threatening even by those whose work we considered political. "I didn't want to present my ideas like an ultimatum," Haring went on, "and have my work be dismissed as just slogans or propaganda." The drawings are not a vehicle to convey information, he told us, not a way to persuade, but an expression of his individual personality.

Only a little disturbing, a pinprick of puzzlement but not fear. Something nice to find in the dreary underground world of the subway, with hints of those progressive ideas, set out like puzzles.

"Is it political?" we asked Richard Hambleton whose black figures are the latest in a series of street pieces he has been doing since 1975. "It is political but that's secondary," he said. "There are political implications, but they are not my intention. I don't want to be known as a political artists," he continued.

When Hambleton works on the street he tries to work with the city rather than on it. The street stuff is incomplete—unlike gallery painting which he also does—because the city, the parking lots and doorways are part of the painting. The black figures are called night life, because they come alive at night. You may think of them as muggers at first, he told me, but then, after a while they become like security guards there in the shadows. If a mugger sees them lurking there, watching him, he'll turn away and leave you alone, according to Hambleton.

Another street artists, David Wojnarowicz addresses himself to the human condition. Nervousness about what is happening around him is his prime motivation yet he despairs of a solution because the power structure of society seems inalterable to him. However, Wojnarowicz says that he does want to make people face the realities around them and stencils images of burning houses, war figures, and the violence of society. Small and purposely located in places where people will be surprised to see them, the soldiers are meant to convey a sense of the possibility of war, of what it could be like if soldiers patrolled us here as they do in repressive dictatorships.

The work of the anti-nuclear stencil brigade is directly political and issue-oriented. Begun in February 1982 by Eva Cockcroft, Jon Friedman and Camille Perrottet, its aim was to mobilize support for

the Freeze movement and the June 12th rally and march. The idea was to create a series of 2 x 2 foot stencils with images of life like the dove, fish, a mother and child; and death, Reagan, the bomb, a skull, that could be used together as a kind of mural or separately as warning signs.

In a weekly open workshop, artists designed the images, cut the stencils, and then went out to apply them. Eventually about 15 people, a majority of them women, were involved in the stencil brigade. The images were stenciled on sidewalks, walks, entrances to subways, mostly in the East Village, Soho, and Tribeca, but also on Wall Street, the Upper West Side and Midtown.

One of the first artists to use the stencil medium, John Fekner has been stencilling significant words outside since 1977. Creator of more than 400 stencils, Fekner is not graffiti oriented, but concerned with linking specific sites with issues. He often collaborates with community people, and worked with the Peoples Convention in 1979 stenciling the words Decay and Abandonment on buildings at that South Bronx site.

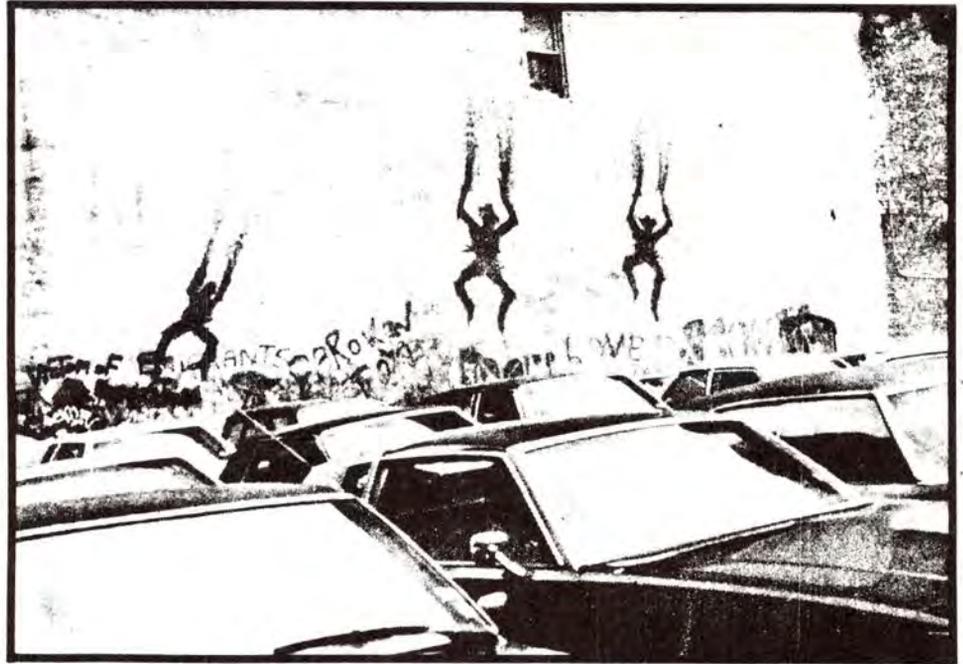
Fekner tries to crystallize his concerns—American Indians, TV and advertising, decay and abandonment, and toxic chemicals into clear and concise statements that use the site to make their point. Though he considers himself environmental rather than political, Fekner brings together elements from the art, community, and street worlds.

One of the things that happens on the street is a certain kind of conversation between street artists through their images. For example, on the corner of Lafayette and Prince Streets one artist painted a room. Vallauri added some crocodiles walking along the edge of the carpet, someone else gave them parachutes. Sometimes, however, conversation becomes destruction.

This happened with Hambleton's black figures. They are a strong image and some people responded with anger. As they began appearing between January and June, some people thought they had to do with nuclear holocaust and that connection would become clear before June 12th. But, just before that time, an article about Hambleton appeared in the Village Voice that denied any such connection. These people, who had been watching for the Holocaust connection to be cleared up, looked again. This time they saw the figures as racist, as the archtypical Black mugger, stereotype of a thousand racist fantasies and white nightmares. They decided to destroy them and in a concerted campaign added antennae and funny faces to make them ridiculous.

On the street, no matter what the artist's intentions, the image is what people perceive it as. There are no mediators, no critics, no guards, and criticism can be direct and brutal. Intentional or not, everything put in the public space out on the city streets makes a political statement whether it is decorating the status quo or attempting to change society. In this article we have tried to clarify what certain street artists think they are doing. It is up to you to decide what they have done.

By Eva Cockcroft and Miriam Brofsky
Art & Artists, Vol. 12, No. 3, Feb. 1983



Richard Hambleton,
 Dark Figures



London 1979, from *Spray It Loud*, Jill Posener (see review, page 7)

A Billboard Without Graffiti Is Something Quite Outrageous

Three people who shared this view were sufficiently motivated to actively combat the proliferation of billboards and came together in October 1979 to discuss the possibilities of a more united effort, thus B.U.G.A. U.P. was formed.

Basically B.U.G.A. U.P. arose from the need for mutual support and collaboration amongst billboard graffitists. There was no conscious decision along any political line, just the recognition of a common aim; to combat the inhuman corporations who manufacture tobacco, alcohol, fast foods, soft(?) drinks, etc, their sole aim being to profit from the sale of those unhealthy and wasteful products. It also meant that if one of us was apprehended there would always be someone from the group able to bail the other out. The number grew to the point where there was at least seven activists in the Sydney metropolitan area. There are other people active besides us, and there's been an increase in billboard graffiti unconnected with B.U.G.A. U.P. in the early months of 1980, with graffiti appearing in Wyong, Newcastle, Brisbane and Melbourne. The well publicised case in Melbourne recently in which a doctor was charged for graffitiing on a tobacco billboard points to the increasing acceptance of this type of action by the community.

From that time then, we started 'signing' the billboards we graffitied with 'B.U.G.A. U.P.', which remained cryptic until we 'seized' our first blank billboard on Parramatta Road near Sydney University on Christmas eve. We used ladders to paint across the whole billboard: B.U.G.A. U.P.—BILLBOARD-UTILISING GRAFFITISTS AGAINST UNHEALTHY PROMOTIONS, you can support us. From that time people became aware of a group and the 'signature' on each billboard has become more meaningful. Also due to the co-operation (and the feedback we've received) the type of graffiti we write has changed...we all effect each other.

What we are trying to do with our graffiti is to expose the devices the advertisers are using to exploit us—demystifying their process. The advertisements use two main ways to promote their products, sexuality (both male and female) and insecurity. They do that by setting up a situation (visually and verbally) where the viewer is made to feel somehow insecure or inadequate, and then imply that by consuming the product they

The creative conversion of billboard advertising to oppositional messages has become an international sport. One of the most extensive and creative billboard graffiti groups is in Australia—a continent where the street mural and graffiti movements have a strong and active base. This account of the work and aims of B.U.G.A.U.P. drawn from taped conversation and interviews with members of the group was carried back from Australia by a recent visitor. Although it was impossible to identify the author or place of publication in Australia we thought it was of sufficient interest to reproduce it anyway.

can be saved from the terrible situation in which they find themselves. The billboards say 'all you've got to do is buy this product and you'll enter this terrific fantasy'. The product can no longer exist without the fantasy.

Many of the messages we write are determined by the billboard itself; the space available, the wording and how they lend themselves to addition and alteration; most easily seen in the Claridge escort and Dunhill billboards reproduced in the catalogue. This does raise the question of whether graffiti just makes people notice advertisements that they would not normally, but the very danger of billboards is that people don't consciously acknowledge them. The danger here is twofold; firstly it means that these ads work virtually subliminally which is really bad news, and secondly it means the

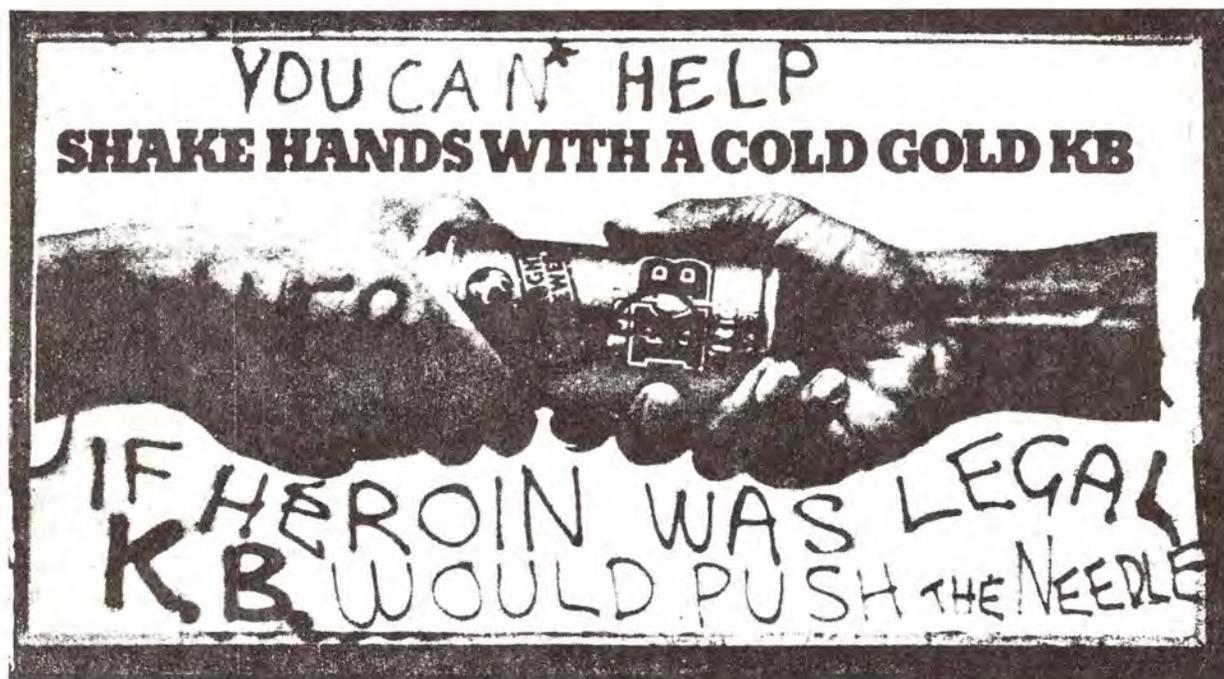


Photo by B.U.G.A.U.P.

advertisers can push whatever they like and no-one is going to challenge their 'legal' right to impose as much visual pollution on us as they want to.

We think graffiti's function here is vital—firstly it makes people consciously aware of the ad, secondly the graffiti makes obvious, usually in a humorous way, the latent undertones of the advertisement itself. This is most obvious in the 'masturbation fantasy' of the kb beer ads. It's all there in the image of the ad—their can of chemical shit has inserted itself between the two hands. The last vestige of unobstructed human contact, especially between men, has been done away with—now, uninhibited male contact is only possible via the medium of beer, in this case by consuming a maximum amount of cans of kb—drinking with the boys not only at the pub, but everywhere.

Another important thing to realise is that most of the billboards are on Public Transport Commission property, ie on government property. We've got the situation where the Commonwealth and State governments are encouraging the promotion of products they themselves recognize as being unhealthy. This absurd contradiction is most apparent on the trains. Smoking is banned on trains, so that 70% of passengers don't have to share the kamikaze instincts of the smokers and yet these trains roll past tobacco billboards, macho-alcohol billboards, macdonald billboards, coca cola billboards, and all the other unhealthy promotions we are opposing—it's completely crazy.

As one activist points out:

They promote a drug that's killing 40 people in Australia each day and the law protects them. I write on their ad how many people are dying from tobacco-related diseases and I get charged with malicious injury (to a billboard!) Anyway the law used its power to try and hurt me with a fine and compensation, which they probably imagined would be a deterrent. I merely cut out the fines by going to gaol for a few days.'

We do however believe in minimising the risk of apprehension; to avoid not only the loss of 'time and money' but also the hassles of the legal system.

Each activist has their own particular method of doing the job; some are quite spontaneous, while others usually plan what they are going to write and which billboards they're going to reface in a given time. When on the job, a phantom painter usually carries three spray cans; black, red and chrome. Additional colours are used when necessary. It doesn't take long to be able to write quickly whilst avoiding spelling errors, the embarrassment of any graffitist. Ladders are used if an appropriate vehicle is available, and sometimes it's possible to climb up the back of the billboard structure and work from the

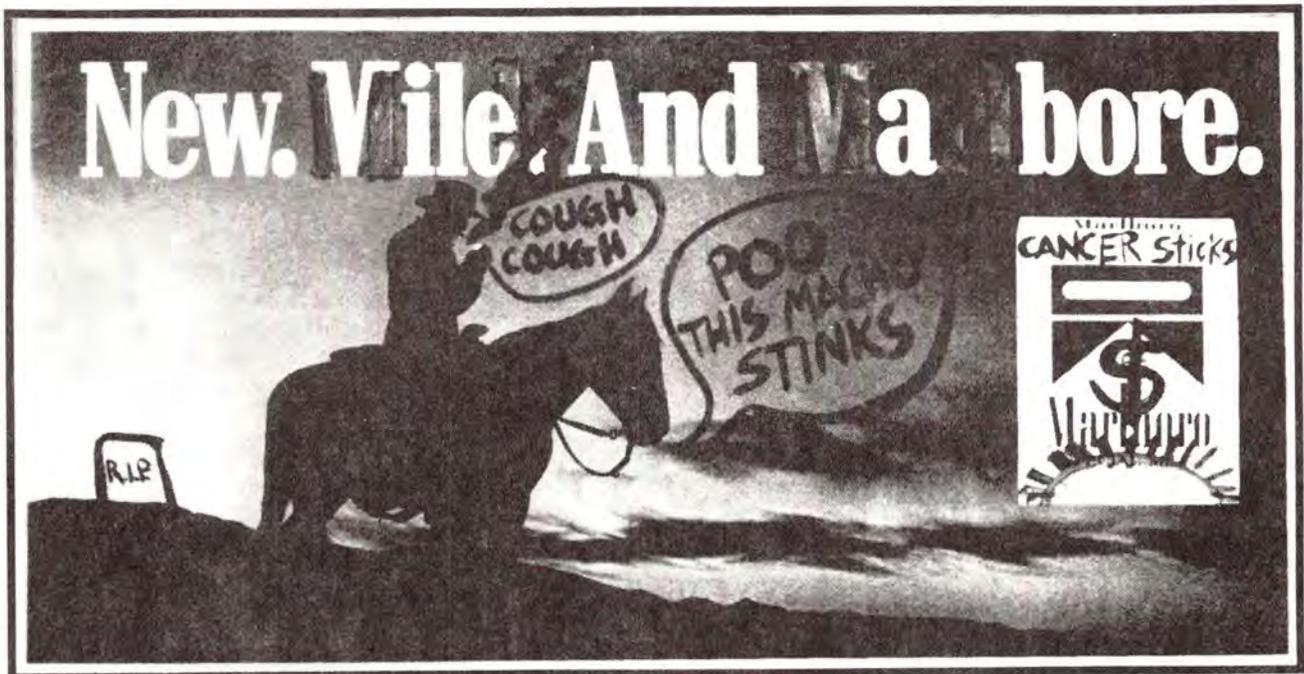
top; upside-down writing with a spray can is an experience that has few comparisons. 3 to 10 billboards can be done with each spray can (250 g being the best size) and 20 or so can be done in an outing for reasonable expense. Billboards altered in the city have a life span of between one day and six weeks. Those on PTC property seem to stay for three to four weeks, while those in the country tend to stay there for months.

The people who've been involved in the campaign have been teachers, printers, artists, students, truck drivers and health workers and have varied in age from 15 to 55. It has hardly been a homogeneous group due both to their differing backgrounds and motivations. The prime reasons for painting on billboards include repulsion of tobacco smoking and promotion, direct political action against corporate 'legal' drug-pushers, and concern for our visual environment. But a united homogenous group was never the aim, and the differences of opinion have been potentially divisive but ultimately fruitful. We all agree at least on the necessity to graffiti on the very advertisements that assault us daily and threaten a sane and healthy future.

'It seems natural to use this system against itself.'

By Kenneth Friedman

Art & Artists, Vol. 12, No. 3, Feb. 1983



Australia Photo/B.U.G.A.U.P.

The Pullman Project

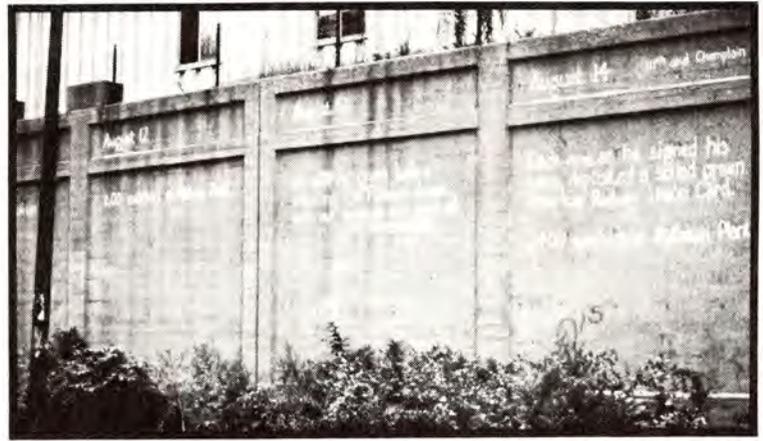
Our *Pullman Project* originated in our interest in the history of the town within Chicago in which we live. The project (May through August 1981), which records the events of the 1894 Pullman strike, also presents the persona of George Pullman as capitalist/philanthropist/Horatio Alger. We attempted to explore the mental contradictions which support a system of grossly apparent economic injustice in which the possibility of an individual "making it" is valued even by those who are then necessarily oppressed.

The *Pullman Project* took the form of chalked writings and drawings in various locations throughout Pullman. The panels of an 18'-high retaining wall along the train tracks were used to record the events and quotations on dates corresponding to the strike. Chalked drawings and stenciled spray paintings in the streets, squares, and parks recreated scenes of striking workers and the occupying army. We carried an elaborate set of plans with us at all times and used them when explaining what we were doing to community members and police.

The transitory nature of the *Pullman Project* was fundamental to its structure. The sense of duration of the strike, of events and the forgetting of events was paralleled by the fading words and images. (Only a few images are still visible one year later — the boycott figures and the workers returning after the strike was broken.)

Questions or clarifications can be handled by:

Jon Pounds
Olivia Gude
11221 Champlain
Chicago, IL 60628
312-568-4480



August 12-14: *The Strike Defeated*



August 15: *Defeated Strikers*

The Shadow Project

For one hundred and fifty volunteer workers, the predawn hours of August 6th were a time of intense, calculated, dream-like, joyful and passionate activity. As participants in The Shadow Project, they were transforming the urban landscape at six sites in Manhattan, locations designated as imagined centers of nuclear detonation. Working quickly at Wall Street, Grand Central Terminal, Fifth Avenue at the Plaza, Lincoln Center, Cathedral of St. John the Divine and at Columbia University, the group was busy painting fullsize human "shadows" in the streets, recreating the appearance of ground zero in Hiroshima where, thirty-seven years earlier, innocent victims of that holocaust were literally vaporized, leaving only their poignant shadows permanently etched on the streets and steps of the destroyed city.

Like many Americans, I have known the stark facts about Hiroshima for a long time — a twelve and a half kiloton new uranium bomb leveled the city, over 300,000 civilians

and 40,000 soldiers experienced the bomb first-hand; approximately 120,000 civilians and 20,000 soldiers died within the first weeks; over ninety per cent of the 76,000 buildings were destroyed. Great amounts of heat and radiation were released and a hurricane force wind was created which fanned the fires below. With one small bomb—puny by today's standards—the whole city was reduced to ashes.

In past years I noted the anniversary of that act, reflected briefly on the horror of it all, and then went on about the business of my life. This year my remembrance took a somewhat different form; a series of personal events occurred which in turn led me to organize a public work commemorating the Hiroshima bombing. The result was visible on the streets of Manhattan the morning of August 6th.

The process that led to this commemoration began last winter on the campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz, where I was teaching. In February, three

Japanese monks, who have been walking the world praying for peace ever since atomic bombs were first dropped, passed through the city of Santa Cruz. My wife and I were invited to greet them. The monks appeared over the crest of a hill, the broad Pacific behind them, walking in time to dull, arhythmic beating on simple drums. When we saw them they were on their way to Portland, Oregon, from where they would walk east to join others of their order in New York for the United Nations Conference on Disarmament.

That day I talked with a young American who was walking with the monks. We talked about the need to redefine the function of art in a nuclear age. I argued that art should once again be viewed as an offering rather than what it has become in our commercial culture, a commodity. Several weeks later he returned to the campus in order that he might give me a modest book, *Days to Remember*.

The book is an illustrated account of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One photograph in the book transfixed me. It shows an imprint of a human form etched on the stone steps of the Sumitomo Bank 250 meters from the hypocenter of the detonation. This person, and others like him who happened by chance to be near ground-zero, was literally vaporized, leaving only a shadow-like image on the ground.

That afternoon I began to formulate what turned out to be The Shadow Project. Looking at the photograph of the human shadow, I understood that if art had any function at all, it is to nourish the collective imagination.

Together with a few artist friends, I conceived a plan to commemorate the bombing of Hiroshima. We wanted to allow our fellow citizens a vision which, had a nuclear bomb been detonated over New York, would be witnessed by no one. Our plan was to place painted echoes of full-size shadows in the streets to allow all who viewed them to identify personally with the victims of atomic war.

The Shadow Project, if it were to take place at the appropriate scale (life-size rather than art-size) would require a community of artists and other volunteers, working in a collaborative, carefully orchestrated manner. Encouraged by Bill Hochhausen, a sculptor and friend, I went to the Pratt Institute in April, where in one hectic day, I outlined what I hoped to do. By the time the visit was over, more than one hundred students, responding to my impassioned scenario, signed up.

The Shadow Project was originally planned to coincide with the June 12 Rally. Because of funding problems the project was rescheduled for August 6th. As President of Friends of the Earth Foundation I had earlier received Board approval for a restricted grant account into which contributions for various art/anti-nuclear projects could be placed; we did not have to wait out IRS approval as a new organization.

Bill and I divided up the work, collaborating on the basic policy decisions. He took responsibility for the logistics, largely arranging for the acquisition of vinyl for the shadows and for the paint and supplies which would be required for the project's implementation. I took on the jobs of fund-raising, preparing a recruitment mailer, planning publicity and overseeing the design of a poster. Thanks to Friends of the Earth, we were given a New York office and the invaluable services of Susan Payne, a summer intern from Colorado.

Our mailing list of potential workers was compiled from FOE members in the New York region, from the Foundation for the Community of Artists, the Pratt students who had earlier signed up, from my summer class at The Studio School and from artists and friends in the area. Knowing that August was a time when many people would

be out of town, we assumed that several thousand possible volunteers would have to be solicited in order to get a hundred or more who would work.

Bill and I experimented with several methods of preparing and laying down shadows, guided always by our desire to replicate the appearance of the Hiroshima victims.

We decided on tracing the shadows of human or animal forms and then cut out the shape. This shadow would be placed flat on the street, a little paint would be poured on the shadow and then, with a brush or roller, the paint would be brushed out on to the street about four or five inches. The stencil would then be lifted up, leaving a halo or umbra of a human form looking eerily like the Hiroshima shadows.

Our original plan was to provide each three-person team with a pre-cut shadow. Very quickly, the volunteers let us know that they preferred to cut shadows of their own using their husbands, wives, lovers, children, friends and pets as subjects.

Fifty gallons of a specially manufactured latex-base grey paint was ordered. We decanted the paint into one quart plastic-lidded containers in order not to physically burden the volunteers. Resupplies of paint were available at each location from mobile vans and cars.

From the beginning we accepted the fact that our activity was, at best, quasi-legal, and more likely, illegal. Checking informally it was clear that it would be unwise to seek formal approval for the Project from the City. If we were to ask the police department for a permit and, having been turned down, then went out on to the streets and did it anyway, we would be flagrantly violating the law. As a result, no permission was sought; no permission was granted.

Lawyers for the War Resisters League and the National Guild of Lawyers outlined a variety of possible scenarios some of which indicated that arrests and fines might occur. They underscored their belief that any specific outcome depended on the dynamics of an individual policeman interacting with an individual shadow painter. One attorney offered to be available on call throughout the night if the unexpected occurred. We set up a hotline in the FOE office, manned from midnight to 6 a.m. by a person whom people could telephone to report on actions, find out where they might go next and to be reassured by a friendly, calm voice.

At two meetings prior to the night's work, we briefed volunteers on how to behave (do not run if summoned by police, among other things) and what the real risks of arrest were. Lawyers were present and questions were answered. We did not play down the possibility of arrest. In the end, seven persons were arrested and immediately released pending hearings.

Zachary Winestine, a young film maker, geared up to produce a fifteen minute, black

and white documentary. I have seen his rough, un-edited footage and it is filled with images which evoke German gothic films of the twenties. He returned to Wall Street the "morning after" and interviewed passersby for their reactions, documenting their compelling mix of concern, skepticism, puzzlement and passion.

It is difficult to convey what it felt like to be out on the streets of New York during the middle of the night, painting those shadows. The night air was sensuous; we had a real sense of working on an island as sea breezes wafted everywhere. I have never felt quite so safe on the streets of the city. Indeed, others reported feeling as I did, that the city belonged to us. We experienced a rising wave of emotion, finding image after image in place after place. As a group we had succeeded in laying down over two thousand shadows. Though the message was serious, the act of making the shadows was like play.

The Shadow Project may be done but it certainly is not over. As a working artist, I know that I am, in ways not yet fully understood, altered by what happened. The volunteers, touchingly, wish to constitute themselves as a continuing community, not out of sentiment but out of a recognition that there are new deeds to be accomplished.

Recently I was walking through the new galleries of primitive art at the Metropolitan Museum. In a letter on display in the museum, Michael Rockefeller talked about the advantages Asmat artists had in working with a shared language of forms. Each artist of that tribe was able to use his or her skills to the fullest, knowing that the language was understood by all. In our culture, Rockefeller noted, artists have no such advantage. Only the greatest of artists can create works which are generally understood. Among the Asmat, each event in life—death, feasts, birthing—is given meaning by artists. As long as the culture exists, he concludes, there will be a function and a need for art.

In our time and our place, artists have sought meaning not by placing art at the center of human and community life, but rather, by a lonely search for self. If the language of forms was more broadly shared, artists could more easily see their art as an offering to the culture. What The Shadow Project accomplished, I believe, was to take an event—the possibility of nuclear holocaust—and to discover a language of form accessible to all. Each participant was free to use his or her skills to the fullest and to work as part of a community within a framework of shared understandings. For one brief morning, art in New York functioned as it does among the so-called primitive peoples of the world.

By Alan Gussow

Art & Artists, Vol. 12, No. 3, Feb. 1983



Dead End

Last winter, I attended a large meeting of Artists for Nuclear Disarmament, a group of artists who were/are concerned with the nuclear buildup in the world — people willing to donate some time and energy to produce work related to this issue — seeing the work as an educational tool, to make the public aware of the danger we all face.

I volunteered to coordinate/direct the mural activities and formed a group of about 15 artists/muralists. We met every weekend for more than two months, preparing mock-ups for two murals (to be hung on June 12th), doing sketches, planning concepts, trying to determine what sort of reaction we wanted from viewers: did we want to create images of hope or images of doom? To shock or to sooth? It was interesting that 99% of the sketches were expressions of our fears rather than a more positive outlook.

During this planning stage, I saw a gripping movie done by Physicians for Social Responsibility and got the idea for one of the murals we painted: *Dead End*. A doctor described conditions after a nuclear blast in San Francisco, the vermin, bodies with no health provisions, etc., and I saw the visual concept in a flash (as we artists are prone to do at times!). A few nights later Leslie Bender and I worked out the concept visually: a low horizon, black sky, with the bomb in center, yellow, with red modulations around the glow, underneath, red from the heat of the blast, and in the foreground, corpses. The bodies were drawn rather simply, giving each artist an opportunity to interpret the forms for himself/herself.

At our next meeting I showed this mock-up to the crew and everyone was moved by the visual concept. We decided to call it *Dead End* and use it as one of the murals for June 12th. The other mural would be a total collaboration — the whole group, each person contributing forms and symbols.

At about this time, I got a call from Marlene Park, who is an Art Historian at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. She asked if our group could paint a mural for a teach-in at the college in May. The teach-in would last two

days and nights. We would work with students and teachers to paint the mural. I showed Marlene (by the way, Marlene Park wrote "The New Deal for Art", the WPA book on murals and paintings, etc.) the mock-up for *Dead End* and she wanted us to paint it at John Jay.

The John Jay mural was a great experience — students were moved by the subject matter and felt like they were making a statement by working on it. The president of the college liked the mural so much that he wanted to hang it permanently in the cafeteria! In addition, some of the artists in the group are studio painters and it was very exciting for them to work on a mural — a new experience.

After John Jay, we devoted our weekends to the completion of another *Dead End* (copy of the original), and the collaborative mural (the size of the three murals we painted was 8' x 16'). The night before the march, we hung the murals — on the 42nd Street overpass, near the United Nations; the marchers walked beneath them.

My crew consisted of people ranging in age from 25 to 70, mostly people of the 60's generation and people of the 30's, which was interesting. We developed a true community of concern and it was, for everyone, a powerful experience, one we won't easily forget.

Here are names of my crew for your reference, and we also were very grateful to CityArts Workshop for donating the space on the weekends: Cindy Luvaas, Leslie Bender, Rosaire Appel, Roni Nicholson, Lynn Rosenfeld, Joe Stephenson, Eddie Alicea, Charles Keller, Deirdre Leber, Eva Cockcroft, Muriel Block, Ethel Farkas, Amy Fisch, Pat O'Malley, Richard Meyer and Pud Houstoun.

P.S. *Dead End* (the duplicate) was stolen from its hanging place at about 2:00 p.m. on June 12th. I hope whoever has it is using it for a good purpose!

Cindy Luvaas

A Personal Response

TO SOME OF THE TWELVE POINTS POSITED WITH RESPECT TO CHICANO NATIONALISM

The determination of whether Chicanos are a national minority or whether they constitute a nation would appear to hinge on current perceptions of both a past and a present reality; that is, acknowledgement and appreciation of ancient history, colored somewhat by legend, weighed against what we witness today.

Aztlán, the 12th century homeland of the Aztecs, was abandoned by them, but not forgotten, "somewhere in the north". They had migrated south to Anáhuac, "the place by the waters" where they built their great city known today as México. "Somewhere in the north" would, therefore, refer to an area within the borders of the present-day U.S., probably somewhere in that region's southwest. However, until 1848, what are now the southwestern states of Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas, belonged to Mexico. Their seizure during Mexico's war with the U.S. marked the second time this land was colonized, the first colonizers, of course, having been the Spaniards. Aztlán became once again "Occupied Aztlán", to borrow Rudy Acuña's evocative phrase. Aztlán is thus viewed as an expropriated nation within a nation, a *Mestizo* nation (nation fused of two cultures) with a Mexican heritage onto which was grafted an alien culture and new geographic boundaries. The Chicano is the product of this *mestizaje* (mixture) of the two cultures. But, at one and the same time, the Chicana or Chicano is in cultural limbo by virtue of that fact. By invoking the concept of the "nation of Aztlán", Chicanos assert their nationalist feelings for their birthright, Mexico. Their ideological identity is with Mexico and things Mexican. However, their current day-to-day identity is more immediately and persistently shaped by a U.S. system of values which can and does erode bonds of solidarity among Chicanos, so much so that growing numbers disavow the generic term by which they're known. Still fewer Chicanos retain or learn Spanish. Some would even prefer to be called Hispanic, deluding themselves about what Ortega y Gasset would call their "lived reality" or actual experience, while at the same time unconsciously subjecting themselves to an old tyrant. It follows, perhaps, that those Chicanos who would consistently assert their proud identity as *mestizos* (bi-cultural individuals) are a minority within a minority. It is now possible to draw two tenable conclusions: (1) that a nationalist Chicano minority within a greater minority constitutes a nation, albeit in largely ideological terms; and/or (2) the greater Chicano population of the U.S. constitutes a national minority which is by no means homogeneous in composition nor wholly assimilationist in attitude or inclination.

Secession by nationalist Chicanos seems unlikely at this point in time because of their number and relatively modest political sway. The unlikelihood of this prospect takes on added meaning if one considers recent failed attempts by French

Canadian nationalists to have the province of Québec secede from the rest of Canada. In that case the nationalists were not part of a minority constituency, but rather, part of the majority, and beyond that, they wielded considerable political influence.

An alternative to secession was Reies Tijerina's bold plan of the late 1960s. Addressing fellow Chicanos, he admonished them to recover what was theirs by "law":

They took your land and gave you powdered milk,
took your grazing and gave you Smoky the Bear,
took your language and gave you lies in theirs.
There are 1,715 land grants in the United States,
and we will get them back!

It is indeed fortunate for us that the various forms of Chicano cultural expression, from poetry and theatre to murals and film, have afforded Chicano nationalists eloquent vehicles for their *gritos* (cries) and their *flor y canto* (flower and song). Few writings document this happy circumstance more effectively than the catalog for "Dále Gas . . ." ("Give it Gas . . ."), an exhibition of Tejano or Chicano art of Texas, mounted in 1977. Organized by artist Santos Martínez, the opening page of the publication offers an exhortation for Chicano nationalists or would-be converts to nationalism:

CHICANO — A MEXICAN-AMERICAN
INVOLVED IN A SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUGGLE
TO CREATE A RELEVANT, CONTEMPORARY AND
REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS AS A
MEANS OF ACCELERATING SOCIAL CHANGE
AND ACTUALIZING AN AUTONOMOUS
CULTURAL REALITY AMONG OTHER
AMERICANS OF MEXICAN DESCENT.
TO CALL ONESELF CHICANO IS AN
OVERT POLITICAL ACT.

It may well be argued that many Chicano murals, poems, films and the like are "autonomous cultural realities" and "overt political acts" in and of themselves. But, more often than not, these cultural products have played a limited role if measured by their ability to trigger or mobilize a group into collective nationalist action. When a political activist and a cultural worker are one and the same person, we indeed have a propitious circumstance. But, and I truly believe this, until the *pueblo* (people) of its own free will comes to the artist seeking the latter out as a leader in its nationalist struggle, the artist remains somewhere on the periphery of nationalist activity. It is not enough for the artist to win the confidence of the people. The *pueblo* must embrace the artist very much in the manner of a Chile embracing her nationalist poet, the late Pablo Neruda, a tribute so movingly captured in photographs by the exiled Chilean photographer, Marcelo Montecino.

Victor Sorell
National Endowment for the Humanities



The Broadway Mural, John Valadez, partial view, 1981, Los Angeles. Photo: Alan Barnett

UNITED STATES

EAST/NORTH

Attempting "Art by the People for the People":

WASHINGTON D.C.'S UNITY MURAL

Reminiscing during the 1960s about Mexican mural painting of the 20s, Jean Charlot, French-born Mexican muralist and essayist, wrote that "art by the people for the people came to be the underlying motto of the painters who sat on scaffolds." Clearly, their maxim assigned to the mural a social and political significance and mission. It is, furthermore, a motto which has had a resonant effect on many contemporary U.S. community muralists. Ligia Becker and "Big" Al Carter are two such muralists under whose guidance 11 young "initiate" mural painters executed the "Unity Mural". Located at Ontario Alley on a wall of the Champlain PEPCO (Potomac Electric Power Company) Substation, across from the Marie H. Reed Community Learning Center in the Adams-Morgan community of Washington, D.C., the collaborative team project began June 21st, was completed on August 3rd, and inaugurated on August 5th, 1982. The completion of the painting was indeed expeditious, but not so its conception.

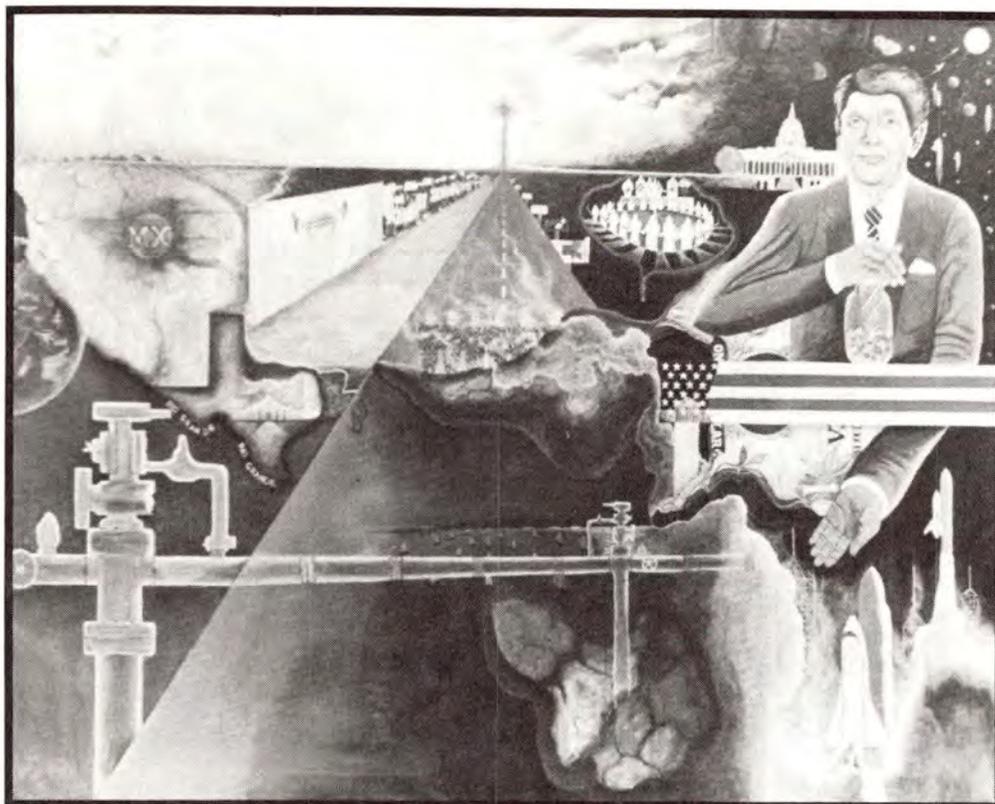
Attempts to make "people's art" in the U.S. tend not to be acts of spontaneity but, rather, carefully orchestrated and long-term efforts. In this instance, we must go back in time 11 years to find out when the idea first surfaced for what was to become the "Unity Mural". According to documents in the possession of Edwin B. Lawless, current Manager of Civil Engineering for PEPCO, the firm of Fry and Welch Associates,

Architects and Planners (contracted to the District of Columbia) noted in a memorandum of 1971 that a wall which they had exposed in the course of demolition should be considered a good site for a community "super graphic". The architects were then engaged in the process of replacing Morgan Elementary School with the M.H. Reed Community Learning Center. Their interest in accommodating a mural would appear to stem largely from a D.C. building code law which stipulates that treatment for surface leakage is called for when the exterior wall of a structure is newly exposed. The addition of a mural would clearly make the maintenance all the more worthwhile. Beyond this apparently human and aesthetic justification for reparations to the wall, it is also likely in Lawless' opinion that nearby Afro-American street murals from the late 60s also inspired the architects. This last point cannot be over emphasized, since it is only too well known that architects as a generic group, some notable exceptions notwithstanding, are reluctant to invite the efforts of the mural artist, since they so often perceive such painting as a violation of the integrity of their built environment.

Victor Sorell



Photo: V. Sorell



Survival of the 80s

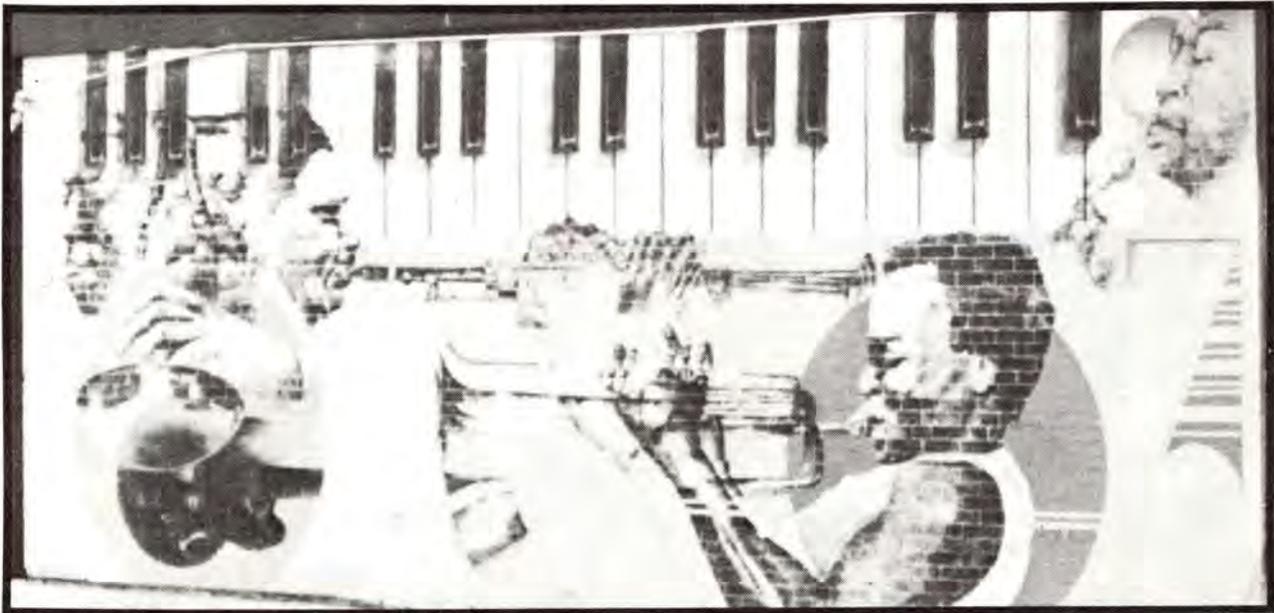
As strange as it may be sometimes, life may also seem sometimes to be blurry. It is because a lot of us don't have a clear vision of what's really happening in our environment until it affects us personally.

Unemployment (at its highest), volcanic eruptions, the MX missile arms build-up, nuclear power plants, racial protest, survival soldiers, the space shuttle, the Horn of Africa, and the nuclear explosion are all centered around our leaders in the White House, who make important decisions in the best interests of our country. If We the People are to survive, then we must get a clearer focus of how to solve these problems by supporting issues that will eliminate obstacles that affect us and our children. America was built by the Constitution. We must exercise our right to *vote consistently* for issues that are in the best interest for all of us, no matter what race, color, or creed we may be.

Moses Adams, Jr.



The Ethnic Festival Commemorative Mural is 18' x 44', located underneath the Shiawassee Street Bridge in Lansing, Michigan's Riverfront Park. Created in 1977-78 by the Popular Arts Workshop, under the direction of Gary Andrews, the mural was funded by a grant from the Lansing City Council and included a community planning process involving representatives of 22 ethnic groups. No maintenance has taken place to preserve the mural, which has been affected by salt used on the bridge in winter months, and defacement by vandals. P.A.W. is currently trying to organize an "Adopt-A-Park" group in cooperation with the City Parks Department to try to preserve or re-paint the wall, which is a focal point in the annual 4th of July city-wide Ethnic Festival. Photo: Brian Burd



Tribute to Black Classical Music

A promising new muralist on the scene in Boston is Paul Goodnight. One of his best works is to be seen in Boston's South End at the intersection of Tremont and Benton streets on the wall of Walter Jo's, a night club bar. The mural (23'x14'), funded by the owner and entitled *Tribute to Black Classical Music*, is an homage to Black musicians.

On the left of the mural, three portraits represent (from left to right) John Coltrane, Johnny Hodges (a very popular local musician who used to play with Duke Ellington), and Cannonball Adderly playing the trumpet. In the centre of the mural, one recognizes Miles Davis and on the top right a portrait of Sarah Vaughan singing. The background of the mural is almost divided into two parts: the upper part is a top view of piano keys, symbolizing Duke Ellington, while the rest of the background is a light purple color with geometrical pink and turquoise shapes. The fact that artist Paul Goodnight chose famous figures of jazz music as the main theme of his mural shows his attachment and pride for one of the major contributions brought to American culture in the field of art by Blacks.

It is very interesting to study the way the artist's vision is expressed: besides the extreme subtlety of the portraits simply drawn with charcoal and lightly painted, an impressive characteristic of Paul Goodnight's painting is his ability to relay a true impression of *motion*: thus, one sees Miles Davis playing the trumpet and moving his fingers. Looking at Cannonball Adderly's hands, one can see a succession of movements. One sees several fingers in different positions, which gives a true impression of movement. This is also true of the three portraits on the left side of the mural: John Coltrane's left profile, Johnny Hodges' face and Adderly's right profile. Although the features are different, they unite to form one single head moving from left to right. This could actually symbolize the harmony one finds in an orchestra, where different people play in unison.

Besides this strong impression of motion in the mural, there is an interesting combination of images: as in the artist's canvas paintings, one always finds multiple images in Paul Goodnight's works. The more one looks at his works, the more one discovers new images. For instance, in the mural, different shapes are merged: on the far left, Johnny Hodges' saxophone becomes part of a guitar which symbolizes Wes Montgomery, just as the guitar becomes part of the saxophone. There is a nice play on the shapes that makes the mural sometimes very geometrical and abstract. This play is also true of the colors: sometimes the blue meshes with the pink areas and the pink also subtly invades the blue.

The mural also provides an interesting combination of styles: the piano keys look real and give an impression of an almost three-dimensional image, while the portraits, and even more particularly the hands of the players, are graphically portrayed. This combination of styles makes the mural extremely effective. There are different perspectives in the mural: the piano keys are seen from the top, while the players are presented from a frontal perspective. There is also a powerful use of transparent planes: if one looks at Miles Davis, one sees a pink circle around his head, while its edge intersects the forehead.

Besides this very complex play on shapes and colors, the emotion that the players suggest in their attitudes is striking. Their eyes are closed and they seem to be passionately "within" the music.

It is evident that the key of Paul Goodnight's paintings is found in the sensation of motion and the superimposition of planes. His mural introduces in the dull and depressing environment of South Boston a powerful note of visual pleasure. Let us hope that he will get new opportunities to paint more murals.

Laurence Morechand

*Editor's Note: The figure on the right in the group of 3 is playing soprano sax.

Tufts University, Universite de la Sorbonne (Paris)

Montana Murals and Muralists

I moved to Montana in 1977. When I arrived I sought out existing public art pieces (murals, sculptures, etc). There was quite a lot here. Banks have ceramic and painted murals. The Boys Club in Billings had murals covering the outside of all of its walls. We "discovered" a mural done by high school students on the foundry entrance in Anaconda. Some excellent artists such as Rudio Audio, Lyden Pomroy, and Jim Truex were working with ceramics, welded steel and paint to produce very handsome and striking murals all over Montana. In Great Falls, Montana, there is a cast concrete sculpture done by kids. Also in Bozeman, Montana, at the Native American Studies Dept. are six murals by Jim Thiex. These and other artists are working alone. I have seen many impressive murals and I'm sure there are many more that I haven't seen. However, until I came here, I did not find very many collaborative pieces or community murals. Since

1978, though, other people (besides me) have been working with the elderly, the communities, and the schools to do some excellent public art. Currently, besides working on my own projects (a ceramic mural, restoring a mural and planning another large outdoor mural), I am working to organize the Montana Public Art Group. This organization will serve to unite the artists in Montana who are working on public art and will be a resource available to people in the state in case they want to sponsor a mural or other public art project. Another goal of the group will be to address relevant issues of concern to residents. This group is now incorporated and we are beginning to put together a membership list. If anyone is interested, please contact Niki Glen, Montana Public Art Group, 11750 9th St., Livingston, Montana 59047.

(See Page 21 for photos.)

Niki Glen

Restoring Frank Engebretson's Folk Art

A rt

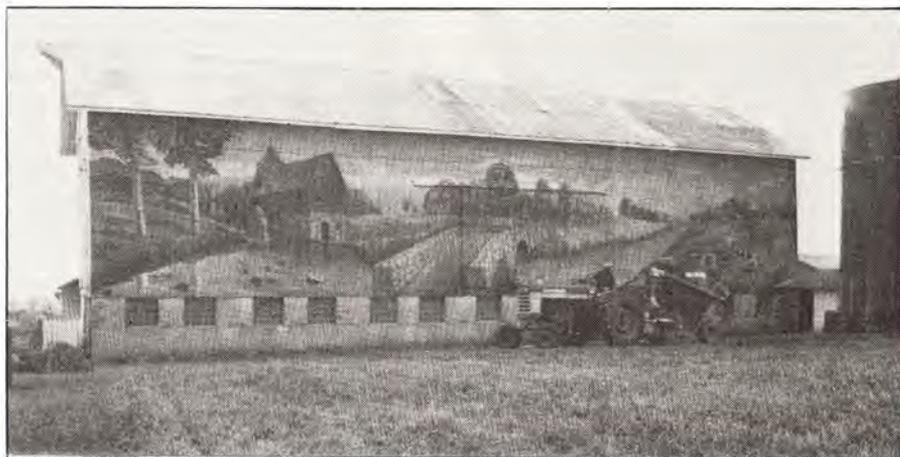
endures. In some instances it not only survives its maker, but is given new economic life upon the artist's death.

Such was not the case with the brilliant creations of Wisconsin's Frank Engebretson. When this pioneering folk artist died in 1973 at the age of 90, many of his paintings were already lost. A few had blown down and some had burned to the ground. Most, however, had simply and literally faded away. His larger-than-life work was, as one observer noted, "more enduring than sand castles, but not much more."

Engebretson was the most prolific barn muralist in American history. That is, he painted hundreds of pictures on the broad sides of barns. But don't be concerned if you've never heard of him; Frank Engebretson was, in his own humble words, "a family man and a poor man to try to get away."

Even as Engebretson's reputation grew to match the scope of his outdoor paintings, distant demands for this artist's colorful, rustic artwork never lured him far from his Brodhead, Wis., home. As a result, all of his creations rested on foundations of fieldstone in the pastoral counties of southwestern Wisconsin.

The dairylands of that region are great to browse in: narrow, tree-lined roads winding through sunlit moraines, crossroad towns and solitary schoolhouses dotting dreamy valleys, farmhouses nestled beside prosperous red and white barns.



The Old Mill Stream (above), a Frank Engebretson original, was restored in 1981 on the farm operated by Charles Lederman, Brodhead, Wis. The artist (right) in his retirement years, with one of his less-than-barn-size paintings, Winter Sunset.

It would be difficult to improve on a scene of such bucolic beauty, but Engebretson's work did just that. He was a local legend in Wisconsin's Green and Lafayette counties—the man who enhanced the barns. As is the case with many unique art forms, Engebretson's work developed through a combination of talent, insight and perseverance.

Engebretson was born in 1882 on the family homestead near the quintessential Midwest town of Gratiot, Wis. The son of Norwegian immigrants, Engebretson entered a world that would be both beguiling and stifling to the young artist. The beauty of the land was unequaled, transformed but not lessened by the change of seasons, and demanding to be painted. Yet the same verdant pastures he loved to paint served to isolate his skills from the attention and instruction he needed.

Daily farm work, not artistic experimentation, dominated his early life. Though he worked with oils and watercolors on canvas and tapestries, there wasn't a strong market for his paintings among the industrious, reserved farmers of the area.

At the age of 32, Engebretson was the perfect picture of a struggling artist. Unable to make enough money selling his landscapes, he supported his wife and three children by adding new coats of paint to the lofted, gabled and shuttered barns of local dairy farmers. Seeing the pristine beauty of his handiwork set against the rich, quilted hills filled Engebretson with pride, yet also reminded him of his hand-cuffed creativity.



One summer's day in 1914, an idea occurred to him that changed his feelings toward barn painting forever.

"I don't see much sense in having all barns look alike," Engebretson said to farmer Jacob Winn, whose barn he was about to paint. "If I could paint a picture of your prize Holsteins on the barn, it could come to life and have some individuality." Winn eyed Engebretson suspiciously. "All right, do it your way," he said. "but we'll have to see how the others like it."

The "others" were the farmers of Lafayette County, and like it they did. The mural showed cows grazing lazily near a meandering stream, and it attracted the gaze and envy of many a passerby. In one masterful stroke, Engebretson had discovered how to match creative artistry with functional economy. He had become a barn-painter-turned-barn-artist.

Over the next 50 years, Engebretson painted more than 100 barn murals in southwestern Wisconsin. By his own computation, his original paintings plus restorations totaled nearly two miles of rambling, rural art.

Engebretson worked with a free and simple style, splashing vivid colors between crisp firm lines. Even from a great distance the effect was striking.

Not only did Engebretson bring artistic vitality to this culturally isolated region, he documented the lifestyles and heritage of its people. Popular were his re-creations of scenes from the barn owners' homelands, such as *Switzerland Birthplace* and *Norwegian Fjord*. When given a free artistic reign, he honored local landmarks (*The Old Clarence Bridge*) and even saluted advances in the sciences (*Progress!*).

Though he was revered locally, national recognition came slowly. In 1942, 28 years after painting the mural of Jacob Winn's Holsteins, Engebretson was honored in the pages of *Life* magazine. Pictures of his barn art later appeared in *The Country Gentleman*, *Prairie Farmer*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, even the *Times* of London.

As James Morris described in his book *Coast to Coast*, "Frank Engebretson's work was as near to folk art as you can find in the Middle West."

Through it all, the contented, humble artist remained unswayed atop his ladder. The largest fee that Engebretson ever charged was \$250 for an 18-by-150-foot mural—about 9 cents per square foot—on the William Chapman barn near Woodford, Wis.

Engebretson never believed his paintings would make him a wealthy man, just a happy one. Neither did he believe his work would endure. Though he took great pains to protect each mural with a coat of linseed oil, the harsh Wisconsin elements began—even before the final brush stroke—to rob him of lasting fame.

In 1962 when Engebretson, at the age of 80, climbed down from his ladder for the last time, he was not at all solicitous about his fading gallery. He had found a uniquely beautiful way to honor a countryside and people he loved and that was enough. To one reporter he remarked matter-of-factly, "If you paint a house you don't expect it to last, do you? You've got to keep repainting it. Same with my murals. If they don't get repainted, they'll fade. Paint on a wall—that's all they are."

To the wind and rain, perhaps. To the pleasantly surprised traveler, the murals were unabashedly beautiful barn art.

For a long time it appeared that Engebretson's art form would be lost altogether, his paintings burnished smooth by the indiscriminating elements and forgotten. In 1975, however, the Wisconsin Arts Board was searching for ways to involve rural communities in the Expansion Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts. Because of the creative thinking of Arts Board Director Jerrold Rouby, the magnificence of the old master was revived.

The Expansion Arts program was a federally funded project designed to bring art to people who lived far from the museums and galleries of the big cities. Rouby's plan went beyond delivering art to those outside the mainstream; he proposed that they create it. Simply stated, he aimed to foster "the involvement of local citizens in the creative process by the design and implementation of murals for paintings on barns near their communities."

The National Endowment for the Arts responded with a \$32,000 vote of confidence; in 1975, two years after Engebretson's death, the Dairyland Graphics program began anew to bring Wisconsin barns to life. "Though it lacked the deep emotions of a solitary artistic figure," says Rouby, "our program had a positive spirit all its own."

Nearly 400 community volunteers participated directly in the program. Cities and towns like Dodgeville, Eau Claire, Oak Creek, Beaver Dam, Ashland and Shawano came alive with artistic creativity.

Local artists submitted designs, farmers signed five-year no-paint contracts, big corporations like PPG Industries and Sears, Roebuck and Co. supplied paint, and smaller local businesses contributed scaffolding, rollers, brushes and buckets. Small teams of volunteers—4-H members, scout groups and school classes—supplied enthusiasm and muscle, and proud parents furnished refreshments and transportation. When dedication ceremonies began, legislators and other public officials were all too happy to pose before the creations.

"Dairyland Graphics was a tremendous success, largely because it appealed to community pride," Rouby notes. "The satisfaction of having worked together to create something so magnificent will be with the participants forever."

The community spirit and cooperation evident in Dairyland Graphics wasn't the only contrast to the independent mural efforts of Engebretson. Dairyland Graphics brought new respect and heightened visibility to the art form by moving it from the back roads to the highways. All 12 rural murals were positioned along highly

traveled routes. Barn art became a refreshing alternative to billboards; nothing was being sold but artistic exuberance.

And the subjects were different although they continued to honor Wisconsin's heritage. Circus clowns, pioneer portraits, Lake Superior, iron boats and Canada geese replaced the pastoral themes of Engebretson's heyday.

The most famous work of the program was the stunning *Blue Cow* mural on the Hilbert Schneider barn near Johnson Creek, Wis. Soon after completion, the mural appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, prompting its owner to install timed floodlights over the painting. "I once had a cow barn," Schneider mused. "Now," he declared proudly, "I have a museum."

Since the end of Dairyland Graphics in 1977, barn mural efforts in Wisconsin have been largely restoration projects. Farm owner Earvin Johnson of Darlington completed three Engebretson restorations in 1980-81 with the help of artist Cheryl Narveson and a \$5,000 grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board.

Appreciators of folk art hope there will always be a plan to continue the barn mural tradition in Wisconsin. At least three of the renaissance projects of Dairyland Graphics are already gone—including Hilbert Schneider's *Blue Cow* "museum," which was destroyed by a tornado.

Unfortunately, federal funding for local art programs is as tough to find today as are artists of Frank Engebretson's skill and independence. The answer, not only in Wisconsin but in any state considering an urban or rural mural program, lies in the cooperative efforts of community groups, local businesses and state arts councils.

By working together they can assure a lasting place in the sun for murals everywhere. □

By Jim Caletta
Friendly Exchange, 1982

A Mural By Benton May Be Split Up

By MICHAEL BRENSON

An important mural by Thomas Hart Benton, the American painter, which was sold last May for a figure reported at \$2 million on condition that the buyer would make "every effort" to keep the 10 panels together and in the United States, may now be broken up and sold abroad.

The mural, called "America Today," was painted by Benton in 1930 for the New School of Social Research and is considered a prime example of "American scene painting" or "regionalism." It was sold by the New School to Christophe P. Janet, a Manhattan art dealer, who specializes in old master European paintings.

According to the original agreement, Mr. Janet was obligated to tell the New School if the conditions of the contract would not be met. He recently informed the school that such a possibility now existed. Albert W. Landa, vice president of the school, then wrote a memorandum to the school's president, Jonathan Fanton, saying Mr. Janet "was having great difficulty reselling them" and was at present negotiating with a "consortium of museums." The memo added that there was a strong likelihood that the mural would be broken up.

"The purchaser pledged that he would make every effort to resell the mural in this country and not to sell them individually," the memo said. "This is not a binding pledge. We recognized from the start that if there was no institutional purchaser, there was a chance they would be sold individually."

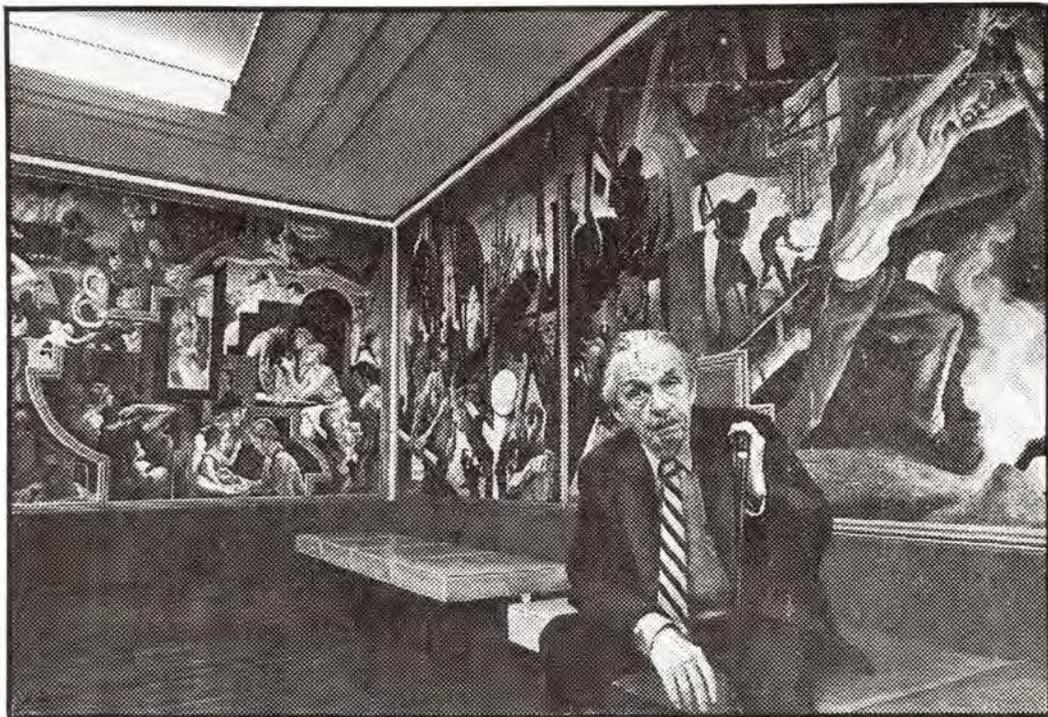
The memorandum also said, "If there are any sudden press calls concerning resale, we should say that Janet and his colleagues have made a sincere effort to keep to the agreement."

Mr. Janet said he was "still trying" to "make all efforts to keep them together."

"I have done and will continue to do everything I can to keep them together," he said. "As time goes by, it's a greater financial burden."

When asked if the work would be sold outside the country, Mr. Janet replied: "All endeavors are being made not to sell them abroad. Our intention is that all other avenues are explored in priority over such an eventuality."

"America Today" established Benton's reputation as a muralist. As with other "American scene" painters, such as Grant Wood and Reginald Marsh, one of Benton's artistic ambi-



Thomas Hart Benton with some of the murals he painted in 1930 at the New School for Social Research.

The New York Times, 1968

tions was to create a style and subject matter that would be distinctly American. The four-wall panorama of American working-class life includes images of a boxing match, a cabaret show and people working, dancing, drinking and riding the subway. The scenes are packed together, sometimes piled on top of one another, and painted with the kind of vigor and meandering line that would leave a mark on Jackson Pollock, one of Benton's students. An aim of the mural was to create a sense of the dynamism of New York City and of American life in general.

"They are an important monument of 'American scene painting,'" William Rubin, director of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern art, said of "America Today." "It was a moment in which one of the major 'American scene' painters was painting in New York, about New York. The program was very elaborate. It was a big undertaking, done when Pollock was his student, posing for the mural."

Before the deal with Mr. Janet, the school advertised the mural in Antiques magazine and tried to sell the mural to several American museums, for an asking price in some instances considerably higher than the price for which the work was eventually sold. A source at the Whitney Museum of American Art said the mural had been offered to the museum for \$5 million.

Since acquiring the work, Mr. Janet has also been trying to place it in an American museum. But the size of the mural, the asking price and the fact that the mural was made to fit a particular site with an eccentric ar-

chitectural molding that partly determined the shape of the panels continue to be major stumbling blocks.

Mr. Landa said he had complete confidence that Mr. Janet had adhered to the contractual conditions. "The institution feels that Mr. Janet has done exactly what he said he would do, and we're very satisfied," Mr. Landa said. He indicated, however, that the school would take no action if Mr. Janet did eventually sell the panels independently, even outside the country. Mr. Landa suggested there was little the school could do.

"There is a question in my mind how binding the agreement can be," Mr. Landa said. "The purchaser put into writing that every effort would be made to keep the work together, in America, because we requested that. Even if they said they would do it contractually, there was a question how they could be held to it."

The situation raises the question of the degree to which a seller is protected, even when there is a signed contract with the buyer, stipulating what the future of the work involved in the transaction should be. The buyer has recourse if those conditions are broken, but lawyers agree that the legal protection is minimal.

In 1930, shortly after the Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco painted a mural for the New School, Benton was asked by Alvin Johnson, the school's founder, to do a mural for what was then the trustees' room. Benton worked on it for nine months and was not paid, except for the materials. "It was my first wall, and I did it for nothing, just expense money," Benton said in 1968, when he was in New York to

receive a New School honorary doctorate. "But it led to eight other murals, which paid me very well, so it was a good thing for me."

Over the years the room became a classroom, then a seminar room. Because of the crowds, the smoke, the heat and humidity, the condition of the mural deteriorated. Benton restored it twice, in 1956 and 1968. He left word how it should be restored after his death.

Although Benton did not want the mural sold while he and his wife were alive, he is known to have understood that it might be sold eventually. He and his wife died within months of each other in 1975. Soon after, the school, looking for money for rebuilding purposes, began trying to sell the work.

"We have been involved in a concerted effort in the last year to expand the endowment," Mr. Landa said when the sale was made last May, "but our highest priority had to do with our continuing anxiety about our ability to protect the mural."

After unsuccessful negotiations with a number of museums, including the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, the school sold the mural to Mr. Janet. At the time Mr. Janet said, "Our commitment is to keep it as a group and as part of the American patrimony."

He insists that is still his commitment. "I'm making all efforts to keep them together," he said. "I am still trying to speak with all institutions in the country that would make sense."

Sale Is Possible

"There is a possibility the work could be sold in the near future," he added. He would not say to whom and in what form.

If the work is broken up, there is little the school can do. According to Larry Kars, a tax lawyer, the only way the original seller might retain control of a work is if he or she found out about a sale that would breach the original contract before the sale was made. If the party to whom the mural is resold buys the work in "good faith," the work is his, and there is little hope of getting it back.

The main recourse open to the original owner is to file suit for damages. But that, Mr. Kars suggested, is often a problem. If the school wanted to sue, for example, it would have to determine how it has been damaged — perhaps in terms of the school's reputation as a place to which works of art could be bequeathed in trust. Then it would have to go to litigation, Mr. Landa said, which could take years. Even if it won the suit, it would almost certainly not regain control of the work in question.

THE NEW YORK TIMES
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Mural Bus

In the spring of 1981, Mr. John Donahue, from the Association House, contacted myself, Tomas Sanabria, about painting a mural on an old bus that his agency had in its possession. As the Creative Arts Specialists of Youth Guidance working in Chicago's West Town-Humboldt Park community (with sites at Roberto Clemente High School and at the Humboldt Park Cultural Arts Center) I had been trying since the latter part of 1980 to paint a mural on an old airport limousine that was placed at my disposition. Good fortune at the time, though, was not with this project because of the lack of funding needed for insurance. So, naturally, the project was shelved until recently, when Mr. Donahue approached me with the same idea, painting a moving mural on a moving vehicle. I immediately renewed my dreams and plans.

Why a moving mural? A mural on a moving vehicle immediately becomes an added positive asset with which one particular community can associate itself. To have a large moving vehicle, such as our awkward looking "Safari Bus", painted with colors that immediately attract the public eye, that has lines and shapes that capture the public imagination, that has designs and forms that compel those who gaze upon it to study even further what they see, is to have an object that day after day becomes a permanent focal point of admiration and respect. The bus itself, with the passage of time, can become a meaningful symbol, encouraging and representing our growing community. This moving monument, so aesthetically designed, will be a meaningful symbol encouraging and representing to inspire, as well as to educate; it can compel many adolescents to learn about their rich culture, as well as their history, yet even more so. It can serve to awaken a conscious awareness of their community's struggles and aspirations.

Individually speaking, Mr. John Donahue wanted to see a mural that represented the Puerto Rican community, as well as to promote the philosophy of the Association House. He also wanted to see as much community involvement as possible. Therefore, it was agreed that the Association House would pay for the total low cost budget to paint the mural, as well as to maintain the operation of the bus.

On the other hand, my idea for having a moving mural on an awkward looking vehicle is to convey to the general community the philosophy and goals of my arts therapy group called C.R.E.A.T.E. (Culture, Respect and Ego Advance Through Exhibition). To paint such a message on the bus, it was agreed that those students actually participating in the C.R.E.A.T.E. photo therapy group would be responsible because they represent a good selection of our community itself. This group has set priorities and goals similar to that of the Association House, therapeutically speaking. After performing such a feat, it was agreed that the Creative Arts Program in West Town would have use of the bus for field trips and for mounting exhibitions at various locations throughout the city.

In general, we both agreed that the overall development of the project, as well as the designing of the mural, was entirely left up to myself. As a community artist, photographer and writer, it is my purpose and philosophy to always try to incorporate ideas and feelings that reflect the pulse of a growing and changing community such as ours. In order to maintain that, a consistent effort to receive constructive criticism from other community artists, as well as community persons, will also be made. As for the actual site of the painting of the mural, it will take place on an open vacant lot close to the Humboldt Park Cultural Arts Center and will be a part of its summer CETA Program, so as to receive the much-needed community support and feedback.

Tomás Sanabría
Creative Arts Specialist/Community Artist

Northern Journey

Part 2: New York to Michigan

NEW YORK CITY

Franco the Great

We arrived in the Big Apple on Saturday night and were out early the next morning in Harlem. Sundays, we had discovered, were the best days for cruising, the worst for contacting people. But this Sunday we had luck at both. We intended to start with 125th Street, the heart of Harlem and familiar ground to us. What was new were some 30 steel shop gates painted by Franco "the Great" Gaskin, which have caused the avenue to be dubbed "Franco's Boulevard." One of the first we came on showed a Black shoeshine boy waiting on his box with his St. Bernard. Overhead what was indeed a shoeshine parlor had a sign that appealed to pedestrians, "Help A Small Businessman." Next door the entire storefront of the Baby Grand Club was a stylized keyboard, piano top and stream of notes all rendered in mosaic and perhaps dating from the Harlem Renaissance of the '20s. Further along on the Howard Hats gate were a bulldog and assorted hounds gotten up in fedora, panama, beret, derby and cap, all shooting pool while a swish setter swung by: an illustrator's joke of maybe 60 years ago, still rich today. There were comparably appropriate designs for record shops, clothiers and many lush landscapes that Franco learned to do by painting velvet. One of the gates showed a Black man with a six-pack being beaten up by three cops.

We were lucky to find Franco at his labors but ready to chat. He had been at these gates for two years working on Sundays and for a few hours before the shops opened during the week. He told us he was born in Panama and in early childhood fell from a three-story porch. He could not speak for years and his family regarded him as permanently damaged. He had to leave school but taught himself to read and write. He drew, he said, because he could not talk. Seeking recognition, he earned his first money as a child magician; later as a teenager he did drawings of half naked women and muscular men in front of adult movie houses and bookstores. He also painted little pictures blindfolded. He said he always wanted to do something new. His wife has said that he is a dreamer but has an incredibly hard head.

While Franco has received world-wide press coverage, Harlem's Studio Museum refuses to recognize him. He would like it to acquire one of his steel gates when a business is sold and the new proprietor no longer wants it. Media exposure has opened up mural jobs for him downtown, one in a health business in the World Trade Center.

New York is rich in such local shop painters. In a Puerto Rican neighborhood along Rockaway Avenue in Brooklyn a number of walls were painted with a fish market, a fruit cart and peasants riding in a wagon. Santana's Meats in the Bronx showed a *campesino* turning a pig on a spit over a fire while around the corner different cuts of pork flowed from a cornucopia.

Graffiti

A number of people urged us to see the Graffiti Hall of Fame in Spanish Harlem. These are in fact graffiti murals ranging from 8 to 15 feet high and at least 12 feet long on the wall around Jackie Robinson Junior High at 106th and Park. Each panel is an individual work with little or no graffiti scrawled over the original. The letters are more than man-sized and gleam and flash with all the ingenuity of the spray-painter's craft. Some of the messages are decipherable like the title of the project itself, while in other cases the letters have been re-shaped into genuinely abstract art. One wall makes clear that the whole project was under the direction of one of the artists, "Sting-Ray" Rodriguez and sponsored as a "community arts project" by CNPP. A caption affirms that "It's the Pride that Makes You Strong." Oddly this is set among Walt Disney animals, mushrooms and flowers, a curious accompaniment of current graffiti all over the city.

Another type of wall painting that is widespread in SoHo, Greenwich Village and Midtown are the black, sometimes menacing life-sized silhouettes often with antennae and an arrow through their ears with captions like "Art the Rat." The Shadow Artist has been identified as one Keith Hering. Smaller more colorful figures labeled Avant (forward) and some stencil art protesting arson were also to be seen on SoHo walls. The most moving messages are the big white letters against black on the top floor of a Charlotte Street tenement in the South Bronx, the last remaining structure on its block that is being bulldozed. The squatters whose wash still blew from lines had painted "Last Hope" and "We Are Still Here."

Hank Prussing

One of the most successful efforts of the poor in overcoming the obstacles that confront them is Hope Community in Spanish Harlem around 104th and Lexington. The Puerto Rican residents have rehabilitated their old tenements, organized neighborhood cleanups, operated a community arts program and newspaper. One of their early projects was the *Spirit of East Harlem*, a wall of more than life-sized neighborhood portraits that Hank Prussing expanded between 1973 and '78. Hank, who holds degrees from Pratt Institute in painting and architecture, has now designed a community garden that fills the backyards of half a dozen tenements with brooks, bridges, banks of flowers and of course murals,



Graffiti Hall of Fame (portion), recent, Jackie Robinson Junior High School, New York City



Hope Community Garden, Hank Prussing, 1981, New York City

one done by his own hands, another by young people in the shady bowers that are spreading behind the buildings. His own mural is remarkable. It shows local people working in the garden against the skyscrapers of the city. At its center a channel has been molded so that water simulating a creek can flow down to the pools below. The entire work is in fact acrylic fresco relief built up from wire mesh attached to the masonry and stuccoed with cement. It brought additional pride to the neighborhood as one of the winning gardens in a city-wide contest last year.

Hank said he has done about 25 murals. Another recent one is *Hub Emerging*, also done in 1981 on a second floor wall that looks down on a busy shopping street at Third Avenue and 151st in the Bronx. With his characteristic photo-realist inventiveness, it shows a young family striding out of the wall amid new construction that seems to take shape from a blueprint.

Then there is one of the most monumental works of the community murals movement. Hundreds of local people, some three times life size, walk, chat and lounge on the walls above the balcony of the Lexington Avenue Presbyterian Church in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn. This had been Hank's church; there he painted a small mural of Jesus caring for the sick in 1963. The church itself dates from 1893 when Tiffany glass was installed in the windows. In 1974 it commissioned Hank to do murals in the spaces between them above the balcony, which took him four years to complete. He took hundreds of photographs on the street of people going about their ordinary affairs and transferred them to the walls. You are reminded of Bill Walker's mural at the Stranger Home Church that sanctifies ordinary people rather than religious figures. Hank's photo-realism and apparent casual ordering of his subject is quite different from Bill's architectural formalism. Titled *Clouds of Witness*, there are the young and the old, well-to-do and poor, a cop pick-

ing his nails, most people in good humor, and derelicts treated with respect. Hank has demonstrated how photo-realism can transcend the satisfactions of tricky illusionism and celebrate the common life.

CityArts Workshop

We spend many hours catching up on the recent projects of CityArts in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. Particularly noteworthy was the *Unidos Venceremos* that Vivian Linares and Manny Vega had directed with local youth in Spanish Harlem in 1980. Its four-story image of a wiry Puerto-Rican family tending a garden across from a tenement and a huge sunflower winding up an advancing section of wall were appropriate because the neighborhood, which owned the area in front of the mural as a public land trust, was developing it into a garden and playground.

We visited one afternoon with Vivian and Cathy Gupta who staff CityArts. The neighborhoods do not want anything political, Cathy said. It became clear that what she meant was that they wanted to overcome inner divisions in order to confront external threats like gentrification more effectively. It occurred to me afterwards that what also may have been meant was that the neighborhoods were disillusioned with mainstream politicians and wanted to take charge of their own fates.

Five projects were underway this summer on the Lower East Side, in Brooklyn and Queens directed by Eva Cockcroft, Joe Stephenson and Leslie Bender. Crews were down to 5 to 12 teenagers due to cuts in youth program, but there was still some CETA money. CityArts was continuing with its co-sponsorship of murals, neighborhood groups recruiting young people and raising their wages from public sources while CityArts staff and painters in the field were supported by the NEA, city and state art councils and business.



Lucy Mahler, *Untitled*, 1980, Third Street Music Settlement, New York City

One of the older CityArts works we visited was the *Douglass Street Mural* in Brooklyn, painted by a crew directed by Mary Patton in 1976. It was done in response to rioting between old Italian residents and Black and Puerto Rican newcomers a few years earlier, I was told by the O'Quendo brothers who own the building. It calls for racial and worker unity — *Obreros Unidos*. It had faded a good deal and there was graffiti as high as arms could reach. There had been discussions about CityArts coming out to renew the paint. But the city owned the empty lot opposite the wall and was planning to build a condominium eight feet from the mural. The O'Quendos and the Black grandmother pictured under the mural's rainbow, who lives across the street and recently purchased half a building for \$10,000, had considered petitioning the city not to build there in order to preserve the mural that they clearly had some pride in, but they realized that the new building would raise the value of their own property and decided against it. They foresaw that the presently poor neighborhood was going to become middle-class, and they hoped to gain from that although it might mean that the grandmother's children whom she rented to might not be able to afford to live there in a few years.

Having watched Lucy Mahler struggling through the early stages of four ceramic murals for the Third Street Music Settlement in the East Village three years ago, I was anxious to see how they had come out. The different colored relief tiles that follow the shape of the musicians and dancers worked handsomely, and so did those of Nitzza Trufino next to Lucy's. Over the phone Lucy said that she had done some more ceramic work in 1980 at the Bronx Psychiatric State Hospital.

The old and new in Harlem

We spent a good many hours in Harlem catching up on the predecessors of the community murals movement. There was a retrospective of Charles White's easel work at the new home of the Studio Museum. On exhibit were only easel pieces, but these immensely moving portraits were the kind of thing he incorporated in his relatively few murals. The museum was also exhibiting two splen-

did murals that Aaron Douglas did under the title of *Aspects of Negro Life*, painted originally for a Harlem branch library in 1934. Using a silhouette technique that has become popular again, Douglas in one chronicled the struggle from slavery through Reconstruction and in the other he depicted Blacks migrating from the South, climbing up a huge gear and blowing a saxophone to the skyscrapers.

The Harlem Hospital was the scene of the first major commission of murals by the federal government to Black artists. But it caused a furor in 1936 when the hospital's White administrator resisted the proposed Black subjects although 95% of the patients were Black as was most of the staff. The Artists' Union, the Harlem Artists' Guild and the community finally prevailed. The result included two large panels by Charles Alston in which he used the montage style of Rivera to recount the contribution of Blacks to medicine in Africa and the New World. While these murals have been badly damaged but could be repaired, in better condition is a whole corridor of works also of 1936 detailing Black history by Vertis Hayes, who had studied with Jean Charlot. Other murals in the hospital have since disappeared, but Alston returned in 1958 to do a mosaic procession of local people seemingly leaving the hospital in its new lobby. Now in 1979 Carmen Texidore has done an innovative mosaic using large pieces of glazed ceramic that depicts Black people waiting on a bench, a moving work that hangs over a hospital waiting room.

NEW HAVEN

Here we visited with Terry Lennox and Ruth Resnick in their office at the local YMCA, and they drove us to some of the murals they had helped create during the past six years. Their masterpiece, *We Can Do It All Better Together in Peace, in Joy, in Love* in the local welfare office was well described by them in the Fall, 1979 *Community Muralist's Newsletter*, but what came as a surprise was the intense orange of the whole work that brightens both the waiting room and the staff's open



People on a Bench, Carmen Texidore, 1979, Harlem Hospital, New York City

working area. Actually to see how the long 70-foot frieze links these two spaces and how the drama of the figures is so effectively presented by the portraits and the outward and inward gestures and shifting perspectives is to be profoundly impressed. The theme, Terry explained, is Don't Blame the Victims, and then she went on to point out how the imagery protests against urban renewal, the so-called public utilities, Yale University which pays no taxes on its downtown property, Electric Boat, Inc., that builds nuclear subs and the difficulty the workers have to organize. Terry and Ruth checked their cartoon with the full staff, not just the director, and while some wanted butterflies, children and park scenes, and some changes were made, they and the clients, the artists said, were very appreciative of what is a strong political mural. In spite of the suffering it depicts, it has a strong upbeat spirit.

While some of their professional quality is missing from the murals they did with high school students and CETA summer youth, their skill brought the best out of the teenagers, to whom they said they gave their heads. This appears particularly in the murals at Lee High School done in 1978. On a prominent outdoor wall they directed *The Path of the World*, which puts Huey Newton at the center of figures of the different races, including Eleanor Roosevelt, joining hands and reaching out toward the viewer with books and diplomas. New Haven has been a center of Black Panther activity. In the corridors inside are well-painted murals of inter-racial cooperation and Stevie Wonder's *I Wish* and in the cafeteria another on Wonder themes. Students would return for succeeding projects, and Terry and Ruth encouraged some to go on to art school. Currently they are working with volunteers on a decorative wall in the waiting room of the city jail.

Terry is a graduate of Yale and had done only abstractions until her first mural in 1976, which she says was her first realist work. This was on the backstop of a baseball field where she helped youngsters do portraits of Malcolm and King calling for brotherhood. This was done under the auspices of a City Spirit Program supported by Mayor Frank Logue and funded by CETA Summer Youth Employment money. Help during succeeding years came

from the city and state art councils, the NEA and local business. In 1979 City Spirit Artists became a non-profit collective of visual and performing artists who now number 30. Ruth and Terry do the staff work. Funding has become increasingly difficult with CETA cutbacks and Connecticut providing one of the lowest per-capita subsidies for the arts of all the states. Terry said she was leaving murals for a while because of their high cost and being tired and wanting to do portraits and abstractions again.

Terry and Ruth drove us by local murals they had not been involved in, one a work by Tony Falcone and Dan Dadona showing a team of white horses pulling a puffing fire engine out of the wall in the social room of a local engine company. The artists had done other photo-realist works in the area. Murals in New Haven also mean Rudolph Zallinger's rendering of dinosaurs and mammoths in the Peabody Museum at Yale.

Strolling about the campus and New Haven common, we came upon what for us was a new form of public art — sculptures in bronze of ordinary folks doing ordinary things like throwing frisbees, reclining against a tree absorbed in some calculations on a clipboard, flagging a taxi beneath an umbrella and sitting on a park bench and reading an article in the newspaper headed "But Is It Art?" These works of J. Steward Johnson, who has his studio in Princeton, represent an effort connected with community murals, celebrating the common life. We were to see more elsewhere. At best they dignify daily activities and work, but none suggest that ordinary folks have real control over their lives. They are part of the rediscovery by mainstream artists, among whom the photo-realists need to be included, of the aesthetic legitimacy of representing the commonplace, but too often it is a world only to be viewed and smiled at, even marveled at, but seldom mastered by common people.

Ruth Resnick put us up at her and her friend's cottage on Long Island Sound for a night, and we were very grateful after a very hot day of pursuing murals to be able to swim. This modest community we learned was collectively owned by the 70 households that occupied these summer houses.



The Path of the World, Terry Lennox, Ruth Resnick and students, 1978, Lee High School, New Haven, Connecticut

NORWICH

We drove to this small Connecticut city that manufactures nuclear subs to see the murals of the downtown revitalization project undertaken with CETA funding between 1977 and '78. We first sought out the tribute that Eva Cockcroft and local artist Jerry Wadsworth painted to the unsung workers of the public works department on the back of their building. When we went inside to learn more, we were taken in hand by Gloria Berthod and Carol Fedeli at their desks who also informed us proudly that they appear on the wall that commemorates the people who care for the streets and sewers of Norwich. Mrs. Berthod offered not only refreshment to the two of us who were beat from the heat but told us where we could find other murals. Around the corner individual bricks of a three story wall had been painted to resemble mosaic and create a decorative panorama of the city. Facing a busy intersection was a supergraphic done by Jon Friedman and Jim Peters of gulls and sun that incorporated the utility poles and transformers in front of it into a lyric expression of different kinds of energy. On a retaining wall of the bluff across the river, a man and woman were drawing strands from earth to sun, which had been continued by unauthorized Walt Disney characters that had been halted by the city — at least a sign that public art had built some momentum here. However, city hall terminated the entire downtown project that had employed 14 artists.

BOSTON

Lilli Ann Rosenberg

The principal discovery for us here was the work of Lilli Ann Rosenberg. I called her up, only knowing her by reputation. She said come in the morning for breakfast and bring croissants from the bakery in Newton Center close by. After a few hours' visit, she and her husband invited us to stay the weekend. Actually, Marvin should always be mentioned when Lilli Ann's work is referred to. He does much of the engineering and heavy work on her very heavy mosaic projects before and after his day at the office as head of social services for a Boston hospital.

She is a very hard worker and is handling clay and firing tiles throughout the day and evening in their house where the basement and yard serve as studio.

Lilli Ann had grown up in Los Angeles and left home at 15. She says she never had any doubt about her career. She attended the art program at the California Labor School in San Francisco, studying under Pablo O'Higgins and Anton Refregier. She painted in the backgrounds of the latter's controversial Rincon Annex Post Office murals and worked briefly at Heath Pottery in Sausalito. She taught silkscreen and worked with kids in a playground. When the Labor School was closed down under the pressures of the McCarthy era, she went on to study at Cooper Union in New York in 1950 and was hired by the Henry Street Settlement to teach youngsters ceramics. Two years later she became director of its art program and remained 17 years. She said she found the rear garden filled with sculpture and soapstone bas-reliefs of the WPA period made from recycled tenement washtubs. In the mid-'50s she hired Susan Shapiro-Kiok, who, she says, got most of her experience from her. Between 1958 and '62 Lilli Ann had a Rockefeller grant to humanize public housing by incorporating in their walls murals made from ceramic tiles molded by children. The art of children, she said, placed permanently in neighborhood walls was a means of validating their self-worth. Working on such projects, Susan was to organize CityArts Workshop in 1969. Two years earlier Lilli Ann published what she had learned in *Children Make Murals and Sculpture*, which is now out of print. If the community mural movement can be said to have a mother, this must be Lilli Ann.

The first of her mosaics we saw was in the square in Newton Center. This was a free-standing ceramic street sign crowned with a bird with real feathers that blow in the wind. In addition there were arching plaques embedded with delightful ceramic figures modeled by local people of all ages. As with much of her work in which she invites the participation of the community, she leaves them to work out the designs of their pieces but arranges them in shapes that she has predetermined. We drove to a clinic in Boston's Children's Hospital to see a wall of



Betances Mural, Lilli Ann Rosenberg, 1979, Villa Victoria, Boston

ceramic tiles and mirrors she had done in the lobby. In Cambridge, elderly gentlemen were basking in the sun beneath tile trees, flowers and birds at Miller River Housing for seniors, many of whom helped create these works. Another project we saw was the 10 x 110 foot ceramic wall she did behind the tracks in the subway station at Boston Common. Begun in 1976 and finished two years later, it shows a crowded train at the turn of the century and a cross-section of life, hills and the Charles River together with the actual tools and gear of daily life.

But for us the the most impressive work was the wall she did to cover a utilities substation in Villa Victoria, a Puerto-Rican community in the South End that pulled itself together in 1968 to resist urban renewal that would have destroyed the neighborhood. They developed their own plan and organization based on local control and mobilized their own skills. With the help of public funding they rebuilt their neighborhood, creating permanent jobs for residents. At the same time they developed a cultural program and at the center of their community Plaza Betances. It was a 7-year-old who had worked with Lilli Ann in a local art project earlier who told a nun about her when the refurbishing of the substation in the plaza was being considered, and Lilli Ann was eventually commissioned to undertake the mosaic with community participation. It took two years and was completed in 1979. It is a big 14 x 45 foot wall with a terracotta portrait by Lilli Ann of Ramon Betances, the 19th century patriot, at the center. She also did the overall planning, but the rest of the ceramic designs were done by 300 local people of all ages. One was a girl who wanted to say something about her black heritage and created an African village in mosaic. The mural is at the heart of the community and has become the background for public gatherings and celebrations.

Dana Chandler

We visited Dana at AAMARP (African American Master Artists in Residency Program), an entire floor of commodious studios and gallery space in a converted warehouse owned by Northeastern University. Dana's big studio was a warehouse for years of his painting while sofas, chairs and abundant green plants were arranged for leisure and talk. Propped against the walls and hanging from them was a decade of his work: depressed sienna faces with actual barbed wire across them; images of

brutalized Black women; confrontations of brown heads with x-ray views into their brains showing red, black and green erect penises facing limp ones in stars and stripes; and seven-foot high works whose shape is given by the jagged edges of their over life-sized subjects — cut open watermelons, mint juleps, nails and knives. These last are political still-lives and indeed murals. Dana took us to see the first mural he had done since 1975, *I've Been to the Mountain Top*, painted last year for a middle school in Roxbury where it is mounted on an outside wall. Here Martin Luther King among faces of different races superimposed on a map of the U.S. is pointing to another image of himself seen against a mountain and Africa, the maps of both areas giving shape to the mural. The mural provoked talk about busing, which Dana said that he and many other Blacks opposed because it had wiped out neighborhood schools, which once had been the focus of community organizing.



I've Been to the Mountain Top, Dana Chandler, 1981, Martin Luther King Middle School Roxbury, Massachusetts



Federal Innerbelt I-95, Bernie La Cruz, undated, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dana presides over AAMARP while being tenured at Simmons University. AAMARP includes some very talented painters, notable Milton Derr, and Nelson Stevens has exhibited with them. While the group can put out handsome four-color posters and publications, Dana said that Black artists simply cannot sell in Boston. Nor, he said was there any new social or political murals or organizing among Blacks in the area. As we drove past sites where he and Gary Rickson had done militant murals in the late '60s, Dana reported that Gary was no longer painting; he was doing TV entertainment. Dana said that he himself was burned out with politics and art but would not abandon either. He had refused to paint supergraphics and other commercial pieces.

Cambridge, Chelsea and Boston Community Arts

Cambridge has one of the most thought out and elaborate community arts programs in the country, and its achievements provide a chance to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts. We had a number of meetings with staff members of the city Arts Council and its founder, John Chandler, one of the staff, had been close to Summerthing, Boston's project that had sponsored community murals from 1968 into the '70s (including Dana's), a program John regarded as an attempt by the establishment to cool out the ghettos. The question that hangs over more recent public art, such as that in Cambridge, is whether it is a way of distracting people, also.

Of all the works we saw in Cambridge, only one had political content: a mural done on the back of a supermarket by Bernie La Cruz two years ago that showed local residents and shopkeepers protesting the approach of a bulldozer to clear them out for an inner beltway extension of I-95. It is deftly painted with some humor to sweeten its message, but it had whipped up a furor, and even Ron Fleming, the former chairman of the Arts Council, which sponsored it, described it as "Soviet Realism" and "ghetto art". He thought that La Cruz had been pretty cool through the storm, however. The beltway was not built, and the mural may well have had something to do with that. But it is not listed on the Arts Council's publication on its accomplishments.

Ron Fleming said that what had provoked him to help found the Cambridge Arts Council in 1975 was a question by the mayor of Oakland (not a city of singular beauty): "Why is Cambridge so ugly when it has so much talent?" Fleming, a planner by trade, worked on the city fathers and wrote a grant application for NEA City Spirit funding, which was matched by CETA. The new Arts Council set as its task not the usual raising of money for the existing art institutions, but for generating art in the neighborhoods and for the community as a whole by involving its unusual resources at Harvard and MIT, its busy

and unemployed artists and untrained residents, young and old, in heightening the local "quality of life". The population of Cambridge is 120,000, most of them blue-collar families. Fleming saw the "arts as a means of addressing major urban problems of neighborhood identity, visual quality, institutional responsiveness and ethnic cooperation," as the Council's literature puts it. During our talks, he spoke about "preserving the sense of place", and the function of public art to create "lovable objects", works that create intimate attachment and community. He and his wife, Renata von Tscharnar, last year published *Place Makers*, a book of examples, many of them in Cambridge, a number of them murals. Fleming spoke to us of balancing the inputs of old-time residents of modest means and the new educated middle class, who had the resources and know-how to preserve things — gentrification — he was not embarrassed to say. He was open about describing his views as "aristocratic", in the sense of going through the authorities and employing established artists and professionals to work in the neighborhoods, but he recognized the importance of neighborhood review. He advocated professionals doing a neighborhood profile of cultural needs and resources. One of his most interesting ideas was his championing the need to involve artisans in the building arts, not only housing, but sidewalks and manhole covers. He believed that craftsmen's work could compete economically with industrial production. At least the public financing of art, he implied, made artisanship affordable. (The expense of craftsmen could be justified by the number of people who used or viewed the work.) He spoke refreshingly of the "little mafia" of reputable artists who determine grants in the NEA's Art in Public Places Program.

The first project of the Cambridge Arts Council was a 1976 mural by Ellary Eddy (her first, too) on the outside of a firehouse with portraits of the members of Engine Co. No. 5, one of their trucks, and volunteer firemen George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. On the strength of its public success, a horse-drawn steam engine was done overnight with a slide projector by three other artists some years later. (Old fire engines seem to be lovable objects in New England.) Cambridge murals have also celebrated leisure hours on the Charles River, a demolished Victorian mansion, basketball players, and there is Lilli Ann Rosenberg's ceramic mural done with the elderly at Miller River Housing. There have been graphics on the garbage trucks, and the stumps of two trees at different locations have been ingeniously sculptured. There have also been a host of ethnic and neighborhood festivals, culminating each year in the city-wide River Festival with parades, entertainment, elaborate floats on the Charles and an 800-foot picnic table.

Ron Fleming has also served as planner in the revitalization of Chelsea, an old industrial city just to the north and the port of entry for immigrants for two centuries. Inspired by the "quality

of life" projects in Cambridge, Chelsea secured funding to redo its downtown, putting in brick pavements, facelifting its shops, planting trees in front of them and surrounding these with tall iron fences, which are now being used as receptacles for soda cans and trash. (It's curious how people who cared enough not to discard them in the street got the wrong idea.) Against a park bench Penelope Jencks propped a little girl listening to a local teenage athlete and popular high school physics teacher — all in bronze. A few blocks away on another busy square, Mags Harries had implanted on the pavement of a bus shelter a bronze bag of groceries that was catching real cigarette wrappers.

Across the Mystic River in Boston's restored Quincy Market, Harries had celebrated the produce market, that urban renewal has almost completely removed, by embedding in a crosswalk bronze casts of vegetable crates, cabbage leaves, rotting fruit, a lady's glove and a comb, that we are to imagine people had lost. Flush with the road, they are certainly not murals; maybe "street-als". Nearby were two bronzes of Mayor Curley, one of him approaching you on the pavement with his portly paunch, the other within a few feet with him relaxed on a park bench. All of this told little about the controversy that surrounded him; he had become a picturesque artifact. Each of these pieces might be worth a tourist's snapshot, but I doubt if they make their places more lovable or livable. While visitors were swarming through Quincy Market, eating overpriced instant food, hundreds were waiting in line for interviews at a nearby hotel employment office.

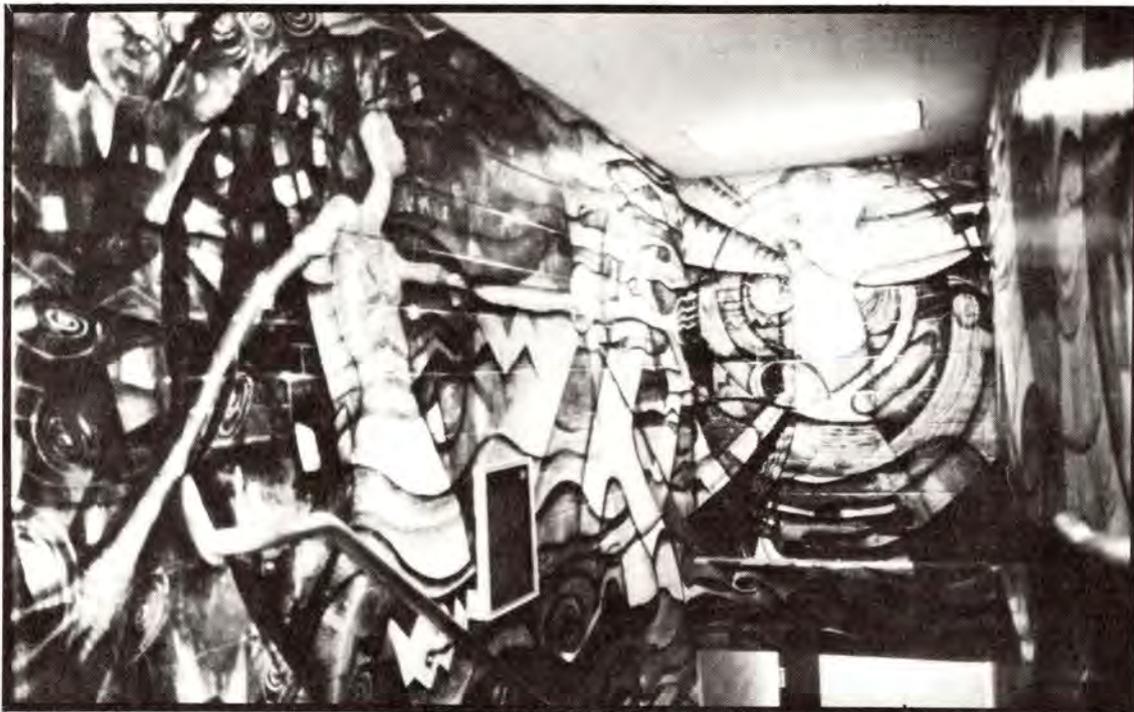
In Cambridge, Chelsea and Boston, commissions had been granted to mostly established artists; perhaps a few unemployed artists and artisans had received temporary public service employment. Thousands of residents have had art brought closer to them and have participated in varying ways, mostly as passive publics. It is clear from Fleming and the literature that a major intention of the Cambridge program has been to use art to overcome the alienation we all feel in our work, leisure and community. This lies behind the quest for lovable objects, a sense of place and and local intimacy. At best, it seems to me, some distractions, some compensations have been provided. But they have not empowered people where it counts, on the job, in their daily and national life. If ordinary people had control in these areas, then their work and life would produce their own art; indeed, would be art, because it would free their creativity and expression in whatever they did. Buildings, for

instance, would not be complete without murals. Community arts programs in Cambridge and elsewhere may be helping people come to understand that by giving them some experience in making art and in particular, making it collectively, so that they may demand more such experiences and finally take them as a model for ordinary work. But as long as art is seen as recreation and entertainment, something outside daily life, it will only be used to make daily regimentation and exploitation more acceptable. Lovable objects and a sense of community cannot be dispensed from outside, not even by art councils; they have to arise out of our daily labor and personal relations. They have to be struggled for.

So much of this public art is quaint, nostalgic, picturesque, inane and irrelevant. That is what gentrification and the revival of a past that never was are about. But they point to needs for real community, creative work and control that cannot be met by means that do not empower ordinary people, but are meant to keep them dependent consumers and employees.

LOWELL

We drove up here to see the Lowell National Historical Park. In 1828 the Industrial Revolution came to America when some Boston entrepreneurs decided to build canals and waterwheels at Lowell to put the 35-foot drop in the Merrimack River to work in the textile mills that continued to flourish until the first runaway shops of our time began moving south in the 1950s. The factories, canals and turbines are well preserved, and the park service has done an admirable job of attracting the public with train and canal boat rides, and also providing well-informed guided tours and films with a good deal of social consciousness. To our surprise and delight we discovered that one of the parking structures had been decked out with a frieze along two sides dubbed *The Industrial Revolution Art Project*, the work of a 1978 CETA neighborhood youth crew directed by Janet Lambert-Moore and Martha Hayden. Scenes included the early canals; girls at their looms and slaves in cotton fields; the time schedule of 1868 with rising at 4:30 a.m. and laying off at 6:30 p.m., 66 hours a week. There were the words and music of *The Spinners Song* and the cover of *The Lowell Offering*, articles by the female workers. There were the immigrant laborers who replaced them, but only perfunctory notice is made of the strike of 1912 and the organizing of the United Textile Workers in 1934.



Let There Be Life, John Kendrick, 1976, Winchester Square Community Center, Springfield, Massachusetts

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

We now pushed on to Springfield, where Nelson Stevens had directed at least 30 murals between 1974 and '77 with his University of Massachusetts students during summer courses, which received VISTA and ACTION funding. Nelson's characteristic explosive color, now faded, could be easily identified in the faces of Black people on a big frieze he did with his students at the Boys and Girls Club Family Center in 1975. At the Winchester Square Community Center, two of his most talented students' indoor murals were still in prime condition: at the rear of an auditorium, Clyde Santana's *Wall of Medicine and Technology*, with human and bird effigies colorfully hatched, seemingly riding bicycles. Along a stairway, John Kendrick painted big figures caught up in rippling color that radiates from what is perhaps a god, a composition of 1976 titled *Let There Be Life*. We saw another mural of Kendrick's at New Africa House on the U of M campus, this time of swirling, dancing figures. Nelson thought him an artist of extraordinary talent, but shortly after receiving his Ph.D. in 1978, he died. Nelson would like Africobra to do a retrospective of his art. At Mt. Holyoke College we saw a big wall in the Black Student Union done by Clement Roach and Clyde Santana in 1975 under the direction of Nelson. Titled *Carnival of Souls*, it was again an effort to combine African and modern design, this time about toothy masks and claws, hatched with zigzag color. We saw other examples of Nelson's students' work in Springfield, but urban renewal has destroyed most.

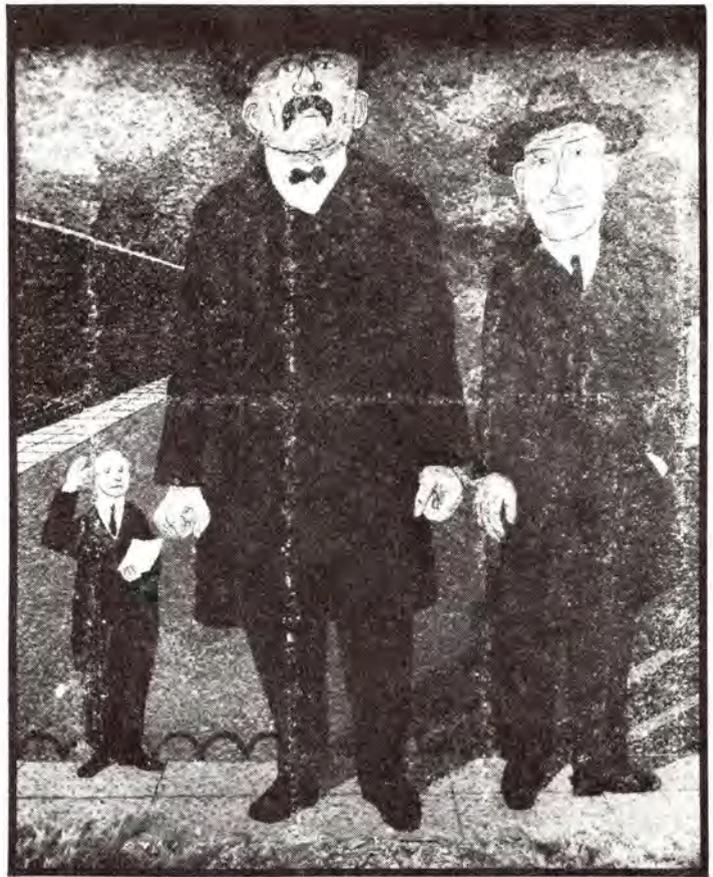
We had dinner and spent an evening talking with Nelson in his studio. He showed us copies of *Drum*, the handsomely produced magazine of Black U of M students, with full color reproductions of their painting and writing. The cover of this spring's issue had Jones and Caton's *Builders of the Cultural Present* on it. Nelson talked about the past. He had grown up in Brooklyn and graduated from Kent State in 1969. He was one of the founders of Africobra in Chicago the same year. He recalled how its members met every other Sunday for as many as eight hours. You always had to bring in something new or some fresh observation about Black experience. In 1970 it mounted a Confaba conference of Black visual artists at Northwestern University, attended by Charles White, Samella Lewis and John Biggers.

Nelson was hired at the U of M in 1972 and the following year did his first mural, *The Black Worker*, with Dana Chandler at the United Community Construction Workers labor temple in Roxbury. The union had set up the boards and primed the wall, Nelson recalled. It was hoping the mural would help establish its credibility as it was trying to recruit members. In recent years he exhibited his easel work two or three times a year in galleries and community places. He was now doing a series on Stevie Wonder, which will be shown in Los Angeles this fall. He also does record jackets. He regards the big mural he did at Tuskegee Institute in 1980 (*Community Murals*, Fall, 1980) his best, but would prefer to paint outdoors, where he can be seen by more people. He would like to use billboards to paint about political issues and hoped Africobra would push for public interest messages on them, just as radio and TV are obliged to provide space.

UPSTATE NEW YORK

We drove through Syracuse to the university to see once again the mosaic rendering done in 1967 of Ben Shahn's *Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, the gouache cartoon of which dates from 1932. Even though the mounting of the separate panels resulted in distracting seams, the work is still immensely moving.

At Corning we took in the photo mural in the new city hall of local folks, by Elliott Erwit. Along with the fire chief, a garbage collector and other common souls are the board of Corning Glass and officials of the United Glass Workers Union. The city



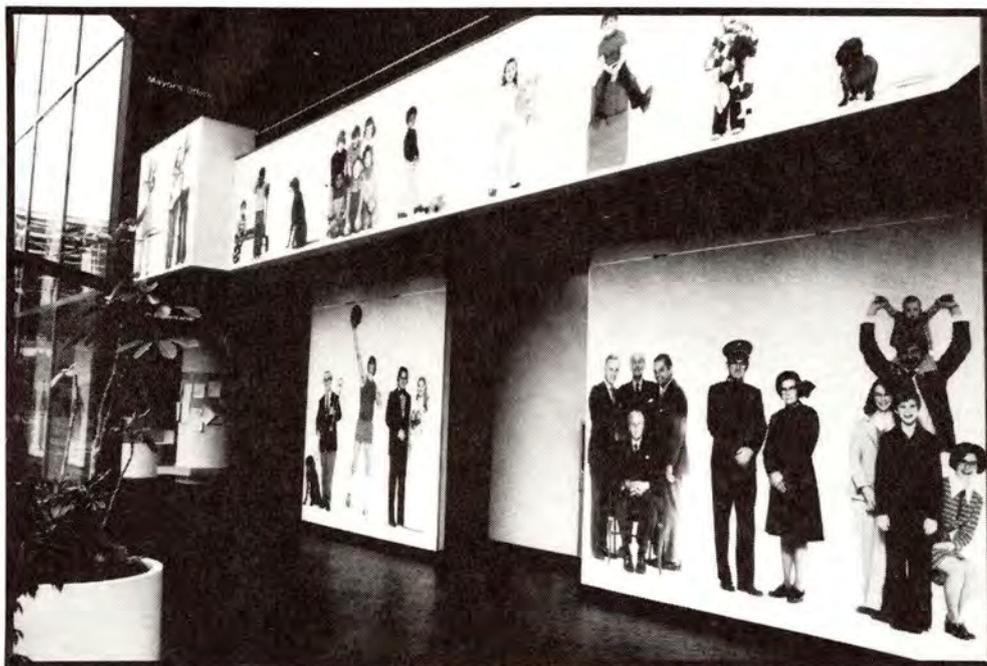
Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti (detail), Ben Shahn, 1967, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

is a company town, and the company and the union paid for what is called the *People's Wall*. It is hard not to read these three floors of life-size images and the plenitude of glass as paternalistic self-advertising.

STATE COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA

Penn State, now a university, has been a center of mural activity for more than 40 years. Henry Varnum Poor, who in 1935 and '36 had done frescoes in the Post Office and Justice Buildings in Washington, came here in 1940 to do a cycle of *Land Grant Frescos* in the foyer of the administration building, which were not completed until 1949. You see them first at the top of a grand staircase. There is Abe Lincoln distributing federal lands to homesteaders and the states for higher education. Around the upper level of the foyer are scenes of men and women at work on the farm, in mines and mills and in the arts. It is a splendid ensemble.

Viktor Lowenfeld came to teach at Penn State in 1946, where he established the Art Education Department, which required that all majors take a murals course and do a mural. Alice Schwartz, a student of his and now chair of the program, remembered him as a dynamic teacher. She plays a tape to beginning students in which he recalls his life and emphasizes his interest in art for the personal development of people, rather than turning out artists. Lowenfeld died in 1960 at age 55, and his last lectures have just been published. John Biggers came to Penn State with Lowenfeld and painted a panel in 1947 that details the life of rural Blacks that is now in the Black student union. For his Ph.D. he did two larger murals in 1949 on the importance of education for Blacks and other impoverished people. They are now mounted in one of the classroom buildings.



The murals class has been required up till now and for years has been taught by Yar Chomicky, also a student of Lowenfeld. Fortunately, Yar was available and took us around campus, showing us the murals in the stairwells and dormitory lounges that students had done over the years. Early murals by veterans on the GI Bill were often about World War II, he said. A later work linked Klan lynchings, police attacks on Blacks and congressional demagoguery with Hitler and Mussolini. There had been a decline of interest in social themes in recent years.

There had been no upheaval on campus, which was remote from cities, during the '60s. Yar had encouraged students to do murals of metal, weaving and ceramics; one had been created out of cafeteria trays. He had arranged for students, sometimes 20 on a crew, to do murals inside and outside restaurants and the shops close to campus, but these were purely ornamental. He said that students no longer read the newspapers. This spring his colleagues had voted to discontinue the murals course.



John Biggers, Untitled, 1949, Burroughs Hall, Penn State University, State College, Pennsylvania

YOUNGSTOWN

We wanted to go through Youngstown to see what had happened to the efforts of the community, unions and churches to buy the steel plants that had been closed down and also to see George Segal's *Steelmakers*. Stopping at the AAA downtown to get oriented, we were accosted by a young man of about 30 who overheard our inquiries and offered to show us around. Wayne Lewis was a laid-off steelworker and needed six months more work to vest his pension that required 10 years of service. He walked us over to the pedestrian mall, where he said the "hunk of junk" was. Commissioned by the city's arts council with NEA and Ohio funding matched by local business, Segal had secured a surplus open hearth furnace (of which there was now an excess) and next to it he had placed the bronze figures made from life casts of two veteran steelworkers selected by the union. Although the accompanying plaque affirmed, "This is a tribute, not a memorial," the work was dedicated in 1980 when the fate of the local industry was conclusive. It now stands as a massive tombstone in front of the local welfare office. Around it, most of the stores and the Paramount Theater are shut down. On these boarded-up storefronts are murals: burlesque acts on the theater, joggers on one shop, the animal kingdom on another, a much magnified box of crayons on a third, a plane taking off on another. To add to the incongruity, a few blocks away stood the just-completed sports stadium — which seems to be the story of USA, 1982.

Wayne said that the Save Our Valley campaign was dead. Washington, though acknowledging that a community-run steel industry here was viable, did not come up with the loans to modernize after the Lykes conglomerate had milked Campbell Sheet and Tube for years. Neither Lykes nor US Steel wanted to sell anyway; that would have created a new competitor. I remarked that I had been impressed by the instant socialism that the conservative workers were prepared to embrace. Wayne said that they were looking for a savior. They were not interested in workers' control; the foremen left the old-timers alone. It was local businessmen who wanted to keep the plants going to save their skins. The workers were "stupid", Wayne insisted. They had not supported the insurgent candidacy of Ed Sidlowsky for union head; they voted for Reagan. They deserved what they got. Communists leafleted here (the hometown of Gus Hall) when the plants were shut down and were promptly arrested. Whom had he voted for? Barry Commoner, came the reply. Wayne had read about his anti-corporate views in national magazines; he was the only person he knew who voted for him. Now we guessed why he had picked us up; he must have seen the peeling Commoner strip on our bumper. Wayne did not believe that real socialism would work because working people did not want the responsibility. He now wanted to study law and later go into business himself and retain lawyers who could not tell him how to run his show. His views, he

cautioned us, were his own, and we would undoubtedly get different interpretations from others. In parting, he directed us to where we could see the steel plants being dismantled and the open hearth furnaces demolished by the wreckers ball.

CLEVELAND

We arrived here on a Friday afternoon, a bad time to locate people and murals in an unfamiliar city. We went directly to Karamu House, a well-known Black community center, where we found a pottery class in the yard making raku in smoking garbage cans beneath a mural that illustrated Karamu's varied involvements in the arts. But there was little else in the area. On the West Side we found some Puerto Rican murals, one dating back to 1974. Just by chance we came on *Cultural Rhythm*, done by Gloria Mark and local people in 1977. An old issue of the *Muralists Newsletter* tells how this celebration of Black culture had suffered repeated defacements until Gloria brought more residents into a discussion and they agreed to renew and extend it. The absence of graffiti, now five years later, on the faces of different colors and the joining hands demonstrates her success. We were directed to an Italian neighborhood, where the Murray Hill Mural Masters had done *La Storia di Popolo Italo-Americano* in 1979. It recounts the immigration, the enterprise of craftsmen and businessmen here, ballplaying in the streets, the mutual care of the generations and the importance of books. Our notes indicated that we could have found more, but we should have contacted people in advance.

DETROIT

It was Saturday and we headed straight for Rivera's murals at the Institute of Art. Having seen just about all of the master's wall art, we concluded that this must be the greatest — probably the prejudice of *Norteamericanos*. Rivera always turned everything into myth. Here work on the assembly line becomes a great ballet; the machines come alive, almost humanized; Henry pats his engine on the head as if it were a pet dog; a husky worker with the red star on his glove is towered over by great phallic tubes, while Edsel is at his desk beneath a giant metal vulva being screwed by a collared shaft; a child being vaccinated updates the Holy Family; and everything is presided over by Anglo and *Indio* earth mothers while airplanes in their hangers point to the sky. It is a paean to an ideal, anchored by real knowledge of manufacturing processes and social reality and leavened by wit. The conception is matched by the execution.

For a contrast, it is worth going across the street to the terrible murals in the Detroit Public Library, with the one exception of Millard Sheets' mosaic, a handsome academic work at the rear entrance. In a closed library branch in Scripps Park, we saw Leroy Foster's *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*



La Storia di Popolo Italo-Americano, Murray Hill Mural Masters, 1979, Cleveland, Ohio

through the window, a very powerful work of a muscular naked Black man breaking his chains, one fist punching out of the canvas, the other reaching in as Douglass, John Brown and others watch.

We discovered that the 1968 Detroit walls of Bill Walker and Eugene Eda were gone. The building on which the *Wall of Dignity* had been painted was demolished, and the panels of the *Harriet Tubman Memorial Wall* at St. Bernard's Church were now in storage with restoration being contemplated.

We went down to the Eastern Farmer's Market to see Alexander Pollack's comic cows and pigs, whose mouths open to admit customers into the big produce shed, but there is much more work, likely by additional artists — two stories of hanging sausages in the front of one store, roof-high watermelons on another. Their paint was bright and must have been recently renewed, since they date from at least the early '70s.

LANSING

We arrived here on a Saturday evening and tried the one or two phone numbers we had, but with no success. For the first time I decided to check the yellow pages, first under "Artists", then "Painters". Well, why not? I tried "Murals". Surprise. There was something called "Off the Wall Murals". It was now 9:45 on a Saturday night. No harm in trying. A pleasant female voice answered. I explained what I was about. Yes, she did know Gary Andrews and was herself a member of the Popular Art Workshop. The next morning, Ruth and I drove over and met Katy McNenly and her family. She was doing murals in schools with kids and had put herself in the yellow pages with the hope of commercial work. She drove us to a project Gary had completed this year with two students from Lansing Community College for course credit. Facing the parking lot of a bicycle shop, it was a pleasant scene of people peddling through Lansing and the countryside. We then took in *Ethnic Festivals*, which he did with three other artists and two dozen assistants in 1977. It had more social bite, showing 44 local people of all races, but also George Washington walking a dog and Malcolm X. They confront viewers from a pier beneath a bridge in Riverside Park. Gary later explained that he tried to work out a kind of "average" style that all participants could master; the result is engaging.

We met Gary later in the morning. He is a graphic artist by trade with a political science background. It was partly painting, with Caryl Yasko, the *Wall of Cooperation* at Circle Pines Camp in Delton, Michigan, in 1973 that turned him on to murals. The Popular Art Workshop that Gary has led came together in 1975 as a result of work at Turner Park, formerly the red light, wine district of the Michigan capital. When a fire destroyed buildings on a corner there, the North Lansing Community Association decided to turn the neighborhood around. It held a mural competition, and Gary's proposal won. It was to paint in the buildings that had disappeared, a tree, a flivver, and add real porches, plantings and an expanded pavement to make this a little plaza where people could lounge and feel good about it. An old WTCU fountain was also moved in. The result was that artists moved into nearby storefronts, property owners felt better and winos could still relax there.

The Popular Art Workshop has done 15 projects, its most recent the Mural with local youth in 1981 at the Ingham county fairgrounds in Mason, an entertaining sequence of rural scenes which attempt to overcome the small size of the building by making continuous panoramas of farmyards and fields so that the corners disappear. This year Gary got stymied by local politics in his plans to do three more, though he had broad support.

Gary showed us the campus of Michigan State and the town of East Lansing, where there was some faculty and student work on shops and a Save the Whales wall. Gary said that the

state has no percent for art in public buildings statute, although some counties do. The state art council has given only three grants for murals. He said that most of the artists in the Popular Art Workshop were on the left, but that they had decided not to show this explicitly in their murals. Lansing, they felt, was too conservative, and the ethnic neighborhood power base had been broken up by highways and public buildings. Ethnic groups did not want to pay for murals. As it turned out, the most political mural we found in Lansing was a billboard we saw repeated in a number of prominent locations. At the top it read:

American

Bank and Trust

YOUR ALLY IN THE FINANCIAL WARS OF THE 80's

The lower half was devoted to a tangled row of barbed wire. The barbs were dollar signs. (There must have been a subversive artist in that agency.)

Gary was full of information about muralists in Michigan. In Detroit, we had missed Nathan Thomas and Ruth James of the Mural Painters Guild. In Bay City, Terry Dickenson redid 24 familiar historical paintings for the Bicentennial between 1974 and '76. David Torres, on the Delta College faculty there, had been one of the people to move Gary to doing murals and had painted Raza projects in Saginaw and Flint. There were murals in Grand Rapids, Holland, Grand Haven and Muskegon. But our energies were wearing thin, and the one suggestion of his we followed was the Martin Luther King wall in Benton Harbor, because it was on the most direct line to Chicago, which was to be our last stop for murals before heading home. The King mural consisted of his portrait with supergraphic red, black and green stripes reaching out to a bald eagle and dove at either end.

We would have liked to have gone back via Minneapolis to see Miranda Bergman's new work, the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where we were told there were murals on the Native People's struggle and Montana, where Niki Glen was painting, but we could not have done justice to those places. We had also bypassed New Jersey, expecting to be there soon again. There must have been many areas along the way that we missed out of ignorance or limitations of time, which we regret.

What we learned was that there is a national mural movement, that the idea and practice of socially conscious murals have a life of their own because of the hard work of the last 15 years, and that they will not cease being done because times are tough. It is, after all, an art of struggle. We carried home with us once again immense admiration for the people who are keeping it alive.

Alan Barnett
National Murals Network

Photos: Alan Barnett

Alan's "Southern Journey" appeared in the Fall, 1981 issue of the *Community Newsletter*. His book, *Community Murals*, is due to be published early in 1983 by the Art Alliance Press and Cornwall Books.

CALIFORNIA



Photos: Tim Drescher



Crumpler Completes Second Part of *The Fire Next Time*

Dewey Crumpler has completed the second section of *The Fire Next Time*, begun in 1976-77, at Hunter's Point in San Francisco. As the photograph shows, the new section stretches across an upper wall of a gymnasium, around the corner, and along the entire north wall of the structure. It continues the earlier piece in both style and imagery, with few changes.

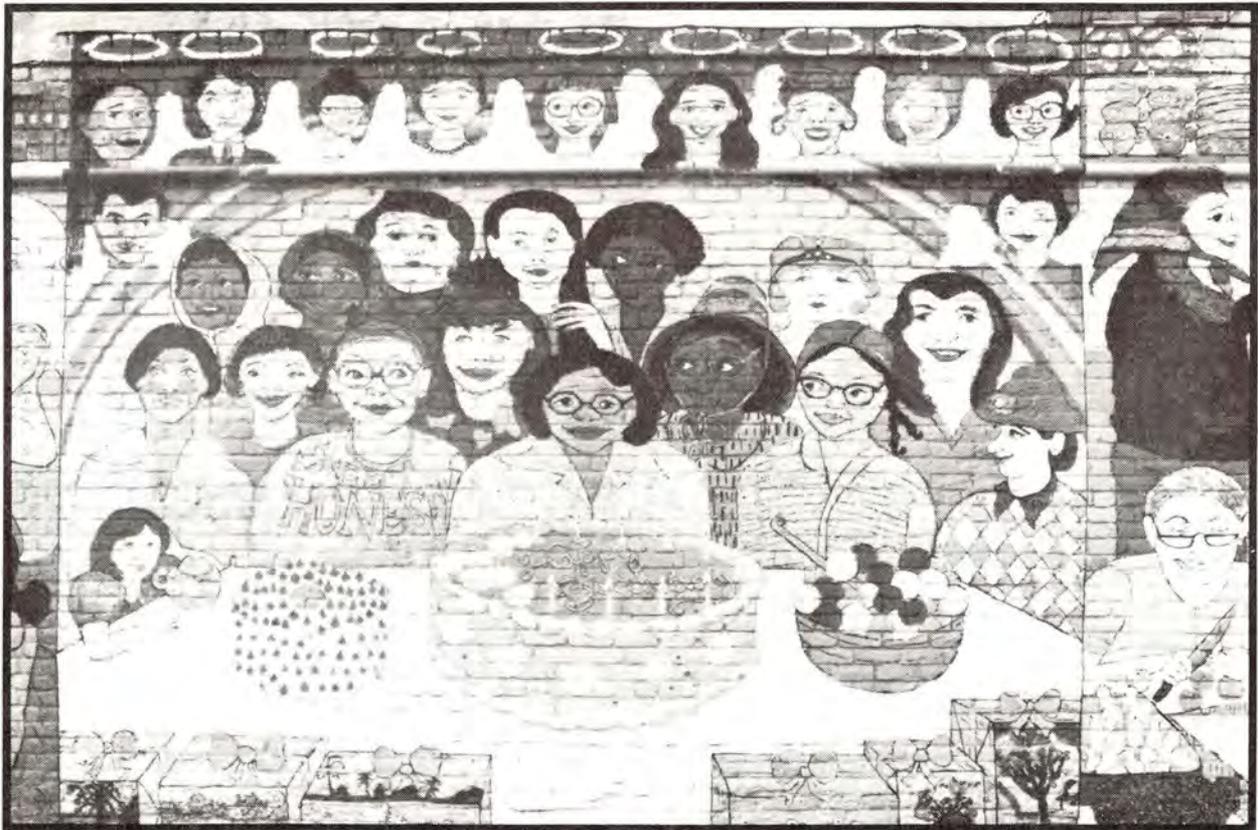
Reading from left to right in the photograph, the mural contains circled stylized portraits of leading fighters for Black rights in the United States: Sojourner Truth, Malcolm X, Mary McCloud Bethune, and Martin Luther King, Jr. On the right-hand portion, above the windows, are large Dogon figures symbolizing, with African figures, the centrality of the family and the constant regeneration of youth which it brings about.

The left-hand, or street side, of the mural depicts the transition from Africa to America for Black people, and shows how African-American culture retains African traditions, even if modified. For example, African weaving, textile designs are shown on the left, and again in a modified form as quilts made in the southern United States by Black women. This shows how the U.S. quilts have African roots. The cloth joins the two cultures over immense distances which separate them on the globe.

The central image, painted in blue, is an Oni figure, one of the early kings of the Ife group of people, part of the Benin region today known as Nigeria. It was made of bronze in the late 15th or early 16th century. Its monumental size proclaims an ancient and awesome heritage of African-American people. The image is so powerful it makes it mandatory that viewers understand that the African tradition is much greater than just its African-American history. This bronze shows anyone that Africa's civilization produced striking art for hundreds of years, an art that often demanded considerable scientific knowledge of metals to produce.

The wall's presence in Hunter's Point, a predominantly Black neighborhood populated by Blacks who came to work in its shipyards during World War II, itself proclaims the profound linkage between African and African-American histories.

The mural was funded by the Office of Community Development, and administered by the Mural Resource Center in San Francisco from May 1982 until its completion in February, 1983.



Scenes From the Downtown Women's Center

A 1982 mural was unveiled at Los Angeles' Downtown Women's center, painted under the direction of Ann Alexandra Wolken assisted by Frank Sullivan and with the local women whom the mural depicts. These women are commonly known as "bag ladies," but Wolken prefers to refer to them as women of skid row. The Center is a refuge and focus for their lives.

Having been selected because of the positiveness of her sketches, Wolken xeroxed the drawings and posted them up in a scaled grid. The women, once the grid was transferred to the wall, helped with color, and with a moving dedication ceremony.

One of the painting's themes is female power. This is suggested by the wall's being done in pastels in an aging neighborhood, presenting a positive self-concept for people frequently exploited.

The exterior wall of the center becomes an x-ray of activities inside. Scenes of different activities are presented in four parts: 1, the backyard on the right, the women of skid row; 2, the kitchen — the Center serves a free lunch, and this scene includes the director and founder of the Center and volunteers; 3, a birthday party for one of the women — Civic Angels, those whose contributions keep the Center going, are pictured above; 4, the living room, where puzzles, bingo, coffee, reading, and make-up are available. It includes women reading a newspaper with an article on skid row women.

The project was supported by a California Arts Council grant of \$5,000 toward the \$8,500 total, and took one full year.

Progress on Beach Flats Clinic

A building and a mural, unexpected gifts to the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center, have raised hopes that a free clinic in the Beach Flats area, as well as a community center, may become a reality. A Santa Cruz Council decision on Tuesday, March 8, will determine whether money will be available from the city to help provide staffing and supplies for the proposed clinic.

"There has been such an incredible surge of energy, beautiful energy, around this project," says Rosamaria Zayas, Outreach Coordinator for the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center and one of the founders of the Beach Flats Community Development Consortium who submitted the funding proposal to the City Council. "First, there was the extremely generous offer of a building from a woman who read in the *Sentinel* about our need for some place to plug in our Mobile/Health Unit once a week in the Beach Flats area. Instead of an outlet,



BERKELEY WOMEN'S HEALTH COLLECTIVE MURAL TAKE CONTROL

Ariella Seidenberg and Deborah Green, 8' x 16', Ellsworth and Howe St., Berkeley, CA

The imagery reads from left to right. The first image is a woman giving birth to a child. The next sequence is a group of faces of emotion — anger, pain, sadness. The joy of solidarity of women is shown beginning with a disabled mother, a gay woman, a woman learning self/help health care, women practicing self defense, women studying together, women making music together, women farming together, and finally the woman giving birth to herself. The earth is represented as a woman's rotund body. The sun rising is her head.

This mural was painted using some very exciting principles of collective mural work. The project once proposed to the BWHC included their input often. They were consulted for imagery ideas, the drawing was displayed for weeks to the public for their input, which was received and some of it used, and of course as health workers would take a break from the clinic and watch our progress we would draft them as models. As two painters working together, we both experience a sense of unity and artistic intoxication as each other heightened the other's work.



photo by Bill Lovejoy, courtesy S.C. Sentinel

we got a building! I really want to praise this woman (who wants to remain anonymous) for giving so generously. I love her for that.

"Then these two Chicano men from UCSC, Daniel Alejandro, a member of a group called El Teatro de la Tierra Morena (The Theatre of the Brown Earth) and Ruben Molina, a political artist, came to us and said, 'we want to do a mural for you.' And they walked the streets in the Beach Flats community talking to young freelance artists (graffiti artists) and involved them in the planning and painting of the mural. When the painting was done, these Beach Flats youth not only felt appreciated for their art, but also felt a sense of ownership in the building. One young man, all 'cholo'd out,

told us, 'Hey, you got 24 hour patrol on this building!' Now, if the City Council will fund our proposal for a free clinic and a multi-service community center, we can begin to fill that beautiful building with the services the community desperately needs."

According to Rosamaria, the cooperation and understanding between such apparently disparate elements of the community as the Women's Health Center members, Third World UCSC art students, and Beach Flats youth, is a good example of Third World feminism. "We don't eliminate men. The thing I hold against some kinds of feminism is that they eliminate men. Our struggle, the struggle of Women of Color, is a total community struggle. It works to everybody's benefit. An annual pap smear can save a woman's life. Yet we need the cooperation of men to make it possible for some women to get that pap smear. Now we have some male support for our proposed clinic, thanks to this mural conceived and carried out by men. They feel a part of it. It's a very powerful statement."

The mural itself portrays two goddess figures, the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness of Mexico, and Coatlicue, Mother of the Aztec God's. Rosamaria explains that the Virgin de Guadalupe was chosen for the mural because she appeared to the Spaniards to tell them that God's love extended to all peoples and that they should stop killing the Indians. Because the Virgin appeared on the same mountain, Mt. Tepeyac, that was sacred to the Aztec goddess, she is believed by some to have been the Christianized manifestation of that ancient Aztec mother of the Gods. Whatever the interpretation, the two sacred figures now preside over an empty building at 124 Liebrandt in the Beach Flats area. A mass has already been held at an altar constructed beneath the two figures. "All this energy is conjuring up the power that we need to fund the free clinic and the multi-purpose service center," says Rosamaria.

by Barbara Riverwomon
Matrix March 1983

AUSTRALIA

Direct Community Participation in Two Canberra Murals

The Commonwealth Gardens Amphitheatre Wall Mural and the *Women's Mural* at the Ainslie Shopping Centre, both in Canberra, were organized as experiments in direct community participation. Within visual frameworks previously established by groups of interested individuals, people were invited to say, without censorship, something that they felt was relevant to themselves and the present. A situation was devised where people of varying art experiences could work together, to avoid the "artists" becoming separate from other participants.

The degree to which mural painting is a "community art" form varies according to the amount of participation by the community concerned and the amount of control the artist/coordinator(s), if involved, has on the project. Believing that mural art should be both for and by the people, a primary concern in both projects was that community members had a direct involvement in formulating the content, and if they wanted, the painting. The initial intention of many muralists is to break down the barriers between artists and their community and to disturb the existing art hierarchy based on professionalism and capitalism. Murals can be a real opportunity for individuals to have an effect on their environment — to say something about their lives or simply decorate their lives.

In his speech at the opening of the Commonwealth Gardens Mural, Humphrey McQueen emphasized the desirability of mural painting being a "normal" event in a society and part of a broad town-planning concept. He said, "That to see them as separate from that, as just something you can do on a wall as if you then didn't have to be worried about the way in which people lived in the rest of the environment, is, I think, to misunderstand how a mural or a fresco should work and that one of the most obvious and exciting things about the particular one behind us is the way in which some of those elements have been brought together. That a large number of people worked on it, they did their own patchwork square, not only do they hold together, but that the various elements in there do, indicate the range and the conflicts, the competitive ideas and images that go into making up any society, that then go into making up the art of that society."

The Commonwealth Gardens Mural is a collage of images — ideas and philosophies of people who live in Canberra and wanted to participate in a group activity that recorded these.

Coordinated by a community art group, "Paintings On Walls — Canberra City Mural Art", and funded by the Department of the Capital Territory, the mural replaced one painted several years earlier as part of an ongoing visually changing wall. Organization of funds for the project, to include nominal payment of all participants, took over 12 months. During this time, invitations to Canberrans to participate were made through radio, posters and letters sent to high schools, colleges, public libraries and various community and art organizations, the press and by personal contact.

The composition was formed by members of "Paintings On Walls". Based on a patchwork quilt flowing from a Brindabella Mountains horizon, the design enabled individuals and groups to paint a different image into each square. They felt the Brindabellas were a feature of Canberra's environment that everyone who lived there would identify with, and encouraged people to paint from ideas related to Australian history and culture. The overall pattern was chosen to enable many ideas and painting styles to be incorporated.

Painting the 93'3" x 6'8" concrete wall took two weeks. Fifty-one people, including artists, art students, teachers, children, arts administrators and many interested individuals worked on the mural.

Many of the squares are descriptive and related to the Australian environment, such as the pelican, the sea shell, the parrots and the treescape; others tell stories of the painters' families, such as the scene of the Kalgoorlie goldfields, the view of the Blue Mountains and the portrait of the Gilgandra farmer on a march to Sydney to join World War I forces; some relate to Australian history and personalities, such as William Lane's Utopian settlement in South America and the portraits of the female painter Dorrit Black and the female writer Miles Franklin; some are good fun, such as the "Bushfire Blues" square and the Merry-go-round; several sections reflect social concerns, such as "Nature Heals", the poem on the birth of a new society, the references to the Hilton bombing, the statement in memory of all women raped in all wars, the pattern based on the Aboriginal Land Rights flag, the writing about woodchipping, the "Women Work" motif, and the squares on unemployment and the jeopardized Tasmanian environment.



Commonwealth Gardens Amphitheatre, 1982. Canberra, Australia. Photo: Lesley Goldacre

Abstract and floral patterns, different types of stitching, a multitude of colours and the two main figures — a woman sewing the patchwork together and a man planting a tree complete the scene below the Brindabellas.

As well as the people who were previously contacted, many others joined in the painting after the project had begun. They heard about it from friends, saw reports in the press or stopped to paint after noticing the activity on a visit to the gardens. There was a positive response from people visiting the gardens during the school holidays who watched, talked to the participants, took photographs and/or painted, and from people who worked in the gardens.

Everyone worked cooperatively and good-humouredly. As one participant said, it was a good opportunity for the people of Canberra to work together on a project that related to themselves directly and for inexperienced painters to work with others, share ideas, learn more skills and gain confidence.

When the New South Wales Women and Arts Festival was being organized in Sydney, a group of Canberra women artists began meeting to discuss a "Women's Mural" at a suburban shopping centre. They wanted to paint a "celebration of women" that viewers would identify with and learn from.

Painters were invited, through notices distributed in the area, to centres of possible interest, such as the Canberra School of Art and to friends. Participation was also open to onlookers — people who stopped to look were enthusiastic about the content and wanted to join in.

During preparatory meetings, many possible themes were suggested and debated. The mixture of attitudes and sensibilities of the interested women and men led to a valuable dialogue on feminist ideology.

The site, in an older suburb, was accessible and familiar to most of the painters, some of whom lived there. The owner of the supermarket whose wall was to be painted was sympathetic and made no attempt at censorship. The women who worked at the shopping centre were supportive and excited, although none became involved in the actual painting. Some of the painters visited nearby women residents and talked with them about the theme and their possible involvement. They were shy of being personally represented, so a theme was sought which they could enjoy and with which they could identify.

Ideas were tossed about — a history of women in the Ainslie area, activities of women in the Ainslie area, an alternative representation of women's role in society, portraits of notable Australian women, a political/feminist statement, self portraits or an open format with areas set aside for individuals to develop their own ideas.

It was important to the participants that the theme was personally relevant while also creating a work which would stimulate thought and discussion. Realizing that the mural would be a collective activity, an overall format was chosen to hold the mural together visually. A long line of different types of women, arms linked, kicking their legs joyfully in the air, was agreed upon.

A very basic outline, to keep proportion consistent, was drawn on the prepared wall, and on two consecutive weekends paints and brushes were made available.

Painters developed the outlines of 29 figures into women of their own design. More discussion and research took place at this stage. A bushwalker, a housewife, a feminist doctor, a mime, a goddess, May Tilton — a World War I nurse — one painter's daughter, another's sister and child, another's mother, a radical feminist, an African woman, an old woman, a young girl, a swimmer, Mum Shirl — an Aboriginal Rights worker — a photographer, and many other women were depicted, with personal significance to the painter, or painters, as some figures were worked on by small groups.

Unity was represented and unity was practiced during the work. Ainslie residents visiting the shopping centre, shopkeepers and employees, and especially the elderly people who live at the nearby Goodwin Homes, were excited about this change in their environment and encouraging in regard to the content. Seventy-two people were involved with the painting of the 55' x 6'6" wall. The project was not funded by local government. Materials were supplied by the "Paintings On Walls — Canberra City Mural Art" group.

Art in Canberra, "the Nation's Capital", is tucked away, often denied its function of making the community more visually stimulated and aware of their lives and environment. The city seems to be regarded by the bureaucracy as a space for tastefully arranged imported sculptures, although as the Scottish town artist David Harding said, on his visit to Canberra in 1982, "culture must come from within, and not be imposed on the people." Community involvement in local art production adds to the life and spirit of a city.

The Commonwealth Gardens Mural and the *Women's Mural* are two projects which prove that there is energy and enthusiasm to produce art for and with the people of Canberra.

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Australia



Women's Mural, 1982, Ainslie Shopping Centre, Canberra, Australia. Photo: Lesley Goldacre

BRUSSELS

The St. Josse-Ten-Noode Murals

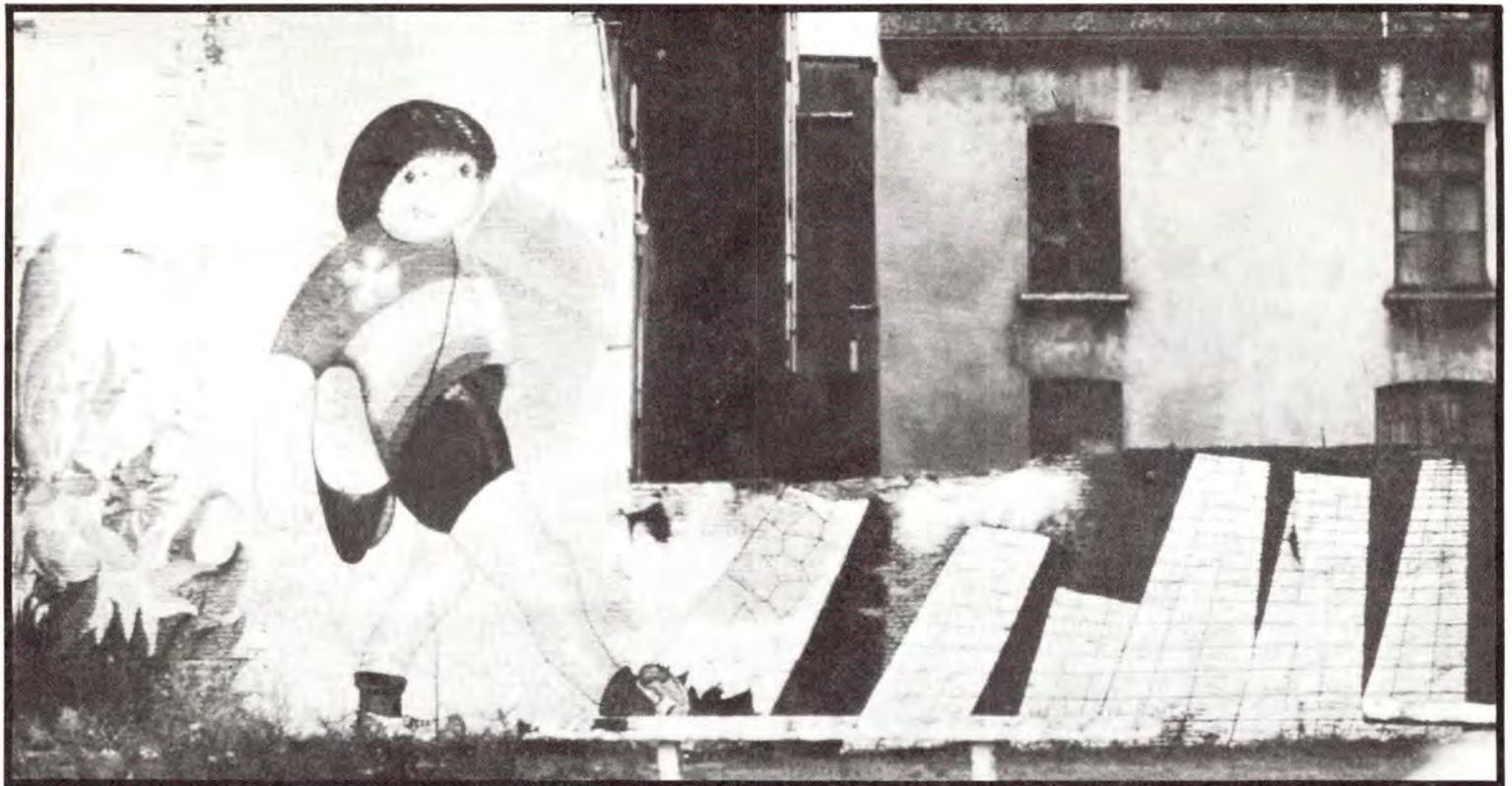
Brussels has the reputation of being a dull city. The only action in town takes place at the NATO or EEC headquarters, or perhaps once a year in the medieval Grande Place, the showcase for the busloads of tourists on their one-night stand tours.

On a recent trip to Europe, however, Brussels' reputed silence was broken for us by a group of colorful murals which literally "spoke" for a neighborhood's inhabitants. On the west side of the buildings facing the extended Boulevard Emile Jacqmain, between Boulevard Baudouin and the Rue Charbonnier (two blocks west of the Gare du Nord), are a series of murals which, directed at the passing motorists, describes the residents' own view of their neighborhood's situation in the face of city-sponsored urban renewal plans.

This neighborhood, St. Josse-ten-Noode, was slated for major demolition in a 1963 plan drawn up by city officials and delegates from the "administrations communales", a fairly vague term used by the authors of a book describing this plan. * A new route for an extension of the Blvd. Emile Jacqmain was to cut through the neighborhood, resulting in the demolition of several residences. In addition, this new boulevard would be lined with 16-story residential and office towers, replacing the 4-story 19th century brick apartments. Other than the construction of the new Blvd. Emile Jacqmain and the enlargement of the Gare du Nord, however, the rest of the project was delayed.

The murals give some explanation as to why the rest of the project has not yet been carried out. Some of them directly translate the resistance to the plan. The "Y'en a Marre" ("We are fed up") mural, with both its graphics and its location directly in front of the towering office buildings (the reason for inverting





the letters on the banners), represents the residents' opposition to the plan. The "Rainbow Kid" literally kicks down the high-rise buildings to make way for a more humanistic environment, the seeds of which he is sowing. The neighborhood is full of untapped energy, as illustrated by electric apparatus.

In an effort to dramatize what the urban landscape of Brussels could become, the muralists have cleverly painted an image of the Grande Place as it would appear reflected on a modern glass facade. The rampant greed is symbolized in the ironically-titled "Brussels is Love" image. The businessman in suit and tie seems to hold the city at gunpoint in his pursuit of profits.

The people of the neighborhood paint themselves as imprisoned, perhaps by their lack of housing options. They seem to identify with other victims of the military-industrial oligarchies around the world. The slogan written on the face of the figure wearing a military uniform proclaims that: "Everyone has the right to liberty of thought, conscience, religion, freedom of speech and opinion." This proclamation stands in ironic contrast to the victims of state oppression, represented by the faces hung as medals. Among these faces are those of Ghandi, Salvador Allende, Martin Luther King, Solzhenitsyn, Russell Means, and others.

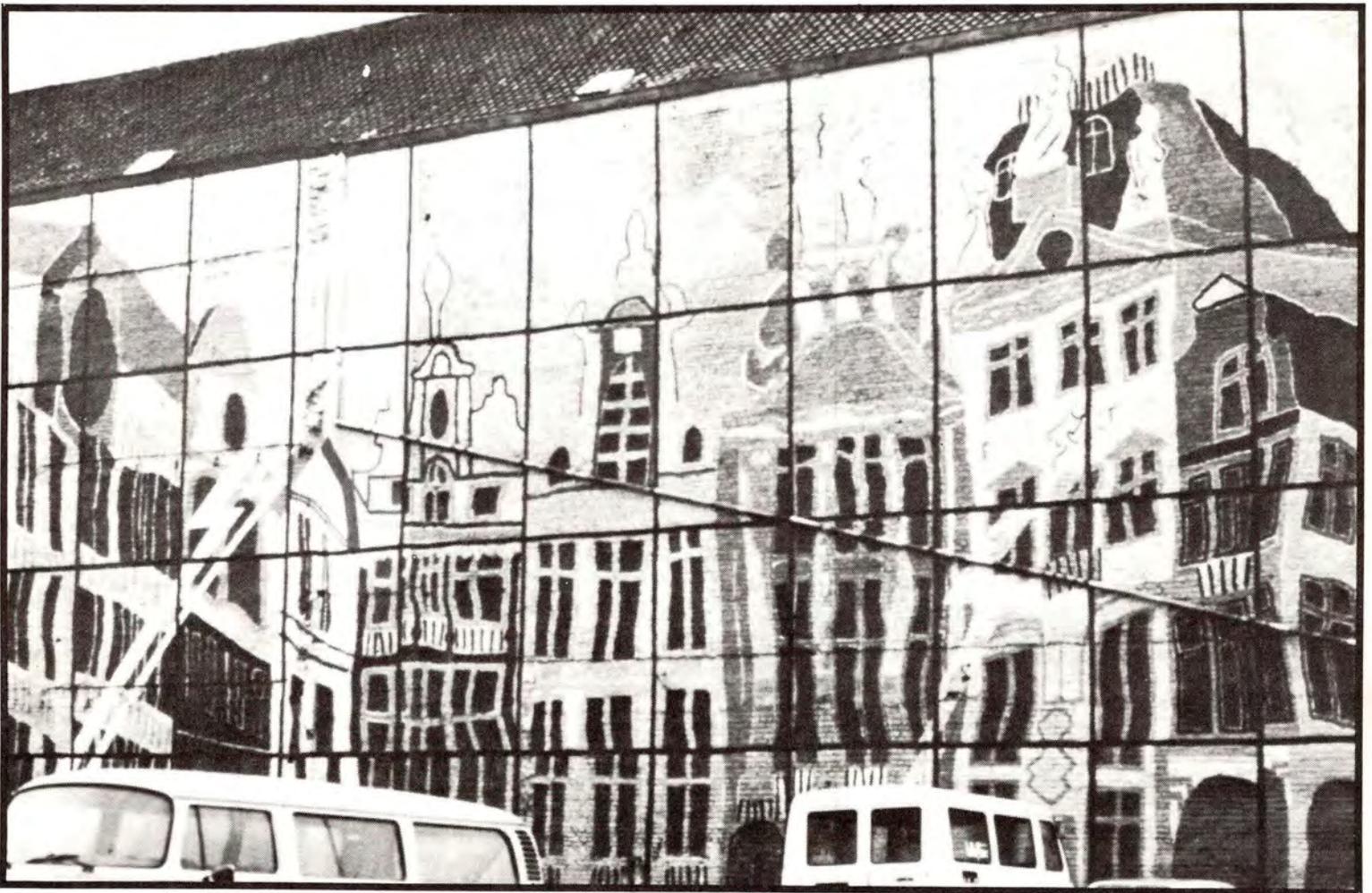
The store window which originally called our attention to these murals also displayed a "counter-project" done by architectural students working with the neighborhood people. Instead of demolishing most of the neighborhood, this project planned to rehabilitate the existing buildings and utilized new, locally-operated technologies, such as solar and wind energy. Indeed, a wind generator stood in front of one of the murals.

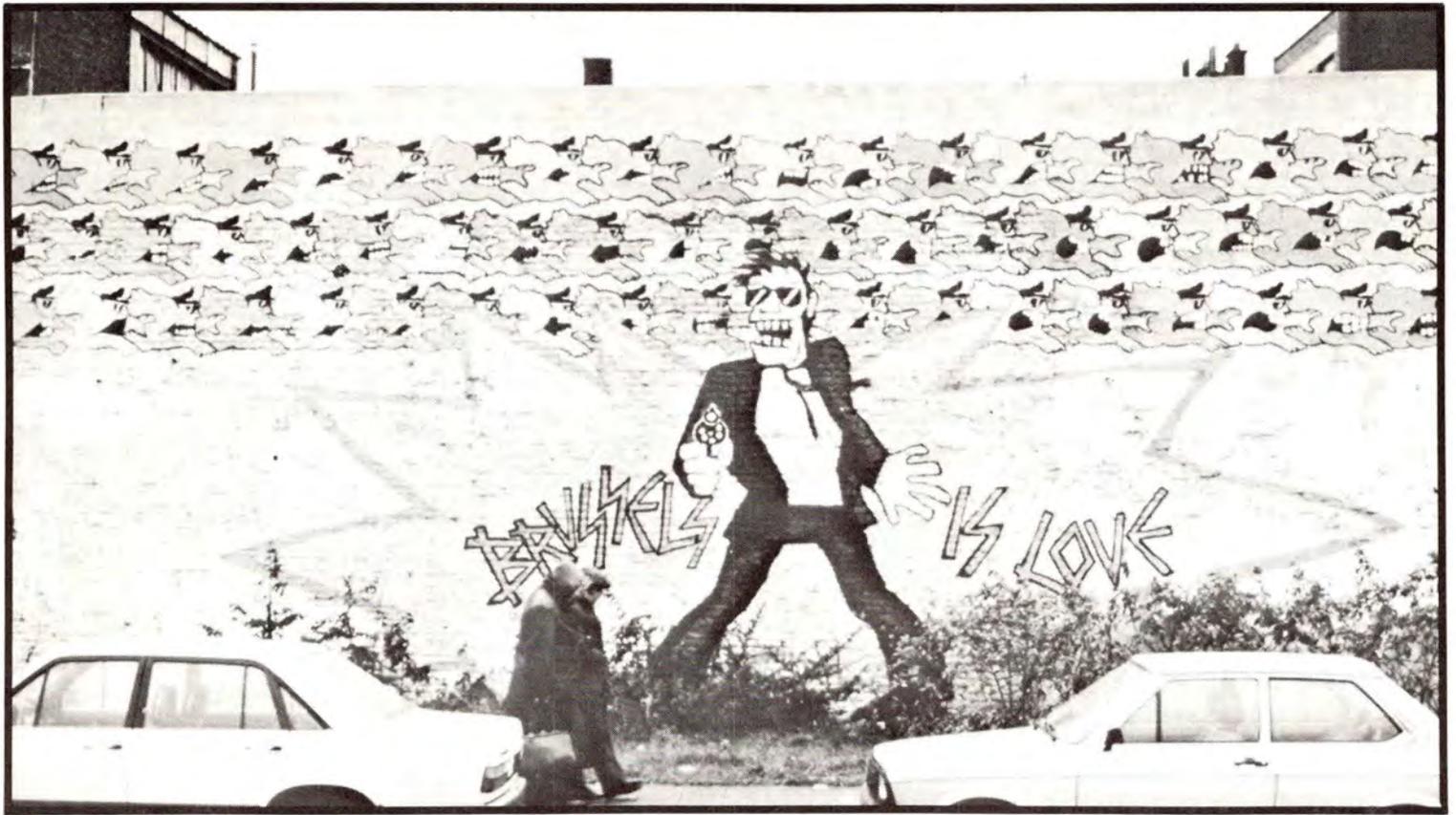
Our discovery of the St. Josse-ten-Noode murals made our last day in Europe one of the most interesting and exciting of our entire trip. So much so that in talking to a native of Brussels sitting next to us on the plane back to the States, we were able to strongly object to his put-down of his home town as "dead".

Zeynep Celik
E. Perry Winston



* Saulnier, P. de, *Renovation Urbaine*, extract from the magazine "Habiter", #24-25, December 1963; Ghent, Belgium; pp. 29-32.





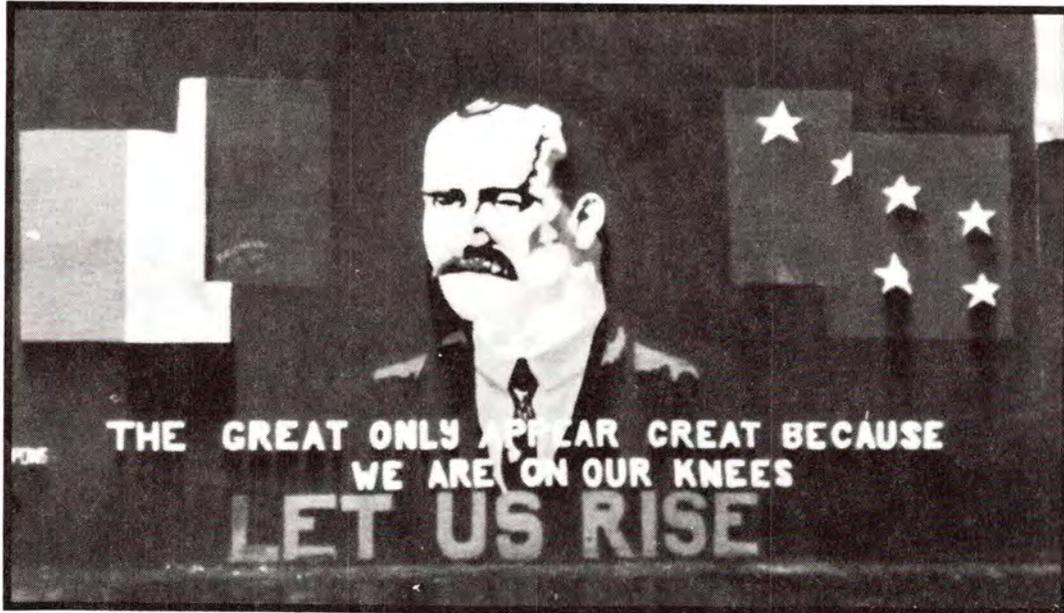
IRELAND



The Provisional IRA aligns itself with all struggles for the liberation of the people from oppression around the world, in Latin America, the Middle East and in Africa. Photo: Mary Ellen McGuirk.



Plastic bullets are often fired at point blank range, travelling in excess of 100 miles an hour, at residents, including children, of the Falls Road area, the Catholic ghetto of Belfast. The bullets are over 1" in diameter and over 3" long. Photo: Mary Ellen McGuirk.



James Connally was executed by British troops on May 12, 1916 for his leadership of the Easter Rising. A union organizer and socialist theoretician, Connally serves as an inspiration to the Republican movement of today's Ireland. Photo: Mary Ellen McGuirk.

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