

# COMMUNITY MURALS

SUMMER 1984  
VOLUME 9, NO. 3





# EDITORIAL

Several recent incidents bear a disturbing similarity—overt attacks against both democratic and artistic community expressions. In Los Angeles, reactionary Cubans defaced a mural in Estrada Courts, and in San Francisco, the Ku Klux Klan has vandalized murals in progress in the Mission District. Such attacks are on the rise, no doubt encouraged by the attitudes of conservative governments in power, such as Reagan's and Thatcher's.

But the attacks are not only on artworks, they are also on basic democratic freedoms. In San Francisco during the Democratic Convention demonstrators guilty of minor infractions against traffic codes were arrested for "conspiracy to commit misdemeanor," a serious felony. In England, Thatcher's Tory government is moving to eliminate democratically elected local governments, defending her plan with arguments used by Hitler and Mussolini to defend their fascist takeovers—efficiency and centralization. Who knows what horrors Reagan holds in store

should he be reelected after portraying his self-serving politically motivated war-mongering as a foreign policy.

It is exactly this period before elections that gives community artists a special opportunity to apply our skills effectively. Repressive governments always breed opposition, and in many places that includes community arts.

In some countries, traditional advertising forms have been "turned around" to provide positive messages/experiences for the population. In Cuba, billboards have been used for years in this manner. This was also true in Grenada, before the invasion, where billboards proclaimed the need for education and healthcare for all citizens. In this issue of *CMM* we print a photograph of a recent billboard in San Francisco alerting passersby to the insane (but lucrative) dangers of nuclear politics. Still, there is some question about using billboards for community purposes, and so we are publishing a debate, an exchange of letters, really, between proponents of differing views, community artists all.

Nor are community expressions limited to visual arts. The poem printed in this issue was written by a young

Nicaraguan poet while watching a brigade of international muralists painting in Managua. Its belief in the sincerity of people, regardless of governments which try to obscure their rights to self-determination, captures one of the wonderful relationships in a community arts project, and gives to it a recognition of the international nature of our movement.

With poems or murals, silkscreens or banners, community artists can make a visible difference in the upcoming elections by helping to raise issues of community self-determination. The candidates need educating (only Rev. Jessie Jackson seems to be aware of the existence of community-based arts, as he indicated in his speech at the Convention in July.) People in general can always benefit from powerful visual images articulating their needs, aspirations, hopes and (true) histories, especially when they become involved in the process of design and creation themselves. Thus, again, may community artists help create an art of high quality, freely accessible to people in their movements against racial, sexual, and economic oppression.

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## Deadlines!!!!

Materials for the next four issues are as follows:

- Fall 1984 Thursday, October 11
- Winter 1985 Thursday, January 24
- Spring 1985 Thursday, April 25
- Summer 1985 Thursday, July 25

Materials for these issues must be in our hot little hands by the dates shown. Please send us information, with black and white glossy photos (and slides, if possible) about projects in your part of the world.

Special note: The Fall 1984 issue (the *next* issue) will feature images of labor.

Cover: *Fair Street: Drawing of a Mural in Progress*, pencil, Anthony Senna, San Francisco, CA. 1984.

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## CMM Initiates Volumes and Numbers

With this issue, at the request of several people we are noting the volume (year) and number (per calendar year) of *CMM*. The publication began, as a Newsletter, in 1976, so that is Volume 1. 1984 thus becomes Volume 9. In most years, we published only two issues, i.e., numbers 1 and 2, but with 1984 we have been publishing quarterly, so this issue is Volume 9, Number 3, the third issue published in this year.

### Editorial Group

Juana Alicia	Nancy Hom
Miranda Bergman	Emmanuel Montoya
Kathie Cinnater	Mike Mosher
Lincoln Cushing	Jane Norling
Jim Dong	Ray Patlan
Tim Drescher	Arch Williams



### Our Error(s)

1. In the last issue we on p. 10 we printed a comparative analysis of two Irish murals with the headline (and conclusion) that "Style Teaches a Lesson in Politics." We were misinformed and wish to correct the errors we published. David Harding sets the record straight in brief: "The King William mural was not done by someone with 'extensive formal training.' It is not of an English conqueror. He was Dutch and was fighting the King of Great Britain, James II. It is painted in a working class district."

A lengthier discussion of the Irish murals and issues they raise (in content and style) was received just past deadline, kindly sent by Julian Watson. We will print his essay in the next issue, but we wanted to correct the errors now.

2. In the last issue of *CMM* on p. 3 is an article about the Keim Paint System in which the term "render" is used several times. For those of us who might not know what the term means *CMM* has discovered that, in United States terms anyway, it basically means "plaster." Yes, that's right. To use the Keim System, it is necessary to plaster the wall to be painted.



# RESOURCES

## New Directory of Arts Activism

*Cultural Correspondence* has just published a *Directory of Arts Activism: We Will Not Be Disappeared!* The 162 page book has over 500 separate entries about progressive arts organizations and individuals listed in six geographical areas (NE, MW, SE, NW, SW and international), and fifteen categories (visual arts, theater, dance, photography, music, film, community center, distribution, publications, mail art, writers, video, networker artist, a network, radio).

It is not just a list, although names and addresses are given. For each entry there is a statement explaining the group's philosophy and what they are trying to do. Plus excellent visuals.

To order, send \$5 plus \$1.50 handling and postage to: Directory—Cultural Correspondence, 505 West End Ave., New York, N.Y. 10024.

## Exhibition Catalog

### San Francisco Artist's Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America

Although many cities across the U.S. participated in the Artist's Call movement this past Spring, very little documentation remains. This catalog helps us to capture our own history by presenting San Francisco's efforts. Included are statements by local organizers, critical reviews, photos of the exhibits and the works themselves, and a brief financial report (\$3,000 was raised for Central American aid.)

The catalog is available by mail from:  
Mission Graphics, Attn: Kay  
2868 Mission St.  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
\$4 covers sale price and postage.

## Peace Mural Postcards

Postcard sets of the Peace Murals shown in the Spring 84 issue of *CMM* are available in packs of 7, from:

Greenwich Mural Workshop  
The Macbean Centre  
LEB Yard, MacBean St.,  
Woolwich, London SE 18

Cost is one pound, or \$1.50 per set.

## Cultural Exchange Project

Fellow Muralists:

As you may be aware, the situation in Chile has changed dramatically in the last year. Opposition to the dictatorship, once almost exclusively underground, is increasingly open and outspoken. As a result, there is a greater need to produce and print art and information that expresses the hopes and ideas of the majority.

As Bay Area artists and cultural workers, we are committed to buy a press and supplies for an on-going graphics workshop in Chile. The entire project will cost approximately \$4000 to start. Up until now, graphic artists in this group have produced posters and literature for use by people opposed to the Pinochet regime. The workshop's efforts have been frustrated in the final stages by not having their own press. Given the nature of their work, printing has often been difficult and at times impossible to come by as well as routinely two or three times the normal cost. Added to these burdens, the need to use outside printers further increases the danger in an already precarious situation.

To make this idea a reality, your support is crucial. We hope that your own experience will help you appreciate the urgency of this situation and encourage you to join this collective effort.

We welcome you to join us in this exciting and needed project.

In solidarity,  
Lincoln Cushing, for  
the Cultural Exchange Project

Tax-deductible contributions  
made be made out to:  
La Pena/CEP

3105 Shattuck Ave.  
Berkeley, CA 94705



## ... For Beginners

The April 1984 issue of *Africa Now* reports that

**This month, Pule Monama, national organiser of the Azanian Students' Movement, will appear in court in Johannesburg charged with allegedly possessing a banned book. When security police raided the home of 28-year-old Monama in Soweto on November 25 last year they seized several publications and tapes.**

**He was then charged with possessing several banned publications, but the charges were dropped and he was then charged with one offence under the Publications Act. Monama was alleged to have been in possession of the book *Lenin for Beginners* (second revised edition) contrary to section 8 of the Publications Act.**

The book, published by Writers and Readers in the UK, is part of their internationally acclaimed *Beginners* series now published in over 20 countries. The books are written in a down-to-earth manner for those who do not want to spend much time studying a particular subject but at the same time want to know the basics. Other titles in the series include *Freud, Darwin, Einstein, Marx, Capitalism and Socialism*.

The South African action against Monama further proves that apartheid does not end at race, but also extends to knowledge.

Recently, the series issued *Orwell for Beginners*, text by David Smith and artwork by San Francisco muralist Mike Mosher.

New or forthcoming for *Beginners* topics include Ronald Reagan, Wilhelm Reich, Computers, and Black History. The books are distributed in the United States by W.W. Norton, Inc., 500 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010, but are often available in bookstores.



## "Por La Paz"

Señor Community Murals Magazine:

Estimado Artista Nacional:

El incremento constante y desproporcionado de la carrera armamentista, los signos amenazadores de los poderes belicos, han venido trazando estrategias que atentan contra el ordenamiento de la paz mundial. La posibilidad de una tercera guerra propiciadora de grandes exterminios y cimentada en la tecnología nuclear motivan a la Unidad de Artes Plásticas y Afiches del Departamento de Difusión Artística y Cultural de la Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo a convocar de modo plural distintos artistas del mundo a la Muestra Internacional de Arte Correo "Por la Paz".

La muestra, en la que que esperamos contar—con alguna (s) de tus obra (s), será realizada en Octubre del presente año en conmemoración con el 446 aniversario de nuestra Universidad.

Las obras a enviar entran dentro de los denominados impresos (fotografías, dibujos, grabados, carteles, etc.) enviados por correo sin marco.

Al final de la muestra, nuestra institución—editará un libro con una obra de cada artista, su dirección, así como un breve curriculum. Un ejemplar del libro será enviado a cada participante.

Esperando contar con tu participación y decidida colaboración invitando a otros artistas, nuestra dirección para la recepción de correspondencias y obras es la siguiente:

"Por La Paz"—  
Muestra Internacional  
Departamento Difusion  
Artística y Cultrual  
Universidad Autonoma de  
Santo Domingo  
Santo Domingo,  
Republica Dominicana.

## "International Art Exposition For Peace"

Dear Community Murals Magazine:

The disproportionate and constant growth of the arms race, the warning signs of the warring powers, have been deliberate strategies in opposition to the ordaining of world peace.

The possibility of a 3rd World War which will bring mass extermination and which will derive from nuclear technology has motivated the Union of Plastic Art and Two-Dimensional Design of the Department of Art & Culture at the Autonomus University of Santo Domingo to convene a mass international conference of individual artists at our "International Art Exposition for Peace."

The show, which we hope will include some of your readers' work, will take place in October of this year in commemoration of the 446th anniversary of our University. The works to be sent should be in the following categories: photos, drawings, prints, posters, etc., sent in the mail, unframed.

At the conclusion of the exhibition, our institution will edit and produce a book with a work of each participating artist, their address, and a short comment. A copy of the book will be sent to each participant.

Hoping for your participation and decided collaboration to invite other artists, our address for correspondence and artwork is:

(signed) Attentively,  
Carlos Sangiovanni  
Director of Plastic Arts & Design  
Humberto Frias  
Director Interim

(translation by Juana Alicia)

## Call For Entries:

**CURRENT WAVE;**

**An International Exhibition of  
Womens' Posters  
in Celebration of  
International Women's Day**

*Current Wave* is an international competition of women's posters juried by Louise Kollenbaum, the founding Art Director of *Mother Jones* magazine. Deadline for slide submissions is October 19, 1984. The exhibition will open at the Woman's Building Gallery in Los Angeles on International Woman's Day, March 8, 1985. *Current Wave* will then travel internationally. To receive the Call For Entries send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: **CURRENT WAVE**, the Woman's Building, 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012.

The theme is open to work that reflects *all* of women's interests and concerns. Posters may be announcements of specific events or posters made for their own sake. Posters must be printed in multiple and can be in any media. One-of-a-kind posters will not be accepted. This project is partially funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Woman's Building is a public center for women's culture founded in 1973.



## DONATIONS

We hope readers will be able to donate at least \$10 and institutions (libraries, museums, arts councils, etc.) at least \$20-\$30 to help support continued publication of Community Muralists' Magazine. Checks are made out to "Community Muralists' Magazine," and mailed to 1019 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \_\_\_\_\_



# INTERNATIONAL

## Puerto Rico: Art for the People

Free from the traditional walls of art galleries or museums where one normally goes to see "fine art," mural painting is a popular art form that has developed in Puerto Rico during this past decade. It is commanding the attention of much of the island's three and a half million population as well as the international art community. Rafael Rivera Garcia, or Sonny as everyone calls him, is a dedicated professional artist who is using his skills to produce art for the people, as well as to promote the people's creative potential for self expression.

In his mid career as a successful easel painter, Sonny made the decision to alter his creative direction. By 1971 "everything small seemed of no consequence." Since then he has devoted himself exclusively to mural painting projects which have transformed the exteriors of public walls and buildings throughout Puerto Rico into a blaze of intense color and form.

At the time of his decision, friends counseled him: "Sonny, you're going to be dead as an artist. Murals, what you're doing now is slum art. Your reputation is going down the drain. The galleries won't want to sell your work." This well-meant advice did not deter Sonny from his commitment to utilize his art expression for a broader public audience. This new audience includes the dwellers of large, low-income housing projects, the people that attend neighborhood community centers, those that use public bus stops, or the hundreds of thousands that drive daily along the congested San Juan (the capital) freeways to and from work, where walls and underpasses are interspersed with some of his murals.

Sonny's early interest in art evolved from 1944-1947 as he attended New York City's High School of Music and Art. His family was among the first wave of Puerto Rican immigrants to settle in New York, where his father worked as a postal clerk. In later years Sonny was to reverse this immigration trend by making Puerto Rico his permanent home.

He attended the University of Puerto Rico in 1950 for his undergraduate studies but returned to the United States to attend Columbia Teachers College in 1954 for his Master's Degree, and the University of Miami in Florida in 1967 for his Master of Fine Arts Degree.

From 1954 until 1970 Sonny had numerous exhibits of his easel paintings. His work was represented by a prominent New York art gallery. He exhibited at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and he had one-person shows at the Museum of Modern Art in Miami. Sonny recalls, "My paintings were also in the best galleries of Puerto Rico. I went that route and I never want to go back to that in my life."

Although Sonny began teaching painting, drawing and design at the University of Puerto Rico in 1960 he has simultaneously held other responsible positions for extending and popularizing the arts to a non-elitist audience. This had included: working with the Governor of Puerto Rico as Director of Cultural Programs throughout the country (1976-1983); and initiating a unique art program in the city of Dorado which many now refer to as "the city of murals" (Fig. 1).

The goal of this multifaceted Dorado cultural program which Sonny currently directs, is "arte para los barrios" or "art for the people." The historical colonial

building, Casa del Rey, serves as Dorado's community center where free programs for children and adults in painting, ceramics, and crafts, as well as folklore, music, theater, literature and archeology, are held. Adults attend sessions in the mornings from 10 to 12 and in the evenings, while children come in after regular school.

Sonny's interest in mural painting began in 1970 with his painting class students at the University of Puerto Rico. The exterior campus walls that they painted contained primarily abstract images. The first off-campus project was initiated at a low-income public housing project. At first, Sonny and his students stylistically tried to "keep up with the times" by utilizing geometric and pop art imagery for their mural themes. A short time after completion of one of the housing project murals, it was vandalized by the neighborhood people. "They had no appreciation of it."

In those years Sonny encountered opposition from one of the University deans as he objected to mural painting projects and questioned the value of an educational experience that took students off campus: "Is that really academic?" Women students had never before been seen on the streets painting murals, and that attracted many curious onlookers. Therefore, the Hous-

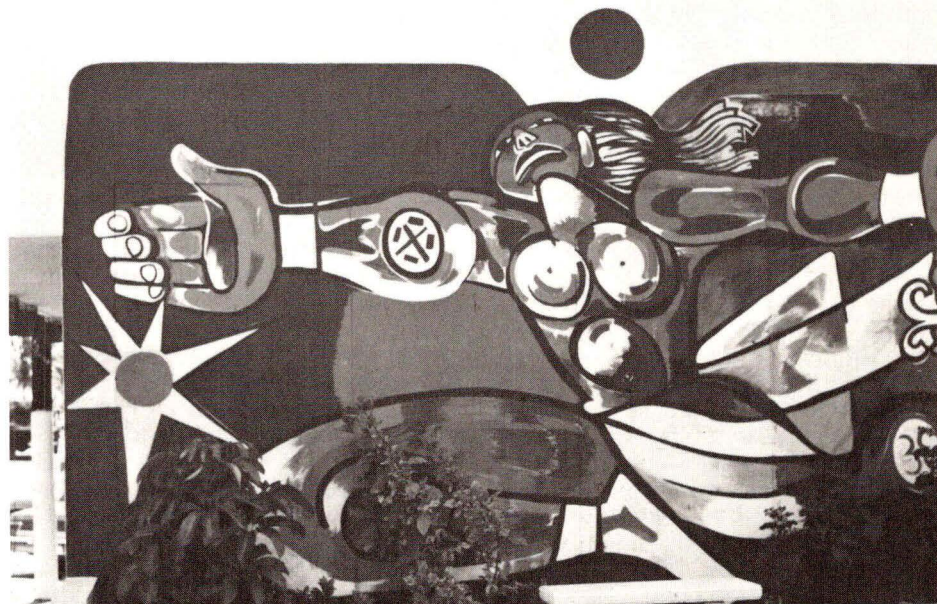


Fig. 1



ing Authority, besides preparing the wall and paying for the paint, also had to provide a guard for the students.

Sonny searched for a new thematic approach. It had to be non political, "No blood and guts", yet recognizable and appealing to a broad public audience. It occurred to him that Puerto Rico's unique Taino heritage with its endless pantheon of super heroes and gods might provide a rich source of imagery. Unlike other Caribbean Islands, the earliest inhabitants, the Arawak Indians, survived the period of Spanish colonization and intermarried with the imported African slave population and Spanish colonial rulers. Present-day Puerto Rico is a blend of these three ethnic groups, and much of the Indian heritage has been kept alive in the vocabulary as well as in the names of streets and towns. When Sonny and his students applied themes from their Taino heritage to the walls of another part of the large public housing project where Sonny had previously painted the people's comments were, "Gee, you're really a good artist, not like the one who painted the other mural." Sonny realized, "I was right, geometric abstract murals meant nothing to the people."

For a period of two years Sonny regularly transported his students, their paint and brushes to Dorado where they have covered innumerable large walls that guide one through the city. Under his direction they have developed their mural themes in a variety of individual but predominantly figurative styles. Meanwhile, Sonny also continued to design and paint his own murals in Dorado and in other towns with the assistance of student apprentices.

At Rio Bajos (Dorado) Sonny's mural focuses upon the heroic goddess ATABEX, who holds a torch aloft as her horizontal body fills the expanse of the 8 by 15-foot bus stop wall (Fig. 2). Although the acrylic colors are deliberately limited to bright cadmium red, orange, ultramarine blue, black and white, a careful balance is established between the dark and light, as well as between warm and cool aspects of the design.

At the Punto Santa Clara bus stop mural (Fig. 3) a young man sits and listens to his radio. He seems dwarfed by the two large and kneeling super heroic figures that have their arms upraised, encircling an archeological disc. Symbolic markings are painted on the disc as well as on the bodies of the gods whose flesh tones are established in intense shades of orange and red. Their stylized body contours are developed through juxtaposing elongated curves with shorter straight edges, and the overall brightness of the

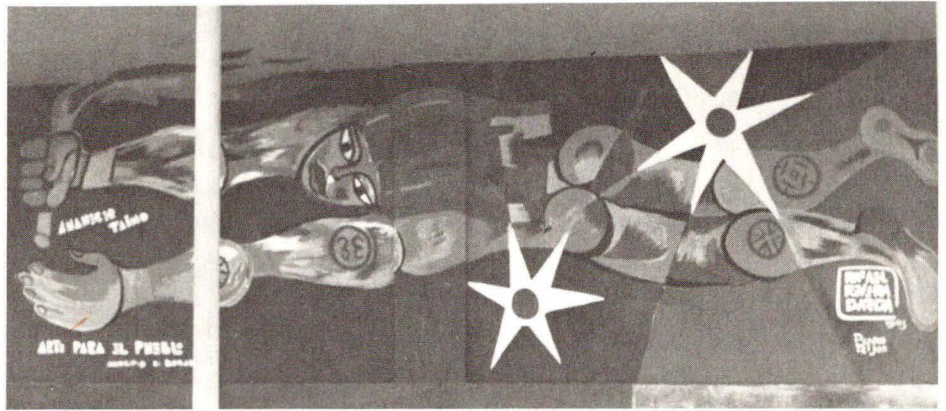


Fig. 2

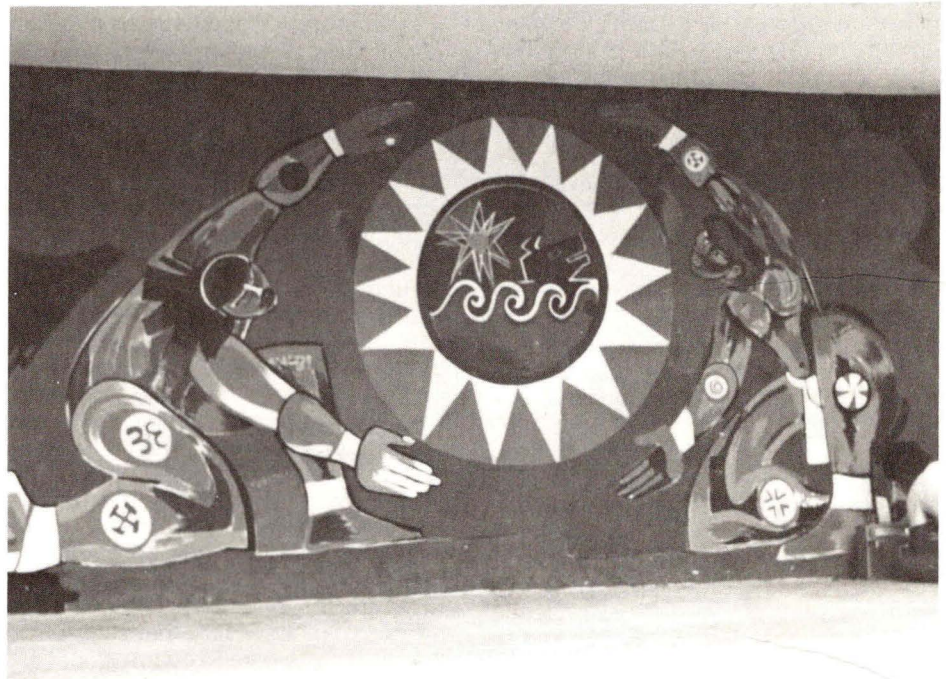


Fig. 3

Photos by Betty LaDuke

color is balanced by the deep dark ultramarine blue and black flat pattern of the background. Sonny limits his color scheme so that the future touching up or repainting of the murals due to weather deterioration will be manageable by others.

At the Centro de Maguayo, a community center mural, the snake as a symbol of evil is incorporated with the heroic images of the triumphant gods that are painted on three separate walls. The most powerful of all the Taino gods is a woman who gives birth to twins, Juracan, who represents evil, and Yoka-ju, a force for kindness and benevolence. This Taino legend has many parallels with the Old Testament story of the two brothers, Cain and Abel.

Sonny feels that murals give people a sense of pride in their cultural heritage

as well as their environment. This is apparent by the improved maintenance of the grounds where the murals are located. As Puerto Rico's social and cultural values increasingly reflect the United States influences of consumerism and industrialization, the murals offer a positive image of Puerto Rico's past traditions, a time when people were self sufficient and maintained control of their own environment.

However, Sonny's thematic commitment is not always consistent. At the Punto Cubano bus stop, the location of his most recent mural (1984), he has reverted to the use of abstract geometric shapes and rhythmic curves. Sonny now believes that after people have had a prolonged exposure to art, they will be more appreciative of abstract forms. Even after the buses



come and go, the people seem to enjoy using the bus stop as a place to just sit and talk. Of course, sitting and talking become important parts of one's daily life when unemployment is over 20%, and there are no immediate job prospects.

At this time Sonny's services and those of his students are much in demand, and there is a waiting list for other towns that want murals. In recent years Sonny has also painted murals in New York, Houston and Miami (Fig. 4). Art for the people has definitely enhanced the visual environment of both the rich and the poor and given Sonny a sense of personal satisfaction that goes beyond his early commercial success.

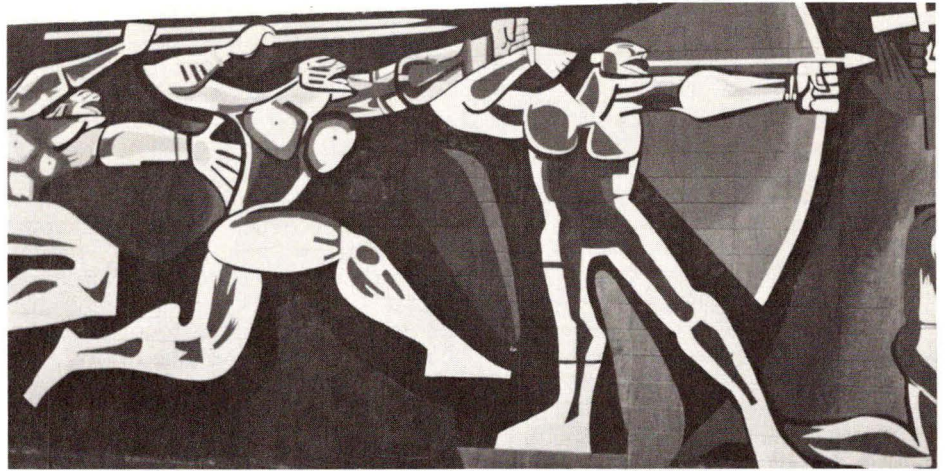


Fig. 4

## Argentina Mural Movement

We have received a packet containing back issues of the now defunct EL MURAL, a review published until 1982 by the National Muralist Movement, Italo Grassi, General Coordinator in Argentina. From these bulletins and a position paper of the movement we can trace the group's formation and development from 1971, when the Greda group of Buenos Aires joined the La Peña Group of Mar del Plata to work toward wider acceptance of the muralists' medium throughout their country.

Prime movers in this effort were Rodolfo Campodónico, Omar Brachetti, Nestor Berllés, Victor Grillo and Hugo Cordoba from the capital and Italo Grassi, Maria Rosa Tola, Marta Grassi, Guillermo Cuenca, Oscar Guma and Nestor Sturla from the La Peña group. Many were former students of Carpani, Urruchua and Castagnine and hoped to revive the neglected mural tradition of Argentina.

Between 1971 and 1982 the movement sponsored 19 national conferences in addition to many local and regional conferences, which served as working reunions for muralists from all parts of the huge country as well as highly visible publicity for this public art form. In its early days, the group hit upon the clever gambit of scheduling its conferences to coincide with local civic celebrations. An integral part of the festivities, the muralists worked on moveable panels (1.8 by 3.6 meters), placed in well-traveled districts so that they could interact freely with passers-by. They took as their themes the historic or humanistic events which were being celebrated at the time.

Financial support for these conferences was apparently provided by the Secretary of Tourism, local Rotary Clubs and businesses. After the celebrations, the finished panels were donated to local institutions.

Since 1971, according to Grassi, 400-500 murals have been distributed throughout the country, some on walls where they are slowly self-destructing, but the majority in protected environments, such as schools, societies for neighborhood improvement, syndicates, offices of the Cultural and Tourism Departments, municipal buildings, regional museums, military installations and churches.

As a direct result of the activities of the national organization, certain of its members have been commissioned to

complete large murals in important buildings. Notable among these are Italo Grassi's "General San Martin," in the National Normal College of Buenos Aires (Colegio Normal Nacional, Maipu) and "Canto al Barrio" ("Song to the Barrio") in the Racing Club of Mar del Plata.

Italo Grassi's "General San Martin" is 14 metres long by three metres high and is painted in flat enamels over a white base. Portraying significant events in San Martin's arduous effort to free South America of Spanish rule, Grassi has used vibrant colors: "... reds, blues, yellows, raised to their highest registers in some scenes; tempered in others by abundant ochres, earth tones, whites and blacks. . . . The geometric treatment of the background does not affect the strong realism of the



*La Batalla de Las Malvinas*



figures and, at the same time, enriches the colors in multiple intermediate tones. Chiaroscuro has been avoided and replaced with contrasting planes of color. Similarly, the classical approach to perspective has been rejected; limited perspective (*lineas de fuga*) and shortening of certain figures are used, instead, to suggest relative size." (EL MURAL, no date, p. 3)

In April 1981 another of the founders of the national movement, Rodolfo Campodónico, unveiled the 400-square-metre mural which he completed for the Municipal Palace in Trenque Lauquen. Covering three walls of the large hall, the mural depicts important events of the Desert Campaign and of Argentine national history, including historical characters from the discovery and conquest of America and the English invasion. Among these figures, which are powerfully modeled, the most prominent are General San Martin and Güemes, the famed Gaucho leader of the north. At the center of the right panel is the human couple. Campodónico painted his mural in (synthetic) enamel and acrylic over conglomerate, textured in certain sections.

A fourth large work was completed by Omar Brachetti in 1982 for the newly constructed cathedral in San Francisco, Cordoba. Interviewed by LA VOZ DE SAN JUSTO, Brachetti discussed the conception and execution of his mural: "Before beginning my work here in the cathedral, I, of course, made many sketches in order to clarify my ideas. Once I had decided precisely how I wished to proceed, I made a sketch to scale, transferred it to slides, and... projected them onto the walls of the altar. The problem which faced me was of a plastic nature, but at the same time, I realized that I was inside a temple, to whose architecture the mural is subject. Many times the faithful cannot recognize the plastic problems one has attempted to solve; but at least they realize the religious function of the figures which have been painted."

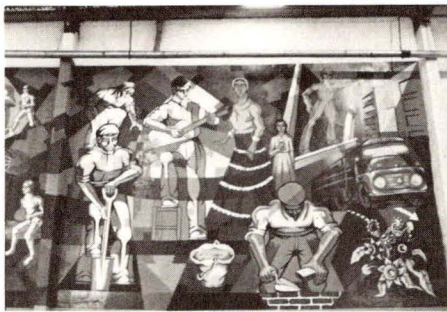
The principal altar is composed of three panels, those on the side slightly

behind the central panel, on which Brachetti chose to paint both Christ and Saint Francis of Assisi. "Here the problem was to place these two figures on one panel which... measured 8.5 meters high by 3.5 meters at the base. The only possibility was to make Saint Francis the more imposing figure and, by means of transparencies, to suggest the figure of Christ. That is, through Saint Francis, one sees the crucified Christ. I could not present the two figures in the same tone of voice, because the dimensions of the wall made that impossible. Of course, the two lateral panels are subordinated, and on them I have painted the ascension and the resurrection.

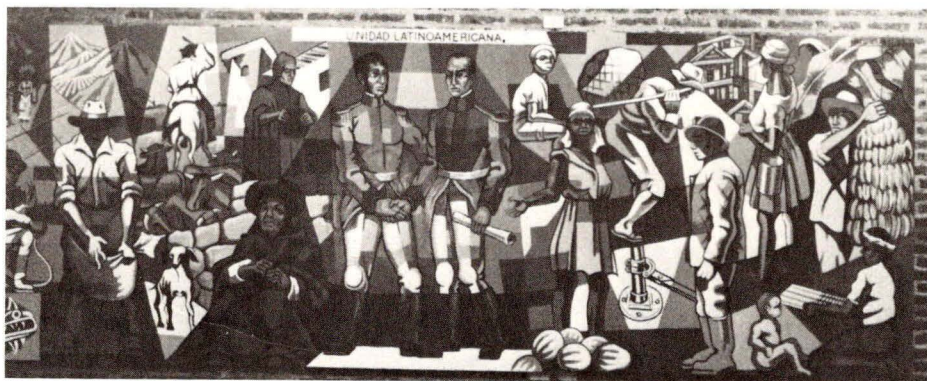
"The technique which I've used is tempera; the egg, as they say. It is one of the most ancient techniques and is similar to fresco painting of the pre-Renaissance and the Italian Renaissance. The panels are of concrete,



*Origenes de Mar de Plata*



*Canto al Barrio*



*Unidad Latinoamericana*

covered with plaster, since the paint is so rapidly absorbed.

"My palette is somewhat limited by the plastic language of the situation. Basically, it consists in dusky greys and browns; in harmony with the place, there are no strident colors. The mystical sense of the Christian religion requires a subdued palette, generally seeking design within the plane. That is, the design of the background is composed of distinct planes of minimal contrast and always within the same range of colors: golds, ochres and similar tones. Then the drawing creates a law of contrast in plane and line." (From EL MURAL, December 1982)

Reviewing in laudatory terms the Brachetti mural, EL ECONOMISTA of Buenos Aires (October 1982) deplores the limited diffusion of murals in Argentina and castigates the government for ignoring the muralists' art. A similar cry is echoed throughout the pages of EL MURAL and also in the following manifesto:

"The Movement, inheriting and continuing the traditions of Spilinger, Castagnine, Berni, Urruchua and others, has just completed a very important creative and formative stage and is now attempting to begin a more significant second phase. To this end, with appropriate counsel, the Movement has prepared a Law Project for the realization of murals on public and private buildings.

"Moreover, the Movement proposes to denounce implacably the efforts of elitist and special interest groups sponsored by the foundations of foreign businesses and their associates to denationalize Argentine muralism. With the support of genuflecting artists, certain art critics, and the press which lends its services to such efforts, these groups seek to empty our murals of national, humanistic and patriotic content. We lament the support given some of these projects by certain Secretaries of Culture, who apparently do not realize what is at stake here."

Italo Grassi concludes, "In order for our county to become one of the leaders of the American mural tradition, with muralism of national and Latin American content, we need the support of the people, the Legislature, those in charge of public buildings, the Secretaries of National, Provincial and Local Culture, and of cultural and plastic artists in general. For this we hope."

And for this we hope, here in San Francisco, California, where we anticipate news of further successes of this industrious group.

Translation and article by  
Marcia Rautenstrauch



## Berlin Murals 1984

Walking around West Berlin you can find nearly one hundred large murals, mostly done on four story walls without windows, so-called "fire walls." In addition to these murals, there are countless graffiti done for political occasions.

There is no city in the world with as many "fire walls" (Brandwände) and in a way it is typical for the postwar townscape. Unfinished peripheral housing projects from the turn of the century under emperor Wilhelm, the destruction of World War II bombings, and at last the rebuilding projects and sweeping measures of new building, city and highway plans executed during the 1960s and 70s leave behind this depressingly high number of slices through the city panorama. These unmasked, stony facts in a destroyed, overpaved city create the term "Stony Berlin."

Already at the turn of the century, the so-called *belle époque*, there was an attempt to burst open the narrowness of the streets with illusionistic and artistic means. Some of this remains, but it is without significance for today's muralists. The tradition of these decorative illusionists is too obscured today, and no one knows enough about it. Without these traditional roots, however, the wall paintings of today would have the same effect: to soothe and harmonize great disturbances of the urban context. In 1973 and 1977 the "German City Union" (Deutscher Stadtetag) recommended against continuing such practices and with the slogan "ways to a manlike city" they tried to work for city reconstruction and better images.

In 1968 the student revolts and the extra-parliamentary opposition (APO) set the important tone for a new common government and an understanding of true democracy. The call for a socialist, democratic and emancipated understanding of all things was born. This "call" also gave a new direction to artists. Some of them were hoping for a more community based public art. They wanted to leave their studios and go into the streets. Others, who saw the inability of galleries to reach a larger audience, were projecting monumental gallery art on exposed fire walls, and another group of them started to use the public medium of walls for political expressions. Even the professional organization for the fine arts, (BBK) started to join in the discussion, hoping to change rigid structures in the "Kunst am Bau" (art for buildings) practice. There was a try to make competitions and job allocations much more democratic, also with the object of finding

and opening new jobs for socially disadvantaged artists.

During this same time two large shows, "Murals in the USA" and "Mexican Revolutionary Art", took place in Berlin. They reinforced the wish for a mural practice even in Berlin. Examples of mural art in Sardinia and Portugal became well known and exiled artists from Chile lived and worked in the city after the overthrow of Allende.

The Berlin (and West German) wall painting practice did not grow out of itself, not even out of a pure delight in creativity. It is a reflection and an expression of a more open political climate and an expression of discomfort and sometimes of protest. Beside political graffiti and banners, the first official monumental mural was done by professional artists in 1975. The subject is a crying tree of life, a symbol for a nature tortured by smog and poison. It has become a memorial against the destruction of nature. Many murals like this followed in the next few years. They were so important for the townscape that they got international attention. They are paid for by city government, with tax money.

Some professional murals are the result of a powerful political movement. In the shade of this movement it is

possible to realize these "illegal," unofficial murals. In these cases the artists mostly worked without pay. The opposite are the countless graffiti which have always been illegal and the objects of police actions.

### Some Aspects of Our Work

If we get a contract for an official mural, paid by the government, we try to do our designing very close to the part of the city where the mural should be painted, or we try to support the local political organizations in the neighborhoods with our skills. Who is living in the neighborhood? What about the other houses around, what colors are they? What about the architecture of the building? These are some of the questions we must answer before we can start a mural. Mostly we have worked together with the tenants because our artwork should be done in the most democratic way possible. Practically, it was very hard to do and mostly negative for our art. Sometimes we got really upset when the tenants tried to force us into a more aesthetic and harmonized direction.

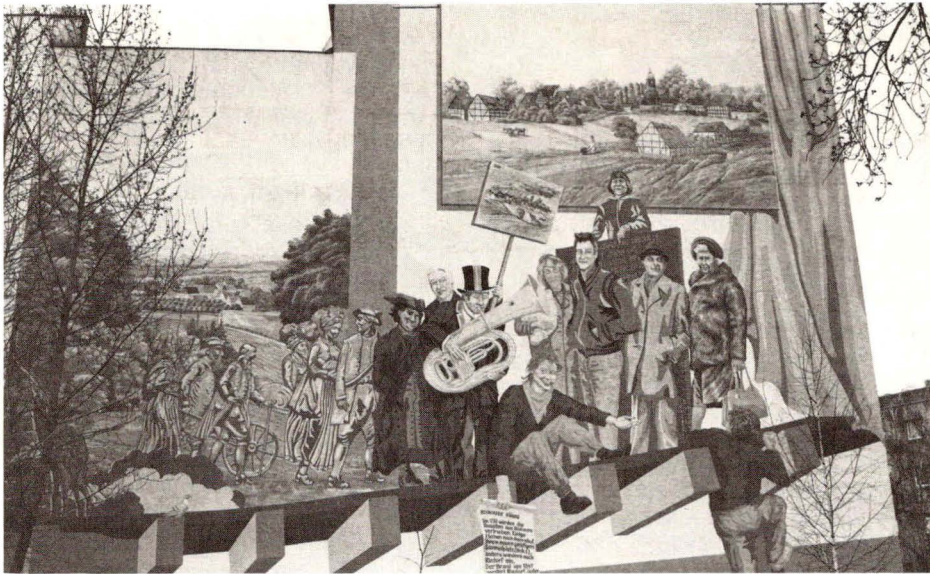
The examples pictured here we worked on in the last few years.

Richardstreet 98 was an official mural, done with tax money. We worked



Photos by Andreas Schmidt





Richardstreet 98



Nehringstreet 34



Wilhelmstreet 9

together with the tenants and neighbors as much as possible. The background for the mural is historical fact and actual events. In Richardstreet it is a cycle of people, immigrants from 1730 who escaped for religious reasons to Berlin (they built a community in the part of the city where the mural was done). Also there are people from the neighborhood, squatters, etc, and we have placed everybody into views of the old village.

Nehringstreet 34. The front painting was possible because there was a large and strong "movement for the restoration of old buildings." Although there were thousands of people looking for apartments, there were hundreds of buildings without tenants as a result of real estate speculation. The empty houses went to ruin yearly. Then, mostly young squatters squatted more than 150 empty houses and tried to fix them up. It was happening all over the city and was a very popular movement. During this time we have done Nehringstreet and some graffiti. The powerful and active background of the movement gave us a lot of power and motivation, too. With our painting we helped to force communications between the squatters and the rest of the people and so there was a better understanding for the aims of the movement. The most important part of this project was the communication in the streets.

Another front painting was only assisted by one of us for an early squatted building in Wilhelmstreet 9. It was occupied in 1973 by youth who came out of very difficult social circumstances. They gave a name to the building: "Tommy Weissbecker House." Tommy was a young anarchist who was shot and killed by police during the 1960s riots. The layout of the painting was done by one of the youth—large clouds, a broken mirror with the cityscape from the opposite side of the street and a young boy who flies on a cannonball like Baron Munchhausen (a funny German fantasy tale)—a giant hunk of beef in one hand.

Besides lots of other projects—like a competition for a front-painting for a war-bunker with the theme "No more wars and fascism"—everyone of us is doing individual artwork. The individual art is necessary for our experimental and personal development. With it, it is possible to work out things (and thoughts) without all the compromises and reductions of the mural-projects. We can work more politically and privately. Here we can work with fun and frustration on the sad, the lucky and the ugly sides of life.

Werner Brunner  
for the art-group RATGEB



# A Revolution Trying To Stay Up: Grenada, In Memoriam, 1979-1983

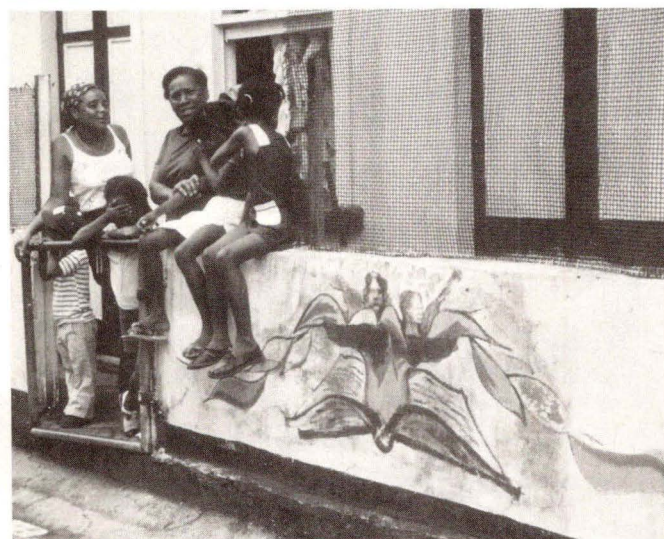
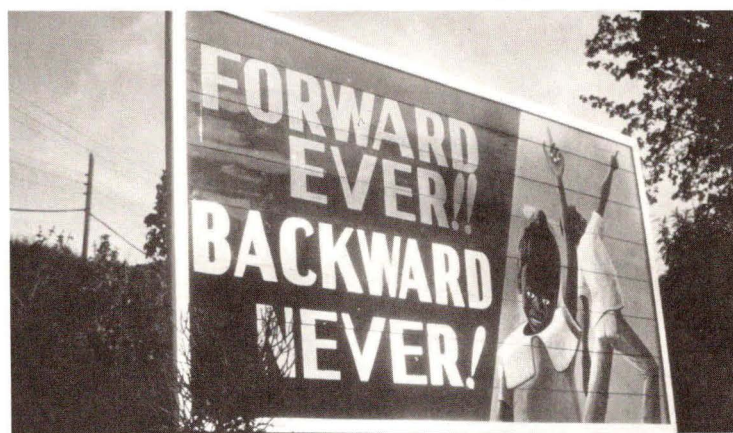
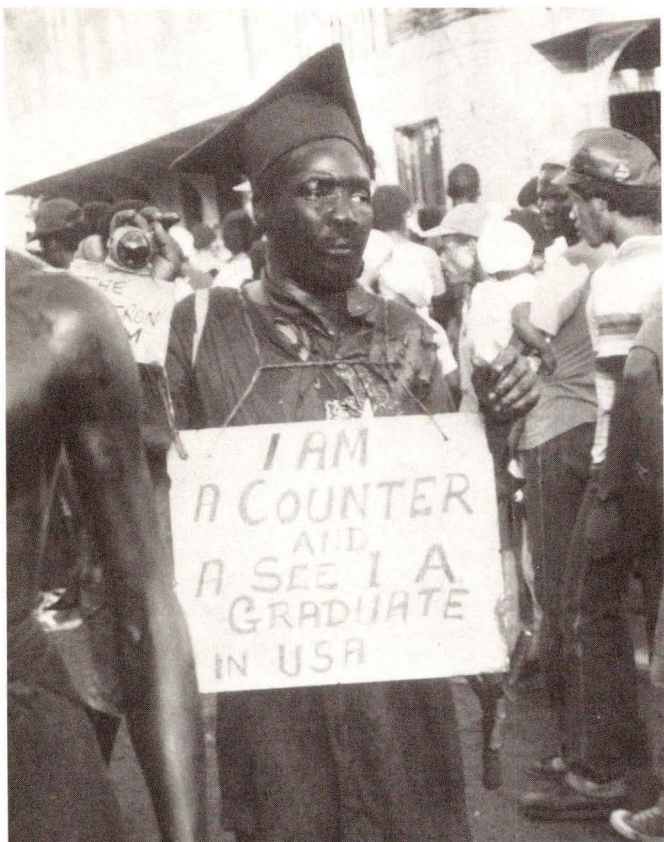
From March 13 to October 25, when the US invaded and imposed a military occupation, the tiny island of Grenada (population 110,000, 21 square miles), underwent a revolutionary process initiated and led by the New Jewel Movement and Maurice Bishop, who formed a People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). Taking power in a virtually bloodless coup against the U.S.—supported dictator Sir Eric Gairy, who had ruled the

island for many years and since independence from Britain, the PRG instituted reforms in health, education and the development of popular organizations and workers' power.

In our three-week visit of August 1983, we noted signs of a cultural renewal, documented here. Inheriting in 1979 an impoverished economy, with a low educational level and a state of cultural dependence, Grenadians had

begun to express themselves independently; since the invasion and the imposition of control by the U.S. and its surrogates, the cultural renewal has been reversed. The billboards have been dismantled, whitewashed or painted over with pro-American messages; murals have been obliterated, a pro-American newspaper installed.

David Kunzle



Photos by David Kunzle

COMMUNITY MURALS MAGAZINE/SUMMER 1984



## Nicaragua

This mural was painted by David Fichter on the wall of Rigoberto Lopez Perez School in Managua, Nicaragua in January, 1984. Lopez Perez was the poet who assassinated the first Somoza in the mid 1950s.

The theme of the mural is based on the motto of the Juventud, the Nicaraguan Youth Organization, which is "Defense, Study, Production."

Fichter went to Nicaragua on his own with the intention of painting a mural as an act of solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution. With the help of a Chilean exile muralist, he talked with the principal of the public school, who gave permission to paint the mural. In August, a group Fichter works with, "Arts for a New Nicaragua," sponsored an artists work brigade which sent ten painters and ten musicians to Nicaragua. The goal was to paint murals with local artists in different locations of the country, and brigade was sponsored by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture.

This is a poem written by a young man in Nicaragua while watching muralists paint last year. The mural is pictured in the last issue of *CMM*, p.5.

### North American Artists in Solidarity With The Nicaraguan People

—that's what their shirts and sign said—  
On several tables the American women  
set out their paints condemning the birds of prey,  
a motor deafening those who would destroy,  
and they mixed their colors  
as all peoples mix their deepest love . . .  
They came to the land of Sandino  
the land of 50,000 guerillas  
to kiss their memory with their paintbrushes  
with the mural they painted:  
Death to Somoza! Death to imperialism!  
Long live culture and joy, free homeland or death!

They come to give of themselves—unconditionally—  
they way true brothers and sisters give,  
those who hand over body and soul  
so a nation may be free.

Long live the peoples of the world!  
Long live the North American people  
who, as we do, will shout one day in their country  
our slogans of struggle!

—Omar Jota Lazo Barberena  
Boaco, Free Nicaragua December 7, 1983

Luis Alfonso Velasquez Park  
(translated by Margaret Randall)



Photo by David Fichter



# UNITED STATES

## Los Angeles Rejects History: Barbara Carrasco Mural

In 1932, David Alfaro Siqueiros was commissioned to paint a mural on the second story outdoor wall of the old Italian Hall on Olivera Street which would be visible to the public. The mural depicted a crucified Indian with the United States eagle perched aggressively on top of the cross and a group of Mexicans standing below shooting at the eagle. Once completed, the mural, entitled "America Tropical," was white-washed amid xenophobic controversy before the 1932 Olympic Games.

Apparently, history is repeating itself fifty years later. Barbara Carrasco, a Los Angeles-based artist, was commissioned by the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles to paint a mural which would be displayed by the 1984 Olympics. City officials have repeatedly tried to cover up the contributions that minorities have made in the historical development of Los Angeles, as depicted in Carrasco's mural entitled "The History of Los Angeles: A Mexican Perspective." Unlike Siqueiros' mural, Carrasco's mural has yet to be completed and installed.

The mural project was initiated by John Lopez, the owner of the McDonalds building located on 3rd and Broadway. Lopez initially wanted a mural painted on the wall of his building, so he approached the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), the city's urban planning department. R.A. Secora, a CRA architect, suggested that Carrasco be commissioned to paint the mural. Secora was familiar with Carrasco's work and Lopez agreed. Asked about the commission today, Carrasco says, "I think it's good that they let a young woman artist undertake a major project."

Shortly after Carrasco was commissioned, she began researching the history of Los Angeles with the consultation of three established historians; Rudolfo Acuna, Jean Bruce Pool, and Bill Mason. She also conducted oral histories with individuals such as Fred Morales, a direct descendant of the San Gabriel Mission Indians.

A sketch of the mural was presented to the CRA Board on Feb. 4, 1981. Carrasco said, "The entire Board gave its full approval for financial and content support. This is the only thing in writing to date; an agreement to fund it." According to Carrasco, "The contract was never signed because it was ambiguously written. It said, in part, that the CRA had the right to indefinite postponement of installation." Carrasco never signed the contract. She wanted a guarantee that the mural would be installed and formally unveiled.

Five months later, additional problems arose when Secora was replaced by Gary Williamson, another CRA architect. Carrasco commented, "Secora would have been an ideal person to handle this project because she is knowledgeable and a supporter of the arts. I don't know why they placed Gary Williamson in charge. He had no experience dealing with murals." Williamson objected to some of the images in the mural. Carrasco said, "He would actually come out with remarks about the main image like, 'I think her skin is too dark, and her eyes, I have never seen such black eyes.'" According to a *Los Angeles Times* article (January 19, 1983) Williamson said, "I had a very real concern she was trying to put too many images in that thing, which was not doing justice to the mural as a whole."

Carrasco disagreed, saying that "among the 72 portraits and 51 scenes in the mural, there were 14 images he wanted me to take out. The first thing he started with was the Virgin Mary. He said she had a look of repression on her face. He also objected to the depiction of the Chinese Massacre which occurred in L.A. The photograph that I selected to represent the particular incident is in every single bicentennial book. He said it was negative to Chinese people, at which time I replied, 'How can you speak for those people?' He also objected to the Zoot Suit Riots and to the farmworker scene. He actually said that farmworkers had nothing to do with the history of L.A. At one time this was a big agricultural area. I couldn't believe they were that ignorant." Other prominent figures and scenes the CRA board wanted removed included; the white-washing of Siqueiros' mural, the destruction of homes in Chavez Ravine to make way for Dodger Stadium, Sandy Koufax, the

last cannon fired in L.A., New Angel's Flight (a proposed but never completed tram system), Tiburcio Vasquez (whom Williamson referred to as a Mexican outlaw), and Joaquin Murrieta (inaccurately referred to as the Mexican Robin Hood).

Regarding the beginnings of the controversy over her work, Carrasco said, "I think maybe someone notified the board that the Olympics were coming to L.A. and all these people from all over the world were going to see a mural that depicts some of the history that has never been exposed. The first mayor of Los Angeles was a Mexican Indian, Jose Venegas. He was the very first mayor and it's as if he never existed. On Sept. 4th the city had a bicentennial celebration and his family was sitting in the front row and they weren't even acknowledged. Although someone brought it to the city officials' attention, he was ignored. I think that's real disgusting. In the mural I depict him as a silhouette. I want people to ask, why a silhouette? Maybe people will start asking why aren't these people in history books."

She continued, "They don't like seeing the truth. The truth is real hard to deal with. Why isn't the last black slave in L.A., Biddy Mason, talked about in classrooms? The woman took her white owner to court and won her freedom because California had a law against slavery. Biddy Mason is a real symbol for black people. Maybe they (the CRA) feel that this mural would be too political for the Olympics. I think it's ridiculous. It's a basic historical mural. It's so basic that I think its embarrassing for them."

CRA also claimed that the Japanese internment camp scene may be offensive to Japanese people and that they don't want to be reminded of this type of image. In contrast to CRA claims, the Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization (LTPRO) (a founding member of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations) viewed the mural and endorsed it on the spot. Carrasco said, "In fact, they asked me to put a barbed wire across one of the scenes." Evelyn Yoshimura, an LTPRO representative to the NCRP, sent a letter to Don Cosgrove, Senior Planner of CRA, on February 1, 1983. She urged CRA that the mural be finished and displayed as soon as possible. The last line in their sup-



port letter read "Although some of the scenes depicted in the mural may not represent the proudest of L.A.'s or America's historical moments, we can show the people from other countries that we are a democracy, and that we are not afraid to show the truth."

The 18 x 80-foot mural was a collective effort. The Summer Youth Employment Program provided youth workers and an artist to assist Carrasco on the mural. "The kids worked on the project for nine weeks. It was a unique experience working with individuals who had little or no experience in the arts. Most of them were gang members from four areas of the city. The first two weeks were rough, but after the nine weeks they were all friends." Two of the youths continued on to art school. All those assisting were painted into the mural. Carrasco went on to say, "It's not my interpretation of history nor the kids' interpretation. It's real facts, and CRA cannot deny those facts. All they can say is that the images are going to offend specific ethnic groups, and even that has been refuted by those groups themselves."

The CRA has tried every possible means to stop the project. "They withheld my time card for 3 weeks, the construction of some of the panels for several weeks, and they demanded my copyright after censorship attempts failed," said Carrasco. In addition, an at-

tempt was made on June 28, 1982 to destroy the mural. An order was given to city workers to remove the mural from the city hall east building where it was being stored. Carrasco recalls she was passing by the CRA office and stopped off to make a phone call when she noticed CRA workers loading the mural onto a truck. She asked them what they were doing and one employee responded that they had orders not to tell her anything. After making several phone calls, Carrasco managed to stop the action with the help of contacts in the Mayor's office. Carrasco proceeded to call on her community supporters to relocate the mural in a safe place, thus preventing the mural from being taken to a produce storage market. "Any moisture that would get into the panels would destroy the mural," said Carrasco.

After this attempt to destroy the mural and numerous meetings between Carrasco and CRA, Carrasco sought to gain co-ownership of the mural. On March 14, 1983 a meeting was held to discuss ownership rights. Present at this meeting were representatives from Gloria Molina and Art Torres' offices, James Blancarte, and Antonio Rodriguez, who were acting as Carrasco's attorneys, Edward Helfeld, an administrator of CRA, and two CRA board members. At this meeting, CRA offered Carrasco two choices: 1) \$20,000 to relinquish her copyright and ownership

to CRA; or 2) complete ownership of the mural with the understanding that CRA was no longer responsible for providing the funding for completion and installation of the mural. "I don't want any money, I just want an equal say-so in what happens to the mural. It's the principle of the thing. That's why I was asking for co-ownership in good faith. They said there was no reason to mistrust them so they asked me again to reconsider their first offer." At this point, Carrasco stepped out into an adjoining office to privately discuss the two offers with her attorneys. "We went into the room and a CRA artist was eavesdropping from an adjacent room. Discovered by my attorneys, she was embarrassed along with other CRA board members. Re-entering the conference room, my attorney replied, 'this is why Ms. Carrasco doesn't trust you; you have people eavesdropping on an important meeting.'" Following this incident Carrasco and her attorneys chose to gain sole ownership of the mural and to completely sever ties with CRA. She declined the money and is presently awaiting documentation of ownership before completing the mural.

by Beatriz Echaveste  
and Gloria Estolano

Epilogue: Since the writing of this article, the mural has been completed and Carrasco is still seeking a location for it.

The Eastside Social Justice Reporter No. 15, Spring 1983



Photo by Thomas Gaspar (detail)



## Oakland Dedicates "Grand Performance"

*Grand Performance*, a mural dedicated on July 29 in Oakland, California, is a tribute by the artists to the diversity and quality of arts in the San Francisco Bay Area. The mural is not a who's who of the area, but covers a broad spectrum of past and present local artistic talents from the internationally known pianist Mary Watkins and symphonic conductor Calvin Simmons, poet Judy Grahn, printmaker Rene Castro, muralist Ray Patlan, to a child doing ceramics and an anonymous mime—the entire group suggesting that anyone can participate meaningfully in the arts.

The mural was directed jointly by Daniel Galvez and Keith Sklar, with the assistance of Brooke Fancher (who became interested in the project after just stopping by one day) and Karen Sjoholm. Sklar says that "We see it as an invitation to the community to get involved. Here are some possibilities. You can do it." The form of the mural captures this idea by giving a sense of time and space appropriate to the Bay Area: time moves from left to right and from day to night to sunrise to a new day and the aerial view of the cities of Oakland and San Francisco moves from about seventy five feet up to far into the clouds at the far right.

The process of the mural's creation also repeated the concept of the mural. The directors held community workshops for dozens of people two nights a week for six months on mural painting and design. People who attended these workshops submitted images of artists they liked, and a 1":1' scale model was then painted on masonite panels. Since many of the original images were black and white, the artists improvised with colors in this phase of the design—and then the difficulties began.

There was a ten month delay caused by bureaucratic obstructions within the City of Oakland, during which many workshop participants dropped out. Once muralists moved onto the wall in September, the project was again halted by the theft of scaffolding in November. Due to financial difficulties with a sponsoring agency, Pro Arts of Oakland, monies designated for the project were used for other purposes, and so there was no reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses until June, 1984. Experiences such as this have caused a number of people who have worked with Pro Arts to question the organization's effectiveness.

The project was also sponsored by the California Arts Council (1982-83



grant to Daniel Galvez), the City of Oakland, the East Bay Community Foundation (1982-83 grant to Keith Sklar), the Zellerbach Family Fund, and Kaiser Cement, with a special thanks to L&D Scaffold of San Leandro, who donated nearly \$5,000 worth of scaffolding after the theft.

Aesthetically, the mural offers an excellent amalgamation of styles of the four main painters. It is extremely difficult to distinguish who painted which parts. But the lengthy delays in the process also caused problems with continuity of form in the mural. A figure was added on the Friday before Sunday's dedication, another portrait perhaps

looms too large for its location in the piece. One observer felt that the details of the city might have been painted so that they "read" better up close, whereas now they are best seen from across the street.

Still, the mural is a significant contribution to the Bay Area's murals, and its powerful presentation of a combination of dreaminess and intense vision make it a creative act to view it. The design and stylistic developments of a photorealist style also make it aesthetically stimulating. To the hundreds of people who attended the Sunday afternoon dedication, the success of the piece and the process was clear and greatly appreciated.



Photo by Daniel Galvez



## The Chicago Mural Group is in its 15th Year of Remaking the Face of Chicago

The Chicago Mural Group/Public Artworks is a coalition of professional artists working to produce quality public artwork. We work with mosaic, sculpture and park design, and also create murals in porcelain enamel, permanent paint media, trompe l'oeil and ceramic. Our more than 300 local and national projects have received numerous awards for design excellence and international acclaim for the group. The artists bring people together in a process of changing their environment through visual expression. Chicago Mural Group projects play an important role in neighborhood revitalization. Group artists collaborate with community groups, engineers and architects, working by public funding, consultation and commission.

Summer of 1984 Projects include:

- Mural at Chicago Industrial



League (Halsted & Monroe) by Mitchell Caton with Jose Guerrero.

• Lakeview High School Mosaics by Esther Charbit with students.

• Symons YMCA, sponsored by Nancy Abbate and Youth Service Projects, directed by Jose Gonzales (Mira), with Pedro Silva as part of our Artist Exchange with City Arts, New York. Mosaics.

• Jose Berrios at the Logan Square Boys Club.

• Nina Chin with Kevin Dixon at Cottage Grove Middle School, East Chicago Heights.

• Lynn Takata is finishing an artist residency at Gale School, where she is working on a painted mural with students. She is also beginning a cast concrete sculpture at Pratt Ave. Beach, Rogers Park.

• John Weber will be in New York as the counterpart to our Artist Exchange with City Arts.

## "We Are Not a Minority" Mural Vandalized

Mario Torero's mural at Estrada Courts in Los Angeles, *We Are Not a Minority*, was recently vandalized by reactionary Cubans for the second time. The central figure on the mural shows respect for Che Guevara, a Cuban revolutionary. Those who lost the revolution, who came to the United States, cannot bear such a symbol of Cuban strength, and so they attack it.

When word leaked out that the Los Angeles Housing Authority was considering removing the mural, a massive campaign of letter writing was launched, and the Housing Authority announced on April 27 that it would preserve the mural.

Last October, the mural was defaced with black paint, but restored by Charles Felix, director of the Estrada Courts Mural Project, who promises to restore it this time, too.

The editor and publisher of a local anti-communist Spanish language Cuban newspaper openly defends the vandalism, according to an article in the *Los Angeles Times* of May 16, 1984. That article also quotes Shifra



Photo by Shifra Goldman

Goldman, who "lead the campaign to save the mural in February, as noting that the defacement "flies in the face

of the democracy that they [the reactionary Cubans] claim they came to the United States for."



## Caravan of Dreams

The Caravan of Dreams was conceived as a center for avant-garde performing art and opened its doors with the music of Ornette Coleman. Ornette grew up in Ft. Worth, working as a shoe shine boy etc., studied his music while being an elevator boy. He opened the Caravan of Dreams playing his symphony with the Ft. Worth Symphony Orchestra of "Skies of America"; a film of his life and return to home town being made simultaneously. That film called, "Ornette, made in America" should be out in the Theatres this coming October. Other notables were William Burroughs and

Brion Gysin reading from their current works. The Caravan of Dreams consists of a restaurant and world class Jazz and Blues Night Club on the ground floor, (day time restaurant as well for office workers etc.), theater seating 212 people on the second floor, dojo for martial arts in the basement, and a Rooftop Garden Bar in the shadow of a 50 foot plexi geodesic dome housing the 5th largest rare cactus collection in the world.

Sarbid Ltd., the concept architectural company which designed and managed the construction had from the beginning conceived of the idea of having murals as a chief feature of the design in the Jazz Club and in the Theater Lob-

by. The subjects, "The History of Jazz and Blues", "The Forms of Dance", and "A Moment of Theater", were decided from the onset, three subjects open for controversial interpretation, an opportunity not ignored in their execution. The Jazz and Blues mural occupies an entire wall, 9 feet by 40 feet, and is contiguous to the stage where the musicians play making a changing and living continuation of the mural.

Although all the murals take a strong stand in their subject matter, they have been on the whole very positively received, mainly because they are so exquisitely executed. The Jazz and Blues mural pulls few punches as to the origin and development of Jazz in America.



Photo by Flash Allen



The Forms of Dance Mural does not include Ballet, for example, which, being a dance of the "aristocracy" does not relate to an ethnic tradition, all of which in some way relate to the earth and basic tradition, including the new dance of America, represented by Martha Graham and Isadora Duncan. The Theater Mural depicts a typical, but unacknowledged, scene between "artists", in this case performing artists, and the "local authorities", a scene from a play "Tin Can Man", by the Caravan of Dreams Touring Theater.

The designs for the murals were begun in February 1983 in Santa Fe, N.M., where they were painted on Belgian linen. There were later restret-

ched and backed on the walls of the club and theater lobby. It is nearly impossible to tell they weren't painted in place. They were complete and in place on September 29, 1983, for the grand opening of the Caravan of Dreams. The project took 7½ months to complete.

I was the overall director of the project having been given the commission by Sarbid Ltd. and having collaborated on the subject matter with Margaret Augustine, Managing Director of Sarbid, and her people. It was clear I needed some top help and in turn commissioned my own partner from October Studio, Corinna MacNeice of London, a fine painter; and Zara Kriegstein of the Multicultural Mural Group of Santa Fe. Zara

was a key element in the project. She and her partner, Felipe C. de Baca were well versed in mural painting having completed several murals in public places around Santa Fe. Given the concept, Zara made the design of the Jazz and Blue and Dance murals. I did the design for the Theater Mural working closely with Corinna MacNeice. The difference in styles is also key to their location as the restaurant murals are more receptive in their approach, (though not in subject matter), while the Theater mural has brighter color tones, more dramatic movement with larger figures. The dimensions of the Theater mural are 12' (high) by 16 feet, towering over the theatre lobby. Flash Allen  
Director





# OFF THE WALL

## L.A. Revives Artists' Call

"Having concluded the first phase of activities which coincided with an extraordinary national effort by artists during the first quarter of this year, Los Angeles Artists Call is preparing for Phase II. The situation in Central America has worsened. The United

States is much closer to a Vietnam-type involvement. As we head toward the presidential elections in November, the need for an increased level of activities is manifest."

With this statement, L.A. Artists Call invited artists to join in a spring, summer and fall of activities organized around the need to educate people about U.S. involvement in Central America, and the desire to use artists'

skills to help in that education.

Events included a performance by the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a Mothers March, performances by Holly Near and Inti-Illimani, an Artists and War Symposium, the massive art show A Vision of America at Peace, Survivalfest 84, and a show at the Casa de la Raza in Santa Barbara, Artists Protesting Intervention in Central America and the Third World.

## Community Culture—A Team Effort

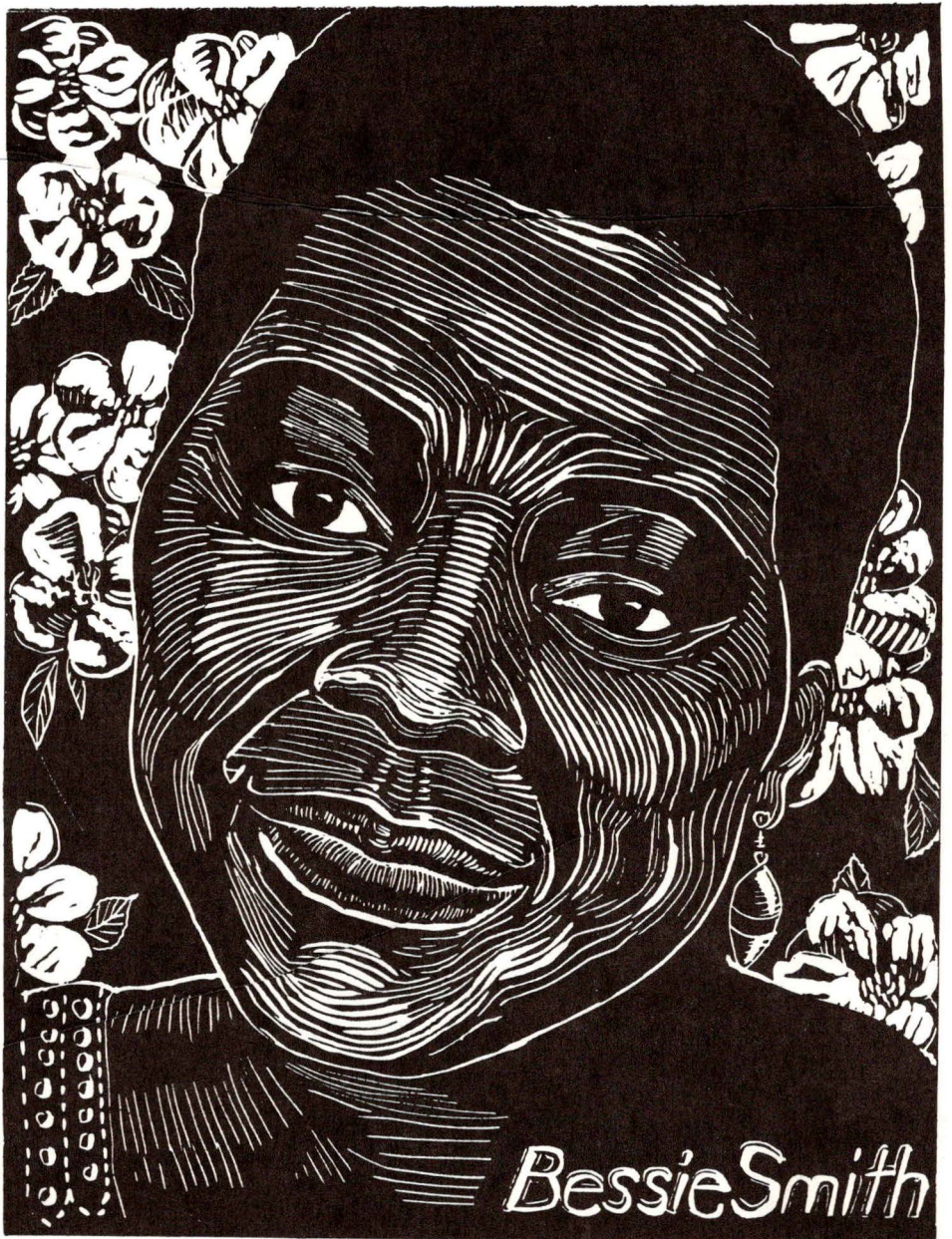
Community artists have been aware of the need to relate to the communities they serve. Indeed, that is the basis of community work. Of equal importance are the relationships among artists themselves, often captured in posters and silkscreens for community events. Many have begun to interact with each other and to recognize the link between various disciplines—music, dance, visual arts, writing, theater. The muralist paints musicians, the musician plays at festivals and dedication ceremonies, the graphic artist advertises events, etc. These relationships are often captured in poster and silkscreens for community events.

Posters such as the one advertising the local Mission District Carnival celebration in San Francisco provide attractive, low cost publicity as well as developing an identifiable image for the event. The bright colors and shapes capture the spirit of Carnival and express the community's love of dance and music. The poster thus becomes an indispensable part of the whole celebration.

Other posters promote local community talent such as jazz musicians and musicals by aspiring writers, giving groups needed publicity they could not otherwise afford. Likewise these same musicians may play at a community gallery opening or participate in a theater performance or at a benefit.

This interdependency among community artists creates stronger statements and builds bonds within the movement that will help further our goal of social change—a goal incorporated in the events themselves and in their posters.

Nancy Hom



Rachel Romero



**ASIAN AMERICAN  
JAZZ FESTIVAL**

OCTOBER 8-9

1 9 8 2

Zand Gee

**CARNAVAL**



**GRAND PARADE & FESTIVAL SUNDAY, APRIL 12**  
**FROM MISSION DISTRICT TO CIVIC CENTER PLAZA 12 NOON**  
Produced by CARNAVAL SF 1981, a project of Mission Neighborhood Centers, Inc. Sponsored by SF Art Commission  
**COSTUME BALL CALIFORNIA HALL 6PM**

Nancy Hom

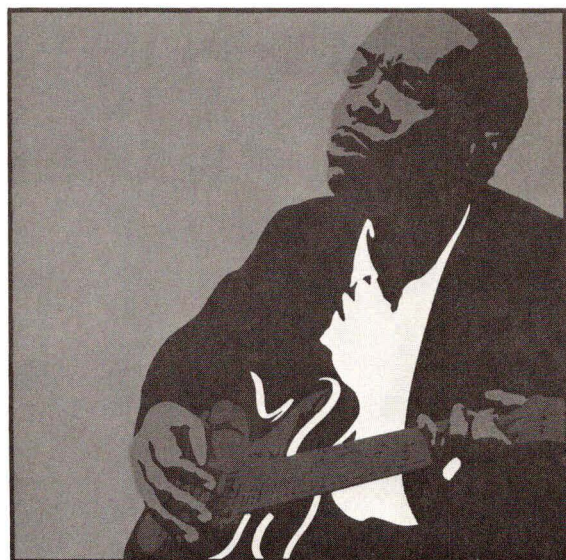
benefit concert

7th anniversary of La Peña  
 7<sup>mo</sup> aniversario de La Peña

**PETE SEEGER  
 GRUPO RAIZ**

Saturday May 29, 1982 8 pm  
 Berkeley Community Theatre - Grove at Allston Way

Lincoln Cushing



THE CHARLES BRISCOE LEGAL CENTER PRESENTS  
 BLUES STAR

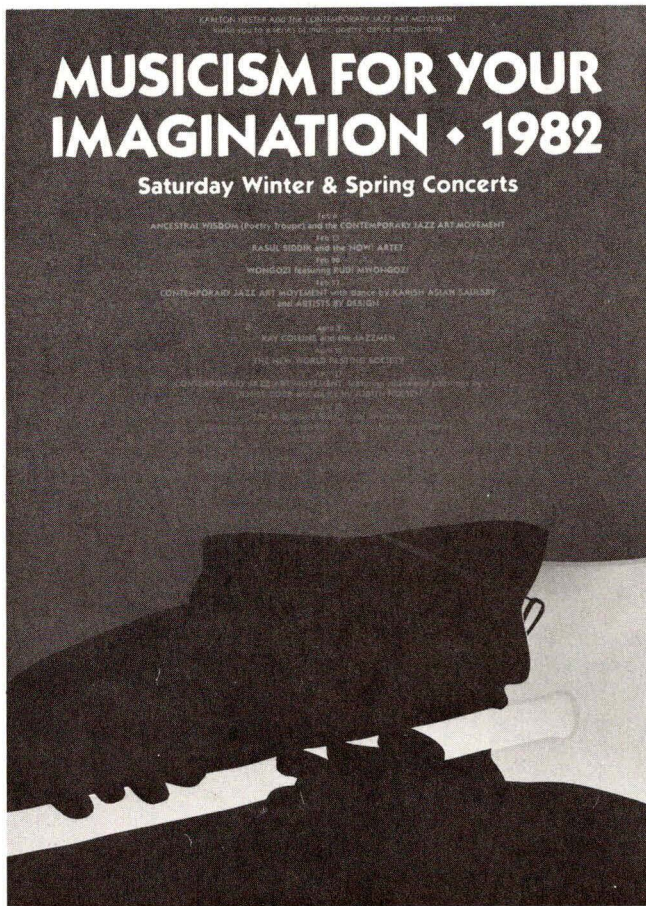
**JOHN LEE HOOKER and the  
 Coast to Coast Blues Band**

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS  
**DISTURBING THE PEACE**

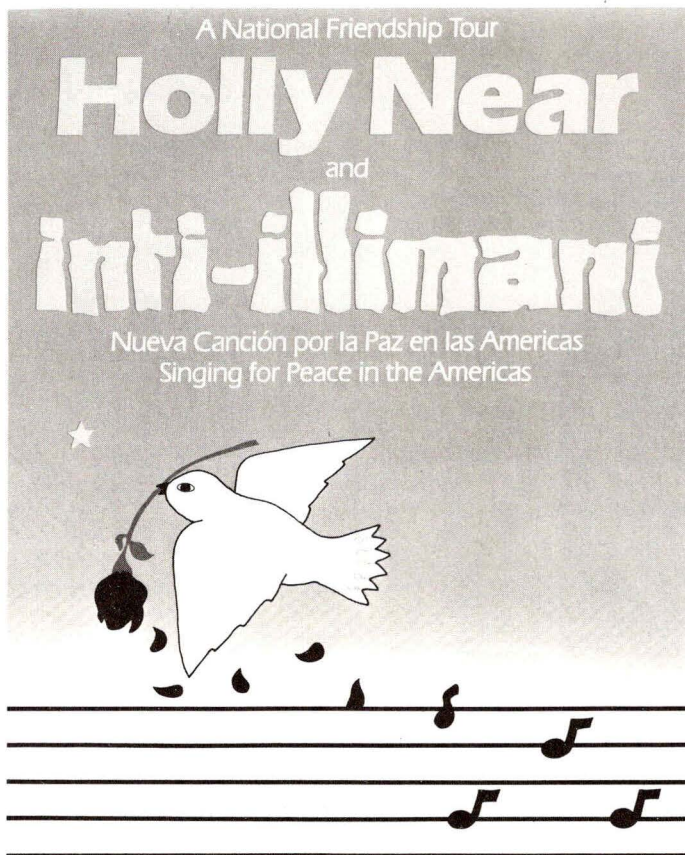
**SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 7PM TILL 'LIGHTS OUT'**  
 INTERNATIONAL MOLDERS & ALLIED WORKERS HALL 4425 E. 14 ST., OAKLAND

Nancy Hom





Zand Gee



Lincoln Cushing

## Billboard Debate

*CMM* here offers two positions about the use of billboards for non-commercial works. We think the comparison of the pieces merits including both, and hope readers will respond to some of the ideas raised in the "debate."

As the first article notes, *CMM* has published articles and examples about community use of billboards, and it is to one of these articles, by the Chicago Mural Group, that Mosher's article is responding initially.

"While I applaud the long and continuing efforts of the Chicago Mural Group, I question their latest choice of a vehicle for community artworks, billboards. It seems there have been numerous attempts in the past to create "Artists' Billboards"—the Eyes and Ears Foundation of San Francisco is one active patron. A few years ago in S.F. a bank with much publicity and hoopla selected small paintings by artists to be transformed by signpainters into billboards. The bank's name displayed so prominently on the billboard's frame made the painting secondary, into pretty and irrelevant advertising art. At times even artists with a strong neighborhood muralist reputation have "crossed over" to design/paint a billboard. In all cases I think the artists have been at worst deluded, at best unsuccessful.

By definition an effective billboard's characteristics would make an unwelcome community mural. A billboard must not be an image integrated into the surroundings. It must brashly separate itself from them for attention. A billboard does not share that fine art characteristic of murals, that of being worthy of repeated viewings. A billboard is designed to reveal all in the shortest possible time, the *gestalt* of a single glance.

Finally and maybe most importantly, in nearly all cases a billboard is put there by corporations, big money to make more money—in method (like the worst "parachute art") and content probably not the same interests as those community mural projects. All impersonal relations of the market. For should a neighborhood or community be forced to purchase or lease a little chunk of its own space for its own imagery?

Murals *create* a space in the community and affirm the cultural fabric within that space; for my money that process is diminished when the space is rented (or received as a tax-





Artist: Horace Washington. Photo by Tim Drescher. Billboard sponsored by Eyes & Ears Foundation. Located at 11th and Folsom, S.F.

deductible donation) from its landlord in a traditional business transaction. As the capitalist medium *par excellence*, billboards represent the commoditization of any space that can carry an image and catch attention; Real Estate of the Eye.

I'm much more interested in the counter-tradition of active community use of billboards: from 1970 student council members in my high school who chopped down signs with ecological motivation (and those who did it merely in spirit of fun which everyone still applauded), to the burgeoning examples of billboards altered into political messages (*CMM* fall 1983), of which this Magazine welcomes further examples. For even with an urgent political message (purchased or the result of alteration) a billboard is still a billboard and hence an—albeit sometimes necessary— inorganic intrusion. The danger is when muralists confuse this with their highly developed art form with its unique accountability to its audience. The most successful compromises for short-term community artworks might lie along the lines of oppositional messages in slide projections, like the projection of anti-war images on a New York City armory in 1982 and anti-arson images over San Francisco's fire-gutted Gartland Apartment pit last summer. But artists, let billboards be billboards! Monkey with 'em and don't get caught, but meanwhile develop and paint community murals.

Mike Mosher

## About Billboards II

We passed Mike Mosher's letter around and discussed it in Chicago Mural Group circles and were initially

mystified (and dismayed) by his vehement denunciation of artist-designed billboards. As we thought about the letter and the subject more we realized that though we are in agreement with many of his opinions, we believe that at crucial points in his argument Mosher allows himself to be seduced by art-world conventions.

The CMG Billboard Project was conceived of as a way of reclaiming public space for messages from the community to the community. The mural movement opened up the possibility for a wide-range of public images, but we would be fooling ourselves if we believed that muralists are currently "telling everyone's story." Because community murals to be successful must have the support of a substantial segment of the community, murals must sometimes avoid too controversial themes, particularly in heterogeneous neighborhoods in which a wide range of opinion exists.

The positive reaction of communities to our (GudePounds) temporary, graffiti-type neighborhood art (see *CMM*, Spring '83, The Pullman Project and *CMM*, Fall '83, Unemployment Line Forms) led us to speculate that more radical themes might be successfully addressed in temporary work. For example, we cannot imagine a neighborhood which would want a permanent mural on the subject of child or woman abuse, but a temporary billboard on the subject could be an important, temporary, contribution to the dialogue of a neighborhood.

It is true that we could have chosen to call these community-donated spaces "permanent sites for temporary murals" rather than billboards and thus avoided the "taint" of working in a form which is usually associated with crass commer-

cialism. However, in this project we were interested in encouraging community groups to utilize this space to communicate clear, specific messages in a temporary form, and that, fundamentally, is what a billboard does.

Mosher states that an "effective billboard... would make an unwelcome community mural." This may be true, but the point is we're not trying to make a mural; we're making a billboard. We find it ironic that Mosher then denigrates billboards because they lack the attributes of "fine art" complexities because these same criteria (lack of complexity, oversimplification, working with an audience, ect.) have often been used by the conventional artworld to devalue murals.

In designing his posters, CMG artist Carlos Cortes (see the back cover of the last issue of *CMM* with his Artists' Call poster) tries to "First catch the eye and then get the message across—make sure that message is short enough that it hits them." Do we wish to denigrate his work by also refusing to call it "fine art" because he aims for simplicity and boldness?

It seems to us that there are many strategies for artists to use to further progressive goals and that it hurts our potential as artists and community organizers to arbitrarily ordain some forms as sacred and to call others profane. The Artworld has kept artists in line for years by dismissing work which presents a clear message for change as simplistic propaganda—let's not do it to each other.

We share Mosher's interest and joy in the dramatic, witty, and daring work of the billboard graffitiists. The graffiti work falls into the historical tradition of the avant-garde artist in opposition to conventional society, shocking the bourgeoisie. The finished works with their palimpsest of new messages on old create a dynamic which is especially pleasing to the tastes of those of us who have been educated to the appreciation of modernist irony and dialectical complexity in a work.

There was a potential some years back for muralists to make the error of seeing graffitiists as natural enemies rather than as artistic allies. It stands to the lasting credit of the muralists that they stood by their convictions (the importance of communication and of the reclamation of public space) and not by a commitment to a single form.

Similarly, we need to avoid the error of heroizing one dynamic, oppositional form and overlooking the uses of other forms for posing alternatives to the dominant culture.

Olivia Gude  
Jon Pounds



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