

COMMUNITY MURALS

SUMMER/FALL 1985

VOLUME 10, NO. 3



EDITORIAL

"When fascism comes to the United States, it won't wear jackboots. It will wear Mickey Mouse ears."
Anon.

With Reagan so successful using the "big lie" recently, we thought it would be helpful to spell out some basic points about information dissemination and attitude formation so that community artists can recognize the techniques more easily, understand them, and use their artistic skills to combat destructive tendencies and promote positive aspects of communications. The basics of this editorial can be found in J.A.C. Brown's *Techniques of Persuasion* and in Jacques Ellul's *Propaganda*. If you have only a few minutes and want to do some reading, examine the excellent Preface to Ellul.

Brown tells us that "all propaganda messages tend to occur in three stages: the stage of drawing attention and arousing interest, the stage of emotional stimulation, and the stage of showing how the tension thus created can be relieved (i.e., by accepting the speaker's advice (p.77)." A big lie, something perhaps fabricated about who are terrorists, certainly gets the public's attention. What is more, it unifies people by creating (in this case out of whole cloth) a common "enemy." The "big lie" is one form of what is today called "disinformation." As for emotional stimulation, the daily press coverage given Reagan's distortions

Continued on page 23

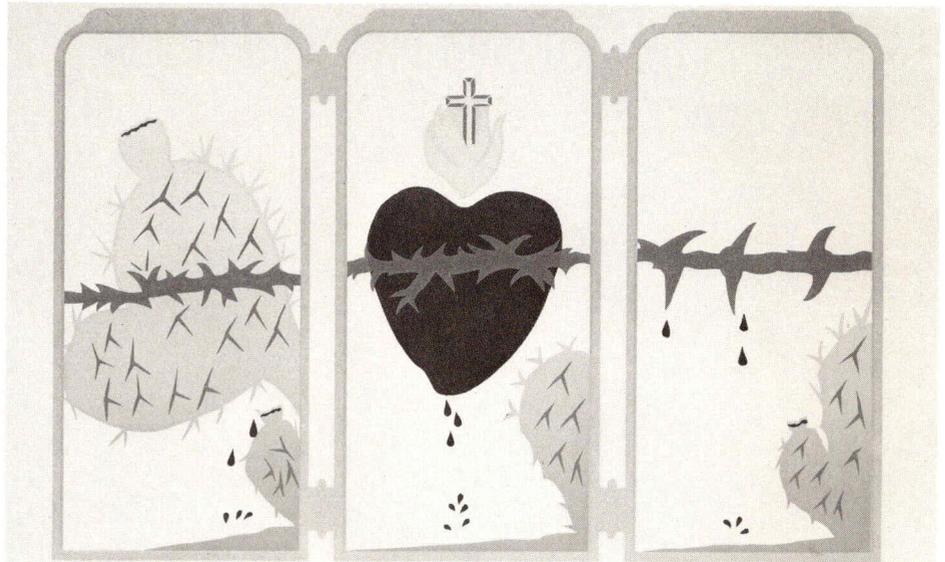
Ralph Maradiaga 1935-1985

Ralph Maradiaga died of a heart attack on July 19 in San Francisco. Too few people know of his tremendous efforts on behalf of community arts as a printmaker, filmmaker, co-founder and director for fifteen years of the Galeria de la Raza/Studio 24. Like others, Ralph sacrificed a career in these individually-oriented fields to help establish and administer a community-based gallery and studio. His role at the Galeria was primarily administrative, and to his credit he confronted the often thankless tasks of making a community gallery a viable operation with unflagging competence. CMM is especially grieved at his death because Ralph helped us with our grant

proposals, our bookkeeping, with how to negotiate the maze of Washington bureaucracy and with the NEA. More, he was always ready with his broad smile and knowledge to lend a hand when we needed it.

The world is a sadder, more empty place without his warmth and good humor. All working for progressive social change will feel his loss as it will take the efforts of several people to fill his shoes.

A memorial exhibit is planned. Donations may be made to the Galeria de la Raza/Studio 24, 2851 24th St., S.F., CA 94110, to help support this project.



Screenprint by Ralph Maradiaga

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Materials for future issues must reach us by the following dates:

Winter 1985-6
Spring 1986

by Thursday, October 3, 1985
by Thursday, January 23, 1986

Correction

In the article on Calley O'Neill's Hawaiian mural, *Taking Their Proper Place in History*, CMM Spring 85, the large photo at the bottom of the page was from that mural, but the small photo was from another mural by O'Neill at the University of Hawaii. Our apologies. We hope to have future articles on her and Hawaii's murals.

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Cover: Mural, California Medical Facility, Vacaville State Prison, CA. Photo: Tim Drescher

Special Note: This issue, Summer/Fall 1985, is not a double issue - we are simply advancing the seasonal designation one quarter.



RESOURCES

Post Office Murals

Democratic Vistas: *Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*. Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985. Hardback \$37.95. 247pp.

Park and Markowitz have produced an excellent work both documenting and explaining Post Office murals of the New Deal era. Over 1,100 post offices across the country received artworks in this period as the result of an extraordinary program initiated by the federal government during the great depression. This work provides access to these projects in text, in 162 well-printed photographs on good, coated white stock, with eleven in full color, and in a town-by-town listing of all post office art in the United States. This last list alone is invaluable for those wanting to explore the murals across the country. But the book offers more.

It is divided into chapters treating historical themes, the 1930s, regionalism, architectural and visual solutions, and the realist coalition, a combination of approaches indicating both thoroughness and freshness of the authors' treatment of the murals.

Perhaps more useful still is the honesty with which Park and Markowitz set the murals into their complex social, political, and artistic contexts. "We forget," they remind us, "how few people in the 1930s had ever seen an original painting and how extraordinary was the effort to place murals and sculpture in communities of every size (p.xvii)." This newness, which some viewed as federal intrusion into their local communities, often led to conflicts between the program, its artists and the communities in which works were to be located. Indeed, as the authors point out, the murals "often represent the conflicts as well as the identity between community and nation (p.xvii)." In fact, the entire period is viewed as a transition between regionalism and nationalism, and this is an extremely useful point of view from which to study the murals that resulted.

Community visual artists of today might be interested to learn that many of our problems were faced by New Deal artists. The most basic, perhaps, is the projects' "uniquely American" combination of "an elitist belief in the value of high culture with the democratic ideal that everyone in society could and should be the beneficiary of such efforts (p.5)." Today, we make a distinc-

tion between public art, such as that in the post offices, and community-based art, done by and with members of a coherent group, but this has come only later, and partly as a response by contemporary muralists to what they have seen in post offices.

Finally, the authors make available their access to previously unpublished letters and interviews with such artists as Ben Shahn, Tom Lea, William Gropper, Peter Blume, Isamu Noguchi and others, all participants in WPA post office art projects.

IMAGINATION

Ninth Annual Conference of the Alliance for Cultural Democracy
October 11-14, 1985

Chicago, Illinois
for information and registration, contact Allen Schwartz, 2262 W. 119th Pl., Blue Island, Il. 60406, ph. (312) 388-3871

This should be an excellent opportunity to meet a wide variety of cultural workers who are concerned with the struggle for self-determination. Artists and organizers of many disciplines will present examples of their work in many communities. The ACD has members all over the U.S.; call the Chicago number for more information about the conference and for contacts in your area.

FYI (For Your Information)

Clearinghouse for Arts Information
625 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10012
(212) 677-7548
quarterly; no charge listed

Aptly subtitled *Practical Information for Those Who Create and Work in the Arts*, FYI is an official publication of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York Foundation for the Arts. Although its purpose is to provide art information for New Yorkers, it includes resources and contacts of value to cultural workers in other parts of the country, including grant deadlines, book and magazine reviews, project descriptions and relevant legislation.

Labor Culture Magazine

The Mill Hunk Herald
916 Middle St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
quarterly; \$3/year, more if you can

The *Herald* is an excellent source of contemporary labor culture. It emphasizes the written word—poetry, short stories and articles—but is visually reinforced with many cartoons and graphics. It is one of the few outlets for the uncensored voice of the working class, and deserves your support.

American Indian Arts Magazine

Native Vision
American Indian Contemporary Arts
934 Brannan St.
San Francisco, CA 94103
bimonthly; \$5/yr seniors/students,
\$10 individuals

Native Vision includes articles on contemporary Native American artists and shows, as well as practical advice for artists on issues such as contracts and pricing. It is published by the AICA, which operates a gallery in San Francisco.

SCWP Catalog

Syracuse Cultural Workers Project
P.O. Box 6367
Syracuse, N.Y. 13217
(315) 474-1132

We've mentioned the SCWP before, but their new catalog requires an announcement. They are one of the best sources for political posters and other printed materials. Currently featured are postcards by Lisa Kokin (*Community Murals* Winter '85), a poster by Domingo Ulloa (*CMM* Spring '85), and other fine artists. Their next catalog will be available the beginning of September.

Overview of European Public Art

The latest issue of *Dossiers de L'Art Public* adds color and some English text. The main articles are some very serious discussions of art and urban context/urban design by progressive urban planners Damien Hambye and Michel de Sablet, and a review of the inspiring work of sculptor-space designer Henri Marquet. The next issue will attempt an overview of European public art and will be published trilingually—English, German and French. David Harding (*Art in Social Context* Program at Dartington College, England) and Dr. Johann Bernhardt, who works with the Berlin mural group RATGEB, are co-editing with Herve Bechy and Xavier de la Salle. It promises to be an historic, blockbuster issue. They are also looking for reports on Keim paints and will publish photos of work done with it.

Get your copy by joining the Association pour la promotion de L'Art public, Domaine de Chatenay, 37100 Tours, France. Membership includes subscription: \$13 yr.

How do you send \$13 to France? Easy—get postal reply coupons at your local U.S. Post Office.

John Weber

INTERNATIONAL

ARGENTINA MURALS

Editorial note: The following series of articles has been translated and/or paraphrased from those published in the May 1984 issue of La Actualidad in el Arte, which was mailed to us along with a new collection of newsletters from the National Muralists' Movement of Argentina, by muralist Italo Grassi. Although the material is by now over a year old, we publish it in an effort to bring to our readers something of the historical background of Argentina's mural movement. We welcome further information from Argentina, and especially would like to see better photographs than we have been able to obtain to date.

CMM believes that the transition from the military dictatorship to the present government is of more than passing interest to our readers, and over time we hope that we will be able to piece together the story of the role played by community murals in the transition as more information is received. These articles, and those printed in CMM Summer 1984, we repeat are translations from articles published in Argentina by community artists. In order to provide a better context for understanding the living conditions and political situation in Argentina, Jo Tucker has submitted the following information.

On March 24, 1976, a military junta overthrew the Peronist government of Argentina in the bloodiest coup d'etat in Argentine history. Peronism had come to power in the 1973 elections with 79% of the popular vote and the hope of ending the long years of repression by a series of dictators. But the government

In addition to articles here translated, the May 1984 issue of LA ACTUALIDAD EN EL ARTE, which is devoted principally to muralism, contains an homage to Spilimbergo as well as articles or interviews with the following muralists: Raul Soldi, Antonio Berni, Raquel Forner, Eduardo Martin, Adriana Micheletti, Marta Grassi, Maria Rosa Tola, Victor Grillo, Carmen Pacheco, Nicolas Cacciatore, Mario Mollari, Omar Brachetti, and Italo Grassi. For additional information on the Argentine movement, see CMM, Vol. 9, NO. 3, Summer 1984.

cast aside its campaign promises. In response, the people began to mobilize in neighborhoods, unions, cooperatives, student groups and revolutionary organizations. Among these were many trabajadores de la cultura, cultural workers who integrated their work with community struggles, producing murals and barrio theater groups.

Faced with this powerful upsurge of mass mobilization and the growing strength of the unions, the military party staged a coup, forbidding activities of political parties, imposing censorship of the press, and placing direct military control on 80% of the unions. The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, formed in 1977 by mothers whose children were among the thousands killed and kidnapped by the government and paramilitary groups like the AAA (Anti-Communist Alliance). The mothers, with white scarves on their heads and photographs of their sons and daughters, bravely marched every Thursday at the plaza calling for the return of their families. They are still marching every Thursday, still raising the same call for justice. Families of the "disappeared" have identified 30,000 kidnapped and never seen again. In addition is the death toll of those known killed (15,000 from 1974-78). A million people fled this horror into exile. During the dictatorship 20,000 were arrested and virtually all of them tortured. Argentina was infamous for its specialized torture techniques, especially medical methods for prolonging life during torture. During this time to hand out a leaflet or paint a slogan calling for justice was to risk death.

The economic plan of the dictatorship involved massive cutbacks in social programs resulting in hospital closings and school drop-outs. Combined with inflation raging from 250-400% annually and rising unemployment, the unlivable conditions prompted more mobilization. The disaster of the Malvinas (Falklands) War initially diverted attention from the widespread labor strikes, but eventually contributed to the mass opposition which forced the military to seek a political way out—return to elections and constitutional democracy.

Raul Alfonsin, the current President and candidate of the Radical Party, of-

fered the best option, campaigning with condemnation of the repression. Human rights organizations were optimistic after his election. Yet Alfonsin's government has focused all responsibility for the bloodbath on the trial of nine military commanders, leaving the rest of the military and repressive apparatus unchanged. And they have not even been able to complete trials of the nine. Lawyers' lives have been threatened, bombs placed near their homes.

General Roman Camps, who publically on television claimed he deserved a medal for the 5,000 "subversives" he disposed of, has yet to be judged. The Madres, disillusioned with such democracy, recently sat in for twenty hours, demanding a meeting with Alfonsin.

While repression has lessened, the economy has worsened. Inflation for this year will top 1,000%. Workers' buying power has been cut 50% since December. With a foreign debt of \$47 billion, Alfonsin bowed to the International Monetary Fund demands which will further cut income and services for the workers and the poor. Protests and strikes are again on the increase as the Argentine people demand an end to a government which in the words of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo "always directed its army to oppress its own country, to silence it with terror in order to dominate it by hunger."

Art as a Social and Aesthetic Act: An Interview with Elena Diz and Juan Manuel Sanchez

"United in their daily lives as well as in their shared conception of art as the expression of the collective human unconscious, Elena Diz and Juan Manuel Sanchez have long worked toward the development of a uniquely Argentine art tradition. Twenty-five years ago they were among those who supported the 'Manifiesto for a Revolutionary Art in Latin America.'

"Later, as collaborators in the historic Spartacist group, they proposed that muralism should be realistic and monumental art of the streets with aesthetic and moral obligations to the

spectator. Today, after the repression of recent years, they are finally able to tie their earlier philosophy to the need, as well, of 'painting from within'.

"In the following interview the couple discusses their positions on muralism and contemporary reality.

Interviewers: Which rules guide your conception of the mural?

Sanchez: I would say synthesis: form and synthesis. There must be a unifying expression of color and form which eliminates the decorative or superfluous. In the mural there is no landscape; or at the very most, it is barely suggested. The mural is for people on the run; people who, in moving through the city, can feel invigorated before a work of art.

Diz: I understand the mural as a large painting—although obviously not the same as an easel painting. Apart from its social function, it should also contain few elements: a simple anecdote, a clear message. The mural is also different from easel painting in attracting a different audience; those who go to a gallery to view pictures are not generally those caught in the daily bustle and confusion of the streets and who might be gratified to see something beautiful.

Int: Does muralism present limitations to its practitioners?

Sanchez: Those of any discipline; that is, its own laws. As Elena said, the muralist creates work which is fundamentally social. Therefore, I believe that the main requirement for the muralist is knowing how to place his work within the context of its physical space in order to establish visual perspective.

Diz: The mural confronts and affects the public which passes. Imagine, for example, what happens when people walk through the Pacific Gallery and suddenly encounter all the murals of the dome. . .

Int: Do you feel that all the works of the Pacific Gallery actually possess characteristics of the mural?

Sanchez: Not all of them. There the muralist is Spilimbergo; after Spilli would be Berni, and then Castagnino, with certain 'buts'. . . They are the muralists we have as antecedents.

Int: In Argentina, contrary to the experience of Mexico, Brasil and Cuba, the mural movement has somehow been frustrated. To what do you attribute this?

Sanchez: Murals require space—large space which only public buildings can provide. And, plainly, works of large dimensions require motivation from the state. Mexican muralism, for example, was tremendously productive precisely because it grew from a social revolution.

Diz: Here, muralism is thwarted because there is absolutely no interest in placing art at the service of the people. No one at the official level is interested in such a project.

Int: When you speak of murals, are ceramics and acrylics necessarily excluded from the discussion?

Diz: No; all can be incorporated in the mural. We have produced works with paint and ceramics. . .

Sanchez: Ceramic murals are simply different conceptions. It depends upon the means by which the materials of the framework are joined; whether by ceramics or fresco is relative.

Int: Is it preferable that the framework be fixed or that it be moveable? I'm thinking of certain murals that can be rescued, *Guernica*. . .

Sanchez: I, too, was thinking of *Guernica* and thinking that its movable supports—which permitted its simple mounting and removal—were precisely what saved its disappearance at the hands of Franco so that it could continue as testimony to the horror of that epoch.

Int: Is there an artistic attitude or philosophy which differentiates the painting of murals from that of the studio?

Diz: Painting in the studio forces the artist to work alone. The mural painter, however, lacks such solitude; his work is done before his public.

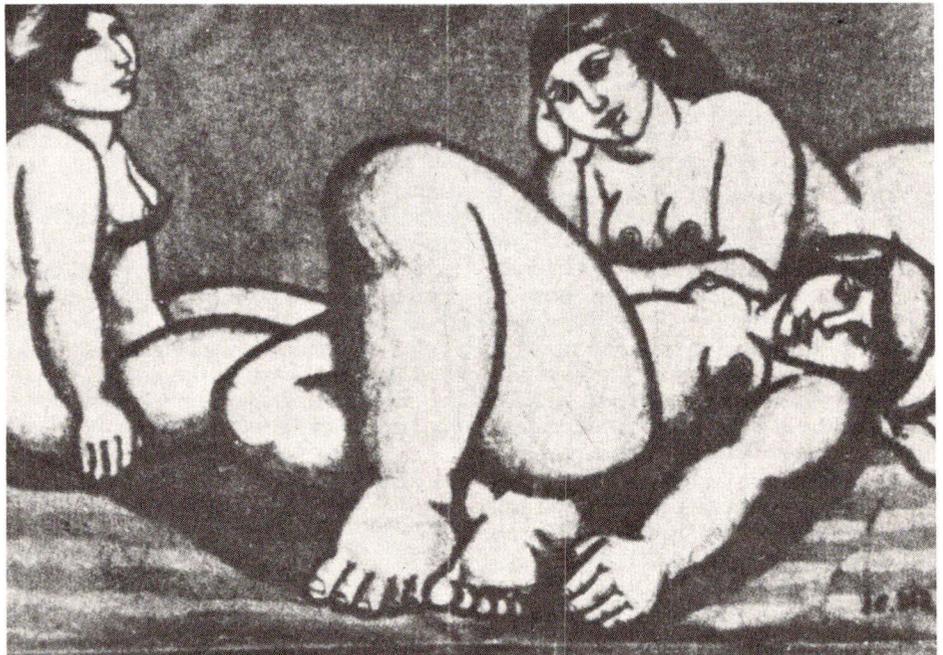
Sanchez: What I believe is that there is a philosophic or, better, a political position which differentiates the mural from studio painting. Because the mural appears together with a great eruption of social, political and economic changes,

in the mural the spectator participates and communicates.

Int: The Espartaco group, of which you were among the founders, was born a quarter of a century ago. My understanding is that this was the first movement which proposed a continuous, joint artistic effort. Although the members of the group embraced diverse political philosophies, all agreed to the concept of art as a social function, completely divorced from the individual. Could you speak a bit about that experience?

Sanchez: Espartaco was a group of artists and workers which emerged in 1959 and dissolved in 1968. Along with Elena Diz and me, there were Carpani, di Bianco Sessano, Lara, Mollari, Bute, and Venturi, another of the artists among the ranks of the terrible list of dead or disappeared during the last military dictatorship. . .

Int: Speaking of changes, there appeared some days ago in the new review, *CULTURA*, Fermin Fevre's article, 'Art in the Streets'. His proposal seemed valid but caused a good deal of indignation, since this art appears in the streets of those who, after benefitting from the 'process', today remain encysted within the official cultural channels of a democratic government. And these individuals have name and surname: Glusberg, Safons, the same Fevre, to name only a few. They openly continue to exercise 'cultural power', for example, by manipulating competitions, such as the last event sponsored by Benson and Hedges. . . Under these circumstances, at the hands of whom does art appear in the streets?



mural by Elena Diz, painted in Pina Mar.

Sanchez: Look, some time ago similar things happened. I believe they happen not only with those who 'conduct' cultural affairs but with certain artists as well. . . I remember that two or three years ago a mural competition was contrived to decide upon a design for the building of Argentine Airlines. From the beginning, everyone knew that Polesello would be chosen. In spite of many protests, all other contestants were eliminated, and Polesello was selected without the slightest explanation. . .

Int: Many years ago there existed a law for the protection and diffusion of murals. We understand that a preliminary proposal is currently being presented in the Chamber of Deputies to insure that one percent of the construction costs of all projected buildings will be authorized for the inclusion of murals and sculptures and those buildings. In public buildings this will be a mandatory method of forcing the state to encourage and stimulate artistic activity.

Sanchez: This seems a good idea to me; but it also introduces the theme of the relationship between architect and artist. Architects as well as engineers are, in general, misinformed. To them it's all the same whether a wall contains panelling, a mirror or a mural. It seems they possess neither background nor current information about national culture and the art which is developing around them. . . It will be necessary to create an advisory body of artists to assist these professionals. In any event, to produce murals without state support is nearly impossible; as you say, we need a new policy for the arts.

Int: In the years of the dictatorship and the degree of vulnerability which they signified, there were people—like Clorindo Testa, for example, who were able to pursue their work; and they are names which survive. As artists in these circumstances, how did you feel?

Sanchez: There are periods in which one can only close himself into his studio and paint and paint—from within himself. These last years were very difficult. I left and returned; and we passed through a very difficult time. However, we continued working. In spite of a great desperation which grew within me, I feel that it is important to be able to incorporate all this experience into the language which each has chosen to express himself.

Diz: This has happened to everyone, except those 'artists' who thrived during the dictatorship and continue to do so today, with total impunity."

Susana Cuestas Vedoya
and Salvador Linares

The following translations and/or paraphrases, along with any inadvertent errors in interpretation which they contain, are the sole responsibility of Marcia Rautenstrauch.

Editorial: On the Matters of Remaining Behind (Quedantismo) and Hypocrisy*

"No one denies that Senor Jorge Glusberg and his group sheltered under the acronym, CAYC (Center of Art and Communication) gave a cultural face to the 'process'. Nor is anyone unaware of the fact that during the past seven mournful years many drawing rooms and official centers and institutions opened their doors and lent support to the curious and capricious whims of CAYC.

"Senor Glusberg and his colleagues, meanwhile, conducted their 'world classic'—ignoring not only the many who were sacrificed or 'disappeared' but also those who, with a certain egotistic elitism, we refer to as our companions of the cultural road: painters, sculptors, architects, engineers, actors, authors, critics, sociologists, musicians—or simply students desirous of exploring the diverse humanistic disciplines considered suspect during this period and costing the life of more than one.

"With absolute indifference to the tragic circumstances stifling hundreds of creative artists the CAYC group moved easily into all positions of power left vacant by true witnesses of reality and accepted without qualm these gifts of ideological persecution.

"While among others Harold Conti, Rodolfo Walsh, Hector Oesterheld and his daughters were being assassinated; while Antonio de Benedetto was being tortured; while Tato Pavlovsky and David Vinas were forced to flee the country (the latter after the massacre of his two children). . . the Glusberg group continued brilliantly representing and 'projecting' the country from its 'center of art and communication'.

"At the same time Paloma Alonso was assassinated, the family of the painter Mario Dario Grandi was exterminated; and his wife is presently one of

*Translator's note: It is difficult to know how to translate precisely the coined word, "quedantismo", which has no true English equivalent in a society which does not (usually) silence its critics with bullets or "disappearances". Under the latter conditions, there are those who leave—by one means or another—and those whose ethics—or lack thereof—permit them to stay (quedar).

the Grandmothers of the Plaza del Mayo still demanding knowledge of the whereabouts of her grandson.

"Today these people are democratic. They sing of liberty and support art in the streets. The streets of whom? The streets where our sons, colleagues and friends have fallen? The streets from which an entire generation was expelled because it did not believe in reliving the experiences of the twenty European years? A generation which did not wish to imitate an official model which we were already tired of seeing enshrined in books and encyclopedias which served only to silence the painful reality we were living?

"From those streets in which today they attempt to gain new ground; from those streets where many left their blood, we have the obligation to remove them. We who survive with will and spirit; we whom the cruelest adversity cannot break: to us remains the duty of unmasking and denouncing these individuals as the cynical cultural charlatans they truly are."

Salvador Linares, Director
LA ACTUALIDAD EN EL ARTE

Muralism: The Art of the Streets. In Whose Hands?

"In spite of the favoritism which they enjoyed during the lamentable years of the military dictatorship, certain opportunists today attempt, under the protections and liberties implicit in a democratic system, to continue their fatal influence over both the critical and organizational aspects of our artistic life. Those who previously proposed, encouraged and diffused artistic elitism now support an identical attitude which they attempt to disguise as art of the people.

"LA ACTUALIDAD EN EL ARTE has always supported 'the art of the streets' and, likewise, the popularization of artistic activity, so long as it is honest and authentic. Therefore, we can unequivocally acknowledge the true representatives of this art form who have struggled for so many long hard years to sustain their work—just as we can identify those strangers to democracy, who insult the public with their self-interested sleight-of-hand routines.

"The following article, including notes on the history of Argentine muralism and statements from its contemporary practitioners*, is offered to clarify the true intentions of those in power who apparently assume that we are blind, deaf and mute before the reality (they have created)."

Failed Muralism

"On the occasion of his visit to Buenos Aires in 1975, painter and theoretician Otto Herbert Hajek, secretary of the Syndicate of Plastic Artists of the Federal Republic of Germany, stated that 'all inhabitants of a city have a right to participate in the artistic experience of their environment; that is, the city itself'. Appropriating this declaration, the firm of Benson and Hedges, the Arche Foundation and the Argentine Association of Art Critics totally negated the educational thrust of this idea in their recent competitions.

MURALS FOR THE CITY

"In a communication directed to the mayor of Buenos Aires, Doctor Julio C. Saquier, I questioned the judgment of a jury (Nelly Perazzo, architects Pena y Grill, Glusberg, Juan C. Distefano) which ignores an ornamental tradition uniting public art with the personality which it evokes. Such was the fate of the murals of Torroja, Audivert, Zelaya and Aguirrezabala destined for three public plazas (Roberto Arlt, Lola Mora and Dr. Grierson). The images presented in these efforts are completely alien to the life and work of the public figures they are intended to memorialize. I requested that Dr. Saquier designate a different fate for these murals.

ARCHE-AACA

"If the installations of the 'Murals for the City' Program were inappropriate, the future of public space is further darkened by the appearance of 19 murals destined for our city after their exhibition at the Malvinas Cultural

Center 2 February through 22 March, 1984). Here one can appreciate the denial of the Argentine mural tradition forged by such people as Spilimbergo, Berni, Castagnino, Urruchua, Seoane, Soldi, Batlle Planas, Italo Grassi, Picoli, Perez Celis, Miguel Davila and others.

"Regarding this exhibition, the National Muralists' Movement (the sole representative body since 1971) published the following letter, signed by Oscar Faliero, of the capital:

'With great disgust, I have seen the manner in which our muralist tradition has been trampled. I attended the exhibit to see these projects and their authors. I could not believe that the public would be offered such barbarism. 1) Without muralistic content; divorced from reality; contempt for the viewer; some totally lacking in line, in form. 2) The fact is that no one attempted to produce a mural with content. 3) I ask myself: aside from certain known artists, who are these people? Who is behind this travesty?

"In the daily, THE NATION, critic Romualdo Brughetti writes,

'...Regarding these murals, wouldn't it have been more democratic to hold a public competition in which all those competent in muralism could have presented their ideas?'

"In another public declaration (February 1984) the National Muralists' Movement stated:

'...Rather than selecting the muralists in an open competition,

a group was hand-picked—among them, some good artists; others, merely obsequious imitators; but the majority without muralistic experience or conception... that the jury responsible for awarding the commissions was also hand-picked and did not include spokesmen from recognized artists' groups...'

"Upon assuming power on 10 December 1983, Doctor Alfonsín announced,

'...culture will be directed to all the people, with full federal respect for the development of regional cultures and not only that of supposedly learned and illustrious minorities.'

"The 'Murals for the City' and 'Art in the Streets' programs blatantly contradict this policy statement of the chief of state. Their public installation is a total negation of the essence of our fine arts. These ridiculous ornaments embody images which neither permit the slightest aesthetic analysis, convey a social message nor perpetuate the brilliant Argentine mural tradition. The reverse of this situation can be seen in the 900 meters of murals painted in love and consideration for the children of the National Pediatric Hospital.

"In view of all these antecedents, we petition our local authorities to revoke the permits for installing in public places the 'Murals for the City' and 'Art in the Streets'.

"There will be justice."

Oscar Felix Haedo

Ricardo Carpani: Rebellion and Solidarity

"In the decade of the sixties Ricardo Carpani appeared on the Argentine artistic scene. Along with Juan Manuel Sanchez, Julia Elena Diz, Bute, Mollari, Sessano and Venture, Carpani was a member of the famous Spartacist Movement (*grupo Espartaco*), which initiated a new form of muralistic expression.

"Regarding this group, Jorge Eneas Spilimbergo remarked in 1958:

'...their artistic motivations are: to arouse the public aesthetically and morally; to attract the people by artistic means to the world of solidarity, rebellion and the revolutionary workers' desire for justice; and to discover forms, symbols and styles which portray our Argentine and Latin American reality.'

"Some years ago Carpani, who was obliged to leave the country, wrote in his book, ART AND THE PROBLEM OF LATIN AMERICAN NATIONALISM,

'The fundamental difference with respect to the consolidation of our own national culture is that we have existed as a nationality for centuries, with racial homogeneity,



Graphic by Ricardo Carpani

ty, cultural and ancestral traditions fully in force.

'We were born a colony, and our culture and politics were essentially denied by our colonizers. The first act of our Iberian colonizers was the systematic annihilation of the great pre-Colombian cultures. At one extreme, annihilation both physical and spiritual, accomplished by means of war, genocide and enslavement; at the other, aided by the Catholic missionaries, destruction of ancient beliefs, religions, traditions and cultural habits of the indigenous peoples... This is of major importance in the characterization of our reality, since it is quite different from what has happened in other parts of the world.'

No author given

Declaration of the National Muralists' Movement: In Favor of National and Popular Subjects

With the re-establishment of a constitutional democratic government in our country a legitimate desire has been awakened in all healthy cultural sectors to "take art to the streets." This orientation of art to the people, its natural audience, involves, on one level, a rebirth of muralism in our country.

At the same time, certain groups never previously famous as champions of popular art—foreign businesses (largely Yankee), elitist groups and supposedly vanguardist personalities who only a short time ago supported the "death" of painting—have suddenly appeared to organize and finance meetings among muralists and other artists. Examples of these meetings were the mural competitions in Mar del Plata and Buenos Aires and that sponsored by the Esso Petroleum Company.

In 1970 when the National Muralists' Movement formed and held its various meetings, these same groups laughed scornfully, maintaining that muralism was a relic of the past which had no viable place in modern architecture. Along with the critics who totally ignored our efforts (with the exception of Enrique Baliari and Oscar Felix Haedo, who have supported us from the very beginning), they suddenly appeared, declaring that, thanks to the Benson and Hedges fiasco, Mar del Plata "...now has its first

mural." This announcement produced great laughter among the local population, since the city already boasted more than a hundred murals by Juan Carlos Castagnino, Batlle Planas and many other artists. Today these detractors have radically changed their position and have transformed themselves into zealous muralists.

Confronted, therefore, with the supposed interest of parties whose objectivity seems, at best, dubious, the following clarification seems necessary:

1) The current "awakening" appears under the auspices of businesses to which it is difficult to attribute artistic inclinations, particularly those directed toward the populace. Their motivation seems, rather, a ferocious effort to exploit the people, since for them art is just one more form of penetration parallel to that which they have already achieved on the economic and social levels.

2) Along with these commercial interests inevitably appear groups and personalities favoring cultural elitism and substantiating the claim of Anibal Ponce: "When it is enjoyed as a privilege of the few, culture is debased."

3) The National Muralists' Movement has been systematically excluded from current discussions. In its fourteen years of existence this group has, often under difficult conditions, sponsored more than twenty regional and local conferences throughout the country, leaving hundreds of murals on the walls of schools, neighborhood societies, syndicates, etc. Also excluded have been muralists responsible for important works in churches (San Francisco, Cordoba),

municipalities (Trenque Lauquen, Guamini), and secondary schools (Maipu), among many others.

4) Rather than awarding commissions on the basis of a free competition open to all artists without exception, this group has hand-picked its winners, among whom, of course, there are certain good artists. Their general lack of muralistic concept and experience, however, is readily apparent in the so-called murals produced in Mar del Plata and in the exhibition of designs there presented.

5) Jurors responsible for selection as well as remuneration of the muralists were also capriciously chosen, without the participation of representative artists' groups (SAAP, Federacion, etc.) or of the National Muralists' Movement.

6) As the facts have amply demonstrated, they have encouraged and rewarded a type of muralism lacking national identity, humanistic and social content and historical continuity with the founders of Argentine muralism (Spilimbergo, Castagnino, Berni, Uruchua, Soldi, among other teachers).

...It is vital that all plastic artists without exception, all representative artists' groups, authentic art critics and the National Muralists' Movement unite in defense of an art oriented toward the public and that, with complete creative freedom of styles and pictorial methods, such an art would once again raise the banners of the best democratic, popular, revolutionary, national and Latin American traditions.

Italo Grassi

Declaration of S.A.A.P. (Argentine Society of Plastic Artists)

"In response to the so-called murals which have recently appeared in the streets of Buenos Aires, the Argentine Society of Plastic Artists reiterates its position, stated some years ago in its Project and Program, that murals should be undertaken only under conditions which totally respect the intentions of their creators.

"To ensure the quality of art in public murals, monuments and buildings, all architectural and urbanization projects of the State or Municipality—particularly in Buenos Aires—must recognize those groups which have organized to represent the various artistic workers (painters, engravers, sculptors).

"An open, public jury must be created to guarantee the proficiency of participating artists. In addition,

'...participation in mural design competitions must be absolutely free and open to all, so as to avoid situations such as those fostered recently by the Municipality of Buenos Aires or those sponsored by Benson and Hedges and Archet in which participants were chosen by a jury whose only function was to award prizes: a jury, moreover, criticized by all artists of the country because of its open collaboration with the military regime.'

"As its principal objective, the urban art project of S.A.A.P. seeks the beautification of the city. We are opposed, therefore, to all types of pre-selection or pre-conditions, such as those, for example, which resulted in the installation of the monument to Don Quijote on Mayo and Lima Avenues.

"Those representing the artists feel responsible for these injustices and demand a law* which would allocate decoration (painting, ceramics, murals and other art forms) certain percentages of the cost of all public constructions: bridges, highways, factories, schools, hospitals, barracks, plazas and living complexes. The measure would also encompass certain private buildings whose costs exceed 'a figure to be determined.'

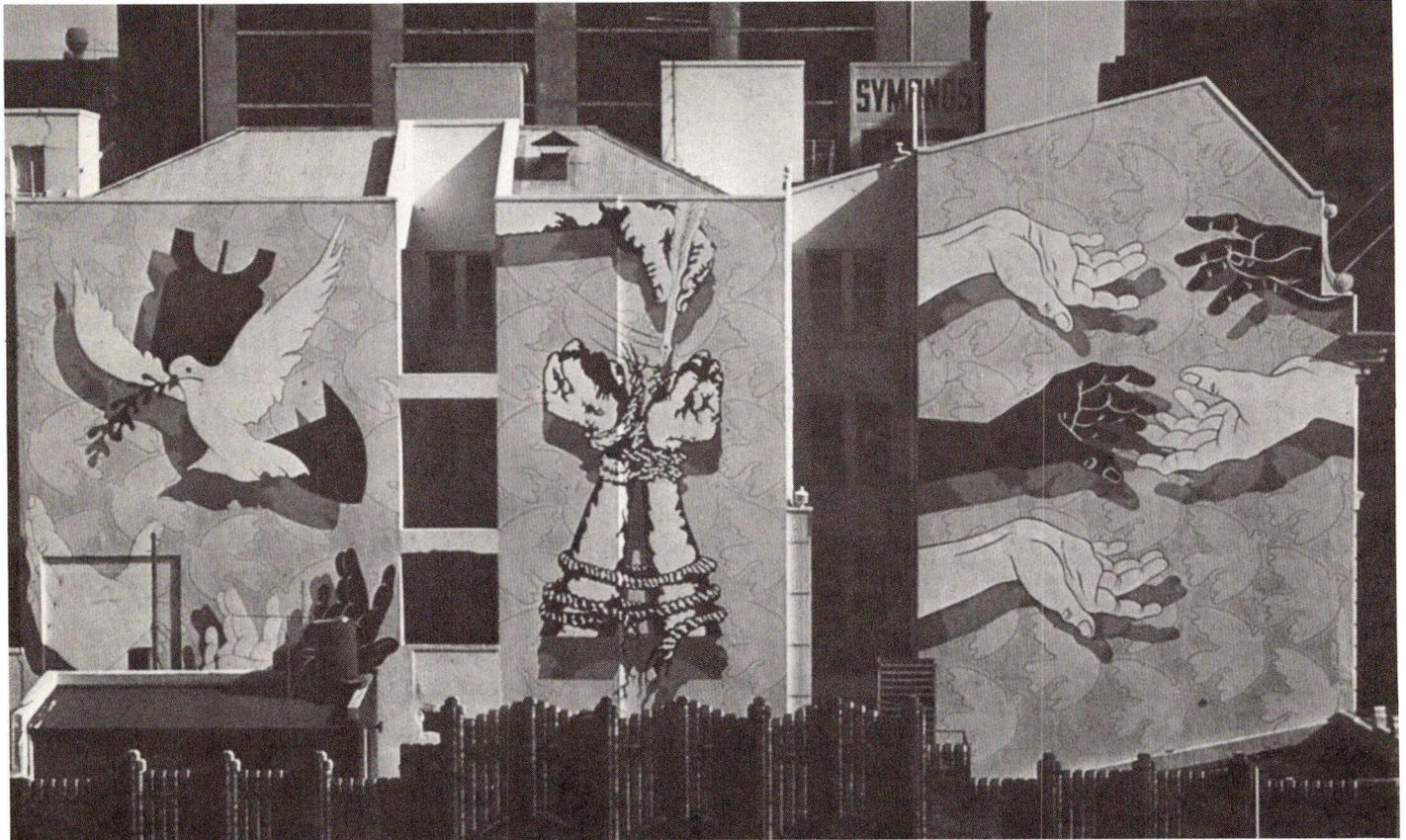
"In defense of a uniquely Argentine art, S.A.A.P. proposed to 'combat colonialism and the type of dependence which previous so-called competitions have attempted to impose.'

"S.A.A.P. strongly supports the program and legal projects of the National Muralists' Movement of Mar del Plata."

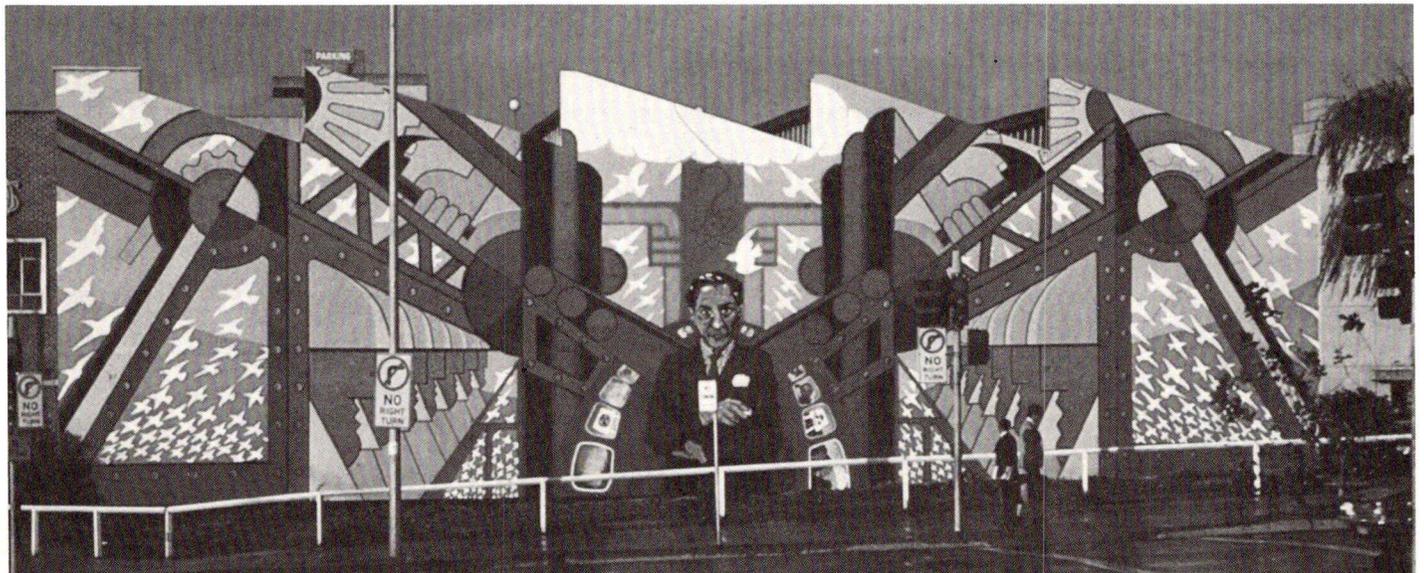
*Editor's note: The National Muralists' Movement has been instrumental in working toward this goal.

Australian Murals

Public Art Squad, P.O. Box 611, Darlinghurst, 2010
Sydney, N.S.W. Australia
postcards available; 50¢ each plus postage



"Peace, Justice and Unity", Pilgrim House, corner Pitt & Park Streets, Sidney
24 x 13 meters; Artists: Rodney Monk, David Humphries, Ashley Taylor; photo Rodney Monk

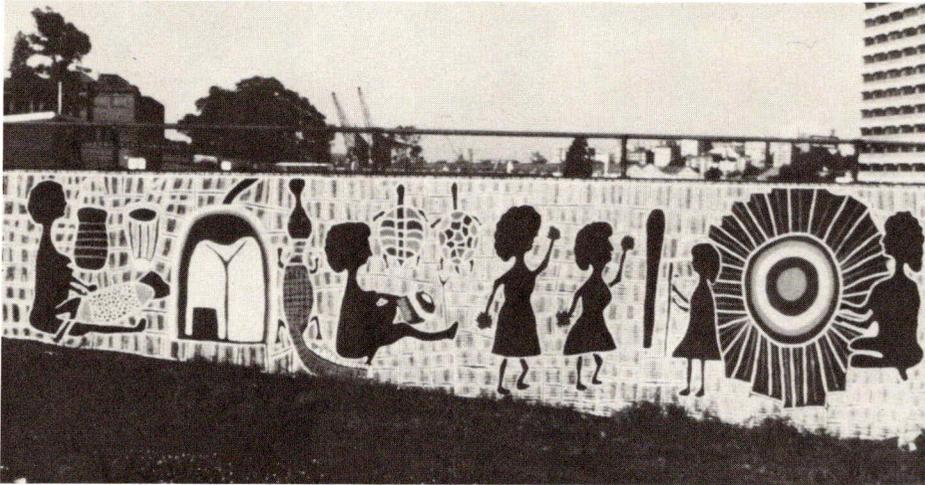


"Steel City—Peace City" Wollongong, N.S.W. 30.3 x 10.5 meters; photo & direction Rodney Monk

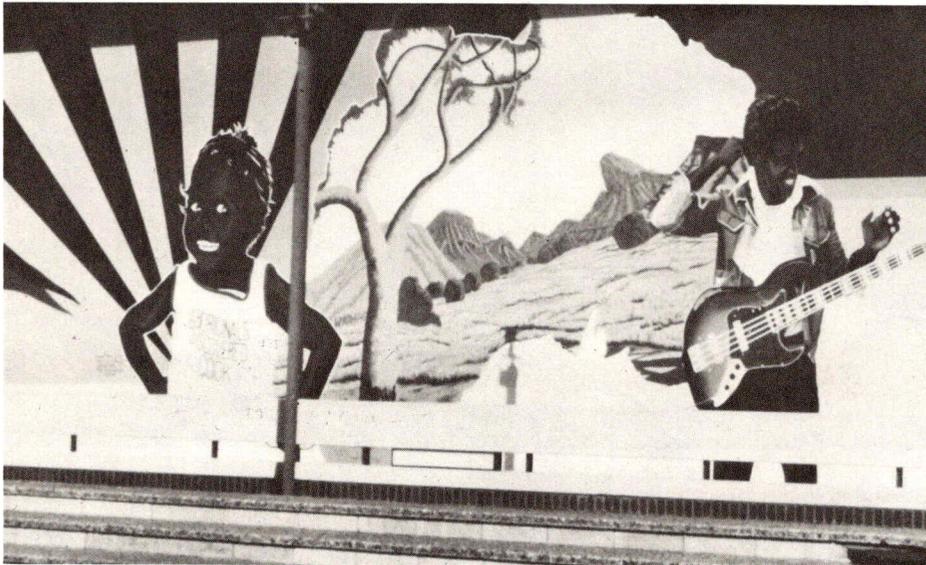
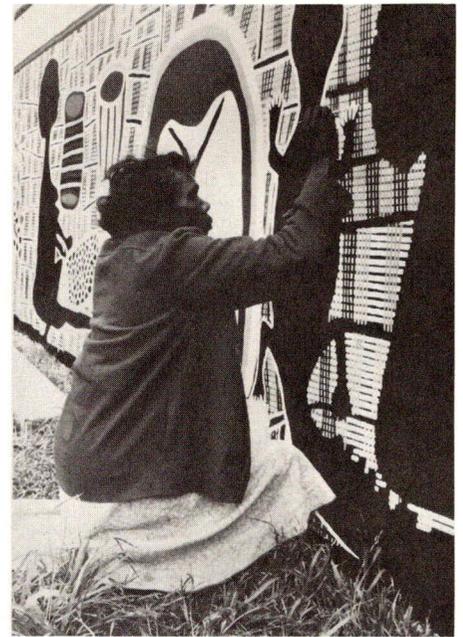
Carol Ruff, Australian Murals

All of the murals presented here are group designed, and coordinated and painted by Carol Ruff.

photos by Carol Ruff.

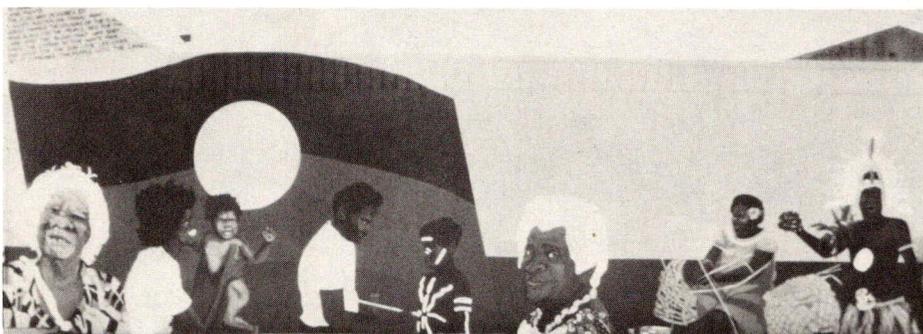


Domain Park Mural, Sydney 1982, 135' long. "Women on the Edge of Town". Funded by the women and arts festival on the theme of women in the city, their jobs, the effects of technology on their lives and migration.



Adelaide Festival Theater, 1982 20' x 100' titled "Aboriginals Discovered Cook", funded by the Adelaide Festival of Arts.

The detail shows a map of Australia with a typical Alice Springs style landscape (aboriginal homelands).



Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Medical Center, 1981. Part of a multimural (7) project. Funded by Aboriginal Arts Board, Australia Council. The theme is a portrait wall of local aboriginal and islander people showing aboriginal flag (black, red, with bright yellow sun in center), Torres Strait, weaving and dancing.



"Proud of Our Elders", Sydney, N.S.W. women's mural funded by Randwick City Council on the theme of elderly people.

UNITED STATES

Painting the Stones of Law

The "correctional institutions" in California (most of us would call them "prisons," but only two out of eleven in the state are officially so named) have a number of murals within their formidable walls, behind their razor wire and guard towers. The prisons also have a pervasively depressing atmosphere caused with stunning effectiveness by a combination of rules, fear, and architectural design. But at various times throughout their history, California's prisons have had murals painted on some of their walls, and in recent years, the state has instituted Arts in Corrections, part of whose programs have encouraged the painting of murals inside the facilities. This brief essay is an introductory survey of all murals painted inside California Prisons, recent and older.

The Program began, according to Arts in Corrections Program Report for 1983-84, when

in 1977, under the auspices of the non-profit William James Association, and funded by the California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the San Francisco Foundation, and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, a pilot Prison Arts Project was initiated at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville. The Prison Arts Project provided instruction, supplies and equipment to the over 250 inmates at the institution who became regular participants during the 2½ years of program activity. Program offerings included music, ceramics, creative writing, jewelry, and leather work.

The William James Association is a private, non-profit community service organization which focuses on arts and humanities, especially in prisons. It offers help to fledgling organizations the government cannot or will not help. Its constant advocacy of high standards sometimes causes tensions, but its independence allows it to play an important role regarding arts in prisons.

Vern Stanford began the pilot project at Vacaville in 1977 which developed in-

to its present, full-scale program in 1980, after State Senator Henry Mello sponsored a \$400,000 state appropriation for Arts in Corrections within the Department of Corrections. Recent evaluations of the Program, including murals, indicate that it is highly cost-effective. In the summer of 1985, ten portable mural projects were scheduled to be painted inside the prisons and then installed at pre-selected locations outside. Final permission for a project always resides, of course, with the specific prison administration involved, but administrators recognize that mural programs are beneficial to everyone involved, from prisoners to guards, other staff, and the system itself, so the outlook for the future is favorable.



Soledad corridor

In terms of what our readers normally think of when they think of community mural projects, it helps to recognize that prisoners are part of a collective by virtue of being held prisoner. The attitude encouraged by this is "us against them." Collective mural projects can give prisoners a positive activity, "something done by us for us," a rare possibility inside a prison. What is more, a mural is a public object for the prison community at large, something shared positively, "for us."

As might be expected, prisoners basically like the murals. Painting gives them something to do, a way of helping time pass. Guards like them because they keep prisoners busy and out of trouble. Although you learn in talking with prisoners that some do not care for some of the mural designs, everyone agrees that the painted walls are nicer to have around you than institutionally arid cinderblocks. As one prisoner commented to us, "We've got enough of those here."

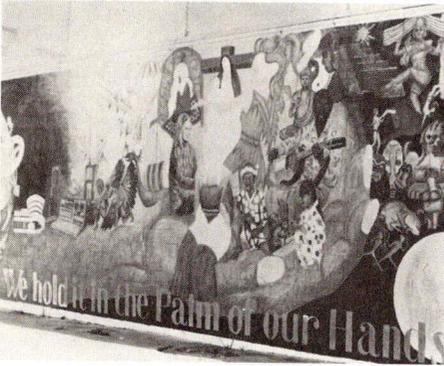
One difficulty in discussing murals painted in prisons needs to be mentioned, and that is that at some level approval of the arts programs might become an endorsement of the prisons themselves, even of the system. We offer no such endorsement. We are not qualified to assess these institutions, nor has that ever been our interest. Our sole purpose in this survey was to document the murals themselves within their contexts.

Part of normal documentation involves listing the names of those who created the mural, but in this case special problems arise. While some prisoners would like to have credit for their efforts, others do not want public recognition beyond the walls and their fellow prisoners. Since it is virtually impossible to track down all artists for all the murals, we have had to omit names from the projects mentioned here.

We witnessed four kinds of visual art in the prisons: tattoos, easel paintings in art workshops, quilts, and murals. Tattoos are certainly the most personal form of visual expression inside. Often, the technical quality of the drawing is surprisingly high, and it is clear that tattoo artists have prestige within the prison population. Since they are hidden for the most part, tattoos can also be more sexually overt than the more public mural form. In one case, while photographing a group of mess hall murals and commenting on them with a prisoner, it emerged that he had an arm tattooed by the same artist, a sort of walking mural. Prison tattoos deserve a careful study in their own right.

The eleven correctional institutions in California have a total of 175 murals in them. Some are quite small, but are painted on walls, which qualifies them for the purposes of this study. A few are quite large, covering an entire wall of a mess hall instead of just a rectangular segment. More than eighty percent of the murals are landscapes of some sort. The preponderance of such "escapist" subject matter is not surprising. These paintings offer a certain (albeit limited) sense of tranquility, the serenity of a pastoral meadow giving at least a glimpse of something other than bare, institutional walls. Since the prisoners cannot go outside, these murals try to bring the outdoors inside the prisons. These scenes also avoid controversy,

which raises the question of how the prisoners might bring up topics they feel are especially significant to them. The answer: rarely, if ever.



San Quentin, Lynelle and prisoners

About a dozen murals stand out among the bulk of landscapes in the murals we viewed. Two of these were executed under the direction of artists who worked inside the prisons under special programs. One of these, Judy Baca, with inmates, had directed a wonderful dragon at the California Institute for Women in Frontera, featuring a wall clock in its mouth, breathing time instead of fire, as it were, the main concern of all prisoners. Powerful, colorful, appropriate, striking image that it was, it was painted out shortly after completion due to "routine maintenance," we were told.

The other such mural, *Curators of Life*, was painted on a wall adjacent to the "Adjustment Center" (read "maximum security") at San Quentin, and was directed by Lynelle, CAC Artist in Residence. To the left are images of physical evolution moving from darkness to light. On the right are images of cultural evolution from a darkened right toward the left and a space station. In the center, earth is presented as seen from space, suggesting the unity of all life. She has managed quite extraordinary accomplishments under the most trying conditions. San Quentin has been in a virtual lockdown for over three years now, and that condition (where prisoners must be in their cells except for essential departures to eat, receive medical treatment, etc.) stopped the mural just as it was nearing completion. It is one of the few programs we learned of that actually brought prisoners from different factions together at San Quentin, but who knows if it will ever be completed? In the meantime, Lynelle goes to individual cells and works with prisoners one at a time insofar as it is possible under the conditions. This includes working with a young prisoner on death row who has painted three small murals on the adjacent office wall, scenes of the old west and of an Aztec

prince taken from postcards and a calendar.

Occasionally, a mural seems to challenge authorities in some way, but exactly where the line between assertion of self or group identity and outright challenge to prison authority is drawn, is difficult to say. In Vacaville, (California Medical Facility) a small dining room of perhaps half a dozen tables has a current events mural painted above it beneath the ceiling. This design is made up of a carefully selected and composed group of news photographs from the 1970s, and the selection provides a commentary on "current events." In addition to less-than-flattering depictions of major political figures such as Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, there is acknowledgement of the vitality of the times in depiction of streakers, cultural figures, etc. Two surprising moments for a prison mural are a seven-headed cobra from the SLA and an ironic caption (given the location of the mural in a maximum security dining room), "Protect endangered predators."

In a glass case inside the classroom section at Soledad (California Training Facility) is a surrealistic scene with a

As might be expected, given the rich tradition of murals in the Raza community, there are a number of Raza murals in California prisons. There is a strong triface (combining Indian, Conquistador, Mestizo) at Chino (California Institute for Men) and a complex, powerful mural at Deuel Vocational Institute near Tracy painted by Nuestra Familia. In the room where Nuestra Familia used to have their outsiders' visits is a complex mural where on the right an image of God from Michaelangelo's Sistine Ceiling reaches toward the vertical center section where a woman presents images of la Raza, including on the top the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, masks of tragedy and comedy, conquistadors, a pope, and skulls (calaveras) on each side. God is attended by a multi-racial group. The basic background is painted to look like brick and the UFW emblem makes up a narrow border surrounding the entire mural, but the eagle is red, the field is black. All in all, the mural gives a powerful, clear statement of traditional influences on today's Raza.

At Vacaville, Carlos Licon painted a particularly strong depiction of *Califor-*



Vacaville (California Medical Facility)

photographs by Tim Drescher and Jim Prigoff

city in the background and warped sun dials looming over tiny people doing various kinds of work in the foreground. To the left the three artists have signed the piece, and the first initials of their three names are L, S, D, perhaps a reference to the drug-influenced nature of the painting. Whatever the case, we were repeatedly told that the only two prohibitions on content in the murals were pornography and criticism of prison personnel. Still, just because expression of true feelings is not proscribed does not mean such expressions ever find their way onto the walls.

nia Heritage in which the early ranchero life and the Mexican people who populated the state before the late eighteenth century are featured.

Two murals stand out for their poignancy. One is found at the top of a stairwell in the shop section of the California Men's Colony at San Luis Obispo. At first it seems a bit tame, showing simply a couple dressed for their wedding. But when one considers the location of the wall, deep inside the prison, and the absence of women or human tenderness at the institution, the painting gains a large measure of attrac-

tion. In a similar vein, in an obscure sallyport on the second floor of a back corridor at Vacaville is a strikingly profound mural. It is painted on a single wall of a somewhat narrow cinderblock passageway where prisoners must wait between locked doors while checked over and while waiting for the next door to be opened for them. Thus they have plenty of time to look at the painting, which is two very large portraits, one of a young man with rainbows reflected in his glasses, the other of a much older man, whose spectacles reflect instead the muted grey-browns of prison bars. Except for the rainbows, the entire mural is painted in muted greys and dull browns. Upon studying these portraits, one realizes, in turn, two things: first that the portraits could easily be "before and after" depictions of the same person as a youth and as an older man. Second, you find yourself pressing against the wall with your back trying to gain sufficient space to view the mural clearly. It is at that point that the conceptual brilliance of the mural strikes you, for its relation to its architectural space is such that *it* tells you that you must be outside the walls in order to see yourself clearly.

Not surprisingly, we saw only two or three instances of graffiti/vandalism of murals in the entire system. It is obviously very difficult to put a mark on a mural when you are in danger of being seen by guards. It is surprising that in spite of this occasional comments have been made. Two come to mind. One is an understandable, "Boss don't give me no shit." The other, from a guard, is a bullet hole squarely in the forehead of a priest in a mess hall mural. We were told that the guard had told everyone to "freeze," and then fired a warning shot over their heads. There was no need for a second shot.

What follows is a short rundown of the murals in each of the institutions.

California Correctional Center,
Susanville (4 murals)

Judging from slides generously provided by Ellen Davidson of the William James Association, there are four murals in Susanville, all landscapes except for the cartoon characters in the visiting room. One of the landscapes, however, presents a multi-colored world outside a wall. Inside the wall, watched over by a guard tower, the world is stark, sharply angular, and barren.

California Correctional Institution,
Tehachapi (4 murals)

Again judging from slides of murals in the dining area, there are four panels. They may be painted on the walls, but

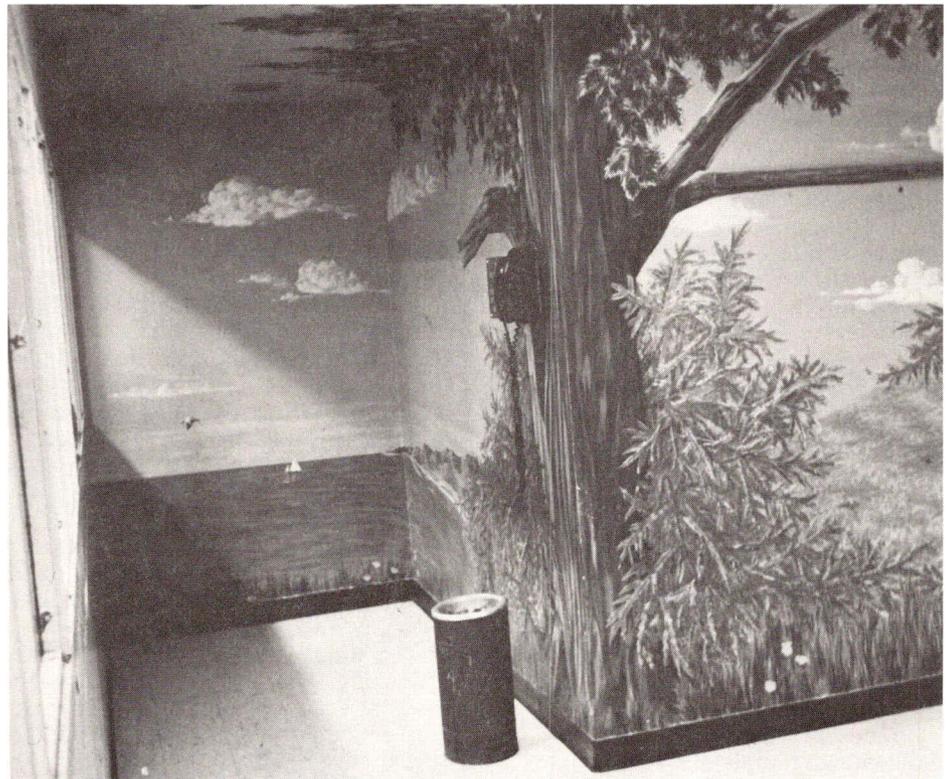
they have frames placed around them, as if to assert they are hung on the wall. All four are clearly by talented, practiced hands, and cover a wide range of figures: children of all races playing together, a "typical" (white) family, a black couple studying, with scenes from black U.S. history in the background, and, most interesting, one titled *Old Tree Stump, The Common Enemy*, showing an Asian, a Native American, a black and a white man all working together to remove a massive tree stump. One gets the impression that the artist has worked on removing some stumps in his time.

California Institution for Men,
Chino (12 murals)

Of the twelve murals we saw when Tom Skelly, the Art Coordinator showed us around Chino, two are notable. One is a seascape with a Neptune figure ris-

Several showed ability to paint, but the most striking images were those done in graffiti style in a bathroom. The need for quickness has apparently produced images of simple power, indicating what we perceived to be more honest feelings than could be expressed in more formal projects. We were unable to find out if they were periodically painted over, but Kaufman agreed that they were some of the strongest art in the institution.

Although the two quilts we have viewed were on tour, and we saw none at CIW, Frontera, it seems natural that women prisoners would continue the traditional communal form of expression of quilt making. The examples we have seen are not so traditional in design as they are narratives of their makers' aspirations and of their social analyses. They have been used as fund raisers for prisoner-centered programs.



Example of landscape, well-executed in difficult architectural space at Frontera (California Institute for Women)

ing in the center, adroitly well proportioned for the small room it is in, giving a certain power to the space. Outside the prison library is a mosaic which has images of fire and a wheel, identified for us by inmates nearby as a peyote button and the door to a bank vault.

California Institution for Women,
Frontera (11 murals)

The artist Facilitator, Kimberly Kaufman, showed us the eleven murals executed by women prisoners at Frontera.

California Men's Colony,
San Luis Obispo (38 murals)

The Art Program Coordinator is John Barrett, and he was especially enthusiastic about the prospect of a team of muralists in the prison doing a series of portable panels which would then be placed outside in the summer-fall of 1985. There were thirty eight murals at SLO. In addition to the wedding scene already mentioned, CMC had as wide a variety of murals as any prison we visited. There were greek figures,

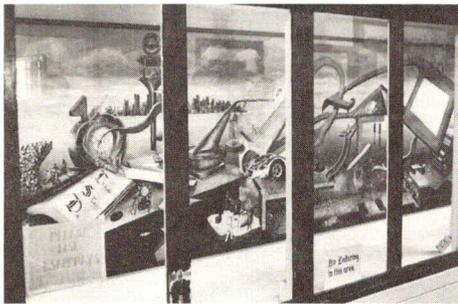
scenes of ancient, crumbling architecture, bullfighting, dogs, birds, the ubiquitous landscapes, a series of California Missions painted in the chapel, and a Last Supper behind the altar. One scene of puppets depicted them as quite voluptuous nudes, an image whose sexuality is exceeded only by its sexism.

California Medical Facility,
Vacaville (13 murals)

The staff person who showed us around was Deborah Star, and she was not only helpful to us, but instrumental in trying to establish a mural painting workshop on a regular basis for the facility. Three of the thirteen panels we saw have already been commented upon ("Rainbow Eyes" and "Events of Our Times" and *California Heritage*). The remainder are in the visitors' area, but with more words than usual, e.g., Wonder Woman saying "I'm gonna take my man outa here."

California Rehabilitation Center,
Norco

This facility, along with Folsom Prison, has no murals to speak of. Since it was used as a prison facility in the thirties and had occasional organized crime/Hollywood stars as inmates, stories abound. The ceiling beams in the main two event rooms are decorated.



Soledad

Correctional Training Facility,
Soledad (23 murals)

Herbert Matthews, Jr., the Community Resources Manager, showed us that Soledad has nearly two dozen murals, including the LSD panel mentioned above and the Raza Familia scene in the visiting room, also mentioned. The remainder are mostly "postcard" landscapes, old California mission scenes, Monterey Bay (just across the hills), etc. In the summer of 1984 a three panel Native American mural was being painted in the classroom wing, which also had portraits of Michael Jackson.

For a number of years the Artist Facilitator at Soledad was Dick Crispo, and he is to be credited with a major

mural effort at the prison. The main structure at Soledad is really a number of two-story buildings (cell blocks) jutting out from corridor which runs straight as an arrow for at least a quarter of a mile. The construction is cinder block, with concrete and linoleum floors, the aspect bleak. Looking down it from any position, the corridor seems like an architectural restatement of the psychological reality prisoners face everyday, i.e., the place goes on forever. What Crispo did was to undertake (successfully) to paint murals along the entire length of both sides of the main corridor. It is probably the longest indoor mural in the world, a special characteristic viewed with pride by some, with skepticism by others. The method of painting was that Crispo did the basic design work, incorporating specific images within an undulating, ongoing design so that the walls take on a kind of rhythm as you walk down the corridor. Prisoners then painted in the figures. The process has been criticized by some as "fill in the numbers" painting, but everyone we talked with agreed that even though "the corridor is still the same old corridor, it looks better with the mural."

Deuel Vocational Institute,
Tracy (20 murals)

The twenty murals at DVI were shown to us by Dave Davis, the Community Resources Manager. For the most part, these murals are landscapes, scenes of a bird in flight, etc. The single exception is the Nuestra Familia mural discussed above.

San Quentin (41 murals)

San Quentin, as the oldest prison in California also has the widest variety of murals. The majority are older, painted probably (judging by style, since there are no dates) in the 1930s and 1940s. These are located in what is now the medical building and consist of postcard scenes of Highway 24, the Feather River, the Redwood Highway, Mt. Shasta, Donner Lake, the Echo Summit, and Camp 35. In the storeroom of the building are six scenes of California missions. Bill McMullen, PIO, was most helpful in showing us the murals at San Quentin.

In 1976 Hilaire Dufresne was hired to paint a mural with inmates on a massive old wall of the north side of the prison, down a road from the Adjustment Center. A stylized, abstracted landscape of the rolling California countryside beyond the wall was done, but Dufresne withdrew from further projects out of dissatisfaction with the limited role prisoners would be allowed to play.

Beneath this wall George Jackson was shot and killed in a famous case a few years earlier.

Other recent murals may be found in East Block, and are scenes of San Francisco, sunset through the Golden Gate, mountains, meadows, etc. In Death Row guards' office are three recent paintings by a resident of an Eagle Warrior, a California bound Stage coach, and an eagle and a hawk, all copied from postcards or calendars. There are also murals in the Education building, the music room, and the library.



CIW, Frontera

San Quentin boasts the largest prison mural after Crispo's at Soledad. It is a spectacular mural on six sides of dining hall partitions, consisting of several thousand square feet done in sienna browns, and greys, depicting California history in a style owing much to Diego Rivera's works in San Francisco. We were told it was painted in the 1950s by an inmate who, upon release, returned to finish the work.

Sierra Conservation Center,
Jamestown (9 murals)

As one might expect from an institution located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, SCC has primarily scenes of the Old West in its murals, although with some interesting twists. One panel is an accurate depiction of Charles Christian Nahl's painting *Sunday Morning in the Mines*, giving the mural the benefit of more technical training in composition than the actual artist was able to acquire in Jamestown. In another mural, a stagecoach is seen careening down a mountain road, chased by robbers. Out of the stagecoach a man is leaning, hollering. The man is a fair likeness of the warden at the time the mural was painted, which depiction was approved and enjoyed by administrators and prisoners both. Supervisor of Vocational Instruction Ed Anderson was in charge of these programs.

Tim Drescher and Jim Prigoff



Emmanuel Day Care Center Mural, 1984 by Artmakers - photo Eva Cockcroft

The Struggle Continues/La Lucha Continua: Lower East Side, Central America, South Africa...

Picture an empty lot covering 1/3 of a block containing two large and two small buildings facing an open space some 70 feet deep with a few trees and some home-made wooden amphitheatre benches—the one-time “Plaza Cultural.” Around it are decaying and burned out buildings. Now imagine more than twenty artists working together to transform this site into political art park during July and August (and perhaps September). All the images would deal with the peoples’ struggle in the Lower East Side, Central America and South Africa. The large 40 foot high wall facing 9th St. at the cor-

ner of Ave. C (Building A) would be painted by Artmakers working with a collaborative team of artists with a mural on the theme of displacement and the cultural heritage of the Lower East Side. The other walls, 10 to 18 feet high, would be divided into 20 separate sites, each approximately 15 feet long and painted by a different artist or team of artists who would donate their work to the project. A running line formed by the words “The struggle continues” in as many languages and scripts as possible will act as a unifying element.

The project will be open to all artists of commitment in the community and

the greater New York area. An open organizing meeting will be held on May 7th at Charas, 605 9th St. (between B and C) at 7 pm. The site will be curated by a design committee composed of representatives from the local community, the artist community, and Artmakers. The project will be coordinated by Artmakers, Inc., a not-for-profit multi-ethnic community oriented group of public artists, and is co-sponsored by CHARAS, a 20 year old local service and cultural organization deeply involved in the housing struggle, and Cultural Correspondence.

Three Campus Murals Erased

Karrie Williams, *Las Vegas Optic*
(New Mexico), June 25, 1985

Three murals, including a giant painting of Communist revolutionary Che Guevara, have been erased from familiar campus walls at Highlands University—a Board of Regent move that has infuriated a group of past and present students.

Early Saturday, university maintenance crews rolled creamsicle-colored paint over the three paintings; two inside the student union building and a third across the street outside Burris Hall.

The board contends that the murals, painted during the turbulent 1970s, are offensive and “do not project the image that is conducive with plans to increase enrollment” at the state-supported school, according to acting university president Tony Gallegos.

Gallegos has been acting president at HU for two weeks. His brief stint ends July 1 when new university president Gilbert Sanchez takes the helm. Gallegos then will report back to his position as graduate dean.

The 46-year old dean said he issued the work order Friday afternoon at the request of the regents and the incoming president. When asked why maintenance crews painted over the murals at 7 a.m. Saturday, Gallegos said: “The painters were simply ready to do it then. They have many other jobs.”

Gallegos said “The decision was made and I personally agree with it. The murals cast an image to the rest of New Mexico what we’re not. I don’t think Highlands is like that anymore.”

But some students lambasted the move, condemning it as a “cultural rip-off” and “premeditated cowardice.”

They claim the murals aptly depicted the struggle and the turmoil of the 1970s. “Our heritage has died at HU,” read one banner posted at the student union building.

Many of the 17 student senators and four officers are away from campus for summer break. “But a lot of people think it’s cultural vandalism,” according to a statement released by student senate president Francisco Gonzales.

Chicano Club president Lorenzo Flores said the 168-member campus club has started a petition drive to oust Dean Gallegos. Petitions protesting the regent’s action without notifying students are also circulating, said Flores.

Monday afternoon, about a dozen students filed a vandalism report against university officials. But Flores said the group cannot get a copy of the police report made by HUPD chief Andy Vigil.

Efforts to file charges were “stalled” at the district attorney’s office and at magistrate court, said Flores. “But we’ll get it done somehow,” said the club president.

The students claim the union building is owned by past and present students, because construction bills were paid with student fees. “It’s our building and it’s been vandalized,” asserted one student protestor.

But regent vice president Jim Starr, contacted today at his Santa Fe home, maintains that all buildings on Highlands University campus are state property.

Starr, a graduate of Highlands and a regent since 1983, said the university

board has informally discussed the murals for two years.

“One of our concerns was that the large mural in the student union building had a communist star painted on the beret of Che Guevara, a revolutionary who sided with Castro.

“Maybe it was a good idea at the time it was painted. But now, it is not in the best interest of the school. We all agreed that it did not project the best image of Highlands University,” said the regent vice chairman.

Regent president Dr. Frank Sanchez was not available for comment.

The Che Guevara mural was about 15’ x 16’. The other mural in the SUB was a gigantic Aztec calendar that stretched across the entire east wall (approximately 60’ x 35’).

The third mural faced University Ave. traffic from the outside of Burris Hall, the school art center. Students described the outside mural as “Christian symbolism.” It was about 15’ x 35’.

Other murals painted in university buildings remain: the space shuttle inside Donnelly library and various “campus scenes” inside the administration building.

The regents reportedly want other murals painted on campus but all artwork must be screened and approved beforehand. “If they want new murals,” said student president Gonzales, “they’ll have to put it someplace else because I don’t think they’ll get the students involved.”

Chicano club president Flores said a second student demonstration is planned Thursday at 11:30 a.m. “We’re hurt. The murals were a part of Highlands’ history. No students were notified—not even the student senate. It’s a terrible injustice,” he said.

The War on Graffiti . .

Being underemployed has its advantages. Like noticing the “Graffiti Eraser” truck on a city street one day last week, and the next day arranging myself a ride with the crew. In existence for the past 3 years, the unit patrols the 163 public schools in the San Francisco Unified School District, taking calls at night from principals and custodians, and then making the rounds the next day with a new list. On occasions, their efforts have elicited a fresh barrage of graffiti, and they’ve had to return to the same school the very next day. Sometimes the truck itself gets graffitied. One time the crew returned to a school they had cleaned up the previous day, and found SFUSD Graffiti Eraser Sucks!” among the new material.

The crew is small; just Cory and Clay.

Cory told me I was lucky to get a chance to cruise the city with them. He said that the Dept. of Public Works, with a work crew of 150 and 3 trucks, would never allow it. SFUSD has a total crew of 8 painters and plasterers, and only one truck.

The truck carries a sandblaster, and a myriad of rollers, brushes, ladders and 5-gallon cans of paint of various standard colors to roughly match the colors of most school walls. Spray paint disappears rather easily under a desired color, although white spray paint is the hardest to cover, as it tends to show through. Permanent magic markers are the biggest nightmare for a graffiti eraser; they show through any kind of paint, and require a primary coat of pigmented shellack which must then dry before the wall can be painted. Lacquer thinner and alcohol work to remove

graffiti from metal and glass, and a product called Brulin Graffiti Remover is also used. It works like paint and varnish remover, and sometimes turns plexiglass white. Although bare concrete walls and sidewalks are sandblasted to get rid of graffiti, smart graffiti bandits seal their graffiti with a silicon gel, especially effective on porous concrete surfaces, like sidewalks, to make the surface hard like glass, and resist sandblasting. The silicon gel is also effective for sealing graffiti on glass and metal surfaces. I asked about a special urethane varnish recently developed, celebrated for its ability to make walls graffiti-resistant. It creates a clear plastic coating like formica, and graffiti washes right off. Clay told me it’s true that the graffiti washes off, but it requires substantial effort and the coating wears off after about two years.

—Zoe Noe

Processed World #13

Popular Arts Workshop Closes

Effective July 15, 1985, following ten years of mostly volunteered efforts which have resulted in community-based public artworks, including 21 Wall Murals, and 3 community arts event experiences; the operations, business functions and all current arts projects of the Popular Arts Workshop, in the Lansing area, are hereby suspended until further notice. . . .

Principal among a number of factors effecting this suspension of operations is an on-going financial problem. Tax deductible contributions and donations over the past three years have dropped off to a point that even basic operations cannot be maintained. As a small community arts group, P.A.W. has incurred a number of overwhelming liabilities that include: deferred vendor payments, unpaid outstanding loans and other debts in excess of \$2,000., since 1982. Projects designed to provide Summer and Part-Time employment opportunities have not been able to generate sufficient revenues to cover costs, and a lingering deficit has grown out of reach. Grant applications to the State Arts Council, the City of Lansing, "Equity

Fund" and other sources have either not been successful, or have had other circumstances involved which have curtailed several projects.

Also, a number of external local short-sighted conservative political linkages and subsequent covert political pressures have sabotaged a number of major public art project attempts (Fairgrounds Art Project-1982, Aerial History from Lansing Mural 1983-84, and a 1985 Summer Jobs Project). Over 10,500 people see what P.A.W. has created since 1976, everyday. Surveys conducted in 1980 stated that people wanted to see more of what P.A.W. creates, and showed that people felt that governments and business should be able to cover the necessary expenses. Businesses have been supportive, but governments have been too involved in the politics of the situation to meet the challenge of the people's desire. No wonder the "liveability index" of Lansing has fallen in these past three years.

Membership in P.A.W. has dwindled as incentives have become more difficult to realize, and people have become discouraged that their dreams of adding to the overall quality and liveability of our community must continually encounter so many shallow and uncooperative, external political

obstacles, outright discrimination and general lack of respect.

Since 1975, P.A.W. has provided the Lansing area with a number of Public Arts experiences, all with NO regular paid staff, NO fancy office, NO on-going operating budget. The P.A.W. effort has been a "Labor of Love" for our community, by those of us who have tried to bring some life, color, form and an extra-added dimension to the experience of life for the people of our community. "Love," however, doesn't pay the bills, so we have been forced into a corner and must suspend all on-going Lansing area operations until some other developments take place to help get P.A.W. out of the hole and back on a solid fiscal foundation. Our total annual operational budget, including projects in the works, plus our existing deficit equals over \$60,000.

The P.A.W., as a non-profit, tax exempt Corporation dedicated to the promotion and creation of artworks in the public environment, will, however continue to exist. With your interest, support and assistance, it will come back. . . later on down the road to provide our unique, colorful, public community arts service, here in the Lansing area.

—Gary Andrews

Taino Gods Watch Over Perkins St.

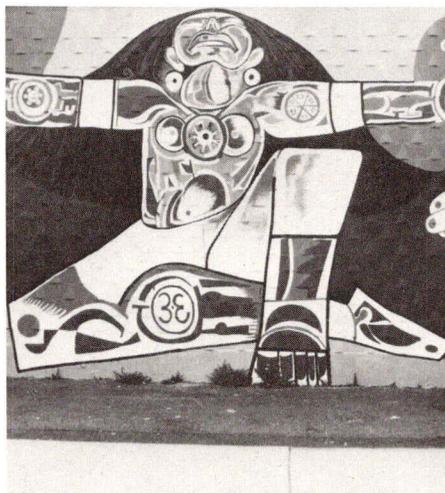
People passing along Perkins Street in the past few weeks have been surprised to see a dynamic image bursting from the back wall of the Hi-Lo Supermarket. This is the work of Sonny Rivera and his assistants, who have been working twelve hour days in all kinds of Boston weather to be finished by September 8 for the dedication ceremonies.

Sonny Rivera is associate professor of painting at the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras. His associate on this project is Jose Ramos, a student at the university who also teaches at the University of Turabo and is a magnificent painter in his own right.

How did this project end up in Jamaica Plain? At the current time, Sonny Rivera is the cultural affairs director for a small city, Dorado, on the northern coast of Puerto Rico. Through this position he is able to fulfill one of his most fervent goals, that of bringing art to the people. He finds going into the barrios himself more satisfying than his former position as director of the office of cultural affairs for the Governor of Puerto Rico. Putting art where people are, rather than in museums, is his aim.

The young dynamic mayor of Dorado, Alfonso Lopez Chara has a connection

with Boston because that is where his wife Ricky is from. They come to Boston often and on one trip met with the Hispanic groups in Boston and conceived the project. Dorado offered the services of the artist and provided transportation to and from Boston. Mayor Flynn,



"Taino Gods", Jamaica Plain, MA by Sonny Rivera; photo © 1985 Haskell Werlin

who has rerouted his daily jogging path to pass the wall, was very enthusiastic and arranged to provide hotel accommodations and meals. City Hall also picked up the bill for additional expenses not covered by local sponsors. Paint

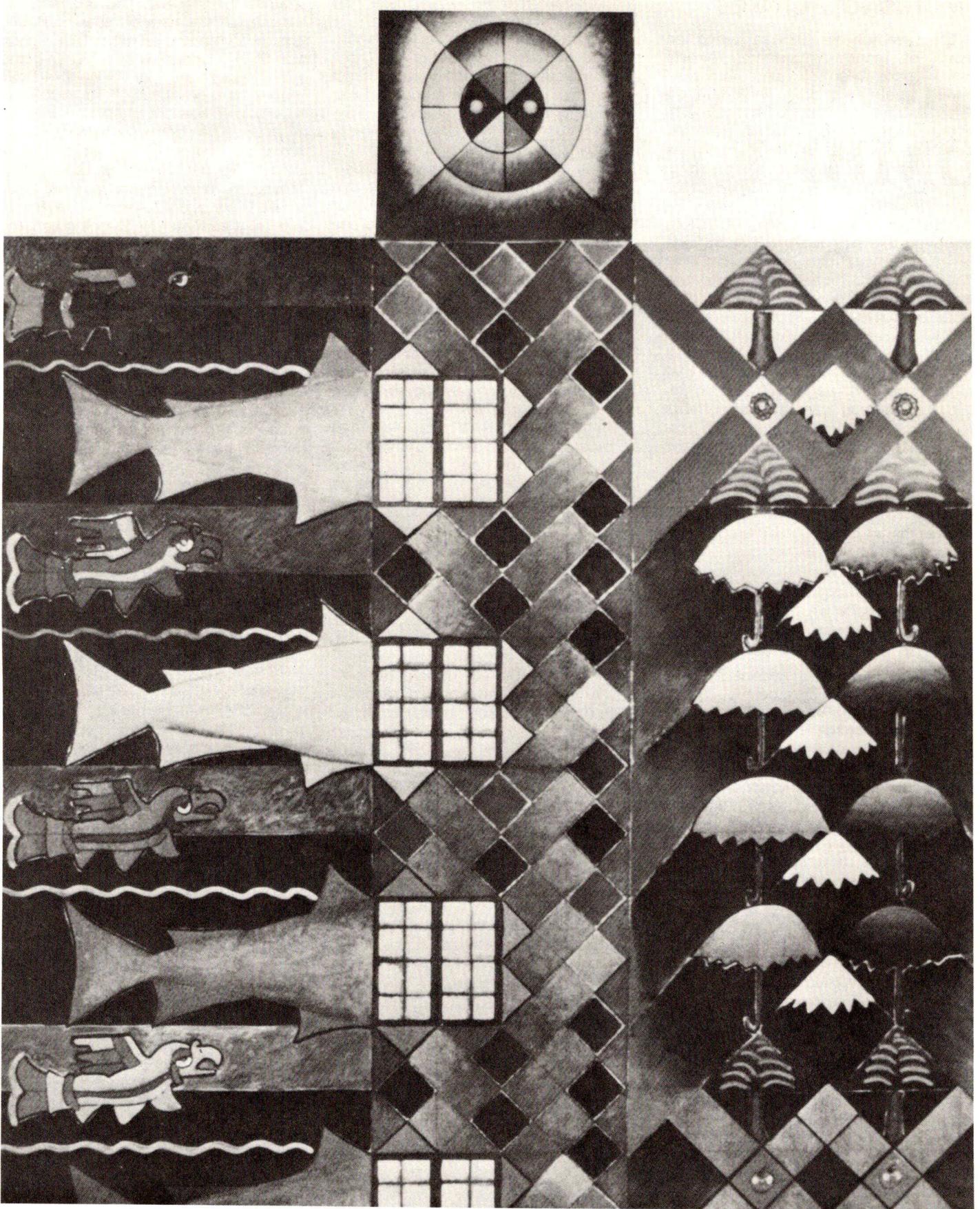
materials were provided by Sherwin Williams, the scaffolding was offered by a local contractor, Pepe Diaz.

Additional community involvement came in the form of two artistic helpers, John Monteiro and Jose Alicea who put in many hours filling the very large color areas.

Rivera is not new to murals. He has many murals in his native Puerto Rico and also throughout the United States, giving him a reputation as one of the foremost muralists in the U.S. Many works depict the gods and folklore of the primitive people who once inhabited the Antilles Islands, which include Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and many smaller islands. These Taino Indians, also called the Anawak by anthropologists, were the Stone Age civilization that was discovered by Columbus. These were a warrior people who bravely fought the Spanish incursion into the area. Their wooden clubs and small bows and arrows couldn't match the Spanish arms, but the Taino influence is felt to this day in the popular culture. The vast majority of place names are Taino and people are proud of this common heritage, one of the reasons Rivera chooses Taino themes for his work. This is particularly relevant in Boston, where the Hispanic community comes from many places.

Jamaica Plains Arts News

Seattle Mural



Arturo Artorez, "The Realm of the Seahawk", mural 48' x 50', 1985 (detail)
from *Metamorphosis*, Northwest Chicano Magazine of Art and Literature

Notes on Keim Industrial Paints for Murals

I have had the opportunity during the past four years to participate in a number of mural projects using Keim's Granital Paint System. I know of three Keim Farben Paint systems, Granital (also known as Industrial), Dekor (for home and interior decoration) and Kuntzler Farben (fresco medium). All these systems are known for their permanence, but Granital is by far the most economical for larger mural projects. [Ed. note: the Kuntzler Farben system was described in *CMM* Spring 1984, and involves plastering the entire surface to be painted].

Keim mural coatings are two-part, silica-based paint consisting of paint and a binder called Dilution. We, however, generally call it "fix." Each system has its own Dilution and they cannot be intermixed. The systems may be used together on the same surface if the Dilutions remain consistent.

The most attractive feature of Keim paints is their permanence. I believe this to be the result of both its bonding abilities with masonry and its porosity. It is an extremely porous paint. I will discuss the mural process as it relates to Keim in a way that will ensure the most permanent work possible.

If you are thinking of using Keim Granital for a mural there are a number of factors that ought to be considered. First of all, the surface to be painted must be masonry, brick, cinderblock, stucco or concrete. The surface must be free of other paints, as the permanent quality of Keim is negated if applied over another paint. This is because Keim bonds chemically with the surface of the wall and another paint below the Keim will interfere with this process. Keim is also a very "soft" paint and scratches easily. In the projects I've worked on this has not been important, but it should be considered. Keim is expensive and there are time factors involved in ordering and shipping. I would suggest that you make very exacting calculations on the amounts of paint that you will need. Also make sure that you order plenty of Dilution. Remember also that the shelf life of "fixed" or Diluted Keim is approximately one year, so it is to your advantage not to overmix.

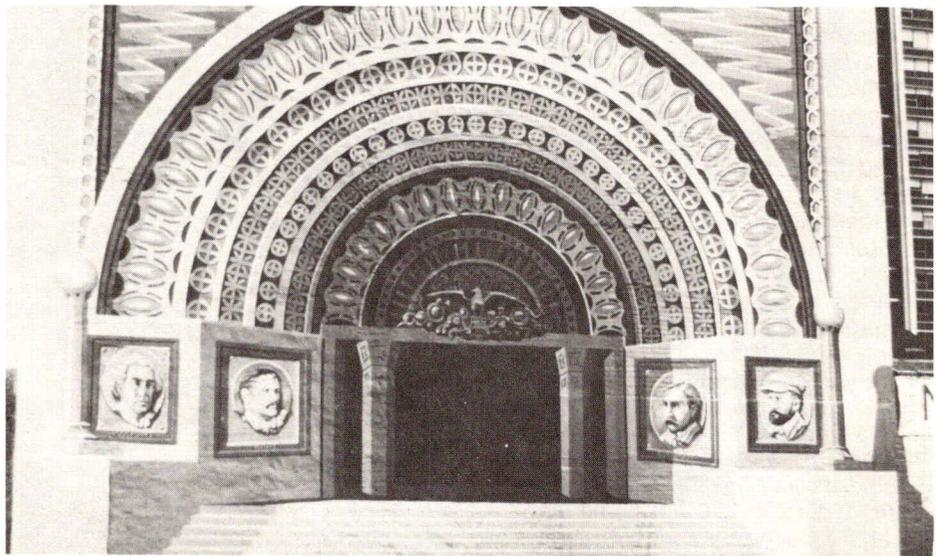
Let's assume that you have a decent wall free of paint and in fairly good condition. Follow general rules concerning wall preparation: check cornice for water seepage, check for spalling (flaking brick), check for excess emission of

salts. Does the wall need any tuck pointing? Once any problems have been assessed and corrected, we can proceed to priming, then to painting the wall.

Before painting a ground coat it is best to apply Keim Silan Primer to guarantee future results. An application of Silan Primer will help to draw salts out of the wall and will neutralize many but not all fungi that are common to brick walls. The ideal way to apply Silian is by spraying either with an airless or with a Hudson sprayer. If you do not apply Silan, problems may not show up immediately, but down the line they will. Keim does manufacture a product called Lotexan, similar in results to Silan Primer, which may be applied to the finished wall, but I caution you that this is after the fact and may require additional labor and expense months after the mural is complete, so remember, "an ounce of prevention..."

ing time is also similar, but I think Keim dries a bit faster, especially on hot, dry days. When you are working, always keep Dilution handy to add to the paint as it thickens quickly when sitting on the scaffold. It is very important to keep Keim covered tightly when not in use. Keim does not "skin over" and dries up very much like ceramic glazes. When you are blending, you must be quick and direct to gain the best results. Keim Granital is very opaque and in certain cases may alter your painting techniques. To my mind it is like painting with gouaches. I really look forward to using this glazing compound because I am hoping it will add some versatility in techniques to the Granital system.

I hope that I have been able to give some useful information about Keim Farben paints. I hope that some of you decide to use it, because it is a beautiful and clean paint when applied correctly. Every kind of paint has its own charact-



Example of Keim paint use

La Salle Tower (detail) by Richard Haas in Chicago, 1980; photo Jim Prigoff

It is possible to obtain brighter and deeper colors than shown in the color pack by using pure tints and very small amounts of white, but with Keim this can be costly as some tints run up to seventy dollars a gallon. Keep in mind that you can use the other Keim systems in conjunction with Granital. Both Dekor and Kuntzler Farben have much richer palettes and can be used in small amounts to enhance the work done with Granital. Keim also has a product called Purkrystalat that when added to Granital in place of Dilution creates glazes. I will know more about this compound later this year as we plan to use it extensively on a project at the end of this summer.

Keim cleans up with water and handles much like flat latex paint. Dry-

eristics, and once they are prepared and ready for the brush, one thing is certain "paint is paint." So have a good old time painting.

From one wall dog to another,
Terry Brackenbury, Muralist
July 20, 1985

Useful addresses for Keim products:

Mineros Industries, Inc.
505 West 211th St.
N.Y., N.Y. 10034
Gibson Associates
P.O. Box 90974
Los Angeles, CA 90009
Gibson Associates
P.O. Box 921
Los Gatos, CA 95030

OFF THE WALL

John Hoagland— 1948-1984

John Hoagland was one of the finest photojournalists to work out of Central America.

Born and raised in a San Diego Navy family, he became a high-school surfer and college anti-war activist. He later worked as an ironworker in San Francisco and turquoise miner in the Mojave Desert. In 1979 he travelled to Nicaragua to photograph the Sandinista revolution. While there he began working for the Associated Press, and later contributed to UPI, the Gamma photo agency and *Newsweek* magazine. In 1980 he moved to El Salvador at a time when many journalists were afraid to even visit there. His photos during this period documented the terror of the Death Squads just as his earlier images had recorded the violent exhilaration of Nicaragua's insurrection.

Hoagland was the only U.S. journalist who chose to make his home in Central America. As a full-time resident he was able to record all sides of the conflict as well as the war's effect on non-combatants throughout the region.

His dedication did not come without costs. Twice he was with friends and colleagues when they were killed in action. He was wounded by an exploding mine, jailed on false charges and threatened by El Salvador's right-wing death squads.

In February of 1984 *Newsweek* sent him to photograph the U.S. withdrawal from Beirut, Lebanon. He returned to El Salvador in early March to marry his Salvadoran fiancée. Two weeks later he was caught in crossfire between government troops and rebels near the town of Suchitoto. Kneeling to take a photograph, he caught a round through the lung from a U.S.-made M-60 machine gun and was killed.

With his death John left behind a powerful visual legacy reflecting the human costs of the war. A touring exhibit of his work will show in San Francisco the end of this year; contact the author for more information.

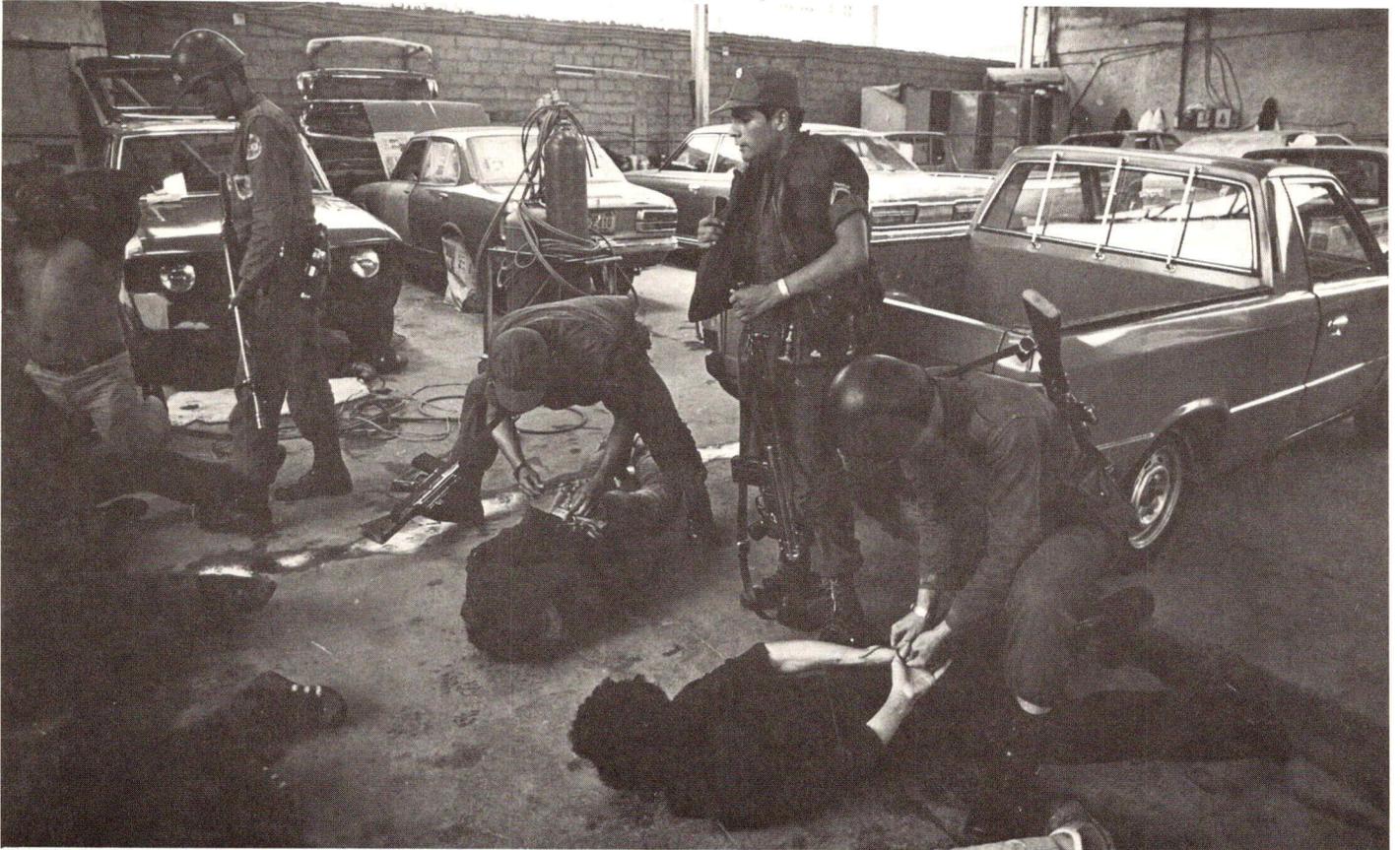
Dave Helvarg



"A guerilla family portrait in a rebel zone of control"



"Children gather at the perimeter fence of a San Salvador refugee camp"



"Arrested mechanics later found dead, victims of Death Squads"

Letter From Alan Barnett

To my friends at *Community Murals Magazine* and its readers:

I of course read your reviews of my book, *Community Murals: The People's Art*, with anxiety and eagerness. I want to thank the reviewers for both their good words and criticism. Most of the latter, I feel, is just. My chief disappointment is that some of the photos did not come out as sharp as I had hoped. In particular, the color does not do justice to the works or my slides. The typos are a damned embarrassment.

John Weber is correct about the neglect of particular muralists, especially Lilli Ann Rosenberg, whose work I did not know when I was writing the book. It was only in the summer of 1982 that I met her and saw her splendid ceramic walls. It was then too late to include them. I tried to compensate by writing an extended report about her in *CMM* (Spring, 1983). As I said there, if any one can claim to be the "mother of the community murals movement," it is she, for she was working with neighborhood peoples on walls in the late fifties.

My neglect of Lilli Ann was matched by that of other artists whom I only came to know too late and tried to acknowledge in articles here during the early eighties. I hope there will be a new edition of my book that will permit justice to be done them all. With this in view, I would be grateful for corrections from muralists concerning their work and information about what they are currently doing. I shall continue to depend on this magazine as a primary lead to them as it has been in the past.

I would like to make a few responses to the *CMM* reviews. Tim Drescher

laments my use of the term "masterpiece" with regard to murals, which suggests to him the hierarchical judgments of the elitist fine arts. Osha Neumann, on the other hand, wishes I had been more selective. These seemingly contradictory views point to the real achievement of community murals which require new ways of looking at and evaluating art.

I try to deal with this in the aesthetics chapter of my book. Briefly, community murals, it seems to me, are made for their communities first, and whether they work for them, local people can best say. Whether a mural provides pleasure and increased understanding to a community, whether it empowers it, its people can tell a visitor. If he sees murals as instruments of raising local consciousness and encouraging a community's organizing and activism, he can evaluate the particular work. He can also judge its visual effectiveness.

Bill Walker's *Black Love* is the only work that I can recall referring to as a "masterpiece." The term still seems appropriate because Bill employed here with extraordinary power forms developed by Western civilization over centuries, using them to express his profound tenderness and respect for his people.

The impressiveness of *Black Love* does not diminish other murals. First steps are as important as later ones. Simpler, more elementary murals may have their power, too. Although fists, chains and doves may strike the more sophisticated as clichés, they are the symbols that visual speech begins with. What has always struck me is the freshness and remarkable imagination frequently displayed in the murals of beginners.

Osha wonders why I did not deal with New York subway art. Mainly because it

seldom rises to speaking out on social issues but remains a desperate or exalted assertion of self, a self alienated by an oppressive society, to be sure, and seeking recognition, but not realizing that that is futile unless one voice joins with others to transform their society, which the best of the murals have done. The sometimes handsome graffiti and big bold lettering of the subways are all too like the art of the avant garde in their individualist challenge to the proprieties, which in turn are like the efforts of entrepreneurs and hucksters they protest against. In contrast, gang graffiti elsewhere have learned to transform their art into socially-conscious murals. Consider what the subway cars could be saying about El Salvador, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, South Africa, about slumlords, unemployment and drugs, as ghetto and barrio walls have.

I should point out to the artists whose work has appeared in my book that it is available to them at 40% off the retail price of \$60. That is, they can get it for \$36 by writing the publisher (Associated University Presses, 440 Forsgate Drive, Cranbury, NJ 08512). They should identify themselves as a "contributor" to the book. This is hardly a "people's price," as Osha correctly observes. Recognizing this, I have tried at my expense to get copies into the hands of community art centers as well as the persons who contributed most to the book. Getting copies into public libraries is also a way to make it available to the people for whom it is intended. This readers can do by requesting their local librarians to order it.

Again, my thanks to the reviewers.

Sincerely,
Alan Barnett

Continuing Plea for Subscriptions and Donations

Although response to our announcement that *CMM* is now a donation-only publication has been quite good, we sense that a number of potential subscribers are putting off sending in their \$12. Do not hesitate. Send in your subscription today!

We gave *CMM* away for seven years, and the interest generated in terms of letters, information, photographs, and articles indicates that readers believe, as we do, that it is an important source of information about community visual arts. We still rely on readers for information about projects but we now must rely on you for financial support through subscriptions. Send in yours at once!

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84a St. Stephens Ave.
London, W12, England

* Back issues are \$3 each, when available.

* All payments must be in \$U.S., except for Great Britain mailed to the St. Stephens address, which may be in pounds.

Editorial

continued from page 2

builds up tension. Why, it has been asked, does a supposedly objective press simply report what he says instead of noting that he is wrong or lying?

As for the "solutions" offered, one reason Reagan's appear attractive is that they offer a means of compensation for the thwarting of people's legitimate desires for communality, real democracy, security, a decent future for their children, etc. The "solutions," of course, are merely smokescreens for the particular interests of an already powerful group of wealthy conservatives, but they are not presented as such to the public.

So the big lie is a successful technique when someone wants to obscure the truth about a subject in order to advance their own interests when they cannot do it honestly. A government which wants to control/confuse a populace also uses several common devices in addition to the big lie. Among them, again according to Brown, are:

use of stereotypes, substitution of names (totalitarian Marxists for Sandinistas, "union bosses" for union administrators, etc.), selective use of facts in complex situations, repetition of lies so that after a time they seem real, appeal to authority (pp.26-29).

Now each of us probably believes that we form our own opinions for ourselves based on available information and thoughtful consideration. But sophisticated communicators know otherwise. They understand that, as Brown says, "one of the most successful means used today to bring about attitude change is the creation of a group in which the members feel belongingness since in these circumstances the individual accepts the new system of values and beliefs by accepting belongingness to the group (p.67)."

This is where community visual artists come in, because in spite of Reagan's distorting efforts to recreate a sense of belonging to a (highly selective, racist, sexist) "traditional America" [sic], when groups of people from communities work together, they build common beliefs together, and take action (or

remain passive) based on the shared attitudes of that group. Community visual artists have a role to play not only in articulating those attitudes and beliefs, but in creating groups through the process of community interaction that goes on in the painting of a mural, making of posters, silkscreens, etc. The expectation is that the reality of people's lives will offset the falsehood of their lives as presented through the mass media and from the government.

Thus it is essential that community image makers be scrupulously aware of how images work, of the connections between cultural images and their political impact. The government (not to mention large corporations) have much better ways of promulgating falsehood. We can't compete with them on their terms if for no other reason than the means of repetition are simply not available to us. What we have got is some insight into the truth of our lives and the lives of the communities of people with whom we work. A little of this goes a long way, especially if given monumental, accessible public expression through art. That is our job.

CAN YOU RECOGNIZE A TERRORIST?

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN:



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and...



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and...



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NATIONALIST FANATICS,

and...



PATRIOTIC CITIZENS

For More Information, Contact the Terrorist Hotline (415) 986-0145

Poster by Signs of the Times Affinity Group, 2847 Fulton St., Berkeley, CA 94705. Inquire about ordering information. "These posters were simultaneously placed in airports around the country in order to prompt people to think about the language and policies coming from the Reagan administration. They were intended to look official (and unclear as to source or originating politics) so that viewers would be a little confused and therefore more likely to think about the issues involved."

COMMUNITY MURALS MAGAZINE/FALL 1985

Viet Veterans Say 'Rambo' Is Bunk

By Jack Viets

A band of Vietnam veterans surrounded a San Francisco theater yesterday to attack the macho, killing-machine message they see in Sylvester Stallone's hit movie "Rambo: First Blood Part II."

Armed with picket signs, they said their prime concern is that "Rambo" glorifies the horrors of war to such superhuman — and inhuman — heights that it is completely unrealistic.

The protesters outside the Galaxy Theater at Van Ness Avenue and Sutter Street, members of the Veterans Speakers Alliance, said they do not want young Americans to think war and killing are fun and games. They also worry that "Rambo's" violent mentality is touching a receptive mood in the nation's capital, and that the message of "Rambo" increases the danger of a Vietnam-style war in Central America

In the movie, Stallone finds and rescues missing Americans in Vietnam and shoots his way to safety, killing dozens of Viet-

names in the process.

"It's sad that so many of our young people are getting excited about it," said Charlie Liteky, 54, a Roman Catholic chaplain in Vietnam from 1967 to 1970.

"I've seen young men stand up and try to be John Wayne and get their heads blown off," said the former priest, who won a Medal of Honor for dragging badly wounded GIs away from the scene of a North Vietnamese ambush.

"It was in December of 1967," he said quietly. "We lost 25 dead and 80 wounded."

Jack McCloskey, 42, a Marine medic in Vietnam who was wounded twice and who won a Silver Star and a Bronze Star for bravery, said he thinks "Rambo" is really "propaganda for sending 18- and 19-year-olds to war."

If youths are "Rambo" believers, "they won't have any questions about war, either," he noted. "... in Vietnam I saw 18- and 19-year-old kids literally die for nothing. All I want is for young people to question things."

SF Chronicle July 25, 1985

CMM
1019 Shattuck Ave.,
Berkeley, CA 94707

