

COMMUNITY MURALS

SUMMER 1987
Vol. 12, No. 2

AN INTERNATIONAL VISUAL ARTS MAGAZINE



EDITORIAL

GUEST EDITORIAL

The Editors present this guest editorial for consideration and response. We think the issues the statement raises are worth careful thought by all artists.

An artist's work becomes effective when it is concerned with content, form and context. But too many artists feel their job is done when they complete the first two. A pamphleteer must also take on the task of exhibiting. An anti-war poster shown in an art gallery will have little effect on the U.S. war in Central America, just as a piece about degrading working conditions exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art will have little effect on wage and benefit demands by workers. However, these same pieces at a rally, union hall or wheat-pasted to a billboard could inspire and activate large numbers of people.

How work is exhibited is the next consideration. Written documentation from the artists can help identify a work's purpose and protect it from establishment misrepresentation. Also, progressive

organizations acquire new public support when their information is combined with art.

Artists have been told throughout their schooling that when their work merges with politics it becomes a lesser art form. This is incorrect. A utilitarian dimension does not diminish art's fullness. *More does not equal less!* Artists have been taught to be observers in their studios, but the crises of the times require that they become activists. Experimentation has to go hand in hand with practical organizational needs. If they are to move from recorders of injustice to full participants in making history, they must begin taking sides and making proposals. What artists should ask themselves about their artwork is not whether it is propaganda, but who it is for, and how can they do it best?

We dedicate this edition of *Community Murals Magazine* to Ben Linder, a North American engineer who was recently murdered by the contras while at work in Nicaragua developing technology appropriate to the needs of the new society. Ben was also a cultural worker—a clown, juggler and unicyclist, who added a joyful note to campaigns for health and education.

Ben represents the best in all of us. In his memory, and with determination, we rededicate ourselves to building a strong and lasting bridge of solidarity, friendship and peace among the peoples of the world.

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Paint Chemistry Break

Due to a shift in jobs, there will be an interruption of William D. Meadows' series on paint chemistry. We hope to continue it within the year.

Cover photo: Anti-interventionist sculpture on San Francisco Bay mudflats in Emeryville. Photo by Marvin Collins. Story on page 22.

Back cover photo: *Lilli Ann Mural*, San Francisco, by Chuy Campusano. Photo by Sheila Sherry. Story on page 14.

Editorial Group

Miranda Bergman
Kathie Cinnater
Lincoln Cushing
Jim Dong
Tim Drescher



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Yolanda Lopez
Jane Norling
Odilia Rodriguez
Arch Williams

Deadlines:

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

- Fall 1987 by Thursday, July 23, 1987
- Winter 1988 by Thursday, October 1, 1987
- Spring 1988 by Thursday, January 21, 1988
- Summer 1988 by Thursday, April 21, 1988

We rely on readers sending in information and photographs about projects in *your* area. Please be sure that worthy projects you know about are brought to our attention.

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ISSN 0886-2044



NEA DEFUNDS CMM

In a conversation with a program officer at the NEA we learned that we were not funded because of the competition, an increase in applications, and the weaknesses of our magazine. We were told that the panel felt we had not grown very much in ten years, that we should be doing more than we are, that we are not as daring as we should be, that we should be more developed, and that the writing is uncritical. New publications were funded which showed new energy, and the panel did not find that fresh breath in older magazines.

We think these criticisms make sense if you accept (uncritically) a gallery orientation for your criteria. This, however, excludes community arts—and *CMM*. We are out to inform and to offer critical questions, but not to cut each others' throats.

If *CMM* has been important to you because it informs you about developments in community-based visual arts, then write and tell the NEA. If nothing else, they should not be allowed to marginalize the artforms where the largest number of people participate. Even if we are not funded again, their elitist attitude is an outrage to all people who are not locked into a gallery-based aesthetic.

If you write, please send us a copy so we can keep track of the response to the NEA. Thanks.

The address: Frank Hodson, Chair; National Endowment for the Arts; Nancy Hanks Center; 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.; Washington, D.C. 20506.

RESOURCES

FUSE

183 Bathurst St., 1st floor
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 2R7
Monthly, \$12/one year

FUSE is a tremendously valuable magazine focusing on Canadian art and culture. The recent issue (April) includes articles on cooperative projects between trade unions and artists, a look at pre-1970's anti-apartheid activism, and many book, music and film reviews. Note their new address.

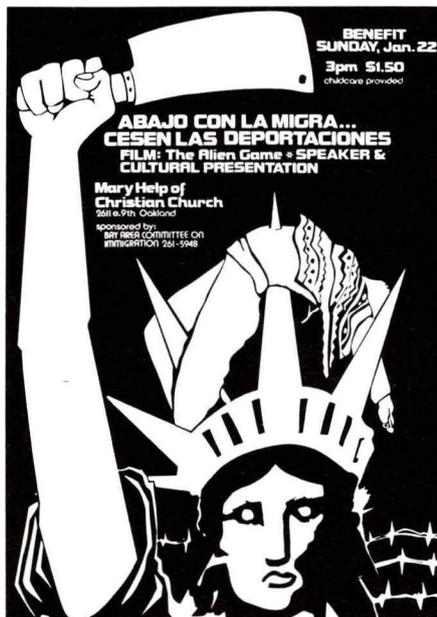
Billboard Corrections

A group of arts activists and writers has begun collecting examples of *billboard corrections* for publication in book form. All readers are requested to send examples in any photographic form (slides, b&w or color prints) to *CMM* with as much explanatory information as possible. All personal id's will remain confidential, but anyone sending an image used will receive a copy of the book when (and if) it gets published.

Third World Resources

464 19th St.
Oakland, CA 94612
(415) 536-1876, 835-4692
Quarterly; Individuals, \$25/two years, organizations, \$25/one year.

TWR collects, annotates and publicizes resources from all around the world on Third World regions and issues. Each issue is divided into Organizations, Books, Periodicals, Pamphlets and Articles, and Audiovisuals. There is also a 4 page feature insert in each issue which includes additional information on specialized subjects, such as Africa or Reference Guides. Very thorough and readable.



SILK SCREEN POSTER BY MALQUIAS MONTOYA. ABAJO CON LA MIGRA. 1978. PHOTO: BLAIR PATRIDGE

**Chicano Expressions:
A New View in American Art**
INTAR Latin American Gallery
420 West 42nd St.
New York City, NY 10036
\$5.00 + \$1 postage/handling

This is the catalog for a recent exhibit curated by Tomas Ybarra-Fausto, Judy Baca and others which appeared in Los Angeles in the Fall of 1986 and in San Francisco Spring of 1987. It includes hundreds of examples of contemporary Chicano art from all over the country, and presents them in their full cultural context in order to establish Chicano art as a legitimate and vibrant part of American culture. Included in the catalog are excellent examples of murals, posters, photographs and mixed-media pieces.

The Labor Heritage Foundation

815 16th St., NW, Room 301
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 842-7880

The foundation is an excellent source of material on U.S. working culture. They

VISUAL ARTISTS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts recently introduced legislation in the Senate to improve copyright protection for visual artists. The amendment to the Copyright Act died in committee during the last session of Congress, but will be introduced again this year, according to Senator Kennedy.

The bill has three major components: first, for works of fine art, deletion of the requirement that a copyright notice must appear on all works for which copyright is claimed. However, artists would still have to register their works with the Copyright Office.

Second, the prohibition of intentional distortion, mutilation, or destruction of works of art, giving artists legal redress for such alterations. Additionally, giving artists the right to be acknowledged as the artist whenever work is displayed, or to disclaim authorship if the work has been intentionally altered. A work which is part of a building would not be covered under this bill, unless the artist expressly reserved these rights at the time of commission.

Third, the payment of resale royalties of seven percent of the difference between the purchase price and the selling price of a work which is resold, if the sale is in excess of \$500 and the value of the work appreciated at least 120 percent, for the lifetime of the artist and 50 years after.

CMM has just learned that a similar bill has been voted into law by the New Mexico State legislature.

publish *art works*, a biannual newsletter of resources (including records, murals, books and labor culture news) and produce an annual Labor Arts Exchange. The next Exchange will happen June 28-30 in Washington, D.C.; contact the Foundation for more information.

Subscriptions

United States individual subscriptions	\$12
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Foreign institutional subscriptions	\$30
Great Britain individual subscriptions	L20
Great Britain institutional subscriptions	L30

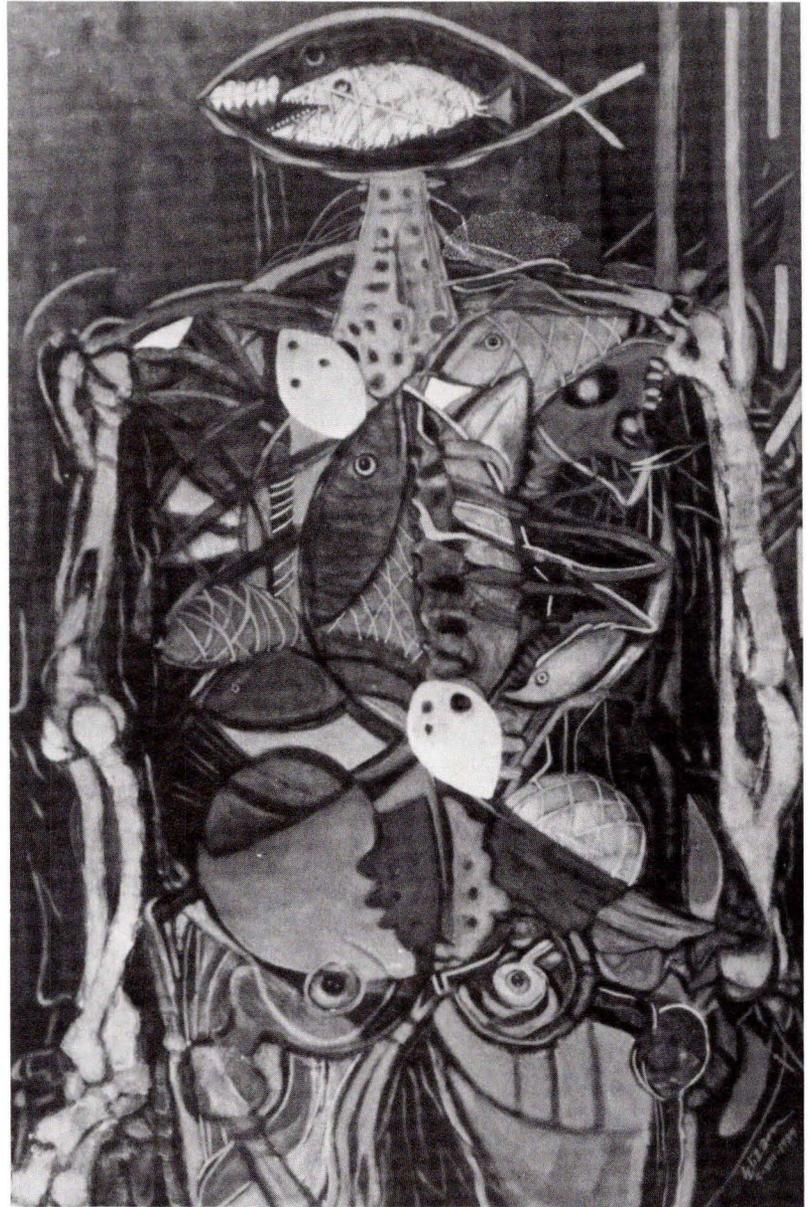
- * All foreign subscriptions are sent airmail.
- * Subscriptions in Great Britain may be sent to:
Community Murals Magazine
84a St. Stephens Ave.
London, W12, England
- * Back issues are \$3 each, when available.
- * All payments must be in \$U.S.

Elizam Escobar: P.O.W. in U.S.

Elizam Escobar is a Puerto Rican Prisoner of War serving a sixty year federal prison sentence for fighting to free his country, Puerto Rico, from U.S. colonial domination. He is also an accomplished artist with a degree in fine arts, who until now has continued to create paintings and drawings while in state and federal custody. Less than one week after the publication of a catalog of his work and the opening of an exhibit to commence a national tour of his work, he was uprooted from the federal prison in Oxford, Wisconsin and transferred to the prison in El Reno, Oklahoma, where prison officials have told him he will not have the opportunity to continue painting, and where he is thousands of miles from his family, friends, and supporters.

This is no coincidence. Elizam, already a well-respected painter in his native Puerto Rico, was beginning to receive recognition for his work inside the U.S. His show, "Art as an Act of Liberation," consisting of some 60 drawings and paintings, opened to an enthusiastic reception in November in Chicago, as part of a nationwide tour, accompanied by the publication of the beautiful full-color catalogue. His work is not at all overtly political in content and it is clear that he is being persecuted, not for the content of his art, but for his activism and ideas. There can be but one purpose for the stifling of his freedom of expression—to isolate him, deny him support engendered by his art, and prevent the creative expression of his being. The U.S. prides itself on its so-called "freedom of expression," but a closer look reveals the true meaning of such "freedom," and the repression against Elizam is not unique. There are over 100 political prisoners and prisoners of war in U.S. prisons. A concerted strategy is at work to deny these men and women support and even access to their communities, and to deny them activities which affirm their identities and political principals. In some cases "control units" are used to further isolate them in the attempt to break them down physically and psychologically.

A committee has been formed to expose that there was no legitimate reason to transfer Elizam Escobar, and deny him his right to paint, which is demanding that he be transferred back to Oxford or another similar locale, and that he be allowed to produce his art wherever he is. The committee is also coordinating the national tour of his art and spearheading a letter-writing campaign to expose this situation. Please take the time and write a letter of protest to:



Espantapeces (The Scarefish), 1984

Warden
FCI El Reno
P.O. Box 1500
El Reno, Oklahoma 73036

and

Director
Federal Prison System
320 First Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20534

For more information, contact:
Friends of Elizam Escobar
c/o Editorial El Coqui,
1671 No. Claremont
Chicago, Ill. 60647
(312) 342-8023/22



El Vejigante (Vejigante), 1984

Louder Than Words

Jill Posner
87 pp., 7½x8½ format, \$8.95
1986, b&w
Pandora Press
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE

Jill Posner's new book is a sequel to *Spray It Loud* and continues her recording of political graffiti in England and (this time) in Australia with the work of BUGA-UP. It is published in London and New York. Occasionally, short explanatory quotations or statements are provided, which help the reader unfamiliar with the issues of the specific location to understand the writings' significance.

In most cases, the examples score double on our sensitivities by virtue of a clever inversion of what an advertisement or other slogan has led us to expect. To an

ad for a London newspaper, "The *Mail* on Sunday" has been added "Submission by Monday." The common "Liberate Animals" slogan has been altered to "Animate Liberals." The racist "Asians Out" is "corrected" to read "I'm glad Asians are about." The book is especially strong on militant women's and lesbian graffiti.

The book has about a dozen comments on smoking and cigarette ads toward the back, but the final comment, on the rear cover, is a graffiti which says, "If your back is up against a wall, turn around and write on it," a fitting summary of the motivation for socially oriented graffitiists throughout the world.

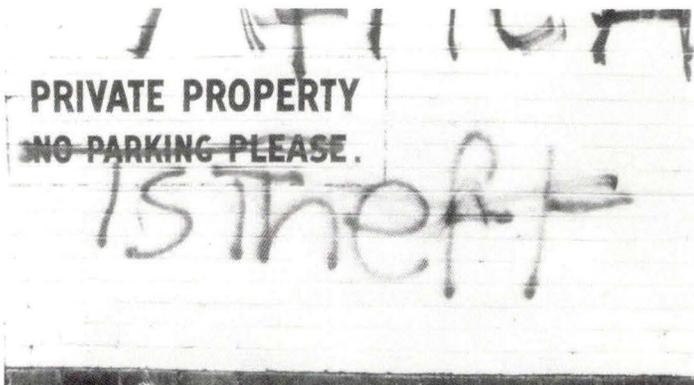
Both Posner's books remind us that one weapon community people have against the mental terrorism of mass advertising is to turn the images back against their sponsor corporations—a

practical application of the chant, "Turn the guns around."

Photos by Jill Posner



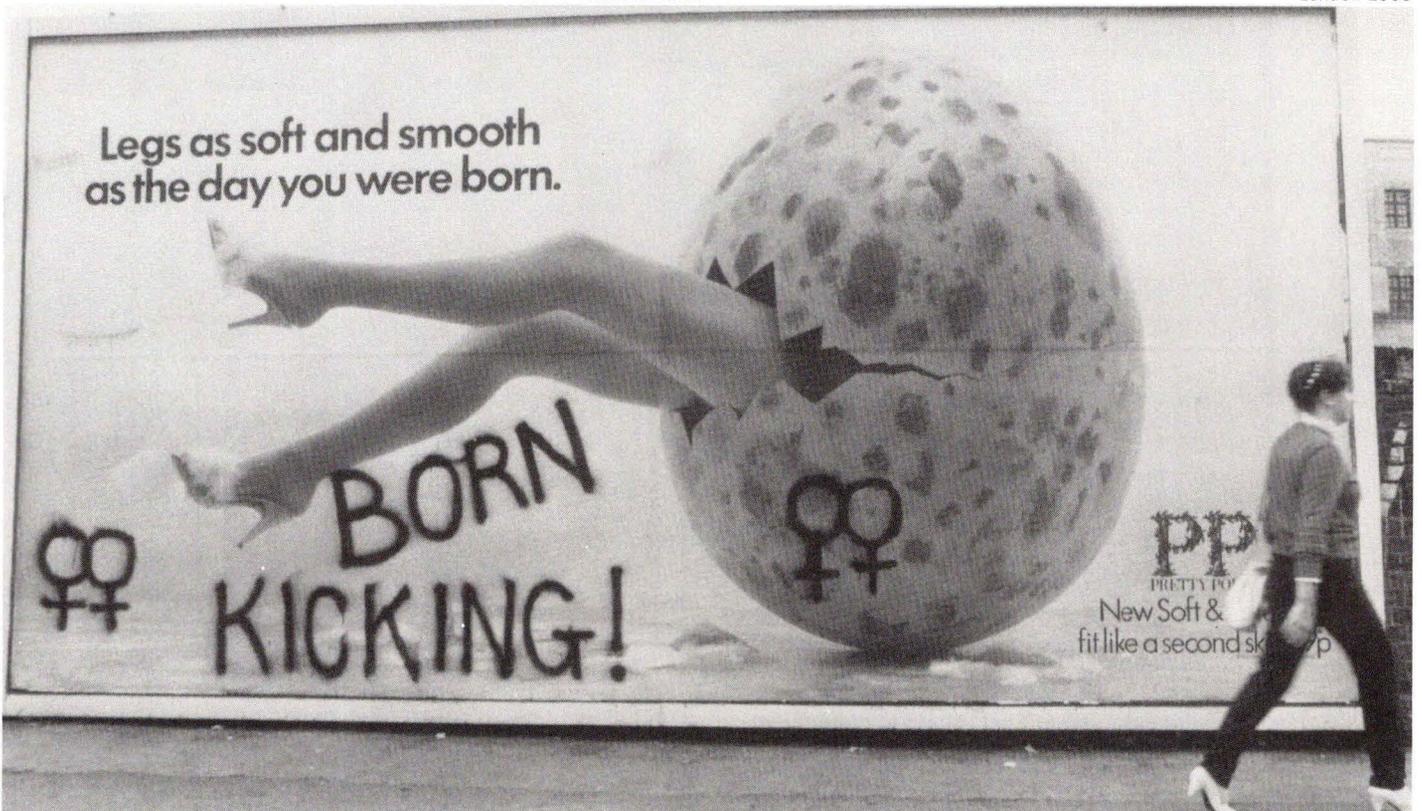
London 1985



London 1983



London 1985



London 1983

Museum of the Streets

Moira F. Harris
with photographs by Leo J. Harris
132 pp., 8½x11, \$15
1987, color and b&w
Pogo Press, Inc.
Four Cardinal Lane
St. Paul, Minnesota 55110
\$1.50 handling & postage for the first book
and \$.50 for each additional book

(See accompanying article on page 18.)

Congratulations to Pogo Press for publishing *Museum of the Streets: Minnesota's Contemporary Outdoor Murals*, by Moira F. Harris. She is a rare art historian who takes community arts seriously and who has compiled an excellent collection.

The introductory chapter of this 8½" x 11" photo book is a summary of

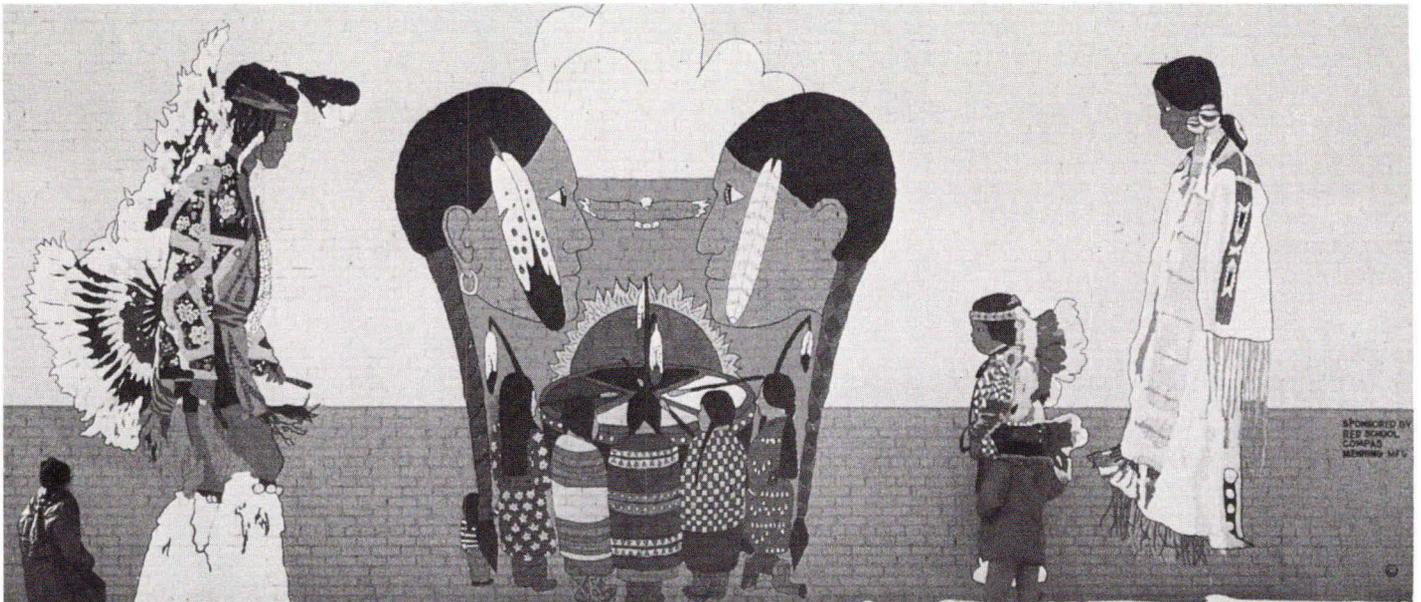
"Minnesota's Outdoor Murals," offering a useful overview if not extensive analysis (which is the correct choice of emphasis in a survey book of this sort). The chapter places the murals clearly in their social and art historical contexts, and helps the reader understand the images. Mention is also made of surfaces, paints, techniques, materials and tools. To its credit, it is especially strong in crediting organizers and supervisors of projects.

The book has two clear maps, one each of Minneapolis and St. Paul. It has twelve color photos, plus the cover, which are excellent, but, of course, we always wish for total color reproductions. It offers an index of muralists and buildings, brief biographies of muralists, and list of further reading which is unfortunately weak in its failure to note strengths or

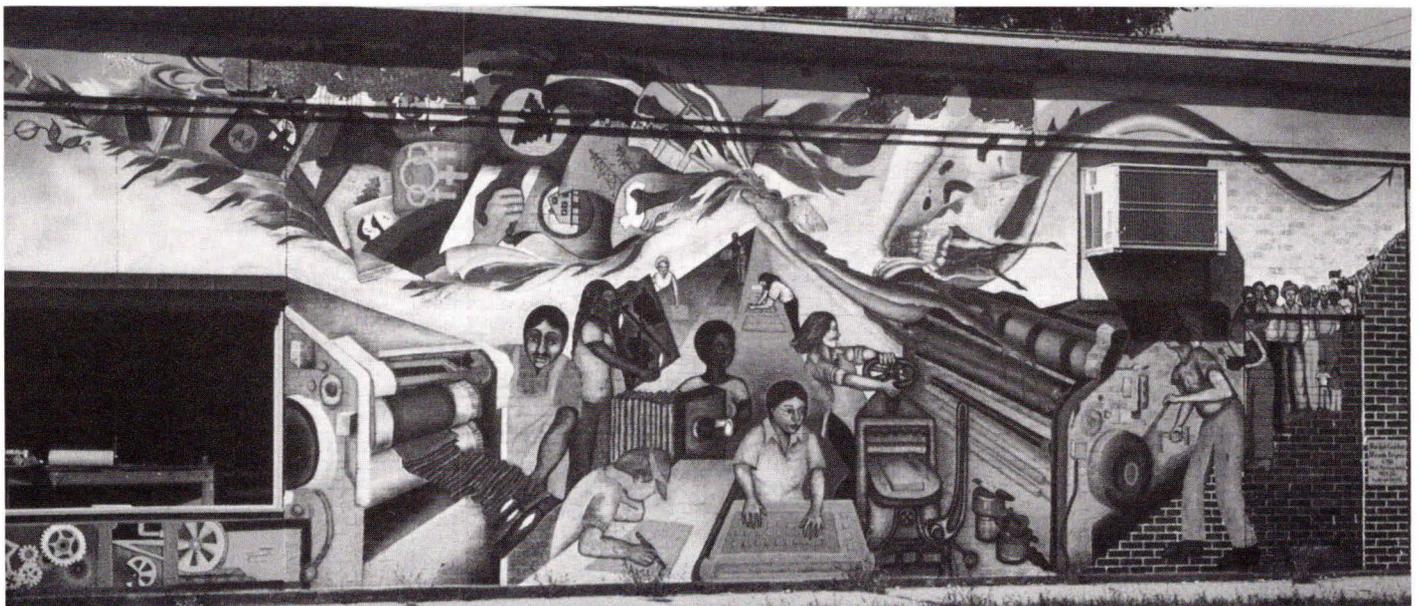
weaknesses of the listings, and their availability (This criticism would remain even if *CMM* were mentioned). Also, one wishes for sharper reproductions in the b&w section. Still, the book has a nice feel to it, is well produced and carefully designed.

All in all, it is a treasure to have so respectful a work published on so important but relatively unknown a group of murals. The twin cities can be proud of their murals, and the state of Minnesota of this book about its public paintings. All of us are glad to welcome it.

Museum of the Streets can be purchased from Pogo Press, Incorporated, Four Cardinal Lane, St. Paul, Minnesota 55110 for \$15, plus \$1.50 handling and postage for the first book and \$.50 for each additional book.



Indian Drum Dance, Joe Lyles, Frenchy Wilson and Denise O'Neill. Quality Inn, St. Paul, 1978.



Market Press, Inc., Miranda Bergman and Marilyn Lindstrom, Cedar Avenue at 35th Street, Minneapolis, 1981.

Photos by Leo J. Harris

INTERNATIONAL

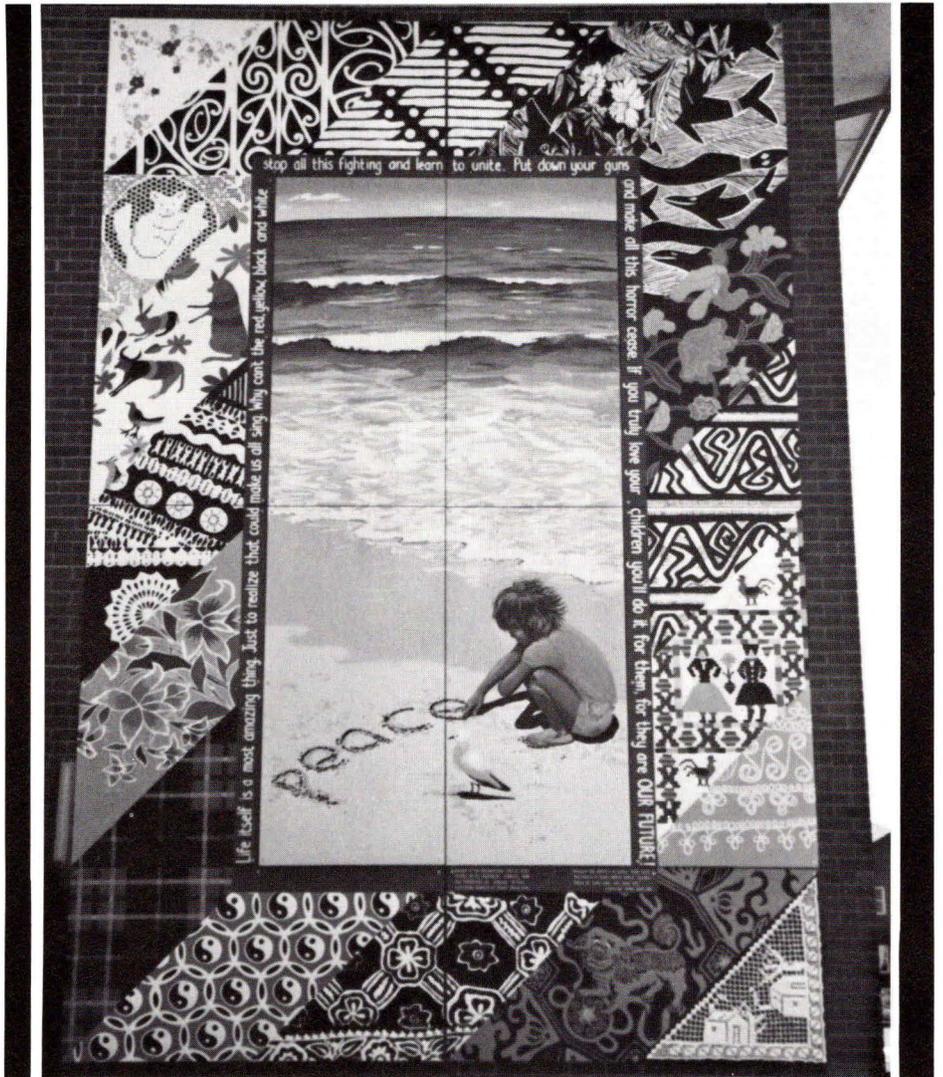
Australian International Peace Year Mural

This is the International Year of Peace mural painted at the Bondi Beach Public School, Australia. The muralists received a grant for Carol Ruff to be a resident artist at the school for four months and during that time the mural was produced. It was painted on exterior plywood panels. The muralists did not want to use scaffolding because of the young children involved and Carol's pregnancy. The panels were bolted to the wall. The mural was painted in Solver mural paint, an exterior gloss paint manufactured in Australia for such projects.

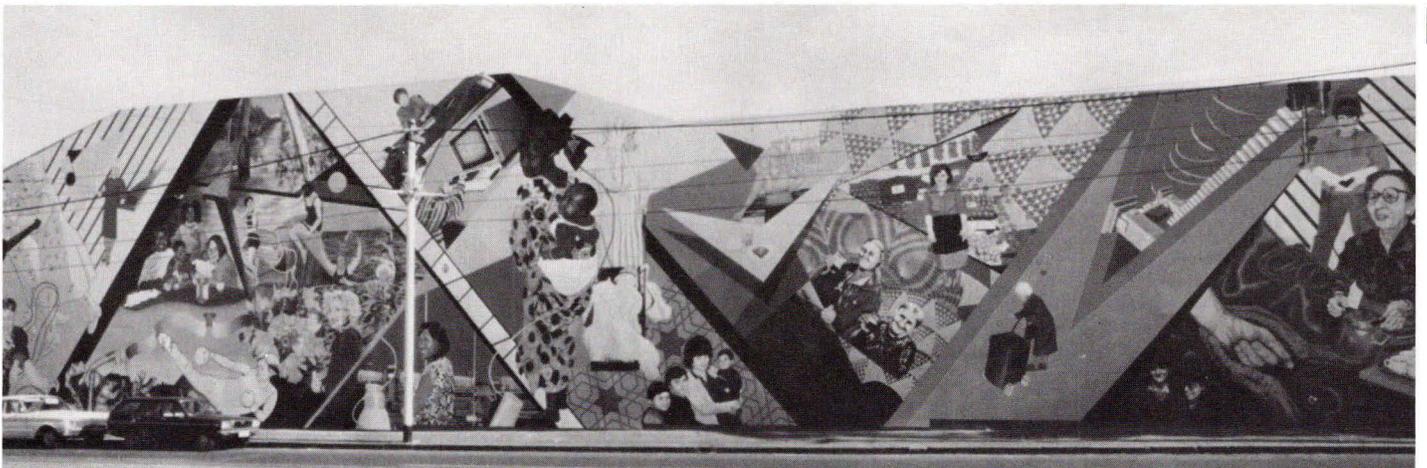
The mural is directly on the sea front and therefore in a very visible position. The border patterns are made to represent some of the many nationalities in the school. Over 40 different language groups with the big proportion of Pacific Island groups (Maori, Tonga, Malaysia, etc.) attend. The children brought batiks, English embroidery, crochet doilies and the patterns were designed from these. A 9 year old girl named Shay Ling Mei Sim wrote the poem around the edge:

Life itself is a most amazing thing
Just to realize that could make us all
sing
Why can't the red, yellow, black & white
Stop all this fighting and learn to unite
Put down your guns & make all this
horror cease.
If you truly love your children, you'll do
it for them.
For they are our *future!*

Some early design ideas which made reference to war and violence were voted out by teachers and staff, but the final design idea was unanimously hailed as the sort of image wanted for a primary school.



International Year of Peace, Bondi Beach Public School. Directed by Carol Ruff, November 1986. Photo: Carol Ruff.



From Barbed Wire to Bonboniere—Women's Mural, Melbourne, Australia. Eve Glenn and Megan Evans, 1986. 25'x120'. Photo: Carol Ruff.



Te rangimarie me te kotahitanga—Peace and Unity, Bondi Beach, Australia, 1986. Maori banner painted by Carol Ruff, showing children of Bondi Beach School in concert party costume, and the islands of the Pacific, with the "Rainbow Warrior." 7'x9'. Photo: Carol Ruff.

Women's Mural Project: Melbourne, Australia

The idea to do a women's mural came about when Eve Glenn and Megan Evans first met in 1984 and realized that they were both women muralists living in Northcote. The obvious mural to paint together was one of a theme from their own experiences as women. As they had a working relationship with the Northcote Council, they decided to draw the material for the mural from women in the Northcote area. During the research period they were based in the Community Service Department and spent two months photographing and talking with groups of local women and individuals about their lives and their ideals for a women's mural.

It became apparent that many women wanted the caring and nurturing work they do to be valued more by the community. Many other issues were raised which the artists then drew to create a design which would positively affirm all women to women, to themselves and the broader community; and celebrate their lives, work, creativity, recreation. They chose a broad range of ages and ethnic backgrounds, using portraits of some of

the women interviewed to represent broader groups. The design process took two weeks.

From the inception of the project in 1984 the artists sought funding through State and Federal Government, various foundations and private sources.

The project would not have happened without the active support of the Trade Union Movement; especially the Operative Painters and Decorators Union, the Builders Labourers Federation, and the Building Workers' Industrial Union.

The mural was painted by Eve Glenn and Megan Evans with assistance from Carol Ruff and Marina Barker and many volunteers, both men and women.

The drawing and painting took two and a half months to complete. The wall was 45 meters long by 8 meters high.

While the mural was being executed the overwhelming public response was positive and encouraging, confirming the artists' belief in the value of Public art /Community art. This was proof that this kind of art form was accessible and appreciated by a broad range of people, many of whom do not generally attend art

galleries. Scaffolding was donated by Big Ben Scaffolds; Grollo Bros. provided boards and attached them to the wall. Other contributing bodies were: The Community Arts Board of the Australia Council, The Victorian Ministry for the Arts, Northcote City Council, The Reichstein Foundation Women 150, Fitzroy City Council, The Myer Foundation, Sandra Bardis, Eva Mahlab, Costains, The Department of Public Works, The Metropolitan Transit Authority, The Equal Opportunity Board, Port of Melbourne Authority, and The Melbourne Moomba Festival Ltd.

Muralists are a form of Painters & Decorators and the Operative Painters and Decorators Union in Victoria has set an historic precedent in creating a recognized award for Artworkers. The award commenced operation on June 7th 1985 (Victorian Government recognition) and was applied to all employees from 11th October 1985. The award has been aimed towards: correct wages and conditions for artworkers, to assist in the recognition of the artworker's role and skills within society.

Brazil: Portinari

These murals as a whole comprise one of Brazilian painter Candido Portinari's (1903-1962) most celebrated works. In Brazil, the man himself was eulogized and his work lauded; after winning an honorable mention at the Carnegie Institute here in 1935 his work also received international praise. Yet for some Brazilian critics, the excessive adoration bestowed on Partinari by official culture obscured the recognition of other important national artists. Even stronger criticism has been directed at him, in more recent years, for his role as "official painter" for the populist government of Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945)—a nationalist regime characterized by its intent to spur industrialization, expand domestic production and consumption, and create social reforms. A controversial artist of mythic proportions, Portinari's career and fame are punctuated by ironic circumstances and events.

He had a traditional academic training at Brazil's National School of Belas Artes and studied painting in Europe for two years. Unflagging material production marked his artistic career, as well as a desire for stylistic experimentation, and his laborious attention to preparatory work in the way of research and sketching.

In 1936, immediately after the projection of his international acclaim, he was commissioned by the Brazilian government to paint a series of murals, those seen here, for the new building of the Ministry of Education and Health. The project's theme, "Economic Evolution," was interpreted personally by the artist and agreed upon by governmental patrons. The murals, twelve in all, depict Brazil's principal elements of economic production in this epoch (i.e., rubber, coffee, sugar cane, cattle, etc.) portraying laborers, men and women, at work in the process of each.

Owing to his growing notoriety here, he was commissioned in 1941 to produce four huge frescoes for the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress. A historical theme, with regard to the Americas in general, was proposed for this large undertaking. Portinari chose to articulate the "conquest" of South and Central America, the "domination of the land" and "colonization."

In this production, as in many others, the painter depicted Blacks, Mulattos and Indians—all an integral part of Brazil's population—in a historic pictorial repres-



photos by Patricia Mannix

entation. The subjects of his earlier paintings largely constitute the campesino at work, and the poor of rural towns and urban cities, often engaged in day-to-day activities. Biblical themes also figure in his work, as well as favorite national past-times, such as Carnival and Samba.

In the U.S. in 1939 the painter executed three panels for the Brazilian Pavilion at the N.Y. World's Fair. The following year he participated in an exhibition of Latin American Modern Art at the Riverside Museum in New York. Art historians here praised the artist, pointing in particular to the "humanitarian" and social themes in his paintings and murals, which, unlike those of Rivera and the Mexican muralists, were, they said, "untouched by propaganda." In the book *Portinari: His Life and Art*, published in 1940 by the University of Chicago, the writer elaborates on the painter's ostensible apolitical posture: "He does not discuss politics—which he believes disgusting. He thinks of the war only in terms of its possible implications on the lives and works of the painters and their freedom of expression."

In 1952, he received yet another commission in the U.S., through the urging of the Brazilian government and at its financial expense for two large murals, "War" and "Peace," at the headquarters of the United Nations. However, this being the height of McCarthyism, he was denied an entrance visa because of his affiliation (initiated in 1945) with the Communist Party of Brazil. Consequently, he undertook the project in Brazil and it was shipped to New York, where ultimately it had a cool reception, being formally unveiled with little fanfare.

Portinari died in 1962 of poisoning due to intoxication from oil paints. During his lifetime his work was exhibited in Europe, Israel, Argentina and Uruguay and, of course, extensively in Brazil. In the latter, his monumental works are unquestionably his most renowned. He also represented Brazil in the Venice Biennial and Mexico's Inter-American Biennial.

Portinari's life and work are much heralded. For many he has been "Brazil's greatest painter." Nonetheless, a polemic still revolves around the significance of his relationship with the Vargas regime and the question of the ideological expressions reflected in his representations of the campesino, the poor, the Black and the Mulatto.

Patricia Mannix

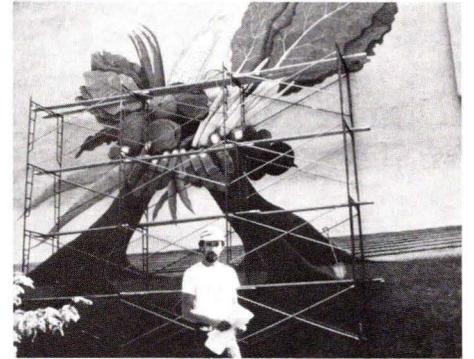
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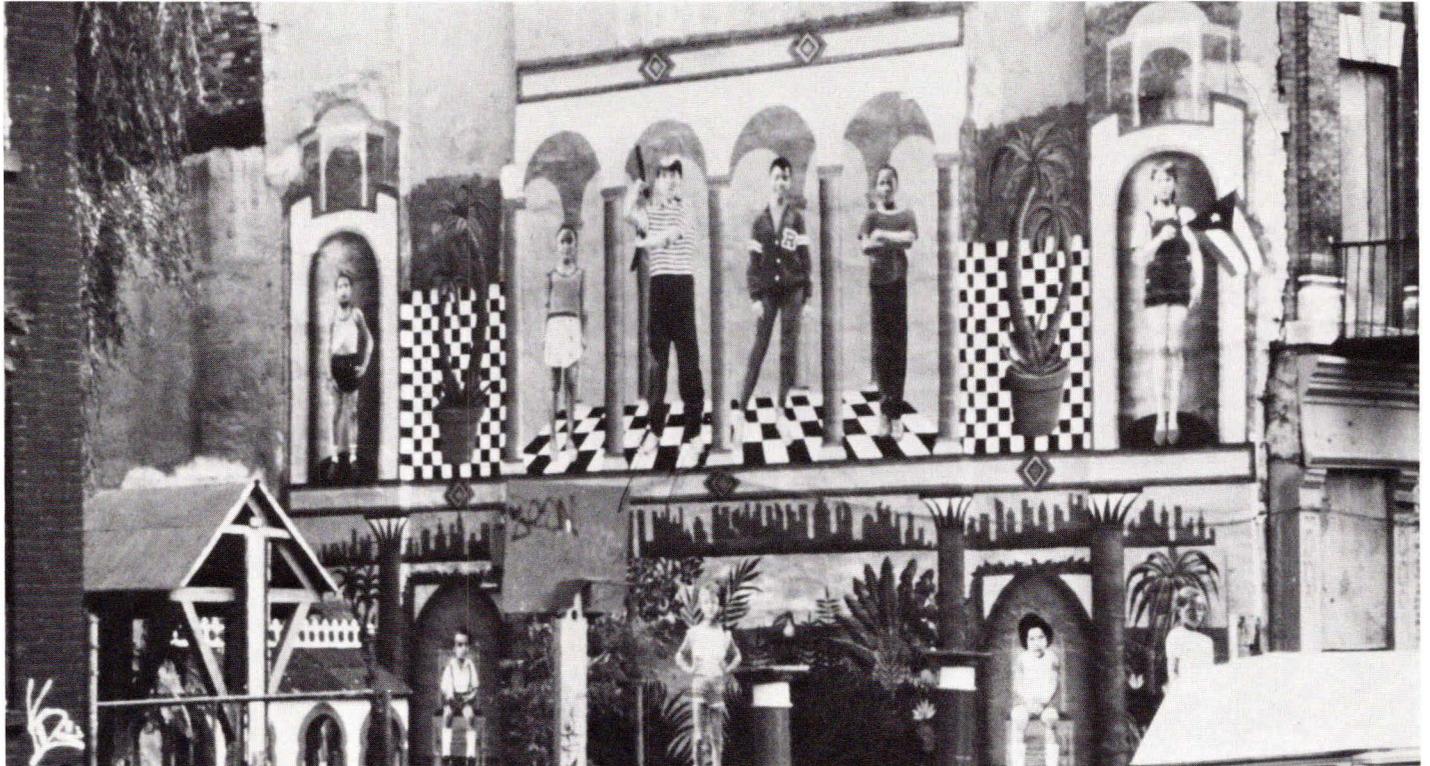
Photos: Eva Crockett



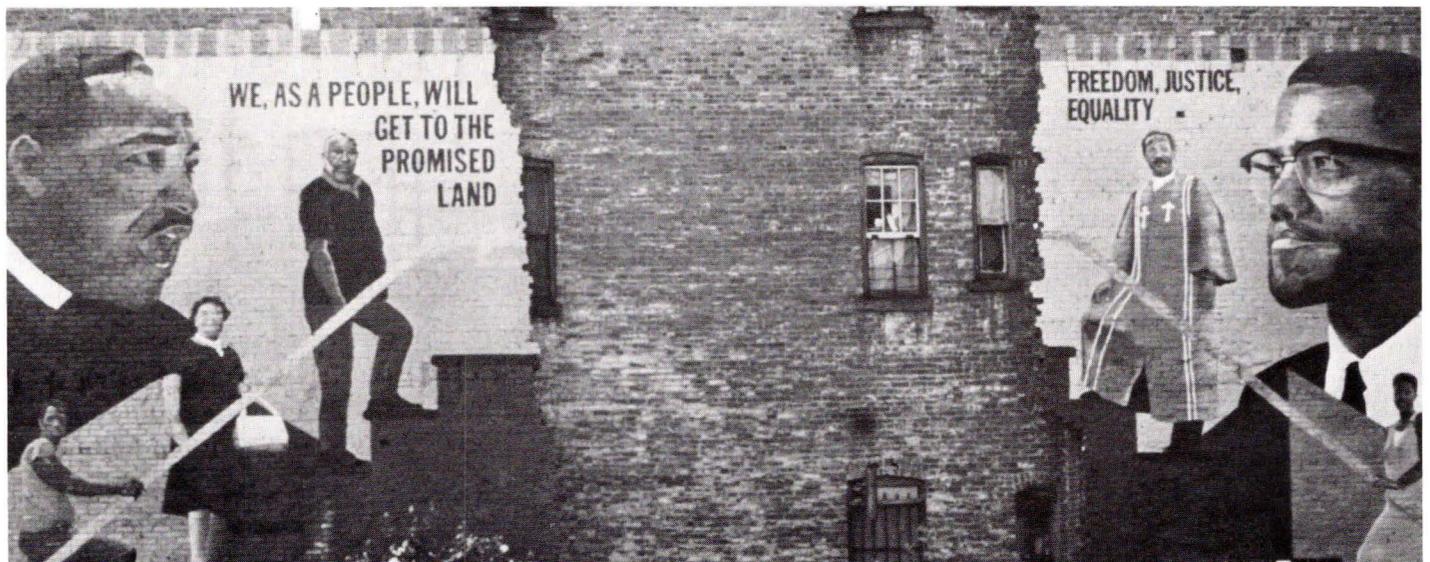
Joe Stephenson, Artmakers, with local youth. Brooklyn, New York, 1986.



Garden Mural, Joe Stephenson, 1986.



Enchanted Garden, Robin Michals and Kristen Reed. 4th Street, between C and D, New York City, 1986. Sponsored by Artmakers.



Robin Michals, 1986. Brooklyn, New York, in a garden near Malcolm X Boulevard. Sponsored by Artmakers and Green Thumb.

"Song of Unity" Restored

Santiago, Chile circa 1979: The small dormitory room full of beds is like an exhibition of memorabilia. The "dorm's" inhabitants, Chilean political prisoners, have turned the walls into a collage of poems, family pictures, postcards, calendars and other reminders of the world outside. One card calls attention: a 3½x5 full color postcard of a mural reminiscent of those murals which multiplied during the cultural awakening of the Allende years. "I got this from the U.S." the prisoner would tell people, and he was right: the postcard is of La Peña Cultural Center's mural in Berkeley. For him the mural was a message of solidarity, a reminder that the rest of the world is aware of Chile, of Latin America, and the horror her people are living.

La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley will celebrate its 12th anniversary this June. The very fact of La Peña's survival and growth each year as a multi-cultural community center and restaurant which presents high quality political, cultural, and educational programs six nights a week is cause in itself for celebration. But this year La Peña has something special to celebrate—the restoration of the internationally renowned mural on the front of the building.

The mural, entitled *Song of Unity*, was painted in 1978, and since then has become an integral part of the colorful Berkeley landscape. Postcards of the mural have travelled around the world, sometimes smuggled into places like Chile where its message holds special significance.

The mural depicts the peoples of the Americas coming together in song and struggle. On the lefthand side, the peoples of Latin America, and on the righthand side the people of North America. The two streams of humanity converge on the double doorway which leads into La Peña. Several of the figures of the mural are perpetually building and repairing La Peña.

Many of the figures are singing or playing musical instruments in support of the central figure, the three-dimensional representation of Victor Jara, who was chosen as a symbol of people's artists in struggle. Victor Jara lost his life in Chile in 1973, one of the first of thousands of victims of the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet which still holds power in that country. In the mural, Victor Jara continues to sing although his hands are severed, a lasting reminder of his courage and determination in the face of fortune and execution which continue to inspire

us to struggle against seemingly insurmountable odds.

Along with Victor Jara, some other faces are recognizable in the new mural: Violeta Parra, the Chilean folklorist who inspired the New Song Movement (Nueva Cancion) of Latin America; Oscar Romero, the Salvadoran Archbishop killed by right-wing death squads; Augusto Cesar Sandino, inspiration of the Nicaraguan revolution; Paul Robeson and Malvina Reynolds, beloved activist/singers from the United States.

The central part of the mural is dominated by three large, stylized birds made of ceramic pieces which seem to jump off the face of the mural as if lifting into flight toward freedom. Two birds from the old mural remain: the eagle representing

covered with fiberglass mesh tape. The three-dimensional figure of Victor Jara was done in *papier mache* over a chicken wire form.

As it turned out, this low cost solution was not sufficient to withstand the intense rain, sun, and wind which the mural is subjected to. Over the years, the masonite panels began to swell and buckle, the nails pulled out of the wall, the fiberglass tape came off the seams, and the *papier mache* deteriorated and began to disintegrate.

This time around, the restoration was funded by the Community Development Block Grant Program of the City of Berkeley, and the Alameda County Arts Commission. With more money for materials and construction (and for artists' salar-



North America, and the condor of South America. Now a third bird has been added—the beautiful green-feathered *quetzal*, the national bird of Guatemala which here represents Central America.

The original *Song of Unity* was created in 1978 as a joint project of Commonarts, a Berkeley community arts organization, and La Peña. The same artists who painted the old mural—Ray Patlan, O'Brien Thiele, Osha Neumann, and Anna de Leon—reunited to redesign and recreate the new mural. They were assisted by Joanne Cooke.

La Peña's mural represents certain unusual technical problems which called for creative solutions. The building facade is not a uniform surface to paint on. There is a brick surface above with several storefront style windows across the lower part. Originally, these windows were covered with exterior siding to make the underlying surface even. The whole facade was then covered with masonite panels to provide a surface to paint on.

The first time around, the budget for materials was very low (and the artists worked for nothing). No one really knew for sure how to attach the panels to the building so they wouldn't come off. The panels were nailed on with wide head nails, and the seams between panels were

ies), solutions to the technical problems could be sought.

The solution to the problem of the surface was a radical one: attach a whole new wall to the front of the building. Now, with a uniform, solidly built, plywood surface as a base, new masonite panels could be attached. Pressure treated exterior masonite was used. The panels were glued onto the plywood with architectural grade adhesive, then attached with "grabber" screws into the underlying studs. Space was left between panels to allow for expansion, and the seams were left untreated (they aren't noticeable on the finished mural).

The panels were primed, and the new mural painted on them. The three dimensional portions were formed with marine fiberglass over the forms from the original mural. The original ceramic pieces from the eagle and the condor were re-used (they had withstood the elements unscathed), though slightly rearranged. New pieces were made by Anna de Leon for the *quetzal* in the center of the mural.

The new mural is larger, now rising above the roofline of the building. There will be a border of ceramic tile below the mural (not complete at this writing), which will add texture and protect the bottom of the mural. Plans are also in the

works to extend the mural over the doorways to either side and incorporate new signs for the entrance to La Peña and Cafe Violeta, La Peña's restaurant.

The entire renovation process from design to completion took almost a year, longer than anticipated given that the basic design was like the original. Once

work began, however, it went relatively fast. The mural was painted mainly on weekends between August and October.

The new mural is truly an outgrowth of the old, maintaining the original internationally recognized design, but incorporating new elements of the Latin American struggle, particularly the

events in Central America of the last decade. The new mural is also more permanent, "built to last," perhaps reflecting La Peña's own process of maturing and transition to a permanent community institution.



And death looks on with a casual eye and picks at the dirt under his fingernail.

Anne Sexton



Valerie Jacobs

Bay Area Mural Update

There has been a recent flourishing of mural activity in the San Francisco Bay Area's vibrant community scene. Within one year we have seen ten murals completed and there are at least eleven more in the works. By and large they reflect the rich cultural and ethnic heritage of the city in their themes and also display some exciting work of artists making their first major public statement. Among the new artists we are pleased to see five disabled people who have proudly painted their first mural and it looks great! Probably the most controversial new piece is the spec-

tacular abstract work by Jesus "Chuy" Campusano, reminiscent of New York City's "City Walls" program. In fact, a car of young people drove by during the dedication ceremonies and shouted, "This is San Francisco, not New York." The mural has re-opened the ongoing debate on the role of mural art, as well as opening the eyes of viewers miles away.

All of the recent murals, except two, are projects of the Mural Resource Center under the present directorship of Luz de Leon and primarily funded through the Mayor's Office of Community Develop-

ment (OCD). Some of these mural projects were designed a couple of years ago and were promised OCD funding which was not forthcoming until last December. Newer concerns about funding have recently emerged after OCD made over a twenty percent reduction in already promised grants for 1987.

Arch Williams

The following mural notes were provided by the artists:



Photo: Jim Dong

Spofford Alley Mural

Gail Aretani has designed and painted three portable murals which represent a series of portraits of people who typify the contemporary Chinatown community. Each figure is moving forward, carrying something symbolic of a task which contributes to community life. Also, each figure is presented before a Chinatown storefront which relates to the character of the person depicted.

The mural is painted on masonite with Liquitex colors and was completed June of 1986. Spofford Alley runs parallel to and is below Stockton St. and is bounded by Clay and Washington Sts.

A Salute to Excellence

The American Savings and Loan Association commissioned Seitu Din to do a mural commemorating Black History Month. Their exhibition was entitled "A Salute to Excellence—The American Spirit." The 12x8 foot mural done on 3 masonite panels using Politec mural colors was done on site at their Telegraph Branch during the entire month of February, 1987.

The original image of this mural was taken from a statuary on the tomb of Pharaoh Horemheb. The marble-like background was made up of abstract symbols derived from early graffiti which was recognizable by the developing Black communities as symbols of pride, justice, hope, freedom, and unity, compared with the oppressive economic, educational, and living conditions which they found themselves forced into before the 1960's street riots.

The mural reflects the developing visual language which endured, expressed itself, and survived through the visual arts, music, dance, business, and sports.

Our arts express the survival of our beautiful culture, as they did in ancient times when the arts were used to enrich the

society. This mural captures a journey to excellence.

Seitu Din

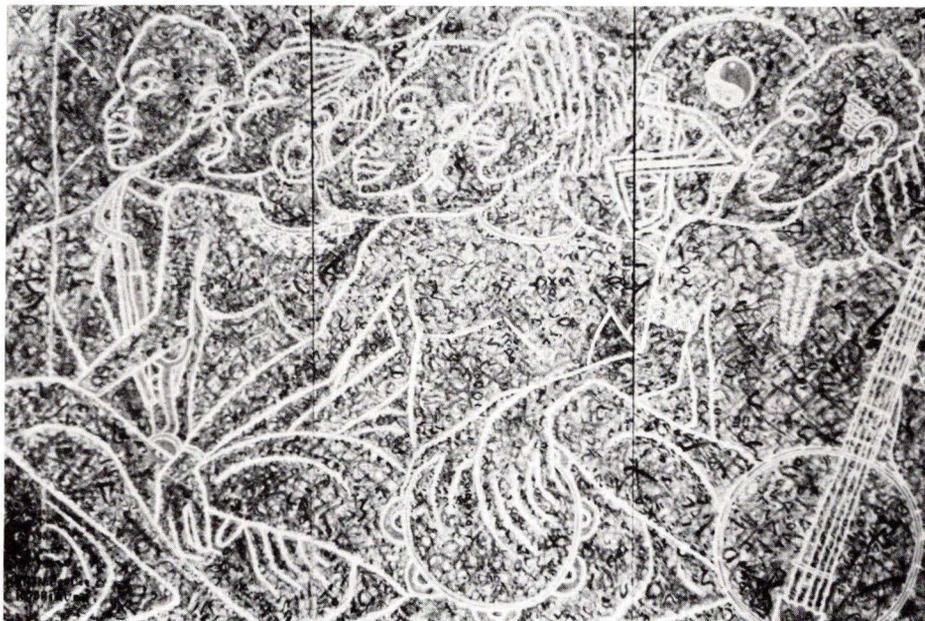


Photo: Seitu Din

North Beach Swimming Pool

Designed by Fran Valesco, and painted with eleven volunteers, including students from S.F. Art Institute.

This mural has symbolic elements representing both the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood and the wider population of San Francisco. These are represented by natural phenomena, since I wanted to create a visual oasis, a kind of painted public park.

The sky, from sunrise to sunset (including incoming fog), is the unifying element. Below it are found fish native to the San Francisco Bay Area: king salmon, ling cod, striped bass, starry flounder,

cabezon, herring. Around the edges of the wall is a decorative border. This presents a composition both like a Chinese folding room screen and also recalls Italian Renaissance bookbinding. Silk-screening directly on the wall, I incorporated techniques I use in my personal work. In addition, the type of images in this design are in keeping with my own printmaking.

I chose to represent the Italian and Asian population of the area. The Italians are represented by the awning and columns from a cafe, with potted palms reminiscent of the Savoy Tivoli and other cafes of the area. Asians are represented by cranes and rocks in water painted in

Chinese brush stroke style. The red, white, and green in the awning are Italian national colors; red and green are also Taoist colors, representing yin/yang.

City life is represented by wild plants found in San Francisco and the Bay area: pickleweed, gum plant, sedge.

The mural is approximately 135 ft. by 16 ft. and is painted on cement and wood with Politec Mural Colors over Roy Anderson latex primer. It has been coated with Triangle Anti-graffitti varnish. The Swimming Pool is located at Lombard and Mason Streets.

Fran Valesco

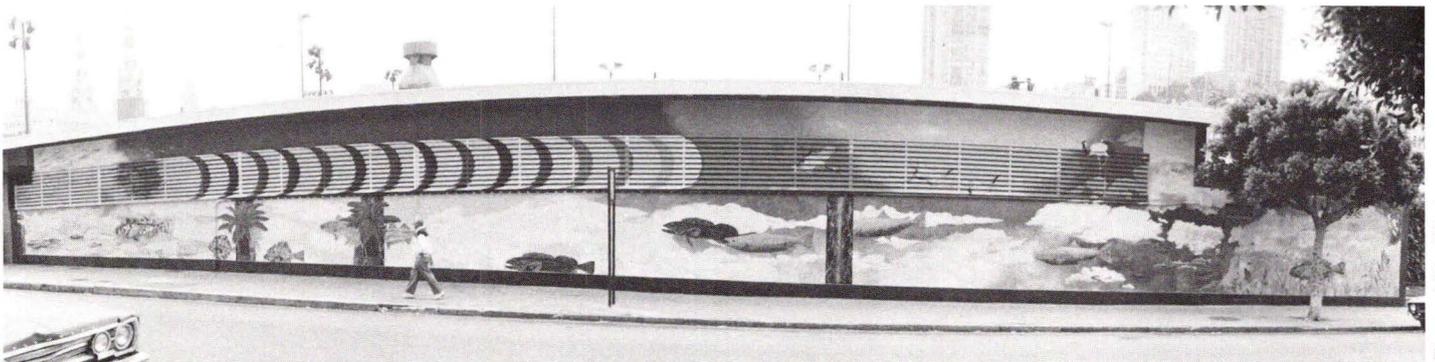


Photo: Nita Winter

Tuzuri Watu

The mural, titled *Tuzuri Watu*, which means "we are a beautiful people" in Swahili, is a tribute to the black people inspired by black women writers. What was originally conceived by the artist, Brooke Fancher, to be a tribute to women writers, evolved with community input to become a tribute to black people.

"By reading the black women writers, a new world was opened and I began to see things from a new perspective. The work of brilliant writers Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Patricia Parker, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Sonia Sanchez, Toni Cade Bambara, Nikki Giovanni and Sojourner Truth touched me deeply," states Fancher. "I want to honor and to publicize their work."

The original design was predominantly images of women. As she gathered photographs to fit the literature, Fancher, through conversation with friend Zee Lewis, realized how, too often, the black man is left out. Due to stereotyping in the media he is feared and mistrusted. "I painted him, along side the woman, as loving, kind and responsible. I learned much by painting the mural in Bay View. I'll never know what it is like to be black in the USA, but I feel a great affinity, affection and respect for a people who are still dealing with unfair circumstances.

"We have all been brainwashed to make judgments based on the white man's standard which is not only limiting but

damaging to other peoples. My purpose for painting the mural is to promote the black aesthetic: to celebrate black endeavor at all levels, to portray the beauty, dignity, intelligence, creativity, love of life and the unity of a beautiful people. If I can encourage a single person to be as turned on by the black writers as I am, I will feel gratified."

The mural is a photo montage of different aspects of life. Graduates with uplifted arms merge into a green rain forest which provides a backdrop for children working on computers. The ground upon which many of the figures

stand, is composed of a crocheted quilt emanating from a grandmother's hands. This image is derived from a story by Alice Walker, "Everyday Use," which describes the old way meeting the new. Quotations from the literature embellish the mural.

The mural is 1100 square feet with probable expansion to 1400 sq. ft. The wall is sandblasted stucco and primed and painted with Liquitex acrylics. It was completed in February of this year and is located at 4900 3rd St. at Palou, Bay View/Hunters Point.

Brooke Fancher



Lilli Ann Mural

(See back cover)

Chuy Campusano has painted a huge mural at the Lilli Ann building at 17th and Harrison Streets in San Francisco. Passing pedestrians and drivers are surprised to see a four-story wall covered with vibrant primary colors and shapes that grab attention.

For years Chuy has wanted to make a major mural on the south-facing wall of the cutting room building at the Lilli Ann Corporation, a well known manufacturer of women's garments. (Chuy's first job as a teenager was pattern-cutter for Lilli Ann, where he continued to work in various capacities for 5 years.) Chuy has a long history as a community artist in the Mission district and in San Francisco as a whole, including the important mural in the Bank of America Building at 23rd and Mission streets.

But the Lilli Ann mural is very different from his previous work. After two years of gathering support from businesses, unions, residents, and individuals, Chuy designed the 4,000 square foot mural, one of the largest murals in the city.

It was designed to be seen from as far away as several blocks in order for the impact of scale and color to be felt. Forms and colors from today's fashions and from what Chuy sees in the urban environment, from graffiti to commercial signs, fill the space. There are a few recognizable forms to give a viewer a starting place, but Chuy says "I want everyone to use their own imagination when they see the mural. It's o.k. for different people to see different things from the shapes and colors and what they see will change too—and that's all right too." He adds, "There's no heavy message here, only that these abstract shapes with colors are all around us everyday, and everyone sees them differently anyway."

Certainly the mural is a new use for an old space. It makes no subtle invitation to a viewer but demands a reaction and attention. Standing in a muted color setting of light industry, unused railroad track, and a concrete plant, the Lilli Ann Mural illuminates the space with 24 hour a day color and artistic energy. Chuy has introduced avant garde style into San Francisco's public art with a strong statement.

from an article by Roger E. Kelly

Artist Designer: Jesus "Chuy" Campusano
Chief Muralist: Elias Rocha
Assistant Muralists: Samuel Duenas,
Roger Rocha, Carlos Anaya
Project Coordinator: Sheila Sherry
Video: Mario Joel
Architectural Rendering: William Scott

Chinatown YMCA Mural

This work is entitled *Chinese Immigration History* and was designed and painted by Victor Fan, and is the artist's first outdoor mural. The design was developed through discussions with the staff of the YMCA, who wanted to have the mural tell the story of the past, present, and future for Chinese immigrating to this country. They felt that while the history of Chinese-Americans had been very difficult, the present day provides many opportunities for young people to develop themselves, and believe firmly that young people are the future. Victor describes himself as a portrait painter and



Photo: Wilfredo Castano

New Visions

New Visions is the first collaborative mural created by disabled and community muralists in the nation. Five commissioned artists from Creativity Explored of San Francisco, the only full-time visual art center for disabled adults in the city, individually designed and painted their own ideas and concepts in the mural. The artists are: Cam Quach, Eddie Hippley, Vincent Jackson, Melody Lima, and Michael Loggins. The project was directed by Susan Greene with Jane Norling and Eduardo Pineda.

The mural offers a new sensitivity towards the disabled community which incorporates their creative approaches and educates the public about their contributions and abilities.

is especially interested in the social impact of his art. He believes in the "fresh air museums and art for everyone." He is from Shanghai, China, and after graduating from school there, studied for a brief time in Japan before coming to San Francisco to attend the Academy of Art. Other works of his can be found at the Harris Steak House and at the Glen Ellen Hotel.

The mural is 60 by 20 ft. and is painted on cement with Pictor acrylics. He was assisted in the painting by Peter Wong, another student at the Academy. The YMCA is located at 855 Sacramento St. and the mural was completed last November.

The artists from Creativity Explored, with assistance from muralist Eduardo Pineda painted their own designs on 4x8 foot panels. Susan Greene and Jane Norling then painted portraits of the five artists, which were incorporated into the overall design. The result is a vivid, colorfully expressive mural, representing a unique meeting of the muralist tradition, with its emphasis on art integrated into the life of the community and new approaches to unlocking the creativity of the disabled.

Funding was provided by the Mayor's Office of Community Development, the Zellerbach Family Fund, and the Columbia Foundation.

New Visions: 20th street and Folsom, San Francisco, 24' x 44', Politec paint on plywood panels.



Photo: Fuminori Sato

Chinese Playground Mural

This mural is a simple drama of contemporary and traditional symbols of play with two children designed and painted by Jim Dong.

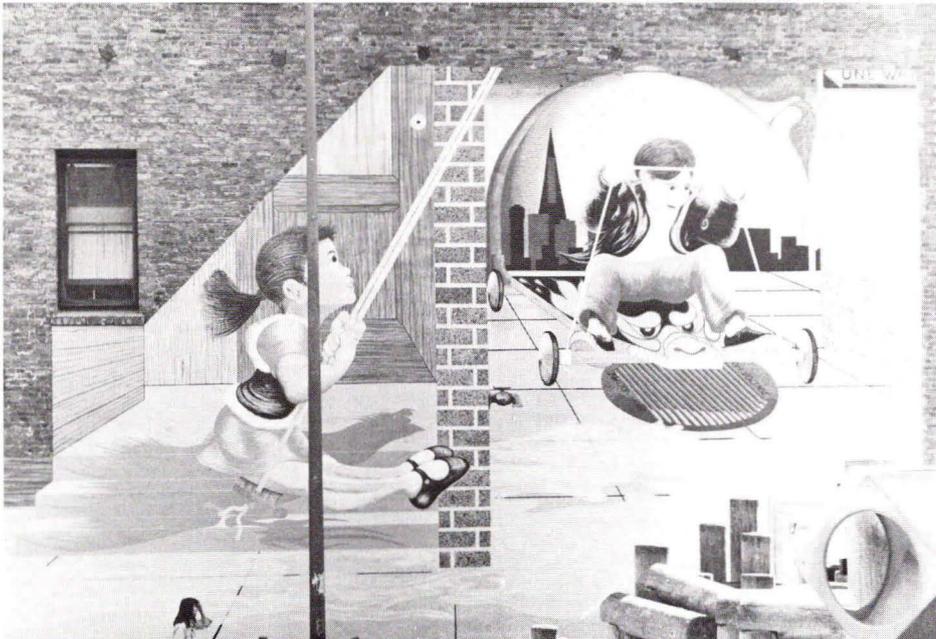
Jim had taken a photograph some twenty years ago of a boy in a homemade go-cart storming down Sacramento Street which gave him the idea to capture the same energy and spirit appropriate for a playground mural.

The same basic design of the presently finished mural was submitted fifteen years ago but rejected by the Church Board of Directors as being inappropriate. The design was resubmitted two years ago and was approved. The original objection was that the boy looked too defiant, but Jim wanted to depict the

boy's youthful defiance not as a destructive one.

Visually, the boy is steering his go-cart through a turbulent course where he must make decisive judgements not always within the flow of his surroundings. Only in this way can he experience alternative avenues and be able to see that he can create changes. In juxtaposition to the boy is a girl swinging as high and free as she can in front of a seemingly dingy building. She is swinging out of the darkness and into the light and is casting a shadow of the Phoenix.

The mural is 45 by 30 ft. and is painted with Politec and Liquitex colors. It is located on the wall of the Baptist Church facing the playground on Sacramento St. between Stockton and Waverly Sts.



Santana Mural

The mural is located at the corner of 23rd and So. Van Ness. It is 30 by 95 ft. and was painted by Michael Rios and Carlos Gonzalez, with special assistance from Johnny Mayorga.

The art work is a tribute to Carlos Santana for his music and his inspiration throughout the years. Carlos Santana grew up in the Mission District community, and is a role model for aspiring young artists.



photos by Jim Prigoff

Teotihuacan Mural Project

The Mexican Museum
Fort Mason Building D.
San Francisco, Calif.

The goal of this project was to do a portable fresco mural that was authentic and would promote the importance of fresco painting in our culture. Fresco mural painting is one of the oldest techniques of wall decoration. Diego Rivera's method was closest to the Renaissance painters such as Michelangelo. The term "fresco" refers to a process of painting on a wet, freshly prepared lime-plaster wall with pigments ground in water.

Part of the uniqueness of the project was exposing the general public to fresco painting by doing the actual fresco on site, giving a better understanding of the technique, and of the development of Chicano art. The finished work dominates the entrance hall of the museum.

The fresco mural project was organized by the Mexican Museum in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts of San Francisco, designed to commemorate the M.H. De Young Museum's recent acquisition and restoration of mural fragments from the ancient Teotihuacan archeological site in Mexico. The fresco mural was funded by Citicorp of San Francisco.

The team was enhanced by the important experience of Stephen Dimitroff, who served as the First Plasterer-Fresco Technician. Mr. Dimitroff worked with Diego Rivera on several of the murals the great Mexican artist painted in the United States.

Incorporated into the design of the mural are symbols important to the culture of Teotihuacan. Two serpents circle the border—one has the head of a snake, and the other a head of a rabbit. The two center figures are a jaguar with feather ornaments taken from a mural at Teotihuacan, and the other is a warrior bird—c.a., 600 b.c. Above these figures is the sun, which symbolizes universal life and regeneration. In the center of the sun is the hands motif embracing living hearts. The lower center symbol is a hand grasping a bolt of lightning, linking the ancient Teotihuacan culture to our present day culture. Below the hand is the Chinese symbol of yin and yang, representing black and white, male and female. Behind the hand is an outline of a missile symbolizing the threat of destruction of the human race.

Fresco Painter: Jesus Chuy Campusano
Fresco Technician, 1st Plasterer: Stephen Dimitroff

Contractors: Christopher Meek, John Melanson

Plasterers: Dante Regolia and Vernon Altamirano

Technical Assistant: Manuel Espana

Project Coordinator: Sheila Sherry

Minneapolis

PAINTING THE TOWN

Contemporary muralists brighten the urban environment.

Fifty thousand cars pass the new outdoor mural at Lambert Landing on St. Paul's Warner Road every day. Designed by Seitu Jones and commissioned by the city of St. Paul, the 247-foot-long wood relief needed to be big and easy to understand by an audience that would have only a few seconds to see it. The mural, which faces the Mississippi River, suggests the river's flow between Pike and Navy islands. The water is symbolized by timbers that once stood in the river as part of St. Paul's now-demolished High Bridge. Jones's mural, along with several others completed this year, provides ample evidence that the Twin Cities mural movement is alive and well.

The contemporary mural movement came to Minnesota in the late 1960s. In other American cities outdoor walls suddenly had become giant canvases reflecting the decade's social problems and concerns. Walls painted with images of leaders and heroes carried messages of respect and dignity to the disenfranchised. Black consciousness was raised with the faces of Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, H. Rapp Brown and Nat Turner painted on the Wall of Respect in Chicago and with images from the African past painted on the Wall of Dignity in Detroit. Other painted walls—like those sponsored by New York's City Walls mural program and Cincinnati's Urban Walls mural project—brightened the urban environment with ribbons of color and bold, supergraphic shapes.

Minnesota's first outdoor contemporary murals stressed neither ethnic heritage nor abstract pattern. They were instead decorative, occasionally humorous, figural compositions painted on houses and businesses in Minneapolis's principal redevelopment area, Cedar-Riverside. Members of a group called the White Sneaker were hired by developers in 1969 and 1970 to "spruce up the neighborhood and give an identity to a new town in town," says a Cedar-Riverside Associates staff member. Although many murals done by this group have disappeared, a faded cowboy above Dania Hall and a somewhat brighter group of dancing musicians on Evenstar bookstore on Cedar still can be seen. One of the White Sneaker murals, in the 1900 block of 5th St. SE., has recently been repainted so

that its large duelers may confront each other with ice-cream cones for years to come.

Most of the earliest of Minnesota's murals, including those in Cedar-Riverside, were privately sponsored. Private sponsorship of murals for local businesses sometimes involved artist-painters like the White Sneaker and sometimes a separation of design and execution. Two of the best-known Minneapolis murals, those on the Valspar Corp. and the Schmitt Music Co. buildings, were designed by artists and painted by painting contractors. The music notes of Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit" on Schmitt Music at 88 S. 10th St. were the concept of Jill Rivard. Peter Busa, a professor of studio art at the University of Minnesota, designed the Valspar murals at 1101 S. 3rd St. in two phases. The first, "Demolition" (1973), was meant to echo the painted lines and patterns left when buildings are demolished. Later, Busa designed a second mural for nearby Valspar buildings. Called "Sport" (1982), its theme relates to the Metrodome, which the Valspar buildings face.

By the 1970s the funding of jobs through the Comprehensive Education and Training Act (CETA) offered a new way to support a growing local interest in murals. Through CETA funds, the Minneapolis Mural Project and COMPAS (Community Programs in the Arts) in St. Paul developed neighborhood programs that hired muralists. Designs for murals were submitted to neighborhood groups for approval, and neighborhood residents often helped in the painting.

To the people who would see the mural every day, subject matter was usually more important than style. Denise Mayotte, who worked with Seitu Jones on a mural for St. Paul's Aldine Park, mentioned that some area residents were concerned that the mural might be "psychedelic or in some other way shocking." When Mayotte and Jones showed them the design with its peaceful expanse of sky, clouds and a bright red cardinal, they agreed that it was perfect for the park's retaining wall. Neighborhood children Jason York, Heather and Matt McGuire, L.J. Workel and Sam Collins were soon at work on the 256 feet of blue sky that would cover the concrete-block wall. The Aldine Park mural is one

of more than 70 indoor and outdoor murals sponsored by COMPAS in St. Paul at sites ranging from schools to recreation centers, grocery stores, restaurants and banks.

In Minneapolis, the Center for Community Action (CCA) has incorporated wall murals into its programs of summer jobs for young people. Since 1971 the CCA has worked with neighborhood groups in both cities to provide summer employment for teenagers in projects that benefit their communities. CCA staff member Delroy Calhoun says the neighborhood selects the wall and arranges for its use as a mural. The CCA then hires a supervisor to design a mural, which the sponsoring organization must approve. The supervisor and a staff of CCA young people paint the mural.

Acting as a supervisor, Calhoun says, requires a special kind of artist who enjoys working with kids and can deal with the instant art criticism any outdoor project is likely to receive. Some of CCA's supervisors have been professional artists like Ta-Coumba Aiken and Seitu Jones, who both have worked in numerous participatory art projects. Others have been students from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. MCAD students Vince Carr, Becky Thorson and Debra Neuenchwander served as supervisors in the Whittier neighborhood of Minneapolis where the first CCA murals were completed. The corner of 26th Street and Nicollet Avenue South, in Whittier, continues to be one of the best corners for viewing murals, with eight close by.

Unlike the well-known federal programs of the 1930s, analyzed by University of Minnesota art historian Karal Ann Marling in her book *Wall to Wall America*, contemporary murals seldom are found in post offices or other federal buildings. Federal money has, in fact, seldom been requested directly for local mural programs, although funds from the National Endowment for the Arts did go to mural programs in such cities as Boston and New York. In Minnesota, two exterior murals—one at the Sabathani Afro-American Center painted by Albert Winton in 1972 and a wall relief by George Morrison for the Urban Native American Center in 1975—were funded by NEA matching grants. Several indoor murals also were funded by the NEA at the Hennepin County Medical Center by artists Andrew Leicester, George Morrison and Jerry Rudquist in 1976. The Morrison wood relief is based on a Chippewa feather pattern, and the Hennepin County Medical Center murals are similarly abstract and geometric.

Another difference between the murals of the 1930s and today's is the background

of the muralists themselves. Minnesota's murals have been painted by local artists rather than by artists awarded and assigned to the projects by federal decision. Public mural art in Minnesota has thus tended to be homegrown. Job programs, of course, were designed to help local people earn and learn, so muralists who originally gained experience through the CETA program have formed the nucleus of a continuing mural movement.

Subject and style in local murals also vary. Abstractions, decorative patterns and super-realist treatment all now co-exist on brick, concrete block and wooden walls.

Some neighborhood groups wanted murals that incorporate local symbols or landmarks. The giant faucets on the wall of the Snyder Drug Store at 1804 Nicollet Av. were meant to suggest the Stevens Square neighborhood's former town pump, muralist Marilyn Lindstrom says. The Metrodome appears amid other neighborhood buildings in the Elliot Park mural at Park Avenue and South 9th Street, completed in the summer of 1985.

Other murals are even more site specific. Roger Nelson painted musicians on the rear wall of the Rainbow Gallery in Cedar-Riverside in an extension of the action that could be imagined as taking place inside. Students reading, bottles and cans are incorporated in the mural at the Minneapolis Education and Recycling Center, emphasizing the center's dual functions as a recycling business and an alternative high school.

The Camden Theater mural in north Minneapolis stresses that neighborhood's former role as a logging center on the Mississippi. A mural on the Emergency Food Shelf building on South Robert Street in St. Paul is an agricultural allegory.

Murals on St. Paul's west side, an early center of COMPAS mural activity, have used a number of symbols from that community's Chicano

heritage. The Casa del Pueblo restaurant is guarded by Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor, shown dressed as an eagle knight. Nearby, on the wall of Wise Penny East (formerly the Creative Wheel Craft Shop), a pair of Indian women weave on backstrap looms within a framework of Mayan glyphs. Other west-St. Paul murals feature gods from Aztec codices, Mexican leaders such as Emiliano Zapata, Benito Juarez and Pancho Villa, as well as the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. The virgin appears on many Chicano murals across the United States in such cities as Tucson, San Diego, Santa Fe and San Francisco. In west St. Paul, she is painted as she appeared in the vision of Juan Diego (on the wall of Joseph's Superette), and in the manner in which she often is painted on small tin devotional images or retablos (on the wall of Hawkeye Liquors).

Although the history of the mural movement is short, there already have been casualties and losses among Minnesota's murals. Strong sunlight, temperature changes and leaking walls hasten the fading and peeling of paint. In less than 10 years two murals have come and gone from the same wall behind the Quality Inn Motel in the Seven Corners area of St. Paul. One of Hollis McDonald's murals was destroyed when the Butler Drug Store at Nicollet and 26th Street burned in Minneapolis. Changes in building ownership may mean less enthusiasm for the preservation of an existing mural. The owner of the University Avenue building with an Art Nouveau-style "Blue Ivy" mural, Irv Ulrich, says, "The roof is leaking and the mural has nothing to do with the building or the businesses inside."

In the mid-1980s mural production may have diminished, but it is far from dormant. Locally, both CCA and COMPAS plan to complete new murals. Muralists continue to work on private commissions for new projects as well as to refurbish older murals, such as the K-Mart "Berlin Wall" at 28th Street and Nicollet

Avenue in Minneapolis, repainted last June by Marilyn Lindstrom and Ta-Coumba Aiken. In Austin, Minn., a mural was painted for Solidarity Week activities relating to the Hormel meat-packers' strike, adding a rare political subject to the list of outdoor wall art in Minnesota.

Painting an outdoor mural obviously involves problems seldom faced by the artist who works indoors. Minnesota's capricious weather makes only the summer a reliable time for mural painting. The height of the wall chosen may make scaffolding, ladders or aerial lifts necessary. One muralist, Boston's "Sidewalk Sam," painted the face of an early Minneapolis developer on the side of the building at 29 Main St. while perched in the cab of a cherry-picker crane. Muralists soon learn what paints to use for any type of surface. The most important factor, however, is the preparation of the wall itself. "It must be cleaned and carefully primed," says Lindstrom, who also used a special mural paint from California for some of her projects. A leaking roof made the paint fall off the Cookhouse Recording Studios wall, 2541 Nicollet Ave. S., Minneapolis. The CCA crew at work on that mural repaired and repainted parts of their just-completed work.

Although Minnesota's murals may not be as numerous or as well documented as those in some cities, anyone interested in this art form has much to see. A tour of inner-city Minneapolis and St. Paul can be a fruitful treasure hunt. As a caption on a mural in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C., says (in both Spanish and English), "A people without murals is a demuralized people." Luckily, in the Twin Cities that's not the case.

By Moira Harris. *Her Museum of the Streets: Minnesota's Contemporary Outdoor Murals* is due out in December from Pogo Press.



Camden Historical Logging Mural, Marilyn Lindstrom and Susan McDonald, Camden Theater, Minneapolis, 1980.

photo Leo Harris

A History of Colorado Murals, Part I

The first of two articles on the murals of Colorado, this article will discuss the murals painted at the turn of the century to the mid-1930s when architectural plans included wall paintings as a significant element of the decorative arts. The second article will explore the murals painted during the years (late 30s and the early 40s) when the federal government funded "art for the millions," and expressions of the contemporary mural movement as exemplified by the Chicano artists of Colorado.

The United States Mint building (Cherokee and Colfax) is a huge structure modeled after an Italian Renaissance palace. Consistent with its architectural style, in the lobby of its main entrance, there are three murals filled with allegorical images of the concepts of commerce, mining and manufacturing. An idyllic and unreal picture is presented about the economic basis of the state's wealth. Rather than depicting the tragic and brutal reality of the accumulation of these riches, it has been transformed and rationalized into a non-threatening universalized visual statement.

Designed by Edwin H. Blasfield and painted by Vincent Adirente in 1909, these are some of the earliest murals in the City of Denver. Others appear in buildings that have been designed as Greek or Roman temples and are products of the period which some art historians refer to as the American Renaissance (1876-1917).

This was a period of immense industrial growth and expansion for North American capitalism which was no less reflected in Colorado. The concept of "robber barons" was the term that large segments of the population used in referring to the financiers of the time. As noted in the catalog for the 1980 exhibition, "Colorado and the American Renaissance:"

Wealth from Colorado, the result of the exploitation of the state's minerals and other natural resources, substantially fueled the nation's eastern economy. The American Renaissance years marked the taming of the last frontier and the consolidation of the nation, and, in its cultural explosion, Colorado captured in microcosmic form the spirit that possessed the great established cities.¹

The art and architecture of the period reflected the consciousness of the financial elite of the era. They identified with the merchant princes of Renaissance Italy, and this search for a mythic and classical ideal (or rationalization) appeared in the banks, post offices, civic

buildings and libraries that were built during these years. In this period murals were an important architectural element for the ornamentation of walls.

Upon entering the lobby of the United States Mint one is confronted by three wall paintings in the shape of lunettes—an architectural reference to a crescent-shaped space usually found over doors or windows. Pictured are men and women against a mythical setting combined with landscape of Colorado. The women are garbed in classical robes and, generally, the men are shown in the clothes of the day.

The lunette to the right upon entering the building is titled "Commerce." Mercury, the central figure, presides over two women. To his left is commerce. With one hand she holds a globe and with the other she grips a bag of gold, presumably representing the commercial world. She appears to be transacting business with the woman to the right of Mercury. Pictured as agriculture, she is surrounded by wheat, corn and other agricultural products.

The lunette over the door "Mining" reveals a successful miner in prospecting clothes. To his left is the figure of prosperity holding aloft the torch of knowledge. Her left hand rests on a gold bullion with the horn of plenty at her feet. On the right side of the panel is the figure of equality holding the scales on which gold ore is being weighed.

The lunette to the left is titled "Manufacturing." Personified as modern manufac-

turing is a young woman resting her hand on a hammer and looking at the standing figure of courage. Courage points to modern manufacturing saying, "You deserve credit for your great progress."² To her right is ancient manufacturing.

The imposing downtown Post Office (19th and Stout), built as a Greek temple in white marble, is another example of the desire for identification with the classical past. It was begun in 1909 and completed in 1915. The four murals in this building were painted by a Mr. H. T. Schladermundt.

The 19th Street entrance contains the largest mural titled "Mining." It is a picture within a picture since the outer part of the mural is made to look like a Roman proscenium or archway with statues on each side holding up the arch overhead. Painted in this area is the Colorado shield containing the words "Nil Sine Numine" (nothing without divine approval), and a pair of crossed mining tools—a pick-axe and a hammer. This is a reference to the historical tradition of mining in the Western United States. The inner painting shows two shirtless miners in the foreground digging in the rocks. A pack mule stands nearby, and in the background the viewer gets a glimpse of the Rocky Mountains.

There are two allegorical lunette-style murals on the 18th Street entrance of the Post Office. These murals have elaborate gold-leaved borders both of which contain an image of a woman reclining against a chaise lounge. The one with the



Main Post Office, lunette at 18th st. Photo: J. Tanguma.

words "United States Postal Service" has Cupid with his bows and arrows handing a sealed envelope to perhaps, the goddess Venus. The second lunette proclaims "Labor is the Great Producer of Wealth." A cherub with a tool (either a hammer or axe) is holding up a lamp to the goddess-like figure. Beside her is a box of jewels. While the wealth has been pictured, the image of labor is nowhere to be seen.

The use of murals as an architectural element continued through the 1920s and 1930s, however both the architecture and the subject matter of murals changed. The works of Allen Tupper True (1881-1955), Denver muralist, focused on the landscape and people of the Rocky Mountain region. Pioneers, trappers, Indians and laborers are posed against the plains and mountains of this area. Many of his murals were destroyed when buildings were razed to make way for newer structures. Nevertheless, quite a few of them are still to be found in buildings throughout the City of Denver. His works can be seen at the Denver Public Library, the Capitol, the City and County Buildings the Brown Palace Hotel, the old Telephone Building and the Colorado National Bank.

Probably True's best work is "Indian Memories" in the Colorado National Bank (17th and Champa) completed early in his career in 1923. True attempted to recreate in 14 panels the cycle of life of the Plains Indians. True said, "They essay to recall the days before the Indian's contact with the white race—days when he roamed the beautiful untouched reaches of our West in deep but unconscious sympathy with the loveliness of primeval Nature—days when his dignity and cruelty, his joy in living, stoic endurance and primitive integrity—made the cycle of his life an epic which has never been properly sensed or understood by the White race."³ While these murals may be somewhat idealized, they create a sense of dignity, beauty, and loss for a way of life of the Native Americans that was destroyed by his contact with Western European civilization.

One of the most talented muralists of this period of decorative murals was Louise Emerson Ronnebeck (1900-1980). A native of Philadelphia, Ronnebeck had studied at the Arts Students League in New York City under Kenneth Hayes Miller.

Ronnebeck painted over a dozen murals in Colorado, including a number of murals for the Works Progress Administration, but unfortunately most of them have been destroyed or lost. Her only existing mural (that I am aware of at this time) is "Adoration of the Magi" (1938) at the Holy Redeemer Church (26th and Williams). There are two other works but

they are a ghost of their former selves. Two fresco panels of student athletes on the facade of Morey Junior High (840 E. 14th), painted in 1934, were all but ruined when a class of art students from the school attempted a restoration. All that remains of three fresco panels, titled "The Family" (1940), on the exterior of the Robert Speer Memorial Hospital (Bannock between 6th and 8th Streets) is the original charcoal sketch and a few dabs of color at the bottom of the painting. Even in these preparatory drawings Ronnebeck's women are monumental while her children are not sentimentalized. Her draftsmanship is very reminiscent of the famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera.

Most distressing of all were the destruction of two of her finest murals. Apparently no attempt was made to save these works when the buildings in which they were painted were razed. One was "Peoples of the World" (1942) at the USO Men's Service Club, and the other, in the Albany Hotel (1948), was a curved wall mural depicting the tourist attractions of the State of Colorado from Mesa Verde National Park in the southwest to Grand Lake in the high mountains.



Main Post Office, 19th St. entrance. Photo: J. Tanguma.

The fate of three Vance Kirkland murals "Greek Garden," "Egyptian Garden" and "Sports" painted in an art deco style has a happier ending. The late Kirkland was commissioned to paint 5 murals at Neusteters, a well-known department store that was closed down in 1986, on the theme of the pursuit of beauty in earlier cultures. Kirkland painted these works while teaching at the University of Colorado/Denver extension center in 1936-37 prior to the time he achieved fame as an abstract painter. Thanks to the efforts of Hugh Grant, Kirkland's estate executor, and the Rocky Mountain Regional Conservation Center, the murals (painted on canvas) were removed from the walls of the building a few weeks before the interior was demolished. The two garden murals will be placed in the Denver Art Museum, while the disposition of the third mural has not yet been determined.

Probably the last important use of wall paintings integrated into an architectural setting took place in Colorado Springs.

The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center board approved the plans of Brazilian born architect, John Gaw Meem, for a large, monolithic concrete structure, an adaptation of pueblo style architecture in 1934. Included in the design, in several key locations, was space for art.

The predominant piece, the entrance frescoes were awarded to Boardman Robinson (the fine arts center's first art school director). In five panels the figures symbolizing the arts were depicted: sculpture, drama, dance, music and painting. However, instead of idealized classical muses of earlier Colorado buildings, Robinson represented them in contemporary young people. Completed in 1936, they were refurbished in 1985 by muralist Eric J. Bransby, a former student of Robinson.

Frank Mechau, another faculty member, was selected to paint a long narrow panel over the gallery windows facing the garden. Mechau's spirited galloping horses, while a typical western subject, recalls the classical friezes of the Parthenon.

Three Taos artists, Andrew Dasburg, Kenneth Adams and Ward Lockwood, painted four murals in the theater lounge. In a flat art deco style a variety of theatrical figures and scenes appear over the four doorways of the lounge.

The elaborate Renaissance and baroque revivals of the early 20th century began to be replaced by the International Bauhaus style of architecture. New uses of iron, metal and glass, and the introduction of concrete and masonry resulted in changed concepts of the organization of space for buildings. Traditional use of walls was altered and in many cases altogether eliminated. Murals as a decorative element almost ceased to exist in architectural plans.

While mainstream architecture eliminated murals, it did not mean that muralism ceased to exist. Mural painting was sponsored by the federal government during the depression years as a means of providing work for unemployed artists. Murals appeared in post offices and a range of public buildings from schools, hospitals and libraries.

The second important period of mural painting in this century began during the Civil Rights movement during the 1960s and continues to this day. With its reemergence on the walls of city buildings, its character changed from being merely a decorative art form to a tool for social criticism of contemporary society.

It has become a vehicle for community organization and education and a means of expressing the angers, frustrations, and hopes of the dispossessed of society.

Mary Motian-Meadows
April 20, 1987

MIXED MEDIA

Bay Area Artists Complete Sculpture Against U.S. Involvement in Central America

Vandals destroy Central America art project

When 50 Bay Area artists erected six huge sculptures in the Emeryville mudflats to dramatize for commuters the war their tax dollars are financing in Central America, they didn't expect an entirely friendly reception. "One of the proofs that it's going to have an effect is that it won't last a week," artist Doug Minkler said April 5th, the afternoon the three-month project was completed.

Minkler's projection turned out to be optimistic. By dawn on April 6th, virtually all of the sculptures already had been demolished.

No one has claimed responsibility for the vandalism, but several artists involved in the project speculate that the perpetrators were linked to the military.

According to Scott Braley, one of the mudflat artists, the project aimed to underscore the Bay Area's role in determining U.S. military policy in Central America. The Bay Area is home not only to the Concord Naval Weapons Station and the Presidio Army Base, which coordinates the National Guard training exercises in Honduras, Braley told the Bay Guardian; the region is also a base for extensive illegal arms activity, linked to figures like Palo Alto resident Richard Secord and companies like the formerly CIA-owned Southern Air Transport.

The artists sought to show their opposition to such activity with works like a huge plywood naval ship with a slogan reading "U.S.S. Misery: Resist the War in Central America." Other sculptures in the project included a farmer carrying a gun on her back, a woman with five raised fists, a military helicopter and dozens of crosses, many of them signed by Salvadorans who listed the names of friends and relatives killed in the war.

Before the destruction, artist Suzanne McMillan, referring to military helicopters that fly over the Bay, commented that "The helicopters we see out here can be carrying weapons." She told the Bay Guardian she would "like to make people aware of that."

But some of the approximately 248,000 freeway travelers who pass by the site each day apparently didn't appreciate the reminder. The morning after the exhibit's opening, the wood helicopter was in splinters, a post the size of a telephone pole had been sawn down and smashed crosses littered the ground. "It was like walking through a bombed village," McMillan said.

Since the Oakland police, the Emeryville police and the state Department of Transportation all maintain the mudflats lie outside their jurisdiction, it is unlikely the vandals will be apprehended. "Artwork like that, it may not be of value, so it may not be a chargeable incident," explained Lieutenant Philip Manhan of

the Emeryville Police Department. The artists involved in the project say they do not plan to file charges.

No feelings, pro or con

Before the April 5th opening, a number of artists speculated that the Army would level the exhibit. As Minkler said at the opening reception, "The military bases are only miles away, and the military pays large amounts of money to keep relations between the community and the military on a smooth level. . . . My belief is they'll just send some people over to tear it down."

However, the Concord Naval Weapons Station, which had been singled out by one sculpture that consisted of an arrow pointing to "Concord Weapons Station" and another arrow pointing to "Central America," denied knowledge of the incident. "We don't have any feelings pro or con on the display," said Dan Tikalsky, the station's public affairs officer. "If somebody destroyed something that belonged to somebody else, we take a very dim view of that."

One sign that the destruction was politically motivated is that the vandals targeted works with messages attached to them, while ignoring those obviously not related to the project, like driftwood dinosaurs built by previous visitors. "The dinosaurs have lived there happily for the last two years," said Braley. "Our stuff came down within eight hours."

The artists have already rebuilt some of the sculptures, and added a sign saying "No Tax Dollars for Central America War" to one of the figures. But they say it's unlikely they'll rebuild the area as extensively as they did before the April 5th opening. "This sort of thing is a transient form," said Braley. "We know that. It's much easier to destroy than it is to put up, so you put it up and get what use out of it you can for the period it's up."

But Braley added that the vandalism showed how vehemently some Americans still oppose efforts to bring the U.S. role in Central America under public scrutiny. "There's not really either freedom of speech or freedom of public art when it comes to statements that are seen as being against the government," he said.

Marian Rust
S.F. Bay Guardian, April 15, 1987

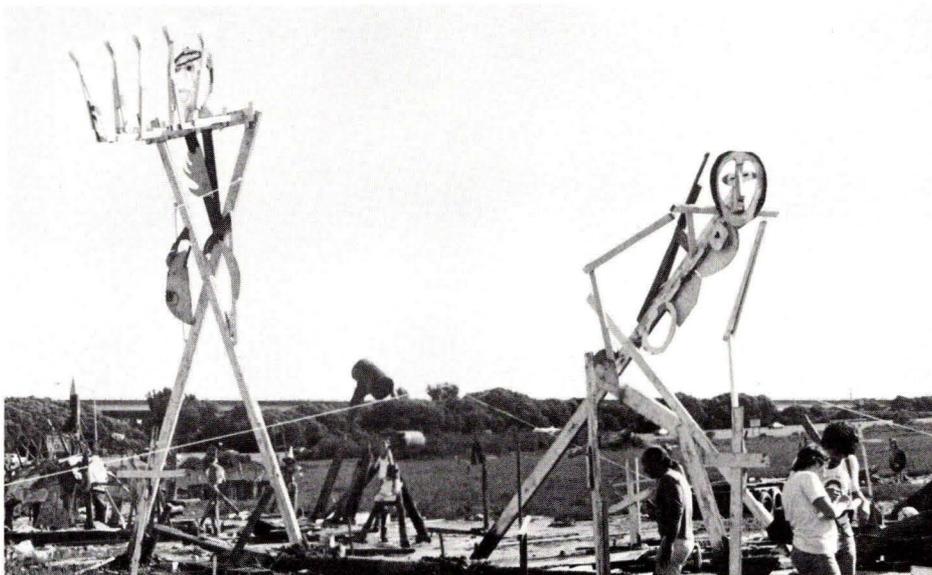
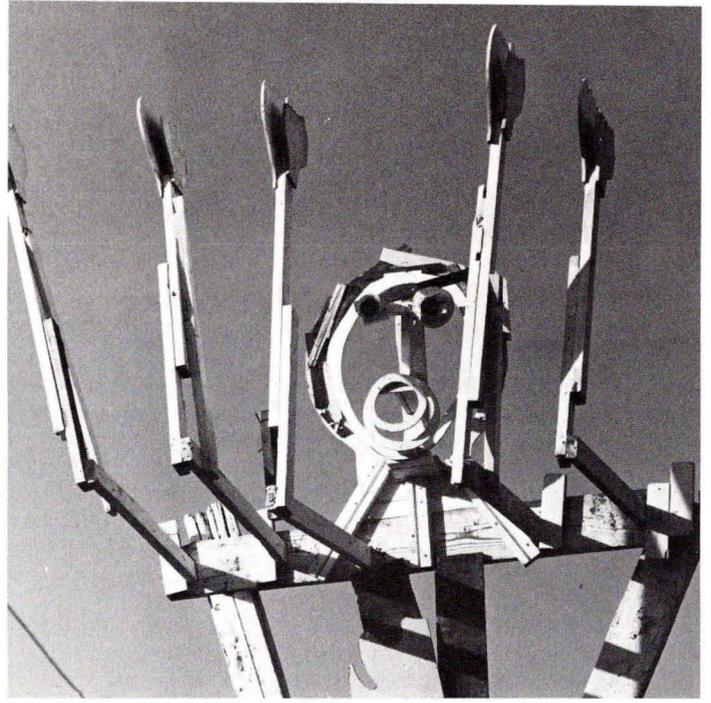


Photo by Tim Drescher



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