

# COMMUNITY MURALS

SUMMER 1986  
Volume 11, Number 2

AN INTERNATIONAL VISUAL ARTS MAGAZINE



# EDITORIAL

## Art as Alternative

In view of the distorted press coverage of the attacks on Libya and aid to Contras recently, it should be clear to us all that there is a war going on for people's minds. A basic weapon used by Reagan is the manipulation of truth, and one result is that people feel powerless. We are bombarded by information, overwhelmed by facts, all of which only make it harder for us to think about our world accurately. Conscious people have to ask, "How can we reach people with the truth?" CMM believes that participatory cultural expression can help us think more clearly about our world.

Community visual artists can provide one alternative to the pervasive negative images of television, advertising, billboards, "news" papers and magazines. A strong poster can, even if

only subconsciously, tell a person that there *is* another way to see the world



than that of the mass media. A strong visual image may also educate by telling a person that he/she knows something new, something reliable, positive, im-

portant. Also in their process of composition and execution alternative methods of working are learned. We *must* know that "the way things are" is not eternal, that they are made by people and can be changed by us if we want to badly enough.

Can't we do better than "the way things are?" Can't we work cooperatively to develop ways of working where each of our strengths contributes to the whole and our weaknesses are developed into strengths? We believe that community visual artists offer a possible model for potential collective work that develops people, but not at each others' expense.

If we believe that people can make important changes in their lives, in "the way things are," then it is possible to oppose the viciousness of Reagan's warmongering (and the system that supports it) with a positive outlook.

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Front cover: *Three Elements to Decode the Day*, by Tonocadima, Chile 1978

*Editorial Note.* With this issue, CMM begins a new regular section on the materials used by community visual artists. We are extremely pleased that Bill Meadows, a professional paint chemist for over thirty years will write a column on paints and will also answer artists' questions. Just send questions to CMM and we'll see that Bill gets them.

### Editorial Group

Juana Alicia  
Miranda Bergman  
Kathie Cinnater  
Lincoln Cushing  
Jim Dong  
Tim Drescher



Nancy Hom  
Yolanda Lopez  
Jane Norling  
Odilia Rodriguez  
Arch Williams

## Deadlines:

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

Fall 1986 by Thursday, July 24, 1986  
Winter 1987 by Thursday, October 2, 1986  
Spring 1987 by Thursday, January 22, 1987  
Summer, 1987 by Thursday, July 23, 1987

We must have possession of any materials to be included by these dates. Please send us information, with black and white glossy photos (and slides, if possible) about projects in your part of the world.

*Correction:* The top photograph on p. 8 of the last issue, V.11, #1, was taken by Shannon Garcia. *La Voz*, which originally printed the article, is published in Denver, Colorado.

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# RESOURCES

## The Indian Reader

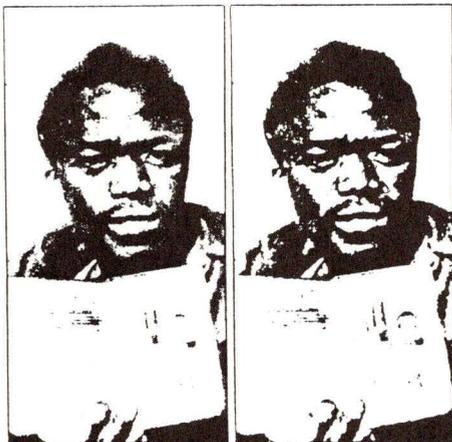
806 East Brooks Road  
 Memphis, TN 38116  
 Quarterly, free/by donation

A new Native American magazine covering a wide range of topics. The premiere issue includes a considerable amount of material on contemporary art, including a lengthy review of the "We Are the Seventh Generation" exhibit in Tennessee.

## Rosenberg Era Art Project

1 Brickyard Hollow  
 Montague Center, MA 01351  
 (413) 367-2671

The R.E.A.P. is a cultural documentation archive focusing on artwork which addresses, both directly and indirectly, the politically charged climate surrounding the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The result will be an exhibit with an annotated catalog. More than 50 works are included so far; if you know of any appropriate art, please contact the Project.



## Mural Painting Course

Centro Cultural El Nigromante  
 Doctor Hernandez Macias #75  
 San Miguel de Allende,  
 Guanajuato  
 C.P. 37700 Mexico

Learn with the masters. This workshop lasts from July 1 through August 31, 1986 and costs \$200.00. Application deadline is June 26.

## Children to Children Aid Campaign

c/o Friends of AMES  
 P.O. Box 22292  
 Seattle, WA 98122

The Campaign is a solidarity project with childcare centers in El Salvador and Nicaragua. They are currently raising funds with a series of notecards.

# BOYCOTT CHILEAN GOODS



Nothing from Pinochet  
 Nothing for Pinochet



Support the Struggle for  
 Democracy in Chile



Peaches, Plums & Nectarines ..... Dec.-March  
 Grapes ..... Jan.-May  
 Melons ..... Jan.-April  
 Apples ..... Feb.-May  
 Wine ..... All Year



CHILE BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN  
 P.O. Box 3620, Berkeley, CA 94703

Lincoln Cushing graphic design © 1985

## Images from South Africa

c/o Stephen Perkins  
 135 Cole St.  
 San Francisco, CA 94117  
 (415) 668-9065, 626-7850

An internationalist art show on Apartheid and the struggle against it. The show currently consists of over 300 mixed media works from 28 countries and is looking for places to go. Contact Images for more information.

*"Everyone has the right to  
 freely participate in the  
 cultural life of the com-  
 munity."*

— **Universal Declaration  
 of Human Rights adopted  
 by the United Nations in  
 1948**

## Subscriptions

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*Community Murals Magazine*  
 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.

# MATERIAL AID

## Paint Fundamentals

### A. Basic Definition and Structure

1. What is paint? In general a paint may be defined as a liquid material which can be applied by various techniques to a surface. Its function is both *aesthetic*, to provide color to a bare stark surface and *practical*, to protect the surface from deterioration from the attacks of the environment.

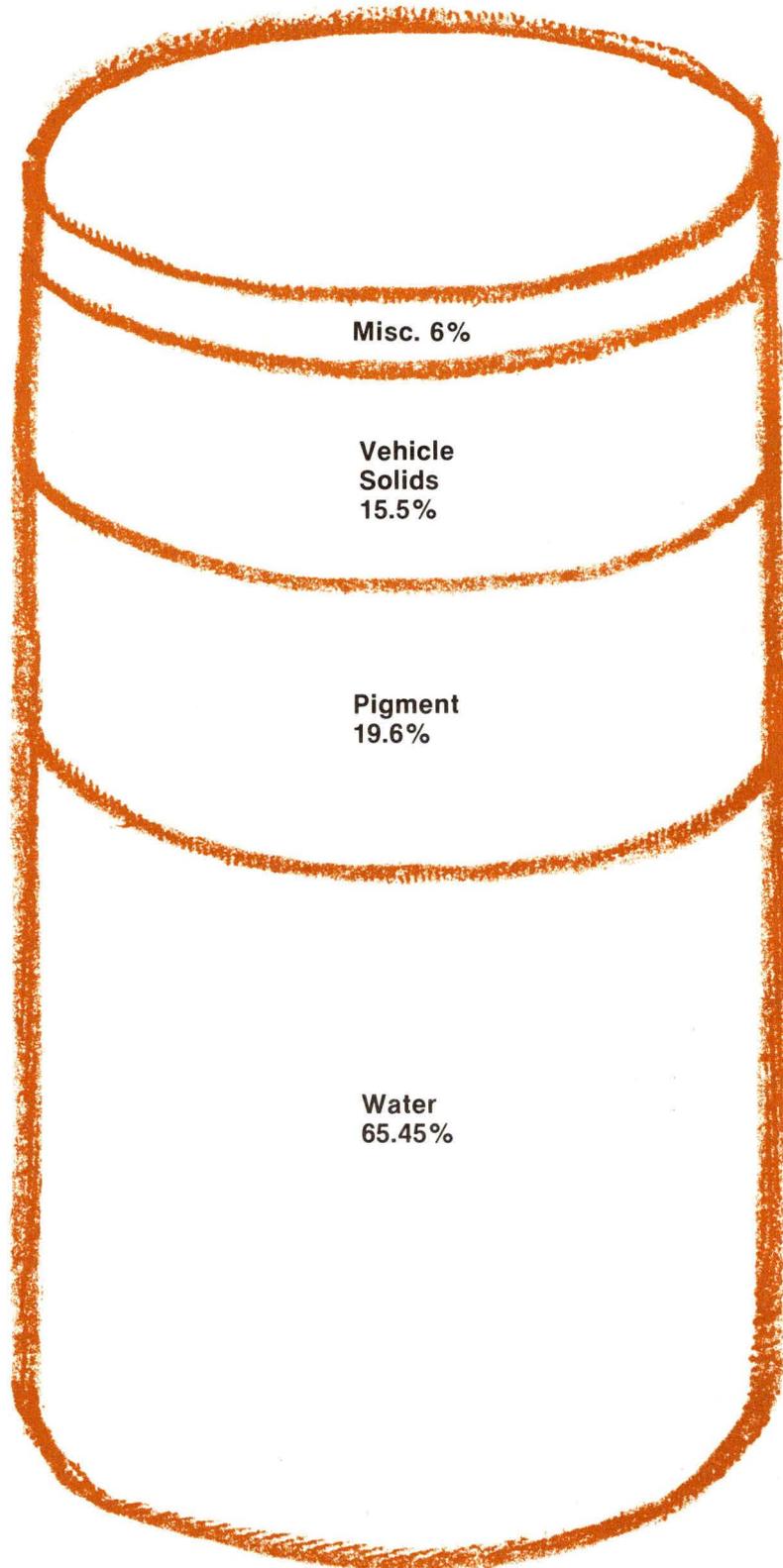
2. The protection paint film offers is extraordinary when we consider the thickness of average films. For example, two coats of latex base house paint add up to two mils or less. (A mil is 1/1000 of an inch.) When we see modern acrylic latex house paints holding up for up to ten years, 2/1000 of an inch of film is going a long way indeed. Even higher solid alkyd film rarely go beyond three mils. Since the paint film is so lean, the quality of the adhesive bond to the substrate is very important as is the general quality of the pigments and binders used. Preparation of the surface is obviously key also. So we must put together the right combination of carefully prepared surface, proper application, and a sound formulation suitable to job requirements to fulfill all the potential functions of a paint film.

3. One of the unpleasant aspects of the level of competition in the paint industry today is that formulators do not always, or even usually, use their skills to bring to the consumer the very best paint possible. In general, the level of paint performance, particularly in trade sales paints, has tended to decline. The point is, paint chemists in an era of inflation, ever higher raw material costs, and severe price competition must compromise quality. This is a sad but real fact and if the paint industry is to survive, there will have to be a turnaround.

### B. The Structure of Paints

1. All paints must contain at least three basic ingredients:

a. *Pigment* - The purpose of the pigment is to color or obscure the surface. This applies to pigments like titanium dioxide or color pigments which have hiding power.\* Extender pigments contribute no hiding power (except for high pigment loadings) but they aid in film reinforcement and improvement of specific properties of paints.



b. *Vehicle* - In simple terms, the vehicle is the "glue" which attaches the pigment to the surface to be painted. Vehicles wet out and disperse the pigment in a form which can be applied to a surface and contribute all the essential qualities of exterior weathering, serviceability, chemical and solvent resistance and drying or baking characteristics of the coating.

c. *Solvent* - The major purpose of the solvent is to reduce the coating to application viscosity so that it can be applied by brush, roller, spray or other means.

The quantity of the above three basic materials will naturally vary depending on the type of paint. As an example, we can show a typical composition of a latex flat wall paint in which the solvent, in this case water, the vehicle (vinyl acrylic polymer), and the pigments are shown in terms of percentages by volume in one gallon of paint.

These volumes will vary depending on the type of paint. Flat or low gloss paints will have greater amounts of pigment and lesser amounts of vehicle. On the other hand, semi-gloss or high-gloss enamels will have much greater volumes of vehicle to pigment.

In terms of cost, the most expensive ingredients in all paints are the pigmentary materials of which titanium dioxide contributes by far the greatest cost, and the vehicle portion of the paint is normally the second most expensive ingredient. Extender pigments contribute little to the overall cost of the paint but have an important contribution to make to the properties of the paint, in most cases.

### C. The Classification of Paints

What types of paint are used in today's marketplace? We can classify these materials in several ways. First, we can classify coatings according to the type of vehicle or film former, which is another term meaning the vehicle portion. It is necessary for the film former to cure or convert to a non-volatile film by either air dry or baking or chemical reaction. Therefore, three possible types are:

1. *Film cures by oxidation.* Such paints include alkyd flat paints, alkyd enamels, exterior oil house paints, etc.
2. *Film cures by chemical reaction.* Such paints include catalyzed epoxies or urethanes, exterior oil house paints.
3. *Film cures by solvent evaporation.* Such materials include lacquers and

emulsion paints or paints based on latex polymers which are water reducible.

Secondly, paints can be classified according to the method of application and the end use market. These include:

1. *Paints applied by brush or roller primarily.*

Normally such paints are called Trade Sales or Architectural paints, which are materials designed to be applied to rigid structures.

2. *Paints applied by spray or dip normally.* These are usually applied in a factory operation and are known in the trade as Industrial Finishes.

Thirdly, paints can be classified according to Function. This would include:

1. *Interior Paints.* These paints are intended for the protection or decoration of interior walls of structures.

2. *Exterior Paints.* These are designed for protection and decoration of external surface of structures. Automobiles

condition under which the coating will be used. Thus:

1. Industrial coatings are paints applied to a product in the process of manufacture such as on an assembly line operation. This requires a paint which can be baked with short time periods or which can dry rapidly. Automobile paints are an example.

2. Architectural paints are designed for use on existing structures, either systems for painting new wood or metal, or refinishing systems. Most of these are applied by the homeowner.

3. Maintenance coatings are specialized high performance materials which are designed for application to industrial plants, buildings, bridges, water tanks, etc. These coatings must combine maximum performance with low cost (in long range terms). These paints are usually applied by the painter professional.

Bill Meadows



could be included in this classification, also.

3. *Corrosion protection or chemical resistance.* Such paints include metal primers, acid and alkali resistant finishes.

Fourthly, paints could be classified into categories which deal with the

*NOTE:* These general definitions are offered here 1) to give a broad introduction, and 2) because muralists often use paints other than those made especially for artists.

\*Titanium dioxide is the primary ingredient making paints opaque (hides the surface). The lighter the color, the more titanium dioxide is necessary.

# Art of defiance: A visual feast from Latin American women

**Compañeras: Women, Art and Social Change in Latin America**

by Betty La Duke  
City Lights, 1985  
126 pp., \$12.50

by David Volpendesta,  
*The Guardian*, March 12, 1986

**B**etty La Duke's involvement with the crafts and plastic arts of Latin America began in 1956. That year, while working as a mural painter and teaching English, she lived among the Otomi Indians in Mexico's Valle de Mesquital. In the introduction to her book, she explains the impact that experience had on her artistic and social consciousness: "I was to gain there not only an intense awareness of the cycle of birth and death, but came to admire how the lives and work of the community's artists—the women weavers—were closely related to the environment within the context of a long cultural heritage."

Many years later—after a subsequent trip back to the area—she began to realize that her experiences there had planted an important seed. Paradoxically that seed was nourished when, attempting to develop a curriculum for her classes on Women and Art at Southern Oregon State College, she noticed there was a lack of literature and slides from the Caribbean, Central and South America. Because the art work from those regions was relevant and important to her students, she undertook a number of journeys to those parts of the world. The early fruits of those journeys were a series of articles for art and women's journals that eventually culminated in the beautiful harvest that is "Compañeras" (woman comrades).

Consisting of gorgeous color and black and white reproductions of paintings, sculptures and craft works—as well as profiles and interviews—"Compañeras" brings together the artwork of women from 14 countries. What's more, the vitality of both the artists and their work are enhanced by La Duke's down-to-earth feminist perspective and deep cultural understanding which allows us to see this art in a sociopolitical context. In this book, the work of artists from Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada stands next to selections from Chile, Peru and Haiti.

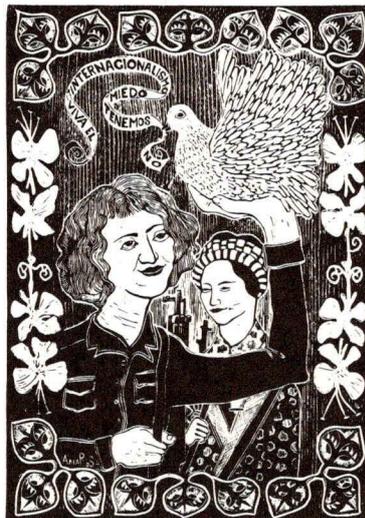
"The persistence of some art and craft traditions can be said to stem from positive acts of defiance against pressures to join mainstream society," the author says. The Molas (appliquéd blouses and weavings) of the Cuna Indians from the San Blas Islands off Panama and the huipiles (embroidered blouses) made and worn by Guatemalan Indian women are more than functional garments. They are images of beauty whose rich designs assert individual identity in the face of societies that exploit and oppress their indigenous populations.

More direct in their political content are the arpilleras (burlap embroideries) made by women in Chile. Composed to tell a story, many of the arpilleras are critical of the current Pinochet dictatorship, particularly the plight of the disappeared, estimated by Amnesty International to be 30,000 people. These colorful "embroideries of life and death" are known to have been confiscated by the authorities. Nevertheless, many of them do leave the country in the manner that La Duke describes: "The embroideries are carried to the U.S., Germany, France, Holland and Switzerland by such organizations as Oxfam, where they are sold in solidarity and peace centers." Despite government repression, Chilean women have organized workshops to make arpilleras and learn new skills from each other. These workshops provide the women with income to support their families and help them overcome their isolation.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Yet even the succession of repressive regimes inflicted upon that country has not been able to eradicate one of

its roots of political and artistic resistance: the Voodoo religion. The artistic tradition of the island is so impressive that French intellectuals as diverse in their thinking as poet/critic André Breton and novelist André Malraux have praised it lavishly.

The highly respected critic and pioneering authority of Haitian art, Selden Rodman, was so impressed with Haiti's plastic efforts, particularly the fact that they



*Long Live Internationalism. We Are Not Afraid*  
by Ana Rosa Gutierrez. Woodblock print, Cuba.

make no dichotomy between body and spirit, that he stated: "not since the Renaissance in Italy has a school of artists so changed the face of a country." From Marilène Villedrouin's preternatural "Madonna and Child" to Vierge Pierre's dreamy "Landscape with Ducks" and Rosemarie Deruisseau's spellbound "Voodoo Dance" with its graphic and colorful depiction of a Voodoo ritual, the painting that La Duke presents by the five women represented in this section is the most consistently inspiring and imaginative in the book.

## OVERCOMING TABOOS

Inspiring as well, and indicative of the common social taboo many of these artists have faced, is the story of Honduran painter Teresita Fortin. One of several children from a wealthy family, endowed with all the social amenities including painting, piano and literature lessons, Fortin decided that rather than marry and have children she preferred to pursue a career as a painter. Because her father told her that "all women who paint are prostitutes," she had to pursue her vocation clandestinely. Severed from meaningful contact with other artists and forced to take care of her father until his death, she nonetheless continued to paint images of her memories and dreams. She received no recognition until the last years before her death in 1982. Today in Honduras she is a highly respected artist who is also acknowledged for the fact that she has made the pursuit of painting an acceptable career choice for other women.

La Duke develops an extensive section on women artists in revolutionary Nicaragua. She includes the primitive painters of the Christian cooperative of Solentiname, whose work, in the words of Gloria Guevara, depicts "along with the terrible sacrifice of people's lives, a new awakening." Mural painter, Julia Aguirre, who enlivens the devastated areas of Managua with pastel, joyful scenes of rural life, says, "The Somoza government left us a poor inheritance. Now women also can develop as artists, and they must learn to advance their art just as men do."

The fine artists of Cuba whom La Duke interviews and illustrates show a range of styles: expressionist, realist, abstract. Cuban painter Lesbia Vent specializes in satirical painting. One of her works, "Semper Fidel" (Always Fidel), is grounded in a fact of Cuban life that is the object of many popular jokes in that country: Fidel Castro's tendency to give extremely long speeches. "Always Fidel" depicts a TV screen in the background filled with a looming caricature of Castro giving one of his speeches, and situates a Cuban family in the foreground watching the spectacle in various stages of amusement. Explaining the content of the picture, Vent has said, "Satire is very related to the Cubans. We're not clowns, but some of our gestures lend themselves to caricature."

The author's journeys also took her to Grenada, where she documented the turn from crafts for the tourist market to "helping the hand to build the land." Burlap appliques and straw products were produced by women, many of them single parents, at home.

La Duke's accessible style, coupled with her vast reservoir of knowledge, allows these women and their works to speak for themselves, from Brazil's lace makers and Ecuador's sculptors of decorated bread figurines to Mexico's Fanny Rabel, who depicts environmental and social devastation and Nicaragua's Cecilia Rojas, who creates intense mask paintings of transformation.

The book's only shortcoming is that, at times, she could be more critical and analytical. Nonetheless, "Compañeras" is a visual feast, beautifully designed, and a moving treatment of some of the region's artists, both well known and unsung.

**Editorial Note:** *CMM* applauds *Compañeras* as an example, too rare among works published on community arts, of sensitive response by an outsider to the work of other cultures and locations. LaDuke manages to convey information about the works and their artists, but without intruding her own cultural assumptions into the presentation, thus allowing the works and artists to stand on their own as much as possible. Whether it is humility or care or both that causes her writings to communicate in this fashion, they are most of all respectful and effective.

## Walls That Speak Like Mirrors

Muros Que Hablan Como Espejos/Walls That Speak Like Mirrors was a three-day symposium on contemporary North American Muralism held in Denver, Colorado from April 17-19. It was sponsored by the Department of Political Science and Hispanic Education Program, U.C. Denver, and the Chicano Humanities and Arts Council (CHAC). In particular, special appreciation is due Jeanne and Leo Tanguma, Mary Meadows, and Patricio Cordova for their efforts. Symposium organizers hoped that this gathering would help define the issues most pertinent to local muralists and to place local work in a wider context of contemporary community and public arts in the United States and throughout the world.

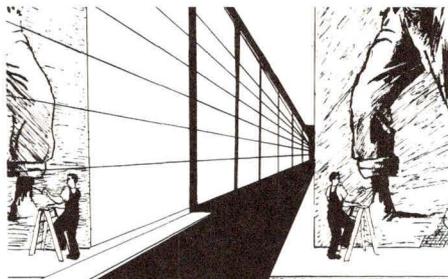
Meetings were held in the impressive main sanctuary of the Montview Presbyterian Church (which has donated working space for Tanguma's *Despues de esta cruz...* mural), Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, and the SPARK Gallery. That such a wide variety of institutions supported the symposium is just one indication of the warmth and generosity of local residents to participants and guests at the conference.

It was announced that the Colorado Arts Council has declared 1987 "The Year of the Mural," and this gathering was a fitting introduction to that theme. The immediate focus may have been murals in and around Denver, but the emphasis of the presentations and discussions was the wider context of art and humanities throughout the world. Several presentations noted connections between local works and images from overseas; one noted a progression from Giotto to Rivera to contemporary murals. Although the material was selected from the world's visual arts traditions, relationships were frequently noted between the images discussed and the broad concerns of humanities taken more generally, i.e., the relationship between the arts and their social and aesthetic contexts, the centrality of artistic expression (in whatever medium) to fundamental human aspirations, and the place of today's expressions within the rich tradition of our own cultural heritage.

Overviews were presented by Lucy Lippard, who spoke on "Muralism in the Context of Political Art in the United States," Tim Drescher, who spoke on "Community Murals—People's Causes," Miranda Bergman, who spoke on "Muralism as a Messenger of Peace," Malaquias Montoya, who spoke

on both "The Chicano Muralist Movement," and on "An Ideological Perspective on Chicano Art," and Shifra Goldman, who discussed "Chicano Art: An Iconography of Self Determination." Many of the images projected provided support for the perspectives advanced by these speakers, for whom Dr. Goldman provided an effective summary in her main thesis, which was that Chicano people have the right to self determination, and that this concept is articulated in their arts' opposition to racism, to ethnic denigration, to class exploitation, and in their affirmative proclamations regarding race, ethnicity and class.

Other participants presented works from Colorado, and included Mary Meadows, who gave a tentative overview of "The Murals of Colorado," a film of work by Manuel Martinez (who was also a Saturday panelist), Carlotta Espinosa, Carlos Sandoval, Pedro



Romero and others called *Espejos—Reflections of a Culture*. Leo Tanguma, a muralist now residing in Denver, and Raul Valdez, from Austin, Texas, each spoke about their recent work.

One purely technical session was offered on "Materials and Methods" by Tim Drescher and Bill Meadows. Its highlight was access to the wealth of reliable information on paints in the person of Bill Meadows, an independent paint chemist. As a result of his participation in the symposium, he has been asked to write a regular technical column for *CMM*, beginning with this issue.

Behind the conference lurked the disappointment in the refusal of a number of institutions in Denver to allow Tanguma's exciting new mural, *Despues de esta Cruz.../Beyond this Cross*, to be placed before the public view. (The mural was described, with photographs, in *CMM*, Vol. 11 No. 1, Spring 1986). The piece, a spectacular fiery cross thirty-three feet high, is outspoken in its analysis of the human struggles of Central American peoples for peace and sovereignty and against U.S. aggression against that, and it is thought that this is the reason local organizations "cannot" find room for it. Thus one of the topics discussed at the

concluding panel discussion that all participants and several of the audience spoke at was whether or not all art is necessarily political, and whether competition among muralists is beneficial or harmful.

Both formally and informally, different ideas about these questions emerged at the conference. Some held, basically, that they had paid their dues in the political movements of the 60s and 70s, and that now, tired of the same topics, they felt a need to develop further artistically; they did not want to live in the past. They felt community pressures held them back from this development.

Others offered opposed views. Have we paid our dues to join the ruling class and in (our) turn oppress our own people? they asked. They, too, are tired of the "same old topics," but are drawn to their expression because they feel they are the most important things facing us today—food, shelter, drugs, medical care, cultural autonomy, peace, etc. The feeling was expressed that "If we had been more effective in the 70s, we wouldn't have to be still struggling for these basic rights in the 80s."

It was suggested that it is true that the community limits the community visual artist in some ways, but by no means absolutely. Many participants felt that a great deal more formal development/experimentation is possible than normally even attempted by muralists, even in the most democratic of processes involving non-artists. It was also suggested that developing a better community was more important than developing better individual artistic expression.

"We all respond to the past," it was said, "but as artists we have a choice about which tradition we chose to utilize in our work."

All in all the symposium, although not attended by as many as had been hoped for, was an outstanding success. Participants and audience alike departed with new ideas, old ideas more clearly defined (sometimes affirmed, sometimes challenged), and a renewed spirit of commitment to murals. Perhaps most telling of all was the enthusiasm felt toward holding another conference in Denver in the future where practical workshops could be held, sessions on aesthetics and formal considerations per se, more information on new media could be distributed, as well as the broader philosophical topics. The Denver Symposium was important because it offered the opportunity to discuss issues not recently on the public agenda. Next time, the conference will build on this powerful beginning.

## Map Mural—San Francisco International Airport

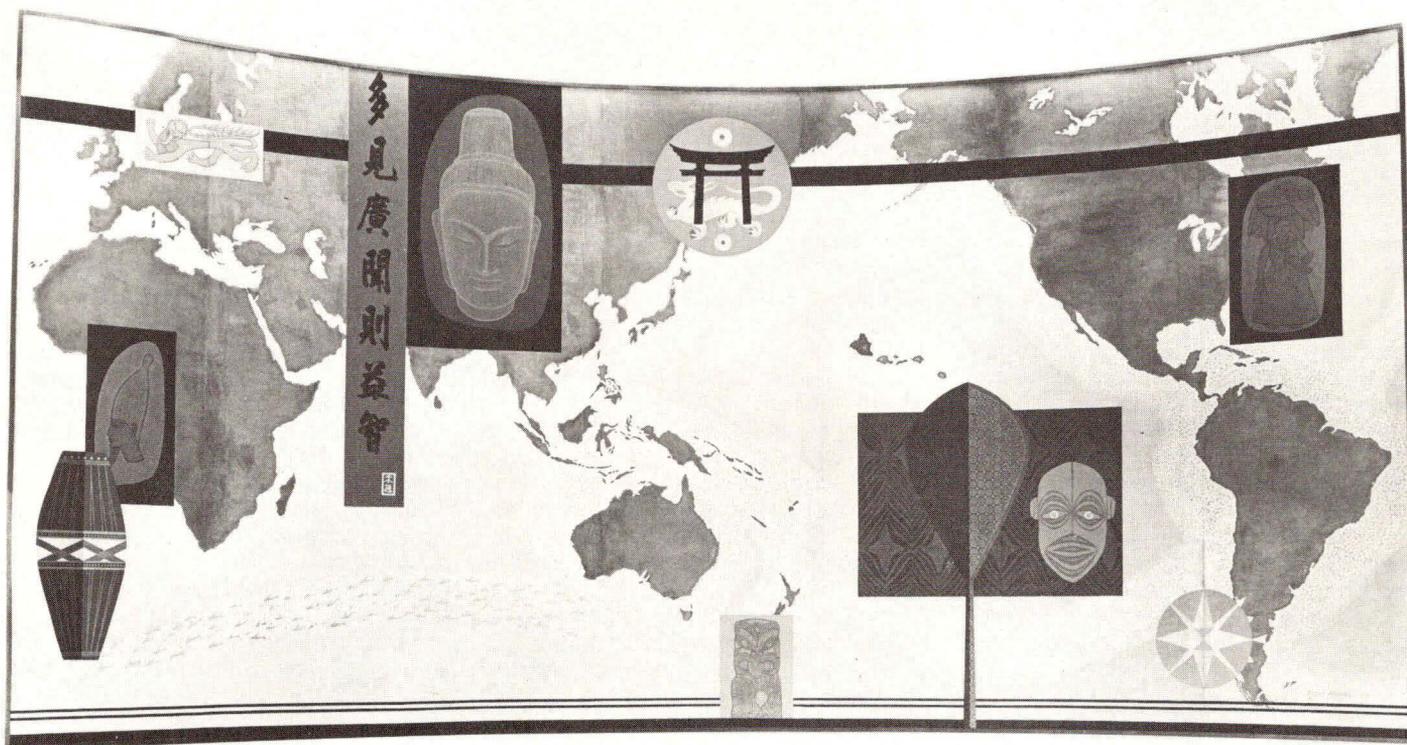
The large mural by Edith Hamlin occupies a prominent space in the recently remodeled International terminal area of the Airport adjacent to the China Airlines ticket counters. The mural design incorporates ethnic art and cultural elements against a world map background.

Painted for the Pacific and Orient Steamship downtown San Francisco ticket office in 1960, the mural remained on their wall until the company closed this office in 1973. At that time the Company generously offered the mural to the artist. When a spacious site became available at the San Francisco Airport recently, Miss Hamlin offered the mural as a gift to the Airports Commission. Through the cooperation of the San Francisco Art Commission, the Friends of the Airport Programs organizations and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the mural gift was accepted and duly installed.

The mural, 16 feet high by 35 feet wide, is painted upon a vinyl fabric in acrylic colors with gold leaf areas. Superimposed upon the map are ethnic designs from various world cultures. In Chinese calligraphy a Confucian quotation reads: "He who sees much and thinks it over, this is akin to wisdom."

Edith Hamlin, the artist-designer, is a Bay Area artist who has been active as a muralist throughout her career. Born in Oakland, in 1902, she maintains her studio in San Francisco. Initially attending the California Art Institute (then known as the California School of Fine Arts), she later studied in New York and in Europe. Her first public murals were among the Coit Tower frescoes during the W.P.A. Federal sponsorship of the mid-thirties. Following murals were two historical tempera murals painted upon the library walls of Mission High School, and numerous other public murals

throughout California and in Phoenix, Tucson, Cheyenne and Chicago bear her name. Those in Amtrak's Chicago offices and the Standard Oil Building's Phoenix Room in San Francisco are especially noteworthy. In both indoor and outdoor works the artist has employed a variety of styles and media, often inventing new techniques to serve the location and architectural requisites. In addition to the use of the fresco medium, oil, tempera and acrylic colors have been supplemented by mosaic; and ethyl silicate and fired porcelain enamels have been explored and used for exterior situations. She finds that mural commissions, which some artists find limiting, can be exciting and challenging by their association with architecture and for the development of media techniques for the specific project. She finds mural designing a very satisfying expression.



Airport mural; photo - R.A. Hardin

# Norwalk Will Restore Depression-Era Murals

by Dirk Johnson, *New York Times*,

January 13, 1986

NORWALK, Conn., Jan. 10 — The largest known collection of Depression-era murals soon will be cleansed of spitballs, ketchup and, in one case, the penciled signature of "Michael Angelo."

After 45 years of adorning — and enduring — the walls of the old Norwalk High School, the oil paintings will be refurbished in a city-sponsored program called Adopt a Mural.

The city is lining up corporate and individual donors to pay the \$250,000 needed to spruce up the 23 murals at the school, some of them as large as 33 feet by 7 feet.

"They'll be absolutely brilliant," said Ralph Bloom, curator for the Norwalk Historical Commission, "once we get the dirt off."

Commissioned in the late 1930's by the Federal Works Projects Administration, the murals were painted on canvas and placed on the walls of the cafeteria, main hallway and teachers' dining room of the Norwalk High School.

## 'Very High Caliber'

"As far as we know, this is the largest collection of New Deal murals," said Arlene Quint, arts material specialist for the General Services Administration. "And the paintings are very high caliber."

The second largest mural collection commissioned by the W.P.A. was for Ellis Island, she said. Some of those paintings were damaged by water after the building closed in 1954, and the salvageable works were later moved to the Federal courthouse in Brooklyn.

The murals in Norwalk were completed between 1937 and 1941 by the artists Alexander J. Rummier, A. G. Hull and John Steuart Curry, who were paid an average of less than \$1 an hour.

Art historians were reluctant to estimate the worth of the paintings. But other works by Mr. Curry, who died in 1946, have brought more than \$20,000 at art auctions.

"There's a new appreciation for W.P.A. artwork," said Mr. Bloom. "It's becoming acceptable, collectable and desirable."

Most of the Norwalk paintings, based on photographs of everyday life in Fairfield County during the late 30's, capture the spirit of country towns and small cities recovering from the Great Depression.

"These murals are unique because they are not the usual W.P.A. artwork — sort of monotone and depressing," said Albert Luk, conservator for Professional Art Conservation, the Westport concern that will clean the paintings.

"These are brighter subjects," he said, "days of sunshine, girls in the country, fruit stands and fairs."

In the paintings, sunbathers lounge under parasols at the Norwalk waterfront on Calf Pasture Beach, a team of oxen pull carts at the Danbury Fair and a Model A Ford rests at a roadside stand advertising fresh eggs, root beer and ice cream cones.

Some of the subjects in the paintings still live in Norwalk. One is Wallace Bell, who was featured as a teen-ager dragging the sea for starfish.

"I remember the people in the painting," said Mr. Bell, who is 65 years old. "But most of them are gone now."

The Norwalk High School was closed in 1961 and, although parts of the building have since been used for meetings and concerts, the murals have been generally inaccessible to the public.

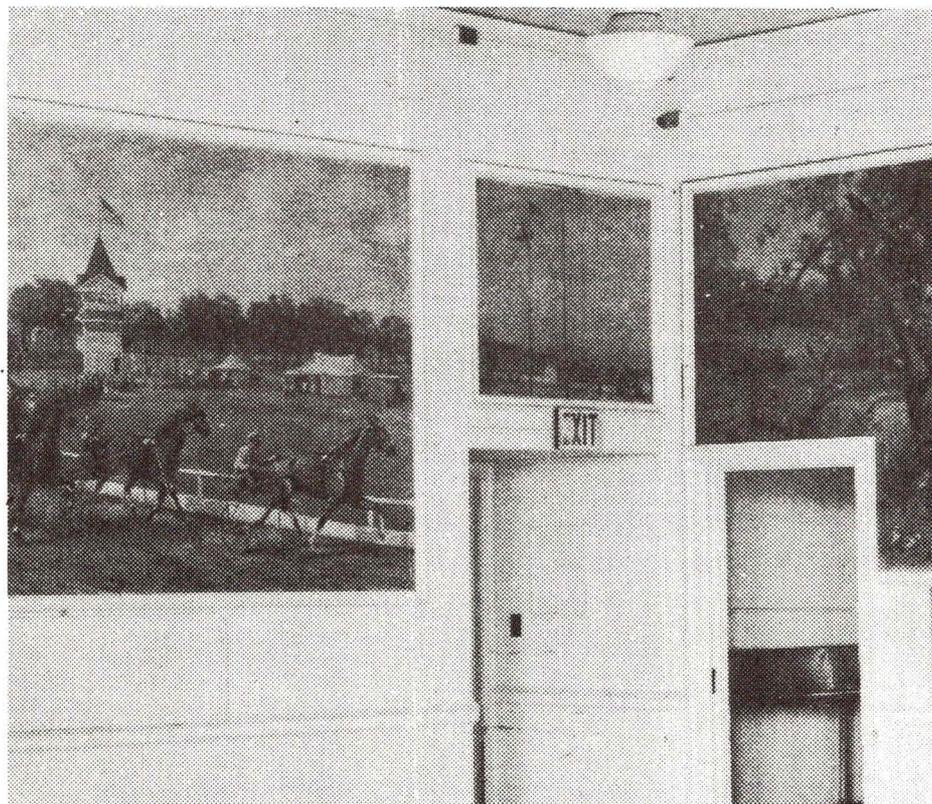
In the spring, a three-year renovation project will begin to transform the old school building into the new City Hall, where the paintings will be rehung once they are cleaned. The Adopt a Mural program also includes 17 other W.P.A. works of art — both murals and free-standing paintings — that will be moved from various city buildings into the new City Hall.

In the meantime, the city will compile a brochure of photographs of the paintings in the campaign to find donors. Brass plaques under the refurbished murals will name the donors.

Before the paintings can be cleaned, they must be carefully removed. The murals cannot simply be pulled from the walls, Mr. Luk said, because they would crack and flake.

A cotton canvas, impregnated with a microcrystalline wax compound, will be pressed against the face of each mural and heated with calibrated irons until the painting becomes one with the new canvas.

Each mural will then be covered with protective paper, loosely rolled and moved to storage, where the paintings will be cleaned with a special blend of chemicals.



Murals by Alexander J. Rummier

The New York Times / Alan Zale

# Movimiento Mural in Austin

<b>TITLE:</b>	Movimiento
<b>DATE:</b>	Construction started in November 1983 and was completed in April 1984.
<b>SIZE:</b>	24 feet height x 68 feet width
<b>TECHNIQUE:</b>	Thirty-two Dura-ply 4' x 8' panels covered with an acrylic primer and sand texture and painted with Polymer acrylic Mural colors The panels are attached to 2" x 2" x 20 ft. angle iron frame The structure is supported by four telephone poles and two-four inch pipes with extensions set in concrete The frame is held together with 1/2" x 4' lag bolts Varnish Sealer was applied as a final protective coating
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Deep in the heart of the East Austin Barrio at 1500 East First Street, Austin, Tejas
<b>ARTISTIC DIRECTOR:</b>	Raúl Valdez, Community Muralist, design, concept and construction
<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTORS:</b>	Bobby Chapa      Gilberto Rivera David Lopez      Esiquio Ubalde
<b>PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANTS:</b>	Augusto Brocca    Ramon Maldonado    David Santos Carlos Lowry      Felipe Riojas        Ray Sosa Sharon Lynch     Ramon Rivera        Jose Treviño
<b>SPONSOR:</b>	The League of United Chicano Artists (LUChA)/Museo del Barrio
<b>FUNDING:</b>	The Texas Commission on the Arts, the City of Austin and El Comité en Defensa del Arte Público

## OLLIN/MOVIMIENTO/MOVEMENT

Located on a well traveled street in the barrio, the structural mural becomes a sight easily accessible to the general public. The results of an opinion poll of five hundred community residents composes most of the content of the painting.

The form depicts a family of three, the father and child reaching out in different directions, the woman portrayed as a significant contributor to history. The design alludes to the stabilizing force her strength has historically provided. In the foreground to the right of her profile is the stone of the moon, Coyolxauqui, making reference to a common Mother culture indigenous to this land. With her right arm she embraces a Native American woman as well as Jose Martí, Camilo Torres, Augusto Cesar Sandino, Violetta Parra, Ricardo Flores Magon, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Emiliano Zapata, Emma Tenayuca and Monsignor Oscar Romero in a gesture of brotherhood among Native and Latin Americans in the struggle for human rights. Her left clenched fist rips a strand of barbed wire.

From the lower center comes forth the offspring of our history, born of the woman's womb and breaking through bricks and debris, symbolic of the systematic attacks on our cultural expression. The clusters of bricks represent pieces of the mural entitled "Los Elementos" which was destroyed along with the Juarez-Lincoln University building at IH-35 and East First Street. The child is offering a rose which has pricked her thumb yet she shows no sign of pain. The cluster to the right represents life--embryo born from a serpent or earth--the cluster to the left refers to death--the old accordion player's leg with the serpent's (earth's) tongue wrapped around it.

The left center of the mural portrays some of the vital contributions to society by Mexicano/Chicano people, the labor force: farmworkers, industrial workers, creative artists (songwriter), a Vietnam era soldier surrounded by helicopters and agent orange. La Virgen de Guadalupe oversees the union of the eagle, serpent and cactus, symbol of the founding of the ancient Mexican capitol Mexico-Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) in 1325. The circular form is symbolic of the sun as represented by the piedra del sol and three faces of El Mestizo, the combination of Native and Spanish blood.

In the mural's right section are the children, stars, universe, the future. Here we see three young people moving toward the center of the mural. The young girl at the extreme right holds the earth in her hands while another young girl holds a book under her arm as she reaches for the scales of justice. These scales, half buried and apparently abandoned by preceding generations, are brought to light by a young man bearing a torch. This section represents the future of our children, illuminating justice through a constructive education that promotes human values and respect. With the world in their hands, future generations must handle issues such as nuclear energy with far more responsibility, than the present generation has demonstrated for humankind's ultimate survival.

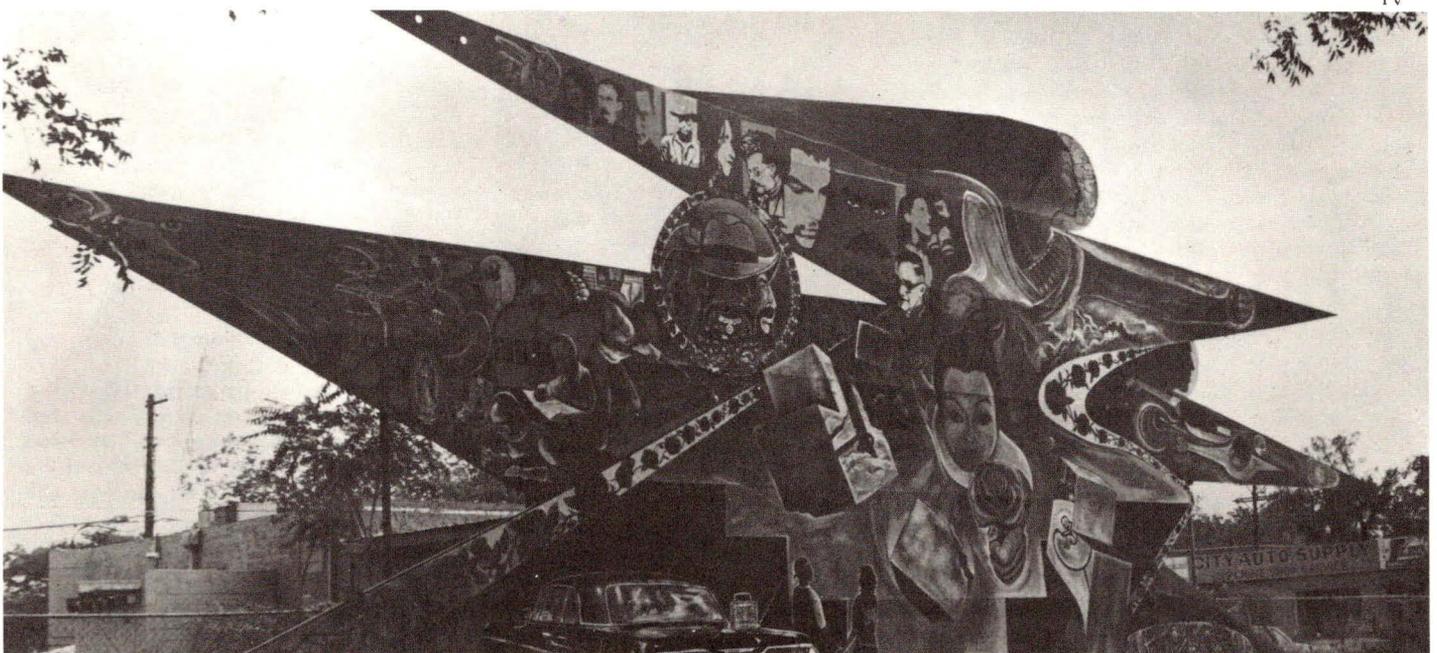


photo - Raul Valdez © East Austin Barrio Mural Team

## Martin Luther King Jr. Mural Unveiled at District of Columbia Public Library

A large mural depicting the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., was unveiled January 20, 1986 as part of the first national holiday celebration of Dr. King's birthday. The mural, painted by Don Miller in oil-on-canvas in two panels, measures 7 by 56 feet. The work is located in the lobby of the Martin Luther King Memorial Library which is the downtown main library of the District of Columbia.

Mr. Miller, a resident of Montclair, New Jersey, has worked as an artist, photographer and teacher for more than 35 years. His paintings have been featured in the Anheuser Busch Great Kings of Africa Series; his illustrations have graced the pages of *Sports Illustrated* and *True*; and his ad designs have appeared in the *New York Times* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Despite Miller's commercial success, he felt that he had a calling to educate young people. He answered that calling by presenting the idea of a King mural to the D.C. Public Library Board of Trustees in 1984. After a series of presentations, the Board commissioned Miller to paint the work.

The Mural tells the story of King and the civil rights movement in 83 scenes and faces. Scenes include King's boyhood in Atlanta, his leadership of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the celebrated March on Washington, his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, his opposition to the Vietnam War and his tragic assassination. Among the mural's faces are likenesses of Dr. Benjamin Mays, Mahatma Gandhi, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks, Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy and D.C. Mayor Marion Barry.

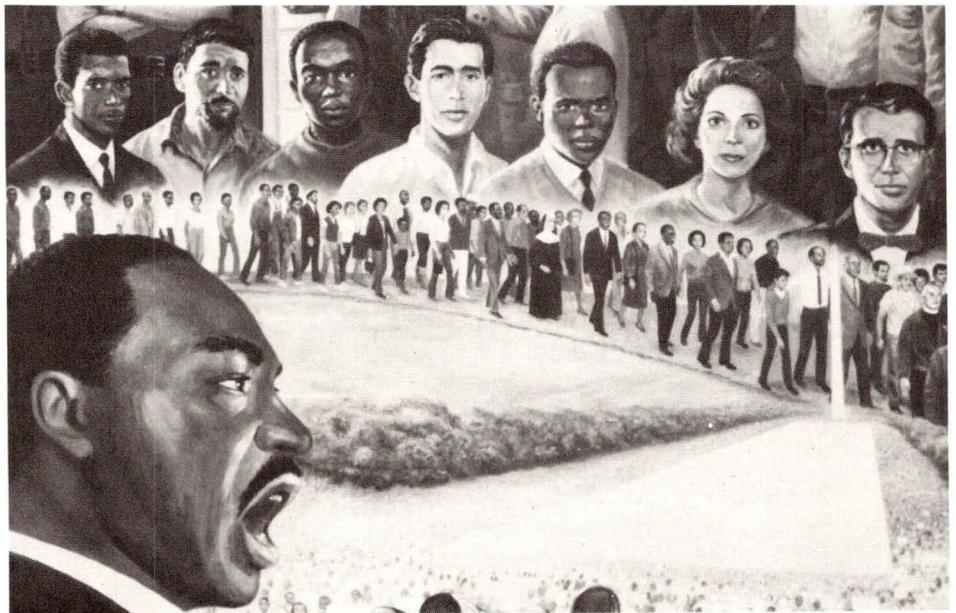
The Board of Trustees of the D.C. Public Library used the mural as the centerpiece of a \$500,000 fund-raising project. The mural project was led by Nora Drew Gregory, Vice President of the Board of Trustees. Barbara C. Washington coordinated the fund-raising drive. Mary E. Raphael was Library liaison with the artist. Contributions came from national and local associations, corporations, foundations, celebrities, government officials and the public. Approximately \$250,000 was raised to finance the mural. The remainder will be used to pay for library needs such as the purchase of special

equipment, the preservation of books and photographs, and the establishment of an information center with electronic data bases and computers.

Described by Library Director, Dr. Hardy R. Franklin, as a "vivid, dynamic portrayal of Dr. King's life," the mural will be one of America's most educational memorials.

For a free tour of the Martin Luther King Memorial Library that includes the Mural, call (202) 727-1221.

photo © 1985 District of Columbia Public Library



transferring their design to the wall, they applied two coats of acrylic sealer to close the wall's pores and prevent excessive absorption.

On 18 November bold Politec colors\*\* began to transform the wall. At the left of the mural is the prehistoric past of Xochimilco—its daily life, agricultural and aquacultural accomplishments. At the center different architecture and geography reflect the rupture which the Spanish conquistadors forced upon the early civilization. In homage to the working classes and especially to the country people (campesinos), the meeting of Villa and Zapata in Xochimilco sym-

bolizes the union of northern and southern campesinos which assured that triumph of the 1910 Revolution. In the foreground grandchildren of that revolution carry books instead of weapons and banners. Lush verdure and flowers link past with present; and the entire mural seems to emanate from the timeless central figure, a woman preparing cactus for sale in the market.

Public response to the mural has been so enthusiastic that the student collective has already embarked in its weekly discussions with Arnold Belkin on plans for its next project, The Forum of Quetzalcoatl, which will be painted in the central business district.

Article prepared and translated by Marcia Rautenstrauch from a brochure accompanying the mural and from an article by Nadia Piemonte in *UNO MAS UNO* (22 March 1986).

\*Maribel Aviles, Monica Castillo, Jorge Degollado, Mario Enrique Fernandez, Patricia Fernandez, Alicia Gonzalez, Enrique Garcia, Elodia Hernandez, Arturo Hernandez, Enrique Leal, Gregorio Leon, Alejandro Nava, Ismael Nieves, Flavio Paez, Ernesto Ronces, Olivia Sanchez.

\*\*Invented especially for mural painting by Mexican professor, Jose L. Gutierrez, at the National Polytechnic Institute in 1952.



photo - Mtro. Anibal Angulo

## Roots of the Flowers (Nelhuayotl Xochitl)

In the centennial year of Diego Rivera's birth, a new mural, *The Roots of the Flowers*, has recently been dedicated by students of the National School of Plastic Arts, once again under the direction of Arnold Belkin. Painted on a wall of the Delegation Building of the Xochimilco District, the four-by-ten-meter mural was motivated by the school's desire to establish strong cultural ties with the community in which it is located and to provide its students an opportunity to perform a genuine social service, the highly professional result of which would become part of the artistic patrimony of the area.

Their work coordinated by post-graduate student Enrique Linaza, the 16 students\* began research for their project in early June of 1985. Trips to the National Museum of Anthropology and History, to the historical archives and archaeological museum of Xochimilco, to the ruins of Santa Cruz Acapulxca, to local markets and many murals throughout Mexico City augmented their library searches of pre-Hispanic descriptions of form and style employed by the early painters of Xochimilco.

As their ideas solidified in weekly discussions, the students were ready in

August to present a 1:5 scale color drawing of the mural to officials of the Delegation, who accepted their plan, with minor changes, and provided funds for materials and for preparation of the wall's surface.

During September and October the drawing was enlarged to 1:1 on Kraft paper, and details of full-scale execution were resolved. Meanwhile, the students also prepared the wall at the Delegation. Removing its surface, they covered the tiles beneath with a metallic mesh to prevent future cracking and prepared a new 15 centimeter surface of powdered marble and cement (2:1). After



## Foreign Contributions

With the victory of the Sandinista Revolution, many foreign artists' brigades arrived to paint their solidarity on our walls. Among these gifts were those of the:

- Panamanian Brigade: murals in the Augusto C. Sandino Airport in Esteli and on the walls at Kilometer 10.5 on the highway to Carazo;
- Orlando Letelier Brigade: murals on the MICONS Building in front of the Rigoberto Lopez Perez Stadium and in other cities of the country;
- Chilean Communist Party Brigade: mural on one of the walls of Bolivar Avenue;
- North American Women's Brigade: murals in the Children's Library of Luis A. Velasquez Park.

Among individual foreign contributions were those of the Mexican, Alfonso Villanueva, whose mural on Bolivar Avenue was a collaboration with Nicaraguan artists Genaro Lugo, Orlando Sobalvarro and Xavier Orozco. The North American, John Pitman Weber, completed a mural on the market, Roger Deshon de San Judas, with the help of Nicaraguans Leonel Cerrato, Dario Zamora and Francisco Rueda.

And finally, the Brigade of Italian professors executed monumental tapestries and murals in the National House of AMNLAE. Recently, aided by the Bo. Rigüero community and

students of the National School of Plastic Arts, they also completed a series of murals in the Church of Santa Maria de los Angeles. Without undue dependence upon the Mexican stylistic tradition, particularly that of Siqueiros, these murals transcend aesthetics as social and religious commentary on some of the most significant events of Nicaragua's history.

## Nicaraguan Artists

Speaking now of Nicaraguan artists, the first mural completed after 19 July 1979 was that of Roger Perez de la Rocha, Efren Medina, Leonel Vanegas and others on the El Chipotito Building, two blocks from the supermarket of Plaza Espana. Of epic character, the mural has deteriorated because of inadequate materials and erroneous techniques used at that time. In 1980 three murals with decidedly Nicaraguan themes were completed in Luis A. Velasquez Park; collaborators were Leonel Cerrato, Alejandro Canales, Manuel Garcia, Hilda Vogl and Julie Aguirre.

Previously, Roger Perez de la Rocha and Manuel Garcia has each completed mural experiments at a country inn at Kilometer 12.5 on the highway to Carazo. Another Nicaraguan artist, Alejandro Canales, painted murals on the Central Building of INSSBI and the Telcor Building and another, in front of

Central Park near the Plaza of the Revolution.

Along with Garcia and Canales, Leonel Cerrato most forcefully projects Nicaragua's monumental art. All these artists have recently returned from overseas mural projects: Garcia, from both the German Federal and German Democratic Republics; Canales, from the state of Oregon in the U.S.A.; and Cerrato, from France.

While the opening of the School of Monumental Public Art is projected for 1986, that Center has already initiated many activities, thanks to the human and material aid of the Italian people. We believe that this important institution must avoid transmitting styles, aesthetic idioms and ready-made solutions but should, rather, teach our artists and art students the techniques which they need to portray our national identity and to lay the foundations for a truly Nicaraguan approach to muralism. Like everything in our country, that muralism is being born. In spite of war and its many sacrifices, we are searching for the pieces of an identity which is truly our own. All we lack is the technical expertise to show it. Its ancestral laws are already in place.

Translation by Marcia Rautenstrauch, from Luis Morales Alonso's "Reflexiones sobre el muralismo," in *Ventana*, 23 November 1985.

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## Mexican Earthquake Update

From the Center for Conservation of Artistic Works of the National Institute of Fine Arts, we have received the good news that of the 679 murals in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Cuernavaca and Chapingo only 98 suffered minor damage during the enormous earthquakes of 19-20 September 1985. Said damage was comprised principally of air pockets, cracks (often the widening of old cracks), and the loosening of the murals from their surfaces or supports and will not, in the opinion of the Conservation Center, endanger the stability or integrity of most murals.

While the murals themselves are largely intact, a great deal of heroic work will be required to remove and re-mount certain murals in badly damaged buildings which must be demolished. At the Secretariat of Education, for example, two of Diego Rivera's murals (EL HERIDO and EMILIANO ZAPATA) will have to be loosened from the wall and placed on a fibreglass-epoxy support, a

treatment which will increase restoration costs of each by one million pesos.

A similar treatment will be necessary for Luis Nishisawa's EL AIRE ES VIDA (Air Is Life) at the Hospital of Cardiology in the National Medical Center, at least parts of which must be destroyed. As a result of that building's demolition, two aluminum relief works by Alberto Beltran and Francisco Zuniga must also be moved. Likewise, a new home must be found for Siqueiros' monumental "Apology for the Future Victory of Medical Science over Cancer," also located there. (Apparently, the latter work was not "definitively lost," as reported in *CMM*, Winter 1986.)

Extensive damage to the multi-unit Benito Juarez housing complex also destroyed 12 of Carlos Merida's murals decorating stairways and facades there. Of 36 remaining works, the Conservation Center hopes to rescue at least 12—total rescue precluded by the

buildings' instability and potential danger to workers.

One of the buildings hardest hit by the earthquakes was the Secretariat of Communications and Transport. There, the upper floors of Building B collapsed along with approximately 50 percent of Juan O'Gorman's "Allegory of Mexico," realized in mosaic and naturally colored stones. Two of Jose Chavez Morado's murals there ("The Aztec World" and "Nationality") have suffered an ironic fate: while they have survived, unscathed, in full 10-story glory, the building itself must be reduced to five stories for purposes of safety... Surely, for muralists, there is a moral here somewhere?

Marcia Rautenstrauch

Note: *CMM* has a copy, in Spanish, of the complete list of damage of Mexican murals (17 pgs.). Please enclose \$1 for handling if you want us to send one to you.

## Reflections on Muralism

*Following is the first of a projected series of articles on Nicaraguan muralism by Luis Morales Alonso, Executive Secretary of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers. Thanking CMM for its work, Sr. Alonso writes: "We do not have similar publications—understandably, under the difficult economic situation in which we live, thanks to military aggression against our small country. Nevertheless, in an attempt to contribute something, I am sending you my recent article...which summarizes the phenomenon of muralism in Nicaragua and hope it will be of interest to you."*

The Mexican experience (that revitalizing axis of the ancient technique) has, unfortunately, posed many frustrations for the pioneers of Nicaraguan muralism. Even working on an individual level, artists often become so enmeshed in the aesthetic solutions and execution of the Mexican school that possibilities for their own development are thwarted. As the artist, Alejandro Arostegui, wrote, "...The powerful influence of Mexican muralism with which certain promising painters erroneously identified, greatly limited their creativity and their search for what was authentically national." (Praxis, May 1972).

Such has been the obvious and dramatic case of one of the precursors of our modern muralism, Cesar Caracas, who never liberated himself from the influence of Jose Clemente Orozco. Since 1954 he has completed a series of some twelve murals in public places of Managua and other cities—some already destroyed through use of inappropriate materials or by the 1972 earthquake in Managua.

Born in 1936, Leoncio Saenz was the first Nicaraguan to seek our pre-Colombian roots and utilize them in his painting. While some of his works were also destroyed by earthquake (*La Criolla*, Grand Hotel, Balmoral), his mural at the supermarket of the Plaza Espana remains a testimony to his pioneering efforts.

Among the murals of Alejandro Arostegui, most outstanding is that inside the building, "La Protectora de Seguros." Later in 1975, with Orlando Sobalvarro and Roger Perez de la Rocha, he completed a series of murals inspired by the designs and elements of our aboriginal art (Commercial Center, Nejapa). These works mark not only a



Mural of Alejandro Canales, Managua, Nicaragua 1984

direct point of departure but also a confrontation with Nicaraguan muralism, its face cleared of foreign influence.

Graffiti gained great communicative and social importance during the liberation struggle against Somoza. After the triumph of the Revolution these ingenuous contributions became more aesthetic, accompanied by drawings, faces of Sandino and Carlos, flat silhouettes, optical illusions, elaborate tapestries, posters and billboards along the streets and highways.

The importance of the written word in public art should be re-evaluated. To that end Editorial Nueva Nicaragua

assembled several months ago a photographic exhibit of the work of these unknown artists under the title, "Insurrection of the Walls," currently available through Gerda Rincon. Unfortunately, the life of these authentic works of "public art" is evanescent: some have already disappeared through exposure or because of their anonymous authors' ignorance of appropriate techniques (understandable, since their conception was based on communication rather than technique).

ceptance of graffiti art because if they didn't like it they were going to paint over it anyway. So it was either to do it and take that chance or not do it at all. After they saw it I think that they liked it a lot. I think that they liked it better than the other murals because it was something new to them. They wanted to know the process of how to do it so they could do it themselves."

After several days of intense painting and interchange with the Armenians, I asked Ashot Bayandour what he thought of the collaboration on the mural. Tears came to his eyes as he expressed his great pleasure with the "beautiful process". "What is important is the interaction of the artist and children trying to work together, not the final product," he told me. He and I agreed that the eclecticism of the wildly different styles coming together was a wonderful element in the mural.

Although our stay in Yerevan, Armenia was extremely short, when we parted and said good-bye to our artist friends, most of us felt emotionally as though we had been friends for years. Our departure, on the shore of Lake Sevan with its beautiful turquoise water as a backdrop, was filled with wild dancing, joyful singing, toasts to peace and friendship, and finally tearful farewell embraces.

### Other Murals in the Soviet Union

During the rest of the trip, I was excited to see that there were many outdoor and indoor murals in the Soviet

Union. Prior to the trip, I had heard about the famous wall paintings in the Moscow subway, which were created in the 1930s. We visited several of the over one hundred subway entrances. One contained many painted scenes of Russian culture, history, industry, and agriculture, but these seemed tame compared to some of the murals I saw in other parts of the country, which are less well-known in other parts of the world.

In Yerevan, Armenia, we saw a large outdoor wall relief carved into a soft sandstone on the entrance to a new sports/theater complex. The images seemed to derive from the history, culture and religion of Armenia. In Tbilisi, Georgia, we saw several outdoor abstract murals. One of these contained geometric forms in colored concrete. The other contained overlapping ceramic pieces which covered both a wall and the bottom of a fountain with a dense texture of brightly colored shapes. On the Georgian military highway, which crosses the Caucasus Mountains, following the ancient Persian trade route, we encountered the most spectacular mural of all. Perched on the edge of a cliff, near the highest point that the highway reached before it descended into the Republic of Ossetia (SSR), we were amazed to find a large semi-circular, free-standing wall, the inside of which was covered with a tile mural. Against the backdrop of the mountain peaks and gorges was the history and culture of the Georgian peo-

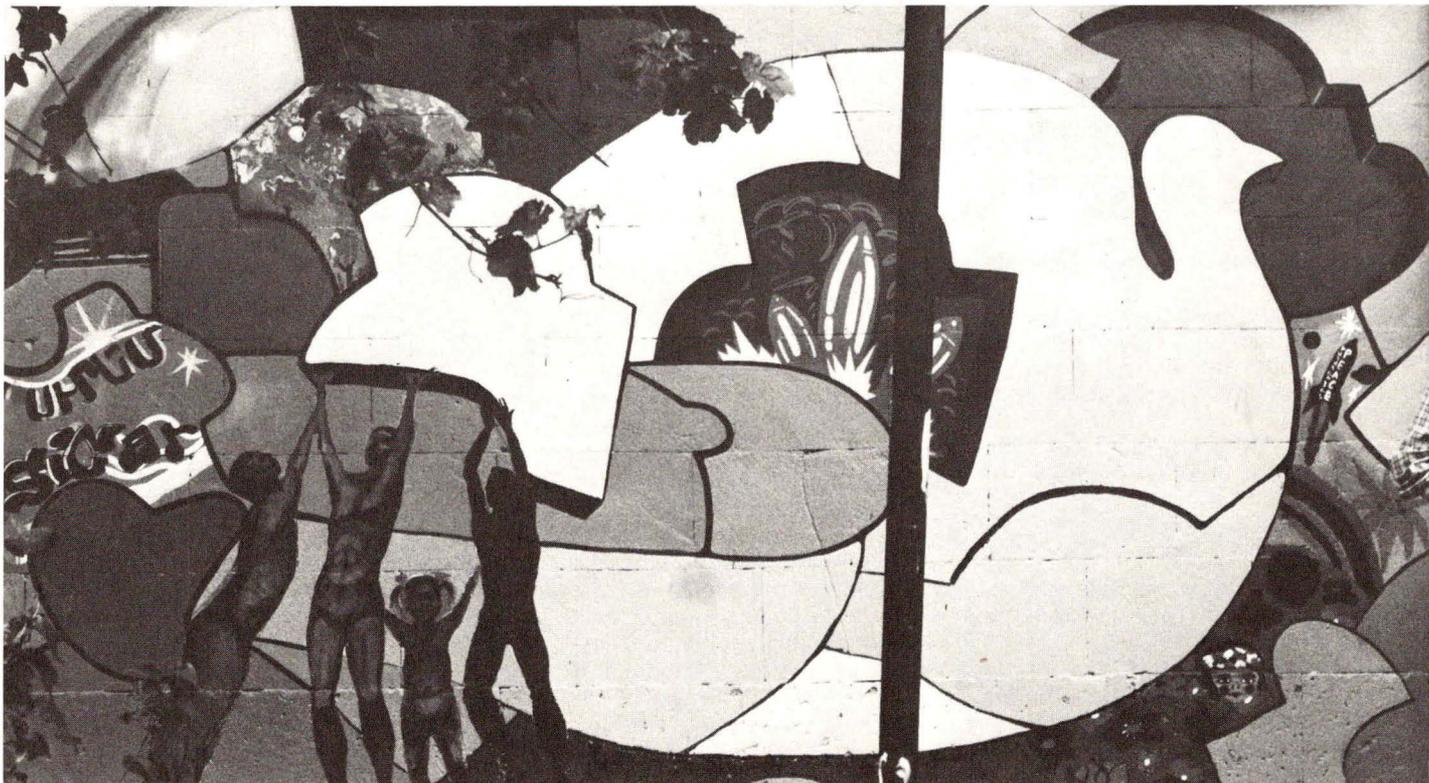
ple. Woven into a flat grid of curvilinear shapes were figures and portraits of Georgians in a historical sequence. One of the final figures was a huge Soviet soldier stepping on a broken swastika. We immediately dubbed this the world's highest mural.

In Ordzhonikidze, capital city of the autonomous Republic of Ossetia, we visited a youth palace which contained a beautiful indoor mosaic mural. The youth palaces are found in every city and are palaces where children can go after school to work on cultural projects, such as painting, photography or music or engage in sports activities. This mosaic mural depicted a number of children releasing doves. Another ceramic mural over the entrance to the youth palace in Moscow depicts children of many different nationalities working together in different cultural activities.

During our entire trip, which included Leningrad, Georgia, the republic of Ossetia, and Moscow, we met many friendly people and saw beautiful landscapes; but in Yerevan, Armenia we became very close to people from another culture because we created art together. We used a vocabulary that enabled us to deeply feel our common humanity, fulfilling the dream and vision that is "Children Are the Future."

*David Fichter*

*The Peace Puzzle (detail); photo - David Fichter*



# Painting Bridges with the Soviet Union

**What is important is the beautiful interaction of the artists and young people working together, not just the final product."**

Ashot Bayandour,  
Soviet Armenian artist

**It was really good. The Armenian kids were helping us and we were helping them. We couldn't speak the language, but we collaborated just by the brush.**

Derrick Johnson,  
teenage American artist

Can the language of art become the mortar for building bridges between the peoples of the United States and the Soviet Union? Can we learn to see things freshly through the eyes of our children, and free ourselves from the blinding stereotypes we have of another society and culture? These are questions raised in my mind by a trip last summer to the Soviet Union as a participant in "Children Are the Future", a project of cultural collaboration between children and artists from the United States and the Soviet Union.

When Judith Woodruff, the director of "Children Are the Future" invited me to travel to the Soviet Union and to work with children and other artists on a collaborative mural project in Yerevan, Armenia, I had many doubts about the possible success of such an undertaking. In the back of my mind there were nagging questions, such as: aren't Soviet artists severely restricted in how they can paint; and how will we ever receive permission to paint an outdoor public mural in the U.S.S.R., considering the overwhelming obstacles to public mural work in our own country? Despite my doubts and the many real obstacles, the cultural projects that we carried out in Armenia (SSR) were an overwhelming success.

In August 1985, our group of ten children and eleven adults, including three mural artists, a teacher of animated film, a musician-songwriter, a singer, a photographer, and a documentary film crew, traveled for three weeks in the Soviet Union. The three mural artists were Barbara Carrasco (Los Angeles, Ca.), Paul Goodknight (Boston, Ma.) and David Fichter (Cambridge, Ma.). As well as being experienced muralists, with an orientation towards art concerned with social issues, these artists have worked extensively with young people

in the creating of murals, often in the public school system. The children, whose ages ranged from 13 to 16, represented a broad cross-section of ethnic, racial and social backgrounds. Two of the teenagers, Geoffrey Maynard and Derrick Johnson, are accomplished graffiti muralists, who often collaborate on murals in the Boston area. The other teenage artists included Jason O'Neill, Donna Alveranga, and Ahmed Cook.

The participation of the children was essential in this project. Most adults find it difficult to experience the Soviet Union without an overload of negative stereotypes that they have absorbed from growing up in the United States, but the children tended to have fewer or less deeply engrained preconceptions. Their refreshing sense of discovery enabled the collaboration to succeed. One of the Armenian artists/teachers expressed her views on the role of the children. "People will believe the word of the child more than the word of a magazine or the official information, because children are children everywhere. They would never lie or tell something that is not really true."

The primary focus of our trip was a week in Yerevan, Armenia, where we collaborated with Armenian children and artists to paint a 70-foot mural on the outside wall of the Center for Aesthetic Education. Other members of "Children Are the Future" helped to create a short animated film based on an Armenian folktale and worked on creating songs and music in various neighborhoods of the city.

Yerevan was chosen as the primary location for our cultural activities because it is the site of the wonderful Children's Art Museum, which opened in 1970, the first of its kind in the world. The museum exhibits the work of Armenian children together with art of children from ninety countries. We were incredibly impressed by the originality of the children's work in the museum, which included many styles and mediums. The director and founder of this museum, as well as the Center for Aesthetic Education, where children study music, dance, theater, film, and visual art, is Henrig Igitian. The Museum of Modern Art, which was just being moved into a new building, was also founded by this same visionary. Mr. Igitian became our liaison in Armenia and aided us by providing Armenian artists and children who wanted to work on the mural, as well as the wall itself.

## The Process

The murals, which were completed in the course of four days, were most remarkable for the process of their crea-

tion. Because of the extremely short time period we had to paint the mural, we divided the wall into two sections, with the Americans designing one side and the Armenians the other. Later, as the painting progressed, artists and children from both countries worked on all parts of the mural. One section of the mural was a giant jigsaw puzzle containing the shape of a dove, a symbol of peace, from which several pieces of the puzzle were missing. Through the openings in the puzzle where the pieces were missing, one could see images of war (bombs and missiles). Children were lifting the final "missing" puzzle pieces into place, which would completely block out the images of war. The modular design of the jigsaw puzzle, enabled the Armenian and American kids to paint in their own individual images of peace and still maintain an overall design.

On the other side of the mural, the Armenians began to paint immediately without the use of preliminary sketches. The Armenian artists who collaborated with us included Ashot Bayandours, Eliza Akopian, Karen Andreaslan, and Ruslan. Other artists, neighborhood people and children also painted on the wall to varying degrees. Ashot Bayandours is the assistant director of the Museum of Modern Art, a painter who paints in a surrealist style reminiscent of the work of Max Ernst, and an illustrator of childrens' books. He was a delightful, warm, emotional artist who spoke some English and was often our main source of communication. Karen and Eliza are both professional artists who also teach children in the Center for Aesthetic Education. Ruslan is a leading Armenian artist who paints in two styles, one which loosely falls into an abstract expressionist category and the other which plays with geometric forms in a tightly-rendered illusionistic space.

Working in a more spontaneous, looser manner than the American artists, the Armenian side evolved from a large geometric train, into a beautiful abstract landscape with trees, birds, butterflies and geometric shapes. The Armenian artists called it a "Pastoral", which expressed the "gayness and sweetness of the world."

A third section of the mural was designed in graffiti style by one of the American teenagers, Geoff Maynard. The word "unity" exploded from the wall in the bold 3-D style of the popular street art of our urban walls. A "cartoon" character holds a dove in one hand and gives the peace sign with the other.

Geoff commented on the reaction to the first graffiti mural in the Soviet Union: "I was not nervous about the ac-

# INTERNATIONAL

## Scotland — Artists' Collective

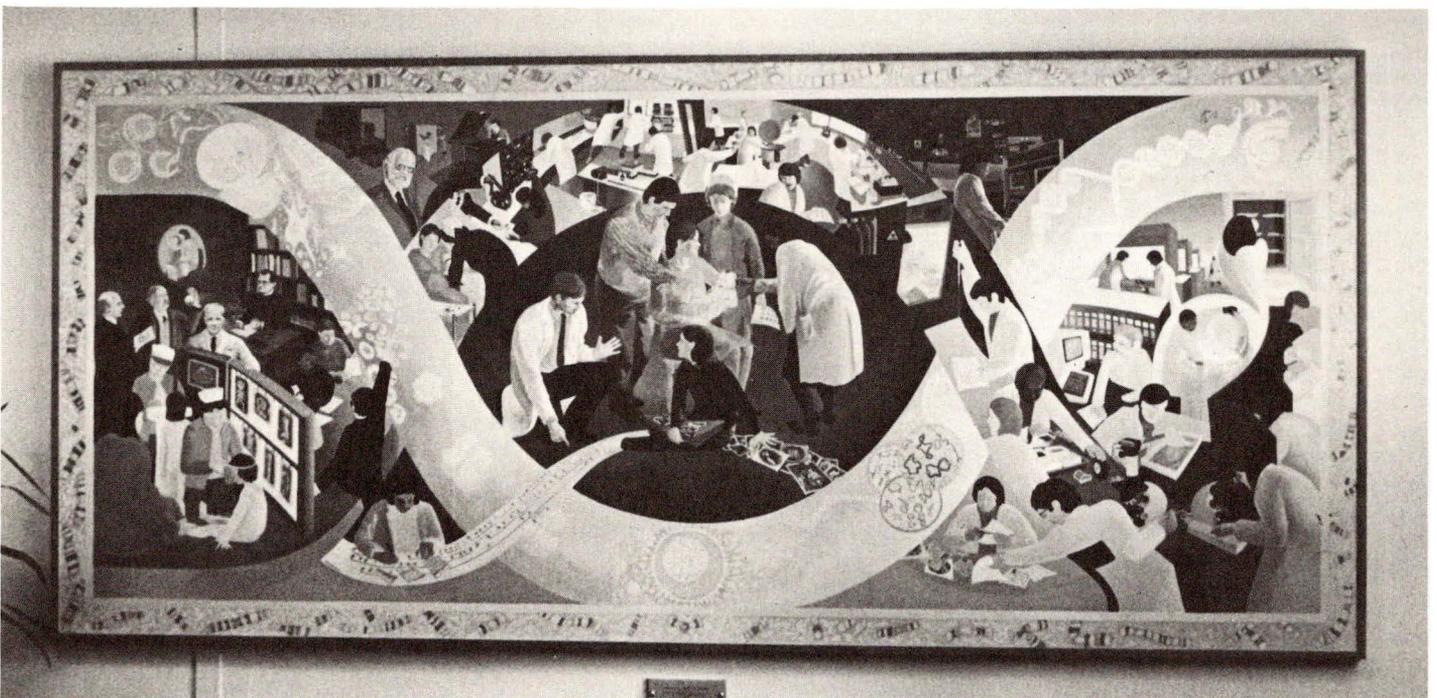
From 1981 to 1984 (at least, more recent information is unavailable), a group called the Artists' Collective painted several community murals in Scotland. The group, comprised of Paul Grime, David Wilkinson, and Tim Chalk, worked in various combinations among themselves and with other artists and residents nearby the mural sites. Illustrated here are two of their works (v. captions).

Other works include *The Foundry* in Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, which, at 28' x 95' is the largest project of the group, and depicts a cutaway view into the foundry on the other side of the mural wall showing the foundry process for making cast iron stoves and the necessary supporting staff, administrators, drivers, etc. The *Pastimes*, Saladander Street back-court mural was executed in 1981, and, using local residents as models, shows the leisure activities and games related to the locality. Mosaics were made by children and sited in the pavement as near as possible to the relevant child's house window.

*Dundee Heritage Mural*. Artists' Collective. Dundee 1983

Other works include *Cat Window*, *Edinburgh Trades*, and a group of panels at the resident senile dementia clinic at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, the *Govan Centre Mural*, *Concert Mosaics*, and *Seagulls*.

All projects are based on immediate community participation, if not actual painting, and were sponsored by a variety of local organizations and individual contributions.



*Medical Genetics*. Artists' Collective. Glasgow 1983

## High-tech Paint for Longshoremen's Mural

As the mural group, M.E.T.A.L. (Mural Environmentalists Together in Art Labor) completes its sculptural mural for the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union, we want to extol the virtues of the paint we have been using. For those inspired by David Siqueiros' invocation to integrate murals with sculpture and architecture and to use the most advanced materials and techniques offered by industry, here is a paint most versatilely suited for polychrome sculpture: Awl-Grip brand paint manufactured by U.S. Paint Company of St. Louis, Missouri.

Although community muralists might not approve of the fact that this epoxy urethane-acrylic paint is ordered in great quantities by the United States military for marine and aircraft applications, we can be assured of its durability. Awl-Grip is a top-of-the-line automotive refinishing lacquer. As a rule, automobile lacquers contain the most light-fast pigments which can also be made inexpensively. While this does not mean that Awl-Grip is an inexpensive paint, it assures us these paints are formulated at the most reasonable cost to hold up under the same ultraviolet rays

and weather conditions that murals are subjected to.

I wish to point out some of the other characteristics of Awl-Grip favorable to those who paint murals. Although Awl-Grip can only be applied to rigid surfaces, such as metal, fibreglass, and certain plastics, compatible with its primers, it is ideal for public art work where hardness and durability of the paint film is important. In this respect, it is equaled only by baked-on enamels. Before the epoxy sets, the paint handles almost as well as sign painter's enamel. It sprays like a heavy lacquer. The manufacturer's specifications even claim it can be used as a silk-screen ink. This versatility is due to the catalytic action of the epoxy hardener which provides the slow drying time, or "pot-life" (5-6 hours), necessary for brushing and working the details in a mural. This pot life, however, also means that each color used must be mixed each day. The process consists of mixing the colors, then adding 1/2 the quantity of catalyst, then adding the proper amount of reducer to give correct density for brushing. Too much catalyst weakens the paint, too little means it will never

fully harden; too much reducer means drips and thinness, too little, a consistency like half-dry glue. This is a precise medium. In spray applications, however, the slow drying time can be a disadvantage when a dust-free surface is required.

When M.E.T.A.L. ambitiously designed a free-standing sculpture to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Big Strike of 1934, we were faced with painting on steel surfaces which would be very accessible to the public. We not only needed to paint the pictorial narrative of the Strike, but also meet the requirement of the San Francisco Art Commission that the paint be "scratch-proof" to vandals with keys, etc. We investigated baked-on enamel, but found that the size and thickness of our steel panels, the cost, and the inflexible technical procedures were prohibitive, especially to our group effort.

In order to facilitate the application of the paint and to make the painting styles of individual members of the group consistent, we designed the images in flat, hard-edged areas of color. We found that by mixing small amounts of color with catalyst and thinner in paper drinking water cups we had greater flexibility in spreading out and working on all sides of our panels at once. Likewise, a team of two or three could work effectively together on one area. Unlike baked enamel, we could easily change a color or modify areas of the design. In final analysis, the technical challenge of mixing and applying the Awl-Grip paints has helped our group work collectively and bring a unified, consistent style to all the images.

The only draw-back to Awl-Grip, to which artists should be well alerted, is its toxicity. Like so many materials and processes which have beautiful results, there are dangerous elements. In particular, we avoid exposure to the glycol ethers and isocyanates in the epoxy paints and the lacquer vapors in general by wearing respirator masks, gloves, goggles, hoods and white throw-away jumpsuits which make us look more like a squad of extraterrestrials than muralists. Like so many safety precautions there is a slight inconvenience or awkwardness to get used to. We feel the precautions are worthwhile. We obtained material safety data sheets on all our materials from the paint supplier and help interpreting these sheets from H.E.S.I.S. (Hazard Evaluation System and Information Service) in Berkeley.

*Jamie Morgan*

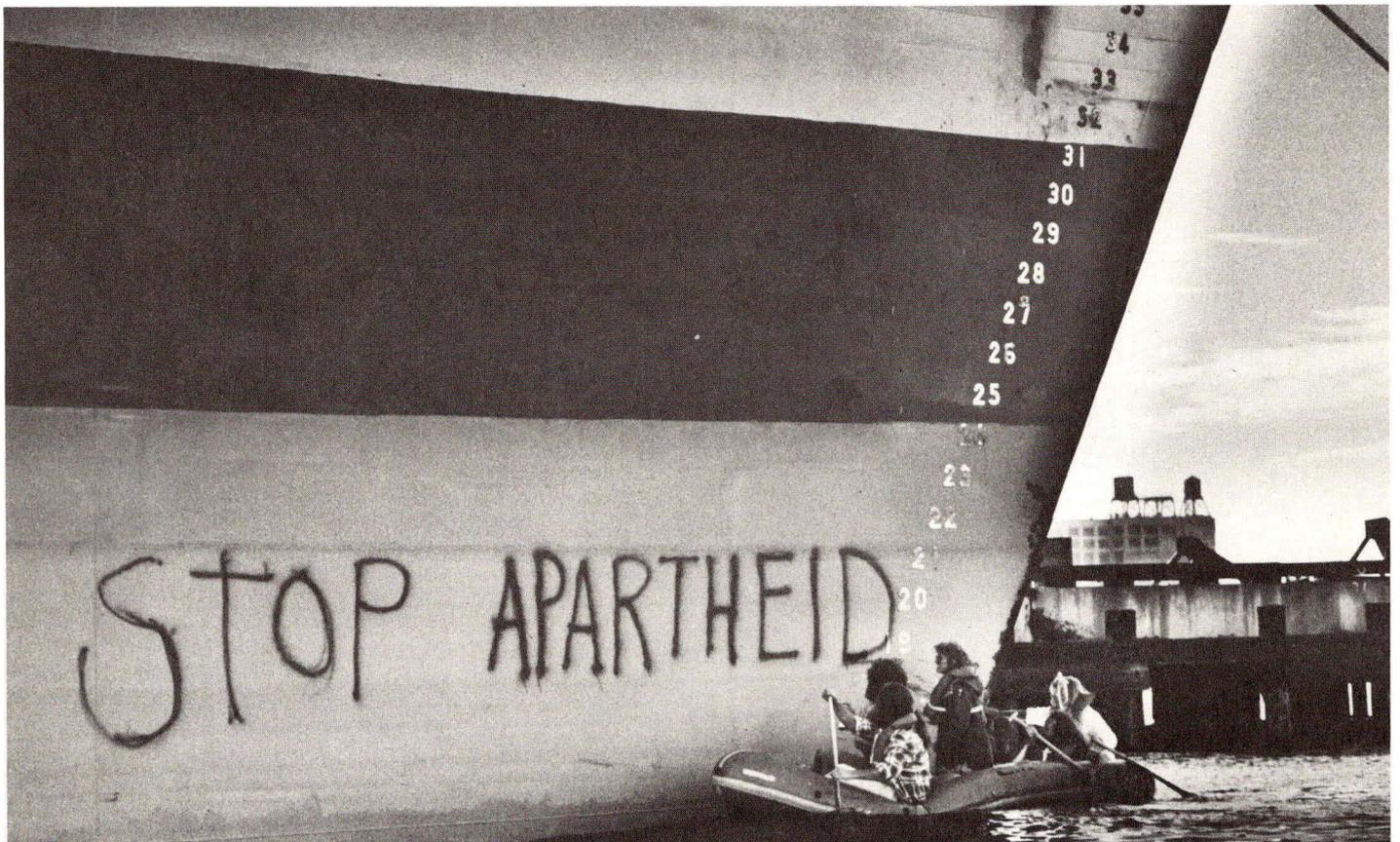


## Anti-Apartheid Artwork



Anti-Apartheid Mural, Mitchel Caton, Chicago 1985

photo - Jim Prigoff



On December 1, 1985, protestors working with the San Francisco Bay Area Peace Navy participated in redecorating the Dutch freighter Nedlloyd Kembla, which was carrying South African cargo. The ILWU (Longshoremen) were conducting a simultaneous picket outside the gates to the dock. *Photo by Mary Golden.*

# MIXED MEDIA

## Getting the Word Out — The Challenge for the 80's

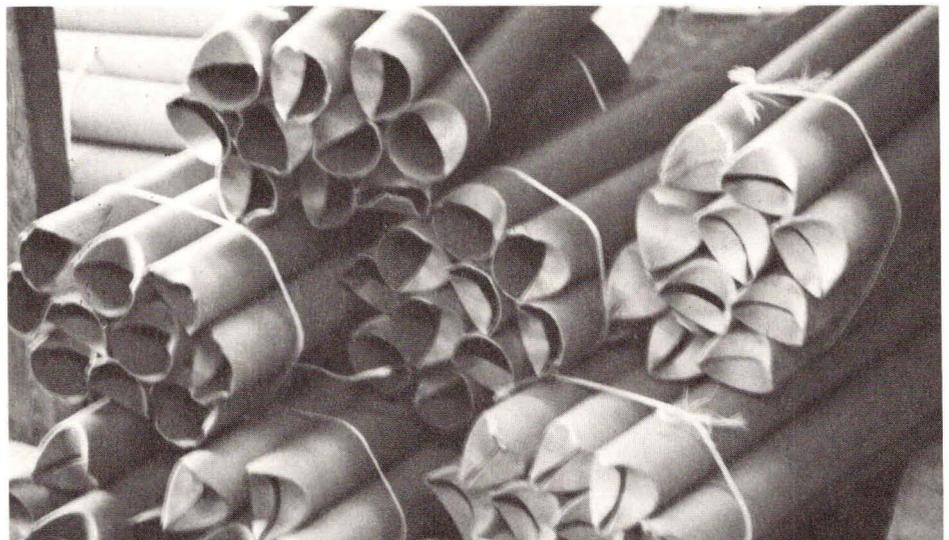
One of the biggest difficulties political poster artists face is the distribution of their work. Not only are multiple sales essential to helping artists support themselves, but dissemination of the message to those who need visual reinforcement is often the primary reason for doing posters in the first place. For years there was no viable method for artists to make their work available to a national audience on a consistent basis, but that has changed due to the efforts of two cultural organizations.

The *Northland Poster Collective* was started in the summer of 1979 as the visual arts caucus of a cultural worker's conference. Like many other poster-producing groups (such as the Chicago Women's Graphics Collective and the La Raza Silkscreen Center of San Francisco) they put a fair amount of effort into selling their own posters through a simple one-page catalog. However, by late 1983 they chose to expand their distribution to include the posters of others, and formally contacted groups and individuals across the country. The result was their 1984-85 catalog, featuring 87 posters. Northland currently supports a paid half-time staffperson, with about three more active volunteers participating in the chores of running the operation.

The *Syracuse Cultural Workers* started in mid-1982 as a group of culturally-committed activists who took on the task of producing the Syracuse Peace Council's annual calendar after the SPC has been losing money on it each year. Their big jump was in producing a full-color calendar in 1984, which was so successful that they decided to continue distributing the same type of artwork through a catalog. Their current catalog features over fifty posters. SCW is run by a staff of six full-time paid workers and several additional part-timers. In addition to the calendar and poster distribution, SCW offers a design service and organizes cultural events in their community.

Both groups have found a high demand for their service from producers, bookstores, and mail-order buyers. Northland's volume jumped 400% in 1985, distributing almost 4,000 posters. Syracuse has sold over 13,000 posters and 20,000 calendars this past year. They also have been reaching people in

Canada and Great Britain. Future plans for Syracuse include carrying more posters on Third World issues and expanding their "exhibition service", which allows for the temporary rental of mounted posters for conferences and events. Northland will be aiming catalogs at specific audiences, such as Labor, Women, and Education, in an effort to reach people who normally wouldn't come across social-issue artwork. They are currently producing a catalog specifically on Music. They are also interested in developing links with postermakers in other countries like



Nicaragua and Puerto Rico as a way to help expose the U.S. to the exciting art happening elsewhere and also raise much-needed money for cultural workers in those countries.

The work being done by these two groups is essential to the survival and growth of progressive culture in the U.S. As Ricardo Levins-Morales of Northland puts it, "We want to help create an atmosphere in which artists will consider postermaking a more viable option than it previously has been, and at the same time improve contact between artists." That is certainly happening.

— Lincoln Cushing

**Northland Poster Collective**  
127 N. Washington St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 724-6795

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

Another source for posters on the American Labor Movement is:

**Bread and Roses**  
c/o Publishing Center for Cultural Resources  
625 Broadway  
New York, N.Y. 10012  
(212) 455-9621

Northland Poster Collective; photos - Lincoln Cushing

## Mass-Produced Billboard Corrections

Approximately fifteen silkscreened "No Aid to Contras" banners appeared recently in the San Francisco Bay Area as corrections to a variety of billboard advertisements. Each paper banner was eighteen feet long and was given to autonomous artists groups. The only request made by those who produced the banners was that a slide of the finished work be brought to a party where technical lessons and trade stories would be discussed. At the present time, May, 1986, the lessons have not been gathered and evaluated, but the party was enjoyable and productive.

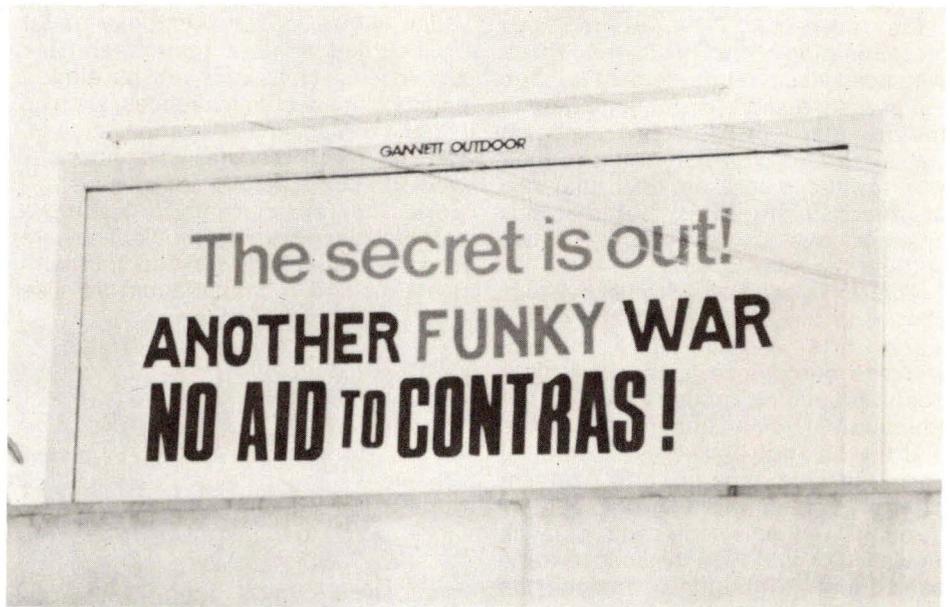
One participant visual artist observed that "we need to make many more banners per edition. Lots of folks want them and are willing to put them in creative places. Also, when including artwork, think big—10 to 20 ft.<sup>2</sup> of image is still small on a 90 ft. billboard.

"From the philosophical side, the project made me realize that I have been channeled by the system into traditional legal and less visible forms of protest. This visual response around the issue of Nicaragua was seen by more people on the way to work than all the art shows I have been in for the last 18 years.

"As an activist artist I'm embarrassed that I have not previously used

billboards. I asked myself 'Why?' I know it wasn't respect for corporate private property, or was it? Possibly it is the fact that billboards represent the ugliest aspect of our society, commercialism, and visual ugliness. In any case, the past is the past. The billboards are ours if we use them, and I am convinced that

a cleverly corrected billboard can be an inspiration and source of pride. The war-makers and corporate bulls depend on our being passive, unquestioning followers. The altered sign challenges their two gods: private property and power."

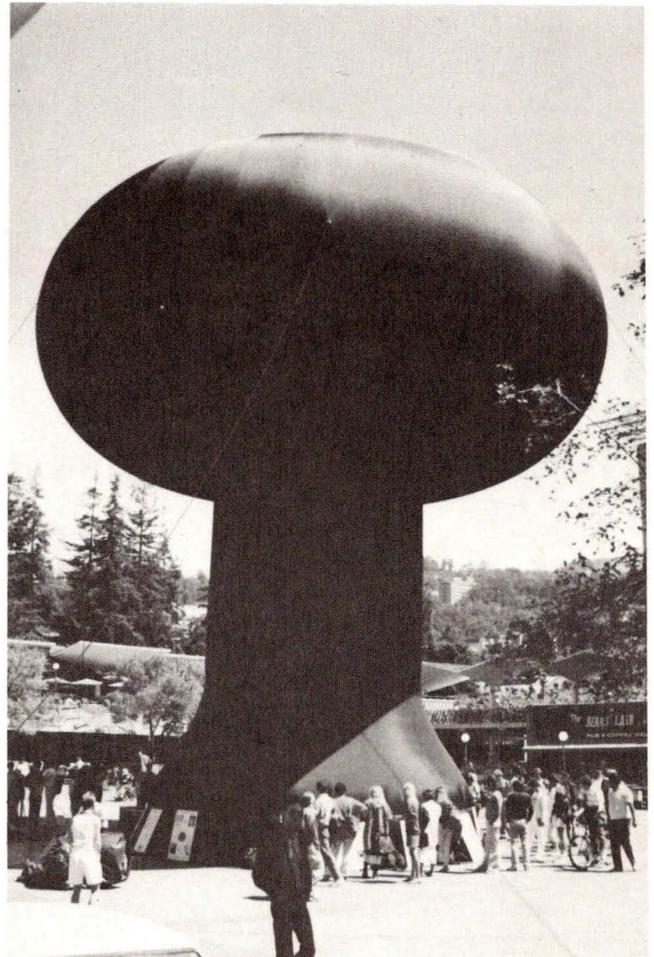
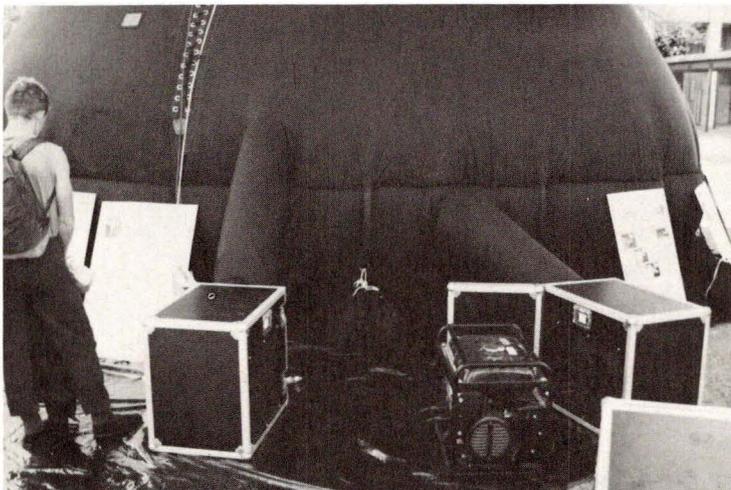




## A Blow for Peace

This 50-foot inflatable mushroom cloud is the work of Los Angeles artist Lee Waisler. It was beautifully constructed in Europe out of ripstop mylon, and is kept up by continuous air pressure supplied by two blowers. A gasoline generator provides an independent source of electricity. The cloud serves as a highly visible prop for peace demonstrations and educational events. For more information, contact the artist at 447 Seaton Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013.

— photos Lincoln Cushing



**CMM**  
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Berkeley, CA 94707

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