



# EDITORIAL

## Arizona Apartheid

One of the things visual arts do best is to make connections. The Reagan administration and its followers in the mass media adamantly refuse even to admit that connections exist between various examples of government policy. Since we were insulted by the July 4 saccharine extravaganza celebrating the refurbished Statue of Liberty as a symbol of this country's ideals of freedom and democracy, readers of *CMM* are encouraged to make the connections between the celebration's hype and the reality of millions of people's lives. The hype hides the connections we all should make.

For example, at the same time the Statue of Liberty was being touted as a symbol of our nation's openness to immigrants, our country's current policy excludes many of the most needful who wish to come here. In the case of some from Central America, immigrants, in the name of law and order, are being returned to torture, prison, and death. The law has become a tool of oppression. Others, such as Haitians, are put into jail here before being returned to similar fates at home.

While Los Angeles talked of building a Statue of Liberty West, the KKK and independent reactionaries organized vigilante border patrols to "help" the Immigration Service capture people crossing our borders from Mexico.

Our government's actions are, while despicable, consistent. Rejecting unanimous condemnation by the World Court of our warmaking on Nicaragua, continuing support of repressive dictatorships throughout the world (as long as they are right-wing), and cutting us off from emerging and struggling nations everywhere, the United States also seeks to isolate internal groups which have conflicting interests.

Not to mention the hypocrisy-become-law of the recent Supreme Court decision upholding an anti-sodomy statute. The virulence of anti-gay and anti-lesbian forces is currently seen in a Lyndon LaRouche California ballot proposition which, if passed, would quarantine anyone who tests positively for the AIDS antibody. Let us dismiss this as a fascist fantasy, remember that Larouche did gather the thousands of signatures necessary to place the measure on the November ballot.

The connections are there if we but look. Relocation of 100,000 Navajo Indians from their ancestral homelands at Big Mountain, Arizona, was scheduled for only three days after July 4. This Arizona apartheid is a model for the forced relocation into bantustans in South Africa. Blacks lived on land the ruling group wanted in South Africa, so they were put into camps (called "townships"). Indians have land major corporations want (in this case, Peabody Coal), and the government tries to relocate the Indians (again; remember the 19th century) onto still different reservations (are they called that because they reserve the best lands for corporate exploitation?).

The more we are successful in illustrating connections between events the government and the media portray as separate, the more we challenge people's intelligence instead of insulting it, the more we can gain of an accurate sense of our own histories, the closer we will be to a more just world and to having a national policy that instead of being shameful supports the movement of all people for economic, racial and sexual equality.

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## 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.

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# RESOURCES

## Middle East Poster Exhibit

Sheraton Boston Hotel  
November 19-23, 1986

The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) will be presenting a major exhibit of graphically outstanding Israeli and Palestinian posters during their annual conference, drawn from the archives of Liberation Graphics. For more information, contact Dan Walsh at Liberation Graphics, (703) 549-4957 (see article on page 21).



## Instant Litter

Concert Posters from Seattle  
Punk Culture  
Compiled by Art Chantry  
Real Comet Press, 1985  
112 pp., \$19.95

*Litter* is a carefully assembled documentary of some very original contemporary visual art. It includes more than 150 music posters produced between 1976 and 1984, with meticulous notation as to date, artist, size, medium, and color. Running annotations provide relevant background about the bands, the artists and the overall music scene.

There are no pretensions about this being "great art". With the few exceptions of clean design by committed professionals, the images displayed are often raw, funky and chaotic. They are also extremely effective and powerful statements, produced by "common people" with little training but with tremendous creative energy. *Litter* is an inspiring chronicle of one kind of community art.

## This Is Apartheid: A Pictorial Introduction

International Defense & Aid Fund  
for Southern Africa  
P.O. Box 17  
Cambridge, MA 02238

This is a small publication with excellent information clearly stated that explains the basics of apartheid in South Africa. Its maps and photographs provide the sorts of visual material especially useful for artists. An excellent place to begin study.

## CHILE ALERT

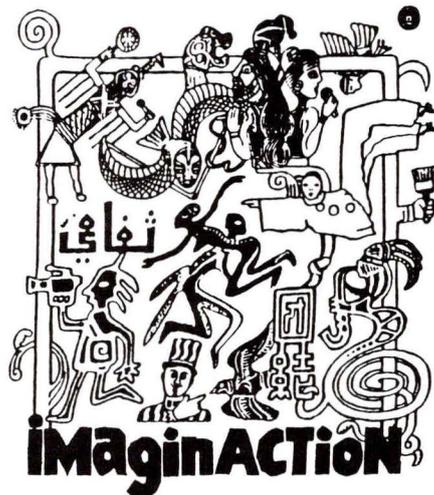
The Association of Painters and Sculptors of Chile (APECH) needs international support to demand that members of the Civic Assembly not be prosecuted under unspecified subversive charges by the military Junta. The Civic Assembly is a broad-based organization which has recently called for a restoration of democracy in Chile. Sculptor Lautaro Labbe, vice-president of APECH, is on the executive board of the Civic Assembly.

Letters of support can be sent to APECH, Almirante Simpson 7, Santiago, Chile. Phone # is 2229739.

## The Other America

Art and the Labor Movement  
in the United States  
Ed. Philip S. Foner and Reinhard Schultz  
Journeyman Press, England  
Available through Midwest Publishers  
Box 4642  
Kansas City, MO 64109  
176 pp., \$14.95 plus \$1 postage

This is the long-awaited English version of the catalog originally produced for the exhibit in Germany in 1983. With over 2,000 pieces, this show is one of the largest collections of art by and about U.S. working people ever assembled. It includes both classic historical pieces as well as a strong representation of contemporary class-conscious art. This version includes several essays, among them "Images of the Afro-American Experience", "Images of Labor in United States Community Murals" by Tim Drescher and Jim Prigoff and Anton Refrigier's "Message to the National Mural Conference of 1976."



10th Anniversary Conference of the  
Alliance for Cultural Democracy  
November 7-10, 1986  
Roxbury Community College  
Boston, Massachusetts

ACD conferences are an excellent opportunity to meet activist artists and cultural workers from all over the U.S. Participants represent all media and types of communities; nowhere else will you find the opportunity to share and learn with so many cultural professionals who have good politics. The conference will include several performances, three major plenary sessions, and workshops on a wide range of topics, including community murals, story collecting, the art of Black music and dance, action theater, and setting up community and activist art programs. For registration information, contact ACD conference planners c/o 42 Jamaica Road, Brookline, MA, 02146, phone (617) 277-1009 or 423-3711.

## CALENDAR 1987 NEW YORK STREET ART

Enjoy fifteen of the best in  
contemporary & temporary  
murals and graffiti from the  
streets of New York City.

9 x 12, saddle stitched, four color,  
13 months, (large grid for daily notes)

Calendars must be ordered through  
*Community Murals* magazine, \$7.95

### International Poster Contest New Nicaragua Agency (ANN)

Nicaragua is sponsoring an international poster contest on the theme of "Aggression by the Government of the U.S. is a Violation of Human Rights." Up to three entries are allowed, size is 17x22", using up to eight colors in any medium. Posters should include the text "Nicaragua Has The Right to Life and Peace, VII Anniversary of the ANN, October 19, 1979." The deadline is October 1, 1986. Entries may be sent directly to ANN or through the Nicaraguan embassy in the U.S.

— thanks to Liberation Graphics

### International Conference on Visual Arts of the Caribbean November 27-29, 1986 Havana, Cuba

Sponsored by the Wilfredo Lam Center, this conference will cover such topics as the general situation of Caribbean visual arts, art distribution, "cultured" art vs. popular art, and the role of visual arts in social life. For more information, contact the conference committee at The International Conference Center, Apartado 16046, Havana, Cuba.

### Nicaraguan Poster Archives Project c/o Liberation Graphics P.O. Box 2394N Alexandria, VA 22301

Two full-color posters by internationally-renowned Nicaraguan artists Leoncio Saenz and Armando Morales are available for sale as a fundraiser for the NPAP. The Project will promote a greater appreciation for the posters of contemporary Nicaragua, help to establish a professional historical archive of internationally-produced Nicaraguan posters, and support the operation of a clearinghouse for the distribution of solidarity posters. Contact NPAP for more information.

### Pork Roast c/o Avis Lang 202 W. 78th St., #3E New York, N.Y. 10024 \$2.95, including postage and handling

Originally the catalog for the First International Exhibition of Feminist Cartoons in Vancouver, Canada, *Roast* reproduces over 60 works by fifty artists.

### London Mural List

The Greenwich Mural Workshop has recently published *A Guide To London Murals Since 1976* in booklet form, with basic documentation of 282 murals still up and an appendix listing 17 that have been destroyed. Also included are black and white photographs of 23 London murals. This is an important documentation, and stands beside the earlier similar booklet by Victor Sorell listing the murals of Chicago.

The List will be available from CMM for \$4.50, including mailing, or you may write directly to the GMW.

### International Poster Contest: "For Peace and Social Progress" 117049 Krymskaya naberezhnaya No 10/14 Moscow, USSR

This contest is sponsored by the Union of Soviet Artists, the Ministry of Culture of the USSR, the Soviet Committee for Peace, and other organizations in an effort to further the creation of poster art which "expresses the desire of all peace-loving forces of the planet to strengthen peace, to contain the arms race, and to make every possible effort to stop nuclear disaster."

Deadline is a postmark no later than October 31, 1986. Artwork must be mounted on cardboard 70x100 centimeters (27½x39"). The artist must also mark the back of the work with a random 6-digit number, and include a separate envelope with the same number on the outside and the following information inside: name, date of birth, education, place of work and mailing address. There will be cash prizes, awards, exhibitions, and a catalog.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Community, Art and The State: Storming the Citadels

by Owen Kelly

published in 1984 by Comedia Publishing Group, 9 Poland St., London W1V 3DG  
distributed in USA by Marion Boyars and The Scribner Book Companies  
140 pp., \$5.50

...Murals come in three sorts, although the distinctions can, in practice, become blurred. Firstly there are those painted in enclosed or 'private' spaces, which are intended for a specific and known audience. These both celebrate, and are part of, a social process in which those who view the mural are as much participants as those who painted it. ...The meanings that accrue to it form a **primary understanding** for they will be part of a body of collective knowledge, and stepping stones towards community.

Secondly there are murals painted on the outside of buildings such as tenants association halls, youth clubs and community centres. These form both a statement of group identity and a form of self-advertisement...The mural serves as a point of clarification about what the building is, how it is seen by those who use it, and how they invite other people to see it...

Thirdly, there is a large group of murals painted on 'public spaces.' These may relate in a very general way to the area in which they are located...their siting is determined by the location of public spaces that are deemed to be available. These murals may contain images which, in their content, are supposed to be radical: they may be anti-nuclear murals, such as

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United States institutional subscriptions	\$20
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Great Britain individual subscriptions	L20
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- \* 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., except for Great Britain mailed to the St. Stephens address, which may be in pounds.

have been sponsored by the GLC [Greater London Council] on five inner-city sites in London... They could be repainted elsewhere without losing any of their meaning. They are a radical message to the world at large addressed by an individual or a small group to an anonymous mass audience...

Such murals do not provide a focal point for a group, nor an emblem for a community; they simply oppress people. They are ideological advertisements rendered more permanent than any capitalists would dare render their advertisements, and they oppress in precisely the same way as any other advertisement. They demand attention from the passer-by in a way which brooks no argument, and they shout their messages at a volume which makes reception compulsory to all but the blind, and acts as a form of ideological conscription... They are part of a pattern of distribution and enforced reception in which those who receive the messages are given no control over what they receive and no chance to opt out...

The sub-text of the third kind of mural is a celebration of the domination of the local state over its subjects. It says: we are powerful and you are not; we are active and you are passive. It says: we can change the very environment in which you are caused to live, and our power is so great that we can use it whimsically. It is the celebration by those in power (who can grant or refuse planning permission and provide or withdraw grants) of their enforced monopoly of decision-making, and it serves to remind those who trudge past how little control they really have over their own lives...

These murals are proof, if proof were needed, that radical intention is not enough...

—Owen Kelly,  
*Community, Art and The State*,  
pp. 113-115

Owen Kelly is a veteran of the British community arts movement. He works as a member of Mediumwave, a collective based in South London. He has written a short book on community arts and cultural democracy which deserves to be read and considered by every practitioner in the USA.

The above excerpt appears in Owen Kelly's book almost as an aside. It illustrates his point that "work practices must themselves be the subject of debate and analysis, not in order that we can destroy our work, but in order that we can build a practice which is congruent with our aims and which is not self-contradictory" (p. 116). Kelly's observations on the "third type" of

murals touch on all his principal concerns: the relationship of community arts work to an identifiable and real community; its relationship to its funders; its aims and theoretical underpinnings. In exploring these themes, Part One of the book takes up the story of the community arts movement in the United Kingdom and its co-optation by funders.



This moral tale will be instructive to Kelly's counterparts in the U.S. Beginning with the first flushes of community arts activity in the '60s, he describes the vision and commitment of pioneers in the field. U.S. readers who were around for early organizing in this country will recognize the heady mixture of hope and experiment which fueled a boom in community murals and every other sort of community-based cultural work.

But from the first there was the problem of money. To obtain financing from the government, community artists decided to find a way to describe their work that would fit within the existing language and ideology of the Arts Council of Great Britain. Community artists took seats on grants- and policy-making panels, learned all the tricks of completing grant applications, and set about legitimating their work by converting it from a form of opposition to constituted authority to a profession within the state apparatus—like "social worker" or "teacher's aid." This project succeeded to an unforeseen extent: seamlessly, gradually, community artists came to use the language, standards, and work practices of the arts agencies as if they really fit. And in doing so, they diverted the movement from its real aims and real strength.

Kelly argues that it is not too late to reverse this process. He calls for a group effort to build a theoretical base for the work, and a firm commitment to the goal of cultural democracy. He believes we must continuously evaluate each project and each initiative in light of this goal, and that instead of trying to make our work look acceptable within the funders' biases, we should insist on what's unique and valuable about our

practices and press funders to accept our language and standards.

To make these arguments, he lays out a sweeping critique of the dominant social, political and economic forms. Sections of Part Two look freshly at the concepts such as "art" and "community," urging us to deconstruct these ideas, revise them, and redeploy them in the service of cultural democracy. Kelly feels he must cover a very broad territory in this attempt to offer a "political framework for community arts." I'm not so sure, since some of this second section seems to pull the reader away from the volume's emphasis on cultural politics. But it's short and interesting and well worth returning to for a second or third reading.

Part Three of *Community, Art and The State* provides Kelly's prescriptions for the future. This is the most uneven of the three sections. Readers will find much inspiration here: worth the price of the volume alone is Kelly's recommendation that community groups must maintain "transparent economies," in which the sources and flows of money are visible to all. But mixed in with such ideas are others not so well thought-out. For instance, Kelly sees the need to replace the method of community arts funding common in Great Britain, where groups apply for annual "revenue grants" which essentially act as general operating support, in effect putting community artists on the state payroll. He sees this single-source funding as a form of grant addiction and a way to silence opposition, and rightly so. But in its place he recommends a series of limited-term project grants, forcing community arts groups to find financing for each of their projects in turn. In the abstract, this may sound like an improvement. But I wish Kelly had thought first to investigate the situation of community artists in the U.S., who are effectively diverted from their real work by the necessity of continuous fund-raising; he would have had to look for another remedy.

Kelly says that he has "endeavoured to write a book in which the argument is open, rather than closed, and which provides the subject matter for further debate, rather than a collection of prescribed solutions to be swallowed whole." In this aim he has succeeded admirably. This book will be of great interest to muralists and other community artists, but also to anyone whose work is partly funded by government and anyone who has an interest in the whole area of cultural politics. If you cannot find a copy in a local bookstore, I urge you to send for one today.

—Arlene Goldbard

# MATERIAL AID

## Modern Mural Paints

by William Meadows

In our first article for *Community Murals*, (Summer 1986), we discussed the basic nature of paint, the various types which are sold commercially and the primary ingredients which constitute a typical paint. Artist paints are highly specialized materials which are especially formulated to meet the exacting needs of the painter. In this article, we will outline stages in the development of artist paints with emphasis on the special needs of muralists. Some general suggestions will be offered on the use of commercial house paints in mural work.

The history of the development of paints for artists reveals very slow technical progress. Artist paints, like all coatings, need two basic ingredients to make them work — pigments to provide color and obscure the substrate, and binder to adhere the pigments to the desired surface. Traditionally, pigments were from natural sources — oxide reds and greens, ochers, chalk, and charcoal.

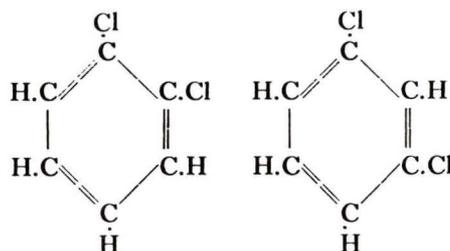
Egyptians of 8000 to 5000 B.C. made the first synthetic pigments by calcining (heating at high temperatures) sand, soda, and copper to produce Egyptian blue. Binders were gum arabic, egg white and egg yolk, gelatin, and treated beeswax. The Greeks mostly used egg albumins (egg white) which is now being used again by modern artists. With the emergence of painting with oils in the 15th century, it would seem that artists felt their technical needs were met. From that point to the 20th century, there was really no significant technical advance in artists paints.

It was the development of the mural movement in Mexico in the early 1920's which stimulated a need for materials which would have better properties. Oil paints, based on linseed oil, had a number of disadvantages. These paint films were subject to oxidation and thus chalked (powdered) in exterior applications, cracked in a typical pattern (see any old oil painted masterpiece), and yellowed. Oil paints inherently had poor resistance to alkali attack when applied to masonry walls.

The mural artist turned to the industrial paint chemist for help, and it was fortunate that the muralists' needs coincided with a series of important technological advances going on in the coatings industry. It was during the 20's and 30's that the first commercial

acrylic resins began to appear, pioneered by the Rohm and Haas Company. Later, in the period of the Second World War, a series of latex polymers were developed starting with basic chemical building blocks called monomers. Chemically these monomers were styrene butadiene (the polymer for synthetic rubber tires), polyvinyl acetate, and acrylic. In latex polymer, the monomer is dispersed into tiny particles in water. When the water evaporates, the particles fuse together and form a film.

In particular, acrylic polymers seemed to be ideal for the needs of the muralist. Acrylic is as transparent as glass, is extremely resistant to sunlight, very flexible and strong, and quite alkali resistant. During the war, acrylic plastic was used for aircraft canopies because of its excellent transparency and resistance to ultra violet light. The first acrylics to be available to muralists were, however, not latex but needed to be dissolved in strong solvents for use. These materials were called acryloids.



These new so called plastic paints were, at first, compounded by the artists themselves. This was before the paint industry fully understood the needs of artists. One of the foremost experimenters in Mexico was Jose Guitierrez. In the 1940's he founded, with David Alfaro Siqueiros, an experimental paint workshop at the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City. Paints developed there were used by the great muralists Siqueiros, Orozco, and Rivera in glorious works we can still view today. In association with the resin manufacturer, Rohm and Haas, the product Politec emerged from this work, very similar to Liquitex paints which you are all familiar with. Politec, I have been led to believe, is being manufactured again in the San Francisco Bay area.

As indicated above, the older solvent-based plastic paints, based on acrylic, were difficult to use. Strong solvents such as xylol and toluene were required, and the application characteristics of these paints could not be easily varied.

Water based latex acrylic paints were the obvious answer, and these began to appear in the 1950's. These paints had the good properties muralists need including outstanding UV (sunlight) resistance, flexibility, excellent resistance to cracking, excellent water resistance, quick drying, and water clean up. Such artist paints could be easily modified to produce levelling or non-levelling as desired. These paints can be made to the consistency of oil tube colors or even thicker for spatula application. There is little change in color from wet to dry. The polymer is absolutely transparent and, therefore, full color values of pigments can be obtained. Application is much easier than with oil tube colors. True, the artist had to change his working techniques based on the very rapid drying of these materials.

Today the acrylic latex based artists colors such as those produced by Liquitex and Politec are the paint of choice for muralists. How do these paints, which are admittedly very expensive, differ from the acrylic house paints widely advertised today? One main difference is in the working qualities of the materials. Acrylic house paints are meant to be applied by the home owner or professional painter by brush or roller. They must be low in viscosity (fluidity or thinness) to be applied easily in large areas. They must level out well to present a smooth surface. Artists' acrylic paints, on the other hand, need to be much thicker (higher in viscosity) so that they can be applied in thicker films or by spatula.

There are other differences between artists' acrylic colors and standard acrylic house paints. Artists work with intense, primary colors. Most house paints are in light pastel tints. Who wants to paint their house in brilliant red or blue? Since very intense colors are not popular, these colors are often produced from acrylic paint bases with very low hiding power (little or no titanium pigment — the major opacifier). To produce deep colors, additions are made from color canisters in the paint store. It is common to use up to 12 oz. per gallon. These colorants are high in what we call surfactants or wetting agents which are water sensitive. Therefore, such paints have poor durability outside. Also, they tend to be very weak in hiding power (opacity) which is undesirable for mural work. It is perfectly all right to use such paints for blocking out white or very pastel colors but for strong, intense colors, we would

certainly recommend the purchase of quality artist materials.

Another reason for using materials like Politec or Liquitex in preference to paints available at your local paint store is in the careful choice of color pigments for long range durability. Many consumer paints are designed for inside use only. Therefore the color pigments do not have to be resistant to sunlight. Artist paint companies like Liquitex use ASTM standards for color durability. These developed standards are based on 100 years of indoor museum life as tested by special fluorescent light cabinets. There are three classes: Class I represents the finest quality pigments, with no fade after 100 years interior museum life. Colors in this class include most of the oxide earth colors, phthalo blue and green, medium yellow

229, and some naphthol colors. Class II colors have some fading on a similar exposure as above. Class III colors are unacceptable for good durability. These include colors like Hooker Green, alizerin crimson, etc. (More on color pigments in a future article.) Obviously muralists should use only Class I colors.

There are still oil based paints sold at your neighborhood paint store. These days, these are actually not oil based but are based on alkyd synthetic resins. However, none of these should be used by muralists because all have the problems we have discussed for oil paints.

Some muralists are currently using high tech catalysed or so-called two package paints. Such paints are called epoxies, acrylic urethanes, etc. Before using such paints the activator, or catalyst, must be mixed with the basic paint.

Muralists should approach these painting materials with great caution. All use very strong solvents which are health hazards and are hard on the skin. Almost all these resins have carcinogenic properties—they may cause cancer with repeated use. For application, masks, with air supply, are recommended and protective clothing. The films produced by such paints are of high quality and are tile-like in properties. However, it is my opinion that these paints should be avoided by muralists because of the obvious hazards.

It is hoped that this article will help muralists to choose paints wisely. Future articles will cover paint resins and binders in more detail, color pigments, and clear protective overlays for muralists — “the graffiti problem.”

colours in nature as well as colour photographs and reproductions.

There are four aspects of colour to consider.  
1. The character of the building will be changed by the colours used, so consider the character the colour should give it.  
2. Each mural relates to its specific coloured locality, the way in which it will blend or stand out, and this should be examined by colour sketches or notes, and cc photos.

3. Local people have imaginative and definite views about colour, though in some cases these are expressed when they are imaginatively canvassed give two examples of very generalised views: most people of the Garnethill district of Glasgow was specifically muted colours when asked by the arts 1 surveying out murals in 1979; in Greenwich at the same time the muralists were being told, “Bright cool definitely. No point in doing it otherwise.” To some communities, as to individual clients, particular colour has symbolic importance that muralists responded to. Sometimes these choices have nationalistic basis but more often they are emblematic of local pride.

4. Walls get varying amounts of light according to direction and location, and unless a mural is somewhere without natural light, its appearance

change through the day. Dingy places created by overshadowing, interiors or subways usually demand mainly light colours - for the effect of dark colours is to cut out reflectivity and make the space even darker. This does not mean using all light colours, for it is probable that in order to be seen clearly, colours need to be strong and contrasts, including tonal-value contrasts, need to

The materials and equipment required to carry out the painting of a mural can appear to be a deterrent, but technically a mural follows the same process of preparation, priming and painting that is used for easel paintings and for household painting or redecoration. Here we describe the preparation of the wall (or substrate), the use of conventional artists or house paints, the tools and equipment you can expect to use and problems of maintenance.

## GMW Publishes MURAL MANUAL

The Greenwich Mural Workshop has recently published a *Mural Manual* which is as clear and helpful a document as any of us could wish. Since it is directed specifically at a British audience, it is most applicable in Great Britain, but as an introduction to contemporary mural painting, it is recommended for anyone interested in the myriad complex processes that go into a mural project. The purpose of the booklet is made clear in the introduction:

*In writing what follows we are setting out to establish a guide to enable artists, groups or communities to find, set up, and carry out mural projects. We do not intend to fix on any particular method, but want to suggest opportunities, techniques and processes, and ways of dealing with special problems, not hiding our own bias, but making the information so catholic it will be of use to all.*

The guide succeeds. After a brief history, which gives specific and appropriate emphasis to murals in Great Britain, the guide three pages on financing your project, and excellent outline which gives specifics about who to contact, what sorts of groups, (with specific addresses and names in England), and also practical hints on how to make an effective presentation to a funding body, how to do proper accounting, and how to write out and follow an effective budget (complete with excellent “budget checklist.”)

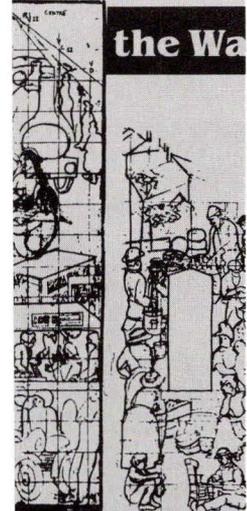
By the seventh page when the talk is of walls and permissions (before mov-

ing on to themes and design strategies) there have been illustrations, photographs, charts, and clear, direct subheadings. This spirit continues throughout the entire publication, helping the reader to move ahead quickly by providing helpful illustrations exactly when necessary. *Mural Manual*, unlike too many English publications, is not a sea of tiny type without a break, but is a delightful, informative booklet whose design reflects the vitality of the subject: community based mural projects.

Of particular interest might be the information about non-paint media. The *Manual* discusses the Keim systems, only recently “discovered” in the United States, but also has at least basic information on fresco, mosaics, murals on concrete blocks, concrete relief murals (modelled on site or off site), ceramic tiles, and painting on metal.

The concluding sample forms and items for various contracts is a helpful guide to the problems/issues involved in the legalities of community arts, but the advice of *CMM* is that if you need a contract or legal form, you had best retain a lawyer in your specific area. Not only do the laws and legal customs of different countries vary, so they do in separate states in the United States, and even within different municipalities.

*Mural Manual* was first published in installments in *Artists Newsletter*, in England, and is now available from the Greenwich Mural Workshop, The Macbean Centre, Macbean Street, London SE18 6LW, England.



particular pattern. In this way you get a true copy of design, undistorted by your ideas of what it represents. It may seem strange until you understand problems that sheer size of the image can bring. If design as clear and detailed as possible so that it no need to be inventing and correcting later when painting the design. An hour spent at the design stage, deliberately working out a problem may save altering the image on the wall at a scale twenty times larger. This does not mean that you can't improve design once it is on the wall. When you have established a line from the design onto the wall, you can still halve been done from a distance as well as close to modify or add details where they are needed. It is not wise to expect to be able to make major changes goes onto the wall.

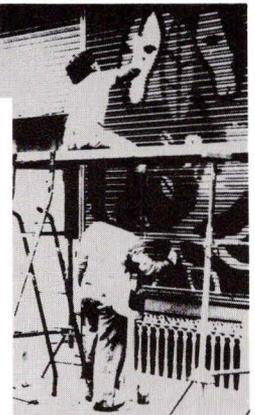
Take into account unforeseen irregularities in all, first of all at the design stage. If necessary move design to emphasize them or diminish the upset they are causing. Can the sloping figure be shifted a few so that the (real) window does not cut into it? A drain pipe be used as a vertical construct if it is in the design rather than being an afterthought? Ideally problems such as this should be sorted out at the design stage but sometimes corrections are unavoidable. Some alterations may be needed to correct attitudes within the theme in response to positive criticism or suggestions from passers-by.

Trace the design onto clear plastic or acetate sheet using an

fluid, and likely to give the most ambiguous indication where colour should go. Some artists have used a fairly thick black painted outline which when slightly overpainted with colour, gives a sharp outline to the separate elements of the mural.

needs chipping back to good and replacing

The reason for this is that either the wall lacks a damp proof course or that the D.P.C. no longer functions. A new damp proof course has to be made

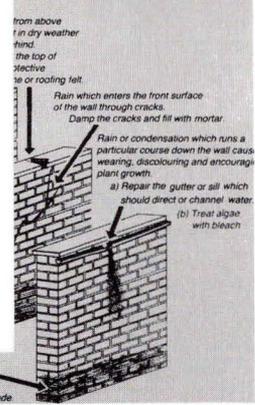


of Keeps Coach paints on metal shutters

outside, it must be exterior grade. Here the surface has been previously painted and paint is cracked or loose it should be removed. A porous firm but shiny paint film should be sanded to its a key. Gaps and cracks should be filled with a paste filler, sanded until smooth. Here screws are driven in, heads should be countersunk and painted with an oil based primer or filled with a paste filler. Dirt and dust should be removed either by wiping with mop cloth or by washing with a solution of cleaning oil. Grease can be removed with white spirit.

Corrosion in the form of scale and rust can be removed by wire-brushing and scraping or sanding. The action of corrosion returning is directly linked to the roughness of this initial cleaning. Here the surface has been previously painted, sand rattle off where it is loose; sand if it is smooth to give key for the primers. Then clean off oil and dirt as follows: Clean off dirt, dust, or oil with a cleaning agent.

## and Repairs



from above in a dry weather find the top of effective base or roofing felt.

Rain which enters the front surface of the wall through cracks. Dampen the cracks and fill with mortar. Rain or condensation which runs a particular course down the wall causes wear, discolouring and encourages plant growth.

a) Repair the gutter or sill which should direct or channel water. b) Treat algae with bleach.

## Diego Rivera: Myth and Reality

1986 is the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. To mark the event, an enormous retrospective exhibition of Rivera's art has been put together by the Detroit Institute of Arts and the National Institute of Fine Art in Mexico. Originating in Detroit, the exhibition has now moved on to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. From there it will travel to Mexico and then to Europe where it will show in Madrid and Berlin during 1987.

Major retrospectives are always important moments in which to assess the work of an artist. In the case of a painter who was a muralist, such an event is doubly significant, because it allows a special attention to be placed on the aesthetics of this particular art form and the artist identified with its practice.

But a retrospective of the work of a muralist whose art is politically significant is problematical, for whatever benefits may be celebrated concerning the public character and accessibility of the mural medium, the mural is for the most part immobile, rooted forever on the spot of its creation. Because of this, a muralist's work is an anathema to the established aesthetics of bourgeois art which for the most part are rooted in the movability, collectibility, and above all the saleability of the artwork. To this, gallery exhibitions contribute by holding showings which provide the opportunity for periodic reassessment. A major exhibition of a muralist, then, is a contradiction, because the work that is the very source of inspiration cannot be seen.

Still, it is well known that Diego Rivera's art was not exclusively concerned with murals. He was also a prolific, if very inconsistent easel painter, and at his best a supreme draughtsman, the equal of Picasso. The exhibition naturally focuses on these examples of Rivera's work, especially once it left Detroit and the extraordinary fresco cycle executed on its walls in 1932. However, a point of considerable interest is that many of the show's drawings are studies for the murals.

The lavishly produced catalogue of the exhibition additionally provides a major new source of material in English of factual information, photographs, and essays on the life and work of Rivera. [See following review]. Some of the essays, particularly those by Fran-

cis V. O'Connor on the influence of Rivera on U.S. muralists, are of special importance.

In this brief consideration of Rivera, three elements of his work as a muralist need to be emphasized, particularly concerning his relationship to contemporary mural practice: the myth of Rivera as a revolutionary people's mural painter, his content and style as a muralist, and his practice.

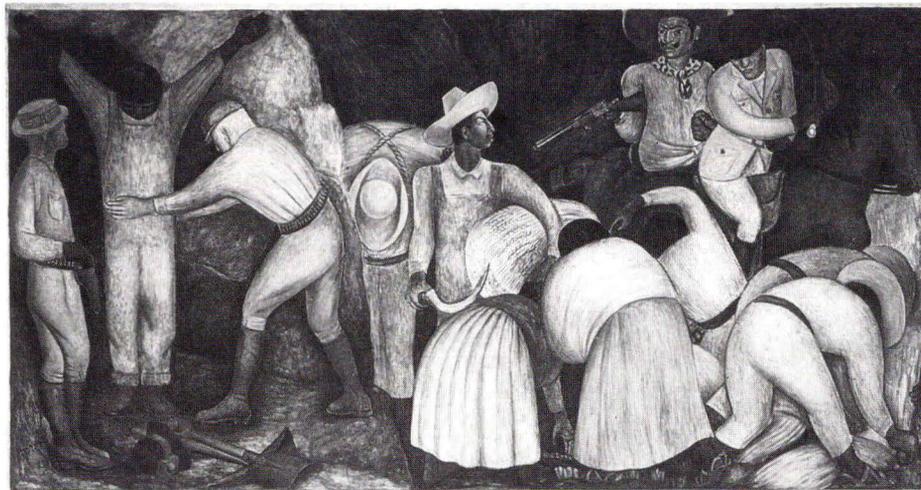
### Myth: Rivera the Revolutionary

The myth of Rivera the revolutionary is a combination of often highly idealized interpretations surrounding the Mexican mural Renaissance and the myth built up around Rivera, often by Rivera himself, as a great revolutionary communist painter. Yet the reality and the myth are often contradictory. Rivera, having subdued his own Mexican national bourgeoisie during the 1920s, went on to barnstorm his way into the minds of major American capitalists during the 30s, persuading them that they too should commission their share of his outpouring of apparently revolutionary public images on the walls of their most sacred buildings. This he did while at the same time largely retaining his credibility as the standard bearer of a radical socialist public art movement. This reputation rested on the often brilliant series of fresco cycles he painted for the Mexican government during the 20's on the walls of some of the most

prestigious public buildings in Mexico City. In these he expressed the struggles of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, and the traditions and history of the Mexican people on their long march towards national independence and social liberty. His membership in the Mexican Communist Party and his subsequent exploitation of the controversies that surrounded the commissions he undertook for capitalist patrons in the United States only added to Rivera's radical reputation.

The years that have passed since Rivera's death are sufficient to have allowed the myth surrounding him to consolidate and be accepted without criticism, but among those who look to him as a source of inspiration in the practice of mural painting, the myth has often prevented a proper critical assessment of Rivera as a revolutionary mural painter and a proper appreciation of his limitations as well.

Rivera's leading role in helping create and bring to the world's attention the Mexican mural movement helped it become identified as the quintessential revolutionary art movement. By being painted on the walls of publicly owned buildings, and by expressing a content reflecting the aspirations of the masses rather than those of a financial elite, the murals of the Mexican Renaissance were seen as the cutting edge on which a radical socialist aesthetic could be born. Rivera has most often been iden-



"Formation of Revolutionary Leadership", University of Chapingo, Mexico, 1926-27. From *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, W.W. Norton.

tified with and cited as a source of influence on this aesthetic.

Yet in the context of today's mural practice, fundamentally different from both the Mexican mural movement and the WPA murals of the United States, the myth and reality surrounding Rivera need to be examined.

### Contradictions

A great deal of contemporary mural painting in the United States as well as in Great Britain, Europe, and Australia, is carried out at least in a spirit of opposition to the state. The thrust of its concerns are most often the expression of the aspirations and identities of national and racial minorities within often

hostile host communities, the political struggles of organized and other workers, issues such as the rights of women, the fight against imperialism, and the celebration of community and neighborhood. The anti-state content of contemporary murals by its very nature has imposed constraints on the specially problematic physical aspects of creating murals. Since the murals are inspired from "below," sufficient finance and suitable walls are often unavailable. Yet from the anti-state inspiration of contemporary murals a new aesthetic is being born, equivalent of the conditions, the context and of the inspiration of its practice. In place of the externally derived inspiration of the professional easel artist working alone, themes are often

worked up through collaboration with those who live within the context of the mural. The concept of the creative team working on equal terms with each other often takes the place of the lone artists accompanied by assistants in the execution of the work. The inspiration derived from creative compromise, so well known to the creators of the collaborative dramatic arts of film and theater, is celebrated over the agonised deliberations of the individual artist.

All these obvious points need to be emphasized with regard to Diego Rivera as a radical mural painter, for whatever thematic and pictorial inspiration Rivera's mural art contains (and there is much), his aesthetic as a mural painter and as a person is fundamentally dif-



"The Liberated Earth with Natural Forces Controlled by Man" (end wall), 1926-27. Universidad Autonoma de Chapingo, Mexico. From *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, W.W. Norton Co., 1986.

ferent from much of today's mural practice. First, the Mexican mural movement within which Rivera's art was born was from the start a "statist" movement. In other words, the murals were commissioned and paid for from "above," by government. Furthermore, although painted in state buildings ostensibly owned by the people, the deeply stratified nature of Mexican society meant that for the most part the rural masses of Mexico has no real access to these murals. In addition to this, the special circumstances of the original mural commissions that Rivera undertook for the Minister of Education, Jose Vasconcelos (who delighted in the concept of the inspired creative individual) meant that Rivera, despite all of the collectivist rhetoric of the revolutionary Painters Syndicate which he, Siqueiros and Guerrero formed at the beginning of the Mexican mural movement, worked in a highly individualist framework as a mural painter. He worked as the "great artist," determining the admittedly revolution-inspired content of his work for himself and directing the work of assistants. His ego was such that he "elbowed out" of the ministry of Education fellow mural painters, painting over some of their works in order to claim the place for himself. He delighted in his growing by completely mistaken reputation in the United States at the time, as the instigator and also sole creator of the extraordinary phenomenon of Mexican mural painting. Once in the United States Rivera wallowed in his reputation as the great genius of socialist art. He accepted commissions from those whose politics and social positions were diametrically opposed to his own,

being paid fees that were beyond the wildest dream of most painters of the time. He exploited as far as he was able the controversies concerning subject matter that attended these commissions in the United States.

In his politics, Rivera was a political chameleon. He often supported one leftist group and then another, the Communist international one moment, the Fourth International the next. At one point he even became involved in the presidential electoral campaign of the right-wing Mexican president Aleman.

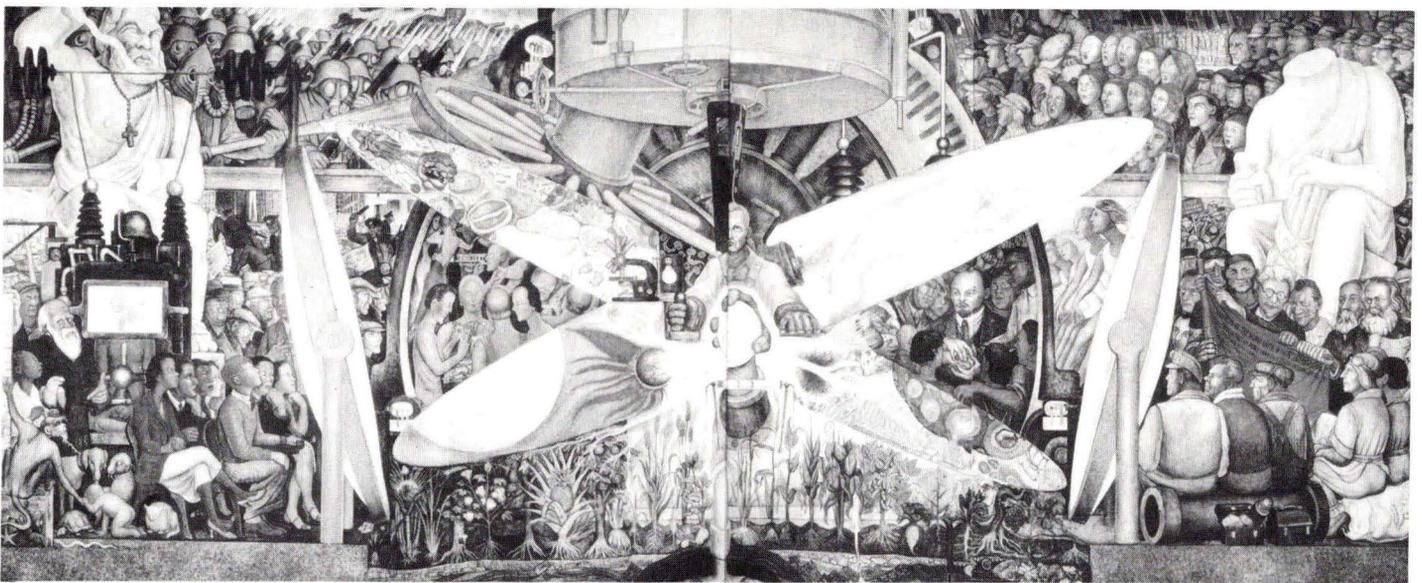
### Painter of Didactic Narrative

But if a somewhat negative picture of Rivera has been drawn here it is not to attempt to negate Rivera's importance as a mural painter. Rather it is to try to lay the basis for a more objective approach to assessing his significance as a mural painter for today. For despite his insatiable and individualistic ego, Rivera is a profoundly important figure in modern art. The tradition from which he sprang as an artist was essentially a nineteenth-century bourgeois tradition, one aesthetically influenced by the tenets of European classicism, even though it is important to add that he was also deeply influenced by the aesthetic revolution of cubism with which he was also involved in Paris at the beginning of the century. He was also, despite the socialist and collectivist rhetoric of later years, deeply imbued with the concept of the individual creative genius. Yet he understood both the lessons of the cubist revolution and the didactic and narrative lessons of

European Renaissance wall painting. It was from this latter tradition that Rivera was able to develop a very special ability, as Francis O'Connor has observed, as a narrative and didactic painter. This special ability intersected with his identification with the spirit of his country's revolution. He was thus able to relay the spirit, the story, and the history of that human struggle in ways which were as visually accessible as they were poetically engaging. He didactic talent as a narrator of the dynamics of revolutionary struggle also equipped him with the ability to develop an iconography that could express the sweep of his subject matter, whether it was the huge panorama of his country's history as in the National Palace in Mexico City, the struggle for land and the eulogy of those who till it at Chapingo, or the industrial dynamic of modern capitalist countries such as in his great cycle of frescoes at Detroit.

If Rivera has a single most important aspect as a mural painter it is as a painter of didactic narrative. The concept of narrative in painting is castigated in contemporary bourgeois aesthetics as a derivative, literary, basically anti-aesthetic concept, yet it is an ancient and important tradition within the history of visual aesthetics that in the great struggle for equality, liberty, brotherhood and sisterhood is as important a weapon of visual expression as it has ever been for those artists committed to the complex task of depicting this trilogy of ideals. This is the source of Diego Rivera's significance for today's artists.

Desmond Rochfort



Composite Reconstruction of the famous censored RCA mural. This was painted in Mexico, 1934-35. From "On Location with Diego Rivera" by Lucienne Bloch, *Art in America*, Feb. 1986

## Recent Publications on Diego Rivera

For years the standard work on Diego Rivera has been Bertram Wolfe's 1963 biography, *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera* (New York; Stein and Day, 458 pages, b&w photos; reprinted in pb 1984). It remains an important and excellent work, but several recent publications offer new analyses, new information, and best of all first-rate color photographs of Rivera's work, both easel painting and murals. All have important information for muralists and anyone interested in this major figure of twentieth-century art.

The earliest of the new publications *Diego Rivera: The Cubist Years* (Phoenix Art Museum, 1984; 176 ppg. pb). The book is the catalogue for a show of Rivera's cubist paintings that travelled to Phoenix, New York, San Francisco, and Mexico City in 1984 and 1985. In addition to the requisite cataloguing, notes, introductory material and bibliography, Ramon Favela provides a text accompanying photographs of the works. Sadly, only a few are in color, but this still is the basic study of this period of Rivera's career because of the thoroughness and strength of Favela's essay. What I missed in the show and the catalogue is any extended treatment of how Rivera utilized cubism in his later mural work. Chronologically, Favela's essay stops before Rivera began his mural work, but, especially for readers of *CMM*, it is an unfortunate omission that suggests by exclusion that Rivera did not bring his cubist experience with him when he returned to Mexico from Europe in 1921. But a student of Rivera's murals has much to learn from understanding Rivera's cubist period easel works, as Favela's essay suggests and several of the essays in the Detroit catalogue describe.

The catalogue for the Detroit Institute of Arts celebration of the 100th anniversary of Rivera's birth is the centerpiece of this recent outpouring of art-historical publications (*Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*; New York, London: Founders of the Detroit Institute of Arts in Association with W.W. Norton & Company, 1986; 372 ppg., 325 b&w photos, 200 color; \$60 hardback, \$30 pb—available only from museums). In addition to the excellent notes, bibliography, index, and introductory material the volume contains ten essays and two documentations (a chronology and a census of murals). Although some of these are quite specialized, nearly all are serious efforts, valuable to anyone interested in Rivera's work. In fact, the Detroit

catalogue is now the single most useful reference work on Rivera, and is likely to remain so for years.

It begins with a hundred page chronology of Rivera's "... Art, Life and Times" by Laurance P. Hurlburt. This is the sort of listing of events in Rivera's life, and of when he executed each of his works, that is invaluable in providing the basic outline of his life. But Hurlburt's list offers more. It includes significant historical events, movements, etc. so that Rivera's development and response can be seen within a historical and social context, and there are also numerous illustrations to show us the artwork Rivera was creating at any given period of his life. Stanton Catlin's "Mural Census," and Hurlburt's chronology are a dream come true to students of Rivera's monumental works. Catlin offers excellent color photographs of Rivera's murals, including "perfect" frontal shots of walls which cannot be seen at once by a viewer in person. He also gives us the basic documentary information about each mural, and superb charts identifying and locating figures and symbols. Selected panels are also offered in excellent color photographs.

Other essays are also delightful to read. Ida Rodriguez-Prampolini's "Rivera's Concept of History" offers a good introduction to this subject, with its complex interaction of Rivera's knowledge of pre-Conquest Mexican history and his Marxist beliefs. One wishes the essay were longer. Jorge Hernandez Campos offers "The Influence of Classical Tradition, Cezanne, and Cubism on Rivera's Artistic Development," which helps us place Rivera in an extensive art-historical context. Alicia Azuela writes on "Rivera and the Concept of Proletarian Art," which explores his relation to the ideas of *Octobre*, a group of artists seeking an alternative to the dominant artistic positions in the U.S.S.R., who he met during his trip in late 1927 and early 1928. *Octobre* "advocated a public art capable of providing an alternative to both Social Realism and the art of the Soviet avant-garde" (p.125). As we know, these are problems Rivera faced in his own work in Mexico.

Betty Ann Brown writes on "The Past Idealized: Diego Rivera's Use of Pre-Columbian Imagery," which to me (no scholar of pre-conquest art) seems excellent. Brown claims for Rivera a pervasive influence on what images we have seen of pre-conquest Mexican art, both through his utilization of the images in his own work and through his insatiable collecting of artifacts for his own collection. "Rivera," says Brown, "romantically glorified the pre-

Columbian past," (p.155) but "from Indians to tourists to scholars, more people have viewed the pre-Columbian world through Rivera's eyes than in any other fashion" (p.155). Certainly this is an important caution to our study of Rivera's use of native history. Three essays in the volume are quite specific in subject matter. They are Xavier Moysen, "The Self-Portraits of Diego Rivera," Rita Eder, "The Portraits of Diego Rivera," and Ellen Sharp, "Rivera as a Draftsman." Each is excellent and insightful, and each offers information useful in assessing the whole mural works because the essays all discuss particular facets without an understanding of which the larger works must remain clouded.

The two critical essays by Francis V. O'Connor hold the most interest for muralists today because of their concern with our movement and with Rivera's Detroit mural in particular. His first entry, "The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930s and After," is divided into a series of chronological sections except for the first and last which tackle more theoretical questions. In all cases, whether one accepts or disagrees, the propositions are clearly put. O'Connor begins by sketching what "influence" may mean in general. He finds most useful Harold Bloom's notion of a "strong" artist as described in his literary critical work *The Anxiety of Influence*, and transposes it to visual art. What attracts O'Connor is that Bloom's concept enables a critic or art historian to retain a focus on an individual artist while constantly drawing out his or her relationships between "psychological and sociological environments, which inevitably include the anxiety-inducing reality of other artists, their work, and their motives... An individual work of art is only marginally meaningful in itself unless seen as part of the totality of the artist's creative experience and production" (p.158). Not only that, I would add, but also unless it is seen as part of the social and historical totalities of which the work is part. O'Connor's looking to the psychological aspect is useful, but should not reduce attention given to the socio-historical contexts. O'Connor finds Rivera and Orozco, of the Mexican muralists, to be "strong" artists in Bloom's sense, and explains why. It is an unusual notion, but is helpful in placing Rivera's work in context.

O'Connor then proceeds to concrete discussions of Rivera's influence on Thomas Hart Benton and on Ben Shahn. In both of these sections considerable biographical and iconographical detail is provided. He then moves on the more

general topic of Rivera's influence on New Deal Muralists, where O'Connor includes an important nine point summary of the basic principles of a Rivera mural. Most of the principles are quite technical in nature, but the list is invaluable as an outline of the pictorial organization guiding Rivera in his monumental works. Both this section and the next on Rivera's influence on U.S. mural movements after the 1960s are based on these basic principles, i.e., the artists who utilize them significantly are most clearly influenced by Rivera.

In this section, O'Connor gives proper due to the retention of the mural tradition in the black community between the termination of WPA sponsorship after WWII and the advent of community murals in the last half of the 1960s in the works of such artists as Hale Woodruff, Charles White, and John Biggers. O'Connor's observations are insightful enough that one wishes for a more complete articulation of his ideas. Lacking, for example, is discussion of Rivera's influence on non-Latino contemporary muralists except for selected black artists.

O'Connor's "Concluding Thoughts on Influence and Art as a Weapon" may seem somewhat out of place here, but with it he raises some practical distinctions such as that "between the making

of art and the uses to which it is put," (p. 181) which all critics should keep in mind. He claims that "the psychology of creativity is the same for the revolutionary and the reactionary. . . (p. 181)," a point at least worth more extensive discussion, as are other theoretical points he raises.

O'Connor's second essay is "An Iconographic Interpretation of Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry Murals* in Terms of Their Orientation to the Cardinal Points of the Compass." The subject is highly specific, but crucial for a thorough understanding of Rivera's mural work. Included are discussions of Rivera's knowledge of Italian Renaissance murals, such as Giotto's Arena Chapel, his use of the *Codex Fejervary-Mayer* and the use to which the knowledge was put in the Chapingo and Detroit murals. The essay is an excellent case study of major murals and thus its methodology extends its significance beyond just these works.

At the end of this essay, O'Connor's assertion that "to be radicalized indicates a psychological state more than a political stance, (p.229)" is certainly open to question and it reflects his use of the psychological as a partial explanatory factor helping us understand the complexity of Rivera's murals.

O'Connor's discussions give

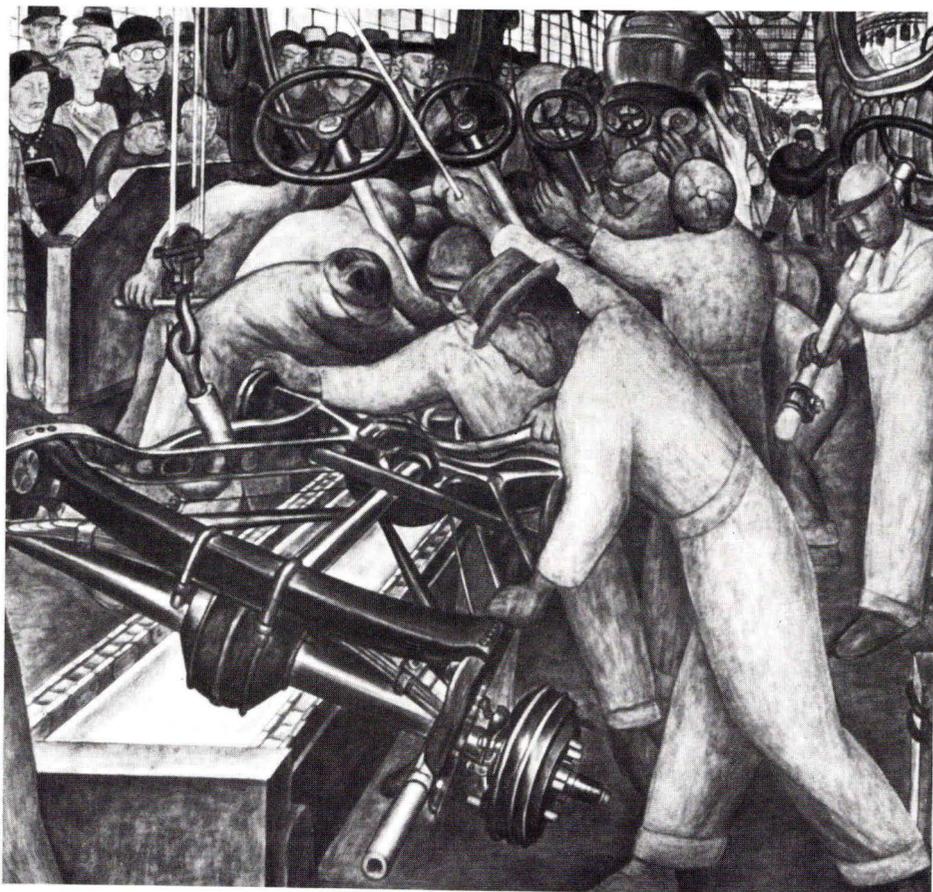
us much food for thought and discussion in addition to a great deal of fascinating and illuminating objective information.

A more specific discussion of the Detroit murals is found in the slim (71 ppg. including index) 1985 volume by Dorothy McMeekin, *Diego Rivera, Science and Creativity in the Detroit Murals* (The Michigan State University Press, hardback only). The book has excellent black and white, and some color photographs of the individual panels, and superb analytical charts identifying figures and symbols and movements within them. The book is also presented in adjacent English and Spanish columns. It lacks, however, color photographs of one of the main panels (they are available in the Detroit catalogue).

McMeekin is a professor of natural science at Michigan State University, as so is well qualified to discuss the topic of the book. While that discussion is excellent, it makes no claim to be exhaustive, treating only the theme of science and creativity in the murals, which are admittedly central to the project but leave us with a somewhat misleading idea of what the totality might mean.

Where McMeekin says (accurately) that "the murals depict the positive and negative aspects of applied science... (p.11), it is still possible for Mark Stevens, writing in the March 10, 1986 issue of *Newsweek* to say with equal accuracy that "the Detroit murals describe the social evolution of mankind" (p.73). Steven's brief article is a quick glance, as superficial as one would expect in a slick weekly news/entertainment mag, but it is generally accurate and offers and excellent color reproduction of the south wall of the Detroit murals.

In another recent magazine, *Art in America*, February 1986 (pp.102-123), Lucienne Bloch offers us an exciting, first-hand account of her being "On Location with Diego Rivera" in Detroit and New York. The primary focus of the essay is the Rockefeller Center mural which Nelson ordered destroyed because Rivera, in 1933, had included a positive depiction of Lenin. Bloch's personal account would be fascinating just for her own experiences with Rivera, but she also gives us a look at how individuals associated with the Rockefeller Center project responded to Rivera and to the volatile politics surrounding the whole affair. The accompanying photos, several reproduced here for the first time, make the article a treasure for anyone interested in art and politics, murals, Rivera or Bloch. This article is certainly the most readable and exciting of the recent publications.



"Detroit Industry", 1932-33 (detail) Detroit Institute of the Arts.

Tim Drescher

## Oakland's Galvez Paints Murals for Massachusetts

Cambridge, Massachusetts:

Another outstanding mural has recently been added to the large collection of public art in the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Oakland, California's celebrated muralist Daniel Galvez completed "Crossroads," a 1200 square foot mural in Central Square in mid July. The Cambridge mural is part of a four city effort to encourage ethnic pride among Hispanic residents of Pittsfield, Worcester, Southbridge, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Galvez has designed and painted murals over the past year. Conceived by the Consortium of Local Arts Agencies of Massachusetts, (CLAAM), the project was also intended to encourage greater knowledge of and respect for Hispanic cultures by the general population, and to galvanize community participation in the arts. Galvez was selected in 1984 to paint the four murals, having shown a strong commitment to involving the community in the mural-making process, and coming from a Mexican-American heritage.

"Crossroads," Galvez's mural for Cambridge, is a multi-image portrait of the community in which it was painted. The Central Square and Cambridgeport neighborhoods of Cambridge are among the most ethnically diverse to be found in the entire Boston area: Haitian, Vietnamese, Thai, Central American, Trinidadian, black, and white American peoples are sprinkled throughout the community, and it was to this cultural phenomenon the Galvez addressed himself in the design of the mural.

After spending the rainy summer of 1985 in the western Massachusetts towns of Pittsfield, Worcester and Southbridge, Galvez arrived in Cambridge during the summer of 1985, when he conducted several meetings, open to the community, to determine relevant subject matter for this mural. Upon his return in late May, 1986, Galvez once again met with community members and potential volunteer painters to solicit images for the mural (his work is photorealistic) and discuss his plan. Painting began June 2, and in a record time of seven weeks (with 10 days of

rain), the mural was completed, with volunteers doing the bulk of the painting and Galvez acting as director, designer, teacher, coach, and master-painter.

Painted in brilliant color, "Crossroads" includes portraits of a local black Jazz singer, "Little Joe" Cook, an elderly couple who have worked and lived in Cambridgeport all their lives, a librarian reading to two young girls, a waiter in a local Indian restaurant, a bunch of leather-clad highschoolers, dancers from a local Greek dance troupe, and others. Various architectural landmarks also lend familiarity and compositional structure to the mural: a row of traditional Cambridge brownstones, the curving wall of Magazine Beach on the Charles River (embellished with the personal signature of a local graffiti artist), and the Central Square news kiosk, which was itself the recipient of a trompe l'oeil facade in 1984, the work of Cambridge muralist Josh Winer. As a whole, the mural's composition is well integrated by sweeping S-shaped areas of images, and by vibrant colors which repeat themselves in different figures.

Of his superrealist style, Galvez remarks, "when people are introduced to visual images on a neighborhood scale, it's mystifying, entertaining and new. It's not a billboard." Galvez feels that realism is ideal for outdoor spaces in general, and emphasizes that a key factor in the appreciation of a public artwork is the public's ability to identify directly with the image. "I've chosen to paint images that characterize the spirit of people's lives," he explains, remark-

ing that this choice is an outgrowth of his private work.

Having completed murals throughout California, in Oregon, and the four towns in Massachusetts, it is hard to believe that there is such a thing as "private work" for Galvez. Indeed, his lack of concern for full authorship of his murals was one of the most remarked-upon aspects of his residency in Cambridge. "I've learned to be less possessive over the years, to be very accomodating, because people's input is an important factor," he says. "You have to have a camaraderie with the people you're working with. I always tell my painters that the painting they do is not theirs. We all share."

There was certainly no lack of camaraderie in Cambridge, if the consistent attendance of 5 to 7 volunteers daily, and Galvez's warm feelings toward them are any indication. As this issue of *Community Murals* goes to press, Galvez will be finishing up the three other Massachusetts murals, and will undoubtedly leave behind friends, admirers, and a lot of people excited about painting on walls.

*POSTSCRIPT: Galvez's mural in Cambridge, "Crossroads," was administered by the Cambridge Arts Council, which, with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, provided funding for this project. Other murals in Cambridge have been funded by the city's One Percent for Art Ordinance, by Community Development Block Grants, by the Urban Mass Transit Administration, and by Massachusetts Arts Lottery games.*



photo—Cambridge Arts Council

# The Donkey Cart Caper

## Some Thoughts On Socially Conscious Art In Anti-Social Public Space

by David Avalos

### To Begin With . . .

In December, 1985 I was given written permission by the General Services Administration's office of the Field Office Manager in San Diego, California to place a sculpture, a painted wood construction, in front of the Federal Courthouse for a two week period from January 4th through 17th, 1986.

I was one of four artists whose works were being shown at different locations in downtown San Diego as part of an exhibition entitled "Streetworks" sponsored by Sushi, Inc.—a non-profit performance and visual art gallery.

I installed the work on January 5th. The next day the General Services Administration removed it and placed it in the basement of the Federal Building after receiving a memorandum which stated: "For security reasons you are hereby directed forthwith to cause the removal of the structure standing in front of the United States Courthouse."

It was signed by Gordon Thompson, Jr., Chief Judge of the United States District Court in San Diego.

Consequently, with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union, I and Sushi, Inc. are suing both the General Services Administration and Chief Judge Thompson. The case is being heard in the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles.

### About "the structure" A.K.A. San Diego Donkey Cart . . .

The sculpture, "San Diego Donkey Cart" follows the basic design of the carts found on Avenida Revolucion in Tijuana, Mexico. These carts are a Mexican form of tourist art. Originally in the 1930's and '40's they were modified animal-drawn work vehicles but now the carts are designed specifically as photographer's sets for the taking of photos of and for visitors to this border city. These souvenirs document the tourist surrounded by the stereotypical Mexico—rural with its cactus, colorful with its serapes and pre-industrial with its beasts of burden.

The fact that this souvenir is created on the streets of a modern city—the second largest urban center on the West Coast of North America seems to make little difference. The non-

functional and unmoving cart succeeds in transporting the tourist away from the contemporary social, economic and political issues of Tijuana. These issues inevitably involve San Diego as well as can only be confronted by people capable of seeing each other with both feet on the ground.

I am sure that if the San Diego Donkey Cart had confined itself to cactus and serapes Chief Judge Thompson may have been willing to have had a souvenir photo snapped. But I added a portrait of a Border Patrol Agent arresting an undocumented worker.

### The "Illegal Alien" As Media Celebrity . . .

The Mexican worker within U.S. society has become well-established in the public's consciousness as the so-called illegal alien. This group receives constant exposure through media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, films and television. The sense is created that this group, though existing outside of the law, is constantly available for public scrutiny. Of course, U.S. society suffers from a deformed sense of what "public" really means. Virtually all forms of mass media in this country are privately owned, and for the most part privately consumed. Nevertheless, we maintain the absurd notion that we are involved in public information exchange while we sit on the toilet reading a newspaper item edited by a functionary of a profit-making private business. It seems to me that more and more our sense of what is public has nothing to do with the idea of social interaction on public property. Ironically, we have a situation where the Mexican worker as a group seems to exist in a public realm, is in fact a media celebrity, while, actually, little, if any, opportunity exists

for social interaction or dialogue between them and those of us comfortably occupied in front of our television sets.

Suspended above Tijuana's Avenida Revolucion the tourist never comes to terms with the gritty realities of contemporary Mexico. Out of touch with a truly public space the San Diego resident has no location for social dialogue and interaction and is therefore limited in his or her ability to come to terms with modern U.S. society and the disgrace of 20th century slavery—the condition of the non-citizen worker within that society.

### Public Art, Private Dreams . . .

So I created a simulacrum of a Tijuana donkey cart, replacing the usual backdrop panel depicting an Aztec warrior with one depicting a Mexican worker being handled by a Border Patrol Agent, and transported the whole thing to the Federal Courthouse in downtown San Diego.

Ideally, I had hoped to combine artistic concerns with political activism and some moderate media hype. My plan was to station myself next to the sculpture for a couple of hours each day around lunch time. I expected to engage passers-by in conversations about public space, public art, immigration and political expression. I wanted to interact socially with my fellow residents on public property while discussing issues of public concern.

The parent bureaucracy of the Border Patrol, the Immigration and Naturalization Service occupies offices overlooking the location of the San Diego Donkey Cart in front of the courthouse. I anticipated complaints from them about the content of the work. I figured that if I kept my ears open that I might be able to create a controversy that could result

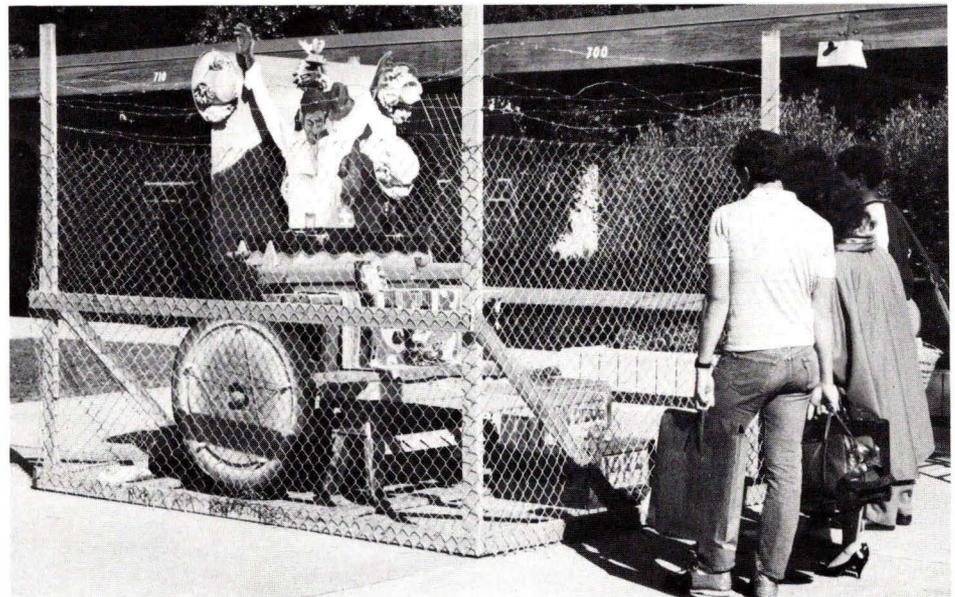


photo © 1985 David Avalos

in a local newspaper feature or two. But the reality was something else.

### Public Art, Private Acts . . .

There has never been any doubt in my mind that Chief Judge Thompson's action to remove the San Diego Donkey Cart was censorship based on the content of my work. Therefore, the lawsuit filed in the Los Angeles Federal District court asks that:

- 1) The actions of Chief Federal District Judge Gordon Thompson, Jr. and the General Services Administration be declared unlawful
- 2) The "San Diego Donkey Cart" be placed on exhibit in front of San Diego's Federal Courthouse as originally agreed for twelve more days
- 3) The plaintiff's costs and attorney's fees be paid for by the defendants.

### Some Thoughts On The Mass Media . . .

Some people felt that the "San Diego Donkey Cart" received its greatest public attention (through the mass media) after it was removed from public view (the street). Mixed-up ideas about what's public are at work here.

Actually, I was a willing participant in the daily media coverage of the event—coverage which was both national and international. But, it soon dawned on me that the issues being discussed were not immigration or public art or public space and social interaction. The issue was reduced to the single one of government censorship, which explains the high media interest. The mass media like to pretend that the First Amendment's guarantee of free expres-

sion is their license to make a buck. And while I appreciated all the help I could get I had no illusions that the media were interested in discussing their own role in the creation of anti-social public space.

By "social" I mean having to do with human beings living together as a group in a situation requiring that we communicate and interact as equals with one another directly. The anti-social nature of the news media contributes to political inequities. So does the law.

In 1986, the social reality of the undocumented worker parallels that of the antebellum South. Black slaves were an integral part of plantation society, yet were kept out of all social institutions through slavery laws. So, too, the Mexican laborer is an indispensable part of the economic vitality of the "sun belt" states, yet is kept out of all social institutions by U.S. immigration law.

With the media and the law we have structured a society in which Mexican workers hand-pick the lettuce and tomatoes which we put in our mouths whenever we eat a "McD.L.T.". Yet it is nearly impossible to have a dialogue with these workers in public space about the conditions of their lives within a society which benefits so much from their presence.

As activist community artists we need to understand the nature of our work in relation to social interaction in public space. I feel that I am primarily a communicator—using all forms of communication yet understanding that face-to-face dialog is the most potent form.

When Chief Judge Thompson rendered the "San Diego Donkey Cart" invisible, it revealed that our sense of what is public, legal and artistic can be basically anti-social.

### On Community Art . . .

Art which claims that it is purest only when free of social reference or interaction is in some ways irresponsible and ultimately the least capable of defending its freedom. Freedom of expression is a political guarantee. It is nonsense to insist that art never refer to the context which allows its freedom. Art is a reflection of the health of a society's freedom of expression. We have a community responsibility to communicate through art with society's political and social structure if we are to expect freedom to become a reality. The "San Diego Donkey Cart" was one way I tried to measure our state of health. The attention that the work has received is an indication of how sick we have become and, I hope, how concerned we are with recovery.

! RAZA SI, MIGRA NO !

### Public Issues, Private Media . . .

*"I didn't even know it had a political content"*

Chief Judge Thompson,  
The Tribune 1/8/86

*"If Sylvester Stallone showed up at the federal courthouse for a special screening of RAMBO, Judge Thompson would be there looking for an autograph. . . What they're saying is if they agreed with it, it's art, and if they don't, it's political."*

Avalos, San Jose  
Mercury News 1/9/86

*"We didn't know if some kook would get into this. . . in the middle of the night and plant some bomb. We've got these kooks out there."*

Chief Judge Thompson,  
The San Diego Union  
1/8/86

*"Should you be prevented from criticizing the government for your own good. . . for 'security reasons'? People like Marcos and Botha might think so, and now, a federal judge apparently agrees"*

Michael Tuck, KGTV-10  
1/8/86

*"Has Judge Thompson declared martial law in San Diego?"*

Herman Baca, The San  
Diego Union 1/8/86

*"We're just trying to protect our courthouse."*

Chief Judge Thompson  
Los Angeles Times  
1/8/86

*"I don't know what the judge meant by security reasons. There are plenty of places inside the building that are better places to hide a bomb."*

Greg Marshall  
Los Angeles Times  
1/8/86

*"We discount the security aspect and believe no great damage would have been done by allowing the assemblage to remain in place for two weeks"*

Editorial, The Tribune  
1/9/86

*"My specific direction, as Chief Judge of this District Court, was not based upon any personal feelings I had about the artwork itself. . . My direction was based solely upon a need to preserve security. . ."*

Chief Judge Thompson  
Sworn Declaration, 5/5/86

*"The idea that the work represents a security threat is complete baloney. I played by the book and got the permit. Now a federal judge is acting as art censor and trying to put on a coverup."*

Avalos, San Francisco  
Chronicle, 1/9/86

*"This man could have put that object any place he wanted to, any other government building, where there is no litigation or where there isn't so much volatility and dissatisfaction. We have enough problems around here already"*

Chief Judge Thompson  
New York Times  
1/21/86

*"I refuse to submit to a violation of my freedom of expression."*

Avalos, San Diego Union  
1/8/86

# Longshore Union Mural-Sculpture

The ILWU (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union) mural-sculpture dedicated in San Francisco on July 3, 1986 is potentially helpful for community artists for our experience in three areas: it had a difficult (but finally successful) process of production, it is an unusual medium, and it involved significant relations with established (and powerful) groups such as unions and municipal agencies.

## Process

"We almost bit off more than we could chew," said one of the group, referring to the fact that after two years of often meeting three times a week, only some of the original group of thirteen were fully engaged in the project. A few had left when it became clear that the project would last much longer than the projected two months, and attrition for health causes, other personal priorities and so forth peeled members away throughout the effort. At the dedication, the remaining full group of ten came together for the first time in several months.

In assembling the group it was idealistically felt that a group of artists could mirror the union democracy fought for by the ILWU fifty years ago. The strike had been a massive collective effort and it seemed fitting that an artwork about that historical event and the principles of the union should be done collectively. The results were mixed, and often difficult. All design work was done by rotating design teams of three members, who would work together until they produced an acceptable design, submit it for group discussion, show it to the union, and then have it revised again by another design team, and so on through several stages. This process forced a lot of "letting go" of preconceived ideas by individuals about what they thought was terribly important, which is always emotionally difficult. The lack of shared beliefs and an unwillingness to discuss procedures led to considerable interpersonal tension at times, and probably added to the length of the project, but each struggle *did* reach a resolution, and in the end a cohesive artwork was produced.

Art projects should not always be "safe," and we tried to work with ten people, tried to use mostly free form sculptural designs with a narrative content; both unusual approaches. The response to the result, even from the artists, is mixed, and is expected to be

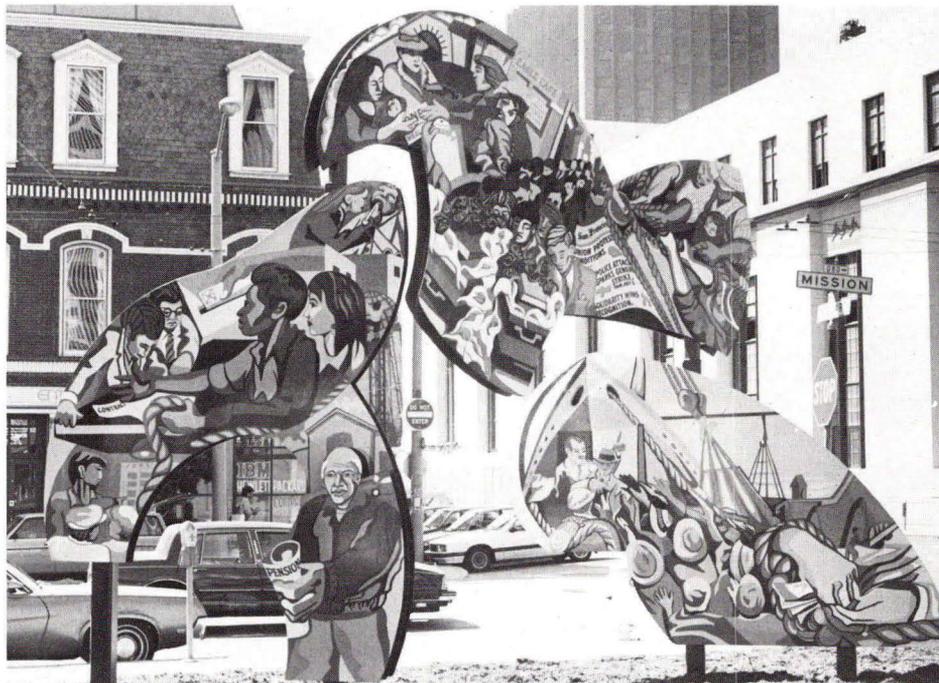
controversial. All of this is to be expected from an effort that shows a willingness to experiment, to try something new instead of doing again what we all know how to do. We hope this project inspires other artists to open their minds about the forms their projects might take, about how they approach the subject matter, and about the potential inherent in different group compositions.

All this raises questions about whether a process works best in an ultrademocratic fashion or whether some other form of leadership/decision-making/procedures is more effective, more conserving of members' energies. These are questions important to all of us, raised by this project, but not solved by it.

In a curious way, however, the unevenness of knowledge about unions,

dockworkers, labor history, strikes, general strikes or international class struggle and a lack of generally shared commitment to any particular set of beliefs meant that often the primary principle available for selection and determination of images and compositional question was the members' practical artistic experiences, although considerable research was done about the events and the issues by several members of the group, and each member's political consciousness in this area grew as a result of this project. Still, design decisions were often based on technical artistic concerns rather than on content and political priorities, which finally gave an important degree of unity to the three-panelled, six-sided sculptural piece.

Also, with nine people actively engaged in painting, a clarity of at least



- 1 The notorious "shape-up," where company-hired dispatchers selected who would work each day, often basing decisions on prejudice and bribery rather than skill or fairness.
  - 2 Working conditions were dangerous before the union. Loads were often unsafe, racially segregated work crews had to work single shifts sometimes lasting 24 to 36 hours without a break. These are the conditions that led to the strike.
  - 3 The maritime strike of 1934 closed every west coast port from Seattle to San Diego. Police responded violently, but union solidarity did not waver.
  - 4 When the police shot and killed two strikers on July 5, 1934, the day became known as Bloody Thursday. The killings led to the General Strike, when all of San Francisco was shut down. The funeral of the two martyrs stretched the length of Market Street.
  - 5 The strike led to a strong union, with benefits such as democratic job selection, union recognition, negotiated contracts, housing for retirees, medical care, end to racial segregated work gangs.
  - 6 The vision of the union not only recognizes that "An injury to one is an injury to all," but that it is important to "Act against injustice." The union vision is a world where both sexes and all races work together productively for a peaceful world, for bread and roses.
- all photos © 1986 Tim Drescher



1



2



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6

stylistic purpose was essential to prevent visual fragmentation of the final image. This need for stylistic unity was buttressed by the group's agreed upon gesture of having its style refer to the style of Anton Refregier's Rincon Annex Post Office murals. Refregier's 1946 work included a panel depicting the heart of our subject, the 1934 waterfront and general strikes in San Francisco, and Rincon Annex is directly across the street from the mural-sculpture site.

Fortunately, active participation of the union guaranteed sufficient unity of theme and specific detail to give narrative coherence to the artists' stylistic decisions. The content may not be what either artists or union would have created on their own, but the group did produce artistic unity for the images derived from the consultations on content. As a result, an artwork was created that makes visible the whitewashed history of the San Francisco general strike and the principles and benefits of unionism in a politically and artistically dramatic way.

### The Medium Was Extreme

It's better for planning if you know what you're getting into," said one group member. A major reason for the lengthiness of the project is the medium selected—3/8" structural steel. The reason for choosing steel is its durability. The union and the city's Park and Recreation Department wanted something that would last. When no wall could be found in a suitable location, and an empty plot of ground on the site of the major event of the 1934 strike was offered, the artists agreed that starting from scratch they could create something much more interesting than just another concrete wall. Finally, a metal sculptural form was selected and since the technology for a porcelain enamel narrative of this size (approx. 500 ft<sup>2</sup>) apparently does not exist, polyurethane epoxy paints were chosen as the next brightest and strongest choice (see *CMM*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Spring 1986 for an article on these paints). "If they work for airplane fleets, they'll work for a mural," we thought. We'll see.

But these gorgeous paints, Awl Grip by name, are viciously toxic, so we made sure the budget included the best protective equipment available, and we made sure the work area was well ventilated. Several of the artists in the project, even with all the protection, would never get near this type of paint again. The paints have a pot life of about four hours, which means everyone must don a complete set of protective gear, (suit, rubber gloves, goggles, respirator, head covering) and mix all colors used each time we painted. You couldn't start a

figure, knock off for an afternoon or night, then return without going through an hour and a half of set-up and clean-up each day. Still, it was exciting working with a new medium, and because the project reflected an industrial struggle, it was fitting that the materials were also industrial.

We worked in a huge warehouse on a pier on San Francisco's waterfront, which meant an excellent space for the project (generously donated by Stevedore Services of America), but also delays when we were not allowed to work because a ship was being loaded or unloaded.

So we spent about a year working with the union on design and content while organizing the rest of the project, and then a year of Saturdays and often Tuesday and Thursday nights painting.

### The Union

Working the ILWU was unusual for street-based community artists, and some of us never did fully appreciate the difference between how an established, politically powerful union works and our normal scrambling style. When the union said it would support the project and raise the funds, it knew it could count on a large membership throughout the region to support the project with donations. Within a week (!) it was able to secure a major portion of the funding from the Mayor's Office of Community Development (locally administered federal housing funds) without the normal delay of months or years some of had experienced in the past.

Gaining union support was significant for this practical reason, then, and also because it was felt that in this Reagan-dominated period of attacks on labor, it was important to proclaim in a monumental public artwork the dignity, history and benefits of unions and working people. The mural-sculpture sets an important precedent for unions in supporting public artworks, and the success of this piece will encourage other unions to support similar projects. Working people need and deserve all the good image exposure we can get.

### The Group

We adopted the acronym M.E.T.A.L. to facilitate financial transactions and it stuck. It stands for Mural Environmentalists Together in Art Labor.

Miranda Bergman, Tim Drescher, Nicole Emanuel, Lari Kilolani, James Morgan, Ray Patlan, Eduardo Pindea, James Prigoff, O'Brian Thiele, Horace Washington.

—Tim Drescher

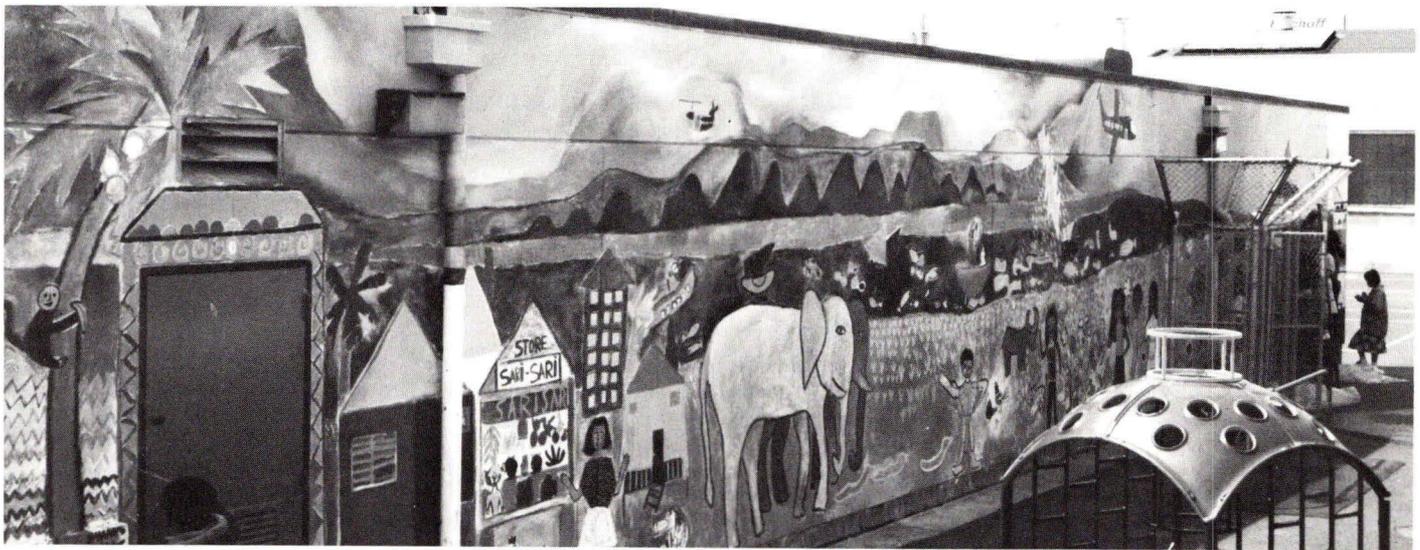
—Miranda Bergman

## Filipino Education Center Mural "My Journey"

"My Journey" is a mural by the 4th and 5th graders at the Filipino Education Center in San Francisco. These children come from the Philippines, Kampuchea, Vietnam, and Laos. They are experiencing their first school year in the United States. Through a grant from the California Arts Council and the Friends of Support Services for the Arts muralist Johanna Poethig started this project as an Artist in Residence in the South of Market community. With additional assistance from AT&T, Pacific Bell, and Philippine Arts in the Community, the materials were purchased

for the mural. Their drawings for the design were started in December. After two months the design was put together from their individual art works. The 15'x100' wall was then primed by the students and the planned design and spontaneous artistic contributions were chalked on. The mural depicts the journey of the children from their homes in Asia to the United States. A long body of water spans the length of the mural on which the boats they traveled sail. In the sky an airplane heads towards San Francisco; a submarine and helicopter remind us of war torn countries.

Elephants, a tiger, monkeys, carabou and snakes inhabit the landscape. A red sun shines over mountains and rice fields. Self-portraits by the children stand with animals and flowers and on the playground of the school. A tropical sky turns into fog over the Golden Gate Bridge. This mural is a unique and beautiful addition to the neighborhood as it reflects the experiences of these South East Asian children. Many of them don't speak any English when they arrive. Through the painting the children can express themselves through color, form and visual narrative.

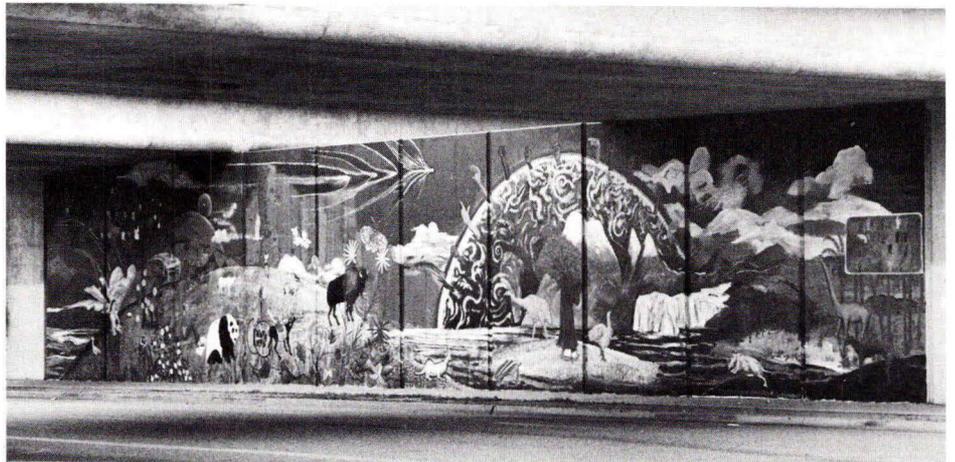


# Endangered Species Welcome the Humans

A new mural at the Fifth Street and HWY 101 undercrossing in Santa Rosa, California, was completed April 20th this year by The Visible Surface Mural Works, Inc. The 16' x 90' public art project is entitled "The Endangered Species Welcome the Humans".

The background has a perspective of comets and planets in succession. The foreground is a world peopled by endangered and extinct plants and animals. A circle of hands about an ancient version of the Earth sign "Welcome Humans". A fantasy of persons in a tree watching television next to a planet being stripped by earth working machines leads one into the time sense of the picture. The four persons portrayed emphasize the importance of diversity and the universality of disability. We all have a shared endangerment with the Earth. The past not necessarily being what we thought, nor perhaps the future.

The mural was initiated and funded by the Visible Surface Mural Works, Inc. through donations. Approval was dependent upon the local community and the California Department of



Transportation's Highway Art Program. It was sponsored by Community Resources for Independence.

Apart from individual donations, contributions came from The Hewlett Packard Corp., American Savings and Loan Assoc., C.L. Marshall Inc., The Sonoma County Peace Co-alition, Alpha Color Inc., Pursel Fuller O'Brien Paints, Santa Rosa Department of Public Works, and others.

## ARTISTS ON THE PROJECT

Rick Zook  
Abd-Allah Le Clair  
Manuel P. Sandy  
Lou Gardner  
Thomas Hall  
Charles M. Finch  
Sondra McSkimming  
Alex A. Anderson  
Nader Mokaram  
James D. Curtis

# New Mexico Highlands University Murals

In June of 1985, three major murals on the NMHU campus were destroyed. (See CMM Vol. IV No. 3, Summer/Fall 1985, p. 16, "Three Campus Murals Erased.") The "rationale" the administration gave to the public was simply, "The murals were no longer conducive to the growth of the University". They were in fact, erasing a very important part of NMHU history, and here we present photographs of the destroyed walls.

As one of the muralists who developed from the NMHU mural movement, along with the original core of muralists, we demanded an explanation and justification for the atrocity. The administration initially refused to acknowledge our request, and after a period of time, stated that the whole Fine Arts Department was being revamped to accommodate a Commercial Art Program which "...better suited the demands of a highly technological era".

The muralists, dedicated to a lifelong commitment to murals, have reorganized. A Mural Forum in October 1986, will review the ethics and politics surrounding the mural issue, and entail future prospects and considerations (i.e., assure that any such barbaric acts of cultural vandalism ever occur).

La lucha continua!

Francisco LeFebre  
July, 1986



photo by Francisco Lefebre

# MIXED MEDIA

## Poster Archives: An Effort at Cultural Self-Preservation

Political posters inhabit a curious terrain in the world of cultural forms. Despite reflecting some of the most urgent and vital messages of their time, representing a tremendously wide range of styles, they are usually considered to be a disposable commodity with no historical or aesthetic future. As a consequence, very little has been done to preserve, document and exhibit them. Ten years ago, two people working independently committed themselves to reversing this situation.

Dan Walsh established *Liberation Graphics (LG)* two years ago after collecting privately since the mid 70's. Originally specializing in contemporary Middle Eastern work, LG's archives now include about 8,000 different posters from 46 countries and movements. Walsh, who is also a sculptor and photographer, has committed himself full-time to Liberation Graphics. He sup-



ports himself through grants, poster sales, printing contracts, and consultation. Walsh has traveled extensively to develop contacts and gather works, including a recent trip to Cuba and Nicaragua. A tremendous amount of effort goes into upgrading the physical condition of the collection; posters are

relatively fragile and clumsy items to store properly, and Walsh believes that the collection deserves the best. Many of the posters are sealed in museum-quality mylar envelopes and stored in large steel-drawer flat files or in specially-made 18-ring binders. Additional effort goes into translating poster texts, developing a slide library, and cataloging the collection on a computer.

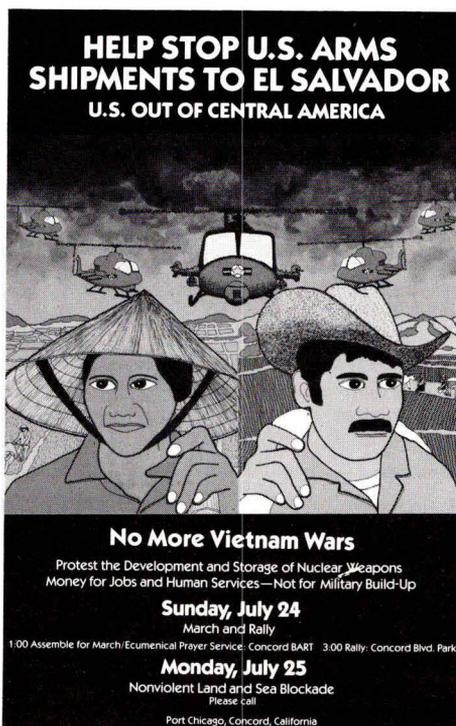
Aside from gathering and storing the posters, however, is the larger task of putting the images to good use. Much of LG's work involves helping poster producers reach wider audiences. One method is to arrange for publication and distribution of foreign posters within the U.S., for which he receives a percentage and the artist/movement makes some money as well. "Posters should be able to pay for themselves," says Walsh. Not all posters are suitable for mass distribution in the U.S., however. Walsh sees definite differences between posters intended for inter-movement use and those oriented towards the outside world. Purely domestic posters often use obscure political references and hostile visual images, whereas posters with more uplifting universal messages are accessible slogans have a tremendous potential to reach the international community.

Walsh considers the wider dissemination of this "generational newspaper" to be a sure way to interest and educate more young Americans about complex international issues without enduring the editing (read obscuring) process of establishment newspapers or the electronic media. LG has begun the introduction into the US of the enormous "Plakata" poster collection of the Soviet Union and at the time of this writing is preparing to file suit to strike the Treasury Department's barriers to regular importation of Cuban cultural, political and educational posters.

Walsh has always seen the liberation graphic as a cultural legacy deserving of legitimacy as well as scholarly attention. "It had always been my intention to accomplish for this body of work what, for example, the Library of Congress has done for movie posters of the thirties—to preserve and exhibit them".

Summarizing his own professional and political objectives Walsh says, "I would like to see the curatorial work LG is carrying out serve two complimentary ends; the development of a greater ap-

preciation for cultural and political diversity among Americans and the establishment of core poster archives for national liberation movements which, as a result of the pressures created by the liberation process, have not had the opportunity to preserve this element of their heritage".



Michael Rossman is a long-time political activist and writer. In the spring of 1977 he started the *All Of Us Of None* (AOUON) archive with 170 U.S. posters of the movements against the war in Vietnam, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement (FSM), the Black Panthers, and other progressive struggles. Realizing that these posters represented a distinct and unique character in the history of U.S. culture which no one else seemed to be documenting, he began collecting almost 500 posters a year. The current archive consists of almost 5,000 different posters, covering from 1964 to the present.

The project has produced an occasional newsletter, which has covered such topics as "The Character of the American Poster Renaissance", a proposed taxonomic method for cataloging domestic posters, and a review of the Library of Congress collection. There is also a slide presentation on posters from the anti-war movement available

for rent, and a large exhibit of posters from the FSM was mounted during commemoration of its 20th anniversary at the University of California at Berkeley. Exhibits on the Black Power movement and the Civil Liberties movement are in progress. Future visions include a major traveling national exhibit for mainstream audiences, a catalog/book ("A romance," according to Rossman), a videotape, and even a computer disk format. Rossman would very much like to get the material in the hands of people teaching history, both at the high school and college level.

Both Rossman and Walsh have a lot of work ahead of them. It is a sad fact

that very few collections exist of progressive political poster art. The Yanker collection at the Library of Congress contains about 1100 domestic posters and under 4,000 foreign ones; the Chicago Peace Museum holds about 500, the Chicano Studies Library at the University of California has about 800, and Prof. David Kunzle at U.C.L.A. has about 500. Few other major collections are known to exist. Yet this type of work is vital to our collective cultural heritage. For example, Liberation Graphics is currently the single largest repository of posters from the Palestine Liberation Organization; the PLO's own archives were destroyed during the

Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982. Both of these projects are performing valuable service in uncovering and exhibiting the priceless history represented by these "disposable" posters.

—Lincoln Cushing

*Liberation Graphics*  
P.O. Box 2394  
Alexandria, VA 22301 USA  
(703) 549-4957

*All Of Us Or None*  
1741 Virginia St.  
Berkeley, CA 94703 USA  
(415) 849-1154

## Rini Templeton 1932-1986

Word came from Mexico City on June 15th that Rini Templeton had died of an apparent respiratory attack or heart failure at the age of 54. Rini was one of my closest friends, a work partner since 1976, a loving and eccentric "Tia" to my children and the only real artist I have ever known. Yet I knew little of her childhood and past, her training and accomplishments. She guarded this just as she shunned fame and personal recognition.

Now, after a large memorial service in Mexico City, the spreading of her ashes around her beloved homestead in Pilar, New Mexico and a cultural festival dedicated to her in Albuquerque, parts of the scattered mural that is Rini are beginning to come together.

From her family we learn that Rini was a brilliant and restless youth, the eldest of 3 children from a family of means. Reading Shakespeare at the age of four, Rini seemed destined to be a writer, for as a child she couldn't draw at all. While still a teenager, she left home and worked her way across forty four states as a waitress and doing odd jobs. She later studied sculpture in England and in 1959 traveled to Cuba where a small band of revolutionaries thought they could overthrow a U.S. backed dictator, and did. Rini stayed for four years after the overthrow of Batista, working on the now-famous literacy campaign in the Cuban countryside.

This experience certainly fueled her passions and optimism, but for a period of time cost Rini her U.S. citizenship. When she was able to return to the United States, Rini went to live in mountainous northern New Mexico. There she worked on her sculptures and became deeply involved in the struggles

of the Native American and Chicano people. Many friends remember her tireless contributions to *El Grito del Norte* newspaper and as a member of the Chicano Communications Collective of Albuquerque (*450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*). But it was her collaboration with John Nichols on *The Milagro Bean Field War* and her illustrations of this book that made her work known outside the family of political activists and cultural workers of this period.

Nichols has written of this relationship in *If Mountains Die, A New Mexico Memoir*, "Her face is lined, tough, pas-



sionate. She wears dark glasses, a kerchief, gold earrings, a bright blouse, black pants, boots. Her fingernails are broken, chipped from working; she has calluses on her hands. She uses acetylene and goggles, cutting and bending metal. . . A horse rears or gallops when she moves. Her big body, her work, her eyes, her political compassion, her lust for life, her desires to twist light from all the dark situations. She drives a car with the sun roof open in mid-winter; ice batters her dreams. She sculpts the true forms and they gleam, at rest or taking flight. Bold, iron-like, some of them are like boulders from the gorge, so heavy in line they could kill you bluntly, so

sensuous they are like bodies floating weightless and slick after lovemaking."

In the mid 1970's Rini went to Mexico City to study at La Esmeralda, the art school that has known so many important Mexican muralists and artists. I met her in 1976 in Cuernavaca, while researching an article on Mexico for NACLA's *Latin American & Empire Report*. Suddenly she was supplying us with drawings, photographs, economic studies, mountains of newsclippings and her own analyses in a steady stream of trips and correspondence that did not end until her death. She wanted to see a book on Mexico published so much that she came to Oakland in 1978 and spent 9 difficult months designing and overseeing its production.

Daniel Molina, a close friend and poet whose work was illustrated by Rini, said at her memorial in Mexico that Rini "came from the North, but not from the North that looks down on us, that enslaves us, but from the North that understands us." Rini's commitment to the everyday struggles of working people in Mexico led her to *Punto Critico*, a collective of labor activists and intellectuals that support and document the popular movement. She began to contribute unsigned drawings to the magazine, as she did for countless publications in the U.S. Soon she was leading design workshops and finally heading a team of volunteers to laborously transform reams of galleys into the monthly magazine.

Professor Alejandro Alvarez, director of *Punto Critico*, reflected at Rini's memorial in Mexico that she was part of a "collective effort that at times becomes gigantic and shocks us when we see how it consumes and extinguishes the physical life of many 'companeros' . . . Rini was an artist and revolutionary internationalist who had chosen work (that universal condition shared by all the exploited and oppres-

sed) as the language of encounter. . . in the end, artistic work grounded in revolutionary work as a powerful instrument to synthesize and express the most profound popular aspirations."

"Incomparable traveler, Rini would go to the farthest corners where there was a struggle to capture the primary images, to feel the problems of that moment, to charge the spirits of the activists; so she was present in a strike in Monterrey, in a demonstration in Chihuahua, sharing the fate of miners who suffered repression in Arizona, she was part of a Native American protest in New Mexico, in a miners struggle in Sonora, in an election campaign in San Francisco, in a conference in Sinaloa, with a work group in Guadalajara, organizing a graphics workshop here in Mexico City, participating in a drawn out struggle in Juchitan or at a bridge in Nicaragua."

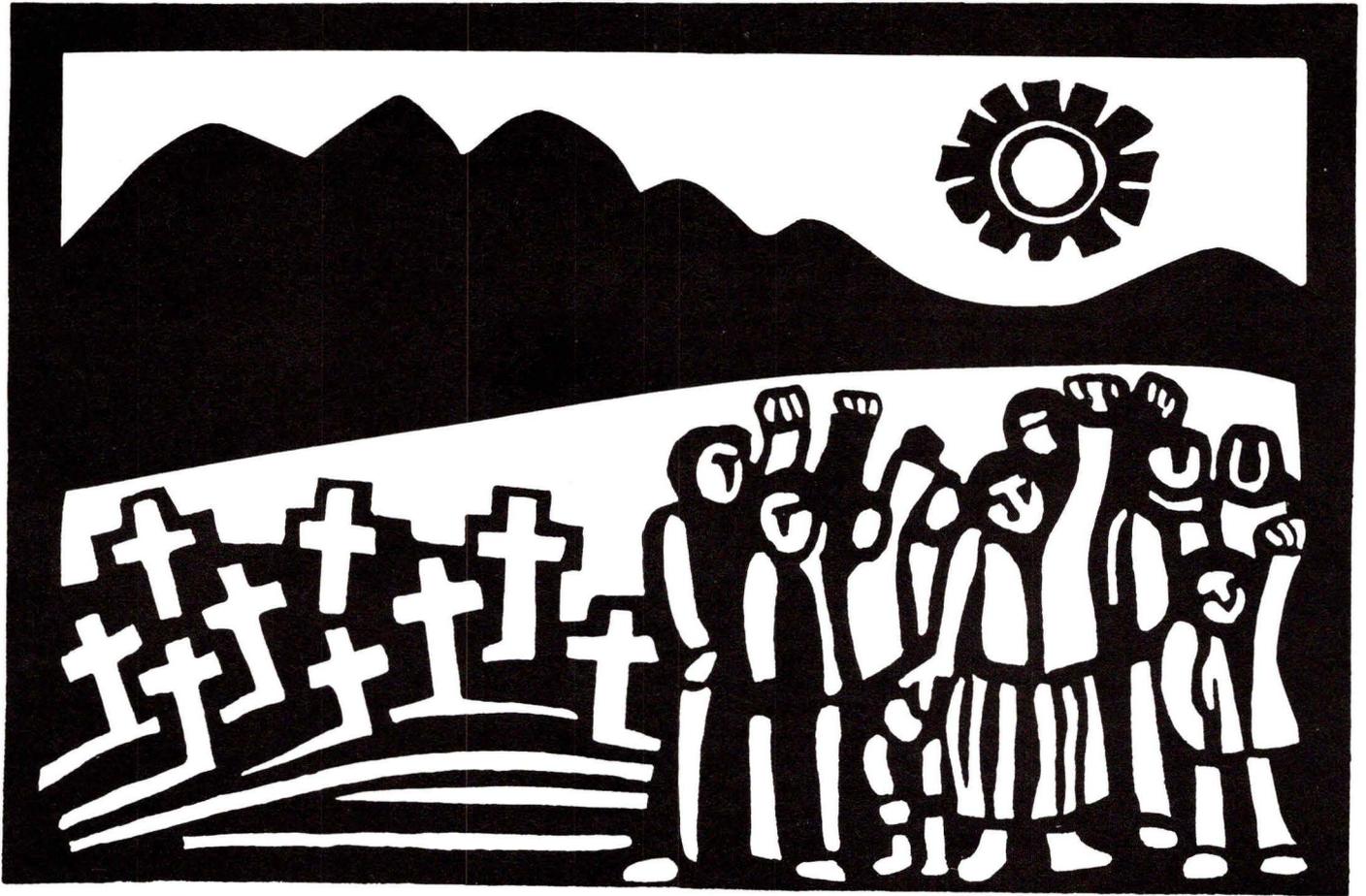
Rini chose bold black and white drawings as her primary medium because they could be easily photocopied and distributed, appearing in leaflets, posters, letterheads, books and magazines wherever the creepers of the grassroots network reached. She would arrive in town once or twice a year with her tote bag of art tools and black sketch book, have a warm conversation over dark coffee and a Delicado, then head for where the action was. Pencil sketches of a rally or strike would be turned into ink drawings late at night, and then be copied and distributed the next day before taking the bus back to Los Angeles, Albuquerque, points undetermined and finally Mexico City.

"I'm just a rolling stone" she would say. But she made friends everywhere she stopped and by her rolling she kept us all together somehow. And now we miss not only her profound artistic contribution and her friendship, but this work of hers—of bringing artists and political activists together, of uniting North Americans with our brothers and sisters to the south. Joe Hill said "Don't mourn, organize." Rini used to say, "Make a plan, carry it out."

Rini Templeton's family and friends are now collecting photographs, graphics, writings and biographical anecdotes to compile a book of her work. It is scheduled for bilingual publication in Mexico in approximately one year and will be available in the United States. If you have something to contribute to this collective effort of Rini's mural, please contact interim coordinator Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez (519 Castro St., San Francisco, CA 94114) or Peter Baird (5511 Ashland Way, Sacramento, CA 15822).

—Peter Baird





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