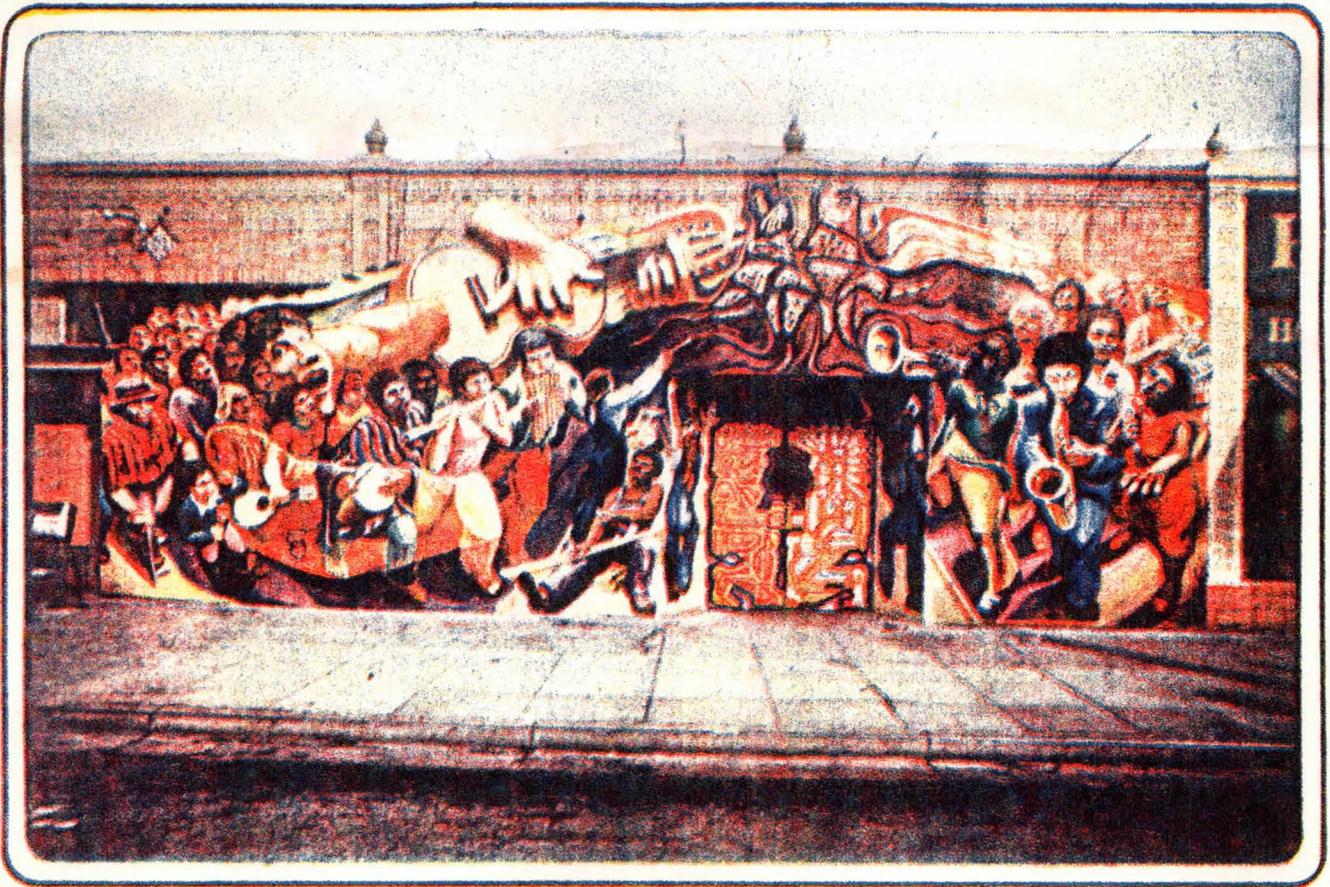




NEWSLETTER

1978



"La Peña," Commonarts, Berkeley, see p. 6



INTRODUCTION

We hope that the expanded format of the Newsletter helps to further the principles of the Network by making more information and discussion of issues available to community muralists. Besides increased length (not in itself much of a virtue, but the issues we are dealing with are often complex), there are two other features of this Newsletter which are new. One is the discussion pieces, where ideas, responses, reactions, etc. are opened up for debate among us. Many of these statements are not fully worked out, but they need not be in order to raise important questions. What the editorial group supports most strongly is the presenting of the issues, and attempts at clarifying them. If you have an idea, opinion, or whatever, send it in. If you wait until it is completely resolved, even in your own mind, it might well lose its immediate significance for other muralists in the country.

The second characteristic we want to be developed is exemplified by the article on Berkeley and the La Peña mural, and, to a lesser degree by the articles on Portland, Oregon, and San Diego; that is, the placing of the mural information in a context of community (neighborhood, union, club, school, etc.). If people in other cities are to get an idea of the processes and issues involved in a mural project, then you must send us descriptions of the several contexts within which a mural resides. What are the tensions, the struggles, the contradictions in your city? In your community? In your organization? What do we need to know in order not to see your mural simply as "art," but as part of an historical community process? These questions, when answered, help all readers learn what locals often take for granted, and help us all increase our understanding as well as our knowledge of the murals.

Reviewing the material for this Newsletter, the editorial group thought it would be helpful to call readers' attention to some important issues which run through several of the articles. One of these is the tension between professional and collective efforts. Sometimes this takes the form of expert vs. amateur. Does "good" aesthetics mean "professional" murals? Do professional murals mean good aesthetics? Neumann discusses this, as do Beckmann and Shaw in the discussion section (but from three different viewpoints). The article on the Canto al Pueblo describes a specific, and important, instance of the struggle, and Montoya's response to Shaw begins an answer to his question. Weber and Macchiarini begin with a somewhat larger political viewpoint, and seek to clarify what is most important in our movement.

Naturally, this question ties into the issue of support. Yasko lays out a strong position that muralists must build concrete community support for any project.

The results of Proposition 13 reinforce her ideas, it would seem. The article on organizing CETA workers into unions points up certain other needs within a major supporting source for muralists. The communications from Jean Charlot and Bernard Baruch Zackheim, muralists with decades of struggle to draw on, are also pertinent here.

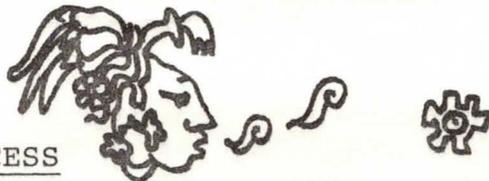
In short, there are a variety of ideas within our movement about these issues (including, as Neumann notes, a reluctance to depend on such sweeping oppositions for clarity). We hope the discussions in this Newsletter will be the beginning of the more thorough consideration these points deserve. We invite responses and elaborations for the next Newsletter.

In fact, news of any and every sort related to mural painting is needed, either in drafts of articles, or just clippings, jottings, notes, whatever. Send us lists of ideas, first drafts, letters, xeroxes--in short, whatever is easiest for you to get to us. Under no circumstances should anyone feel intimidated by the idea of writing something. We will smooth out style, grammar, etc., but we can't do it without the basic material, and that is your responsibility.

Other things we would like to have more of are visual materials. Please send us photographs of murals, but also think of sending handouts, leaflets, sketches of ideas you've had, documents, etc.--anything that has an image that might be interesting/useful for other muralists to see.

Tim Drescher

EDITORIAL PROCESS



We feel that it is important that readers know about our editorial process so that it isn't mysterious--and so that suggestions may be offered to help out. It is basically a three part process, with the first being a meeting at which all submissions are reviewed and people here, volunteers from the dozen local muralists at the meeting, take responsibility for condensing news articles, writing summaries of collections of materials/letters sent to us, etc. General attitudes about length, style, translations and schedule were discussed.

Copies of all issue-oriented, discussion points were mailed to more than a dozen local muralists who responded to the material one way or another, making suggestions or giving approval, before the final meeting at the end of the month, at which five of us went through each article and, especially, the editing of issue-oriented submissions. Final changes were made the following day, and the manuscript went to the typist. If we're lucky, the Newsletter will be mailed before Thanksgiving holidays.

"Members of the National Murals Network are committed to building a community based public art movement. In the communities where we live and/or work, we seek to create an art of high quality which is freely accessible to the people in their movement against racial, sexual and economic oppression."



REGIONAL CONTACTS

The regional caucuses elected delegates to a National Network Steering Committee. These delegates also serve as regional contacts to the Network:

Southwest:

Linda Eber
SPARC
685 Venice Boulevard
Venice, CA 90291

Karen Van Fossan Post
W Dallas Community Centers
212 Dallas W Shopping Center
Dallas, TX 75212

Northwest & Newsletter:

Tim Drescher
P.O. Box 40383
San Francisco, CA 94140

Midwest:

Barbara Russum
Public Art Workshop
5623 W Madison Street
Chicago, IL 60644

East:

Tomie Arai
Cityarts Workshop
525 East 6th Street
New York, New York 10009

The following people in the Bay Area have worked on the editorial/production group to produce this Newsletter:

Miranda Bergman
Tim Drescher
Rupert Garcia
Dan Macchiarini
Galeria de la Raza
Emmanuel Montoya
Osha Neumann

Jane Norling
Patricia Rodriguez
David Shaw
Arch Williams
Fran Valesco
Bill Young
Jo Seger

labor donated

SPANISH TRANSLATION OF NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE

Copies of this Newsletter are available in Spanish. Please write to Tim Drescher, P.O. Box 40 383, S.F., CA 94140, and give addresses. It is our intention to continue making the Newsletter available in Spanish as well as in English, and although we cannot afford to do two completely separate editions, we will make typed translations available when requested.

FUTURE PLANS



For the Newsletter, we plan an International Issue for sometime in the winter, consisting of articles and photos. If you have any foreign news or photos, please send it before January 1, 1979.

Our next National Newsletter is tentatively scheduled for mailing in the first part of May, 1979. This means a deadline for submissions of March 15. Feel free to send news anytime before then--anytime that is convenient for you.

CITYARTS SEEKS NEW DIRECTOR

After ten years of working for the cause, Susan Caruso-Green is leaving Cityarts. Her position, Executive Director, is now available, and Cityarts is searching for someone with heavy fundraising experience, public relations skills, and a background in community arts. Preferably not an artist. The salary is negotiable, but should be around 12,000 - 13,000. People from all parts of the country are invited to apply by sending resumes to Cityarts immediately.

SPECIAL DISCOUNT!!

In order to keep the Mural Manual from going out of print, the Public Art Workshop ordered a second printing of 2,000 copies. This means we have literally a TON of Manuals in our Resource Center. Can you help us pay off our loan? We are offering a special discount of 30% off the regular price of \$5.95 to readers of the Murals Newsletter. Send this ad with your check or money order for \$4.15 per copy (postpaid inside the U.S.) to: Public Art Workshop, 5623 W Madison Street, Chicago, Illinois 60644. This offer expires March 1, 1979. Write for larger discount on quantity orders.



Berkeley is no inner city. It has no easily identified ghettos; no areas of rotting slums. Even the Flatlands where most of the Third World and working class population lives consists mainly of tree lined streets and rows of one family houses interrupted occasionally by ticky-tacky developers' projects and multi-roomed Victorian relics in various states of upkeep. It is hard sometimes to feel the community in Berkeley as palpably as one does in the inner cities where folks hang out on the stoops in summer and the streets are alive with energy.

In recent years Berkeley has slipped into the political doll drums. The radicalism for which it was famous in the 60's has gone underground. Even the political ill-wind of Proposition 13 failed to arouse a strong response. As elsewhere in the state, Proposition 13 has brought about a counter-revolution of lowered expectations without stirring up an answering army of enraged citizenry ready to storm the barricades of bureaucracy and drag the simpering politicians out into the streets to answer for their outrages. Community activists struggle to keep afloat the embattled projects they have nursed from infancy. They have little energy to look to the larger issues, or for the present build the coalitions that could mobilize masses of people. The political arena shrinks. The realism of survival in hard times replaces imagination and militancy. The drift to the right continues.

In this context community art and the mural movement as a part of it has a tendency to define itself a-politically. It gives up the attempt to create a culture of opposition to the oppressive, all-defining mass culture. Commonarts, Berkeley's community arts program fits into this pattern, despite the fact that among the group that founded it and the artists hired are people with strong radical and community committment. As an organization it remains dependent on mother - CETA. It began as a CETA program and would probably die the death of all CETA programs were the money withdrawn. It has struggled for a year to forge a working collective out of a desperate group of individual artists with varying interests and loyalties. There have been successes and failures.

To be counted among the successes has been the work of the Commonarts muralists - Ray Patlán, Brian Theile, and Osha Nuemann. Their most significant work has been the "Song of Unity" mural for the facade of the La Pena Cultural Center.

La Pena is a bright exception in the generally dim landscape of collective radical cultural endeavors. Begun as a Latin American cultural center supported by a restaurant it has become home to whatever radical culture there is in Berkeley these days with a strong committment to community and Third World struggles.

A mural class conducted by Commonarts in collaboration with Peralta College of Non-Traditional Studies began in the Spring and continues after a summer interruption. Two women muralists, Ariella Saidenberg and Deborah Green, have begun painting on their own after doing work in the class. Their first work was a mural for the Berkeley-Oakland Women's Health Collective.

LA PEÑA

The muralists describe their work as follows: The mural with which we have decorated the facade of the Center depicts people of the Americas coming together in struggle. North America is symbolized by the eagle; Central and South America by the condor. Several of the figures in the mural seem to be perpetually building, repairing, and painting La Peña. All of the images need each other and are moving quickly towards a unity of political singing and instruments playing in support of the central figure, Victor Jara, who is chosen as a symbol of People's artists in struggle. Victor Jara lost his life in Chile in 1973 during the anti-Allende coup. This internationally renowned protest musician continued his protest of the Fascists' regime in song even as he was dying at the hands of the Junta. The mural contains portraits of various contemporary People's artists. The doors to La Peña are painted in stylized North and South American Indian patterns. The two figures on the doors greet each other in a handshake of brotherhood.

This project was important to us for a number of reasons: It marked the continued close collaboration between Commonarts and La Peña. It represented the collaboration of four artists (the Commonarts muralists and Anna De Leon, a ceramicist) who had not worked as a group together before this project but developed strong ties and mutual respect in the course of it. It was ambitious and experimental in technique, combining painted surfaces with relief in ceramic (the birds heads) and paper mache made with newspaper and exterior acrylic paint hung on a chicken wire armature (the head and hands of Victor Jara).

We completed the La Peña mural in August. Our current winter project is a mural for the entrance way of the East Bay Skills center, a vocational training college run by CETA.





Throughout the huge Los Angeles Basin murals are constantly being painted, but it is difficult to get information about them because so many are painted by independent artists. We hope anyone with information will send it to us so that it can be published in the next Newsletter. Rumors and a brief visit recently turned up the following information: William Herron's mural, "My Life in the Projects" at Ramona Gardens has been obliterated by renovation. Administrators say, however, that Herrón is going to paint a new wall in the remodeled space. Other murals continue to be painted at Ramona Gardens and Estrada Courts, by Herrón and by other artists (see the San Diego article for one).

In Watts, Elliott Pinkney has painted at least three murals near Rosecrans and Spring Streets.

In Venice, Ed Gilliam has painted two murals on the Boardwalk at Muscle Beach and at Westminster, and John Whorley from San Francisco has painted "The Fall of Icarus" near Windward and the Boardwalk.

Terry Schoonhoven, a member of the now defunct L.A. Fine Arts Squad, continues to make a living doing murals. He is in the final stages of a very large photorealist-with-a-twist wall at Windward and Speedway on the St. Charles Place Hotel.

Two galleries are also active in the Los Angeles mural scene. One, on the east side, is Goetz Gallery, 3757 East First Street, Los Angeles, 90063. For \$2.00 they have a good map of several Los Angeles murals. The other Gallery is Brockman (P.O. Box 43608, Los Angeles, 90043), on Degnan near Crenshaw. Brockman CETA muralists include Robert Delgado (Inner City Cultural Center), Suzanne Jackson (Crenshaw asn 50th), Kent Twitchell (Otis Art Institute), and Ron Moore (Community Service Center--Supergraphics).

Tim Drescher

SPARC - LOS ANGELES

"SPARC" stands for the Social and Public Art Resource Center, located at 685 Venice Boulevard, Venice, CA 90291. It is "dedicated to the production of public art...art produced for and with neighborhood people that is designed to meet the specific needs, concerns, aspirations of a particular community." It tries to demystify the creative process, and reestablish the position of the artist in the community as a visual spokesperson.

Open for a bit over a year now, SPARC has carried out the painting of the Tujunga Wash mural (¼ mile long), and the making of a superb 8 minute film on the project by Donna Deitch (which can be rented through SPARC for \$20, or purchased for \$150). It is called "The Great Wall of Los Angeles," and viewers at the national conference in April, and more recently muralists in the San Francisco Bay Area, felt that it captures a great deal of the essence of mural painting.

SPARC has also employed an artist in residence, sponsored conferences on funding and support of public art, and runs a public art resource center open to the public with all sorts of help, including eight artists in residence, for community art ideas.

For the coming year, SPARC, in keeping with its objectives of making art available to the community, and especially the minority, low-income, and non-English speaking members of the community who are not served by traditional art institutions, among several other activities will create a rotating outdoor display of portable mural panels. This program, according to SPARC's description, "is intended to lead to a greater awareness on the part of neighborhood people of the potential of art as a tool, to stimulate long-run employment opportunities for artists, (and) to maximize the impact of the artists' work and outreach efforts...." It is felt that portable, outdoor mural panels offer several advantages in terms of durability, accessibility, and ease of maintenance.

SPARC is also currently organizing a collective show, hoping it will travel throughout the city. Its theme is "anti angel dust," and the show is being done in coalition with the Venice Drug Coalition.



MONSTER MURAL PROJECT

Certainly the major mural project SPARC has been involved in is the Tujunga Wash Mural, which was begun in 1976 in conjunction with Citywide Mural Project. The new phase of the mural was dedicated on August 24 in 104 degree heat (the wash is almost always totally dry--except for occasional flash floods, such as the one last year which carried off all the scaffolding two days before work was finished for the season). Music was provided by the Freedom Jazz Band, and "Golden Brush" awards were given to participating youth.

The project was directed by Judy Baca, and painted by 35 youth referred through Project Heavy and SPEDY. (See following "Citywide" article). They painted an additional 250 ft. on the "History of California's murals, depicting the World War I Doughboys, Charlie Chaplin, Tomás Alva Edison, and William S. Hart. Work is being done to disclose the true Mexican-American heritage of "Tomás Edison".

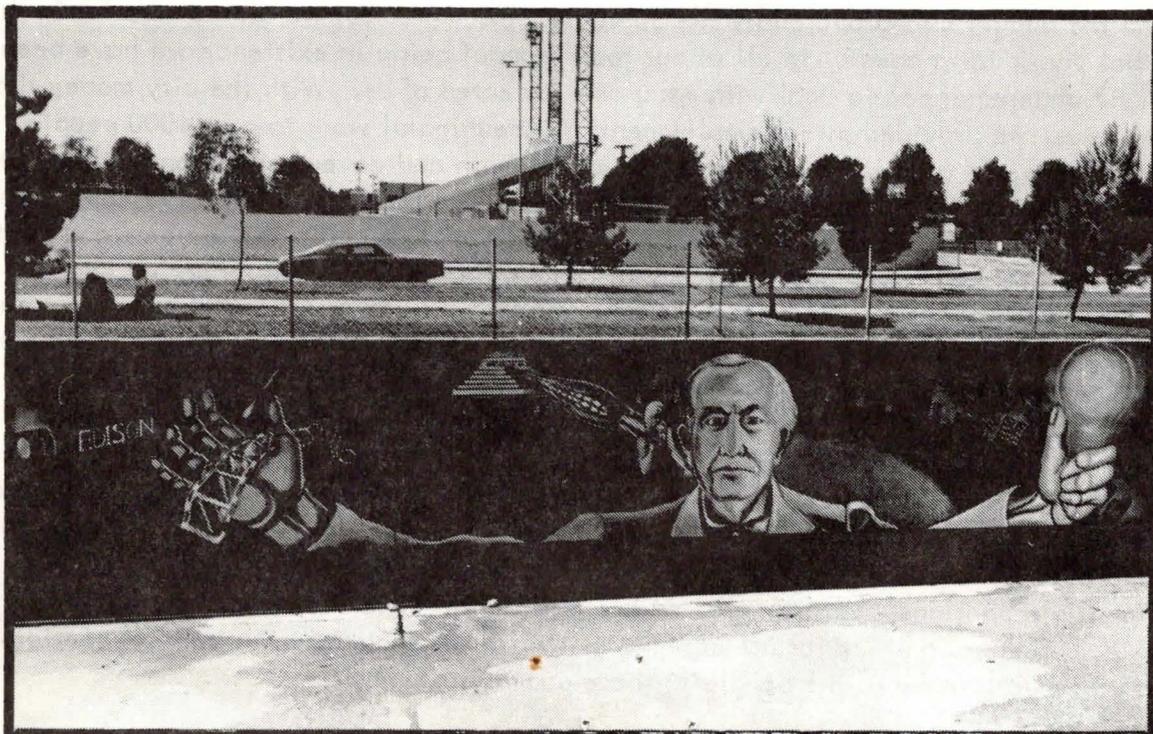
CITYWIDE MURAL PROJECT - LOS ANGELES

This summer Citywide Mural Project employed sixty youth (ages 14-18) under the Summer Program for Economically Disadvantaged Youth (SPEDY). It has three mural projects underway simultaneously in different parts of the city: East Los Angeles, Venice, and the San Fernando Valley. The youth were under the supervision of five artists.

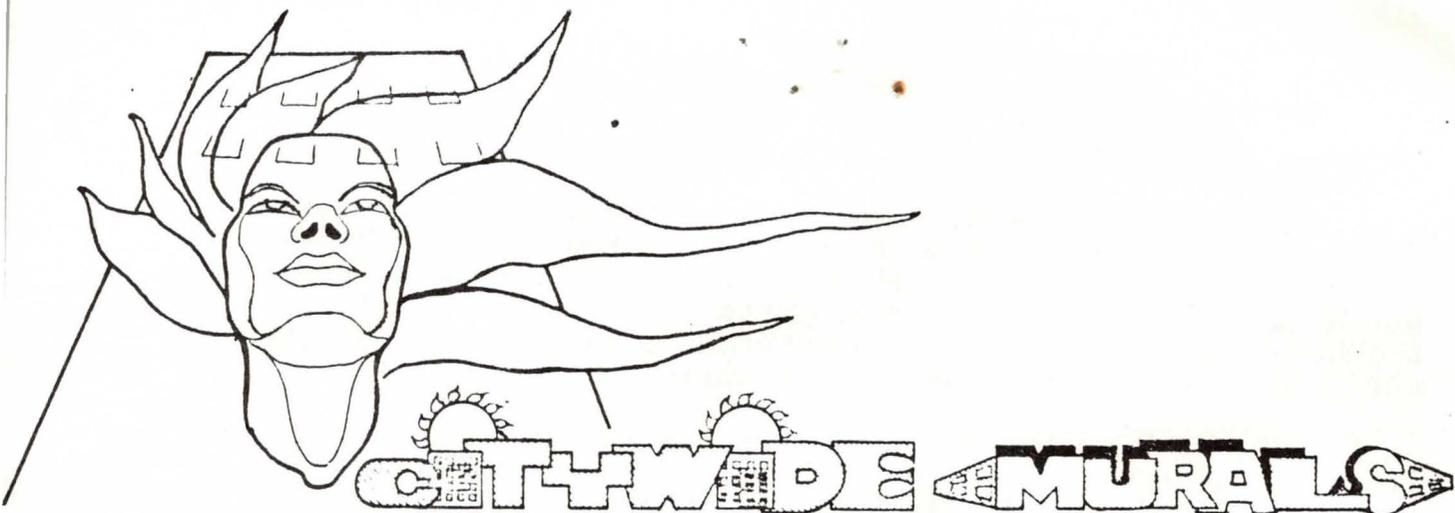
This East Los Angeles mural was supervised by John Valadez. It is in six panels and depicts local scenes and people from the Boyle Heights area. In Venice, Anthony Cox supervised neighborhood youth in painting a mural about brotherhood and unity between the Black and Chicano people who share the Oakwood community. The mural in the San Fernando Valley is the Tujunga Wash mural, an extension of the quarter-mile-long mural begun there in 1976. It was begun with 80 youth under the direction of Judy Baca, and was continued this summer with 35 youth also under her direction. This mural depicts the history of California with special emphasis on the contributions of minority people. The mural is now 1/3 of a mile long and will be continued in future summers if funding can be found.

These murals, however, were the last projects of Citywide. Because of Proposition 13, all funding for future mural projects was cut off completely. The loss of these funds creates a serious problem for public art in Los Angeles in that in addition to the 30-40 murals a year painted by Citywide, the organization also provided extensive equipment and technical assistance to many other organizations throughout the city (see accompanying news release).

Glenna Boltuch



"Tomas Alva Edison"
panel of Tajuanga Wash mural, SPARC



MURAL RESOURCE CENTER 685 Venice Blvd. Venice CA 90291
(213) 478-0731 x527 DEPARTMENT RECREATION AND PARKS, CITY OF LOS ANGELES

PRESS RELEASE

Citywide Mural Project, which has been funded by the City of Los Angeles, Recreation & Parks Dept., since 1974, has been cut entirely from the city budget due to Proposition 13. This goes into effect as of July 3, 1978. With two days notice we have had to layoff three permanently employed part time assistants, one of whom has been with the project 3 years, and at least 40 other youth on mural crews throughout the city. The services provided by the CMP have been a valuable part of this city, not only in its invaluable contribution to community arts, but also in employing youth, giving the experience of working in a group on a mural project, providing communities with the ability to beautify graffiti-covered walls, working together with hundreds of community groups and agencies throughout the city, making a unique contribution to the city in providing artistic relief to otherwise bleak city streets and blighted urban areas. CMP has worked with many gangs, street youth, senior citizens, children, Native Americans, Chicanos, Blacks, Asian-Americans, Anglos--reflecting the entire ethnic diversity of Los Angeles. Over the past few years we have given employment to over 1000 people, many of these poverty-level street youth whose first job experiences were with Citywide Mural Project. In this time approximately 175 murals have been painted all over the city of Los Angeles.

We understand the budget cuts proposed by the Jarvis Amendment. But we are not the fat in the government that Jarvis talks about. In all of our four years of being in existence we have been understaffed and underequipped to deal with what was expected of us. With the city money that was allocated to us, we provided direct employment and meaningful work to over 1000 people. The production of murals gave a positive experience to many youth and gave them a connection to their cultural heritage. We gave a sense of worth to the people and created an alternative educational form. We created a mural resource center (the only one on the West coast and the best and most comprehensive one in the U.S.) where artists could come together and get information about all aspects of muralism, check out books, and see slides of murals in Los Angeles and all over the world. The Mural Resource Center provided tourists with maps of the murals of LA and many people with mural information. CMP sponsored and participated in many cultural events throughout the city. We provided services to gang youth by uniting rival gangs in working together on mural projects. With a minimum of funds, the Citywide Mural Project has played a big part in making Los Angeles the mural capital of the world with over 1000 murals. With our minute portion of the city budget we have accomplished real, visible, positive things with the people and communities of Los Angeles. In cutting the government budget, legislators should look at the real fat in government such as limosines, cars, helicopters, multiple pensions, military, etc. and retain the direct services that are so important to our communities. There is a place for art in our communities and for the important connections and contributions that murals make to the people in these communities.



SAN DIEGO

There has been a lot of mural activity in the San Diego area over the past year, including the following: February--After a year and a half of struggle, the Ocean Beach community artists joined with CACA (Congress of American Cosmic Artists) and finished their conceptual mural, "Cosmic Revolution," 18' x 40'. Also, El Barrio Logan's Boys' Club mural gang finished their 15' x 15' mural, "Stars and Colors." March--The Lomas Doradas Mural Gang was organized and painted "Soul Flight," 15' x 35'.

April--An extensive mural painting "Muralthon 78" was held at Chicano Park where six pillars of the Coronado Bridge were painted with new murals by several artists. The Muralthon was financed partly by groups throughout San Diego county and some 75 painters and helpers worked on the projects. (The history of Chicano Park and its murals is important. In 1970 the California Highway Patrol began to build a substation under the bridge, which is a freeway from downtown San Diego to the wealthy suburb of Coronado Island. The bridge cuts directly over the Logan Park barrio, and its pillars rest on ground for a mile before the bridge arches over the water at a height sufficient for U.S. Navy ships to pass under. The community acted in spontaneous resistance to the building of the substation, and after militant opposition, won the right to build their own park instead--Chicano Park. Three years later the first murals were painted on the pillars, and each year on April 23 there is a huge celebration there by the neighborhood community).

The Chicano Park concept of "all the way to the Bay", that is painting the pillars to the water's edge, and putting park beneath at the same time, was suggested by Salvador Roberto Torres, "El Quezo." CACA was an early participant/organizer of this process, and remains an important force in San Diego murals.

In the Muralthon 78, murals were painted and designed by Vidal Martin from Washington, D.C., with the aid of Felipe Adame, who painted the ceiling of the newly built bandstand in the center of the park to resemble a Central American temple. Also, a mural designed by Rupert Garcia, from San Francisco, was painted, "Homage to the Mexican Muralists Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, David Siqueiros, and José Orozco." Also, the Lomas Doradas Mural Gang and Mario Torero painted "La Virgin Cós mica de las Américas."

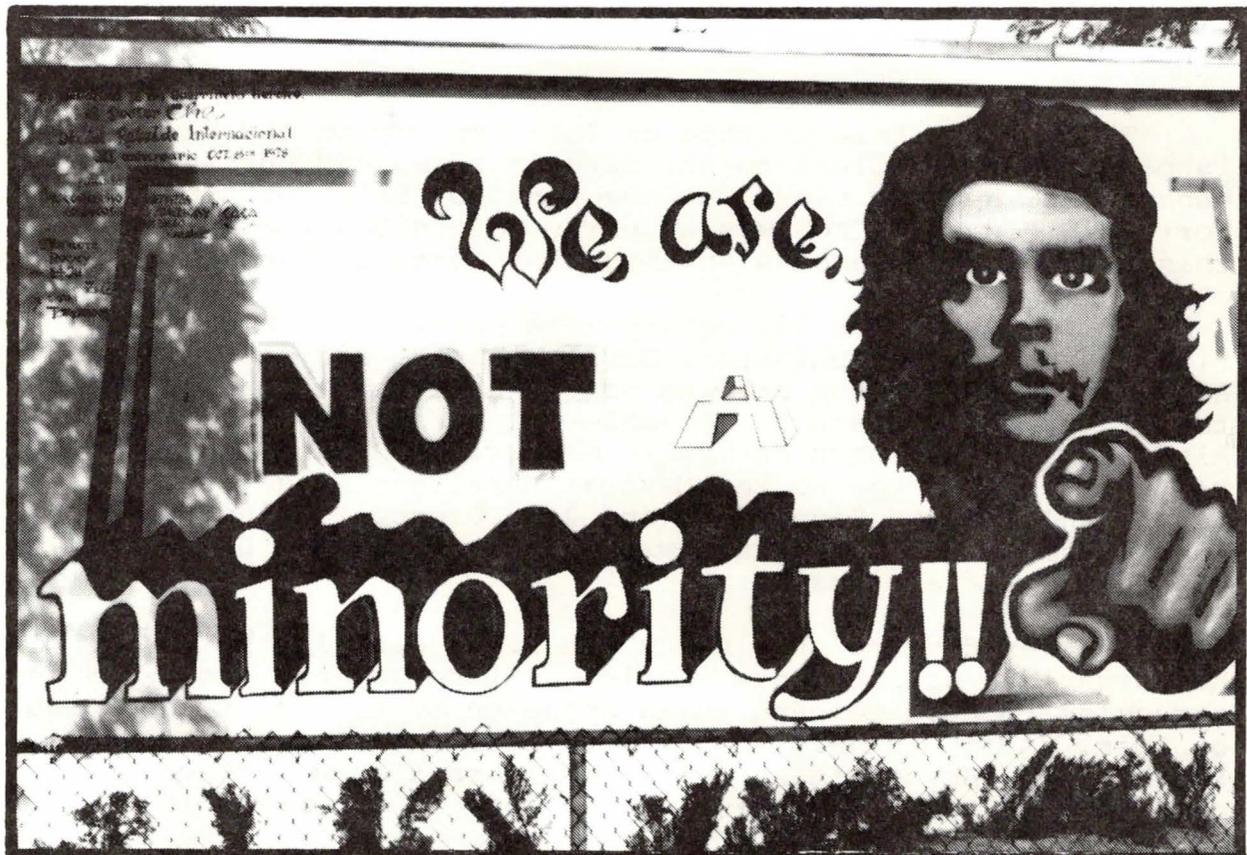
Another development in the San Diego area is that CACA has organized artists into a union. Since May the group has led struggles to have Chicano works accepted by the San Diego Museum of Arts, and it is helping plan the first Mayor's Chicano Art Exhibition. Beyond this, the main interest is an attack on censorship, and a demonstration was held on October 5 to 8

commemorating the "Historical Revolutionary" by CACA's painting a mural in Estrada Courts in Los Angeles called "We're not minorities." This is a reproduction of a mural painted by CACA a year ago, in November 1977, at the University of San Diego in Caléxico, which has a 90% Chicano population. The Mayor and Dean of the University are Anglo. The mural depicted a woman of many color shades directing herself to others like her and saying, "You are not a minority." When time for graduation came, a couple of students complained that they could not graduate in front of the wall and it was whitewashed.

Finally, Torero has dedicated a mural monument to Picasso, a 40' x 100' wall from the second to the fourth floor of the Intercultural Council of the Arts Building on 3rd and E streets in downtown San Diego. El Centro Cultural de la Raza and the California Arts Council were also involved in sponsoring the work, in which Torero was helped by Alicia Saviour, Abdallah, and Nino Domondon.

Other projects currently being discussed include a cultural artists exchange with México.

Mario Torero



PROPOSITION 13 and you--Whatever state you're in

As you may know, voters in California last election passed Proposition 13 which cut taxes on property, and thereby chopped out a very large chunk of public service support funds. Although its backers campaigned on a platform of "cut the fat out of government," the results of its passage have been to attack direct community services such as libraries, schools, medical help, paramedic programs, etc. (see The Citywide Murals Press Release in this issue). The fat, needless to say, remains, along with massive windfall profits by landlords, but no corresponding savings by renters.

In California, this has been momentarily offset by the lump-sum payment of some 4 billion dollars out of a state budget reserve, but that cannot happen again, and the prospects for next fiscal year (after this fall's elections) are dire. One result is that California, which had previously ranked 22nd in the nation in per capita arts expenditure (Alaska and New York are first and second), now ranks 47th. In short, art programs of all types, and especially public art programs, have been seriously harmed by Proposition 13.

Proposition 13 and similar proposals are not simply tax cuts or "messages to the legislators." They set up conservative terms of public debate at a time in which no coherent response from the left is being heard. What people fought against a few months ago, now they're too often happy to get! In a society where the economy cannot provide enough jobs, and the government chooses not to support sufficient basic services for its citizens, the result is that members and groups within the working and poor community are divided and forced to compete with each other for the meager crumbs allotted them. The final word on 13 is by no means in yet, but even larger than its financial burden may be the spectre of divisiveness it raises in poor, working, and especially Third World communities.

We are printing this because of the national recognition the idea has had, and the growing prominence of its main spokesperson, Howard Jarvis, a conservative Los Angeles apartment house owner. Similar cutting proposals are already popping up in more than a dozen states and on the federal government level. Be prepared to fight against such measures!



REFREGIER MURALS IN RINCON ANNEX



The last of the WPA murals finished were painted in 1946-48 by Anton Refregier in the Rincon Annex building of the U.S. Post Office in San Francisco. The Post Office's building of a new mail facility a few miles away raises the question of what will become of these important fresco panels. Efforts are being made to see that they are not destroyed, and that the building itself, a classic WPA style now coming back into fashion, is also protected. Legal aspects of the issue are being clarified, and the industrial engineer in charge of the new building informs us that a decision to tear down the old Rincon Annex will not be made for several years.

Still, we've heard this sort of thing before, so we will continue to pursue the issue and keep readers informed. In the meantime, anyone wishing to help preserve these panels should write a letter of appreciation of the building itself and/or its murals, and send the letter to Chairman of Landmarks Advisory Board, 339 Walnut Street, San Francisco, CA 94118. If you know any particularly famous artists, architects, states-people, etc., such boards are traditionally more impressed by their names than by others'.

PUBLIC ART PRESERVATION COMMITTEE FORMED

A new group, the Public Art Preservation Committee, has been formed in New York City. Its goal is to preserve, conserve, protect, store and place public art, and in particular one of its concerns is to defend public murals, primarily from the WPA period. For more information, write to either Marlene Park, Dept. of Art History, or Jerry Markowitz, Dept. of History at Public Art Preservation Committee, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, 444 W. 56th Street, New York, New York 10019. The telephone number is (212) 489-5183.

SANTA ROSA

James Curtis, in the past year, has done an 18'x 60' exterior mural. He has also been working on painting an undercrossing, for which the sketch has been ready for quite awhile. It depicts native plants, plants patented by Luther Burbank, and Native Americans. Proposition 13 has posed difficulties, however.



SAN MATEO COUNTY

San Mateo County, south of San Francisco, has become the location of a considerable amount of mural activity in the past year. There are three muralists currently working there, with local helpers Chuy Campusano, Emmanuel Montoya, and José Antonio Burciaga, and each has been involved in a variety of projects.

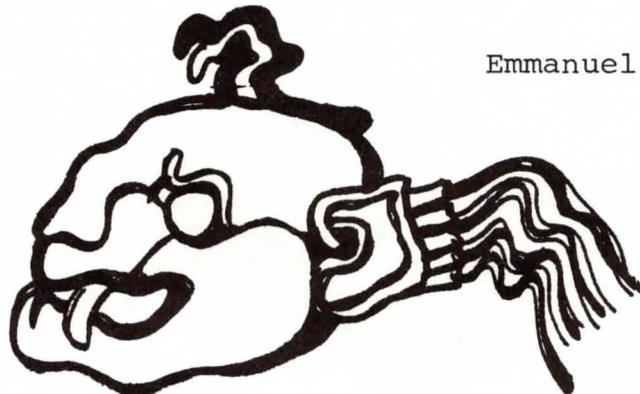
Montoya painted mural-style billboards advertising the San Mateo County Arts Revival Troupe. The billboards were donated by the advertising company that owns them.

Montoya has also painted several murals in the area, including one called "Unidos/United" covering six walls of two adjacent handball courts. Montoya insisted on keeping the graffiti which was present on the courts when he began work, saying that "for an outsider to paint a community mural without concern for the art that is already on the wall would be insensitive and disrespectful to the local population. This artwork should be painted for and with the community." To this end, he combines African and Chicano images with the local expressions on the walls. Montoya has also worked, with Robert Turnidge, on a 12'x18' mural depicting the start of the hot lunch program for senior citizens in the Fair Oaks area of Redwood City. Turnidge has also done an historical panorama on local history for the Millbrae City Hall.

Chuy Campusano has painted a history of Daly City located in the Westlake Branch Library, on an 8'x32' wall. Gilberto Romero worked on this mural with Campusano.

Finally, Chris Barnes did a mural at the Peninsula Humane Society depicting whales and dolphins.

All these projects indicate an attitude of considerable support by the local agencies and municipalities, although, as in other locations throughout the country, there is disagreement between those who want the murals to be simply decorative and those who want to articulate political issues more precisely. There are now ten-odd murals in San Mateo county. As of November 1, however, the program has been discontinued.



Emmanuel Montoya



"Unidos/United," Emmanuel Montoya

SEBASTOPOL

Bernard Baruch Zakheim, who has been painting murals at least since the WPA projects, writes news of his works. One of the current projects is restoration of a mural painted at the University of California School of Medicine, which was wall-papered over, and when the paper was eventually removed, the underlying frescoes were damaged. Mr. Zakheim also was the organizer of the Coit Tower frescoes, in San Francisco, as well as leader of Paris artists in 1932 under the slogan, "W.P.A. for all artists." He sends the following suggestions to us: "Don't appeal to business men for support, because if they can't get advertisement out of it or make a buck, they will not be interested. Mural painting is a matter of national monumental pride, and should be sponsored by the United States Government."

PORTLAND, OREGON

Albina is the name of an Afro-American neighborhood in Portland. It has been described as "a reservoir of diverse cultural activities. Known and unknown to each other, historians, storytellers, singers, athletes, dancers, poets, weavers, cooks, builders, artists and artisans, musicians and actors function singly or collectively to fulfill the urge to create. The community as a whole needs to be made aware of the cultural endowments that its members are perpetuating." One road to that end has been the Albina Mural Project.

On July 4, 1978, a Kintu ceremony of dedications was held for recently completed murals. This is the traditional African ceremony through which an object is given life, and attendance was large and spirited. The mural project produced five painted and one sculpted panel at the Albina Human Resources Building, and all focused on one or another aspect of black history and, especially, local black history such as the early forties shipyard era when more than 25,000 black workers and their families came to Portland. These works were executed by Isaac Shamsud-Din, Henry Frison, Jenny Harada, and Charles Tatum, with the assistance of Conchita Henderson, Darryl Clegg, and Larry Scott.

The program is temporarily (we hope) jeopardized by lack of funding, so the best interim address is through Isaac Shamsud-Din, 4550 N. Mississippi Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97217.

Jack Eyerly



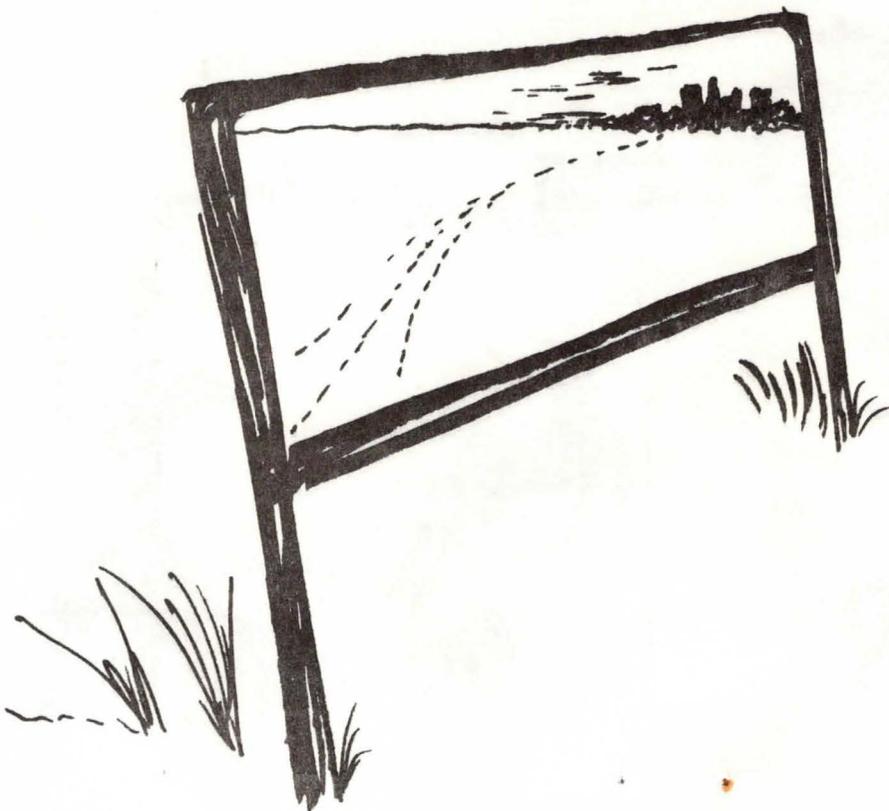
LAS VEGAS

A brief summary of the history of murals in Las Vegas, as far as we are informed now, begins with the Mayor and State Arts Council bringing Robert Beckmann in to work with high school students in designing a mural for a city building. This was in 1976. 1977 saw a steadily increasing number of high school youth participating and also others joining in, along with increased support from municipal parks, recreation departments, high schools, state and NEA. In the summer of 1978, a continuing education project at University of Nevada--Las Vegas two week mural course ended up with a graphic on the side of a university building and participation by people aged 14 to 55! As Beckmann puts it, "The projects here have been collaborative, involving high school students, myself and local artists (as designers and special consultants). We have had the full cooperation of many agencies. All designs were circulated for feedback to municipal commissions, student body groups, or other owners of buildings as well as to building occupants before execution."

He goes on to say that "Since these programs have begun, working relationships between professional artists...and architects and these same agencies have initiated another (professional) mural series."

For further information write either this newsletter (for a list of Las Vegas murals) or Robert Beckmann, 3764 Central Park Drive, #11, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109.

Robert Beckmann



TEXAS

Spread out over Texas are numerous art groups and individuals working on public art murals. Unfortunately, the contacts between these groups are few and the results are people working towards the same goals but with no central point of communication.

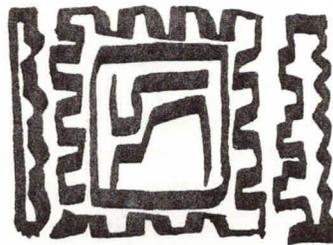
In Dallas, a group of artists hired through Opportunities Industrialization Center (from CETA funds) and assisted by the City Arts Program have completed ten murals around the city area. These murals, being the first in Dallas, could open up the possibilities for more projects. For this purpose, a group of muralists will incorporate into a Dallas Mural Group. More to come about this in future newsletters.

In Houston, a group of artists will complete a number of murals as a requirement for college courses. At Texas Southern University, John Biggers teaches painting and drawing courses. His students have been actively involved in putting up murals on campus walls for years. Presently, he is battling to keep the artworks from being torn down and painted over.

A network to organize the Hispanic Artists in the Southwest may help in contacting various muralists. The Task Force on Hispanic American Arts headed by Jacinto Quirarte, Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Texas at San Antonio, aims at working with the NEA to increase the amount of funding given to the Hispanic art community. Five Hispanic artists are covering all of Texas plus surrounding states to involve artists in every region.

We know there is much more activity in Texas, so please send info either to the Newsletter, or to Karen Van Fossan Post, W. Dallas Community Centers, 212 Dallas W. Shopping Center, Dallas, Texas 75212.

Karen Van Fossan Post





June 8 - 15 in Corpus Christi, Texas, saw the second annual Canto al Pueblo, where over 100 Chicano artists gathered to share ideas, discuss pertinent issues, and paint over half a dozen murals. Among the murals were the following:

"Wall of Cultural Education" painted by a team of 13 artists led by Roel Montalvo. It symbolized the two cultures of the Mexican-American. Other artists who worked on the project include Abel Bocanegra, Carlos Chapa, Evelyn Garza, Mary Ellen Guerra, Frank Montoya, Ruben Peña, Lavernís Royal, Abelardo Salinas and Berta Tamez.

A wall painted by Carlota Espinoza with neighborhood children saying "thanks" to the people of Corpus Christi and the participants in Canto al Pueblo.

A mural was painted by Gilberto Romero, José Antonio Burciaga, and Patricia Rodriguez at the University of Corpus Christi. It is on portable panels, and pays homage to D.A. Siqueiros and Diego Rivera, and attacks/exposes the deception of such arts patrons as Nelson Rockefeller, who destroyed one of Rivera's works in 1934. Titled "Incomprensión al Arte," the mural tries to point out that political murals deserve respect and that, under false criteria, they have not been respected in the past.

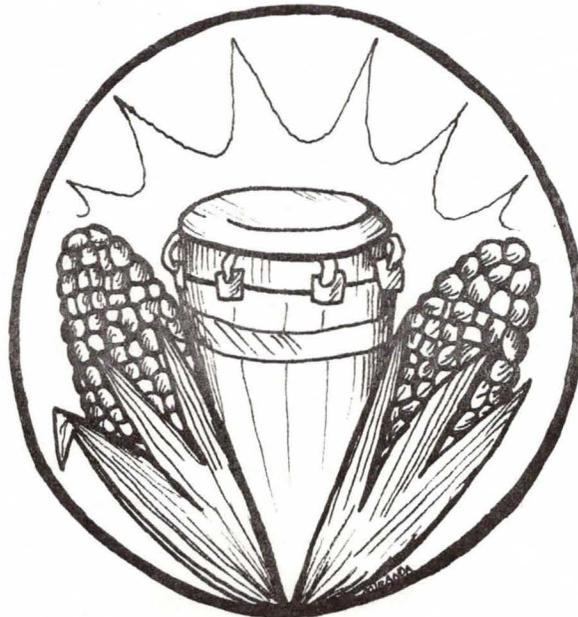
"Madre Tierra", painted by Manuel Martinez from Denver, which symbolizes Mother Earth and several laborers and farm-workers of different ethnic backgrounds. Other artists on this project included Amador Hinojosa of Corpus Christi and Enriqueta Vasquez of San Cristobal, New Mexico.

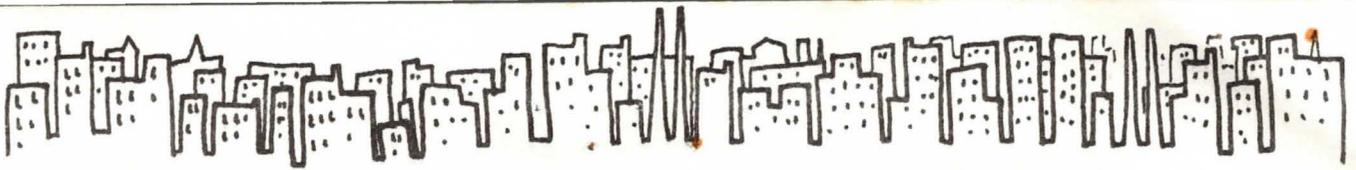
Mario Torero painted a mural entitled "El Chingazo" and on another wall of the same building Salvador D'La Vega painted a mural depicting his view on the experience of the Canto al Pueblo itself. Vega is from Chicago, and although other muralists apparently admired the work's force, spontaneity, color and spiritual fact, the Corpus Christi University Canto Steering Committee, (four people, none artists) have apparently written a letter to Vega asking for his apology for such an "insulting" mural. Other Chicano artists have also noted this tension in the Canto, that is, between progressive artists and more conservative members of its panels and committees. What they say, in general, is that the whole question of the real purposes of the Canto al Pueblo are in question: should the experience be to celebrate Chicano literature and fine arts and provide a forum for exchange of ideas between local artists and visiting artists and critics from several locations, or should the Canto become a formal recognition of the more professional and conservative artists and their work?

This conflict came up in several ways at the Canto. In its basic form, it seems to stem from the original leaders of the Canto being more involved with literary than with visual arts. This led to a relative lack of attention and consideration for, among other interests, murals, some said. For the third Canto al Pueblo, in Pueblo, Colorado in 1979, mural interests are represented by specific delegates (José Antonio Burciaga, Mario Torero, and Patricia Rodriguez). Folk arts and other fine arts also have delegates.

In one meeting in Corpus Christi, some participants objected to the use of Robert's Rules of Order, which they saw as bourgeois. Others felt that some basic order is necessary, and that because the artists' works deserve proper consideration, there should be more prior planning, and, for the 1979 Canto, a committee which will select/approve works before artists are allowed to participate. The other side of this is taken by those who feel more spontaneous, less systematically organized work is also significant and should not be excluded, since doing so will not only exclude many young artists, but will eventually move the Canto and, in turn, the cause of Chicano art toward conservative political positions and away from more progressive views.

Emmanuel Montoya
Patricia Rodriguez
Mario Torero





CHICAGO

The Public Art Workshop reports the completion of a mural by Kathleen Farrell in Joliet, Illinois. It is called "Justice on the Job," and the title and theme both were suggested by the Machinists' Union that is one of the sponsors. Besides the assistance of several unions on the mural, Farrell was helped by Mark Rogovin, Barbara Browne, and Barbara Russum. The editor of the Will County Federation of Labor Newsletter and members of several other unions worked on the wall as well, showing much solidarity with the concept. Farrell's next project is a mural in a local union hall to be done this winter (winters are cold in Chicago, not to mention cruel to muralists).

The Chicago Mural Group--Community Mural Project completed three murals this past summer. The first is on the back and side of a bowling alley which forms one side of Gill Park. The 18'x 100' mural is titled "Let The Children Play," and was executed in a graphic style and bright colors under the direction of Celia Radek and Cynthia Weiss. Nine summer CETA's as well as many of their friends and two local poets participated in the painting team. A grass roots, multi-ethnic mural committee helped sponsor the wall, along with Jane Addams Hull House. The Chicago Park District cooperated, but only after heavy pressure from the community. The mural develops images of freedom and confinement in childhood. A second wall fronting the park is planned for next summer.

Another wall, titled "Nuestras Vidas--Our Lives," was painted at North Avenue at Central Park. The site is a 3-story common wall left by demolition of the corner building for street widening. The design uses the patches of plaster to structure the composition in nine areas of contrasting themes, styles, and materials. Major elements of "real" materials were used along with the painted areas and unpainted brick to create a collage look. The images, all drawn from the immediate neighborhood, range from a cartoon against insurance red-lining to a blown-up wedding photo, to a portrait of the local piraguero (snowcone seller). John Weber and Barry Bruner directed a team of eight CETA's on this project, which was funded by the Chicago Department of Human Services through the Youth Service Project, Inc., a local agency. This circumstance prevented developing any close relationship with local community organizations. The wall was very well received, including the collage techniques. However, the community did find the decision to leave areas of bare brick harder to understand. The artists are interested in developing collage ideas further in the future.

A third wall was painted a few blocks away by Jose Guerrero and Oscar Martinez with Judy Moyka and other volunteers. Somewhat smaller, 16'x 30' approximately, it is titled "Smash Plan 21", which is the city's plan to turn the barrio (and in fact

the entire inner city) into middleclass housing by the year 2000. The mural depicts barrio resistance to this plan. The paints, acrylics, were paid for by the Westtown Coalition (Latin), St. Luke's Church, and members of a local street gang.

A wall on the south side planned by Calvin Jones has been delayed due to problems in obtaining site permission and a history of conflict between merchants and homeowner organizations in the area.

The six artists working this summer were supported by a grant from NEA Expansion Arts, and by three of them working as CETA supervisors. Proceeds from a successful benefit dinner made up the difference. CMG-CMP hopes to repeat this pattern next year. They have abandoned efforts with private foundations, but view the survival of Expansion Arts and the development of their own fundraising base as crucial to the survival of independent mural programs. CMG-CMP has also abandoned participation in CETA for the Arts, due to a lack of any supervisory salary. The CETA-funded, "art for public schools" program, run last year by Andrea Temkin, Beth Shadur, and Dorothy Higginson, ended in July. Murals were completed with children from schools and numerous teach workshops were offered.

Future plans include a mural for the office of the Illinois Labor History Society and a large cast-cement relief for the Logan Square CTA plaza (being developed with the Department of Public Works).

Barbara Russum
John Weber



"Justice on the Job,"
Kathleen Farrell

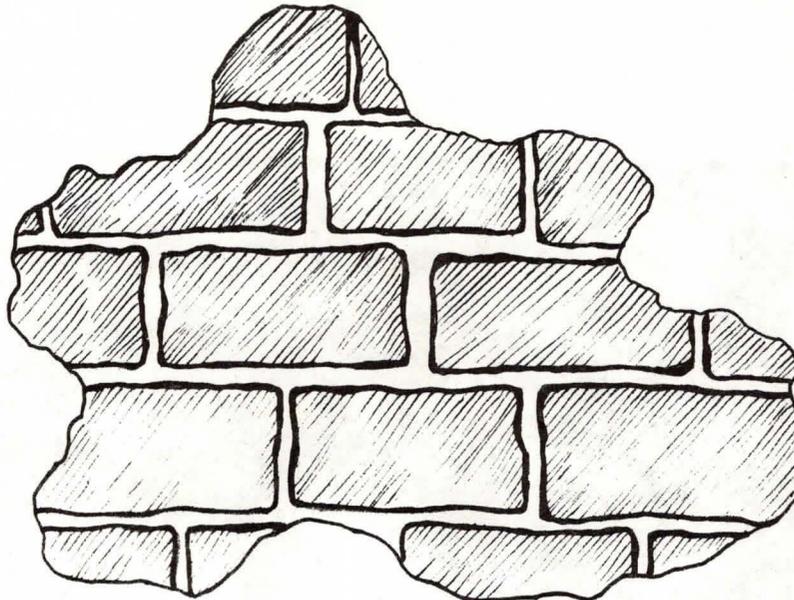
CITY BUREAUCRACY ATTACKS MURAL

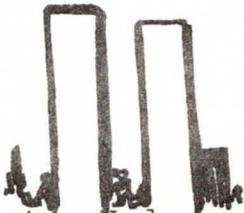
What at first might seem an amusing incident in Madison, Wisconsin, in fact has ominous overtones. In the middle of October, 1978, a city building inspector told attorney Jack McManus that a mural he was having painted on his office's outside wall would have to be removed. The inspector was trying to enforce the section of the building code which states that "if a use is not listed as a permitted use in a commercial district, it is not permitted. A mural is not listed as a permitted use (of a wall)."

McManus responded by saying that "This is bureaucratic hypocrisy. They're a bunch of nitwits and nincompoops." He went on to say that city officials would do better to clean up the adult bookstores and nightclubs that feature nude dancing.

What is significant for muralists in this, besides the obvious interference, is that the city's action is similar to a number of other "reasons" cities have tried to use to prevent murals from being painted. McManus has been sent information about the 1974 U.S. District ruling of Judge Austin over the Blue Island mural case, and letters of support may be sent to Jack McManus, McManus Law Offices, 235 King Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, tel. (608) 257-7103.

from the Associated Press





NEW YORK

Cityarts--Had a productive summer. Cosponsored six murals in different parts of the city, the Lower East Side, Brooklyn, Queens, Harlem and Staten Island. The idea of cosponsoring is that the host institution pays half the cost and also that future projects will be on low walls, hence no scaffolding, hence lower materials costs. Most of this summers murals cost between \$500 and \$600, plus another half from cosponsors. Cityarts says that "this summer we worked with CETA artists, who executed our first artist-designed projects; murals designed by the artist with input and some involvement from the community. This is definitely a new direction for Cityarts." It has been a source of great controversy. When oversimplified, it seems to boil down to a community vs. professionals issue, figurative painting vs. abstract, serve the people vs. serve the artists." Most of the new artists Cityarts worked with this summer, especially the CETA artists, chose to do either landscapes or highly personalized graphic designs. A question arises here as to whether this increased flexibility necessarily means less political content.



THE MURALS

CETA artists Art Guerra and Shulamith Firestone painted two artist-designed murals for the American Nursing Home on the Lower East Side.

Alfredo Hernandez designed and painted, with a youth team, "The Farm," in the 12th Street Garden. This mural was cosponsored by a housing group called the 12th Street Movement.

Artist Michael Kendall painted a youth mural at the Martin de Porres Community Center in Astoria Queens, cosponsored with the Museums Collaborative Cultural Voucher Program.

Project Director Tony Flores worked with a group of youth to paint "Heritage of Victory" in Mount Morris Park Recreation Center in Harlem, cosponsored by the Peoples Park Foundation.

Eddie Alicea designed and directed "Espiritú Latino" on Wilson Avenue, in the Bushwick area of Brooklyn, cosponsored with the Bushwick Youth Services Bureau.

CETA artist Bob Smith worked with young women from the N.Y.S. Division for Youth on a silhouette mural, designed by the artist, in Staten Island.

James Jannuzzi worked with senior citizens on a mural entitled "The Promenade" in St. Charles Jubilee Senior Citizens Center in Brooklyn.

Plans for the coming year include a mosaic mural in the 14th Street subway station, coordinated by Jim Januzzi and directed by Pedro Silva and other artists from the City Arts Mosaic training program. Also, artists will be hired for cosponsored interior murals this winter in a program coordinated by Eddie Alicea.

NORTHEAST NETWORK REGION

The Northeast region has bimonthly meetings, and in the June meeting, Eva Cockcroft's visit to Ira Licht, of Visual Arts Department, NEA, and her attendance at a meeting where funding for community arts through HUD's "Liveable Cities" program was discussed. The Northeast Region will take responsibility for informing other regions of the situation in Visual Arts NEA, and initiating lobbying efforts to build support for the mural movement.

EAST COAST

Monique Goss of Beautiful Walls for Baltimore has an exhibit of Baltimore murals in Baltimore and New York. The possibility of putting together an exhibit for the Northeast Region of the Network was discussed.

NEW JERSEY

Phil Danzig has completed eleven tile mural panels for the Newark Housing Authority. Although tenants selected the themes, they were at first reluctant to attempt designs. After Phil did the first six panels, they began to participate. Executions started with Phil doing most of the work, artist-assistants then took over, and tenants and high school CETA workers joined in.

ARTISTS EQUITY

Artists Equity Association, Inc. has sent a list of fourteen legislative bills relating to the arts, covering areas such as artwork in construction of buildings, protecting artwork from mutilation, establishing an art bank at Congress, tax credit for contributions to public institutions, etc. Further information can be obtained by writing to them at 3726 Albemarle Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016. (202) 244-0209.

Tomie Arai
Phil Danzig

CETA WORKERS JOIN UNION IN BUFFALO

After two and a half years of organizing, the first unionized CETA group in the country has emerged in Buffalo, New York. On May 8, CETA local 2008 of the International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades (IBPAT) was formed. Officials said that the 450 CETA workers affiliated with local 2008 will hopefully serve as an inspiration for similar activities other places throughout the country.

James Wolford, General Vice President for IBPAT's 3rd District, made the following comment regarding the necessity for organized labor to unite with CETA employees: "CETA's here to stay. Better that we join with them than fight against them. We'll organize them and write bargaining agreements with them, protecting us all." IBPAT's CETA workers' contract is not aimed so much at increasing pay benefits, as it is at protecting the CETA workers in the kinds and types of work they must perform. In addition, the contract provides a workable grievance procedure.

CETA workers need job protection, according to Wolford. They "are not getting government handouts; they work for their pay just like you and me and they don't need to be treated like second class citizens." The more CETA expands, and the more CETA employees become involved in private as well as public sector work (including the military), the greater the necessity for serious organizing from the ranks of organized labor, Wolford said.

ANALYSIS

CETA is a temporary invention designed to band-aid a serious and permanent economic fact of our society--the cyclical pattern of recession, depression, inflation, unemployment; in short, economic crisis. On a national scale, organized labor must address the most important contradiction of which CETA is an example. Simply stated, CETA supplies a federal workforce of "temporary" underpaid labor. This force is then placed in direct opposition to organized labor, forcing a harmful ("counterproductive") competition among working people, and undermining gains made through collective actions. The existence of CETA can be used to help prevent "regular" workers from demanding decent treatment and jobs.

For example, CETA workers are often made to do work they are not hired to do, are not qualified to do, do not necessarily want to do, and are not paid an appropriate wage to do. This often means that workers holding "permanent" job classifications lose work that should be theirs, regardless of the CETA clause which prevents such displacement of jobs.

Second, in many CETA jobs personnel are often forced to do the same work as "permanent" employees while receiving lower wages. Fear of losing their pay check, fear of administrative harassment, and feelings of being powerless to complain are the everyday concerns of many CETA workers in every section of the country. Hopefully, the Buffalo union will serve as an example to follow.

Bill Young, CETA worker, San Francisco



"Nuestras Vidas--Our Lives," directed by Barry Bruner and John Weber

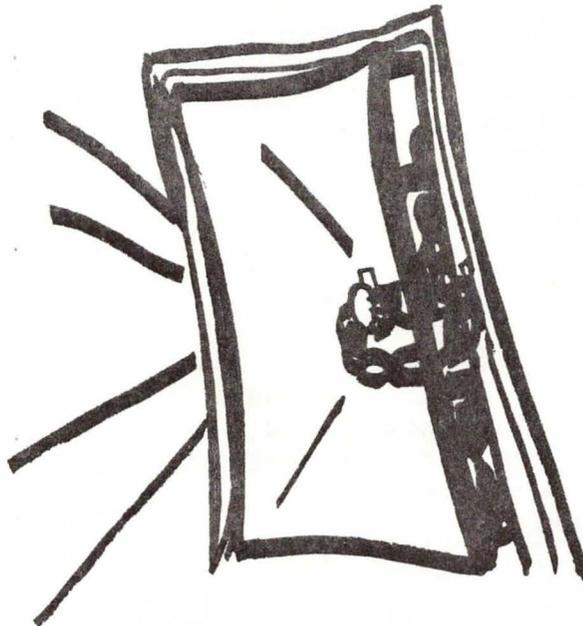
TALLER SIQUEIROS CLOSED

The Taller Siqueiros de Cuernavaca, México, has been closed for sometime pending resolution of a dispute described in an article published in Excelsior, June 1, 1978 by Eduardo Camacho.

According to the article, locked out students and teachers have appealed to the membership of the Salón de la Plástica Mexicana (the artists' organization of México), asking them to intervene to elicit the results of the Siqueiros Trust's analysis of their investigation of the closing of the Taller. Students and professors, after being locked out, have asked for the dismissal of the directors of the organization due to their; 1) lack of interest; 2) incompetence; 3) alcoholism.

Two months before, the Trust was asked to investigate, and only after no response came did the students and professors request intervention by the Salón de la Plástica. Among the specific reasons for the lockout-closing were the student and faculty demands that 1) the administration be dismissed; 2) that the coordinator who was "anti-democratically imposed" on them be dismissed; 3) the acceptance of a program of work proposed by students and faculty; 4) creation of a representative technical council; 5) open hearings on the functioning of the Taller.

According to students and faculty, response to these from the administration was the arbitrary closing of the Taller and the promise to investigate the work (done) until then. The Salon supports the students and faculty, and argues that the Trust is an important part of the heritage left by Siqueiros to the people of México. Also, that "it is hoped that the answer of the Director of the Trust will reflect the aspirations of Maestro Siqueiros to the benefit of the students of plastic arts."



MESSAGE FROM JEAN CHARLOT



My friend, John Weber, having asked me to send to the Congress of Muralists a short message of welcome, here goes.

The birth of the Mexican mural renaissance happened over half a century ago, and I took an active part in this historical happening. This statement suggests that indeed I have reached maturity. But old age is rarely synonymous with wisdom. All I may offer you will be little more than a rehash of what thoughts came to me on top of the scaffold when at work throughout these past fifty years, and as well, when loitering between murals. Not thoughtful logic, rather a perpetual wonder that this strange vocation of mine happens to be so totally at odds with the orderly world we live in, not only the world of business, but even with the specialized world of art that should, or so I would like to think, receive us with open arms.

In a world where selling goods is the pursuit of most, where goods are manufactured and packaged to attract, by means fair or foxy, the buyer, the mural painter 'misses the boat'. His product is created against the grain of the practical logic that is a key to our culture. In the case of the artist, the middleman between producer and consumer is normally the art dealer but, even with the best of good will, how could he handle our awkward offerings. They cannot be exhibited in art galleries, cannot be framed or packaged. For the interior decorator, expertly juggling with bibelots from East and West, murals remain white elephants. The art collector can hardly fit such uncouth giants amidst his expensively framed oils.

Produced with great pain and effort the goods that the muralist offers have no place in an orderly state of things, even in art circles. No wonder that the less stubborn, the more amenable among us, realizing the quandary, come down from the scaffold, shrink their products to easel size and tie themselves to the apron strings of art dealers. It happened in our Mexico fifty years ago. It will doubtless happen to your brand new generation of muralists.

In México, in my youth, well-intentioned friends, far from appreciating our polychromed walls, would gently beg us to reform, to subscribe instead to art magazines and learn of what was being done in New York or Paris, in a word to stop doing what we were doing and toe the line of international art. They meant well. We thanked them but we proceeded as before. That we perservered was not by choice, not because we had, as the saying has it, hitched our wagon to a star, but rather by a sort of animal instinct. The long hours of work on the scaffold, between stone carvers and masons, did not leave us enough intellectual leisure to even open an art magazine and no curiosity whatsoever to observe what more polite forms of art received applause in foreign countries.

If the present generation of muralists proves equally stubborn and uncouth, then be sure that, either when you shall be very old or very dead, guidebooks will extoll the merits of your murals, carloads of tourists will gape open mouthed at them, museums will hang on their hallowed walls fresco fragments from these Twentieth Century old masters.

A sarcastic footnote to repay one for a lifetime of hard work! Yet there is this consolation to know that, for those who persevere, the painted walls they mean as a message for the many shall belatedly be looked at by the many and, haloed that these murals shall be with what respect recession in time alone procures, that the message they contain will be at last understood.

Jean Charlot

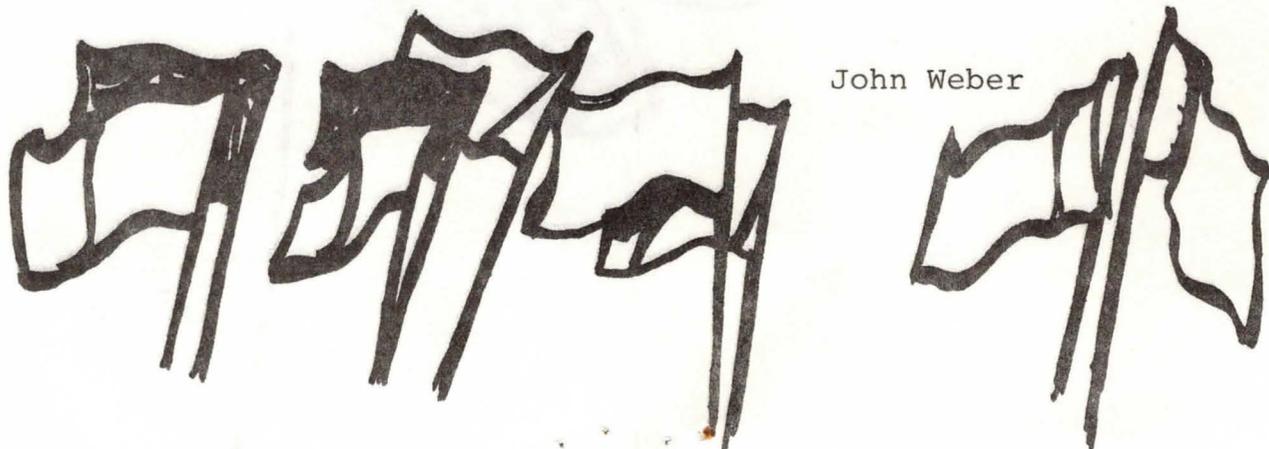


SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS

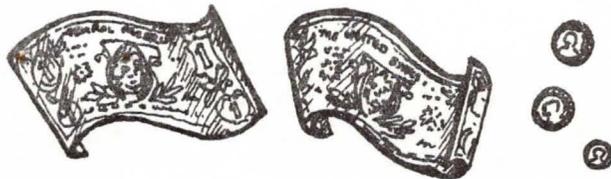
At the plenary of the National Conference I opposed the effort of the Northern California delegation to reinforce our principles of unity with the inclusion of opposition to racism, sexism and imperialism. I was wrong: the language passed by the conference is correct and necessary.

At the time, I questioned the insistence on an explicitly political stance when many mural projects happen without immediate contact with organizing activity of any kind. A few years ago it was true that most murals did happen in a context of community political action. Without such a context explicit agitational imagery may be impossible or inappropriate. Implicit messages may be more effective-and possible. I realized, however, that I assume, unjustifiably, an underlying minimum commitment on the part of all muralists to a perspective of liberation and empowerment of people. Why else do public art at all? I never thought that I would see openly reactionary murals such as two recently done in Chicago on the theme "St Jude Pray for Us". (I do not call this reactionary because of opposition to the Church-I have worked continuously with progressive Catholics for ten years). In the face of increasing domestication of our movement by city bureaucracies, it becomes necessary to regroup ourselves, to reaffirm opposition to all oppression, specifically to racism, sexism and imperialism. We must simultaneously push forward our aesthetics continuously breaking new ground, setting high standards of artistic commitment-and redouble our efforts to maintain authentic contact with the grassroots and every progressive spark coming from the grassroots.

The increasing scarcity of funding independent of local bureaucracies poses a grave danger that the whole idea of murals as a "People's Art" will be swamped by a larger volume of "safe" work done without contact with the communities' independent energies-and perceived by the people as simply another city make-work program. I see no simple answer to this possibility of murals, as a whole, being "captured" - an example of a general process of cooptation. Certainly we must fight for the survival of NEA-Expansion Arts, for a share of city public works commissions, but also importantly develop our independent fund-raising base. Success on all these fronts will be useless, however, if our movement loses its political, social and aesthetic consciousness and identity.



John Weber



It is not easy to be a muralist with a social conscience. The political far left does not have a tradition of support of the arts. There are few progressive sponsors with money and guts to speak out on hard issues to support muralists capable and willing to address those issues. There are many artists with no concept of art that involves the public and these artists continue to prostitute their work, and will paint absolutely anything for dollars. The dangers of large corporate sponsorship of a work are not only the moral and political implications, but the banality and stifling lack of innovation which have become the trademark of such commissions. The continuing search for novelty makes federal sponsored projects short-lived. The death of programs once supported by federal sources is predictable if total dependency on federal support is not overcome.

The mural artist, then, with a commitment to making visual expression available to all in trying to focus the social conscience, must find alternative means of support. The artists must take the initiative in building self-sufficient communities that actively support and create a public visual dialogue. Mural artists have ten contemporary years of experience in mural making. It is time for artists to use that experience in a mature effort to firmly implant public art into an established tradition of a national form of communication.

The small business, whose walls form the foundation of a mural, is the ally of the muralist. I am not talking about large corporations, but the family-run business that not only makes a living from local dollars, but puts money back into the community to complete a cycle of neighborhood economy. These businesses often do not contribute large cash amounts to mural projects, but their participation in the creative process by donating walls and giving verbal and in-kind support, is vital to building a strong community base. The mural artist must keep this relationship, and strengthen it, in order to build self-sufficient communities for a public art.

It is usually a disadvantage to allow any one business to support a complete project. That business would have to be fairly large to afford an entire project, would want artistic control, and if it turned to be fearful of the project, could destroy the entire effort. Although much more leg work in fund raising is required, enlisting support from a wide field of various resources is important. It builds a sturdier public base, gives more people the opportunity to participate in sharing responsibilities, provides greater freedom in choice of theme and means of direction, and allows the muralist greater control.

Besides expanding the support of local business, the ideal funding resources for a public art project would include a very careful balance of federal, state, city, and some corporate

backing. The public should demand that all of these sources be held accountable to support the public's right to visual expression. The public built these institutions with their own collective dollars. People must demand a return on their investment. But the mural artist must motivate the demand.

The work involved to achieve motivation and extended support for collective works of art is phenomenal, but mandatory, if a movement towards a people's art is to flourish. Businesses are ready and willing to financially endorse public art. They know it is good business to support their community. The public is more liberal than its current leaders. It is ready to speak out with intelligent themes that are far and beyond the smiling faces, Christmas card scenes, sentimental socialist posters, and rainbows. But are the muralists ready? Are the artists willing to make a mature effort in bringing new ideas of the public out into the forefront with excellence? Can and will the mural artists meet the challenge of inventing new forms, methods, and materials of public art and develop a reasonable artist pay scale to make that possible? The artists must accept the responsibilities required to take on that leadership in producing a strong and daring public art forum.

All artists cannot or are unwilling to carry out the responsibilities required of a large scale project. Building a rapport with the public is hard work and takes time. No artist should be too special a person to assist and participate in the vast non-painting groundwork that is an integral part of a project, and which is so vital in the expansion of resources. An arrogant artist only shows a lack of normal human courtesies that serve to ease communication to accomplish a creative piece that commands respect for the art, the artist, and the audience.

Clearly written proposals, project descriptions, understandable budgets, letters of endorsement, thank you letters, etc., are all normal and reasonable everyday business transactions. The artist interested in making a firm commitment to expand resources for a public art is held accountable for all of these and more. It is simply an act of respect for the sponsoring public to carry out these transactions, a professional protocol of the mural artist that opens the road to self-sufficiency.

Because of its scale, its location, and its audience, the mural as public work of art is one of the art disciplines with the greatest visual impact. The impact is even greater if the artist can instill a sense of public responsibility and participation by developing a rapport with the public with skillful organizational techniques, and a respect for the highest aesthetic achievement. Mural artists can open up new resources to expand and enhance the public art movement. But exploring new ideas will come only with the initiative of the artists.

Pazem,

Caryl Yasko

IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

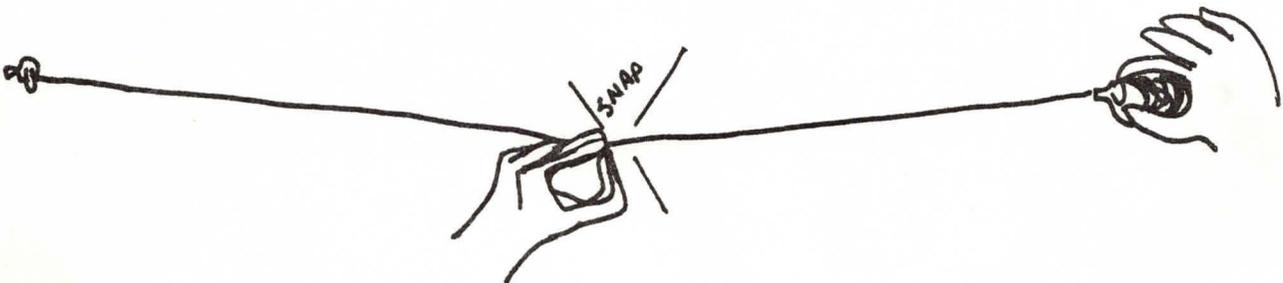
Except for billboards and other, similar, commercial and anti-social "culture," the Man has stayed out of the mural business except as decoration. Probably this is because it is relatively unprofitable and, besides, they have TV, movies, and every other communications medium locked up. Anyway, at least until recently we have had a relatively unchallenged field of operations, and this leads me to think that we have some important responsibilities. These can be clarified by beginning an answer to the question, "Why should we paint murals?"

I think our work should have distinct aims and these aims should work in combination. We understand that our work is by its nature social. Because of this, we have community responsibility to function in such a manner as to use the positive ideas and aspirations of people in our work, to involve people in the actual process of making the mural, whether it be for funding, securing a space to work, or actually painting and protecting it--then it will be as much theirs as ours.

Another thing is that we as muralists also have a responsibility to make judgements not only in terms of putting together community ideas, but also to express our own. We must express spiritual values, not of the religious kind, but of the more general emotional sort, and in doing this our work should not be trite or use cliché. We must be committed to the murals we paint not just because they reflect what's happening, but because we are inspired to promote what can happen, what kinds of communities, cities, countries we could live in.

Another element that I see we need to recognize more openly in our work is that it should be decorative, too. It should be technically as good as we can possibly make it. In all mural projects that I personally know about, a good deal of ongoing criticism was shared among the workers trying to help each other learn more about our craft. This sharing of technical knowledge is one of the best things about mural painting, and is an important function of the Network as well.

Dan Macchiarini



SOME IDEAS TO THINK ABOUT



There are two main currents flowing in the mural movement today: 1) the idea for a mural is conceived, developed and executed with local community people participating in all phases of the work, guided by an experienced mural group; 2) a group of skilled professionals bring their talents together to produce a mural with little or no participation by the community. The second approach dates to the earliest fresco painting and has been the tradition followed to the present day. This is not to say that the content of these murals is not responsive to the needs of society, they in most cases are, but the process is essentially elitist. The community action mural involves untrained people with varying levels of aesthetic development - it is anti-elitist and in that sense New Art - avant garde, anti-bourgeois.

Community action murals are process not product; traditional murals are product not process.

How, if at all, do these ideas relate to the principles of anti-imperialism, anti-sexism, and anti-racism?

David Shaw

REGARDING DAVID SHAW'S QUESTION:

How do the ideas of community process relate to the principles of the Network? Here are some concrete examples taken directly from experience. This is just a beginning; our experiences are rich with many instances of collective, non-sexist and non-racist work.

1. Collective mural painting breaks down individualism, helps individual abilities to grow, and builds community.
 - a. Grassroots community people should be involved.
 - 1) people of all nationalities and backgrounds;
 - 2) and women, too, not only men (to my knowledge of fresco painting in México, Europe, and some in the U.S. in the WPA period, women did not participate at all, or very rarely).
 - b. The subject matter of the mural is crucial.
 - 1) It is a chance to "educate", to share with the community ideas about political issues, social struggles happening all around and within the people's lives, such as direct instances of racism or sexism.
 - 2) For example, in the San Mateo handball courts mural, issues that came up included the Coors Boycott, prejudice and racism among youth in the barrio, political demonstrations that happened during the painting, etc.

- 3) Think of examples from your own mural painting experience.
2. Professional mural projects do not have to be "non-progressive."
- a. Again, use subject matter relating to community members' lives, current struggles around housing, police brutality, etc.;
 - b. There should be some important involvement in the community;
 - 1) climbing down from the scaffolding or stopping work to chat with people--working in a community is not a "cost efficient" process.
 - 2) talk about what affects people in your and their lives; get feedback from them; don't be afraid to alter designs;
3. The subject matter of murals, as well as the process of painting them, must clearly struggle against racism and sexism.
- a. The team should consist of men and women;
 - b. Themes should support unifying bonds among people of different races;
 - c. the mural team can hold study groups--informally or formally during the painting. Sometimes, these groups continue, and can become the basis for further murals.

Emmanuel Montoya



SUGGESTIONS FOR MURALISTS

The mural movement might begin to think more about the A.I.A., state and city architects, National, Regional, State Associations of City Planners, a trade journal; affiliations that could not only result in increased exposure for the murals, funding (outside the NEA, CETA dole), but collaboration with professionals in related areas to enhance the aesthetics of projects.

Further, I feel that the conference did not focus enough on the relation of murals to architecture, environment, spectator viewing habits and questions of scale.

Robert Beckmann



SPEECH TO ARTISTS, FEB. 6, 1977, CHICAGO

I am convinced that the use of new media for mural making is not only important for artistic growth and maturity, but necessary for a lasting life of public art.

The painted mural cannot be replaced for color, for the ease of application, and spontaneity. However, our rugged climate rips it apart. It requires loving care and constant vigil. Someday, you or I will simply say, "I cannot afford to restore that mural this year." Serious maintenance and restoration programs must be established to keep the painted mural intact. Someday there may be a painting medium that becomes part of the surface itself. When that day comes, I will be there to use it.

It is comfortable and convenient to hold to familiar methods supported by years of experience. Tackling the unknown medium is frightening. It means sacrificing time in acquiring new skills. It might even mean a larger budget. But the rewards are permanent. Murals that match the human effort with durability.

Chicago mural artists have a distinct advantage in being the hub of the United States where material resources are abundant. Many fascinating materials either are processed here or pass through this city. One of the most common construction materials lays at our doorstep, the well known limestone deposits of the Midwest, used in making cement for concrete roads, bridges, buildings, and murals.

With each step of exploration into new materials, mural artists will have a wider range of expression. Where color is replaced with light and dark and added dimensions, a new visual vocabulary emerges. The use of each new material also expands public involvement. Contractors, engineers, electricians, welders, steel workers, and carpenters all lent a hand with "Roots and Wings"; total public participation.

Communication is the ultimate goal of a visual statement. Say it in metal, say it in concrete, in paint, in wood, in plastic, in bronze, but say it with excellence. Excellence deserves permanence and the public deserves both.

Chicago artists are the vanguards of the nation in public art. Let's keep that tradition by leading the way to growth and maturity in lasting materials. Don't throw away your brushes, just "paint" with a new tool for a maintenance free and permanent mural.

Caryl Yasko

'The People' aren't people

By ANTHONY HOLDSWORTH

As an artist involved on the left, I see a continuing problem with the radical art exhibited in a growing number of murals in the Bay Area. This attempt to formulate a new art based on political theories is a process doomed to failure. It is an attempt to place the cart before the horse.

Art, at its most vital, draws on our intuitive, irrational and instinctive energies. It deals in a non verbal, non theoretical realm. Only after it is complete can it be discussed intellectually. This is as it should be, for art pierces far below appearances, to reveal what we truly feel and truly believe. Often this is not what we think we feel, or what we would ideologically like to believe.

The growing muralist movement, which seeks to produce art with "relevant" content by taking it out of the museums and onto the streets, is admirable. But when I go and look at these works I search in vain for the sensitivity and humanity that would truly identify this as "people's art." I search for even one true image of a worker. A face that conveys the dull, painful monotony of factory life. A body that conveys in color, posture and expression what a worker is. I look for the sensitive faces and tender postures that convey the wonder, frailty and the beauty of life. What I see are hordes of cartoon figures insensitively drawn, unimaginatively colored, acting out political rituals in vague chaotic scenes.

In art, relevance is as much a matter of how something is painted as what is painted. Van Gogh could paint a chair so that it has

more relevance to the man in the street than an entire political mural by even one of the great Mexican muralists such as Siquieros. A relevant way of painting can be found only after years of searching and effort. In this respect, art is by its nature "elitist." While anyone can paint, and the novice will occasionally discover surprising enthusiasm, to transform this enthusiasm and natural talent into mature artistic expression is a long and difficult process.

As an experienced artist, I could not walk into a chemist's lab, pick up unfamiliar equipment and begin performing serious experiments; the results would be catastrophic. An artistic catastrophe is presently unfolding in the muralist movement. People full of slogans and ideals, but apparently unfamiliar with the vast invisible equipment of art, are filling our public spaces with generally ugly and incompetent images.

In the Mission District there are some fairly successful political murals. They owe their partial success to a passionate sense of humanity that outweighs all their obvious limitations. But even these partial successes are disappointing; they groan uncomfortably in ideological straight jackets and lack the artistic grasp of accomplished murals.

Murals are the most challenging of all the painted art forms. Great muralists like Diego Rivera or Edvard Munch attempted this form only after years of apprenticeship in smaller works.

My advice to aspiring muralists is cancel that order for 15 gallons of paint; go home and try to paint one onion as it is seen through the eyes of a poor person. This is a challenge worthy of the greatest artist.

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PEOPLE'S ART IS ART

Anthony Holdsworth's essay on the mural movement raises some interesting questions. He praises and damns the mural movement. It is "admirable," but within it "an artistic catastrophe is unfolding." Murals with "ideological straight jackets...groan uncomfortably from the walls of the Mission District." Artists who have "put the cart before the horse by basing their art on political theories rather than spending years of searching and years of apprenticeship in smaller works," fail to develop the technique necessary to make a true people's art. In short, the murals are simply not good enough and correct politics does not redeem bad art.

Anthony states that the mural movement is "attempting to formulate a new art based on political theories." I don't think that's the problem. The mural movement moves in a space between "mere" propaganda and the emptiness of modern art." We are not attempting to formulate a new art based on political theories. We are making aesthetic decisions which are also political decisions--which is something quite different. In the sixties we had a slogan: The personal is political. The unity of personal and political corresponds to the unity of aesthetics and politics in our work.

One definition of aesthetic form is a form which reveals the universal in the particular. We carefully choose the particulars which convey our universal truths. We do not pick a blond heiress to be a symbol of beauty for a black ghetto. Similarly, the reactionary content of a Dick Tracy comic blocks our aesthetic appreciation of the art. The work of art is a promise--a liberated zone. That promise is crushed around the world by economic and political repression. We do not decorate the boots of the oppressor. In this world, beauty takes sides. The flower that grows next to the walls of Aushwitz promises that there will be no more Aushwitzes. Even if it is picked and placed in the buttonhole of the Kommandant. Working with this assumption does not guarantee that we will make a great art. But it is not an ideological mistake that makes great art impossible.

Judging from his letter, Anthony believes, as I do, in the importance of aesthetic form. By aesthetic form I mean form that embodies a content, form that has reference beyond itself, a particular that embodies a universal. Aesthetic form faces two directions--outside into the interpersonal material world we share and inside into the world of subjectivity. In defending this kind of form we in the mural movement are Anthony's best allies. Modern art has been a movement towards the destruction of form with reference. Subject and object are torn apart. The picture is what it is--nothing more. It is not a picture "of" anything. Alienation creeps into the bones of modern art. Even the wildest thrashings of the abstract expressionists become a

pleasant addition to the lobby of the bank. The possibility of transcendence is denied. Business as usual.

Anthony would find few friends in the museums and galleries that cater to modern art, for "an onion as seen through the eyes of a poor person" or the worker's face, "dulled by the painful monotony of factory life." The art that most powerfully defends this kind of content and the forms appropriate to it is being created by the mural movement and the movement of community art of which it is a part. It is here that one still finds a belief in the power and validity of aesthetic form, a belief that corresponds to a movement beyond alienation towards political commitment on the part of the artists involved.

What about the matter of skill? Is art inherently "elitist" as Anthony puts it? I don't think so. The mural movement is attempting to find a new audience for art, and a new relation of art producer to consumer. It is attempting a way of doing art that is not isolating for the artist. In the effort towards collective work we change the relation between "expert" and "amateur." We try to encourage those who do not have years of access to art education to try their hand at making art, or at the very least we allow people to have input into decisions about the kind of art that adorns their neighborhoods. There will always be differences in level of skill. These do not have to become the basis for elitism and snobbery.

As in any art movement there will be failures--some unredeemed works of trite sloganeering, formless works, mere propaganda. But why assume that we who are working in the mural movement are uncritical and blind to our shortcomings? People passing on the street, unhampered by advanced critical theory, are quick to point out who can draw and who can't. My faith is that year by year we are getting better, our shared experiences becomes richer and deeper, our work clearer and more fully expressive of ourselves and the communities within which we work.

Osha Neumann

