

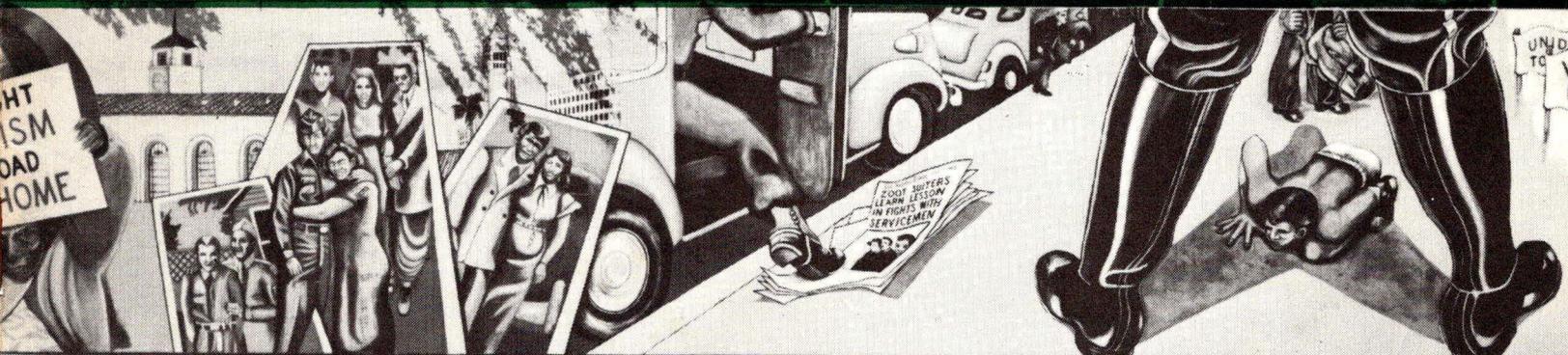
COMMUNITY MURALS

SPRING
1982



CALIFORNIA AQUEDUCT

WORLD WAR II



DAVID GONZALEZ
PACOIMA CA.

ZOOT SUIT RIOTS
LA. 1943

Murals and History

When we think of historical images in murals, it would help give greater clarity to our ideas (and greater strength to our murals) if we better understood some ways in which history functions in public art. In a time like this, when ruling class spokespeople such as Reagan distort history by referring to "the good 'ol days" which in fact never existed except in the imagination, community muralists are learning to use historical images not to romanticize the past but to inform the present so we can progress instead or reminisce. None of us lives in a make-believe world, and certainly not the world the conservative would like us to believe *they* made for us.

We should also be aware that for many people, history *is* its images — that is how they learn about what has happened in the past. The problem is that most of the images we see are on television or in movies, and so we learn an unreliable version of history to sell advertisers' products, not to inform us about our past(s). Murals can offer other images, alternative historical images which challenge the dominant visual media and help community people link up with their past as a means of empowering them to greater strength for their futures.

One way community murals help give power to their communities through history is by showing that traditional images were never abstract notions without historical substance. Historical images in murals can be shown to have grown out of concrete battles that people fought in other times and places, but battles nevertheless that are as specific and as socially located as

ours are today. To treat traditional images as abstractions is to (falsely) remove human being from their own histories. Even contemporary modern murals embody past traditions, too, and what makes them special is that the walls can present images of the past and images of the present at the same time, thus bringing the past into the present (not the other way around, as conservative thought would have it). Understanding these aspects of history and its images helps our murals strengthen our struggles.

History and the images which embody it are matters not of nostalgia, but of concrete actions done by people. When historical murals relate closely to their communities, they become part of these struggles — and their victories. As the principles of the National Community Muralists' Network states, its members "are committed to building a community based public art movement...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." Certainly a better understanding of the role of history in murals helps us all to these ends.



Editorial Group

Miranda Bergman
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Emmanuel Montoya
Jane Norling
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Arch Williams (we forgot his name last issue, sorry)

Labor Donated

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the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Next Deadline

Any material for the next edition of *CMM* must be in our hot little hands before September 17, 1982. Because we all work at other jobs and cannot control many elements of publishing, it takes us generally two months from deadline to mailing, but the deadline is firm. We appreciate receiving material early, too, so send us information about any mural projects as soon as you find it (or think about writing it). Remember, photographs, black and white glossy, are the best beginning for articles or extensive captions.

Correction

In the last issue we failed to note that the captions to the photographs about Nicaragua were co-authored by David Kunzle and Eva Cockcroft.

Correction to photo p.4, *CMM* Spring 1981: Artists involved in the painting of the mural were Ben Campos, Sal Garcia, and Norma Carazos.

COMMUNITY MURALS

SPRING 1982

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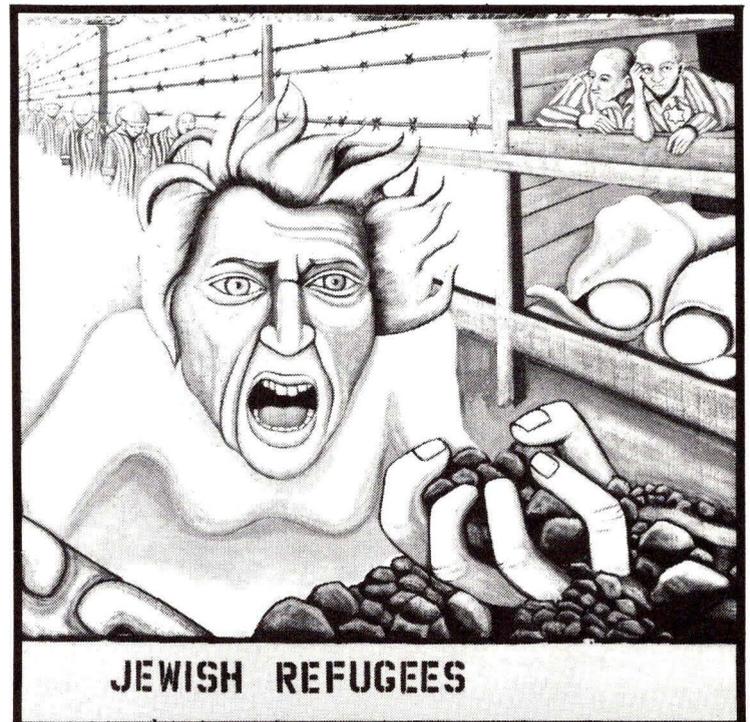
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About the Cover

The cover of this issue of CMM shows composite photographs of the most recent section of the Great Wall of Los Angeles. Painted in 1981, this section portrays a history of California in the 1940s beginning with World War II and the role of Japanese Americans in fighting for the U.S. while members of their families and other U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry were put into concentration camps. The mural continues to explore in turn the contradictory situation of each of the other ethnic minorities in California, including a Jewish American family and an anti-Fascist rally. Also shown is Dr. Charles Drew, inventor of blood plasma who died because a southern hospital refused him help because he was black. Also depicted is the struggle by Mrs. Laws against covenant laws in Los Angeles that denied blacks access to equal housing.

The next two sections show the contradictions in the Chicano experience — David Gonzalez is shown as a typical Chicano serviceman while taxis deliver white soldiers to L.A. for the Zoot Suit Riots where Mexican-American boys were stripped and beaten by Marines with consent of the police. The final panel shows European refugees arriving in the U.S. escaping the Holocaust where more than 6 million Jews were murdered. Beyond the death camps and atomic bomb are the symbols of post war prosperity: tract houses and babies. Returning soldiers of color look on, seeing that for them, little has changed.

These sections of the Great Wall were designed by Judy Baca and Jan Cook, and executed by them with groups of youth under the sponsorship of SPARC, 685 Venice Blvd. 90291.



JEWISH REFUGEES

photo: Linda Eber, SPARC

4 Useful Publications

We have received a copy of *Survey of Pigments* by Arthur P. Hopmeier of the Sun Chemical Corporation Pigments Division, 4526 Chickering Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45232. It is reprinted from *Encyclopedia of Polymer Science and Technology*, Vo. 10, pages 157-193, 1969. We also have xerox copies of a typed outline of some lectures about paints. The *Survey* is a sophisticated chemical discussion of pigments, including chemical diagrams, equations and an abundance of precise, chemical information. For those of us not able to understand such things, there is still a great deal of informative material presented in charts and descriptions. Anyone seriously studying paint properties would do well to read this work.

Toward A People's Art

Although *Toward A People's Art*, the discussion of the first decade of the community mural movement in the U.S. by Eva Cockcroft, John Weber and James Cockcroft is now officially out of print, it is available from John Weber at the Chicago Mural Group, P.O. Box 25074, Chicago, IL 60625; Cityarts Workshop, 417 Lafayette St., NYC 10003; SPARC, 685 Venice Blvd., Venice, CA 90291. Cost is \$10 a copy, including mailing. An updated version will be published in Spanish by Editorial Trellas in Mexico City soon.

L'Art Public

Last fall a catalogue for a mural show in France was published titled *L'Art Public*, edited by Francoise Chatel and published by Jacques Damase. While the text is in French, there are numerous photographs of murals from throughout the world illustrating the several articles contributed by people in several countries. The book includes articles about Murals and the Development of Public Art in the United States, Chicano Murals, The Aesthetics and Politics of Contemporary Murals in the U.S., Chilean, German, Swedish, English, Indian, Chinese and African murals, too. Unfortunately, we have no information as to cost, but one could write to the publisher in Paris.

Nuts and Bolts

Nuts and Bolts: Case Studies in Public Design by Al Gowan collects under one 8.5 x 11 soft cover over forty examples of public art from throughout the country. Types of projects range from contests for painting garbage trucks to Mark Rogovin's Nebraska Prison mural, and while only some half-dozen are mural efforts (and these vary in community orientation), the collection as a whole is useful for its brightly written presentation of so many different approaches to working in public spaces. It can be ordered from the Public Design Press, 80 Orchard St., Cambridge, Mass. 02140 for \$6.59, which includes postage.



Builders of the Cultural Present, Calvin Jones and Mitchell Caton of Chicago Mural Group, with funds from Illinois Arts Council, Chicago Council on Fine Arts, NEA, South Shore Cultural Council. 71st Jeffrey, Chicago, Illinois. Dedicated October, 1981. Photo: John Weber.

UNITED STATES

Keepin' On

Perhaps the key factor running through current mural painting activity in the United States is...Struggle. In one form or another, muralists who work with communities of people have to face a fight between the images the community wants to express and any number of opposed forces. In this edition we see problems with "anti-graffiti" coverings, and deceptive city council members. But we also see, in the magnificent latest segment of the Great Wall of Los Angeles, the Women's Building "mural room" in San Francisco, the daily work of Franco Gaskin in Harlem, that muralists also prevail in their struggles for expression of community.

Pilsen: Urban Art With A Message

Today's mural art in Pilsen, Chicago's Mexican-American barrio, emerged out of the turmoil of the sixties, together with a new wave of minority artists who were bent on asserting the cultural identities of their people. By its nature a public art, muralism easily lent itself to the social purposes and the longing for a mass audience shared by the youthful artists. In the barrios, painters struggled to find new images, styles and methods with which they could create an art to meet the cultural needs of today's Mexican-Americans.

United for Progress exemplifies the strong pre-Columbian influences in Pilsen's muralism. In this work, Aurelio Diaz, a proud descendant of Tarascan Indians, uses ancient imagery to address the concerns of today's Latinos. Above stylized figures of students, who show signs calling for education and for an end to divisions among Latinos, stands a symbol of Indian learning. Represented by a serpent inside a house, Kalpulli Koakalko ("the house of serpent wisdom") is a center for the study of Nahuatl culture located to the south of Mexico City. The serpent stands for gaining knowledge over the earth. To the right, we can see the Aztec calendar and symbol of the eagle perched on a cactus, the prophesied site of Tenochtitlan.

On the barrio murals as well, Indian motifs have become an important component of the imagery asserting the Chicano's separateness, an identity which the artists distinguish from the north American by emphasizing the non-European roots. Jean Charlot, a pioneer of Mexican muralism, pointed out the similar role of the Indian contribution to Mexico's mural renaissance of the 1920's. This Indian element, he noted, "always surges to the fore in times of political unease."

The Mexican mural renaissance was a direct source for many of Pilsen's best-known paintings. Marcos Raya's *Homage to Diego Rivera* is an unusual stylistic tribute to Rivera from an art movement more influenced by his younger colleague, Siqueiros. Raya, one of Pilsen's more politically explicit muralists, retains the basic composition of Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads*, while substituting more contemporary subjects in each section of the painting. Also in this tradition are the paintings covering the walls of Casa Aztlán, a community social center, and the many poster-like representations of Mexican patriotic heroes, such as Ray Patlan's *Reform and Liberty*.

Other Pilsen artists break with these traditions. Salvador Vega, whose *New Birth of the Earth* was recently shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art, is developing an individual and surreal style. In *Man Enjoying the Sun*, an earlier work, Vega used unfamiliar semi-abstract con-

tours which still had a clarity easily appreciated by passers-by. In this painting, which the artist sees as "a reminder of the simpler and most beautiful relationships" in the midst of urban decay, the lines of a subtly-modelled blue figure eliminate all of the man but his straining from the sun. His enlarged hands in the foreground grasp for the sun and his face has no features except the mouth, which is open to the sun.

More controversial is the monumental mural on the Benito Juarez High School, painted by Jaime Longoria and Malu Ortega y Alberro, with the assistance of Salvador Vega, Marcos Raya and José Oscar Moya. The modernist style of this work has made it the most argued-about painting among the Chicago murals. And why not? The mural was born in conflict. It was commissioned for a school which was built only after years of massive community protests against Pilsen's overcrowded and dilapidated schools. Daniel Soliz of Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, which was at the center of the community campaign, proudly noted that when Pilsen residents finally won the right to oversee the design of the school, they insisted that the architect include space for murals.

As explained by one of the artists, Malu Ortega y Alberro, the story told by the mural, entitled, *To Hope*, has the quality of a poem. It abstracts characteristic episodes of the Mexican-American experience to fix each in an image.

As the students approach the school in the morning, they pass a picture of an older generation crossing the barbed wire of the border between the U.S. and Mexico. To the left is a student anxiously hulked over a book. His parents, horrified by the future they see before their child, are represented by a tortured face caught in a scream — the violently foreshortened mouth and hands are twisted in an agony which wrenches them out from the wall. The future they see, the life of the Mexican-American, is a composite represented by the massive, blood-red railroad worker crucifying himself with the spike and hammer with which the railroads were built; and, especially significant for the students at the high school, there are images of the street gangs who make life a constant state of siege.

To Hope addresses students, and while it recognizes hard and inescapable realities, it also gives encouragement by introducing figures of guitarists, poets, teachers and students. Above all, it places suffering in the context of a heroic past. Huge figures of the railroad builder, the fallen giant and a mountainous Benito Juarez appear alongside stylized conceptions of the volcanoes and pyramids which represent the abiding strength of tradition and culture.

As the students leave school, they can read the mural the other way, beginning on the left with the portrait of Benito Juarez. Then, the painting becomes an interpretation of the meaning of Juarez himself. Here Juarez is presented as a young man — he is painted strong and proud, though he came, like this school's students, from a background of poverty. Beside Juarez are the teachers and students who, in a different way, must follow his path.

Like the first murals of Siquieros and Orozco in Mexico's National Preparatory School, *To Hope* was damaged by vandals who were angered by the innovations in technique. Twice cans of white paint were splashed over the figure of Juarez. Community leaders insist that this vandalism does not express the real feelings of Pilsen residents. One of these is Humberto Salinas, whose community center, Casa Aztlán, has been an important base of support for muralism in Pilsen. Allowing that the mural is unnecessarily difficult in places, Salinas said, "We in Pilsen are proud of this mural, proud that we could get the money to paint it and proud that we could get it on a school that we built. A lot of people say they don't like it, but they spend a lot of time looking at it!"

While *To Hope* points, in its theme, to the future of the Chicano, it also points to the future of muralism. It challenges artists to push muralism forward in new directions, to find new ways to depict the experience of the urban Chicano, and to find new techniques and materials to enable outdoor paintings to last more than a decade.

Most important to the muralists is the impact of their art on their own community. This street art has been generally welcomed with enthusiasm by Pilsen residents. This is hardly surprising, since the murals are addressed to the community and painted by artists who live there. When Pilsen residents walk past the artists at work, it is not unusual for them to be asked their opinion and to be listened to with respect.

Some of the artists have directly involved community residents in their work. Aurelio Diaz, for example, has been known to pass out fliers, go door-to-door and hold public meetings before beginning a mural. He has recruited up to twenty young people to help him on a painting, teaching them how to care for brushes, mix colors, clean and prime a wall, and even begin painting on their own wall-space. Other Pilsen muralists give free art classes at Casa Aztlán, work as artists-in-residence in the schools, and are active in community affairs. Naturally, their art, which expresses this social commitment, is appreciated in the neighborhood. Humberto Salinas, whose Casa Aztlán stresses work with neighborhood youth, says that even the gangs have respected the murals. This is certainly a distinction, since the gangs' "graffiti-masters" compete with muralists for choice wall-space.

It is also widely felt that the murals have helped develop the cultural and national pride which are important factors in the community's resistance to urban decay. Mexican-born Marcos Raya noted the changes he has seen over the last ten years: "When I first came here, this neighborhood looked like it was going to go to the ground, and now there is a feeling of reconstruction and maintaining the neighborhood. There is no doubt that mural painting has played an important part in this." ♦

Condensed from *The Chicago Journal* by Paul Elitzik
Vol. 5, No. 42, July 8, 1981

10 Years At The Public Art Workshop

Survival isn't always easy for community based arts organizations. Yet the Public Art Workshop, a surviving and growing group in Chicago's far west side community of Austin, is proudly celebrating its 10th Anniversary on April 23, 1982. Muralists Mark Rogovin, Barbara Browne, Kathleen Farrell, and other PAW artists and friends continue to create, educate and practice their beliefs. They see art as an important humanizing and unifying factor and through their murals, they help their community to express needs and aspirations.

Maintaining its original function as a mural workshop, PAW includes in its program an active schedule of classes in arts, crafts and photography for neighborhood youth. In addition to training more than 100 students each year, PAW provides workspace and support for community artists. Due to its leadership in the US mural renaissance, the Workshop has developed an extensive mural resource library used by artists, art historians, and students from all over the US and abroad.

PAW artists have been responsible for the production of more than 20 major murals in the Chicago area. Shortly after the Workshop opened in 1972, production of the Austin Community's first mural began. Coordinated by PAW Co-founder and Director Mark Rogovin, *Break the Grip of the Absentee Landlord* was 4 months in production and was a strong first statement of concern for improving conditions in the surrounding neighborhood.

During that time, PAW produced a major publication, *Mural Manual: How to Paint Murals for the Classroom, Community Center and Street Corner*. Written by Mark Rogovin, Marie Burton and Holly Highfill and edited by Tim Drescher, the work is an important reference source which established certain definitions and standards for mural production widely in use today. Over 12,000 copies have been distributed to artists, community centers and schools all over the globe. Another major publication, *Como Se Pinta Un Mural* (How to Paint A Mural) by D.A. Siqueiros, translated by Victor Sorrel and Rini Templeton, has been recently organized through the Workshop and will be released as soon as an appropriate publisher is found.

In conjunction with its publications, the Workshop's extensive slide collection, clipping file and library provides important information on murals produced in the US and abroad and includes special sections on the WPA and Mexican murals. Seeking to encourage communication among muralists and the public, the materials have been used constantly in PAW's outreach to area high schools and community groups. PAW artists have given over 300 workshops on mural history and production. The outreach program was even extended to Kansas when Rogovin was invited to become an artist in residence in a maximum security prison. He worked with 10 prisoners for 7 weeks to create a mural which expresses the men's feelings about their imprisonment and their expectations for life after release.

In addition to its major murals, PAW has produced dozens of smaller indoor and outdoor murals, many on portable panels which have travelled throughout the country. PAW built and maintains a gallery at the Austin Branch of the Chicago Public Library where student work is displayed. Reaching beyond PAW's regular programs, the artists remain active in lending their individual skills to community groups. Often using workshop facilities, they have painted banners, designed theatre props and posters and buttons which reflect their concern for ever present social and political problems in this country and elsewhere.

Recent mural production at the Public Art Workshop includes a mural to celebrate the International Year of the Child (1979) and the very important *Peace Mural*, dedicated in September 1980. The mural, painted by Rogovin and Barbara Browne, is permanently installed in the lobby of Columbia College on South Michigan Avenue in Chicago and was used as a focal point for beginning The Peace Museum. The new museum, of which Rogovin is curator, is the first museum of its kind in the country, dedicated to the exhibition of work on war and peace issues.

Production of PAW's most ambitious mural is now underway through the Illinois 1 Percent for Art program, which requires 1% of public building costs to be used for the commission of works of art. Muralists Barbara Browne, Lynn Takata and Rogovin have designed a mural for a West Side Chicago fire station using children's drawings from the Goldblatt School located nearby. The design is a composite of these drawings, expressing the children's feelings and fears about fire and firefighting. The mural, to be baked on porcelain enamel panels, gives a rare opportunity to work in a permanent material. For once, the mural may outlast the building!

Endurance is the attitude at the Public Art Workshop and its artists and friends look forward to their next decade. The current administration's lack of support for struggling communities, the desolation of CETA, and many other funding cuts to the arts make PAW even more determined to remain open and strong. They send an open invitation to all muralists and friends to come visit and join in.

Paul Elitzik

The Chicago Journal, Vol. 5, No. 42, July 8, 1981

Chicago Mural Group Expands

Expansion is part of CMG's response to the Reagan depression and tax cuts. In recent years CMG had slowly shrunk to a small cadre of experienced project leaders. Our group meetings revolved around grant writing and other nuts & bolts "survival" business. We all felt tired and dissatisfied. Instead of continuing down this short dead-end path, we have refocused our energy on the sharing of ideas, support and experience that brought us together in the first place — and we have invited all artists who share our goals and principles to join us. The response from other artists has been wonderful. That response shows us that it is the right time for new beginnings and/or for broadening existing artist alliances.

In late October, a core of CMG veterans met with Arlene Goldbard and Don Adams of NAPNOC (Neighborhood Arts Programs National Organizing Committee). We worked with them for two days sorting out essentials and identifying sore spots. During the next several weeks, guided by Arlene and Don's recommendations, we re-wrote our working goals, listed and grouped our tasks, redefined membership obligations and benefits. We sketched out a new program which, while continuing grant-funded murals when possible, will emphasize seminar-evenings for artists, outreach workshops, and other short-term public art events. Now we have organized ourselves into committees — with the new members we are enough to do that! We know that everything will not run smoothly. We have no administrator, no one person coordinating our efforts, but it is a new start.

We'd like to hear about other groups who are reorganizing, shifting priorities and moving forward. We must find

ways to not only survive Reaganism, but to actively combat it through our arts activities. *Cultural Democracy*, the monthly of NAPNOC is a forum for that discussion (*Cultural Democracy*, PO Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239). If you and your group don't belong to NAPNOC, you are missing the BEST reporting on national arts policy available. *CMM* should also contribute to this vital discussion.

CMG's new address: Chicago Mural Group
PO Box 25074
Chicago Ill, 60625
Answering machine: (312) 871-3089

Bring Down the Barriers

Bring Down the Barriers, a four by eight foot painting on plywood, is a new addition to the lobby of the Joliet Post Office at 2000 McDonough St.

The painting was done in conjunction with the United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons 1981, and calls on the public to "bring down the barriers" to enable disabled persons to participate fully in society.

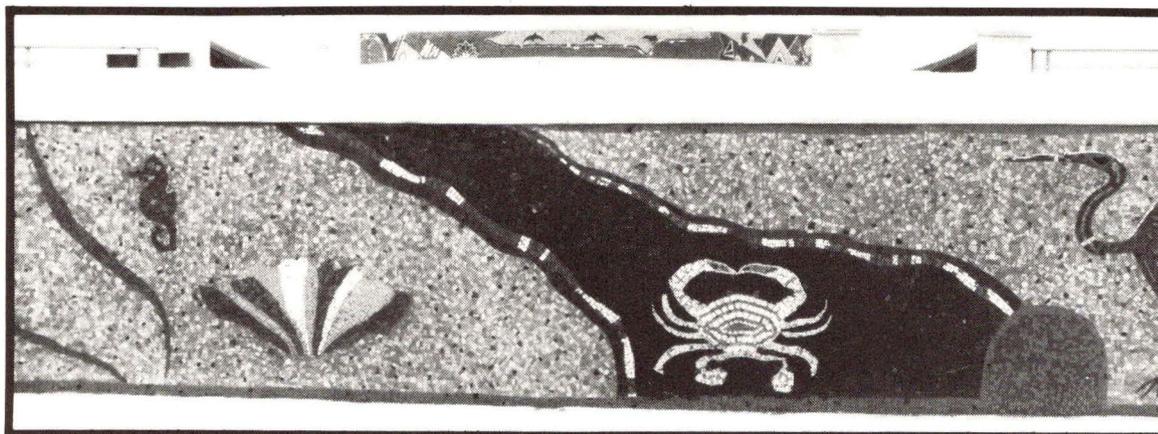
The project was co-sponsored by the Will-Grundy Counties Central Trades and Labor Council and Illinois State University/Joliet Teacher Corps.

According to Jerome E. Sobczak, president of the Central Body, organized labor has had a century-long commitment to preventing disabilities and providing security and rehabilitation for disabled workers. "This project," he said, "is a continuation of our involvement in the struggle for safer and healthier working conditions."

Sobczak credited Kathleen Farrell-McSherry, a member of the Will County Federation of Teachers Local 604, AFT, who directed the work on the mural, painted by her Joliet Junior College art education students. He pointed out that this mural is one of Farrell-McSherry's many art projects depicting Organized Labor's fight for equality on the job. "This will be another reminder to the people of our community that the Labor Movement is concerned with the welfare of all working people," he said.



photo: Kathleen Farrell.



Brian Rose © Cityarts Workshop, Inc. 1981

BEACH STREET ENTRANCE

3'4" x 36' 1'8" x 36' 1'8" x 26'

Cityart's most ambitious project this summer was *BEACH STREET ENTRANCE*, a series of three mosaic walls for the boardwalk entrance at Beach 116th Street in Rockaway.

The mosaics, an homage to bird and sea life, were designed by artist Ann Evans, and are composed of 45,000 pieces of Italian glass and ceramic tiles. The egret, which had become nearly extinct in the 19th Century, has a prominent place on the first wall. The artist and her crew fabricated Beach Street Entrance in Cityarts' Lower East Side mosaic studio utilizing the "Indirect Method" a traditional technique which was developed in Italy.

Ann Evans is a specialist in ceramics and community arts who has taught all ages at the Hamilton Madison House in Lower Manhattan. Her assistants were Mary Nell Hawk, Doris Lorick, Cynthia Goodman, and Sana Musasama as well as 18 college and high school students.

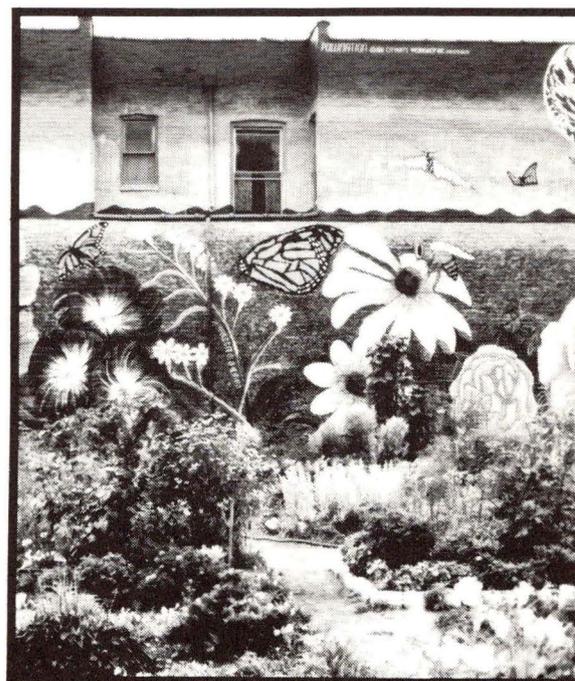
The Rockaway mosaics were produced with grants from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs' Community Arts Development Program and the Neighborhood Economic Development Division of O.E.D. These programs are funded in part by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Block Grant Program. Cooperating agencies are the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the Chamber of Commerce of the Rockaways. The Cityarts mosaic program is supported, in part, with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Other contributors to the Rockaway mosaic project are: Exxon Community Summer Jobs Program, CETA Summer Youth Employment Program of the Chinatown Planning Council, Jobs for Youth, the NYC Arts Apprenticeship Program, and the Department of Social Services. Studio space was provided at El Bohio, a former public school now utilized as a community arts center; Country Floors, Inc. donated some materials.

POLLINATION

67'6" x 23'

POLLINATION, an imaginary gardenscape, now provides a dramatic two story backdrop for the East 48th Street Community Garden at Avenue D in Brooklyn. Immense flowers painted on the bottom half of the wall, bring the real garden up to and into the mural. Giant insects fly into the setting from deep space to pollinate the garden, while "spaceship earth", a reference to the ecology movement, hangs over the scene. A crew of 25 young people painted the mural, which was designed and directed by artist Joe Stephenson. Mr. Stephenson has painted ten murals in Jamaica, WI and in New York City. He was assisted on this project by Kam Hung Mak, a sophomore at the School of Visual Arts. *POLLINATION* was co-sponsored by the Flatbush East Community Development Corporation and the East 48th Street Block Association. Additional funding was provided by the New York City Office of Neighborhood Economic Development, State Park and Recreation Commission for the City of New York, BHRAGGS-CETA Summer Youth Employment Program, the Exxon Community Summer Jobs Program and Jobs for Youth.



Debbie Chumizo © Cityarts Workshop, Inc. 1981



photo: Simon Tropp

Dr. King Mural Dedicated By Boro President Manes

Queens Borough President Donald Manes dedicated a striking 65-foot long wall mural depicting the life and dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at 4 PM today, December 9th, at Astoria Houses, 4-05 Astoria Blvd., Queens.

At the dedication ceremony, Manes said, "I hope this impressive mural will inspire all who see it to recall and follow the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is certainly an attractive addition to the environment of Astoria Houses."

The outdoor mural was conceived and painted by A.G. Joe Stephenson, who was aided in painting the colossal work by several neighborhood youngsters.

The mural is a project of the Martin de Porres Community Service Center, a neighborhood center which provides job training, remedial education, recreation and social services for Astoria Houses and the surrounding community. Funding was provided by Cityarts Workshop, Inc., Museums Collaborative, Inc. and the Brooklyn Museum.

The dedication ceremony was attended by the artist, Mr. Stephenson and by representatives of Martin de Porres, Cityarts Workshop, Museums Collaborative, the Brooklyn Museum and community leaders and residents.

The mural depicts the life of Dr. King in four scenes. The first shows Dr. King delivering his stirring "I Have A Dream" speech to a huge crowd at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington in 1963. The second panel features the Indian statesman, Mohandas Gandhi smiling over an image of Mrs. Rosa Parks. Gandhi's non-violent protest philosophy greatly influenced King's own thinking, and it was Mrs. Parks who sparked the civil rights movement of the 60's when she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus to a white person in 1957. The third panel shows Dr. King with his wife,

Coretta King, leading a demonstration for jobs and civil rights, and the last panel is a "family portrait" of King with Coretta and two of the couple's four children.

A Community Project

The idea for the mural came about through a four day celebration of the birth of Dr. King organized in January of 1980, by the Dr. King Celebration Committee of Astoria. This group approached the Martin de Porres Center requesting that resources be made available to create a special tribute to Dr. King. The Center embarked upon a process which involved the distribution of 1500 flyers, building canvassing and open meetings to get input from the community. The response was overwhelmingly in favor of a mural and after four months of intensive work, the actual painting began on October 8, 1981.

Cityarts Workshop, Inc., which provided the services of Mr. Stephenson, was also able to obtain several student artists to work on the mural in return for academic credit at their schools. The King mural is one of several major works of public art that have been created under the sponsorship of Cityarts Workshop this year.

The Museums Collaborative, Inc., and the Brooklyn Museum provided consultation, encouragement and dollar support through the Cultural Voucher Program, a program designed to assist a wide range of people in using the educational resources of New York City's museums, zoos, botanical gardens and historic sites.

Community Impact

The mural, located on the external wall of the Educational Services Building at 4-05 Astoria Blvd., occupies a focal point in the Astoria Housing Development. As community residents and visitors pass the mural, almost all exclaim, "the long awaited project was worth the wait." The chatter of children can be heard describing what they know about Dr. King.

10 The Astoria Tenants Organization played an important role in the project by endorsing the mural. This support was instrumental in acquiring the necessary approvals from the N.Y.C. Housing Authority Department of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Samuel Perez, Executive Director of the Martin de Porres Center sees this project as another example of the "self help" program that the Center has tried to foster in the local community. Martin de Porres is a non-sectarian, not-for-profit neighborhood house, founded in 1964, which provides a coordinated network of innovative services to 1100 families of the Astoria Houses and surrounding community. Over 3,000 people rely on the services of Martin de Porres and no one is turned away. Today the dream of Dr. King lives on through the work of agencies like Martin de Porres, which believe that service to their fellow man is the greatest service. ♦

Artist Franco Gaskin Gives The Brush To Harlem With a Colorful Gallery of Riot Gates

In the ghetto they are called "riot gates," those gray-ribbed steel curtains that store owners pull down at night, grim reminders of the long hot summers of 1964 and '68. Yet today on Manhattan's 125th Street, in the middle of Harlem, many of the forbidding gates are awash with color, splashes of beauty in an otherwise dreary cityscape. The man responsible for the transformation is a 53-year-old artist named Franklin "Franco" Gaskin.

In the past year and a half Gaskin has converted more than 30 doorways into radiant tropical isles, shimmering lakes and rain forests. Incredibly, not one of them has been defaced by graffiti. He paints on Sundays and early weekday mornings before the stores open, using specially blended acrylics and handmade brushes. It takes 12 to 48 hours to transform the front of a record shop, boutique or jewelry store. The cost is \$350 upward, depending on how complicated the subject is.

"Until Franco came along," marvels one shopkeeper, "125th Street looked like a battleground. Now it's an alfresco art gallery." "Somebody's got to care for Harlem," reasons Franco. "Slowly but surely its image is changing to something more positive."

Much of Gaskin's work recalls his native Panama, where his father was a U.S. Marine and his mother a dressmaker. As a boy, Gaskin dubbed himself "Franco the Great" to promote a magic act. At 16, he apprenticed to two artists in Panama, the Bruce brothers, and the next year he was painting billboards, posters and murals for \$1.50 a week. He had other training. "Public reaction was my art school," he contends. Gaskin moved to New York 22 years ago and subsisted by painting murals for restaurants and bars and selling what art he could. At the time he saw himself "on a big scale, not in terms of money, but in terms of opportunity."

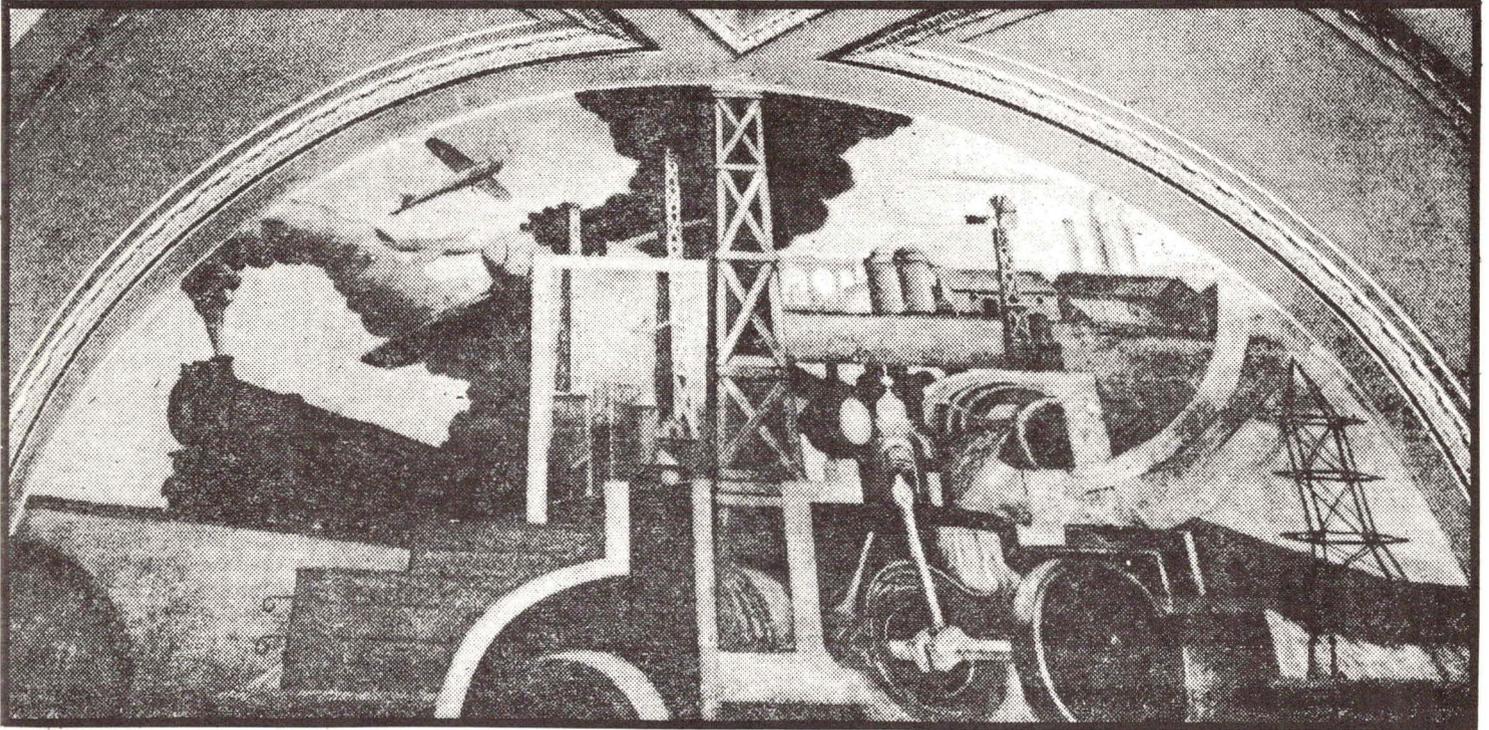
Today Gaskin and wife Alverna live with their son, 20, and daughter, 17, just around the corner from his "outdoor gallery." He has a backlog of requests and will continue to change the face of 125th Street until they run out. "When I paint," he says, "it feels better than good. It's a constant song." ♦

From **People Magazine**



A search for an Eighth Ave. muralist

Daily News, Monday, March 15, 1982



By PAUL LA ROSA

YOU'RE AN artist who did the bulk of your work in the 1930s. You were heavily influenced by the WPA-sponsored drawings of the period. One of your finest accomplishments is a small mural in the lobby of a building at 322 Eighth Ave. at 26th St.

That mural has drawn the attention of developer Donald Shapiro, who now owns the building, and he wants to make it the centerpiece of his newly refurbished lobby.

He does have a head start in finding you because you signed your work "K. Gress," but so far he has had no luck.

He'd like to talk to you to find out certain details about the mural so that its restoration is true to the period and absolutely authentic.

"I never really noticed it until someone brought it to my attention, but it looks like a good period work and it's probably more interesting than anything we could put up," Shapiro said.

He plans to renovate the Art Deco 15-story building and make it into an office building. Currently, it mainly contains commercial lofts.

Shapiro hired Ann Luce, a restoration specialist, to uncover the work. She was the one who suggested that meeting the original artist would help the project greatly.

"I think it would be great to meet him and find out what his original intentions were," said Luce.

Thanks to Luce, who has been working on the mural since August, the work now is at least visible. Before she began, it was covered with grime and the passage of time. "Someone tried to clean it with Comet or Ajax and it was covered with a varnish of some type," she said.

It's evident that the artist was heavily influenced by the Depression-era concern with realistic depictions of working life. The nine by five-foot arched painting is filled with planes and trains and has a distinctive working-class feel.

"There's an industrial motif present," Luce said. "All the movement depicts the imagery of machines and the technological changes that were happening in that era."

Of course, if the artist were still alive he would probably be no younger than 70. Luce is assuming that a male painted it because, she said, the general feel of the mural is masculine.

Specifically, Luce would like to talk to the artist concerning the pigmentation of the original. Right now it has a brown tone, but she's not sure whether the artist intended that or wanted to make it more vibrant and colorful.

She says she has been conservative in her treatment of the painting so far because of the slight chance that the artist will be found.

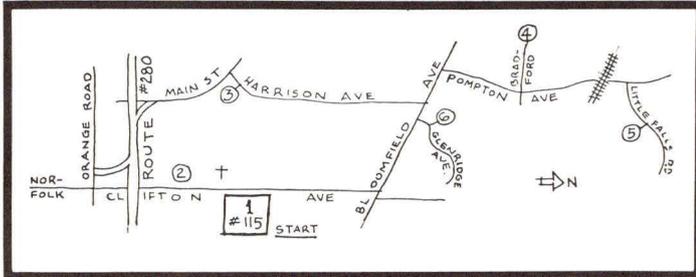
So far, she has checked art indexes and paintings of the era with no luck. Shapiro's company, the Vector Real Estate Corp., has even sent letters to everyone named K. Gress in the phone book, but there hasn't been any response.

Even if the artist is not alive, Luce and Shapiro would still like to get in touch with any relatives. "I think it would be nice for the heirs to know that the painting is still around," Luce said.

So, if you're out there anywhere, K. Gress, call Shapiro at his office, 581-2400. ■

12 Murals, Summer 1981, Wet Paint III Newark, N.J.

1. Essex County Dept of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, 115 Clifton Avenue, Newark
Liz Del Tufo, Director, Cultural Affairs (482-6400)
2. *Life. Be In It* Mural, Park Shelter No. 6
Branch Brook Park
3. *Silhouettes* Mural, Park Administration Building Colgate Field, West Orange Department of Recreation
Thomas Dunning, Director
4. *Eye On The City* Mural, Center School Essex County Hospital Center, Cedar Grove
Steve Gruchacz, Director of Activity Therapies
5. *Troll Bridge* Mural, Cedar Grove Community Swimming Pool Little Falls Road, Cedar Grove, Department of Recreation
John Maher, Director
6. *Unity Is Beauty* Mural, Montclair-North Essex YWCA, 159 Glenridge Avenue, Montclair
Marion Hobbes, Director



The Environmental Arts Group of CEAC* - Murals in Brooklyn, New York

We worked for 36 days during the hot summer of 1981, to prepare and paint a mural on the Crawfords store wall at 1325 Kings Highway, Brooklyn New York. Using a ballot box approach for citizen participation in this mural project, citizens could help choose one design from several displayed in the Crawfords window. A selected jury picked the final design.

The mural painted, a 17' by 55' sepia tone, historic mural, called *Old Brooklyn*, shows picture postcard scenes of the local neighborhood in the 1800's. Also part of the mural is a modern image of a woman mixing paints, a cat, and a painted ladder, an attempt at educating the viewer towards the process of mural painting.

The previous summer, an abstract mural design submitted by a Brooklyn College graduate student was chosen by a selected jury to be painted on the Citibank wall at 1501 Kings Highway. This 17' by 25' latex paint mural, containing eighteen shades of grey, was recently chosen for a citywide Molly Parness beautification award.

The muralist group, composed of college, high school and community artists organized all aspects of these mural projects including wall leasing, funding, community participation and design.

Our program is unique in structure because it is part of a large consortium of support groups involved in an educationally based, environmental improvement program. The projects evolve slowly but powerfully as the broad spectrum of support groups involved help us overcome the bureaucratic barriers inherent in all grassroot urban projects.

The consortium of groups include the Council on the Environment of New York City, a Mayoral agency, Brooklyn College's Center for Public Art and the Institute for the Study of the Borough of Brooklyn, All Communities Arts, Inc., and the Community Education Action Coalition -CEAC*. The Council's Training Student Organizer Program provides student with the organizational training necessary for support services.

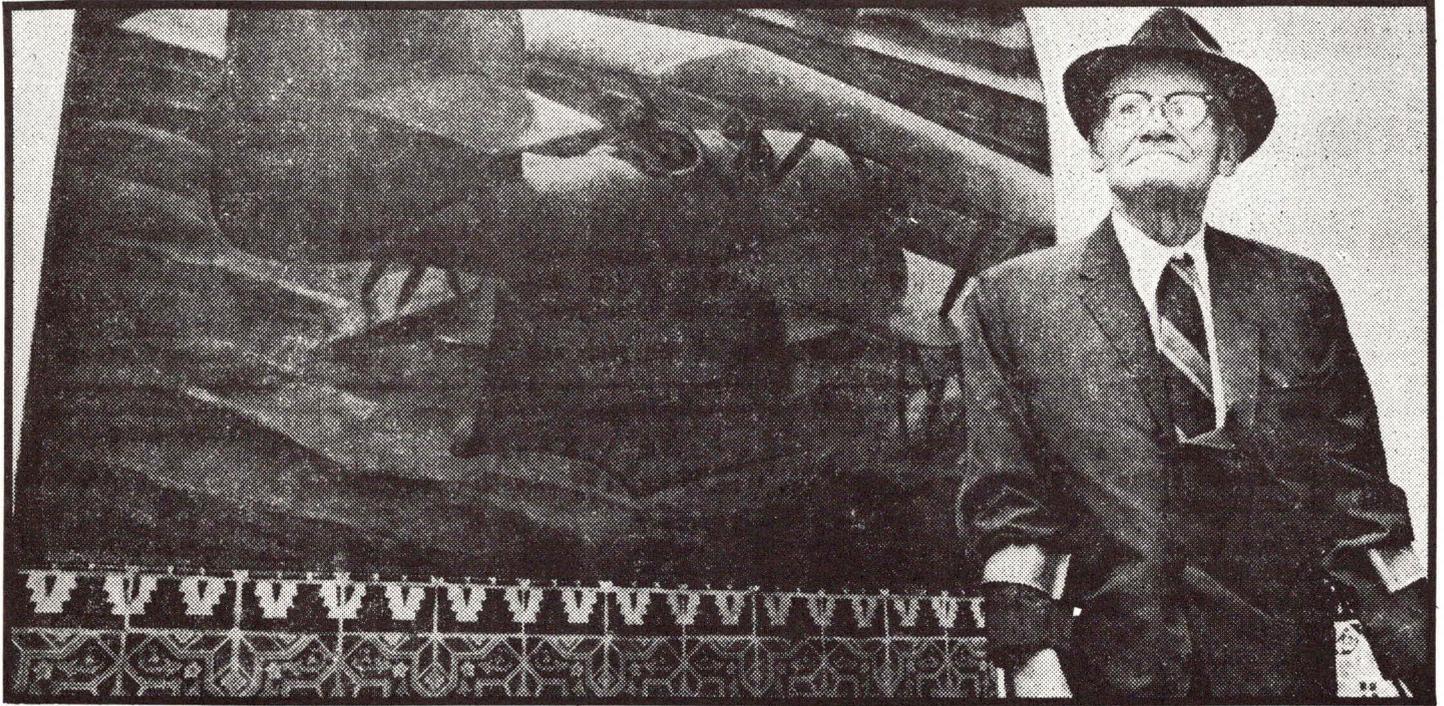
We hope to share our structural format with other "Community Muralist" readers who may be interested in a larger base of operation.

*CEAC is a coalition of school-community groups formed into a steering committee which meets monthly to help facilitate all of the projects mentioned. The groups listed above and others not mentioned in this article all CEAC member organizations.

Denise Hurtado, Assistant Director of an Environmental Education Program, Council on the Environment of NYC



photo: Denise Hurtado



Artist Reviews His Long-Lost Murals

By Michael Grieg

A frail 85-year-old artist, hobbling on crutches, came out of creative seclusion yesterday for the dedication of his recently rediscovered murals at Laguna Honda Hospital.

Glenn Anthony Wessels, who resembles Harry Truman in looks and feisty manner, was clearly pleased by the proclamation issued by Mayor Dianne Feinstein that praised him and his once-paneled-over murals from the Great Depression.

But he was also candid about the work — somber views of laborers among the four elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water — that he had painted as part of a government-sponsored project for the beautification of public buildings.

"It was during the black time of 1934 that I got the call from Dr. Walter Heil, then director of the de Young Museum and local supervisor of the project, to go out and find a blank wall somewhere that needed decorating," he recalled.

"I found the entrance lobby of the Laguna Honda home, with five big recessed panels."

Wessels' matter-of-fact gaze took in the five "social realist" murals, the occasion for yesterday's hoopla, and pronounced them "adequate for the situation" and a helpful commission for a Depression artist.

The former professor of art at the University of California at Berkeley, who taught for 27 years until his retirement to tiny Orcas Island off the coast of Washington, was far more delighted by other of his works gathered from private collectors for the one-day occasion.

"Oh, I'm glad to see that one again," he said, taking in an oil painting of cliffs that he had done in 1964 during an eight-month "retirement vacation with pay" in Sicily. He lingered with the painting in a rare moment of quiet, as if the work were a long-missed friend.

The smaller works, vigorously brushed oils of burned fields and tumbling seascapes, were in contrast to the abstract pieces of his

famous teacher, Hans Hofmann, with whom he studied in 1928 in Munich and St. Tropez.

"I like good abstract work, but often it's all like a song without words," said Wessels, who traveled later as Hofmann's assistant and met such renowned figures of modern art as Picasso and Braque.

"I asked a lot of foolish questions and learned a lot that way," said Wessels.

"Picasso once told me that he kept selecting the details of a subject, and because he left out more and more it would come out looking abstract," he recalled. "Braque said he would paint five versions of a subject because he couldn't get into one painting all that he saw."

His mind drifted to old friends of the Bay Area — photographers Ansel Adams and the late Imogen Cunningham and such painters and critics as Clifford Still and the late Weldon Kees.

"We had quite an art colony then," he said. "Those were the days in San Francisco when artists could find some warmth and comfort on Telegraph Hill at prices they could afford. Then they built Coit Tower and the rents went up and the phonies moved in."

"You know, if you want an art colony, you got to keep it cheap."

San Francisco Chronicle Fri., May 1, 1981

'Political' Art Furor At Moscone Center



The names of eight controversial political figures, scrawled on clay tiles around a massive mural commissioned for the George Moscone Convention Center, have touched off a controversy that sent San Francisco art commissioners scurrying into a secret executive session yesterday. The Stanford University artist threatened to withdraw her work rather than change its frame.

While workmen installed five of the six art works commissioned for the lobby of the massive convention center, one alcove remained conspicuously barren late yesterday afternoon. The committee appointed to oversee the Moscone Center's art has refused to accept the \$35,000 piece by artist

Katherine Porter because Porter wrote the names of such political activists as Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, prison activist George Jackson and journalist I. F. Stone on its border.

"It makes a political statement, and I don't think any kind of political statement is appropriate," said committee chairman Dimitri Vedensky yesterday. "It's a very bizarre and personal list of people. But even if the list had Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, it would still be an inappropriate list to me."

The other four names are Paul Robeson, Dorothy Day, Emma Goldman and Wounded Knee.

In her spacious university-provided home amid the redwoods of

the San Mateo County coast yesterday, Porter fumed that the art commissioners were behaving inappropriately by objecting to the frame's political content.

"There's a tremendous irony in all this because George Moscone was a progressive mayor who cared about the rights of all people — that's the reason I was attracted to this project," said Porter, 40. She lived in Lincolnville, Maine, before accepting her current year-long post as Woman Artist in Residence at Stanford University.

"The names are there to represent blacks, women, Chicanos and other individuals important in American history and in the struggle for human rights," said Porter.

Before going into executive session to discuss the 10-by-20-foot mural, many commissioners argued that Porter had made the changes without their approval. Although they conceded that other artists had made similar alterations without consent from the committee, they objected to the aesthetics of Porter's new frame.

"It's not so much that the names are there, it's that they're so badly added," said art commissioner Peter Rodriguez, director of the Mexican Museum. "It was like a kid scribbling names. I wish she had done a better job of integrating them into the design."

"They're amateurish," said Vedensky. "They are like something you'd do at crafts school and take home to mama."

Porter said that if the center doesn't accept the mural she will put it on exhibition in Los Angeles and on the East Coast. "I've experienced more anger in the last week than I have in my entire life," Porter said.

Vedensky said he didn't know when a final decision on the acceptability of the frame will be reached.

San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 1, 1981
Photo: Mike Maloney

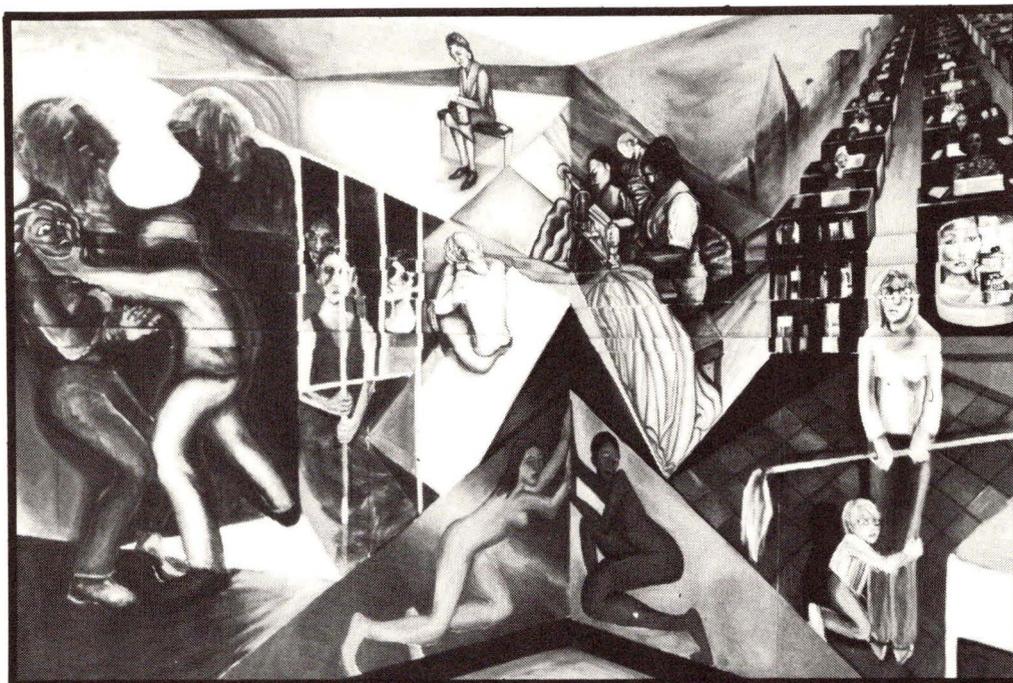


photo: Chuck Thurston

S.F. Women's Building Mural

On March 11, 1980, six women gathered together at the Women's Building to discuss beginning a mural project. The Women's Building, (3543 18th Street), the first woman owned and operated community center in the United States, wanted to create a diverse arts program as part of their goal to "integrate art, culture, recreation, politics and information about the world reflected in a feminist and holistic understanding of life." Not only was the Women's Building an obvious choice for making a visual statement about women, but the fantastic architectural features of the building, which used to be a Masonic lodge, were irresistible to muralists. The four-story stairwell with its sweeping curves which culminated in an arched ceiling seemed ideal for a monumental theme.

In the months that followed, the initial group swelled upwards to seventy people. Since the collective was advertised as "open" in *City Arts* and other local publications, new members came and went. After months of organizing and fundraising efforts and some drawing sessions, a core group of seven finally emerged. The Women's Building balked at committing the stairwell for the mural; the staff agreed on offering a small room on the third floor which was an ante room to Ibsen Hall, a large performing space. The group then decided to close the collective. The members were: Selma Brown, Kathy Bucklew, Deborah Green, Claire Josephson, Laura McNall, Johanna Poethig and Ariella Seidenber. Rather than attempting more fundraising efforts, Josephson temporarily donated paint in order to maintain the momentum of the project.

The next task was to choose a theme. The designated room still had hooks and numbers from the days when it served as a closet. "Women in the closet" became our departure point. From there, we discussed and argued about dozens of issues. This process provoked deep emotions in all of us and many illuminating conversations eventually pinpointed our direction. The mural would move around the four walls from the negative aspects of women's experience towards a positive vision. Drawing and structural concerns were combined in intense design sessions until the group was satisfied.

A self-portrait of Poethig in the closet looking out in suspicion, but looking out nonetheless, titles the theme. Violence against women in brutal and more subtle forms proceed from the closet around two walls. They are: 1) rape, 2) women in prison, 3) abandonment of the elderly, 4) feelings of depression and confusion based on suppression, 5) drudgery of factory work, exploitation, 6) women separated from each other as lovers or friends due to societal pressure, 7) alienation of modern office life and sexual harassment on the job, 8) housewives' isolation and the temptation of drugs and alcohol and, 9) shock treatment. The overall statement in these two walls is the interrelationship of the tragic aspects of society's treatment of women in the maze of modern life.

The doorway between walls two and three signifies passage — the endless eons of women that have gone before us. The receding perspective enhances the feeling of the past. Transitional womb forms precipitate the birth of the "new wave". Water, the traditional feminine symbol gives structure to the next wall. The images in the wave aim to give credence to the work that women have done, showing distinct ethnic tradition while attempting to portray a unifying synthesis for the future. Wall three has images of farming, healing, teaching and mothering. Wall four embodies hopes for the present and the contribution of women towards the future. These images include: 1) The Women's Building, 2) women in professions, 3) spiritual contemplation, 4) joyful passing on of culture and skills, 5) a utopian city whose individuals live in harmony, and 6) an image of personified spirit. "Bertha", a parody of the *odalisque*, lounges above the doorway casting off the useless fetters of oppression, i.e. corsets. These cast-offs bring the viewer right back to the closet. The many interpretations of the mural's images by different viewers enrich the content of the work.

A performance by Lilith Theatre Co. based on a collaboration with the muralists, entitled *You Art What You Eat* highlighted the opening of the mural in November.◆

Claire Josephson
Johanna Poethig
Selma Brown

Mural Movie - Two Reviews

How frustrating! There is a full-length documentary movie out about Los Angeles murals, and few of us have seen it because no distribution has been arranged for the United States. CMM offers here two reviews of the film written from different points of view by two authors involved with community murals. Best: see it yourself, but until it gets a national distributor, the only chance seems to be either a film festival (where it wins prizes), or perhaps a college.

Murs Murs

There is something very French in the way that Agnes Varda looks at the Los Angeles murals (who paints them, who looks at them, who pays for them) in her feature length documentary film, *Murs Murs, Murals Murals on the Wall*. The film is witty, intelligent and clever. It is also a visual delight as the camera using its particular brand of illusion plays visual games with the illusions on the walls. As in all Varda films there is a personal viewpoint. In this case, Varda herself, a French woman discovering Los Angeles. Here, there are also the demands of the documentary form and the desire to do justice to the gamut of mural art in L.A. and its creators. Finally, there is the filmmaker's overpowering impulse to pun at every opportunity.

If the film has a flaw, it is in trying to combine these three elements in a single work. At the same time, it is precisely the idiosyncratic viewpoint that gives the film an interest beyond its subject matter. The autobiographical element is somewhat frustrated in *Murs Murs* because of the demands of the documentary form.

As a documentary *Murs Murs* is to be congratulated on the selection of murals to be filmed. The choice is representative of the best in L.A. both of the trompe d'oeil Venice style and the socially-concerned Chicano walls. The photography is never boring, and in contradiction to U.S. documentary style, totally contrived without any attempt to disguise the artifice. Varda echoes muralist Kent Twitchell's play on scale in his giant photo-realist blowups by having the characters in one of his murals walk from the wall toward the camera until they are larger than their 20 foot high images. Real skaters at Venice beach are intercut and photographed against the illusion on the wall. Judy Baca's portable anti-capitalist mural is loaded on two pick-up trucks and driven around town while the camera focuses on choice backgrounds like the Bank of America building.

The biggest tour de force of the film is Farmer John's Pig Heaven, painted during more than 30 years by two successive signpainters. It is also the only direct political statement by the narrator (Varda) who objects to the fact that the artists have received no credit at all from the company for their work. Varda, herself, puns in giving credit to the artists through a voice which *murmurs* the name of the artist as the camera pans the wall. Unfortunately, not only are the names inaudible, but the quality of the voice is highly unpleasant.

The political content of the East L.A. murals is expressed only through the images of the work itself and statements by artists like Willie Herron about his "Wall that Cracked Open": "A lot of my friends have died. Violence is just happening all over. It's like a never-ending message that I chose to express in the form of art." The film spends quite a bit of time at the Ramona

Gardens Housing Project where gang warfare is a dominant fact of existence and the major theme of many murals, yet Varda resists the temptation of exoticizing low-rider street life or anthropologizing some of the more naive concepts. It is precisely in showing visually the relationship between walls, audience, and environment essential to the community mural movement that the film is at its best.

It is a shame that we have had to wait for a foreign rather than a local filmmaker (a West German company filmed New York's lower east side murals) to do justice to the L.A. murals. But, it is even more side murals) to do justice to the L.A. murals. But, it is even more disgraceful that now that the film exists, it cannot be seen in the United States except at film festivals. Distribution has been arranged in France, Belgium, Germany and England but Varda has not yet been able to arrange commercial distribution in the United States. Varda writes, "It seems that there is a fear of documentaries — even of interesting and witty ones — as if it could not be "entertaining" to discover a city ... the only hope I have is for after the big earthquake, when Los Angeles will be under the ocean. Then, I'll become as famous as Commandant Cousteau and I'LL MAKE MONEY." ♦

Eva Cockcroft
Artweek, Nov, 21, 1981

Mural Art Gets Overdue Recognition from Unlikely Source

Opening night at the La Jolla Film Festival with the showing of French documentary "Mur Murs," direct from Cannes, New York, and San Francisco film festivals, forced La Jollans and others to see what Chicano muralism in East L.A. is all about.

French screen writer Agnes Varda's production brought out an unusual audience — for such a film — of almost 300, who saw what Chicanos have prized and written about for years — mural art. Those whom one may hardly ever see taking a serious interest in Chicano mural art, can now discuss its merits in polite circles with little fear of reprisal.

Why is this true? The reason that Chicano muralism may now be accepted in U.S. social circles other than just Chicano is because "Mur Murs" is not Chicano, but French. Internationally acclaimed at the world-famous Cannes Film Festival in France, Varda's documentary includes all kinds of murals on walls all over Los Angeles, but focuses strongly on Chicano art and artists.

From Europe then, Varda has done the unthinkable, the impossible. She has brought Chicano mural art to La Jolla. Baca, Torero, Carrasco, Alaniz-Healy, Almaraz, Felix, and Botello have received international recognition, not from their own country, but from someone else's.

When film editor and French film star Sabine Mamou, the guest speaker at the festival, met with the audience following the film, the result was an interesting twist: It was not the artists, the experts on muralism, the stars of the film, but Mamou, who ended up answering questions about a film on muralism of the experts themselves: Veronica Enriquez, director of the Centro Cultural de la Raza; David Avalos and Victor Ochoa, artists and co-workers at the Centro Cultural; Michael Schnor, art teacher at Southwestern College in Chula Vista and contributor to the murals in Chicano Park; James and Eva Cockcroft, authors of a book on U.S. muralism called *Towards a People's Art*; and Mario Torero, whose art was featured in "Mur Murs."

What Chicanos have often had dismissed as too radical, and even unacceptable, had to take a trip to France and make a homecoming from there in order to be successfully acknowledged.

Two questions arise as a result of this irony: One asks why a European film would want to focus on Chicano art when U.S. filmmakers have not. Another asks why such a film, produced in France, would be suddenly acceptable in the United States.

The harsh reality is that Chicano art, Chicano cinema, and Chicano literature make a brutal, yet truthful, commentary on U.S. society.

Often an indictment of a cruel system, one in which Chicanos have struggled to survive and develop their potential, Chicano art becomes outspoken, making a bitter statement against the realities with which Chicanos living in the U.S. have had to cope.

Furthermore, Chicano art and literature are political in nature, provoking people to engage actively in changing their own lives; at times urging them to become participants in the decision-making within the power structure; and challenging them even to change the system itself.

Such art has been acceptable in the U.S. only when co-opted by the system, tempered with acceptability, and sold back to the people under the guise of acknowledgement.

"Mur Murs," while seeking to explore the situations of all kinds of artists, subtly reveals how muralism becomes acceptable in the United States to the degree that the message is diluted enough to become palatable to most audiences. That is perhaps why one L.A. muralist in "Mur Murs" is able to paint a massive mural depicting U.S. American TV heroes like the Lone Ranger and Jan Clayton, Lassie's mistress, as God and the Virgin mother; another

artist to paint a forest and trees; and yet another, historical old buildings. Such images are safe, unoffensive.

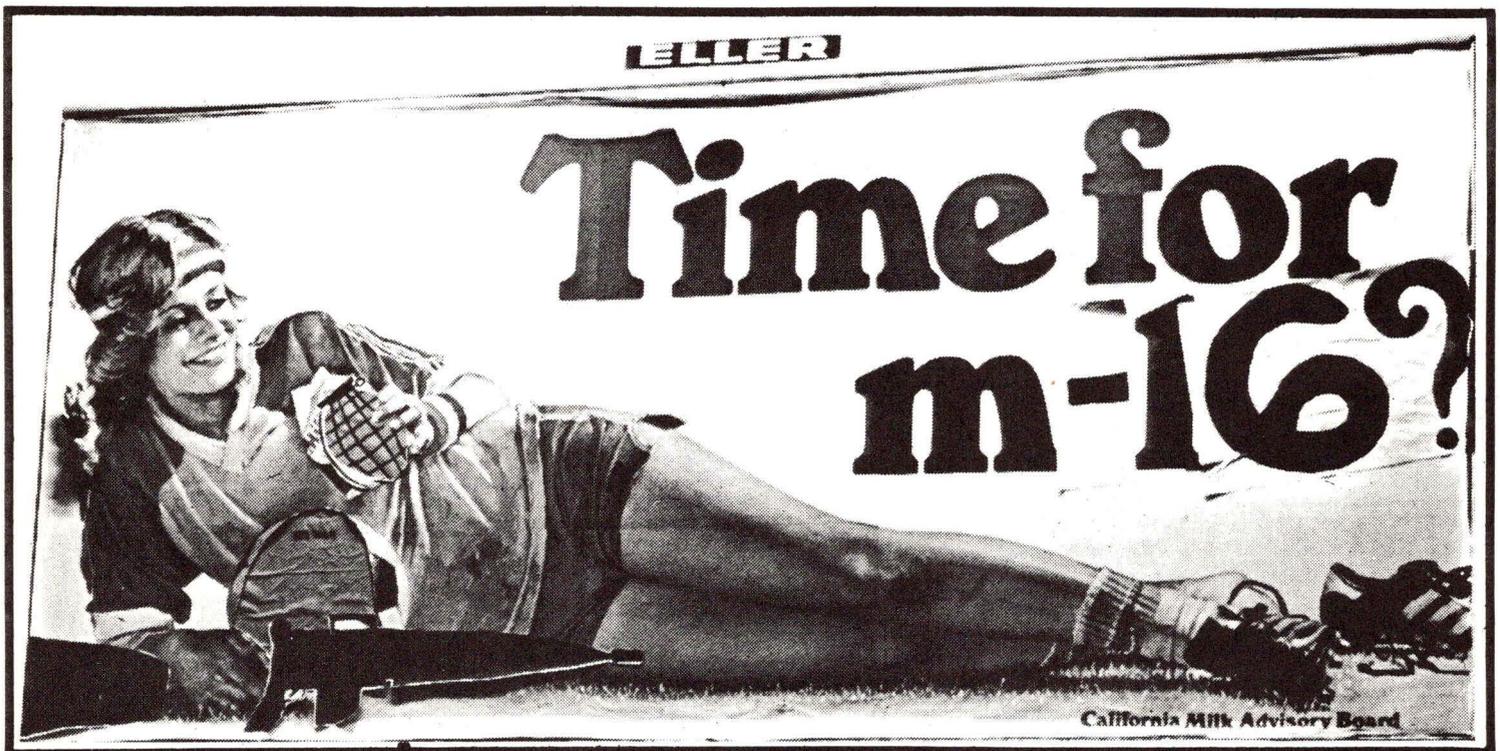
One thing that Varda does not say is that you will see no Chicano murals painted outside the *barrios* without a struggle. They are okay as long as they are carefully confined.

So when people ask why there is not more Chicano literature, Chicano exhibits in the museums, or more Chicano films, the answer is clear. Historically, true people's art in the United States has been brushed aside. It has been done so by a mentality that fears a criticism directed against itself. In short, the symptoms of fright are for the loss of a position of power supported by the mystique of supremacy.

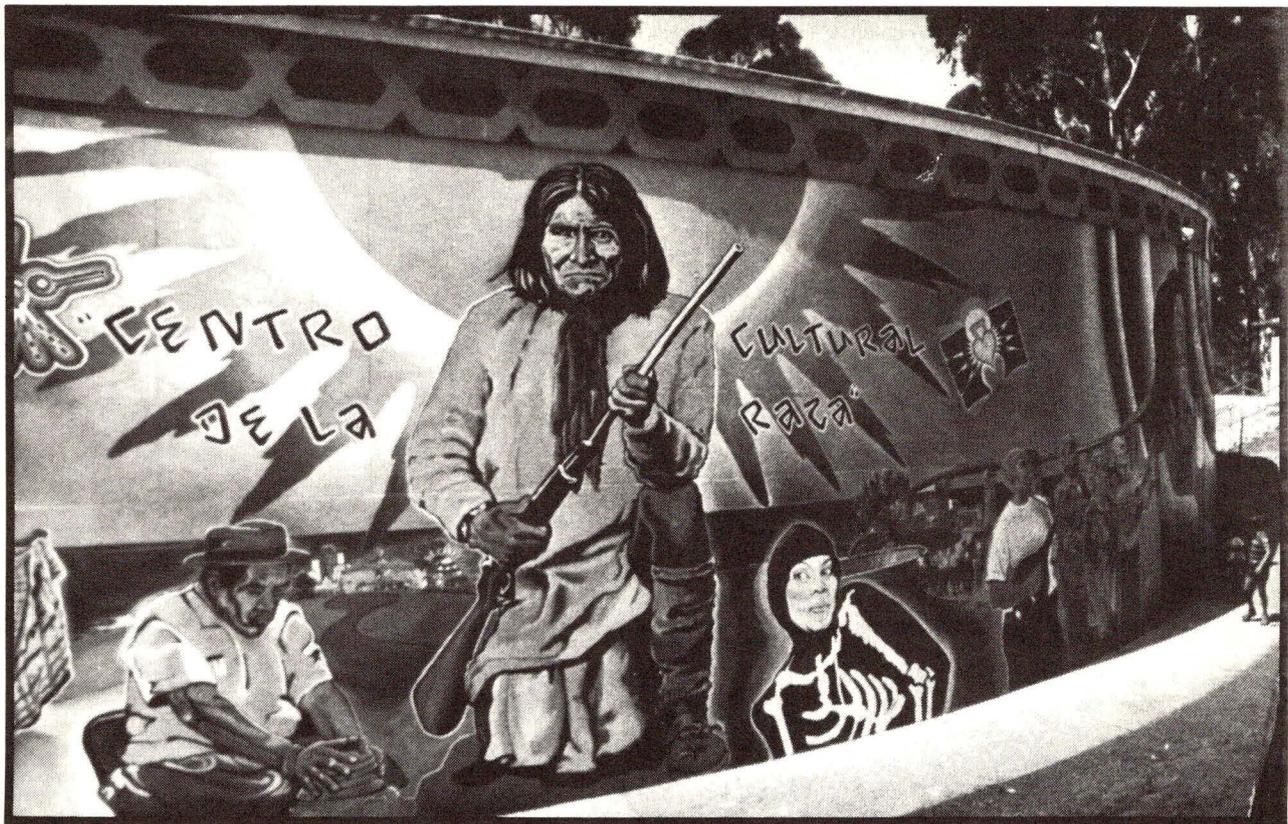
A European filmmaker then, would have no problems with criticism directed against the United States. In fact, such criticism may even be encouraged by those who are pleased to see it portrayed so graphically — thus the premiere of Chicano muralism in La Jolla.

BY RITA SANCHEZ

Redesigned billboard in San Francisco:



The Conspiracy, August 1981. Photo: Kim Corsaro



Native Americans Stand Tall Again as Balboa Park Mural Takes Shape

By HILLIARD HARPER

Rising 18 feet on the side of an old city reservoir facing the naval hospital in Balboa Park is the figure of the 19th Century Apache chief-tain Geronimo.

Geronimo is the central figure, and only completed part so far, of a planned 70-by-18-mural that artist Victor Ochoa is creating to promote Mexican, Chicano and Indian art for Centro Cultural de la Raza.

Once Ochoa has completed the mural, the concrete walls of the former reservoir that now houses the Centro will be transformed into a bright tapestry depicting early native American and Mexican art and culture.

Ochoa, a former director of the centro, which was organized 11 years ago, chose the Apache chief-tain to symbolize the centro's work with the area's indigenous Indians, and as a rebellious figure who fought the western encroachment of his native culture.

"The Mexicans in Sonora didn't like Geronimo either," said Ochoa. "But he wasn't just a thief." The

muralist hopes his painting of the Apache will show the dignity of the chief's race.

Bicultural Insights

Ochoa's own background has given him insight into the two cultures he lives in. His grandfathers were European — a Fenchman and a German — and his grandmothers were Indian — a Zapotec and a Yaqui. Ochoa himself was born to undocumented parents in Los Angeles.

At age 7 he was told he could not go to school, and his parents had to move from east Los Angeles, where they lived near a freeway, to a dirt street in Tijuana.

Says Ochoa, "I was drastically contrasted. My parents thought it was the worst thing that could happen. To me it was the best."

Later, when he attended San Diego State University as an art major, Ochoa was able to make more comparisons of the two societies. "In Mexico there is no welfare, no social security, no unemployment. You have to hustle for yourself," he said.

The sketches for Ochoa's current mural had to be approved by numerous city officials because the former reservoir is city property. In the final step, the sketches went to the City Council, which did not just approve them — it stood and applauded.

Support from the community for the exterior art on the centro walls was not always so positive. Several years ago a mural in the same location had to be painted over because of citizen complaints. A hooded death's figure that was visible to the patients in the hospital across Park Boulevard was considered inappropriate.

Except for the figure of Geronimo, most of the images in Ochoa's mural are likenesses of artisans working at the centro. A pre-Columbian dancer, a potter and folklorico dancers illustrate the workshops and classes available to the public.

The bright colors and the sometimes wild figures on the walls of the centro and the brilliant costumes of some of the dancers belie

the dignity and courtesy of the individuals themselves. The cultures that Ochoa and the staff are preserving and promoting differ from what he calls the cold, technical Western society.

"The rural Mexican and Indian cultures are humanistic, natural, cosmic," he says. It was, in part, fear that these cultures would be assimilated and lost in the greater American culture that prompted the centro's formation.

'Dehumanizing' Society

"Western society is very dehumanizing. It doesn't promote creating," Ochoa said. "When I see guys painting their low-riders, I think it is positive," he added. "They're creating something like a head-dress."

Ochoa points out one activity in which the centro has been involved for years that suddenly has become fashionable. "We've been doing binational exchanges with artists and theater troupes from Mexico for some time. Now that people know how much oil Mexico has, the government has really jumped into this program," he noted.

Ochoa divides his time between painting the mural and supervising the centro's binational exchange program. His contacts in Mexico have aided him immensely in cutting through the red tape surrounding the exchanges. He is now guiding a Mexican theater company to audiences as far east as El Centro. Previously Ochoa has smoothed the way for dance troupes, art shows and other theater companies.

'Ignoring Mexico'

The drawback of this double duty is that he has less time to spend painting. But, says Ochoa, "I've been ignoring Mexico too much. The binational program will give me an opportunity to work in Mexico," and to further develop ties with Mexican cultural agencies.

It is not unusual that an artist at the Centro Cultural de la Raza is also an administrator. Director Josie Talamantez, who is on a six-month leave of absence, is a dancer as is interim director, Veronica Enrique.

The 14-member staff and the programs they administer are supported in part from private donations, volunteer services, COMBO, the city of San Diego and grants from the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts as well as workshop registration fees.

Some, like Ochoa, Enrique and Talamantez, became involved with the centro as participants in the workshops before becoming instructors and administrators.

Having artists at the helm may be why the centro has fared so well over the years. Similar organizations, Ochoa says, started with the same spirit. "But they got into social services, and had to deal with the appropriate federal, state and local guidelines. They lost their creative energy in the paperwork.

"But we've kept the spirit, and we're still here." ♦

Los Angeles Times
March 2, 1981

Mural: *La Revolución Mexicana* by Victor Ochoa

By Hugh Grambau

Tribune Mexico Bureau

When Mexican revolutionary leader Francisco Madero laid out his blueprint for overthrowing dictator Porfirio Diaz in the Plan of San Luis Potosi, he chose Nov. 20, 1910, to begin the rebellion.

But the projection was off by a few months, and the revolution actually got under way in earnest in early 1911.

Despite that, Madero's date went into the history books, and today marks the celebration of the Mexican Revolution in commemorative activities on both sides of the border.

In Tijuana, where it is a legal holiday, all government offices and many businesses closed for the day.

San Diego celebrates with an ongoing exhibit of photos of the revolution and its heroes, a colloquium of four university historians — both at Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park, and the dedication of the latest mural on a concrete pillar in Chicano Park.

The photographic exhibit contains 100 pictures of revolutionary scenes, including portraits of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata.

They were taken by Mexican photojournalist Agustin V. Casasola with a Kodak plate camera and glass negatives.

The photographs are the last made from the original negatives authorized by the Casasola family before the negatives were expropriated by the Mexican government in 1975.

The exhibit runs through Nov. 30 and is free and open to the public at the Centro Cultural between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The colloquium, entitled *Myths of the Mexican Revolution*, from 6 to 10 tonight, features historians Ramon Ruiz of UCSD, Rudy Acuna of Cal State Northridge, and Paul Vanderwood and James Cockcroft of SDSU.

The newest mural in Chicano Park is a 35-foot-high reproduction of a sepia Casasola photograph of Zapata.

photo: Rick McCarthy

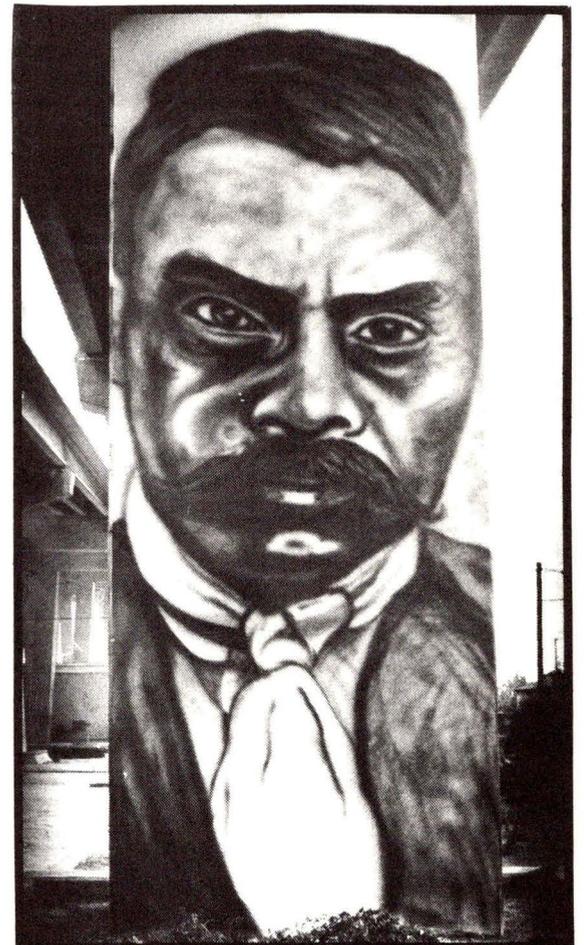
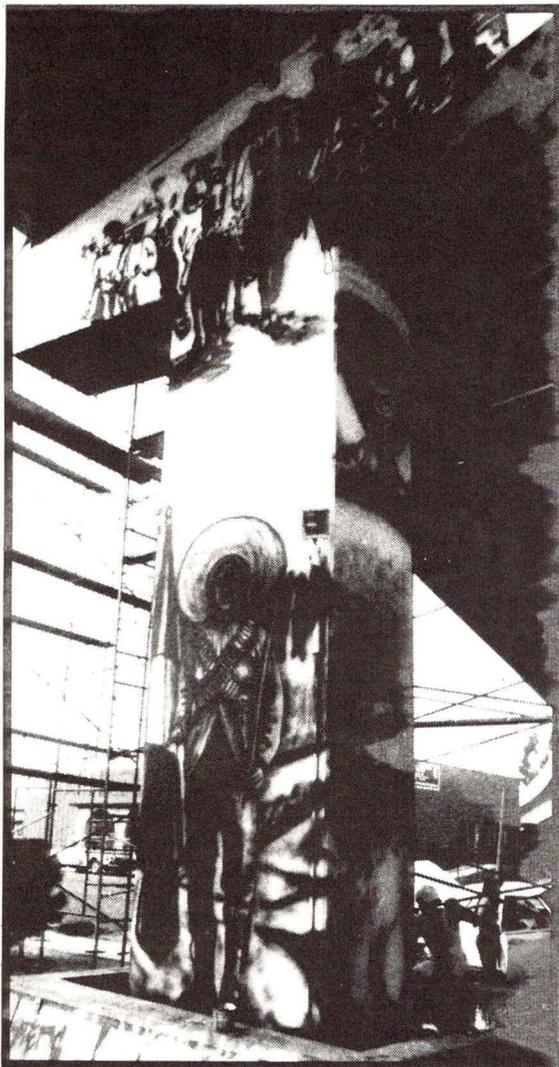


photo: Union-Tribune Publishing Co.



It is done in acrylics applied with an air gun by muralist Victor Ochoa, who grew up in East Los Angeles, Tijuana and San Diego and has a degree in fine arts from SDSU.

Zapata, who was eventually shot in the back by the faction that consolidated power at the end of the turbulent period, has become a symbol for the ideals of the revolution, according to Professor Ruiz.

"He's one of the pure spirits of the revolution and one of the very few who believed in drastic social reform for Mexico," said Ruiz. "The people who killed him were given medals."

The new mural by Ochoa is the first of eight he will do around the county as part of a California Arts Council Artist in Residence fellowship sponsored by the Centro Cultural de la Raza.

Ochoa, who served as the organization's first director from 1970 to 1973, said he made the mural to resemble the sepia-toned photograph, "as au-

thentic to the photography as possible, so the image is as representative as possible of that part of the history of Mexico."

The next two murals will be in Oceanside and San Ysidro, and Ochoa said he hopes to create one in Tijuana.

The Zapata mural will be officially dedicated at a fiesta from 1 to 4 p.m. tomorrow.

All three projects are part of "Noviembre Revolucionario" or Revolutionary November presented by the Centro Cultural de la Raza with partial funding from the city of San Diego, the California Arts Council, the California Council for the Humanities, COMBO, the Center for Latin American Studies at SDSU, the Chicano Studies Department at UCSD and private contributions. ♦

San Diego Tribune

Community members who helped Ochoa paint his revolutionary mural:

David Vidaña, Manuel Rodriguez, Charles R. Picarte, Jesus Becerra, Rodolfo Garcia (Zapa), Ralph Gómez, Raúl Jaquez, Roger Lucero, Ernesto Paul.

photo: Rick McCarthy

National City Library Hopes Mural Helps It Bridge Gap With Chicanos

By JESUS RANGEL
Staff Writer, The San Diego Union

NATIONAL CITY — A mural depicting four facets of Chicano life — family, education, friendship and pride — will be unveiled today in ceremonies at the National City Library.

Fifteen to 20 students, mostly teenagers, chose the themes. They said they did so because those aspects of Chicano life are often overlooked by the mass media. They painted the mural as part of a campaign by the library to attract more Chicano youths.

Last year the library staff, through community surveys and other studies, found that the average library user was an Anglo woman around 55 years old. Very little of the community, which is 40 percent Hispanic and whose residents average 22 years of age, was using the facilities, said Ann Hartman, director of public services.

She asked Juan Parrino of Proudly United for Educational Development Organizing (PUEDO), a research group that until recently was federally funded, to survey Chicano youths on why they stayed away.

"We interviewed about 100 teenagers, who basically felt that the library was not hospitable to them," Parrino said. "The Spanish-language section was buried in the back and the library made little effort to reach out to them."

Sheila Monroe, head librarian, said that the teenagers often saw the library as "a dull place to do homework, not a place to find anything except reports."

Among Parrino's recommendations were an increase in the amount of Spanish-language materials, the holding of special events for the Hispanic community and launching a



photo: Memo Cavada

mural project to get students to use the library.

Most of the youths who worked on the mural were members of PUEDO, which works with young people who often feel disaffected and alienated from high school.

They decided on the mural themes in a series of discussions. "We talked about what was important to them and how they could explain that to others who were not familiar with the culture," Parrino said. "After the first few sessions, they started bringing in photos of themselves and drawings of scenes that symbolized their lives."

They solicited the help of David Avalos, who handles publicity and promotion for Centro Cultural de la Raza in San Diego, to supervise the painting.

Avalos taught the youths how to use the library's resources in researching painting techniques and color patterns. "I wanted to show them that art is not merely putting paint on canvas," Avalos said. "They looked through books on art, history, anatomy, architecture and culture, and photo albums — a familiar technique with muralists is to paint from photographs. They are very much interested in historical accuracy."

The first facet of the mural depicts a family gathering, with food, pinatas and children.

The table holding the birthday cake extends to the second phase, where two youths are studying. That section also depicts the life of a boy and girl who ultimately graduate from school. The woman, in the career phase, is a television reporter interviewing a car enthusiast.

The same people are depicted in the third theme — a quincenera, the celebration of a girl's 15th birthday.

Finally, pride is depicted in the fourth theme with appeals to end barrio warfare. Also shown is Emiliano Zapata, a hero in the Mexican revolution, and La Adelita, the symbol of the women who fought in the revolution.

"I feel very proud, very good that I did something like that," said Sonya Gomez, 18, a student at the Educational Cultural Complex in San Diego. "I did it to prove that I could do something for myself."

THE SAN DIEGO UNION

Saturday, June 6, 1981

The members of the Chicano Youth Mural Project are:

Sonya Gomez
Ceci Licudine
Carmen Osuna
Arturo Bernal
Andy Gonzales
Gilbert Rivera
Rudy Ibarra
Paul Marinez
Pablo Pinmentel
Maria Oropeza

Yvette Carrillo
Trino Villaescusa
Raul Gutierrez
Gerardo Yescas
Rigo Reyes
Noel Valencia
Tony Mendoza
Elaine Gomez
William Ramirez
Gabriel Cabezuella

22 **Warning! City Council Manipulates Muralists**

In March of 1981, the Hayward city council "Anti-Graffiti Committee" had promised Raza from the "A" street area a mural to be painted on the Miner Mart wall on the corners of "A" and Princeton Streets. Young Raza from the area, in exchange, were to rid the wall of graffiti and keep it that way until a mural could be designed.

Eddie Monroe, a muralist from Berkeley, was contacted by the committee and agreed to work on the mural project with youth from the area. In late June of 1981, young Raza artists Rodrigo Beltrán, J.J. Bocage, Robert Beltrán, and Ramón Vásquez were contacted to work on developing a drawing and carrying out the painting of the proposed mural. The drawing was completed in August and was show-cased at a Hayward city council meeting and in the *Daily Review* a local newspaper, on October 5, 1981.

Another Broken Promise

The theme of the mural was Chicano orientated and included images of low-riders, historical figures (Emiliano Zapata, César Chávez), and the barrio, all of which were outstanding. The young artists devoted the whole summer to designing the mural, but their rewards have been few since.

Rodrigo Beltrán, a major force behind the drawing, states, "I was promised a job during the summer and it never came through". When asked what he felt about the mural project now, Rodrigo states, "I worked all summer without pay and even turned down other job offers to do this mural, to show the homeboys and homegirls to be proud of who they are but it all came down to getting burned by the "Anti-Graffiti Committee."

Rodrigo and the other artists have not been contacted about the mural since August of 1981 and the drawing has not been seen for the same amount of time. Rodrigo has even taken the initiative to contact the committee responsible for the mural project, and Monroe. But has not gotten any response from either for the past four months. Evidently the idea of a mural for the Miner Mart wall has been used by the "Anti-Graffiti Committee" to keep the wall clean while leaving the Raza waiting for their mural. It did not take long for the young people to figure out the scam that was being put over on them by the "Committee", for in November graffiti was back on the wall to stay.

Raza, young and old, BEWARE!! There are city officials out there making promises they cannot keep, so they can look good come election time.

Raza, BEWARE!! These officials are using and abusing our culture, our pride, our young people and not giving anything in return for our efforts. If a councilmember comes to your barrio telling you what a good idea a "Hispanic" mural would be, Watcha!! He/she are only doing it to look good for their campaign to become county supervisor. He/she is only doing it to take credit for cleaning the graffiti off the walls in your barrio.

Raza, don't get burned like your *Carnales* from Hayward, Califas, who were promised a mural a year ago by the city council's "Anti-Graffiti Committee" and have nothing to show but a drawing they cannot find and 1,728 square feet of ugly brown wall.

Raza, we must not let our young artists be used by vote hungry politicians who have no understanding of us as a people and who are only interested in getting votes to continue their political careers while leaving us in the

barrio with the real problems: unemployment, racism, poor education, and cultural/historical suppression. We as Raza throughout Hayward and Aztlán must make these people responsible for burning our youth.

Raza, we must not let these politicians exist as leeches on our backs, sucking our pride, our culture, our youth to the point where they are left feeling frustrated and angry. We must unite our powers and resources to develop and control our barrios, and our lives as we see appropriate.

To all you, you young Raza artists, beware not to leave your art in the hands of people who are out to use it for their own political and/or financial gain. Always sign and date your original art work in a place that can be clearly seen. And if you run into a situation like our carnales from Hayward did, contact a local muralist or concerned community person who can help get your work back or can give you advice. Always remember, the power to change and better our barrios lies in our hands and not in the hands of those few politicians. ♦

Con Respecto,


"EL BATO LOCO" QUI QUI

The Struggle Continues

Success in preserving peeling mural from Anti Graffiti Sealer!

My mural *Dreams of Flight* was originally painted with gallons of medium priced Cal-Western Acrylic paint that dried to a flat finish. A few coats of paint were applied from 1973 to 1976. It had faded from the sun's rays slightly but physically it was in good shape. The stucco walls at the L.A. city owned Estrada Courts Housing Projects are strong and without cracks. Only the murals treated with a so-called "protective" coating are now peeling and chipping away.

Soon after I witnessed the swift destruction, from improper sealer, of Ismael Cazarez's mural on Brooklyn Ave. near Evergreen in East L.A. in 1977, I discovered that my mural along with several others had been covered with "Chromatone Resin" by Ameritone Co. Charlie Felix, chief muralist at Estrada Courts for many years, had good intentions and wanted to protect the mural from the elements, but the assurances of the Ameritone people have proven to be wrong although the destruction is happening slowly. The idea that someone can ruin their own or their friends' murals is shocking and unthinkable. The deterioration of the murals was not evident the first couple of years, then I noticed shrinking and peeling on the surfaces' clear coating. Within another year, to my horror, I saw that the resin was holding to the acrylic paint and pulling it up off the wall in many places. You can make out the rolled-on pattern of the coating and can see that more of the mural is peeling where the resin was put on the thickest. In some places only a thin layer of color has come off.

Dreams of Flight was my first solo mural, so I was determined not to just give it up but to try to save it. My first experience with restoration was the Goetz Gallery mural in 1974. It is alcyd enamel painted on plywood. I learned then, that was not the way to paint an exterior mural... plywood cracks a lot, it doesn't last. Since then I have always painted with acrylic. My partners in East Los Streetscapers, Wayne Healy and George Yepes, and I

have now successfully restored two of our older murals which had never been coated by any sealer. First we removed a little loose paint from around cracks, washed the wall and then rolled on watered down thick acrylic gel, which we buy by the gallon from Artex Corp. of Culver City, California (makers of Nova Color, the flexible acrylic paint we now use.) Then lastly we match-up the missing and faded colors.

But this time I knew we could not use brushes or rollers, because *Dreams of Flight* was coming off like little pieces of oregano, when I touched it with the palm of my hand. I thought that acrylic glaze (Rhoplex by Nova Color) could do the job if it could get in between the cracks and glue the loose paint to the clean wall behind it without pushing on the unstable paint. I borrowed a large spray gun, hoses, a 2 gallon tank and a large air compressor and sprayed on 4 gallons of acrylic glaze mixed with water (2 glaze to 1 water).

Needless to say, I felt acrylic protecting acrylic was my best bet. I would recommend this technique to anyone with the same problem. Now five months later

the mural is preserved, no more paint falling off instead the acrylic-coated old resin-curled chipped paint is resilient to touch and firmly sticking to the wall. Our next step will be to remove the larger curled-up paint chips and apply acrylic gel, with brushes, into the many cracked and peeled openings, this way making the wall even stronger before restoring the color.

In the long run, the best protection against graffiti is a good, beautiful piece of art that represents and speaks to the community in images that it understands. Some people look for the easy answers in protective washable coating but the sun and rain will eventually do in any painted mural. I've always thought of painted murals as contemporary statements that could last about 10 years outside. With good wall preparation, generous amounts of compatible paint and sealer (I recommend acrylic and gel medium), and periodic inspection and touch up, I hope they can last a lot longer. ♦

© 1982 David Botello

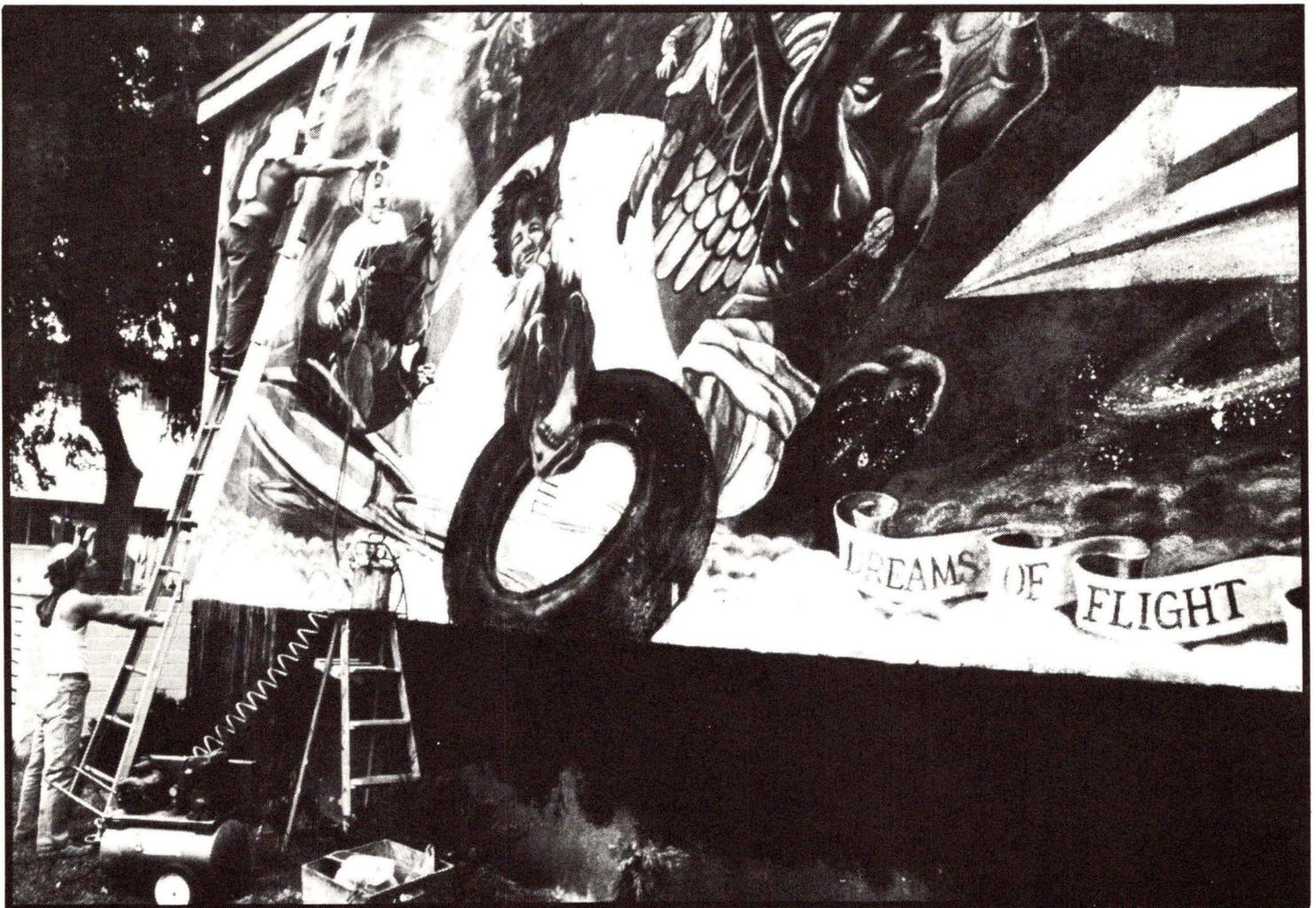


photo: David Botello

MEXICO

Juan O'Gorman

The passing of Juan O'Gorman saddens us all, and leaves the great Mexican mural tradition with one less major figure. O'Gorman is best known for the incredible library building at the University of Mexico in Mexico City, a building completely encased in detailed mosaic on all four sides six stories high.

But the work of excellent Mexican artists continues, and this edition of CMM is proud to include recent work by one of Mexico's leading artists, Arnold Belkin.

Juan O'Gorman

Mexico City

Juan O'Gorman, one of Mexico's best-known painters and architects, apparently committed suicide, despondent because a heart ailment curtailed his work, authorities said yesterday.

O'Gorman, 76, was found dead Monday at his home in the capital's San Angel Inn district.

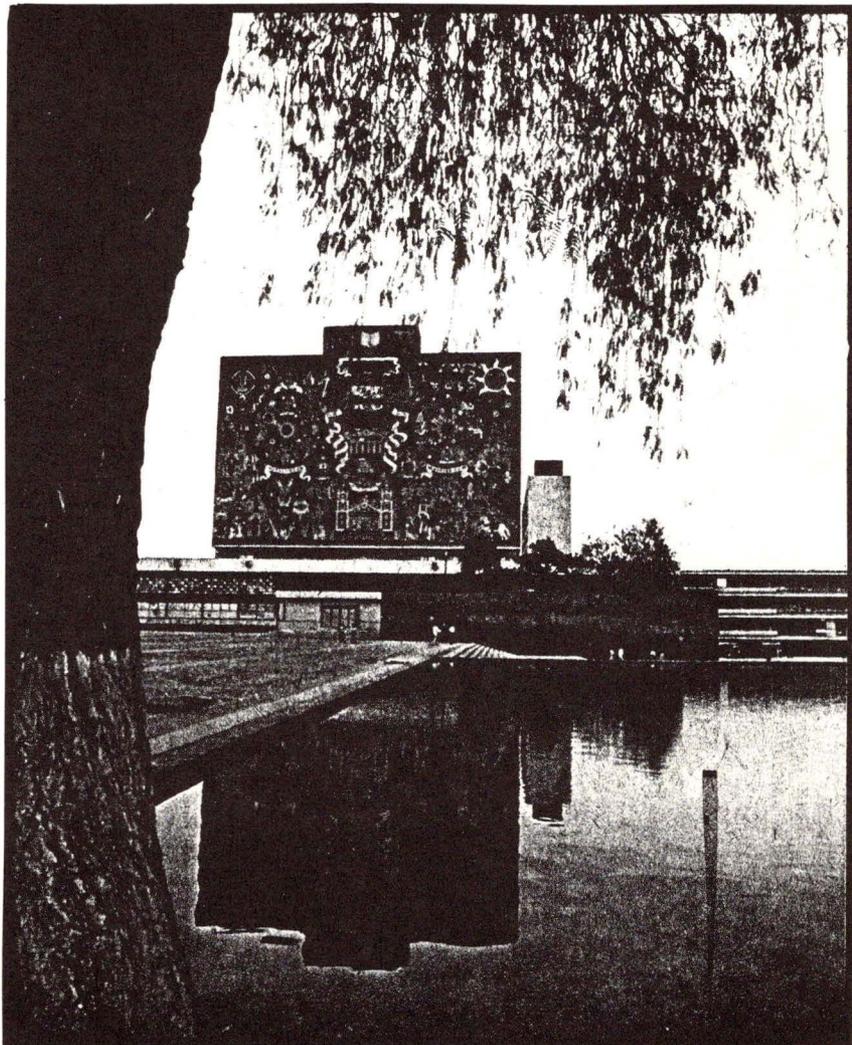
The newspaper *El Universal* carried what it said was the text of a suicide note in which the painter said his illness was keeping him from working.

O'Gorman was a designer of the library at the Autonomous National University of Mexico, which was completed in 1950, and the creator of the stone and glass mosaic that covers its tower. He was a contemporary of the late Mexican painter Diego Rivera, whose house-studio complex he designed in 1928.

Among O'Gorman's other major works in Mexico City are murals and frescoes at the National Museum of Anthropology, the airport and the Museum of National History in Chapultepec Castle.

His Irish-English father, Cecil Crawford O'Gorman, was a well-known portrait painter who settled in Mexico at the age of 21. He died in 1943.

O'Gorman was born in the Mexico City district of Coyoacan. He was graduated in architecture from the National University in 1927 and studied painting with a number of artists in Mexico City.



He is survived by his wife, Helen Fowler, an American whom he met at Rivera's studio in 1935, and a daughter.

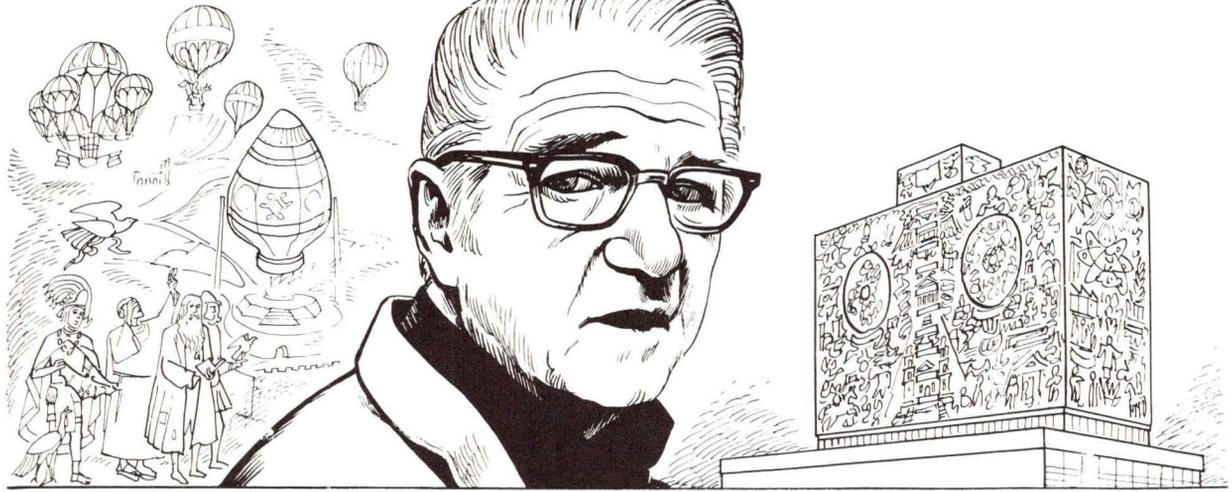
San Francisco Chronicle
Thurs, January 21, 1982

UN ARTISTA DEL PUEBLO

Homenaje a Juan O'Gorman

NACIÓ EL 6 DE JULIO DE 1905
EN COYOACÁN, D.F.

MURIÓ EL 18 DE ENERO 1982
EN SAN ANGELES INN, D.F.



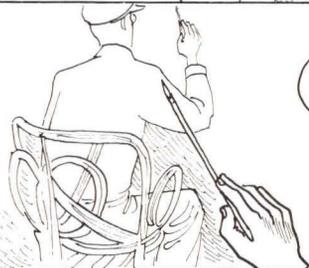
COMO ARQUITECTO CUANDO FUE JEFE DEL DEPTO. DE EDIFICIOS DE LA SEP, 1932-34, CONSTRUYÓ 30 ESCUELAS PRIMARIAS Y UNA TÉCNICA.

NUNCA ME GUSTÓ
HACER ARQUITECTURA
OSTENTOSA



COMO PINTOR GUSTABA DE PREPARAR SUS PROPIOS COLORES Y HACER SUS PINCELES. NO LE INTERESABA USAR MATERIALES COMPLICADOS Y PREFERÍA UTILIZAR LOS MÁS SIMPLES. MUCHAS OBRAS SUYAS LAS HIZO POR MEDIO DE MOSAICOS DE PIEDRAS.

LAS MEJORES TÉCNICAS
SON HECHAS A BASE DE
AGUA, HAY EJEMPLOS
DE MILES DE AÑOS



SUS IDEAS:

SOY CONTRARIO A QUE EL ARTE PICTÓRICO NO DIGA NADA A LA MASA POPULAR.

HOY SE HABLA UN LENGUAJE QUE SOLO ENTIENDE LA "ÉLITE" O LOS "INICIADOS".

UNA CRÍTICA DE ARTE
DICE QUE ES EL VER-
DADERO "CUARTO GRANDE"
DE LOS MURALISTAS

¿DE VERAS LO
ENTIENDES O
TE HACES?



BLANCO
RODRÍGUEZ
BLANCO

SI EL ARTISTA QUIERE ACTUAR SOCIALMENTE TIENE QUE PENSAR EN FORMAS QUE EL PUEBLO PUEDA GUSTAR. PERO CUIDADO CON BUSCAR CONDICIONAR LOS REFLEJOS DE LA MASA, COMO LO HACEN LOS ANUNCIANTES. EL ARTISTA TIENE QUE CONVERTIRSE EN LA CONCIENCIA REAL DE SU PUEBLO, SI QUIERE SERLE ÚTIL.

TEMO QUE VOLVAMOS AL HOMBRE DE LAS CAVERNAS: LOS DIOS SON EL DINERO Y LAS BOMBAS ATÓMICAS. HAY MUCHA CORRUPCIÓN Y MALA ADMINISTRACIÓN.



26 New Mexican Mural by Arnold Belkin

Last December Arnold Belkin's portable mural *A través de la tecnología* was inaugurated in Mexico City's Technological Museum. The mural was commissioned by the Society of Mechanical and Electrical Engineers for their headquarters, but since the building, a converted house, will eventually be replaced by a modern structure, it was decided that the mural be removable. The Society also decided to tour the mural, exhibiting it in several places so that it could be seen by as wide an audience as possible before its final installation.

The mural, 8 x 26', is on canvas, mounted on six stretchers, painted in acrylics, and is easily transportable. It was painted in Belkin's studio during the first four months of 1981. He was assisted by Paloma Díaz and David Santos. The full title of the mural is *Una ver-*

dadera transformación de la vida a través de la tecnología sólo es posible en una sociedad revolucionaria y progresista (A true transformation of life through technology is only possible in a revolutionary and progressive society). In the central part of the mural is a group of people carrying instruments and tools of planning and technology, oil rigs, hydroelectric plants, petroleum refineries. These designed cybernetic figures are interspersed with images taken from photographs of actual people. The group is surrounded by allegorical figures in a larger scale which represent the various disciplines of electrical and mechanical engineering: metallurgy, aeronautics, communications, energetics, and electronics. A giant head looking outward symbolizes accumulated knowledge and projection towards a (hopeful) future. ♦

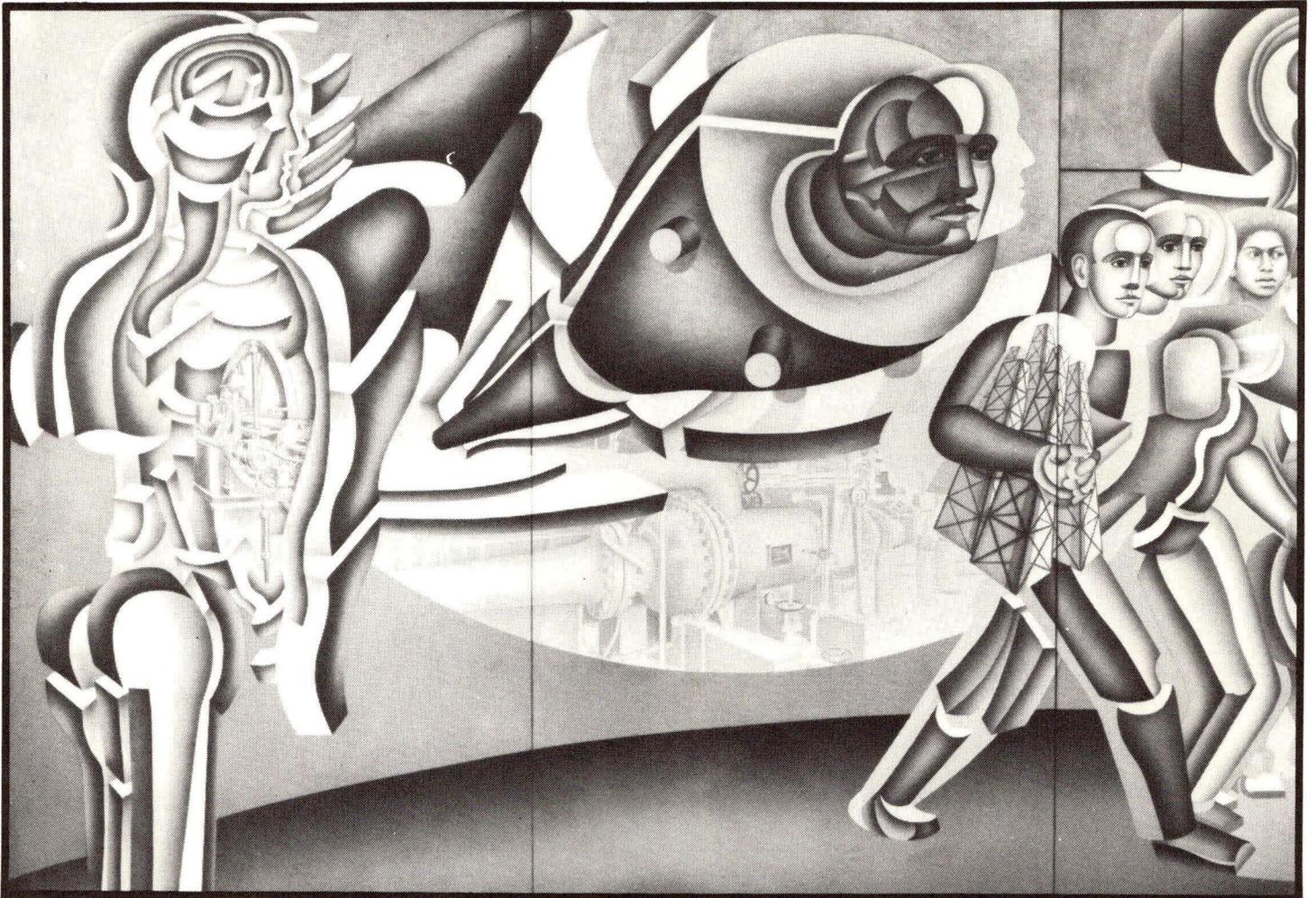


photo: Crispin Vásquez

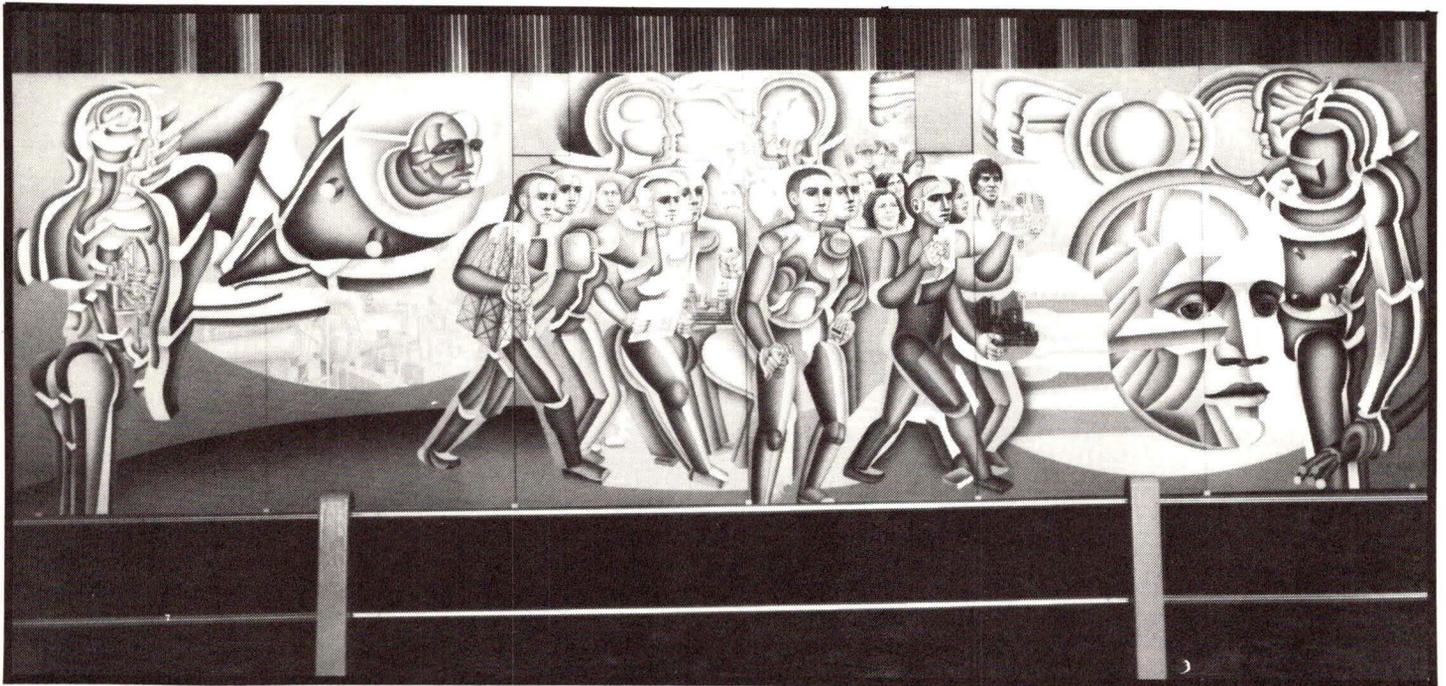


photo: Crispin Vásquez

Contemporary Mexican Painting In A Time Of Change

Contemporary Mexican Painting In A Time Of Change is a provocative and scholarly analysis of the neo-humanist response in Mexico, its social and artistic context, internal contradictions, and implications for socially conscious art in general. In Mexico the dilemma of how to create a socially conscious art was especially acute. Emerging artists were caught between the tradition of the muralists, and the rising current of abstractionism. By the 1960's, muralism (which put Mexican art on the map internationally,) had totally lost its earlier vitality and oppositional quality. The last of the "tres grandes"—Siquieros—was in jail. The first manifesto of the "interioristas," as the emergent "neo-humanist" group called themselves, was written as a newsletter for the jailed Siquieros. At the same time, "interiorismo" represented an attempt to find an alternative to the muralist tradition that Siquieros represented—an individualist response to a social situation.

In her path-breaking book, Goldman explores the problems confronted by Mexico's "neo-humanists." She analyzes the philosophy and artistic production of the artists involved in the short-lived "Interiorista" movement, and breaks new ground in the study of the larger questions of the relationship between art and society provoked by her own study. Using the concrete situation of Mexico in the late fifties and early sixties, Goldman provides new insights on subjects like the nature of socialist realism, what constitutes political art, the role of U.S. business and political interests in the promotion of abstract expressionism in Latin America in the 1950's and 1960's, the effect of changes in the economic structure (rise of the middle classes and development of an internal commercial art market) on art production.

A chapter devoted specifically to "Cultural Imperialism" analysis the role of the OEA, the Bienales, the

Esso competitions and certain critics in the promotion of Abstractionism as the path to success for young Latin American artists. Accusations of "Cultural Imperialism" are commonplace in the intellectual ambience of Mexican cultural life. In this chapter, Goldman examines the evidence for these charges. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this book to a Northamerican audience is the re-interpretation, within this framework of analysis, of the role of the "greats", Rufino Tamayo (symbol of abstractionism) and José Luis Cuevas, both of whom were highly vocal opponents of a political role for the artist.

Most of the "Interioristas" are now in their fifties or older and are the major Mexican artists today. From the publication of the first manifesto in 1961, to 1964 when the group dissolved, sixteen artists participated — Arnold Belkin, Francisco Icaza, Jose Luis Cuevas, Francisco Corzas, Rafael Coronel, Leonel Gongora, Jose Muñoz Medina, Emilio Ortiz, Artemio Sepulveda, Gaston Gonzalez Cesar, Francisco Moreno Capadevila, Benito Messeguer, Jose Hernandez Delgadillo, Ignacio (Nacho) Lopez, Hector Xavier, and Antonio Rodriguez Luna. While Goldman discusses the relevant works by each of these artists in detail, she devotes special attention to Belkin and Icaza, who jointly provided leadership for the group, and to Jose Luis Cuevas whose brief and fiery association with the group provides an unusual insight into the complexities of Mexican art politics.

In many cases, Goldman's book is the first serious study of work by these artists. It fills an important gap in the literature on Mexican art of the last two decades. As Raquel Tibol, one of Mexico's most important art critics writes in the introduction, "this study acquires a singular force in the current juncture of Mexican culture" and "fills a great vacuum." ♦

Eva Cockcroft
Artweek, Oct. 5, 1981

AUSTRALIA

New Australian Murals

Note the emphasis on process in Rodney Monk's article. While excellent help is given by official governmental agencies, one nevertheless gets a sense that the basis of these projects is in their communities. Monk and Humphries are definitely examples of highly trained artists whose commitment to working with people is paramount; no "artists' ego" problems here.

Australia's Public Art Squad

The Public Art Squad has been Australia's most prolific producer of murals, painting some 25 over the last seven years. It is made up of public artists David Humphries and Rodney Monk, both having worked as the Squad's director/artists. Where possible, they employ other artists who are skilled in their ability to work with communities in producing quality murals. This article describes four of the projects completed thus far, giving background to the murals' development and methods of community involvement.

The Oil Tank Mural in the Sydney suburb of La Perouse is the largest community mural yet painted in Australia (32,000 sq. ft. 2). It was designed over an eight week period of public workshops, design sessions and meetings. The mural was painted in the incredible time of ten days. The key to the mural's success was public involvement in a direct yet relaxed production led by experienced artists.

The idea of painting a mural on the oil refinery after members saw a slide presentation of murals by David Humphries. David and I soon met the group and inspected the site, an 80' x 400' side of an oil reservoir in a refinery which edged a graveyard, Botany Bay, and was viewing distance of some 2,000 householders. The possibility of doing a mural on such a site was a challenge inspired by the enthusiasm of the community. We began planning a series of workshops and circulated questionnaires and information sheets to the thousands of householders who daily look across a vista dominated by the oil refinery's stark white oil tanks and smoke stacks.

The response by locals led to the development of an environmental theme—images of Botany Bay and hills contained within the overall shape of an oil tanker ship. These images were drawn upon a gridded scale drawing of the actual wall.

We then developed a number of other images and statements related to the neighborhood and the environment. The suburb takes its name from the French explorer La Perouse who landed in Australia (at the mural site) two weeks after the British had claimed the land and started a penal colony (8 miles to the north, in Sydney). Research produced drawings and etchings of the explorers' ship, and from one of these drawings we developed the sailing ship at the left hand end of the mural.

Many older residents could remember when the Bay was teeming with dolphins, fish, and birds which would feed and breed in the once clear waters of the now polluted Bay. This idyllic possibility is also embodied by the figures who are painted using the Bay as a recrea-

tional "backyard" for swimming, sailing, fishing, and surfing. Contrasting images of reality appear on the horizon: airplanes, cities, smoke-stacks and dollar signs. We also represent images of alternate energy production: windmills, kites, and sails.

The Chinese market gardeners of the area represent an enriching cultural and economic quality to the neighborhood, having cultivated market gardens in the sandy soil of La Perouse. Hence we painted them into the mural.

When the design neared completion and a "finished drawing had been made, we held a public meeting where all images and ideas represented could be debated. About 100 people attended this meeting which proved to be a dynamic example of the social interaction any public art event can create. The meeting resulted in a final drawing being made and approved. The next day we painted the drawing and then traced it the next. The tracing was then completely color coded so a paint-by-numbers technique could be employed to paint the mural. The mural was painted by about sixty people, 12 of whom could work from swinging drop scaffolds. One person worked from a crane operated box, donated by Jim, a local crane operator who was impressed by the work and wanted to help out.

The painting has quickly been identified by its audience. During execution hundreds of tourists would come and watch the painting of a new Sydney landmark. The painting was made during the peak of Sydney summer (temperatures of 100° plus). It was made possible through grants by the Premiers Department—Division of Cultural Activities, and the Australia Council. In kind donations were made by Huisman Scaffolds, British Paints, and Total Oil.

In May 1979 I painted a mural with a group of unemployed people upon the walls of a railroad way underpass in the Blacktown area of Sydney. The project proved popular and successfully led to Blacktown City Council deciding to incorporate murals into their new city library. We worked with the architects Allen, Jack and Cotties on designing murals into the renovation of an ex-1960s warehouse style department store. This was in 1980 and it represented the growing acceptance of murals by many levels of Australian society.

The architects did a marvelous job renovating the building's interior but could find no practical means with which to embellish the building's exterior. We proposed a two stage program: initially we painted a mural into an internal passageway. The building is surrounded by parking lots and the backends of shops, a physically hot and drab environment. We designed blue rhythm bands to



Oil Tank Mural, La Perouse. Photo: Robyn Beeche

flow around the building in order to “cool” the environment and link the building to its most attractive surrounding, the sky. These bands were painted by the building contractors’ painters. When the building was painted, Wayne Hutchins and I worked with the community on developing images for the mural. As the area has only recently become a city in status, it was felt that the city should look to its future, so consequently a city of pyramids was painted. In order to involve more people in the painting we developed a series of silhouette portraits of local residents, which lead into the main entrance of the library. In keeping with the Sci-fi nature of the city, a “solar system” of melting earth, tennis balls, and assorted fantasy panels was developed. They lead into illusionary doors atop the fire stair. Other images include trucks, plants, birds, clouds, and a flight of kangaroos across the front facade of the building. A book-burglar is caught trying to escape down a broken rope ladder at the back of the building.

All images were developed out of the artist’s interacting with members of the local community. Over 500 people contributed ideas during design workshops and about 100 people helped in the painting. The local response has been fantastic, and Blacktown is now one of the few cities in Australia with a continuing community arts program—murals included. The library project was awarded the prize as “renovated building of the year” by the Australian Institute of Architects. The murals were funded by Blacktown City Council and the Division of Cultural Activities—Premiers Department. The mural is approximately 1,000 square meters in size.

The mural now painted on the walls of Bondi Pavilion was a slightly different approach in that this was a wall upon which the Public Art Squad wanted to paint and the initiative came from the artists, not the community. The process of development was still very much community-based, but it took some three years of negotiation with the local authorities in order to gain permission to paint on the wall.

The Pavilion is situated on the beach at Sidney’s

famous Bondi, the place where the surf life-saving movement first took root and an historically popular sea resort for weekend surfers and sunbathers.

I started researching the visual and social history of Bondi through local libraries and interview/workshops with local people, groups, and school children. Wayne Hutchins, Kris Ammitzbol and I then held public workshops at the mural site for about 2 weeks prior to painting, collecting a wide range of images from the Pavilion’s past—sun bathing beauties, beach balls, life savers, etc. from old promotional posters plus many photographs, postcards and drawings of the area. From this resource bank we started developing a design using collage techniques.

In April we started painting the mural with a great deal of enthusiastic and helpful involvement from about 60 seventeen-to-twenty-one year old locals who had worked with us during design sessions. These people joined in the early moments of painting, many staying with the project for the whole six weeks of execution, and developing more personal images and statements into the catalyst areas such as beach, sea, and sky. I have found that there are many people who will want to join in the act of painting and for that reason we always have areas of the mural (called catalyst images) which are open to development by people who wish to participate. Their involvement in the act of painting helps develop fresh ideas into the mural adding more intimate and personal qualities, difficult to design into the preliminary design.

These images help to balance the scale of the major images which in *Bondi the Beautiful* consist of flag-waving lifesavers marching through a beach of lounging sunbathers before a sea and surf filled with sharks, swimmers, boats and surfers. A “bathing beauty” from a 1929 poster, now holds a crumbling globe of the earth, replacing the beachball of Bondi’s fun-filled days gone by. Huge dolphins dive through a rolling sea while Superman tows a line of life-savers through the sky. Dame Edna Everidge (a folk heroine) waves a bunch of gladioli (flora/folk) to the audience while Jewish refugees from



Bondi The Beautiful, Bondi Beach Pavilion, Sydney. Photo: Rodney Monk

Europe play cards under the painted arches of the building.

The mural is big, bright, and heroic, creating a wonderful atmosphere for the concerts, art/craft workshops, and festivals that the Bondi Pavilion conducts. The mural was funded by Waverly Municipal Council and the Division of Cultural Activities—Premiers Department.

1980 was a productive year for the Public Art Squad. In October we were conducting a mural program in Leichholt, Sydney. I was responsible for hiring a group of young unemployed people and directing them through a series of community art murals in the neighborhood. One mural of this program is *The Crescent* in Annandale. The mural is painted on the retainer wall of a railway embankment and runs parallel to a major road. Thousands of trucks, buses, trains and cars pass it everyday. Transport became a major theme and the mural was designed to be read by a motorized audience. The wall is also situated in a backwater of the harbor, with heavy industry port facilities, city and residences all being within viewing range.

The mural was designed out of a series of Public Workshop and Design sessions, and then painted over a ten week period. All images and ideas are related to the environment, or were suggested by members of the community.

As heavy trucks are a dominant feature of this environment we painted their front ends coming out of the wall's western end. Road rules in Australia demand that you give way to your right and the omnipresence of the heavy trucks was intended to slow cars and lead the audience through the other parts of the mural. A landscape emerges from behind the trucks bearing two billboards, one selling trucks, the other advertising crushed cars. In the foreground, a jogger carries his car upon his back, a

humorous look at the automobile's possible future. We then explore contemporary historical and fantastic modes of transport—push bikes, kites (air sailers), horse and carts, roller skates, pogo sticks. A hitchhiking kangaroo marks the boarded-up end of the freeway, representing the fact that resident action actually stopped a freeway from cutting through their neighborhood. Trees appear on the hill line while a billboard supporting the image of the local sporting attraction, dog racing, rises in the foreground. A tiger (the emblem of the local football team) leaps out of the billboard while a cockatoo sweeps across a landscape of industry, sky scrapers, and tire tracks.

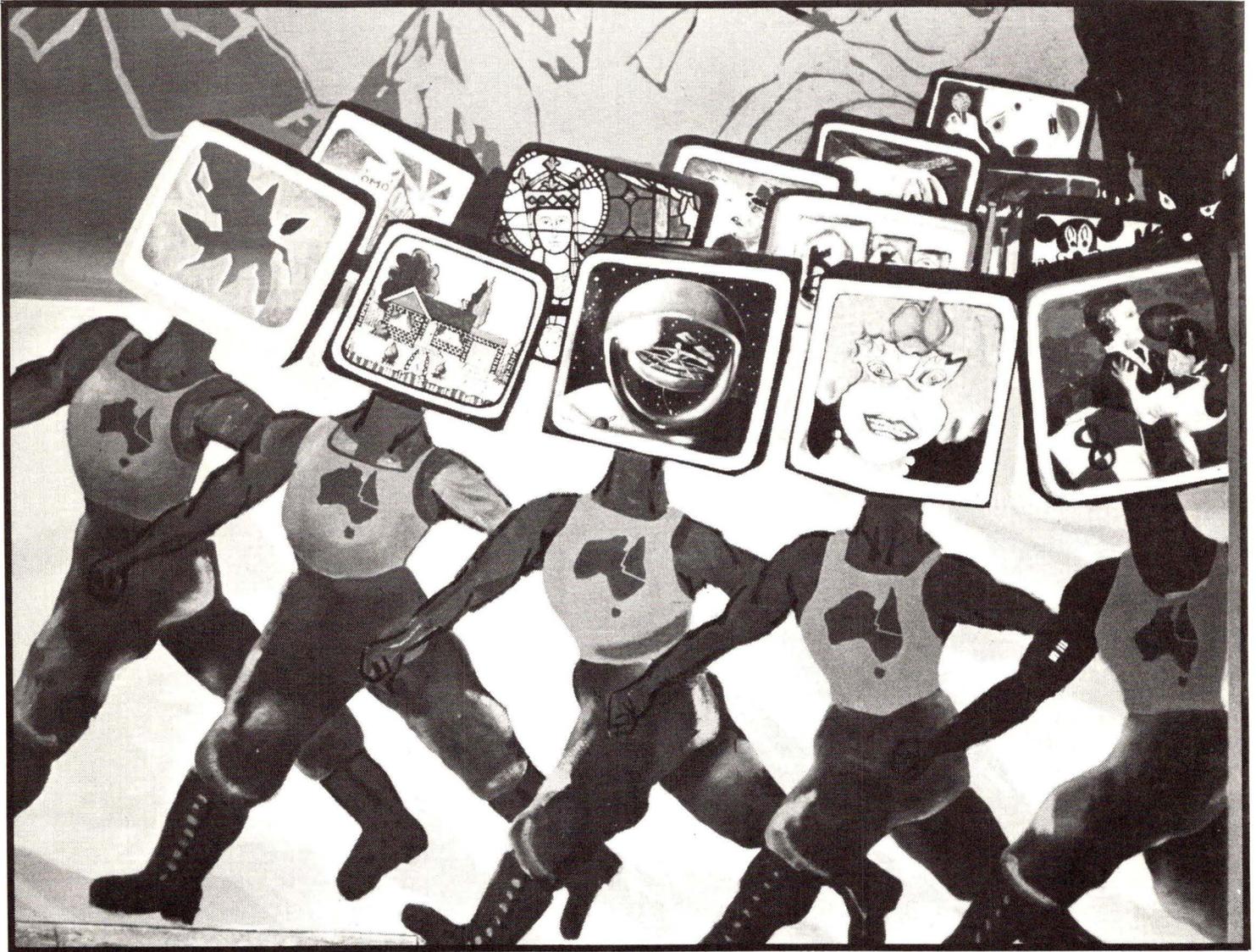
Two twelve year olds used the polluted harbor as an inspiration for painting a fishing trawler complete with fishermen and sharks. The harbor passes behind a bus stop shed around which rise palm trees. The immense wings of a B-52 bomber loom around the bus shed, making ominous comment upon the fact that B-52's have only recently been granted permission to land on Australian soil. A now clean harbor continues on under the B-52 wings, this time playing host to a school of dolphins and frolicking bathers. Birds flutter above a street scene of local buildings such as houses, churches, and pubs. Families stroll along a harbor shore reclaimed from industry as recreational parkland.

Local artists joined in the project in its closing stages, painting portraits of locals, small beach scenes, koala bears and a range of images which have helped the mural gain an intimate quality for the appreciation of the foot travelling audience. The mural was funded by Leichholt Municipal Council, The State Government Council for the employment of Young People, and the Division of Cultural Activities—Premiers Department. *The Crescent* won the civic design award from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1981.

Community murals have become the vanguard of a new approach in Art Events. They have made available to people the possibility of involving themselves in the development of Public Art Works. This involvement happens in many different ways. Not every one wishes to paint, but all can help effect the growth of the mural by suggesting ideas and images, or simply by talking with the artist. The artist has the central and important role of developing and nurturing the ideas and talent of the peo-

ple which will ultimately have to live with the mural. The artist has skills and technique in painting, but must also prove to be a friendly and effective organizer and leader. The mural is ultimately an effective visual and social catalyst for communication, successfully proving the relevance of art to society and the street environment. ♦

Rodney Monk



Detail, *McQuasie Library Underpass Mural*, 1978. David Humphries uses images of television - headed soldiers as catalysts for the development of community input. The image on each screen is painted by a different person. Photo: Courtesy McQuasie University.



Blacktown City Library, June 1980. Directed by Rodney Monk, painted by Monk and Hutchins. Photo: Courtesy NSW Govt.

The Public Art Squad Hits the Streets

It is some time since we looked at the public art scene in Australia. Over the past few years there has been an astonishing growth in attitudes to murals, events and development of artists working on festivals. It clearly is becoming a focus for the expression of Australian popular culture or peoples art.

This article looks at the work of Rodney Monk and the Public Art Squad. Rodney's work has been featured previously in *Simply Living* and we thought it was time to ask him for an update on his more recent activities.

We also asked Evan Williams, Director of Cultural Activities in NSW, what he thought of this new art form.

Rodney Monk:

The most spectacular experience I had recently was the South Pacific Festival of Arts in Papua New Guinea. Participating in this great occasion was an enriching experience.

We arrived in Port Moresby amid a myriad of costumed dancers, flags and music beaming a welcome as bright and

friendly as the tropical sun to the thousands of artists, craftspeople and performers of the South Pacific.

The Australian contingent consisted of many tribal Aborigines as well as white Australian artists, craftspersons, dancers, writers. The close bond and interaction of this group of cultural

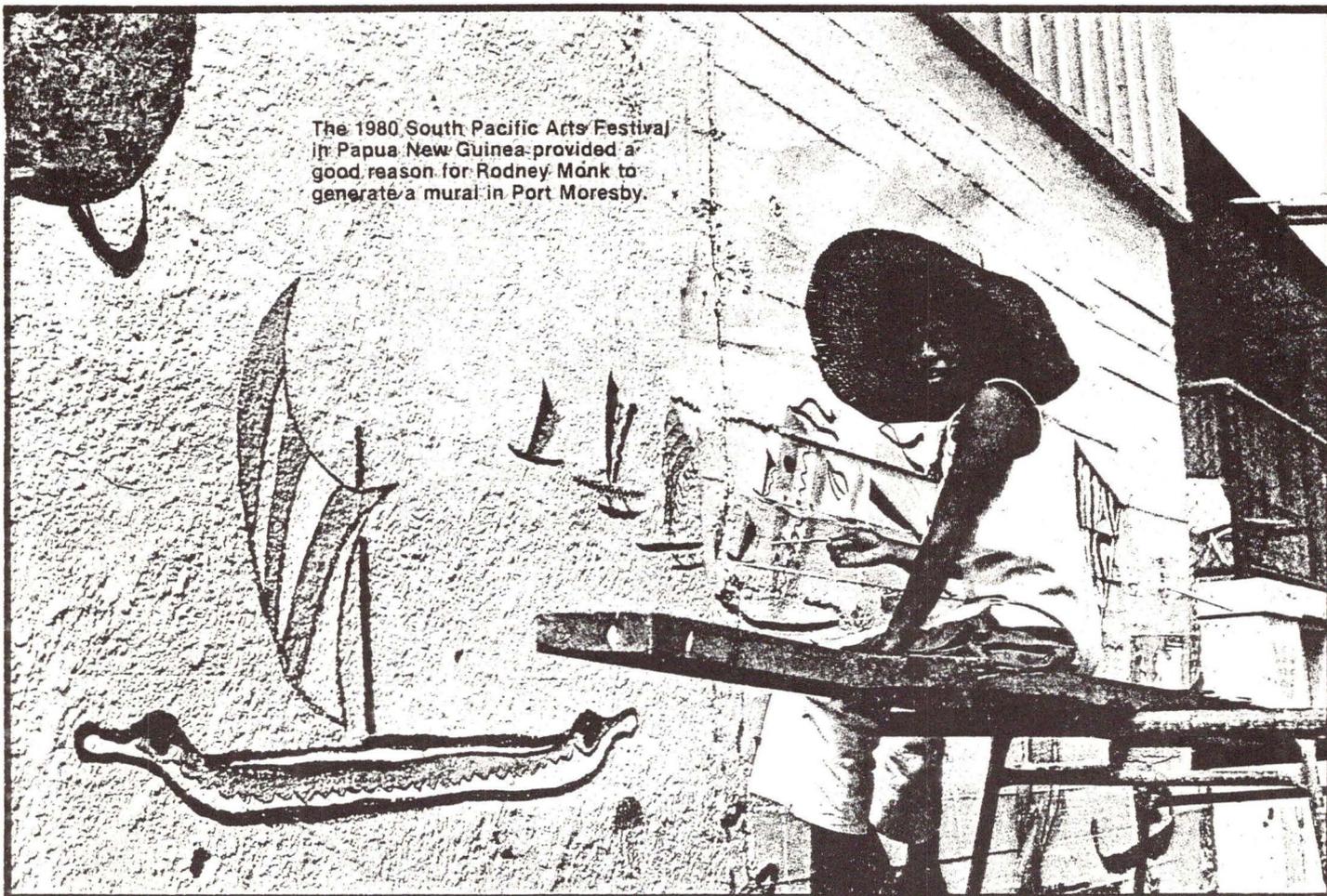
ambassadors was an inspiration in itself.

The project involved the design and painting of a community mural on a wall facing Port Moresby's main bus stop which was a very public situation. We worked with students from the National Art School, Papua New Guinea, and the festival for them was a vehicle to create a

precedent for more mural projects as well as experiencing a project at first hand.

The excitement of the festival stimulated and inspired all of us and quickly became the theme of the mural, a theme of multi-racial interaction and celebration. The imagery of the painting was very literal depicting the regatta on the opening day of the festival where hundreds of outrigger canoes from the Pacific islands converged on Port Moresby harbour to be greeted on the shore by other dance and music groups and the thronging thousands of festival goers.

The mural soon became a popular attraction. Local visiting artists as well as children joined in at working their ideas into this



The 1980 South Pacific Arts Festival in Papua New Guinea provided a good reason for Rodney Monk to generate a mural in Port Moresby.

Photo Rodney Monk

growing painting. Some would come to share their culture, such as Bathurst Island artists who painted a traditional turtle on the beach. Some would arrive every day like young Peter, a 10-year-old who began by painting a school of fish and then went on to develop a series of waist-high figures and was a daily attachment to the project.

This two week festival was an inspiring event, heightening the colour, diversity and power of each South Pacific culture.

The next festival I participated in was for me a development beyond murals.

The Orange Festival of Arts has been an annual event for 18 years and has established a tradition of large scale public art pieces as well as covering the other arts such as sculpture, painting, theatre, pottery and crafts.

The Public Art pieces have created a great impact in the township

bringing arts experience to the widest cross-section of the community. The pieces to date include "The Garden of Earthly Delights" by Philip Batty, Violet Hamilton, Michael Callahan and team, "The Gas Works Wall" mural by David Humphries and "The Orange Railway" mural by Kristeen Amitzbol and myself. Presented for the recent Orange festival was "Ocker Outrageous", an Arts project conceived by the Public Art Squad with Susan Holman, Greg Temple, Amanda Frost and myself.

The basic idea was to conduct public workshops to produce a "3 dimensional portrait" of Orange icons. They were large scale visual objects for the parade and display in the park.

The Ocker Project was very high profile and the Bank of NSW loaned its vacated premises on the main street in the centre of town. The building

proved ideal for workshops, with its large, usable rooms and sizable backyard. People began to call in to the workshop making things and suggesting ideas in an open and informal atmosphere. By festival time a huge amount of material had been organised and produced including a sulphur-crested cockatoo float, banners, costumes, masks, huge bird puppets and an orchestra for use in the parade. There was also a series of life-size cut-out portraits of local people and bamboo and hessian cows that stood in the park or swung from trees as sculptural decoration.

On parade day, a 400-strong flotilla of costumed and painted characters danced and ran down the main street accompanying the central characters Ocker, his wife Ockerella and the large pieces of the parade.

Such projects offer great value. They are aimed to

involve and inspire people by their own creations giving artists the opportunity to develop their work over an extended period in a multi-talented and open workshop environment.

The project was sponsored by the Division of Cultural Activities and ICI. Many local businesses contributed their "waste" material and offered cut rates on items purchased.

The items have now become colourful features of local hospitals and homes. The large pieces in the procession will undoubtedly be used in future festivals.

The potential of using an artist team to design a whole parade and park environment with a community is fast being realised. The contribution of the visual artist to festivals has for some time been realised beyond simply exhibiting of works.

The neon arch especially designed by David Humphries for the 1979 Moomba Festival is worth

34 mentioning. Its flashing lights zipped and pulsed above the festival parade and measured six metres by four metres high. The sign won the National Outdoor Advertising Association award in 1980. In a quieter yet more bizarre manner, another of David's concepts enlivened the Yarra river with a series of life-size dolphins, whales, shark fins and gaping sharks' mouths made from

plastic inflatables by Kenny Beatie of Plosions. Kenny is Australia's foremost inflatables artist. These sculptures coloured an otherwise milky waterway with lifelike images intended to provoke awareness about ecology as well as entertainment. They were sited on the Yarra in full view of both banks and the Princess Bridge. They formed a centrepiece of the outdoor activity area of the

festival, bobbing about delighting young and old. On the beautiful sunny days of the festival people jumped into the river, wrestling and playing with the inflatables, whilst thousands were happy to enjoy the spectacle from the grassy banks or passing paddle boats.

Other projects to date include a mural on the walls and ceiling of the children's ward of Casuarina Hospital, Dar-

win; a revamp of the courtyard walls of the Bondi Pavilion with colourful images of the 1920s 'Bondi the Beautiful' period; and a huge mural on the walls of the Max Webber Library, Blacktown.

With the resurgence of interest in public art, what may have once been considered graffiti is growing into a relevant and far-reaching art-form of the future. ♦

**by Evan Williams Director,
NSW Division of Cultural Activities**

...Public art can ensure that public spaces fulfil many functions beyond that of merely carrying pedestrian traffic. Sensitive and imaginative collaboration between architect, town planner and artist should aim at the comfort, convenience and delight of the individual. Public spaces can provide repose, with ample opportunity for people to sit and rest, to meet and talk, to gather in small groups, for children to play. They can offer opportunities to disseminate simple information: centres for posters and public announcements. There can be opportunities for strolling musicians and players, scope for small public celebrations, occasions and pageants.

Early imaginative collaboration between artist and architects can make all these ideas possible.

Use of prefabricated and mass-produced materials in new buildings need not lead to sterile and depersonalised environments. An artist, brought in at the earliest stages of design, can suggest solutions which offer opportunities for great visual variety—changes of pattern, textures, shadow, light and colour; exciting changes of spatial experiences—narrow and wide spaces, enclosed and open, tree-canopied and open to the sky, winter sun and summer shade.

The argument is illusory that it is more economic to consider a building only in terms of its basic usage. Imaginative and creative ways of treating walls, windows, spaces and floors need not necessarily cost any more and may indeed cost less than a special wall finish. Often a sculptor at little cost could create a simple yet individual effect using a wall finish of far cheaper material. A stained-glass window of contemporary design may be an economic solution to a light problem in a public space with a bad view, where a conventional window of special glass and curtains requiring regular maintenance may be less successful.

Similarly many townscapes and open places lack individuality and often have a harsh, forbidding quality which an artist could alleviate. A mural on a blank wall or fence or obtrusive water tank can make something striking or even beautiful out of an eyesore. In Rio de Janeiro ordinary streets and footpaths have been made an international tourist attraction by simple mosaic decoration. Effective public art has been and can be designed with low-maintenance costs in mind.

Professional artists can bring a variety of talents to bear and help increase local involvement in a

project, especially if they themselves are members of the local community. Where feasible opportunity should exist for creative public participation in the actual designing and shaping of some of the elements and art objects in public places under the guidance of architect, town planner and artist.

Art can be used to delineate areas and guide public movement. It can enhance areas for particular purposes and provide a feeling of privacy and relaxation in otherwise public areas. It can alleviate feelings of tension or enmity or confrontation that waiting rooms and interview rooms can arouse.

Works of art can express the nature of a building where signs and notices would be insufficient. Buildings which have a clearly visible role, such as schools, theatres, churches, transport terminals and hospitals, present obvious choices but an artist should be able to create a visual expression of a role or activity in any planning concept.

Tourist centres can draw upon local resources by using the work of artists to illustrate local points of interest. Not only can paintings and drawings be made available for reproduction as postcards but graphic artists can print limited editions of scenes highlighting the tourist attractions of an area.

Children's playgrounds offer opportunities for creative community involvement in collaboration with the artist particularly where use can be made of existing and recycled materials.

In every case an artist should be involved from the planning stage of a project. The planners should have the benefit of the creative talents an artist can bring to related parts of the planning process, so that money and effort are applied in the most effective and imaginative way.

In many European countries and in the United States and Canada, it is usual to spend about 1 per cent of the total cost of a building project on the art component. The figure varies. In many instances the amount is fixed by law. It is interesting to observe that where detailed regulations are in force there is usually a stipulation that the artist is involved from the beginning of the planning stage.

Winston Churchill described the importance of the physical environment in moulding human values when he said, "We shape our buildings and our buildings shape us."

I believe our environment should reflect our values and that the arts are an integral part of our life. We bear considerable responsibility when we are in a position to pass on these values to future generations. ♦

Simply Living, December, 1981

THE LEGEND OF FIRE

The Story told in Glass



METROPOLITAN FIRE BRIGADE MURAL
EASTERN HILL MELBOURNE

Detail of Mosaic by Harold Freedman

EUROPE

Holland/France

A single theme unites the two articles from Europe found in this issue of CMM: Urban Deterioration. In Amsterdam, Van Weesep's article explains current squatter movements and murals against a background of the history of housing struggles in Holland. The longer article on the New Town in France and the interview with Hervé Bechy of the Public Art Workshop in Paris, offers an exciting sketch of some of the possibilities now being entertained in France, including building entire cities from the ground up, and sometimes with the active collaboration of community artists. Both articles are instructive for the United States, where there is too rarely any positive collaboration between urban planners and community artists.

Squatter Murals in Amsterdam

Introduction

As in many other countries, murals have appeared in the Netherlands. Some of these serve the sole purpose of embellishing a deteriorated environment, while others express the political protest of the squatter movement. Yet both are intrinsically related to housing policy. To understand their meaning it is important to know something of the housing problems in the Netherlands and the emergence of the squatter movement.

The Housing Policy

Since 1945, the government of the Netherlands has become actively involved in the housing market. Besides programming the construction, the government shows its strong involvement through ambitious public housing programs. Private investors can count on substantial subsidies, both for rental units and for owner-occupier dwellings. But the government also influences the housing costs through rent control, operating subsidies, and rent supplement payments. On top of all that, in most cities the local administration controls the allocation of most dwellings to ensure equitable distribution.

In general, the new construction programs have helped to make progress toward the national housing goal: to provide all inhabitants with adequate housing and a safe and suitable residential environment. Of the more than three million dwellings that have been added to the housing stock between 1950 and 1981, approximately 1.3 million were government financed public housing units, an additional 1.2 million dwellings were constructed with government subsidies, and less than 600,000 were completely privately financed. At the moment approximately 60% of the housing stock consists of rental units, the majority of which are owned by non-profit institutions and the municipalities; the privately owned rentals declined from 40% in 1956 to 14% in 1975.

The allocation of all public housing is regulated by general guidelines from the National Department of Housing. But in many municipalities especially in the larger cities and in the densely populated western part of the country, all other rental units (except the most expensive ones) are closely controlled. In many places even the use of modestly priced owner-occupier dwellings is reserved for certain income groups: not every owner is allowed to live in his own property. It seems, then, that the social groups who traditionally have problems in finding a home are well taken care of.

In spite of such regulations, various population groups do have trouble finding appropriate accommodation. There is simply not enough housing for everyone who wants to live independently. Thus, municipal ordinances limit access to controlled housing to certain groups. Outsiders, unless they work in the city, are not allowed to take up residence, except when they rent or buy very expensive homes. Recent immigrants (guest workers and others) and young people are assigned such low priorities that they face long waits. If they don't want to wait so long, they scramble for the openings in the private rental market. But many of these are being converted to condos, and for the remainder, excessive fees often have to be paid (key-money), even though this is illegal under the rent control ordinances.

The demand of the disadvantaged is most vigorous in the large cities, where ironically the vacancy rate tends to be high (especially among the expensive dwellings). Speculation in real estate also keeps other buildings empty, such as warehouses, lofts, small office buildings, etc. In the fourteen largest cities the waiting lists for rental housing doubled in length between 1973 and 1978. More than 350,000 households are now waiting for assistance; although this is not an exact measure of the housing shortage, it is a good indication of the scope of the problem.

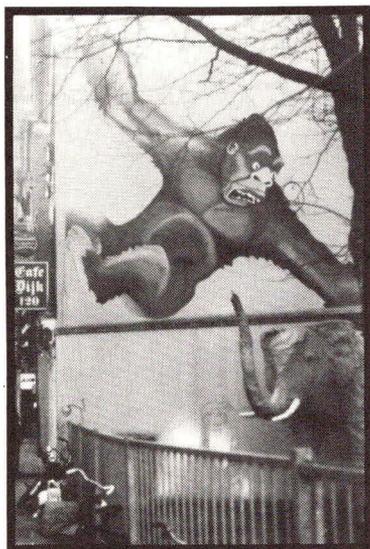
Squatters

Many young people got sick and tired of this and joined the swelling squatter movement. They take advantage of the tenant protection laws, which protect any occupant, whether there legally or without a lease, from arbitrary eviction. The owner would have to go to court to have squatters evicted. However, the courts are not always sympathetic to the owners, especially if the owner has no specific plans or contracts for future use. But the squatters are not just helping themselves to a home. They also protest a system that does not create enough housing and lets speculation in real estate go unpunished while so many people are inadequately housed (or not at all!) Because of this political protest character of at least part of the squatter movement, the squatters try to draw as much attention as possible to the squatted buildings. Posters throughout the city advertize major squatted structures, and the buildings themselves are commonly adorned by flags, banners, news bulletins, and increasingly by murals. The squatters' murals are political protests, exposing and ridiculing the existing power structure, the failures of the housing policy, and the speculators and their henchmen. In this way the squatter

movement has made an important contribution to street art, albeit that their murals are typically short-lived. Whenever the squatters lose their struggle to retain a building, the murals are destroyed upon eviction, often along with the buildings they adorned.

The Murals

The first photo is an example of 'official' murals in the inner city of Amsterdam. Their purpose is to improve the liveability of the neighborhood. The monumental animals (the elephant is approximately 30 feet high) are part of a project sponsored by the city to improve a playground in one of the most notorious streets in the old sailors' quarter. The playground is almost always locked and is virtually inaccessible to the few children in the neighborhood.



The second set of murals are examples from one building. They were executed by the street artists' collective Kukeleku that has made numerous murals throughout Amsterdam. The building they adorned was constructed in the late 19th century as a wholesale milk distribution center, but was later converted into a hotel. It was squatted in 1980, after the City of Amsterdam had acquired the vacant building and traded it with a developer for another property of his where the city wanted to build housing (a decision forced by concerted neighborhood effort). The developer intended to use the site for a combined project of commercial and expensive residential use. The squatters tried to force the City to take the property back and convert it into units for young people. When the City refused and the developer in late 1980 obtained a court order for eviction of the squatters, a massive helmeted police riot squad forced their way into the building by driving their armored vehicles through the murals. The building has now been torn down completely and the construction of the new project may start, if the developer can arrange financing...

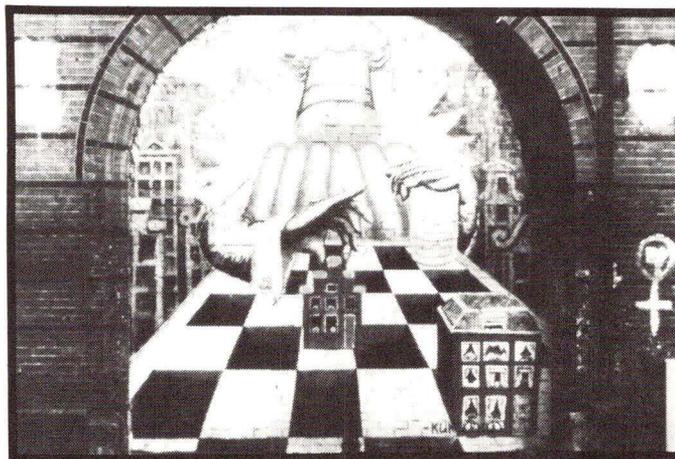
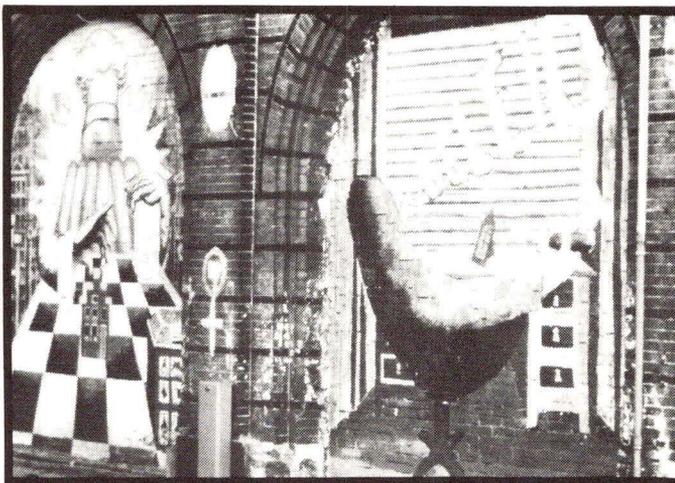
Mural A depicts how policy is formulated: the smoke letters spell P.O.L.I.C.Y. (Beleid).

Mural B symbolizes the game of property development. The baker in the picture refers both to the responsible elected city official, a member of the social-democratic party who used to run a neighborhood bakery in Amsterdam before embarking on a political career, and to the developer Bakker (Baker) who, in this and other projects, got into conflict with the squatter movement.

Mural C shows the helmeted members of the riot police having a ball... The picture, inspired by a scene from a Russian movie, provides an image of the isolation of the police in society: a subtle protest of police brutality and its backgrounds. ◆

Jan van Weesep
Amsterdam

Photos: Jan van Weesep



Where Artists are Involved in City Planning

The note of hope in the interview with Hervé Bechy because of the election in France of a socialist president is significant. Compare the tone with the current fear and anger in the United States under the conservative Reagan administration.

The New Towns give concrete reality to some progressive ideas about the importance of artists in developing communities. These are important experiments, although not completely successful. Whether or not a particular art style appeals to us, the opportunity for such a variety of artists to work with communities on such a scale in planning their visual environments is exceptionally worthwhile.

The following is a condensation of lectures given by Herve Bechy of the Public Art Workshop in Paris, France, during his Fall 1981 visit to the United States.

Survey of Public Art Activities in France Over the Last 10 Years

Introduction

The old tradition which associated art with architecture began to disappear in Europe after the industrial revolution. In recent times it was felt that engineers and architects were more suited than painters and sculptors to deal with new materials like steel and concrete. Thus artists were kept off the urban landscape of official buildings and streets.

Towards the end of the nineteen sixties a counter movement started, rejecting purely functional town planning and industrialized architecture. A few architects attempted to integrate art into their works, but such initiatives remained rare. In fact, it is primarily the Central Government and certain municipalities that have sought to restore a place for artists in the creation of the city. The 1% law, devoting part of construction budgets to the purchase or making of artworks, was the starting point.

Originally the law's purpose was to create a demand for artists and was used principally to purchase existing work of arts. Subsequently, work was commissioned by administrative committees. Then, in the seventies, artists became increasingly involved in the entire planning and construction process. The most important of these examples occur in the "villes nouvelles", new satellite towns created by the central government.

PART I: NEW TOWNS

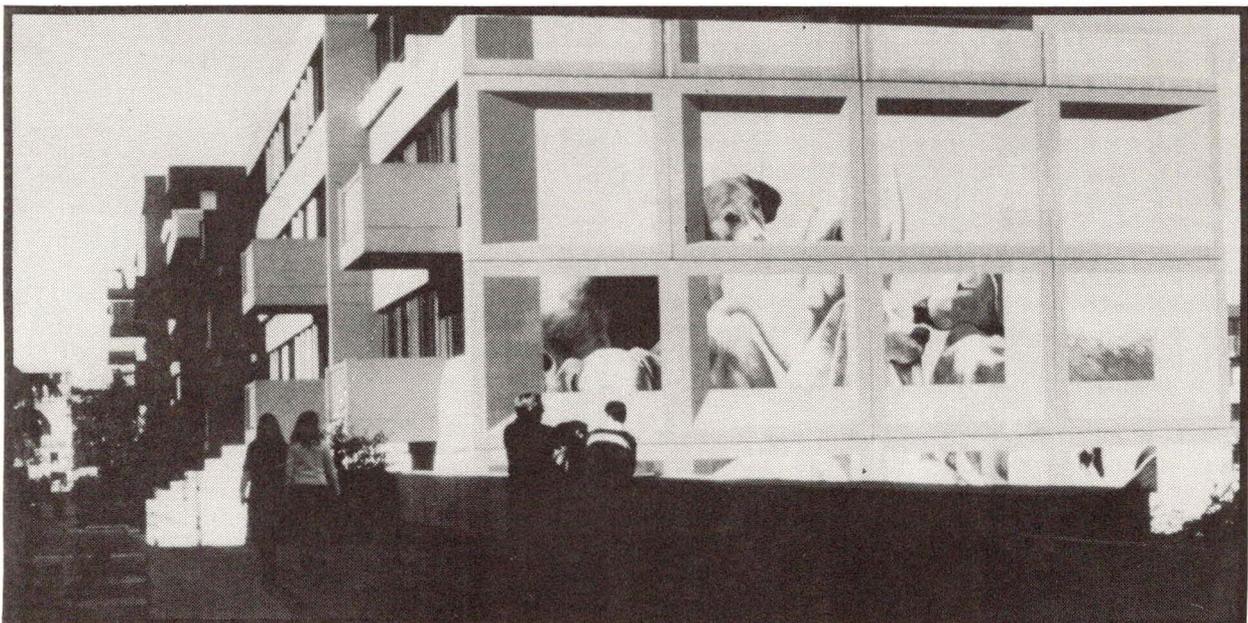
New towns are ambitious planning projects begun at the end of the sixties, inspired by the notion of the ideal town. Planned and organized by the central government, the idea was to fight free-for-all development and the unlimited growth of cities. Housing for 200,000-400,000 residents, and all recreational, educational, sporting, cultural and welfare facilities were to be provided. From the beginning artists have participated in the design as well as the construction of these urban spaces.

There are nine new towns now under construction in France. Five are situated about 20 miles from Paris; the others are near four other large cities.

The central government entirely controls the creation of new towns through a Public Planning Department (Etablissement Public d'Aménagement). A department is set up for each new town to deal with all aspects of its planning and construction, including land purchase, organization of urban spaces and social and welfare infrastructures. One of its functions is to commission work by artists for decoration and arrangement of streets, squares, gardens and parks.

The Department of Environment and the Department of Culture are often associated in planning operations which involve artists' participation; however, there is no specific philosophy concerning their role and each operation is different, depending on the Planning Department for each town and the artist's conception of his function.

The examples selected are from five new towns now constructed and show aspects of this diversity.



Design by Cueco. Photo: Karin Rydstrom

1. Saint Quentin en Yvelines

In this new town, the Planning Department used the opportunity of a large-scale operation to commission works by sculptors. A sort of open-air museum was to be formed in the busiest parts of town. Works by Max Herlin, Otanni Fumio, Michael Grosset and Gerard Lardeur were placed in one park between 1975 and 1978.

2. Evry Ville Nouvelle

For the first time in France, artists were involved in thinking about the shape and form of the town before the start. Four artists, Bernard Alleaume, Yvette Alleaume, Bernard Lassus and Gerard Singer, worked with architects on planning streets and urban spaces on one of several districts between 1970 and 1976. In addition, Sekel created a work designed for training sessions by mountaineering clubs. He was commissioned by the Planning Department and worked closely for three years with clubs in the layout and construction. The sculpture, *La Dame du Lac*, is fenced and open to experienced climbers.

3. Marne La Vallee Ville Nouvelle

In this case, developers and architects were obliged to take into account a landscape created by artists. Paved surfaces, walls and water towers were designed to create the impression of a three-dimensional chain.

4. Le Vaudreuil Ville Nouvelle

Here, the artists' works were included after the construction program was under way. Decorative elements were needed to complete the plans.

In 1976, during the building of the first district, the Planning Department decided to run a mural competition for the decoration of three apartment block walls. These were clearly visible from traffic ways and were bordered by a sidewalk. The purpose was to create a visual happening on large empty surfaces. The organizers also wanted to bring the artists into contact with their public and encourage citizens to take an interest in the way their street would look.

Normal procedure for art competitions in France is this:

1. Artists do not present their own candidacy but are nominated by various official organizations.

2. A jury selects a limited number of artists from these candidates on the basis of photographs of past work (giving preference to established artists).

3. Those selected make their proposals and a jury makes a final selection from these drawings, models and/or technical descriptions. The jury considers use of the support, integration of the colors with the surroundings, lighting direction and scale of distances and the integration of the project with the site. To a lesser extent the subject's symbolic value is weighed.

In the case of Le Vaudreuil, a jury of 16, composed of culture officials, architects, planners and three representatives of the citizens of Le Vaudreuil selected 12 artists out of 30 initial candidates, or four for each wall.

The first wall, by Cueco, is called *The Kennel*. It shows a pack of dogs that seem more or less free behind bars. Some may interpret this as an analogy of the human condition. It is composed of a grid whose colours reflect the environment: pink of the buildings, blue of the sky.

The second wall, titled *The Meeting*, is by Proweller. The subject is the meeting of a man and a woman. At the center is a symbolic tree whose leaves disappear into the sky and whose roots try to get a grip in the town's founda-

tions. The woman is leaning against the tree and turns her back to the man, who is coming towards her with his hand held out. Proweller uses the existing grid formed by the joints between the slabs and runs across it with his story. He decided on a color scheme out of harmony with the surrounding architecture, using sharp, "psychedelic" colors. The jury approved these colors on the basis of the wall facing north; it is in shade most of the day.

On the third wall is a kinetic relief by Tomasello. The panels are geometrically divided by truncated cube elements. These form a giant checkerboard whose appearance is altered by variations in lighting and the spectator's position.

5. Cergy Pontoise Ville Nouvelle

Planning authorities for the New Towns have occasionally attempted to put the artist in direct contact with his audience. Community experiments have been rare. In this case the Planning Department announced that residents would be involved in the project right from the start. They submitted their needs for open space and a project was chosen by a jury in line with these needs. Also, during construction the sculptor's presence on the site helped keep him in touch with the residents. People gradually organized themselves to help with the work.

"Ateliers Communautaires" (community workshops) have been set up on the initiative of a few young architects who live here. Their aim was to give citizens a role to play in the creation of their city. These community workshops were especially active between 1975 and 1978 and dealt with planning park and garden areas and carrying out mural projects.

Artists working on public art projects in France are often reluctant to include audience participation in their work, claiming a loss of creative liberty. In the sculpture project, Schultze, the artist, was confronted by the scepticism of the local inhabitants. The Planning Department had proposed to improve the areas between groups of apartment blocks which the citizens themselves found empty and desolate. But the residents felt there were more urgent needs, such as an assembly hall for teenagers. Even after the project was accepted at a public meeting, problems arose with local youth, such as loss of building materials and damage to equipment. The problem was eliminated when older children were taken on as paid workers. In addition Schultze accepted the conditions of being a public artist, working with the residents.

To conclude this section on New Towns, we can say that they have formed an experimental ground for public artists. A beginning of a reconciliation between artists and architects has been achieved.

However, New Towns are conceived and built before they are inhabited. Thus, residents have not participated in the process of creation. The problem of their identification with the town (reflected in psychological and social problems) remains to be solved.

I think public art could have been a means for inhabitants to take possession of their town through actively collaborating with artists. Unfortunately this possibility has not yet been explored.



photo: Les Malassis. Photo © Imago

PART II. MUNICIPAL ART PROGRAMS

The situation is different in already existing towns. Here public art depends on the cultural and planning policy of the municipality. Two towns have gone further than others in making a special effort in this field. One is Vitry-Sur-Seine, in the suburbs of Paris, the other is Grenoble, in south east France.

1. Vitry-Sur-Seine

This is a township on the outskirts of central Paris consisting of about 90,000 residents, mostly working-class. For the past 10 years, the municipality has had a cultural policy of democratization, giving access to the arts to as many people as possible. This effort has borne fruit; in just 12 years over 100 artworks have been executed, including murals, mosaics, sculptures and layouts of gardens and playgrounds.

Financially, these projects were made possible by an extension of the 1% for the arts formula. This part of the construction budget goes to decoration of municipal buildings such as public swimming pools, theaters, etc. In addition, the municipality plays an important role in the organization and coordination of the projects as well as the selection of artists. It also deals with the presentation of artworks to the public. Often this takes the form of an open debate involving those responsible for the building, the artist, architect and the local citizens. (One might add that despite this approach, the citizens still have no direct part in the creative process.)

2. Grenoble

In 1967 Grenoble organized a sculpture symposium attended by French and foreign artists. As a result art work was placed in public spaces. When the 1968 winter Olympics were held in Grenoble, a special building program was conceived. Monumental sculpture and murals sprouted on the city's new buildings. The projects didn't stop after the Olympics; after the city invited politically oriented artists to work for them.

One of the most spectacular projects was a group of murals at a shopping center. It was commissioned in 1975 from a group of artists known as the Malassis Cooperative. The cooperative was formed in 1970 by five painters who came together to work collectively. Their inspiration came from the social and political events of the moment.

The paintings were done on eleven panels which were then fixed to the shopping center walls. Titled *La Derive de La Society* (the shipwreck of society), the paintings show a world turned upside down by economic crisis and the consumer society with its falling values. The artists used as a backdrop the image of *The Raft of the Medusa*, a famous painting by Gericault which dealt with a sensational case of shipwreck and cannibalism during the 19th Century.

The first work of Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Grenoble dates from 1977 (see CMM Spring 1980, p.2.). This was a series of screen printed posters. The subject matter was the damage done to life and limb by working conditions. It shows three identical images of a man in a position of suffering. In each image a particular kind of damage to the body is symbolized: unhealthy work speed, pollution and noise.

One feature of this project was that the theme was chosen collectively. (He has carried out numerous projects working with community groups of workers, women and immigrants.) The project was influenced by two dramatic events which took place in the city at that time. One worker died of liver cancer. Another became deaf and committed suicide. Both deaths were directly linked to working conditions.

The second feature was that the printed images were to be placed at sites chosen for their bearing on the subject, which formed a framework for the images. The choice of sites was governed by the need for maximum impact of image and its content. Three sites were a factory in the background, factory gates indicated by a road-sign and a fuel container.

In 1979, the town of Grenoble requested that Ernest Pignon-Ernest create a mural painting on the central Union building. This was to be an official public commission under the 1% law. Meetings were organized with workers. After a year of investigation, discussion, analysis of the site and research into local union history, he presented the town with his ideas. The theme was to be the history of labor struggles in Grenoble and the surrounding area. (See CMM Spring 1981, pp 21-23).

The wall is an environment of vast scale, surrounded by multi-story blocks, with the Alps as a backdrop. It overlooks a walkway and can only be seen by pedestrians. Posters are used as evidence of union experience and history, such as posters produced clandestinely during the Nazi occupation, an appeal to help save Sacco and Vanzetti, etc. These posters cover only part of the wall space. To the left, a vast stairway. The first step is real, the succeeding steps are first painted and then suggested. This counterbalances the past with an undefinable future, with no clear model, completely open. To lessen the cold and empty aspect of this architecture, a small girl is painted running up the stairway.

The town of Grenoble is one of the few in France which has really considered public commissions not only as a means of giving work but as a response to social demand.

Grenoble's socialist administration permits us to think that the present government of France may encourage a socially responsive dimension of arts policy.

PART III.

There are some public art activities which do not fall into the framework of official public commissions. They are due to initiatives by artists or groups of artists. Because they have developed outside government bodies they have operated in different ways from official commissions. The following are some examples.

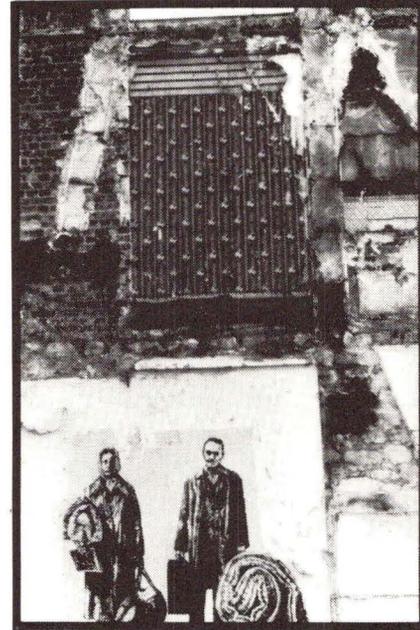


photo: Ernest Pignon-Ernest

1. *Les Images-en-Situation*, Ernest Pignon-Ernest

In the 14th district in Paris there are rows of gutted houses which show the interior decoration of the homes from which people have been driven. These walls were selected by Pignon-Ernest as the support for posters called "The Eviction."

These images break the silence of these facades revealed by bulldozers. They sum up the drama of the evictions by giving the victims a form. On one side we have a man loaded with a suitcase and a mattress. On the other is a woman with a shopping bag on one arm. Under the other arm is a blanket. In her hand is a glass mount in which pictures of a wedding and other typical lifetime photographs have accumulated.

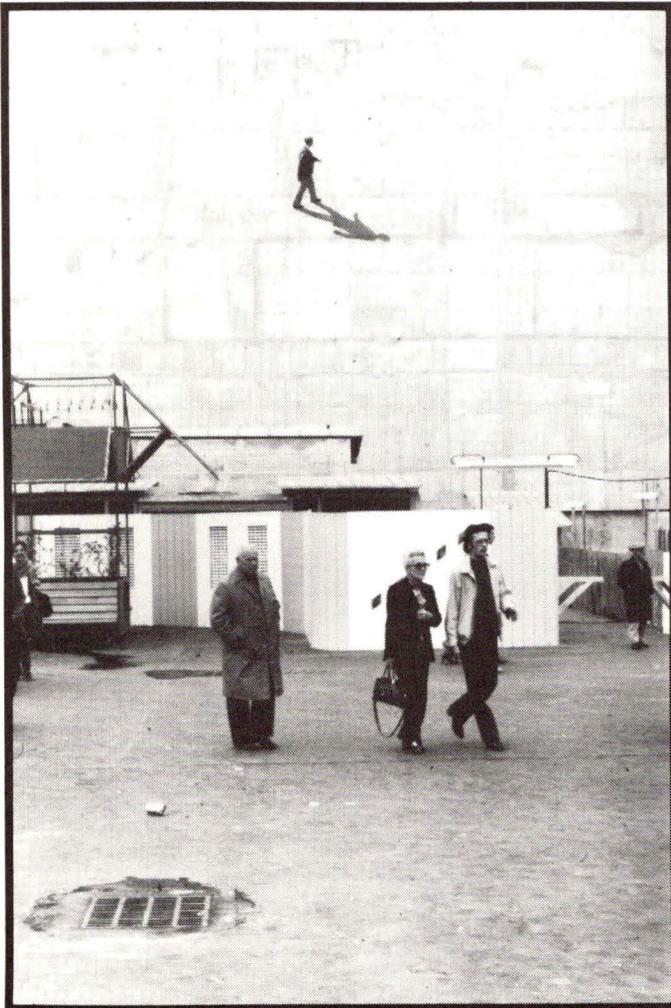
The posters were placed on the sites then given to the street, the eye of the passerby and to the weather.

2. Fabio Rieti

One example of his work is a mural in the center of Paris near the Pompidou Center (Centre Beaubourg). It has a large empty surface on which he first placed one small figure. Later he added a second and a third.

3. Solar Bas-Relief, Roland Baladi

In the same area as the Rieti work is a full scale solar bas-relief constructed in 1978. It consists of a planar surface made up of an array of small individual elements. Each element consists of a square wooden block with one or two shadow-casting rectangular metal tabs. A portion of each element's surface is illuminated by sunlight; a portion is in shadow. The design can be perceived with gray tones when viewed from a sufficient distance. It



Mural by Rieti, Paris. Photo: Karin Rydstrom

42 changes as the direction of the sun's rays changes during the day. The image is of a lion cub, also a symbol of the sun.

4. Atelier d'Art Public, Paris

This is a community oriented art group founded in 1977 in the 14th district of Paris. The first project was a mural done during spring and summer of 1977 in collaboration with neighborhood residents. At that time local inhabitants were struggling against destruction of buildings and evictions due to urban renewal. It was collectively decided to portray the events as experienced by the citizens.

The project was made possible by donations from the community, placed in a fund box in front of the mural.

Today the Atelier is working on a redevelopment project in a small space in the same area. They are trying to develop community awareness so that people will have greater control of their environment and their social development.

5. Coalmine, Arles

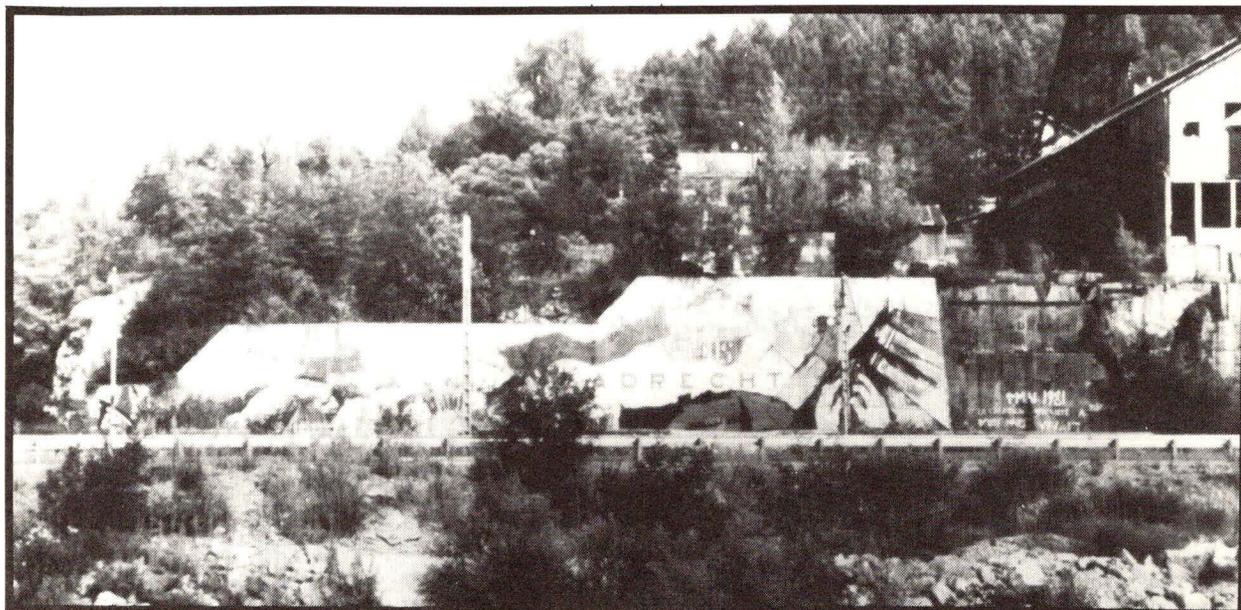
Situated at the entrance of a coalmine in Ales, this painting was done as a political demonstration in 1981. Workers had been fighting for several years against the decision of the government to close several coalmines such as this one in the South of France. Several painters join-

ed the movement to prevent the closing and to maintain this traditional activity in their region. The slogan on the mural is "talk about us."

In these last projects artists were working mostly on empty surfaces on walls in existing city districts, where there have been no public art programs involving those districts. The urban policy has been either total destruction of selected city neighborhoods through urban renewal or preservation of old districts of special historical interest.

During the last few years urban policy has begun to change for many reasons: people's struggles against urban renewal, the economic crisis and demographic stagnation. Both local and national governments have abandoned large planning operations such as the building of new towns and halted some partially completed renewal projects. In the past the government simply destroyed neighborhoods and built new ones. Now they seem to understand that preserving buildings and neighborhoods and their communities is important. This evolution of urban planning in France gives residents much more power in planning urban development which affects them.

For the few artists who are aware of these new approaches it is now possible to work closely with neighborhood residents. It is encouraging that the government fosters the artists' work in neighborhoods. Since the election of Mitterand, the socialist approach can be validated. ♦



Coal Mine, Arles. Photo: Henri Matguet

The following is a condensation of an interview with Herve Bechy in *Cultural Democracy* (formerly *NAPNOC notes*), November-December, 1981 issue. The interviewers are Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard.

France: Public Art and The New Government

Herve Bechy is a member of the Atelier d'Art Public, a group of public artists in Paris. On a tour of the United States in the mid-'70s Herve first became interested in mural painting. He is just completing another tour, visiting with public artists in Chicago, San Francisco and

Los Angeles.

We met Herve at the "Art, Architecture and the Urban Neighborhood" conference in Chicago, a day-long conference held to introduce architects and planners to the mural movement. One of the aims was to nurture the idea that artists, architects and community members might work together from the outset to create liveable, workable communities.

We began by asking Herve to speculate about the likely effects on public artwork of Mitterrand's new socialist government in France.

"In general, we don't know exactly what will change — it's just what we suppose, what we hope. The government has just had a few months now, but enough to show

some aspects of policy change. In general, I think there will be more power for local government, more power for cities and local organizations inside the cities — more democracy in public art too.

"Up until now there has been only one possibility for artists to work in public space and that has been the one percent law — one percent of the funds the national government spends on public construction is to be used to commission works of art. Also, some municipalities have municipal arts programs — like Vitry-sur-Seine and Grenoble — and they have had their own one percent for arts. Mitterrand said just a few weeks ago that this law will be in use in all national government heavy construction — not just educational and military buildings as it has been applied in the past.

"Remember, the character of policy is very different in every city in France. Some are very progressive; for example, the only municipal arts programs in France are in Socialist or Communist cities. There are also 'maisons de la culture' — local cultural centers — which are financed in large part by the national government."

We asked Herve about what it will take to interest the new government in increased public visual arts programs at the community level.

"We are trying to organize artists and other people to be involved in public visual art in France, but it is difficult because during the last ten years the government gave commissions to the very well-known artists without consulting the people who had to live with the art. Now we have to create a demand, a social demand, for art. So far very few artists are doing this work in France. During the last government, a few young artists tried to do something in towns and neighborhoods, but government didn't support their action at all. We (Atelier d'Art Public) have some projects in the 14th district in Paris with support by local organizations, but the government wouldn't give any money.

"Right now we want to push this social artistic approach in neighborhoods in France. There are active public artists now all over France, but they are very isolated and we have just begun to put them together. Our goal is to show various examples of public art which is supported by people, and through this demonstration to ask government to support this sort of initiative.

"You see, most of these initiatives are artists' initiatives — supported by local organizations, but artists' initiatives nonetheless. The problem is the government thinking that public art is just a means to give jobs to artists. But for us it is not just that; it is to make people involved in the arts, through participation, through social expression.

"We want to appear as an alternative — not just as individual artists expressing their own feelings, but rather trying to speak for a whole social tendency. We have an opening, an opportunity with this government and we have to explain it, to push it."

Bechy explained that this effort is complicated by expedient politics. "During the former government many artists joined political organizations like the Socialist and Communist parties just to constitute a pressure group inside. Now they are much more powerful and dangerous because they want to exploit the new government, just to get jobs for themselves. They are very conservative otherwise.

"For example, the program of Vitry-sur Seine was the first municipal art program in France, created during the '60s. At that time the idea was very progressive, to show art to as many people as possible. But the role of the inhabitants was always outside the creative process — never consult, just inform."

Herve noted that Vitry, a city with a Communist administration, had failed to move beyond this elitist "access to the best" idea and that its cultural administration was very conservative and bureaucratic. But he pointed out that some of the Socialist cities were enlightened, such as Grenoble "where the municipality and the cultural institutions believe in bringing the artists back to the people."

We asked Herve to describe the work of the Atelier d'Art Public.

"Our organization was founded in 1977 in the 14th district of Paris. This community was fighting against 'urban renewal' and there were many active local organizations. So it was fortunate for us to be working there — we got the support we needed to act. It was easy to organize because people were already organized.

"Although most people in the community liked the project very much, we had a problem with some artists in this area. They wanted a competition — 'oh yes, we'll hold a competition and get the best' — whereas we wanted the project to be executed by a team. We didn't just want to exchange ideas with other artists but with the people in the street. Eventually, this is why we succeeded, because we were not shut off from others but would see the people in the community where they work and where they live. They knew and trusted us. But we had to fight strongest against the artists who didn't want to join the team, who disagreed with this way of working and said 'oh, you just want to keep the project for yourselves.'

"Right now we are working on a very large project, one that will take a year at least to do. It's a small park that also provides the only access to a day care center. According to park service regulations, parks must be closed at 4 p.m. during the winter and they are just to be used for sitting and walking, not sports or other activities. But this park must be open until 7 so parents can get in and out to pick up their children. Since it was impossible to close the park, kids came to play football. Local inhabitants began to complain because the place was too noisy.

"So there has been controversy. Several ideas have been put forward. One is to close the park and give it to the day care center administration, so that it becomes private. Another is to negotiate with the administration and close earlier to conform with park regulations. The third proposal — ours — is to accept that kids need a place to play football and that the day care center needs access and other inhabitants need a park.

"We try to organize different kinds of users of this park to be aware of each other's problems. In May of 1980 we went into the park and painted a small building there. Though the police came and said we didn't have authorization, we didn't stop — it's still there.

"After that, maybe because of the election, the municipality agreed to discuss the project with the Atelier and agreed to our plan. The city put up about 300,000 francs (approximately \$50,000), which is too little. But for us it's a beginning; we are 'certified'."

Herve concluded the interview by summing up his commitment to the public art movement.

"I am very interested in mural painting, but now much more interested in open space. Most people in France live in high-rise apartments. If things are this way, we need a collective life. The idea is to create a place for people's creativity, to create a space for social meeting and social creativity." ◆

Herve Bechy can be contacted at the Atelier d'Art Public, 61 Rue Pernety, 75014 Paris, France.

MORE

Process

Sometimes information pertinent to community murals does not readily fit into a geographical or even issue, oriented category. Such is the case with this section, but both articles are potentially helpful to anyone planning on painting a public, community, collectively-executed mural. CMM requests that readers with similar or different experiences send information about the processes so that other muralists may share — and benefit — from them.

Problems of Collective Work

We are writing this article for the benefit of people who are planning on forming a mural collective. Mural collective work can be one of the most creative and stimulating experiences you'll ever have. We were in a mural group which made many mistakes and encountered problems which were never resolved. It ended in bad feelings among the members. We want to shed some critical light on this collective which will hopefully be helpful to another group.

One of the main reasons our collective failed was that we never agreed on the definition or the process of our mural collective. We never agreed how we were going to work together, or on the content of the mural. There was no discussion about those issues nor the particular statements or politics we wanted to incorporate in the work. We came together because we wanted to paint the mural.

How can a mural collective work? Decision making through consensus is very effective. Consensus is unanimous agreement. It is a very positive and constructive way of organizing. It is a time consuming process. There is no leader, but a rotating facilitator. Basic issues on administration, content and process need to be discussed.

We had no ground rules. We assumed we were in agreement because we were assembled together for our meetings. We made many assumptions about each other and the progress of the project. Assumptions aren't clarified decisions and they don't work. We assumed we could paint together, shared the same political beliefs and the same collective painting process. These were false assumptions. What we practiced in lieu of consensus was compromise. Compromise is often doing what you don't want to do. One loses interest in the project when one's ideas and images are compromised away. Design in a mural project is of utmost importance, more so than painting. You can't paint something well you don't like.

The more vocal people moved into leadership roles and their ideas prevailed. People acquired unequal status with each other, which was unhealthy for the group as a whole. There was lack of trust in each others' work. There was lack of respect towards each other as individual artists. Since we painted differently, we never agreed how we would paint together.

It is possible to work together compatibly with different painting styles. It's definitely more challenging, but actually more rewarding. The best of everyone is allowed to develop on the wall and the mural is a better one. We are not discouraged by this experience. We know this process can work and we urge people to enter into this positive kind of working relationship. ♦

We feel that the ideas described in this article are potentially so useful that all muralists should be aware of them, even if access to some of the hardware is impossible. The survey can be run by anyone, and its results provide the sorts of "hard scientific facts" that civic arts commissions, etc. often find convincing.

Along similarly useful lines, Sommer has written an article about murals as an anti-graffiti form, "Murals—The Anti-Graffiti Art Form," in Parks & Recreation Magazine, September 1981. Although the article is highly disparaging of graffiti, it, too, makes the sort of point to which many civic officials will listen. The article "proves" that murals "prevent" graffiti.

Student Ratings of Mural Slides

Virtually all of the research effort within the mural movement has gone toward documentation. In view of the short life span of many of the works, photographic and historical recording must of necessity have the highest priority. Yet we have reached the point where a sufficient number of books, slide collections, and analytic essays is available so that alternative research approaches should be considered as complementary to documentation and not as substitutes for it. Some of these methods can generate new knowledge through experimentation that could not be obtained through analysis of existing work.

Simulation methods are being developed in architecture that may be useful for mural research. The artificial creation of environments and design elements through photography, drawing and even computers, can permit the systematic variation and comparison of different design elements coupled with different building types. Kenneth Craik and Donald Appleyard¹ in the College of Environmental Design in Berkeley have developed an environmental simulator which uses scale models and a remotely quided periscope with a tiny moveable lens (1/10th inch radius). Supported by a gantry and control system, the periscope can "fly," "walk," or "drive" through neighborhoods while the lens projects images onto closed circuit television, videotape, or movie film. The simulator was used in a study of development in San Francisco to enable neighborhood residents to examine the visual impact of proposed buildings and compare alternative plans. The possibilities of using such a simulation procedure for murals or supergraphics are intriguing.

Not all simulation procedures are as elaborate as this or require expensive equipment. At the University of Tennessee, architect Alton DeLong² uses inexpensive cardboard scale models to investigate people's responses to buildings. DeLong believes that there is an optimal scale of about 12:1 which makes a model seem most realistic.

It is interesting to reflect about whether there is an optimal scale or format for presenting a mural proposal. This would be a fascinating research problem. When I visited DeLong's studio, I found it easy to project myself into his miniature models even though I have difficulty visualizing buildings from blueprints. DeLong has found that people's placement of figures and scale furniture produced results similar to the spacing and distances real people used in actual conversations. His three-dimensional models may be useful in conveying to neighborhood residents what a proposed mural or sculpture looks like at its actual scale.

Another simulation procedure for muralists is the composite image technique produced by Jerome Sirlin³. Colored filters are used to enable people to see how interior spaces will appear in different color schemes and with different levels of illumination. Outdoor scenes can be used too, with added sculpture, murals, or environmental art. Sirlin's system involves two slides projected through cardboard masks to delete unwanted portions, and then taking a photograph of the composite. Many of the images produced with this technique are surprising. As an example, the method would allow community input on the procedures used by the Los Angeles Fine Art Squad of "painting out" the buildings by painting in the backdrop as if the building had been removed.

The two of us have used photographic simulation to determine people's responses to buildings with and without murals. This was easy to do and the results were very clear. The availability of so many slide series showing murals from around the world permit a wide range of issues to be approached in this way. We will offer our own experience not only because the data may be useful to community arts people in generating support for their programs, but also as an illustration of the utility of photographic simulation in mural research. So little data on people's response to murals are available that a start needs to be made somewhere.

Method

From a collection of slides collected for a book on public art,⁴ six pictures were selected of murals on public buildings along with six pictures of adjacent painted walls or the same wall before the mural had been painted. Buildings showing the painted walls included three housing projects, two community centers, and one school. Two decoy slides (a stone house and the view of a large plaza) were added to mask the purposes of the study. Two separate slide series were created because we did not want a person to rate the same scene twice, and two classes of college students made the ratings. The first series was shown in one class, the second series in another. No student rated the same building twice. A check on the comparability of the two classes was possible in regards to their ratings of the two decoy slides which had been done by both groups.

Results

The ratings were made along five-point adjective scales (see Table 1). The scale positions of favorable and unfavorable adjectives were counter-balanced during the rating but in Table 1 they are summarized with the more favorable adjective on the right. A score above 3.0 means a favorable rating, a score below 3.0 an unfavorable rating.

Table 1. Ratings of walls with and without murals

Adjective Pair	Average Ratings*	
	Walls with Murals	Undecorated Walls
Unfriendly - Friendly	3.3	2.0
Sad - Happy	3.4	2.0
Ugly - Beautiful	3.2	1.6
Drab - Colorful	4.4	1.4
Passive - Active	4.0	1.8
Bland - Zestful	4.0	1.5

*A score above 3.0 means a favorable rating, a score below 3.0 an unfavorable rating.

As predicted, there were no differences between the two classes in their ratings of the two decoy slides. For the other six buildings, statistical tests revealed highly significant differences between the painted and the bare walls. In every case the mural-painted buildings were seen as more friendly, happier, attractive, colorful, active, and zestful than the same or adjacent buildings without murals.

Discussion

That murals can brighten outdoor spaces has both practical and heuristic significance. In view of the interest of arts administrators in documenting program effects, research on this issue is sorely needed. This is particularly true in regards to murals painted by community organizations. The conventional wisdom has been that local people might look with favor on their own artwork, but the work would not necessarily be well-received by outsiders. The present study shows that college students gave favorable ratings to the six community murals, at least in comparison with undecorated walls. The next step is to go further and match different mural styles and works with different settings. As mentioned earlier, the issue lends itself to simulation studies, because of the availability of so many mural slide collections.⁵ It would be interesting to repeat the present study using larger abstract murals such as those by New York City Wall's group or those in downtown Cincinnati sponsored by the Solway Gallery. Such murals might be rated as more colorful, active, and attractive than bare walls, but perhaps not as friendly as community murals. There is a great deal to be learned through a variety of research methods about the relationship between public art to its setting. Documenting public response to the work can also provide information that will help improve the aesthetic quality of the urban environment. These methods can be used not only in evaluating the effects of a mural after it has been painted—showing slides to diverse audiences to gauge impact—but in the early planning of a mural to show neighborhood residents what the painting will look like at an appropriate scale. Not all muralists will want to use simulation procedures. Yet for others the technique may open up intriguing possibilities for both neighborhood consultation and post-painting feedback.

Robert Sommer
Karen Chang

46 References

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²Alton DeLong, "The Use of Scale Models in Spatial Behavioral Research," *Man-Environment Systems*, 1976-77, pp. 179-182.

³Jerome Sirlin, "Photomontage Broadens the Spectrum of Design," *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1981, pp. 56-57.

⁴Robert Sommer, *Street Art*. New York: Links, 1975.

⁵*Environmental Communications, Catalog. Venice, CA*, see also Helmut Weihsmann, *Street Art USA*, Ars Nova Media, Schlagergasse 5, A-1090 Wien, Austria. ♦



This mural was painted at Haymarket Press in Minneapolis, by Marilyn Lindstrom and Miranda Bergman, Fall, 1981. Haymarket Press is a worker-owned union printshop. Besides regular jobs, the press creates many of the materials used by people engaged in political struggles and education in the area. They wanted their mural to reflect the trade of printing through showing its tools; presses, camera, light table, cutter, etc, as well as the people behind the tools and the product. The power of the press is represented by a dragon emerging from one of the presses, and unified in the dragon's fire are books and posters representing through their symbols different parts of the overall struggle for liberation of the peoples and their earth. Approaching the mural from the right side is a long march of people, showing that the printshop is not an isolated group of individuals, but is connected to many. The mural was painted with Politec Paints on the south wall of the building, and is approx 60' x 18'. The building is owned by the press, so the mural should enjoy a long life. The artists worked with the press collective, back and forth in meetings, until the vision came together.

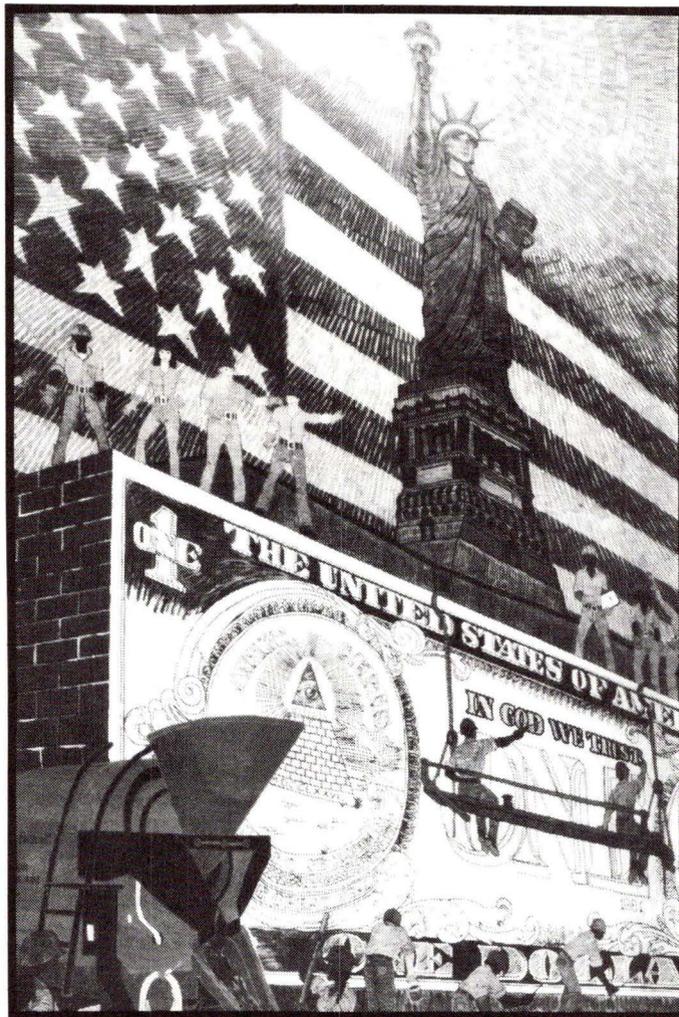
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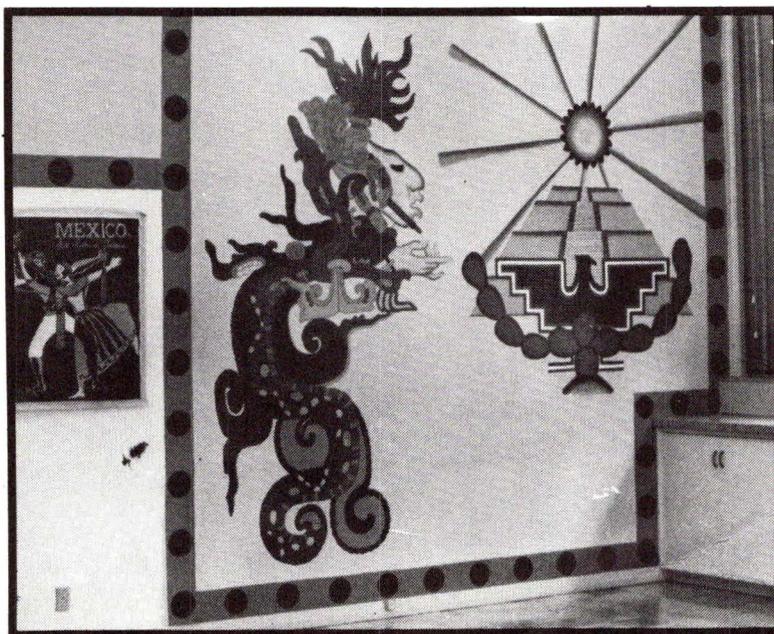
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Pasto Medina and students of Balboa High School, San Francisco, 1981. Photo: Jim Prigoff.



Mural by Jaime Martinez, 17, Long Beach High School. Photo: Hector D. Gonzalez.

