EDITORIAL

Labor & Art

This issue of Community Murals celebrates the rich history of labor in community images. Through a recognition of our lives as workers, our art becomes part of the history of committed public art and also expresses our working lives. Our consciousness of ourselves and others as workers enriches our art, and our conscious art enriches our working lives. We know, however, that this sentiment is more than real. Historically, the relationship of art to labor is worth great respect, but are also uneven.

Images of workers have been used both to proclaim and to manipulate people. Rosie the Riveter was famous during WWII as a symbol of women successfully doing industrial jobs previously reserved for men, but after the war businesses took off her welding mask and put an apron on her image as they sought to banish women back to kitchen and nursery in an extensive advertising campaign. They may be the jobs we do at work and we may populate their images, but the images can be owned—and used—by others.

Recently, workers and visual artists have struggled to reestablish the bonds of previous eras. Ralph Fasanella's paintings of working life have been "discovered" both by the media and by collectors. The mass political movements of the 1970s proclaimed the notion of the "cultural worker," and paid serious attention to all workers in photographs, paintings, posters and murals.

Nor has his collaboration been limited to the United States. Murals depicting the everyday lives of working people have been painted in several parts of Britain, Australia, Germany, and Latin America. In socialist countries, of course, working people are given much greater respect than in capitalist countries, and their images have been acceptable and accessible for decades.

In the United States, the community mural movement has given attention to workers in three ways. First, it has depicted everyday work. Second, murals have shown the struggles of people of color, which necessarily involve their histories as workers at the lower ends of the economic spectrum. Women, too, have suffered a similar fate historically, and have been shown on our nation's walls both working and in a vision of a better world along with people of color.

In the third case, muralists have worked with unions either directly or indirectly in creation of their images. Cases of indirect involvement are best exemplified by the myriad Raza murals containing the symbol of the United Farm Workers, and although few of these walls are sponsored by direct cash grants from the union, they all share a belief in the strength of the UFW as a symbol of struggle of Raza people for better lives. Direct cases of union sponsorship of murals are rare, but significant examples exist, such as William Walker's Meatcutter's Union mural in Chicago, and John Pitman Weber and Jose Guerrero's United Electrical Workers mural in Chicago.

Many of the articles in this issue of CMM demonstrate collaboration between artists and unions in a monumental public proclamation of the potential of organized labor and culture. But these very articles raise some questions as well. Why aren't unions supporting more visual arts? Why aren't community artists going to unions more and offering to work with them to celebrate the best aspects of their work? Artists have worked harmoniously with the UFW; why with so few other unions? Do muralists consider themselves cultural workers? Few artists we know are members of trade unions. What about the possibility of forming artists' unions?

Hopefully, the day will come when art and labor will be seen by everyone as connected and mutually necessary—both to feed each other. Until then, we mourn the actual destruction of Gilberto Ramirez' LULAC mural, a monumental depiction of industrialization and its effects on workers' lives, with a central image of hopefulness breaking through the oppression to begin a better world for everyone. It was painted in San Francisco in April 1975 and shown on our cover. Its recent destruction to make space for a condominium development symbolizes too well the Reagan administration's attack on unions and working people in general. As community artists, we can do more than just mourn, however. We can, in reiteration of the principles of the Community Muralists' Network, use our skills to make art of high quality freely accessible to people in their struggles against racial, sexual, and economic oppression.

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Deadlines!!!!!

Materials for the next issue must reach us by the following dates:

- Winter 1985 by Thursday, January 24, 1985
- Spring 1985 by Thursday, April 25, 1985
- Summer 1985 by Thursday, July 25, 1985

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

Editorial Group

Juana Alicia ............................. Emmanuel Montoya
Miranda Bergman ......................... Mike Mosher
Kathie Cinnater .......................... Jane Norling
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Jim Dong ................................ Odilia Rodriguez
Tim Drescher ............................ Arch Williams

Please Note: In the last issue, the article "Puerto Rico: Art for the People" on p. 5 was written by Betty LaDuke, who teaches at Southern Oregon State College.

Special thanks to Jo Keroes

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Important Notice  Address of CMM has been changed to 1019 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707
Impulse
Box 901, Station Q
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4T 2P1
quarterly; $15/year

Summer, 1984 issue is entirely dedicated to the culture of Nicaragua. Handsome format and use of color; contents include nine pieces of fiction (including Augusto Cesar Sandino's *Rin and Roff*), poetry, and articles and interviews on cultural luminaries as Alan Bolt, Omar Cabezas, and Rosario Murillo.

Left Curve
Box 472
Oakland, CA 94604
published irregularly; $12 for 3 issues

Issue #9, the most recent, focuses on working class culture and aesthetics. It includes an interview with painter Ralph Fasanella, an article on the German-based "Other America" exhibit of American working life, and a piece on the community of labor culture. *Left Curve* back issues have included articles on the Mexican muralists (#6) and on Cityarts Workshop (#4).

Opening of First Mural Training Center in U.S.
The first mural training center in the United States has been announced. Funded through the program for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education for a period of three years, the training center will be held at the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) in Venice, California beginning in January, 1985. The center will train graduate and post-graduate level students in the arts, education, social sciences and humanities, and be run on a quarterly basis.

A culturally-diverse group of students is being sought for the workshops which will be conducted on Saturdays, with mornings devoted to history and theory of the creation of public artworks and afternoons given to actual studio work in video, visual performance, and mural painting.

Some scholarship support is available. For more information, contact Linda Kaun at SPARC, 685 Venice Blvd., Venice, CA 90291. (213) 822-9560, Tuesday through Saturday.

Art & Ideology
New Museum of Contemporary Art
583 Broadway
New York, NY 10012
$10.50 + $2.00 postage

This is an illustrated catalog of the New Museum's exhibit presented in early 1984 in which five guest curators each chose work by two contemporary artists. The purpose of the show was to explore "To what extent do unspoken social, cultural and political factors... affect the way we present and perceive works of art, and to what extent those works of art are part of the larger social fabric of our lives".

As one might expect, a great diversity of style and content is represented—labor issues (Fred Lonidier, Allan Sekula), feminism (Kaylynn Sullivan, Hannah Wilke, Suzanne Lacy, Nancy Spero), and political repression on various levels (Francesc Torres, Jerry Kearns, Alfredo Jaar, and Ismael Frigerio). A considerable amount of text is devoted to expanding the themes raised by the artwork, which is further amplified by artists' statements.

Mural Book
Published in October

Alan Barnett's book on murals is due to be released in the middle of October. *CMM* will review the book in a future issue.

Syracuse Peace Project
P.O. Box 6367
Syracuse, N.Y. 13217

The SCP is an excellent source of progressive political artwork. Of special note is their 1985 Peace Calendar, featuring twelve reproductions of contemporary images (8 in full color), available for $8.25 by mail. For 25¢ you can get a copy of their catalog, which includes posters, cards and other visual treats.

Subway Art


In the beginning, there were the natural questions of trust surrounding this Stanford University classical Greek graduate, but the passion, zeal, and expertise he brought to his work soon made Henry Chalfant the unquestioned documentor of the New York "Writers."

The early morning calls, "It will be rolling out of the C.C. yard at 6 a.m., be there," would send Henry scurrying in a quest spanning several years that enabled him to photograph over 500 subway train "pieces." In the world of the graffiti writers, there were "kings" of the lines, but Henry was and is the king of the documentors.

Martha Cooper is a photojournalist who saw the trains always in the larger context of their environment and the city. Her panoramic pictures created excitement for a new emerging art form.

Subway Art is the culmination of a unique blending of photographic skills with an easy to read trip through the subway world of train writing. It's all here in 104 exciting color pages, incredibly precise photos of many of the major "pieces" spanning a ten year period from 1973 to 1983, preserving visual images of a new American folk art in transition. The authors, with close cooperation from the "writers" trace the history of graffiti in New York City, giving a sense of the lines, explaining the vocabulary, exploring technique and style, introducing the reader to the "writers" and "crews" and examining many comic characters and dedications. The story would never be complete without a word about their bewildered opposition, too.

With graffiti writers now finding their way into N.Y.C. art galleries, this important documentation helps to put this in a proper sociological perspective as well as to view graffiti in all of its sophistication, humor, technical brilliance, and eye-exploding color. As they say in the book, it's really "def," man.

Jim Prigoff
Art At Work

Industrial health and safety is an issue which many people who work at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard in Melbourne, are beginning to realize is vitally important in their lives. A mural which incorporates many of the problems directly related to the Dockyard has been recently completed in the Nelson Pier Canteen.

People spend a great amount of their lives at work and, in this particular environment, come in contact with dangerous chemicals, noise, fume and fire hazards from certain processes daily. A health and safety awareness is important—not only that precautions are taken but that people communicate on issues, investigate materials and alternatives, and solve or remove the actual hazard.

Painted by the Dockyard workers the project was coordinated by myself with Toni Chaffey, who took research and documentation photographs. Twenty one workers from blue and white collar areas were involved with the mural during work time. It was realized that there was a lot of relevant information that could be included because of the large range of trades, dock and office activities. They chose a layout which related directly to their situation. The scene is a semi-aerial view of the Dockyard with superimposed circles containing pictures which relate to particular workshops, the offices etc. The relevance and effectiveness of the content was determined by the workers’ input—the ideas which came from their own experiences in their workplace and their suggestions for the prevention of existing problems.

Some of the aims within the circles were to show the hazard at the site of danger, to suggest safety measures, to encourage inquiry and action, to show the existence of boredom and dissatisfaction, to motivate regular inspection and to state that change is up to both individuals and management. The mural has been successful in helping to generate discussion on these points.

Another purpose of the project was to involve the workers in arts activities and it is planned that an arts programme will continue in the Dockyard. Another mural has been completed and the Wnd Worker newspaper has been established, coordinated by Paddy Garrity, a worker who is also encouraging the arts activities; screen printed posters and signs are being produced, also on health and safety with high worker involvement, which will probably lead to the setting up of a screen print workshop; and there are plans for video activities.

CMM Loses Funding

Community Murals Magazine’s funding has been radically reduced for this year and seems extremely uncertain for the future. We no longer can afford to send the Magazine for free to anyone, so after the next issue, you will not receive Community Murals unless you have subscribed. Subscriptions already received will be honored, but new subscriptions are now $12 for a year (four issues) for individuals, $20 overseas (includes airmailing), $25 for domestic institutions and $30 for overseas institutions. Needless to add, higher sums are most welcome. We have been sending many copies to prisoners and others similarly unable to pay, and without sustaining subscriptions of $30 to $50 or even $100, we will be unable to continue these mailings.

Residents of Great Britain may subscribe by sending £15 ($20 for institutions) to Community Murals Magazine 84a St. Stephens Ave., London W12, England.

CMM has published 570 pages since its inception as a newsletter in 1976, and the present 24 pages contain the same amount of material as the previous 32 page format because of the use of three columns instead of two. Without substantial paid subscriptions, we will be unable to continue this size.

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Make check out to “Community Muralists’ Magazine,” 1019 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707.

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Nine other outside artists spent varying amounts of time on the Nelson Pier Canteen mural. Some were muralists who contributed from their experience and some were artists curious to see this type of project in progress. The interaction between people in their work environment and full-time artists had obvious reciprocal value. It illustrated non-competitive, co-operative skill sharing, and the enthusiasm of all who were involved was matched by the strength of their individual painting approaches and understanding of the communicative value of a public art work.

It was a joint Combined Union Shop Committee and management project funded by the Australia Council through the Footscray Community Arts Centre. Such projects have the potential to involve workers with other methods of expressing their ideas using their own language and aesthetics.

Anne Morris

**Industrial Health and Safety Mural**

[Australia]

Nelson Pier Canteen,
Williamstown Naval Dockyard,
Melbourne, Australia, 1983.

Anne Morris, Toni Chaffey, Hugh Anderson, Neiro Rezzmann, Paddy Garrity, Chris Medger, Tony Hicks, Phillip Bonnicci, Steve Hanson, Albert Roeilos, Mairue, Greg, Warren Clark, Ron Shaw, Dave, Robert, Tony, Guinea, Wally Crawford, Don Harbridge, Trina Burkell, Michael Rohan, Timmy Crumwell, Robert Lacey, Deborah Perrow, Nick Johnson, Mark Denton, Felix Hurd, Phillip McKinney, John Manson, Ric McCracken, Lee Stevenson.

Cost, Approx. $2,000. Funded by the Australia Council through the Footscray Community Arts Centre, Materials, scaffolding, etc. provided by the Williamstown Naval Dockyard.

It is painted on an interior concrete block wall using Chromos High Gloss Acrylic paint.

Photographs by Toni Chaffey

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**Artists Brigade to Nicaragua**

Managua, Nicaragua.
August, 1984.

The Museum of the Revolution.

Joel and I walk up to a low building; on one side of the entrance is a barricade made of bricks from the street. The ones Somoza forced the people to buy by passing a law that all streets must be paved with bricks owned by his company, and then sold at his high prices. On the other side of the door is a hand-made tank.

The museum begins its story with the beginning of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and the Monroe Doctrine. This aggressive expansionism was rationalized by the phrase “Manifest Destiny.” The documentation goes on to Roosevelt's “big stick” policy, Taft's “dollar diplomacy”, three invasions of Nicaragua, two major occupations by the United States Marines, and Franklin Roosevelt's “good neighbor” policy. There is a photograph of Roosevelt with Somoza; the quote has FDR saying, “He’s a son of a bitch, but he’s our son of a bitch.” (This quote is also documented in Time, Nov. 15, 1948.)

Then I see on the wall photographs of four young men whose faces I recognize. I feel a moment of shock as I place them. They are four students who were massacred by the National Guard on July 23, 1959 in Leon, Nicaragua, while protesting an ambush of Sandinistas in the mountains.

Joel and I have just completed a mural with the Taller Toribo Jerez mural collective, on a wall which faces the street where the massacre took place. The mural is a memorial to these students.

Once month later, I am sitting, standing rather, in a very large, very crowded room at City Hall in San Francisco. This is a hearing for all community groups, who are about to lose their 1985 funding from the Office for Community Development.

I am here on behalf of the Mural Resource Center. Everyone in this packed room gets three minutes, on a first come first served basis, to tell the board, (which appears to be not very interested) why their community organization should not be cut.

We listen for two hours while others give their short testimonies (interrupted by an alarm when their three minutes are up). When James Kuramia, director of the Mural Resource Center gets up to the podium, one of the presiding men suddenly becomes very animated and hostile, and demands to know why the Mural Resource Center is here asking for more money when they haven’t spent previous years’ money. The simple answer is, of course, that the money was never actually received. So much for public hearings.

The muralists were cut off from even their three minutes, not to mention their past and future funding. My mind returns to Nicaragua where I encountered a very different attitude towards artists and people in general.

For one thing, in Nicaragua these board members would have to answer to the people instead of sitting and looking bored. (One of the forums for this is a weekly meeting of government officials with the people of different towns. The officials go and answer questions the people may have, without three minute alarms. The meeting is not over until every question has been answered. These meetings are aired on television.)

Leon, Nicaragua. Approximately 35’ x 20’.
Polytech. Susan Greene, Joel Katz and Taller Toribo Jerez Mural Collective.

The Nicaraguan government recognizes the importance of and the inherent power in cultural expression, even during this period of escalating military threats. This is one reason why the Ministry of Culture invited this first Artists Brigade, of which Joel and I are a part, to paint a series of public murals with Nicaraguan artists.

We were ten visual artists, ten musicians and a video crew, a working delegation sponsored by Boston based "Arts for a New Nicaragua." We each paid our own expenses; monies for materials were raised through fundraising events and donations. The musicians split into two groups and toured through much of the country, including performing for the troops at the Honduran border.

The muralists, in groups of two and threes, went to three cities to hold work-
shops, give technical assistance and paint.

It is a part of the Sandinista program that the development of culture is as important as the development of industry and defense. Through art and culture people express thoughts and feelings about their lives and are spiritually nourished. The Centers for Popular Culture (CPC) are located in all major towns. (They are often what used to be the homes or social clubs of supporters of Somoza.)

"They (the CPC) are the department of the Ministry of Culture that actualizes policy because it goes to the masses," Sonia, who works for the CPC in Managua told us.

Among the goals of the CPC are: putting forward the cultural policy of the revolution; securing national identity; securing cultural traditions (keeping folk traditions alive through education and using cultural events to create a consciousness in the value of Nicaraguan products); and the development of new art forms.

Carlos Sanchez, director of the Center for Popular Culture in Leon, said; "The Frente Sandanista (FSLN) has acknowledged the new form of murals and their importance, they see the need to develop this form."

The Frente encourages popularization of the arts and the people we worked with got three weeks off from their jobs, with pay, to design and paint a mural. This is a good illustration of the importance of cultural development to the Nicaraguans as they are struggling to recuperate and build from the ongoing war with US backed contras, earthquakes, and US embargoes.

"La Cultura es el fusil artístico de la revolución"—Culture is the artistic rifle of the revolution, is an often heard slogan.

The group Joel and I worked with (Taller Toribo Jerez Collective) was made up of young workers; carpenters, gardeners, etc. and a well-known classical painter, who teaches in Leon.

Granada, Nicaragua. Project was started by a Nicaraguan artist who ran out of paint. Rikki Asher, Teresa Munoz and Lynn Roberson completed the project.

Most of these people were combatants during the insurrection. A few had been active in the struggle since the ages of thirteen or fourteen. One woman had been in charge of a line of fifty people when she was sixteen.

The process of designing and painting a mural in three weeks with a group in a collective manner was a formidable undertaking, Joel writes: "... it was extremely moving and impressive the way in which our Nicaraguan companeros worked in a collective process. Over difficulties including language barriers, a shortly defined amount of time, and supply shortages; the collective process proceeded with an almost disarmingly unfamiliar smoothness and energy... People were honest with their opinions and objections in such a way that problems of ego and personality conflict were quite minimized. In many ways I feel that this experience has taught me more about the Nicaraguan revolutionary process than any book I have read or speech I have heard."

One of the most impressive things about our experience was the enthusiasm, warmth and appreciation with which were were met. From the start when we arrived in Leon, and were met by 30 people who had plans for more walls than we had time or paint for, to parties held in our honor, to the great intensity and passion with which people shared their lives with us. Judy Brantman, who painted in Granada said, "My home and family life in Granada was a very moving experience. 20 people in the one house, coming and going, appearing from the border, disappearing back to the war; mostly women and their children—all loving and giving to each other and especially to me. They shared what little they had with me as if I was a member of their family and they truly appreciated the work we were doing for the revolution."

I saw what underdevelopment in Central America looks and feels like; and I witnessed how hard the Nicaraguan people are working to change their country. For example 400,000 adults have been taught to read since 1979. Natasha Mayers, who painted in Granada wrote "What affected me daily was seeing how much energy goes into protecting what little they have from US financed sabotage."

Through the experience of living and working in Nicaragua, solidarity now has the faces and words of friends. There is a part of me that would have like to have stayed there but we need all the people we can get for the struggle in the United States. ¡Sandino Vive!

Susan Greene
San Francisco, October, 1984
Arnold Belkin's New Mural "Images of Our Time"

Arnold Belkin, long known in Mexico for his monumental easel paintings on historical subjects, has just finished a new mural called "Images of Our Time" (Imagenes de nuestros dias) on the facades of the New Fire Theatre at the Metropolitan University of Iztapalapa, Mexico City. The mural is divided into two sections: a north wall of 90.8 feet in length and 9.5 feet in height; and an adjoining wall 34.8 by 9.5 feet which meets the first at right angles. Faced with the frieze-like nature of the space, Belkin designed the longer wall with a series of large heads and single or grouped figures facing to the right—so the eye travels toward the corner conjunction of the two walls—syncopated by segments of photographically-derived massed figures facing center or left. The adjoining wall, less than half as long, travels left toward the joining, stabilized by two profile figures which hold the wall in statis. The more stable quality of the smaller wall is consistent with the theme which deals with resolution, contrasted with the tension of the major wall.

Belkin calls the smaller space "The Wall of Solutions: A Possible Utopia," and the major space "The Wall of Problems: Images of Our Time." The latter deals with the urban crisis, the struggles of the marginalized poor for existence, and the armed conflict in Central America. Color is brilliant on both walls, with a range of blues, greens, terracottas, browns and yellows applied flat to constructivist planes, or airbrushed for modulations on rounded forms. The photographic sections are blue, green, red, and yellow ochre monochromes.

Reading from left to right on the north wall, a working class figure, realistically treated, begins the sequence, followed by four gigantic heads in profile and semi-profile executed in gray, blue, rose and violet. These heads, which Belkin envisions as "open to time," fuse a contemporary reference (the present progress toward a more equitable social structure of peace and harmony) with a historic one: that of the Aztec Toxihmolollia, or New Fire Ceremony (after which the theatre is named) celebrated every 52 years at the Hill of the Star (Cerro de la Estrella), a location not far from the campus which is located on the southeast edge of Mexico City. The New Fire Ceremony marked the completion of a century which, if all went well, ushered in the next cycle of life with the relighting of extinguished fires throughout the Aztec capitol. The heads also symbolize the flow of abstract thought (knowledge), a reference to the function of the university. Immediately confronting these idealized faces is a segment of real life taken from documentary photographs: a scene from the 1968 student demonstrations against government repression that led to the October 2nd Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City.

The interplay of two themes—scientific and social research and knowledge, represented by idealized, abstracted, even mechanized human forms (the faculty and students of the university), and the conflicts of the modern world which forms the context of higher education, represented by realistic paintings of demonstrations, urban misery, and armed conflict derived from photographs—are counterpointed throughout the "Wall of Problems." The dynamic at work on this wall is expressed pictorially and musically, in a manner of speaking. Pictorially, the artist employs two different styles to juxtapose the academic and political worlds; however they are overlapped and woven together in the sequential, temporal reading of the wall which flows forward like musical measures with intervals of different keys or melodies. Taken together, the two styles make up the fabric of the whole composition. Belkin expresses this juxtaposition in Hegelian terms: knowledge is the "thesis"; conflict the "antithesis." "Synthesis" is achieved on the second, or utopian wall, but it starts with an image at the end of the first wall: the entry of the triumphant Sandinista revolutionaries into Managua, followed by three gigantic idealized heads that look toward the future.

The "Wall of Solutions: A Possible Utopia" commences with a group of large figures accepting the new flame born out of the fusion of knowledge and
The Little Town that Did: Muralists and Monasteries

Town in Canada uses Murals to Revive

On the brink of becoming a ghost town, Chemainus, British Columbia, Canada, commissioned well-known artists to paint the town's history on its walls as part of a plan to revive the town once its traditional industrial base had decreased. Chemainus was basically a one-industry milltown, but, with the help of the large outdoor murals painted on its buildings, it shifted its economic base to tourism. The booklet describing this process is titled, "The Little Town that Did: Chemainus, Festival of Murals," indicating murals' importance in the revitalization of the area.

The town's use of murals as part of its renaissance plan is told in a 28 minute film, The Little Town that Did, 16mm color, 3/4" video, 1/2" Beta and VHS which is distributed by Canadian Filmmakers Distribution West, Suite 1, 525 West Pender Street, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6B 1V5.

The story of Chemainus' use of murals goes back to 1971, when "a pair of Canadian tourists travelling through Rumania came upon some unusual communities. Monasteries, in the towns of Moldovita, Sucevita and Voronet all had fresco murals painted on their outer walls. The paintings were over 400 years old and they told the history of each area... The tourists came away deeply impressed." In time, this led to the painting of thirteen large murals in Chemainus, including the brief selection shown here.

Since Chemainus' history is bound up with relations between Native Americans and European settlers, immigrants from a number of other places such as China, and its constant occupation as a lumber milltown, the murals are a celebration of the ethnic and working class diversity and traditions of the town. Chemainus is located on the east side of Vancouver Island, across from the city of Vancouver and north of Victoria.

The murals depict such scenes as the "Arrival of the 'Reindeer' in Horse Shoe Bay" in 1873, the area's "Temporary Homes" in 1912, the "Company Store", "Logging with Oxen", and the "Hong King Waterfront Store" in addition to the three murals pictured here.
INDIAN HERITAGE. 50’ x 20’. Artist: Paul Ygartua. Vancouver, B.C. History: Flanked by totem poles are three natives from the Chemainus area: portrayed on the right is a stoic Salish woman, while in the centre is former Chemainus Band Chief Clay-sa-luke. Ce-who-latze (on the left) was chief of Lyakun Village on Shingle Point, Valdez Island and also a constable of the Indian Police and Native Pilot for the Royal Navy. Top right, Mrs. Mary Rice. Photo by Karl Schutz.

STEAM DONKEY AT WORK: 27’ x 10’. Artists: Frank Lewis and Nancy Lagana. History: For the steam donkey and its crew, pulling a log from the forest was an obstacle course of the worst kind, fighting rocks, hill, wood and stumps all the way. “Charley” the line horse waits patiently in the background, ready to haul the 20mm cable to the next log to be hauled. The machine was invented by John Dolbeer in 1882, built by Murray Bros. in San Francisco, and started work in Chemainus in 1885. Now restored, it has been retired to the B.C. Forest Museum in the Cowichan Valley. Photo by Karl Schutz.


COMMUNITY MURALS MAGAZINE/FALL 1984
WPA MURALS

Camden Logging Mural was sponsored by the Camden Community Concerns Council, a neighborhood organization in Minneapolis, and designed by Susan McDonald and Marilyn Lindstrom in collaboration with the neighborhood organization. The theme of the mural was pride in the history of the work on the river. The Mississippi River runs through Minneapolis and St. Paul. Actually, better said would be the cities grew up along the river. The river is part of peoples lives here and the Camden neighborhood, being one of the older neighborhoods is particularly proud of its own history of people working on the river.

May Day Mural was painted for a May Day festival held in Powderhorn Park in Minneapolis each year. The festival is one of spring celebration and we wanted to add some history to that celebration by painting a mural about the history of May Day-celebrating working people, and the history of our labor.

PLACA

Officially it is a street, but it has been known for years to residents of the Mission District as Balmy Alley. Now, there is no word to indicate the transformation that has occurred over the past several months. The street/alley is now home to one of the most concentrated groups of community murals anywhere. A walk down the block thus immerses one in the colorful beauties and disturbing dilemmas of current Central American turmoil. These murals are painted by community artists making their opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America visible to the public. This collective of over thirty artists, known as PLACA, gathered together in the past year to create the mural environment which now graces the garages, fences and walls of Balmy Street. The artists expect those who experience this small but powerful space to be moved emotionally, politically and creatively. They want to make people think and talk about the human realities behind these painted images—the women, the men and children of Central America, their land, their labors, their struggles against intervention and for freedom and self-determination. Through vivid and moving images, PLACA's murals make the human connection between the peoples of the Northern and Central Americas.

Brought together by a common opposition to the Reagan Administration's policies of economic and military aggression in Central America, PLACA was formed in October 1983 and is comprised of community artists: men and women, North and Latin Americans, fine and graphic artists, students and teachers, documentors, community organizers and public relations workers. Murals have existed on Balmy Street for some ten years. Indeed, Balmy's location, in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District, was an important consideration in the choice of the alley as the home of PLACA's mural environment. The Mission is a predominantly Latino community, many of its residents having emigrated there from the Central American countries depicted on the Balmy murals. Moreover, the Mission District is internationally noted for its concentration of mural art with Latin American flavor and political overtones. The Balmy Mural Environment is another significant contribution to this long and proud tradition.

Judy Bell, Tim Drescher, Nicole Emanuel, Paul Rossman.

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Cityarts Workshop Inc. announces the production of “From One Generation to Another” (working title) an innovative mixed media mural project located on Avenue C between 7th and 8th Streets in Manhattan. Designed and supervised by prominent Chicago muralist John Pitman Weber, this project is sponsored by Adopt-A Building and Charas, two neighborhood organizations on the Lower East Side. The mural extends over sections of two adjacent walls, one measuring 30 feet (height) by 40 feet (length), and the other measuring 15 feet (height) by 75 feet (length). Completion and dedication ceremonies were held August 24th. “From One Generation to Another” is produced by Cityarts Workshop, Inc. a fifteen year old not-for-profit arts organization. Cityarts is committed to the production of public art of enduring aesthetic value, while remaining responsive to the cultural needs of the neighborhoods for which the works are created.

John Pitman Weber visited New York as part of an exchange program between Cityarts Workshop and the Chicago Mural Group, funded through the Expansion Arts Division of the National Endowment for the Arts. Pedro Silva, his New York-based counterpart, worked in Chicago. The exchange program was initiated as a vehicle to strengthen ties between these two leading organizations in the National Mural Network, and to share valuable technical information and expertise in working with the more permanent media.

In the “Generations” mural, John Pitman Weber combined two artisans’ techniques: sgraffito (a method of cutting away parts of a surface layer to expose a different colored ground) and free-form concrete relief. This innovative use of materials, particularly on a monumental scale, is an ambitious undertaking which represents the first project of its type in New York.

The theme of Weber’s mural was chosen to capture the flavor of Lower East Side history, with a specific orientation to the cultural roots of the Hispanic community in which the mural is located. Weber sought to reflect this neighborhood’s unique history through a combination of images based on photographs of the community, reproductions of familiar documents (such as citizenship papers) and poetry in English and Spanish. This mural site includes a garden dedicated to senior citizens in the area.

Weber conceived of this project as a fluid, mixed-media installation whose final form would result from a combination of community input and strong direction from the artist. The lower segments are colored concrete reliefs, which evoke tropical images of leaves, birds, and a large sun mask. Weber selected these forms to symbolize this Latin neighborhood’s Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage. The remainder of the installation is executed with traditional painted mural techniques. The verse is drawn from poets as diverse as Pablo Neruda, Jose de Diego and Julia de Burgos, as well as local writers.

Mr. Weber’s crew consisted of college students Gilberto Reyes (Boricua College), Gene de Bartolo (School of Visual Arts), and Daniel Rothenberg (Brown University), who are being funded through the Exxon Community Summer Jobs program, as well as high school students from Jobs for Youth. He has also received vital assistance from Dona Carmen Pabon, a dedicated community volunteer.

Direct project support for “From One Generation to Another” has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts, Exxon Corporation Community Summer Jobs Program, and Jobs for Youth, as previously mentioned, as well as the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Materials funding was provided by the New York City Public Development Corporation. Additional donations of materials were made by Certified Concrete.

Weber later commented that he thought the project noteworthy from the standpoint of theme and of design and technical complexity. "The use of text got especially strong response, as did the very colorful concrete work, a medium never before seen in N.Y.C. The use of freestanding elements as a part of the wall composition was new to us as well. We create an evocation of Latin experience/culture: the concrete work evoking Afro-Caribbean roots as well, strong, permanent, colorful, etc. The painted images of the Loisaida/NYC immigrant experience perceived in documents as fragmentary, contradictory, transitional, the poems (eleven included, three on south-main wall, eight more on west wall on atmosphere-blue background which picks up the blue in the concrete), by Jose de Diego, Corretjer, Soto Velez, Neruda, Daisy Zamora, Jubade Burgios, Fragoso and four local poets present the lyric tradition as a living bridge/path through/over these tensions" profane, varied, passionate and popular. Deliberately emphasizing Spanish in an area likely to be transformed by gentrifying speculation in a few years was one of the political aspects of the project.”

Photo by John Weber
Cara a Cara en Centroamerica

The latest in a series of large portable canvasses (mini-murals) painted by East Los Streetscapers is a 12' x 18' piece entitled "Face Off in Central America." Although the collaborative design and painting techniques used to paint their mini-murals are the same as those used in their many street murals, three important differences are noted by the public art team: first off, the impetus to design such a work is usually an invitation to perform (at a cultural festival) the art of Chicano muralismo. Streetscaper mini-murals have been painted at festivals in Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Pomona, Pasadena, St. Louis, and Houston. Secondly, the themes are more political than the street murals, which are designed to present the Chicano image in a positive manner. Festival mural themes have included gang warfare, nuclear annihilation, manifest destiny, undocumented workers and oil spills. Finally, portable murals are just that: portable. As such, ELS mini-murals have been exhibited at conferences, festivals, concerts, and gallery shows.

"Cara a Cara en Centroamerica" was designed for demonstration at Artesania Mexicana, at Lincoln Park's Plaza de la Raza; an official event of the Olympic Arts Festival. Although the Streetscapers had proposed a permanent 80' by 85' Olympics mural for downtown LA, the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee turned them down, opting instead for art in the fast lane: ten freeway murals. Although the Streetscapers were chagrined (aguitados) to find they didn't make the "top ten," cofounder David Botello decided to bite the paint brush and accept invitations from Plaza and the Craft and Folk Art Museum's "Festival of the Masks." The group designed both festival murals around Central American themes to contrast the "festive federalism" colors that the LAOOC had plastered all over the city.

In "Cara a Cara..." ELS wanted to comment on history lessons unlearned. The possibility of another Vietnam in Central America appears to evade the analysis of the current administration. While the U.S. is nurturing its friendship with the People's Republic of China, it is covertly undermining the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. In the mural, we find a face off between an indignant indigenous lady and the American eagle. TR routs "rebels" out of the underbrush with his high-tech "big stick"-the internal-combustion blowhard. While helicopters equipped with clever eyes that see through the darkness chatter overhead, a campesino clutches a foreign-made weapon to defend his homeland. The fragile feet of the sacred quetzal delicately stand between a patriot and his martyrdom.

These images began their gestation in November of 1983 when Louise Lewis, Gallery Director at Califas State University, Northridge, invited the Streetscapers to show their mini-murals in a gallery show. When the artists told Ms. Lewis that they planned to paint "Cara a Cara" during the Olympic Arts Festival for the CSUN show, she used its imagery to print a beautiful full-color 8½" x 11" invitation.

The show opened in October with a Sunday tardeada featuring antojitos mexicanos, cold libations, and the contemporary Chicano sounds of Califas, featuring the haunting voice and hypnotic good looks of Irma "La Cui Cui" Rangel. If you missed the parranda, you can still get the color reproduction of "Cara a Cara..." for only $1 postpaid ($2 outside of the U.S.) from ELS, P.O. Box 2582, LA 90051. Y si no, pues-just don't miss their street murals when you visit L.A.; they're free and open 24 hours/day.

© 1984 by Pablo Xap
Art and Working Life

In September of 1982 the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) adopted a policy on Art and Working Life. In a country where almost half the workforce is organized, this represents perhaps one of the most enlightened efforts to integrate culture and labor in the capitalist world.

The policy and program were the result of a groundswell in trade-union related cultural work, culminating in a conference held late October 1981 which brought together trade union delegates, community arts representatives, and independent artists with links to the trade union movement.¹ The result was the formation of an ACTU Arts and Creative Recreation Committee with full-time paid staff and a $140,000 budget (FY 1982-83) for programs and projects.

This is no superficial “free tickets to the opera” approach. The policy reflects a sophisticated understanding of the diverse and interconnected roles which must be played by professionals, amateurs and institutions to reclaim and redefine working class culture. There is a realistic sense of the obstacles involved, but overriding it is the conviction that cultural work is as fundamental to furthering the class struggle as strikes or contract negotiations.

The projects in progress provide a clue as to the seriousness with which this task is undertaken. Historical consciousness is developed with oral history recordings, archival photoessays, and restoration of tangible artifacts such as trade union banners. More pressing and contemporary issues, like racism and health & safety, are raised through films, video, posters and murals.

The extent to which this effort will make an impact on Australian working culture remains to be seen; the program in its current state has been operational for less than two years. Regardless of what happens, however, the ground broken thus far can provide inspiration and models for the rest of us.

Lincoln Cushing

*For more insight on the conference, see Ian Burn’s article in Left Curve #8, listed in the Resources section.

Land of Promises

Land of Promises is a project in which community artists assisted immigrant community members to document some of the experiences and concerns of post World War II immigrants to Australia. A series of silkscreen prints was produced and is now touring South Australian communities.

Land of Promises was developed through a dual artist-in-residency (Andrew Hill and Eugenia Hill) based at Community Media Association, Adelaide. Workshops were held every Saturday afternoon from July to December 1982 to discuss experiences of what life was like for newcomers, and to develop and design the imagery.

The content of the images is not that which is generally reflected in Australian art over recent decades. As the published introduction to the project states:

“A very large proportion of our people did not grow up in the secure knowledge that this country was theirs, that they had equal opportunities, equal job access, or equal rights to political self-determination. Language barriers, official attitudes and policies, the industrial need for a compliant labour force which would effectively operate jobs Anglo-Australians shied away from, and would do so for a subsistence wage, ensured many new Australians remained, for at least a generation, a dispossessed group. The Snowy Mountains scheme, Tasmania’s hydro-electric scheme, the Riverland fruit industry, the shipbuilding, motor vehicle, housing, construction and whitegoods industries grew up based on immigrant labour. At migrant hostels, like Bonegilla, the first understanding of official hospitality was gained in situations devoid of nearly all social and material support structures. The large support structures which previously surrounded individuals and families in villages or home cities were gone and survival became so much harder for people isolated in a modern developing industrial economy. Yet alongside the initial dislocation and trauma there was a continuing sense of purpose, a deep need to reinforce familial and ethnic ties, to create support where previously there had been none.”

Giuliana Otmarich. In your painful separation from loved ones and homeland we are near in thought and heart.

Right to Work March

From Wollongong to Sydney, November 1982. The banner was produced by Redback Graffix commissioned by Wollongong Out of Workers Union. Photo: Ann Stephen.
A recently-painted banner produced for the Newcastle Branch of the Miscellaneous Workers Union by Birgitte Hansen Chawner.

The artist was approached by the Union through the Newcastle Workers' Cultural Action Committee. Old union banners were researched and the design based on the banner of the Leather Dressers who became affiliated with the MWU.

The banner was painted using acrylic scenic paint and is stretched on an aluminium frame. The roping was knotted by a local seaman.

South Coast Miners Federation banner produced by Redback Graffix with others, being carried in a demonstration in Wollongong, October 1982.
HEALTH & SAFETY
POSTERS

OCAW

In 1979 the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union International began producing a series of health and safety posters. Unlike several similar efforts by state and federal agencies, the emphasis was on artwork rather than dry and dull exhortations for workers to pay more attention. The project was initiated by Tony Mazzocci, then-coordinator of Health & Safety, in an effort to "Resurrect the artist forms from the 1930's". Artists, health care professionals and rank-and-file trade unionists worked together to develop text and images.

All posters were produced as silk-screen prints to enhance their aesthetic value, and produced in editions of 200. Distribution was accomplished through ads in union publications and word-of-mouth. Over the course of five years, seven posters were produced which covered such topics as asbestos, vinyl chloride, and hydrogen sulfide dangers, a strike at Tenneco, medical emergencies, and recruitment of doctors into the occupational health fields. One was reprinted in Chinese and presented by a delegation of occupational health workers, and one was reprinted in quantity by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The project finally ended because there was inadequate support from the International. Copies are still available from OCAW, c/o Sylvia Krekel, Health & Safety, OCAW-IV, P.O. Box 2812, Denver, CO 80201.

CACOSH

The Chicago Area Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (CACOSH) produced and distributes three posters, covering silicosis, worker's compensation rights, and hazards in the auto industry. Dave Simmons comments on "America's Workers are Dying..." "I used to use the theme in giving talks to medical students about occupational health. The idea was to get people thinking about the pervasive and hidden nature of safety and health hazards by analyzing a product and looking at the dangers all along the way from raw materials to finished product. What do workers go through and suffer in the process? And what's more American than the car?"

The designer was Lenora Davis, who now has her own studio, but then was a student and looking for a final project. She came to CACOSH and offered to do some work for us. I suggested the car poster and she did all the design work. The poster was very successful in terms of getting its message across, and has been very widely (worldwide) distributed. It appeared in a lot of labor publications, newsletters, etc. Financially it was a modest money maker, but a real pain to process orders for individual requests. With the troubles in the auto industry it also suffered a downturn, in that health and safety was not at the top of the agenda for many workers in that industry.

The poster is available for $4 plus $1 postage and handling from CACOSH, 33 E. Congress, Suite 723, Chicago, IL 60605. Lincoln Cushing
Logos of Our Movement

Logos are a unique design challenge. They must be able to concisely and precisely convey an organization's theme without depending on explanatory text. They must work as single color images in a variety of sizes. Their apparent simplicity conceals the tremendous amount of skill required to produce them. And they never credit the artist.

The following are some examples of this craft. I have included images developed for demonstrations or campaigns as well as some more traditional organizational logos. We will print more in future issues: readers' submissions are encouraged.

Lincoln Cushing

Boycott the Nugget

Kerry Tremain/Tom Schneider—The Coordinating Committee for Labor Solidarity in Northern Nevada (Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union).

Boycott the Nugget

Nancy Hom—Family Planning Forum, Oakland, CA.

David Bragin—War Resister's League (Modernized version of an old English logo)

Emily Polanshek—Center for Third World Organizing, Oakland, CA.


The Traveling Union Hall Show

Since 1980 a small group of us have produced an annual art exhibit which places socially-relevant works in union halls. The most recent tour, entitled "Pertinent Issues", was seen by thousands during its six months of exhibition throughout the S.F. Bay Area.

Past shows have included work on Central America, health & safety, environmental issues and labor history. Most of us in the show see the union audiences as key participants in the progressive struggles and see the chance to take part in this show as a unique opportunity.

From three years of putting on shows, several observations and considerations are noteworthy:

1. There is a very real need for relevant, quality artwork in most union halls, which are generally dreary, poorly lit spaces with no distinctive character whatsoever.
2. We have had no problem finding people who are interested in exhibiting. 27 artists participated in the last show.
3. Because of the high workload, as many exhibitors as possible should be volunteered to help organize, install, transport and take down the show.
4. Artists should be warned that security for works cannot be assured, since the spaces are quite public and often used for non-union events such as dances and community meetings.
5. Surprisingly, censorship of content by the unions has not been a problem. Union officials and members alike have been highly supportive of even the most controversial and progressive works.

Artists interested in finding out more about the show or participating in it please contact the authors through this magazine.

Lincoln Cushing
Doug Minkler

COMMUNITY MURALS MAGAZINE/FALL 1984
Artist/Waiter
Creates Graphics
for Restaurant Strike

San Francisco, "Everybody's Favorite City". An unconventional city of big conventions, beautiful scenery and fine dining. The dining is imperiled for the moment, however, for since September 1st members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Union Local 2 have been on strike against seventeen of the most prominent restaurants. Upon the expiration of the last 3-year contract the owners offered drastic takeaways that the waiters could not stomach.

Photographer and collage artist Ron Henggeler supports himself by working as a waiter at a large restaurant on San Francisco's touristy Fisherman's Wharf. Besides his personal art work, for over a year Ron has been creating graphics advertising events and publications of the Anstendig Institute. The institute is a nonprofit group which researches "vibrational aspects of modern life" in cars, photography, symphony halls and stereo equipment, as well as giving public presentations demonstrating the proper technology and procedures for listening to classical music. Ron's copy-machine posters stand out on streets where every telephone pole is covered with Punk Rock collages and political posters, for his collages primarily use the rich imagery of nineteenth- and eighteenth-century engravings appropriate to the music presented. These black and white compositions harken back to the fine art traditions of Max Ernst and San Francisco's late Wilfred Satty. Yet with the advent of the strike—and enthusiastic encouragement from the Foundation director Mark Anstendig—Ron has adapted his reworking of antique graphics to immediate political content. Amid San Francisco's self-conscious Victorian houses and cable-car kitsch, Ron Henggeler's artwork wryly and effectively protests the new Victorian working conditions.

According to Ron, the close-knit "Family" of restaurateurs there had been planning for a couple of years to break the Union on the Wharf, possibly as far back as four years ago, when a strike of 5400 downtown hotel workers put a painful dent in that summer's tourism. At this time the struggle is less over wages and holidays than workplace rights that include existing health and welfare plans, seniority over shifts and station assignments and union representation. Management lawyer Mark Montobbio has a reputation as a union buster, being said to have deliberately provoked a nine-week hospital strike and a bitter six-week department store strike earlier this year. Supposedly he advised his clients that Local 2 could be shattered by attacking the waiters, perceived as less conscious of their contract since the majority of their income is from tips. Management was surprised at a strong response and picket line by what was considered for the past couple years a complacent, disorganized union. Ron, like many in the rank and file and, eventually, the leadership realized the critical state of their "jobs and livelihood—things people in the '20's and '30's were dying in the street for."

"In the past I never went down to the Union Hall" confesses Ron. "I'd just send in my check. If a Union rep came to talk in the kitchen, I'd pretend I was too busy to talk. Then I saw the owners conspiring to cut our wages 40% and the sinister dark tactics—like big, threatening goons—they were trying to break us with." Though he considers his work for the Anstendig Institute as dealing with equally "real quality-of-life issues", this is the first time Ron's applied his artistic talents to a political struggle like the strike. His flyers are in a form intended to "catch and educate the public on the issues in a moment, as well as keep them from the door of the restaurant. Even three of us with signs out front can cut business by hundreds of thousands of dollars." He has elegant informational flyers on the nature of the strike that list restaurants that the Union recommends diners patronize, and by combing imagery and text has created at least one poster depicting each restaurant struck. In some of them he's enlarged the dining establishment's matchbook covers, adding new meaning to the printed phrase CLOSE BEFORE STRIKING.

Though signed "Concerned Artists of Local 2", it's really just Ron cranking out the posters. He laments that he knows photographers, weavers and batik artists in the Union working as waiters, but has been unsuccessful in involving them in strike-related artwork. A Union agent Ron has begun to collaborate with on posters called the graphics "great, but they inevitably end up just part of the shrubbery."

In a new series of graphics, the phrase WHEN TYRANNY IS LAW DEFYANCE IS IN ORDER appears. The text is enlarged on the copy machine until each typewritten letter—and its minute flaws—is 2" high, looking ancient and urgent at the same time. It is then combined with a historic new photo of resistance and its story. These posters show students at Kent State in 1970, Santo Domingo in 1965 or Berlin in 1953, Freedom Marchers vs. Birmingham Sheriff Bull Conner's dogs, and CIO strikers against Republic Steel's cops in Chicago in 1937. Some of Ron's choices are odd and politically ambiguous, like the famous (but unknown) weeping man when France fell to the Nazis, Little Rock racists facing federal marshal's bayonets (is Ron siding with the black children or the antiintegrationist mob?). One even depicts the Montgomery Ward Co. chairman who defied President Roosevelt's order to negotiate with labor to avoid a strike during wartime. These alarming posters are distributed by Ron on the picket line along with those detailing the Restaurant Strike. It is difficult to gauge whether these images in the hands of restaurant patrons are a spur to the conscience and effective organizing tool, or compensate and even contradict the message the strikers so urgently have to convey.

Since Ron generates so many graphics, it's probably only to his credit that some are that unpredictable. With the coming of the Strike and his own workplace transformed into the arena of struggle, Ron Henggeler has made an organic transition as an artist, using his fine art skills, witty style and vision to bear witness to and influence the ongoing fight for survival and dignity in our time.

Mike Mosher
Feed your conscience not your stomach.

Honor the picket line.

ON STRIKE!

poster work by concerned artists in the ranks of LOCAL 2