EDITORIAL

Tilted Arrogance

In 1984 sculptor Richard Serra installed a commission he had won from the federal government in front of the Jacob Javits Federal Building in lower Manhattan, which houses the General Services Administration (GSA). The piece, pictured here, is a long, curving slice of steel. It has been applauded by art critics and fellow artists, but it caused sufficient outrage among the people who had to live with it on a daily basis as they entered and left their place of work that the GSA has decided to move it to another location. We think the recent furor over the Tilted Arc is a clear example of differences between public art and community art.

In the first case, as Serra’s piece shows, an artwork is more or less forced upon its audience. It may be an extraordinary artwork in some way, and it may even be effective in its space and satisfying to its audience, but there is no particular reason to think the piece will be a success with those who must live with it because there is rarely any significant participation by those people. In the case of Tilted Arc, it has been said that the decision was made by a public entity, that there were carefully formulated procedures and a jury system ensuring impartiality, and that therefore “the selection of the sculpture was... made by, and on behalf of, the public.” This according to an article in the July 1985 Harper’s.

The point is not that a public or its representatives have followed procedures, but which public? The hundreds of members of the community of workers in the GSA building should have a central role in the creation of the artwork. Community arts are based on working with a particular group—a community. A community may be a club, church group, YWCA, trade union, school, etc., and is not just a neighborhood, although neighborhoods are often communities too. It is the active participation of these people which makes the work significant for them: there is something of themselves in it.

The concern over this issue should not be used as an excuse for defunding public art. The whole incident should be seen as teaching the need to meaningfully include the immediate community in the process at every stage. The issue is not that the money was spent, but that the process was insensitive, arrogant, and weak.

Nor does a communal approach to art mean an abdication of artistic skills by the artist or artists involved in a project. It does mean taking the community’s feelings seriously and working with those people, not “for” them or “on” them. Thus do community works have the respect and affection of those for whom they are done. They are done by and/or with ourselves, whomever we may be.

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Correction: The cover photograph in the last issue of CMM (Vol. 10, No. 3 Summer/Fall 1985) is by Jim Prigoff and Tim Drescher.

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Editorial Group
Juanita Alicia
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Tim Drescher

Materials for future issues must reach us by the following dates:
Spring 1986 by Thursday, January 23, 1986
Summer 1986 by Thursday, April 24, 1986
Fall 1986 by Thursday, July 24, 1986

Cover Photo:

Three or four slogans were developed for the demonstrations with each having an artpiece representing it. This piece is against apartheid, showing what we are against on the outside (the small format, when the piece is closed by folding the two outside panels inward). Inside is a positive message.

One problem was that the artists did not know that the piece was going to be carried during a march, so they selected strong, but heavy structural materials. It weighs nearly 300 pounds!

photos, photographs, John Pitman Weber
"I Like Everything Nothing But Union"
Fred Lonidier
Visual Arts B-027
UCSD
La Jolla, CA 92093

"I Like Everything..." is Fred Lonidier's most recent exhibit of labor photos, currently showing at the Labor Education Center of Rutgers University in New Jersey until December 10. It consists of 200 black and white photos accompanied by text which helps to break stereotypes about trade unions in America today. The show is set up on panels which are easily transported and mounted; if you are interested in presenting the exhibit in your area, contact Fred.

Ronald Reagan's Reign of Error
by Mark Green & Gail MacColl
Pantheon Books, 1983
$4.95

An excellent resource for those of us who are troubled by the astounding number of exaggerations, half-truths and outright lies spewed out by our president. Reign is full of Reagan's words, documented and credited, and compares them with what the actual truth is in the matter. The "errors"—of various types—are listed by topic (Defense, Deficit, Environment) and together contribute to a damning portrayal of Reagan's intellectual bankruptcy and ideological tunnel vision.

Help build solidarity with Nicaragua Libre, and improve your correspondence at the same time. Every time you buy one set of these beautiful postcards of the mural on the Children's Library in Managua, Biblioteca Luis Alfonso Velasquez, you are paying to send one set to Nicaragua as material aid. Six full-color postcards per set, different images. Only $3.00 per set retail, $2.00 per set wholesale. Order now, and have your cards before the holiday season!
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Part of the proceeds from the sale of this calendar will help support Community Murals Magazine.
Italian-Nicaraguan Collaboration at the Church of Santa Maria de Los Angeles, Managua

As a testimony to the solidarity of Italy's Association of Italian-Nicaraguan Friendship, muralist Sergio Michilini and architect Clementino Sartoria arrived in Nicaragua in 1982 to begin a mural. To them Father Franciscano Uriel Molina offered the opportunity of painting the interior of the Church of Santa Maria de Los Angeles, located in Barrio Riguero, one of the poorest neighborhoods of Managua and scene of some of the bloodiest fighting during the revolution.

These Italian visitors proposed a transformation of the project into a course on the art of the mural and promptly enlisted eight students of the National School of Plastic Arts (ENAP). As the idea matured, the Director of ENAP and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture joined in supporting the creation of a new School of Mural Art in Managua, where cultural, social and political conditions were ripe for the development of monumental public art.

In Italy, the venture was approved and financed by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, with funds allocated for "International Volunteer Work." Italy's non-governmental Lay Movement of Latin America (MLAL) organized the details of the effort, which began in January 1984. Since then, in nearly continuous work, 22 Nicaraguan and three foreign students have learned both didactically and productively about the muralists' art—hoping, meanwhile, for the rapid completion of a new building for their school. On-the-site education was provided by muralists Sergio Michilini, Giancarlo Splendiani and Maurizio Governatori and ceramicist Gianni Berra, with architectural consultation from Clementino Sartori.

To plan for the work a series of meetings was held with Father Uriel Molina, community youths, neighborhood residents, Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs, and members of various popular movements in the area.

From the Nicaraguan viewpoint, the work was embraced as an embodiment of the country's IPI policy (Internal Artistic Integration), since the disciplines of painting, sculpture and architecture were united in an objective public function. Choices of technique and color were based upon considerations of the "moving spectator," and resultant optical deformations of the visual planes were intended to create a more dynamic eloquence in the narration.

Flanking the entryway, various statues give tangible substance to themes of myth and life: the nurturing mother; the goddess of corn; pre-Columbian figures. Even the floor of the sanctuary has been renewed with many-hued, hand-crafted tiles.

From the door of the church to the altar, the artists have intertwined fourteen themes from Nicaraguan history, legend and religion, culminating in a moving "Resurrection," which is the principal mural of the apse. (Detail here reproduced.) Here, a very contemporary Christ is a youthful campesino or worker rising from a group of mothers who clutch photos of their missing children. Before Him, the people...

Murals Destroyed in Mexican Earthquake

As we are going to press we have learned that in the recent terrible earthquake several murals were among the works destroyed in Mexico City. An article by Raquel Tibol in Proceso #464 indicates that several works were "lost definitively": Among them are the Apologia de la futura victoria de la ciencia medica contra el cancer... (The future victory of medical science of cancer) 1958, by Siqueiros; Las comunicaciones en la historia de Mexico (Communications in the history of Mexico), a mosaic in the Secretary of Communications building done in 1954 by Juan O'Gorman and Jose Chavez Morado. Others apparently destroyed were one by Kitzia Helene Domenge de Hofmann on the Finance Ministry, Industry and Commerce in Mexico by Alfredo Zalce in 1962, and the Leyendas Mexicanas (Mexican legends) painted in 1950 and 1952 by Carlos Merida, the destruction including all three buildings which housed portions of the mural.

CMM hopes to have more complete information in the next issue.
(pueblo) struggle to carry the cross. At his sides, harvesters work to gather cane and cotton crops. Behind Him, as in some ephemeral but very important dream, children join hands in play.

The pictorial cycle entitled “History of Nicaragua” was painted in Politec acrylics over a whitewash of sand, lime and cement. Acrylics over varnish sealer (Politec) were employed on the reinforced plywood used for the mural of the presbytery-apse, the altar, lectern and central tabernacle. Sculptures of the pre-Columbian period, the sides of the tabernacle, relief panels for “The Annunciation” and “St. Francis” and all bases and mouldings were heated at high temperatures prior to painting with penetrant, protective resins.

The public function of this ambitious project, coupled to the needs of the building in which it is housed; the harmonious collective effort required of nearly 60 workers—including masons, carpenters, welders, electricians and students; the relatively long period during which the work continued: All these factors contributed to the creation of a small but well-aimed stone in the battle for monumental public art in the West where, too often, art has been reduced to a commodity for private consumption only.

Translations and article by Marcia Rautenstrauch, from a brochure, “Guia a la obra de Integracion Plastica Interna ‘Historia de Nicaragua,’” printed in Italy & mailed from Nicaragua.
The Walls Don't Only Have Ears

What is this crazy wind which has been blowing over Paris these past ten years? These huge blind surfaces used to look so sad in their nakedness and blackening cars' exhausts did not improve the situation. Then some councillors decided to make them sing through the work of talented artists.

Among the twenty or so works chosen by the City of Paris, the most impressive is to be found in the Halles quarter: it is the huge painting done by the studio of Fabio Rieti at the carrefour Etienne Marcel. Two musicians accompany the walk of a passer-by who climbs the steps of a large staircase with his suitcase in his hand. At the top he is expected by an assembly of women. Let's listen to the artist speaking of his work, we'll see that this work does not only have a decorative purpose:

"The topic of this painting is both autobiographical and local: The man walking upstairs is me, eternal tourist, wandering with his suitcase and music on his back. Because music never stops: it is the music of the cities of Europe and America which are my countries; my only country is the city, even the city I have never seen. On the terrace, the women who watch the man going upstairs are both the women of rue St. Denis (N.B.: prostitutes) and those who made my life: my daughters Anne and Leonor, my wife Laurence, Titina Maselli, my childhood's friend and colleague. The man with the cane,—the procurer—is Gilles Aillaud, my lifelong friend. On the right, the two women by Monet are the eternal feminine, the women from all times.

"I tried to create a painted wall as one makes a painting. As a matter of fact, it is painted on canvas in a studio, which gives it a certain degree of intimacy. I know that street painting is designed for a public who is in a different situation from the one where the public watches a painting made on an easel: it is a public of passers-by not of contemplators. But one should never be condescending and "go against"; it is better to "attract towards oneself", even if the operation gives less immediate results.

"I am not looking for a reward but to turn out of the way, off the road. I don't want to make people "dream" but to make them "think". The name evasion: "escape wall" which has sometimes been evoked does not fit me: it defines the opposite of what I am looking for: I don't wish to help people escaping from the urban context, but on the contrary to deepen the meaning of this city which seems to me to be the most original of human inventions and to which I am attached without conditions. The project has been chosen by the city of Paris and the execution financed by Dauphin O.T.A. whose posters appear at the bottom."

Would mural expression only be the privilege of the modern world? Not at all, one only has to remember the magnificent rupestrian paintings decorating the walls of the caverns of Lascaux to be convinced of it. They are 17000 years old.

Today's mural paintings don't have the same longevity, even if they are made with more solid acrylic colors. Quick degradation is caused by cars' exhaust and pigeon droppings: it gives them a life expectancy of no more than twenty five years.

To successfully achieve the decoration campaign which concerns almost 1200 Parisian walls, the city has asked advertising companies to finance the project, which they do, in exchange for the right to place under the works posters praising the products of our consumer society. Would a new type of patronage incite advertising companies to spend sums going from 100,000 francs to 300,000 francs just for the pleasure of passers-by?

C. Voulgaropoulos
Translation by: Delphine Perrett

Anti-Racism Murals Defaced in Greenwich

The photo shows the racist defacement on a new mural painted this year in Greenwich, just south of London, by the Greenwich Mural Workshop. The damage is extensive, but the Greater London Council has responded with a grant to pay for repairing the wall.
Y Tu Y Yo Y Que

Even though one of the heaviest concentrations of mural work is in the Mission District of San Francisco, the mural at 24th and York Streets was a long time coming. Originally this mural was to be executed on the corner of Bryant and 24th Streets. Due to a number of complications including censorship of the initial design that was submitted, this mural took almost two years to complete. Hardly typical of other mural movements throughout art history, the contemporary United States mural movement, specifically in San Francisco, has to answer to quite a few insensitive bureaucratic administrations. Nonetheless, the muralists in this city move onward in their struggle for artistic integrity and freedom.

When the original concept for this wall was rejected, a second attempt was made to do this mural by forming a "mural committee" to approve the design concept. At least within this procedure some muralists could be involved in the decision making process. After all, shouldn't mural artists have something to say about mural work? Currently there are a great deal of mural related activities being administered by non-mural sensitive people.

The resolved idea for this mural was to do a series of giant portraits of local community people in snapshot format. These people would be business people, visitors, working people, children and residents of the past and present. This mural would also continue to change and grow with the community. That is to say that when the initial images were completed, a brief period of two or three months would pass and the mural would be added to or taken away from by another local community artist. This muralist's belief is that we as public artists are making statements about change, we should be willing to accept change in our lives as well as in our works.

The artist would make changes in coordination with changing events or issues concerning the immediate community. So, in essence the mural would be a living, breathing reflection of the community in which it exists. It is in fact this muralist's belief that if we as public artists are making statements about change, we should be willing to accept change in our lives as well.

With respect to the community mural work interaction, this particular wall has some very interesting history. One of the photographs on the mural depicts a resident family that lives directly across the street from the wall. The young boy in this photo had lost his front tooth during the period that the family was being photographed for the mural. Consequently the mural photo exhibited his missing tooth publicly. Some young friends began to tease him about the "window" in his smile. Of course this upset the young man tremendously. For days he endured this trial, but finally his parents mentioned the missing tooth to me. The parents eventually convinced the youth to speak to me directly about his problem. This short, intimate conversation convinced me to become a part-time dentist and speed up nature's process by adding the missing tooth. Not all the stories related to this mural are as positive, unfortunately. For example, one of the portraits of a local person who was thought to be gay was vandalized several times. Even though I was determined to keep this image on the wall, the person who was depicted in this portrait asked that his image be removed for the good of the overall mural.

There was also the case of the giant portrait that had to be removed after eight hours of labor executing it. Some legal proceedings were taking place that involved one person on this mural photo. This person's lawyer suggested that the portrait be removed. This suggestion came of course after this giant portrait (the largest on the wall) had been completed.

One of the past local residents of this community who now represents the government of Nicaragua in the Embassy in Washington D.C. is also represented in the mural. He was very delighted by the large portrait which he visited in progress and also at its completion.

I guess I could go on for several pages with stories and anecdotes surrounding this community mural. Rather than do this, I suggest you come and see the mural and the community yourself.

This mural's title speaks about our involvement in just such a changing environment. "Y Tu Y Yo Y Que", makes the commentary that you and I are all of what is on the wall now as a mural and what will follow, as well as the eventual deterioration. Three artists have already been selected for the next phase of changes on this mural. The first will take place in mid-October of 1985. Keep a watchful eye on the corner of York and 24th. St. in La Mission de San Francisco. C/S y que!

Patlan
THE LA LUCHA MURALS
Artists Create Political Art Park in New York City

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES/LA LUCHA CONTINUA project consists of 24 murals painted on four buildings around a central place—La Plaza Cultural—between 8th and 9th Streets at Ave. C in New York City’s Lower East Side. The transformation of this vacant lot into a political art park is the result of two months of work by more than 30 artists who donated their time and talents to the project. This, more than 6,310 sq. ft. of murals treat the themes of intervention in Central America, Apartheid in South Africa, and Gentrification in the local community.

The project was organized by Artmakers, Inc., a non-profit, multi-ethnic community murals group founded two years ago. It was executed in conjunction with Charas, Inc., a neighborhood housing and cultural organization. Supplies were obtained from Materials for the Arts, a New York City Department of Cultural Affairs program that collects donations and channels them to arts organizations and several other paint and hardware companies including Golden Artist Colors and Amsterdam Colorworks. The City also supplied some art student interns through its arts apprenticeship program. Money to pay for insurance, scaffolding rental, incidental supplies, and some administrative fees was raised by grassroots fundraising within the political art community. After the project began, we also received small grants from North Star fund and the Citizens Committee of New York. The total cash outlay came to no more than $3,500 although the budget for such a project, were the artists to be paid and supplies purchased, would come to at least ten times that amount or $35,000.

The decision to do this project came out of frustration with the blandness of most currently funded community art. It represented a desire to return to the organic feeling of the early mural movement when the personal conviction and politics of the artists and the aroused communities coincided. That frustration was fueled by the knowledge that political murals were happening elsewhere. A slide show by Jim Prigoff of the Balmy Alley project in San Francisco provided the final spark.

Call-out to Artists

In mid-April a call was sent out by Artmakers for “artists of conviction” interested in painting political murals to come to an open meeting. These and other artists recruited from the Art against Apartheid group and local community formed the core of the project. The group was mixed including minority, political, graffiti and East Village artists. A majority were women. The artists became the driving force for the project and provided the energy that made it possible. Design proposals were submitted and approved by a committee composed of Artmakers, Charas, and other concerned community people. Once the designs were chosen, determining their exact location was the next challenge. Across from this building, also on Eighth Street is a trendy nightclub, 8 BC. The owners of the club were initially enthusiastic about the project, but it soon became clear that there was a large gap in taste between them and the more explicitly political artists. They did not like what they considered to be social realist art and wanted their building to convey a more East Village expressionist character. A kind of compromise was worked out in which the West wall of their building would be painted by a group of four artists associated with the club and the murals facing the club would be chosen jointly from our designs. In return, the East wall of the club, where some neighbors had planted a garden, would be curated entirely by Artmakers. The murals also had to be accepted by the organizers of that garden and another garden which had formed on the east end of the lot on Ninth St. The main principle behind locating the designs was to have all of the different themes visible from each viewpoint.

Two sub-themes which appeared in the actual design were feminism and police brutality. Rikki Asher, who painted her wall in July because she was leading the Arts for a New Nicaragua brigade of muralists which painted three murals in Nicaragua in August, brought together the cultures and women of Central America and Africa in her design. Susan Ortega, one of the organizers of the Art against Apartheid exhibitions, portrayed South African women marching against apartheid, while Betsy McLinden used two symbolic female figures as agents for self-determination in the three regions. The police brutality theme was explored in three murals dealing with the story of...
Michael Stewart, the young graffitist arrested and killed by police earlier this year. Seth Tobacman, a political illustrator and creator of World War III comix, created a dynamic image of confrontation between a youth and a mounted policeman—a local reference since Tomkins Square park, only a block away, is patrolled by cops on horseback. Etienne Li told the story comic book style in panels, while Chico, a local graffitist become artist, used spray paint.

The keynote mural, 40 x 30 ft., which I directed, dealt with gentrification and was designed and painted by a collective group of artists. An earlier mural on the same wall by Freddy Hernandez of Cityarts Workshop had been destroyed four years earlier when the landlord tarred over the mural to waterproof the wall. The former mural, a depiction of Chinese, Latino, and African culture is quoted in a corner of the present one in a scene of artists painting a mural.

We were concerned about the durability of paint on a tar surface since tar expands and contracts more than even the flexible paint and decided that like graffiti (which seemed to last fairly well), we would put only a thin layer of oil based paint on the wall leaving some of the tar bare. In that way we hoped that while there might be some minor cracking (as in old oil paintings) the paint would probably not peel off the wall. In addition to wanting to leave some black, we also decided that we wanted to present a mainly positive image.

Painting the Murals

Collectively we decided on the basic composition—a crystal ball with a possible future in the center surrounded by a series of vignettes representing the current reality and ranging from negative to positive. After the images where chosen different artists worked out each of them. Keith Christensen worked up the homeless family and shark-wrecker-limo scene; Margaret Bunyan the evicted family and the fire escape scene; Etienne Li the sweat equity workers and the cultural center; Joe Stephenson the solar rooftop, Rikki Asher the market, and myself the crystal ball images. The idea for the police figure came from a drawing by Judith Quinn while the brick patterns were contributed by Therese Bimka. In the painting process some of the original artists dropped out and others joined in: Karin Batten, Camille Perrottet, and our two interns, Robert Brabham and Dorianne Williams. Beneath the large mural are five smaller murals: An image of Nicaragua by Karin Batten; a root-image containing the names of local grass roots organizations by Keith Christensen with a background by Anthony Buzzco; An image of African Liberation by Cliff Joseph in which the flag becomes subtly organic with a red sky, green jungle, and within the black, the mass of people rising; An image of equality and freedom represented by naked children playing with a ball, and a symbolic image of a Puerto Rican mask by neighborhood activist and muralist Maria Dominguez.

Perhaps the most popular of the murals was “The Final Judgement” a collaboration by Robin Michals and Kristin Reed in which the jury that judges the arms merchants below is composed of portraits of neighborhood residents as well as world leaders like Nelson Mandela and Daniel Ortega. On the same wall is an image of South African Liberation by Leon Johnson, himself from South Africa, symbolic dancers on a rooftop by Leslie Lowe, an
exquisitely colored semi-abstract rendering of marchers at rest by Noah Jemison, and a ceramic piece by Argentine born artist Dian Burstyn. The ceramic, composed of separate pieces of clay mounted in a circle and signifying the endurance and break-up of the ancient Meso-American culture, is mounted on a rough cement section of the wall, itself a contemporary ruin.

The end wall was marred by a large and elaborate dog cage built of chicken wire and poured cement which suddenly appeared one night last spring. The anti-gentrification mural designed by Nancy Sullivan and Janet Vicario, and painted by Nancy Sullivan was given that spot. Nancy Sullivan, herself a Lower East Side dog-owner, decided to integrate the cage into the design and a painted image of the caged dog appears in the mural.

The garden wall, on the East side of 8 BC, contained some of the most negative and therefore controversial images. In addition to the murals mentioned earlier, there is a scene of the struggle against gentrification by neighborhood artist, Willie Birch; a lull in the fighting in Nicaragua by Marilyn Perez; the tomb of the Disappeared painted in slashes of vivid color by Pat Brazill; and the marvelously complex and detailed gentrification octopus by Noel Kunz. The only murals not completed to date are those on the West wall of 8 BC which were peripherally connected with the project in that we were providing paint and equipment but over which we had no control.

Dedication Ceremony

To celebrate the completion of the murals and present them to the community, there was a dedication fiesta on Saturday, September 14, 1985 from noon to 7 pm. Organized by Charas and Artmakers working together. The program included performers representing the African, Latin, and political themes of the murals as well as two salsa bands. Neo Mnnumzana, UN representative of the African National Congress and Roberto Vargas, Cultural Attache of the Nicaraguan Embassy provided a political context while MC's Chino Garcia, president of Charas and a long time community activist and the poet, Bimbo Rivas tied all the threads together. The weather was glorious and hundreds of people, a mixture of the political art world and local community, attended.

The dedication did not signify an end to the project. In a sense, it is only a beginning. Now that the images exist they need to become widely known. Hopefully, the La Lucha project can serve as the model for many more political art parks in other cities and countries. Painted images cannot stop wars or win the struggle for justice, but, they are not irrelevant. They fortify and enrich the spirit of those who are committed to the struggle and help to educate those who are unaware.

For the local community, the result is more tangible. An empty lot has become a place of beauty. For myself and the other artists who participated in the project, there was the sense of joy that comes from working successfully with others and the satisfaction of having accomplished something both public and coming directly from the heart.

Eva Cockcroft

Eva Cockcroft, Executive Director of Artmakers, was the coordinator for the La Lucha project.

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COMMUNITY MURALS MAGAZINE/WINTER 1985
Mission Playground
Linda St. Mural

The Mission Playground/Linda St. community mural “Balance of Power” was designed by artists/muralists Susan Cervantes, Juana Alicia, Raul Martinez, Mike Mosher, Paul DeCosta and Robert Escobar. The muralists were selected by a nine member mural committee represented by prominent neighborhood organizations, residents, users and youth. This set up a unique collaboration between artists and community. Twelve neighborhood youth were hired by the Mayors Youth Employment Program to assist the muralists and learn the mural process. Many contributing artists and volunteers participated in the painting of the mural.

The muralists started the mural July 1, 1985. They set a goal to finish it during the summer so the community could see and feel accomplishment and realization of their supportive efforts having gone through all the bureaucratic red tape for 2½ years. The mural was funded by the Mayors’ Summer Youth Fund and S.F. Recreation and Parks Dept. More than 2500 hours of heart and soul were put into the mural, 1100 hours contributed by the youth workers. The size of the mural is approximately 115’ long and 13’ to 20’ at its highest point which is over the entrance to the “Nickel Pool”. The mural incorporates the interests, memories, and aspirations of the local residents, youth, staff and users of the Mission Playground, pool, and Urban Skills Center of which out of 100 people painted in the mural 50 are portrayed in real life. The mural was dedicated with ceremony and celebration August 31, 1985.

Reading from left to right, the mural progresses from past to future. The fire that devoured San Francisco after the Great Earthquake of 1906 stopped one block away at 20th St., after residents formed a bucket brigade, drawing water from a fire hydrant that still stands at Church and 20th. The mural shows a waterfall flowing from that hydrant to fill the pool behind its wall, in which people are swimming and playing. Above and upon the entrance to the pool the elemental balance of fire and water is represented by two pre-Columbian deities: a rain god and the sun.

To the right of the fire hydrant extends San Francisco Bay and its piers. This was the scene of a watershed in San Francisco labor history: the 1934 Longshoremen’s strike that became a general strike. With the spirit of solidarity characteristic of the Mission, Duggan’s Funeral Home on 17th St. donated burial services for the two men who were killed in the strike. The funeral procession is shown moving from the docks into the neighborhood.

Mission Dolores itself, for which this part of the city is named, is depicted as a drawing on a table in the Skills Center, below the procession. The people around the table are members of the community and of the Center’s staff. It is here that youths and seniors meet, as do all who use the pool, playground, and recreation center. The various sports played on these grounds are also represented: swimming, football, baseball, tennis, soccer, and basketball.

Intruding onto the football field is the club that many youth of the neighborhood, a number of whom live on 20th St., belong to. Above the club’s initials is a dreamcloud surrounded by symbols of careers the members may embark on in years to come.

This mural represents a neighborhood with a proud past and a promising future. It is a place where people of all ages, races, and interests may live together in harmony. It is a community whose residents, in their diversity, can come together for many purposes, whether to fight fire, play sports, or create a mural.

photo by Susan Cervantes
Inner City Mural Project

Valle del Sol, Inc., a community agency in Phoenix, Arizona, sent us the following:

The creation of murals has become a national artistic phenomenon. Artists responsible for this movement have harnessed talents that had previously been untapped from street gangs, troubled youth, the hard core unemployed, the economically disadvantaged youth and so forth. Such youths have helped transform deteriorating communities into massive living art galleries that have instilled new pride in the barrios.

The effects and creation of the murals will not be a simple matter of applying paint to dreary walls but will instead be a process by which muralists and their communities are guided into communication with each other by the experience of working together, by leaving reflections of the community. They leave of themselves.

On a national scale, murals have injected vitality into bleak city walls and have at the same time shaped statements of community pride, hope, and identity. By incorporating community participation, vandalism and graffiti have dropped dramatically and positive self images have blossomed.

Murals are an instrument of education, a catalyst for social change and an instrument of cultural reinforcement, these were the priorities of a group of young artists and their director at Valle del Sol, Inc., of Phoenix, Arizona this summer. With a grant from the City of Phoenix, the group which called themselves Alambrozo created three murals and restored one. Working from 5:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the 100 degree plus weather, the groups' objectives were to revitalize the mural movement in Phoenix.

The first mural, "Pulsations," reflects the concern of a predominantly Hispanic and Black neighborhood and the problem of opiate addiction. The mural incorporates a mural created by Zarco Guerrero six years ago, which according to Martin Moreno, Director of the project was fading and had not been defaced. The importance of restoration of the original mural reinforced the community's pride in their art. "Pulsations," utilizes symbols of the community sounding out warnings against opiate consumption. At the far right the aloe vera is being choked by the poppy. The ribbon reflects the fields and the migrant roots of many of the Hispanic population and their ties with nature. At the center of the mural are two hands interlocked in a gesture of unity with color not being an issue at the point of intersection. At the far left the poppy once again drains the life from a gourd which is both a source of nutrition for the Black and Hispanic populations, and also a cultural symbol (musical instrument) the maraca for Hispanics and the shekere for the blacks. The background is a futuristic scene of walls disintegrating at the warning of an African drum with mountain formations screaming out the warning. The mural is 70' long and 10' high.

The second mural also reflects the concerns of many communities and the abuse of inhalants. The mural is painted on the Chicanos Por la Causa building, and works from left to right with a young Chicano sniffing spray can vapors, the back of his head blowing up in a fiery image of religious and potentially tragic endings. Death leads the young boy to rows of empty graves with a mother image praying for answers. To the extreme right, roses blossom, symbolic of the beauty and thorn hazards of life. The size of this mural is 15' x 42'.

The final mural entitled "Checkmate" showcases the frightening game of nuclear war. Two robot figures on what appears to be dominos play the ultimate game of chess while figures on other dominos reflect the maya gods of death and war. Other countries that have engaged in wars or have the potential to be involved with nuclear war also appear on the tumbling dominos. "Checkmate" was painted in 5 days (22' x 65') which reflects the growth and sincerity of the workers of the project.

Moreno says of his workers which include: Larry Acadiz; Ray Hernandez; Johnny Gonzalez; Mark Del Toro; Jerry Graham; Paul Torres; Steve Flores; and Albert Romero, "they started out as my apprentices but later became partners. In the act of creating public art by collaborating on the designs of the last 2 murals, the workers of the Inner City Mural Project became active members of the Renaissance in Phoenix."
The Alliance for Cultural Democracy, a national progressive artist's organization, held a highly successful conference October 11-14 in Chicago's Wellington Avenue Church. Over 160 participants from all over the country shared their experiences, ideas, problems and solutions on a wide variety of artistic and cultural issues.

This was the ninth such conference for the Alliance, which is one of the only nationwide, nonprofit organizations for community-based arts programs and activist artists. Despite the lack of any major funding or full-time paid staff, the ideas behind ACD have proven to be a persistently energizing force. Besides the Alliance's publications, Cultural Democracy and regional bulletins, the most visible and engaging aspect of ACD has been the annual conferences.

The conference consisted of three main components—plenaries, workshops, and performances. Each plenary focused on one definition of the "community" in community art—where we live, where we work, the constituencies we are a part of and work with, and as defined by a common issue or concern. A panel of art activists gave brief presentations on the topic, and group discussion followed. The presentors were well chosen, and the breadth of work covered was provocative and inspiring. Plenary panelists included GudePounds, a street-artist team from Chicago; Renny Golden, poet and activist in the Sanctuary Movement; Larry Evans, who works with the Mill Hunk Herald labor magazine in Pittsburgh; James Ritchie, writer on farm issues in Missouri; Jerry Kearns, visual artist with NY PADD; Carla Katz, organizer and photographer with the Communication Workers of America; and Moe Bates, from the Neighborhood Open Workshops in Belfast, Ireland.

The workshops dealt with more specific aspects of progressive cultural work, and included such topics/discussion leaders as Central America (David Fichter, Arts for a New Nicaragua), Alternative Fundraising for Small Organizations (Katharine Pearson, Community Foundation for East Tennessee; Catherine Jordan, Women’s Art Registry of Minnesota), Chicago Mural Tour (Chicago Public Art Group), The Importance of the Alternative Publication (Jim Murray, Cultural Correspondence, Lucy Lippard, N.Y. PADD), Using Video and Cable, Working with Youth, Working in Institutions, and Black Art/White Art.

The remainder of the conference included performances by a wide range of artists, including music by San Francisco's Dave Lippman, theater by John O'Neal from New Orleans, and screenings of video work from all over the country.

The conference was a tremendous opportunity for progressive cultural workers to meet each other and participate in building the organization we need to survive and grow. ACD is continuing to evolve as that organization, and welcomes the participation of interested artists. Contact the Alliance at Box 2478, Station A, Champaign IL 61820.

—Lincoln Cushing
As one who does not have the availability of Mural sites or the affordability of costly paints, not to mention the energy to shinny up and down scaffolds, I must content myself with another form of street art, the poster with a social message.

For the past two decades my principal creative outlet has been the linoleum-cut poster. Though I have also painted large canvases and some indoor murals, the idea of reproducing copious quantities of “original art” has long appealed to me. When starting poster making, linoleum was easy to obtain in large quantity from most rug supply stores at prices that made the art supply stores look like highway robbers. Unfortunately, battleship linoleum now has become a very expensive item that can only be gotten in certain outlets at prices that rival the art stores. Consequently I have gone more into wood block prints while always keeping an eye open for material closely resembling linoleum that can be worked with linoleum cutting tools, such as certain types of plastic floor tile that will not damage the cutting tools.

The availability of a large proof press is always a boon for poster makers. Even a large bed etching proof press is good as the roller can be raised or lowered to the desired pressure. Lacking the availability of such equipment, one can still resort to the more primitive and time-consuming method of inking the block, placing the paper on it and then rubbing the back of the paper with a wooden spoon.

Whether working on linoleum or wood, different cutting tools are required for each medium, which like other art materials have gone up in price. The skyrocketing prices of art materials can leave one with the uncanny feeling that there is a conspiracy to keep creative endeavor at a sanitary distance from those of more modest economic circumstances.

The process in itself is quite easy once you have learned to cut only the material and not yourself and to remember that all lettering has to be done in mirror image as well as portraits. Linoleum or similar material when warm and pliable is the easiest to work in, never mind the denigration of the arty-farties who like to refer to linocut as an infantile art form. Linoleum is as easy to cut as butter and can stand the pressure of copious printing. I used to do linocuts for publications that used a flatbed letterpress. Even after a run of 30,000 and more, there was no damage to the linoleum.

Wood, on the other hand, with its varying grains presents a different challenge but one can creatively utilize the grain of the wood into their design to achieve a unique effect. Also it must be remembered that wood not being as flexible as linoleum cannot take the same pressure without adequate protective padding.

As for the design of the poster itself, it depends on what is the purpose of the poster. Some posters are to put out on the street with an assumed short life expectancy while others are to be sold to raise funds for a specific organization or cause. The former has to be simple in design while the later can be more elaborate and “arty”. When doing something for the street, a design must be made that can easily reproduce on the cheapest grade of paper possible. Any written message should be as brief as possible with an accompanying graphic that is easily recognizable. Many times a specific audience can be reached with the use of only one word.

I did an anti-drug poster for use in the Chicano Barrio here in Chicago.
caricature of a burned-out pusher emblazoned with the word Malinche. Malinche was the Mexican mistress of the conquistador Cortes and the name has long been associated with traitor to the Race. One Sunday afternoon a colleague and I along with a pot of wheat paste plastered these posters on every "EI" platform and as many wooden fences we could find in the Barrio. Outside of some penciling in the margins like "Right On!" or "Simon ese!", the only vandalism was done by the Chicago winter over the few months, as that is how long they stayed up.

The 4-hour Day poster, due to its size, I had also used as a T-shirt design as printers ink on cloth endures innumerable launderings. Even some of the guys on my factory job who were Nixon voters wanted these shirts, mainly because the message related to them. That is always something to remember when advocating something that varies from the conventional mass-media messages. You have got to relate it to the lives of those whom you are hoping to reach. This is borne out also by the acceptance of street murals and should be nothing new to readers of this magazine.

Because a large size poster necessitates a separate inking of each poster, the design can be cut so inking with more than one color is feasible which while time-consuming, is much easier than having to worry about proper placement for every impression, as when using the litho process.

As for subject matter, the possibilities are endless. There is always some personage or idea that can serve a much-needed educational function and having sufficient quantities to hustle at neighborhood art fairs can be a nice economic supplement. This is how I make my sin money while waiting for my first social security check. As for the posters, I feel that they can speak for themselves and belaboring the reader with long-winded descriptions would only be redundant. The Joe Hill poster has already gone through a couple of thousand impressions and aside from having been in the exhibition, "The Other America", I was gratified to see it plastered on walls in the Swedish countryside a few years back.

I do not wish by any means to denigrate the silk screen process, not only because I have many highly respected colleagues working in that medium, but also the blending of colors has much greater potential with silk screen than with linoleum or wood block.

I recommend my particular process only for those who have less means at their disposal such as equipment and finances. Also one does not have to endure the fumes that are attendant to a silk screen workshop and one can safely smoke while working. It is a process that can be done with very modest means while also having the advantage of being a one-person operation.

Contemporary poster art has always been treated with disdain by the art purists, but has anyone priced an original Toulouse-Lautrec poster lately? Since the readers of this magazine obviously have little concern for the opinions of the art purists, we need only remember that some of the greatest artists have done poster art and their output has been well-monopolized by the art dealers whose prices are meant for an entirely different class of people than whom the work was originally intended for. I can only refer to Jose Guadalupe Posada and Kathe Kollwitz, who besides reflecting my own ethnic mix, I consider my spiritual Grandparents because of the inspiration I have derived from them.

—Carlos Cortez Koyokulkatl
CONFERENCE REPORT
Meridian's Art of the Americas: Junctures and Disjunctures

This article is from the New Art Examiner and Arte En Colombia

As a concept there is no question that the Meridian exhibition and symposium on the Art of the Americas held in San Francisco from July 10-12, 1985 was a laudable enterprise. It was conceived by its organizers, Ann Brodzky and Tony Williams (assisted by the Society for Art Publication of the Americas and Drs. Tomas Ybarra-Frausto and Amalia Mesa-Bains) as a culminating event leading to the publication of a U.S.-based magazine, *Meridian: A Cultural Journal of the Americas*, which would function on a North-South hemispheric axis (from Canada to South America). The vision is one that many have shared but none have successfully implemented. Brodzky and Williams formerly published the now-defunct *Arts Canada*.

National U.S. art magazines on occasion give the nod to brief stories and reviews about Latin American or Canadian events, however systematic coverage. By contrast, the widespread dislocation, as well as videos for public cable release. Szyszlo's "style" is traditional abstract expressionism (called informalism in Latin America), Thomas' painting utilizes gestural abstraction, Rivera combines informalism with real canvas-mounted twigs, and Cruz Azaceta might be considered an anguished neo-expressionist, judging by his mutilated self-image, *Homo-Beef*. The cool self-referential geometric formalism of Bonavardi and Bloore should not be confused with that of Escobedo's geometric outdoor constructions (though the full-scale collaborative piece with Berry intended as a human environment for a lot near the gallery was never constructed). Escobedo is always concerned with the use and impact of a piece on its human audience, the interplay between landscape, space, monument, and people.

Thus it can be seen that a great variety of meanings and visual languages informed the works that composed this public.
exhibit, acting within and expressing varied life experiences and viewpoints. That some of the stances were oppositional became clear as the symposium swung into its first day. These stances took the form of two contentious positions: should artists concern themselves with "messages" and communication in their work? (the old chestnut of art and politics not mixing); and the political and cultural relationship of the United States to Latin American countries and to Latinos and other Third World people living within its borders. Things got off to a bad start when New York art critic Dore Ashton, one of the "star" participants invited by the organizers, loosed a number of chauvinistic remarks about "Latin America" and "globalization." Ashton, being part of the "global" art world, felt obliged to adopt while part of the Chicanos movement in the 1970s, to a more spiritual (religious) expression. "My culture is in art but...it is a redefinition," she stated. "Whatever I do is my culture, and I now define my culture from the inside." Speaking from the audience, artist Yolanda Lopez criticized the implied rejection of the Chicanos movement; "it was our nurturing soil," she said, "not a far or something from which to escape.

On the second day, excellent presentations were made at the round tables by artist Patricia Rodriguez, San Diego-based Mexican performance artist Guillermina Gomez-Pena whose group, Poyesis Genetica, is seeking artistic expression of U.S.-Mexican border culture, Gamboa and Escobedo. By the afternoon, things began to disintegrate and the symposium was cancelled. Much to be regretted was the non-appearance (for unspecified reasons) of the only discussant on African and Afro-American art. The three-day event which began as a gush, ended as a trickle.

Such an ending was unfortunate. Instead of welcoming the heated debate over issues raised outside the symposium, the organizers seemed perturbed that the wheels were not turning smoothly. There were, perhaps, mixed intentions: the $100 entry fee (later modified to $5 to admit local artists) suggests an expected middle class audience of future financial backers for the symposium which, by and large, did not materialize. For such an audience, controversy and polemics, particularly around sensitive topics like racism and U.S. military involvement in Latin America, were not welcome. However, a polemic developed over the "universalist" vs. "regionalist" debate which cannot really be discussed fruitfully, in my opinion, unless one considers that the ideology of "universalism" has traditionally been promoted by the metropolitan centers of Western art, notably Paris and New York, while the validity of so-called "regionalism" has been defended by many U.S. cities outside New York, and by the metropolis-labeled "peripheral" countries, i.e. those in Latin America, Africa, and the South Pacific. The regionalist accusation has also bludgeoned Chicano artists of the Southwest and Midwest. This debate is breaking down from its own inconsistencies in the post-modernist era when the international art arena is no longer dominated by a few metropolis-supported styles, however it was still in evidence at the symposium and will doubtless continue to be argued for many years as to whether or not these sterile and outmoded ideologies. A more acceptable designation for "regionalism" (which acquired a perjorative nuance during the 1950s when all varieties of 1930s' realism were under attack) might be "rootedness," i.e. art which reflects the local and national character of an artist without, necessarily, being parochial. Dr. Ybarra-Frausto addressed this question from the Chicanos viewpoint, pointing out that while all artists should have wide opportunities to penetrate the dominant institutions, sometimes by changing the militancy or nationalist thrust of their work. Panelist Mesa-Bains pointed out that her altars are moving away from the didactic communal character she felt obliged to adopt while part of the Chicanos movement in the 1970s, to a more spiritual (religious) expression. "My culture is in art but...it is a redefinition," she stated. "Whatever I do is my culture, and I now define my culture from the inside."