

National Murals Network

2nd NATIONAL MURALS CONFERENCE

CHICAGO APRIL 20-23 1978

Last month's conference drew 120 muralists from across the country for an intensive series of workshops, meetings, slide & film presentations and discussions. The conference was hosted by Chicago members of the National Murals Network: Chicago Mural Group, Movimiento Artistico Chicano (MARCH) and Public Art Workshop. While the Chicago organizations worked hard at preparing the bare bones of the conference, the work of leading discussions and making presentations was done by Network muralists from many cities.

Network coordinators had been working since the historic first conference 2 years ago in New York to spread the word and encourage greater involvement from artists new to the mural movement. This hard work paid off when muralists from over 45 cities in 20 states came to Chicago. A new dimension was added to the conference by the attendance of muralists from Mexico, England, France and Scotland.

At the Friday morning workshops on **TECHNIQUES FOR GROUP WORK**, muralists exchanged their valuable experiences on school and neighborhood youth projects. Friday afternoon started with a slide presentation by Luis Arenal of the Siqueiros Workshop in Cuernavaca on Siqueiros' collective style of work and use of dynamic perspective. Later sessions on **NEW MATERIALS** showed muralists some new possibilities for the use of mosaic, porcelain enamel and cast concrete in community projects. A session on the commissioning process was set up to explain how to deal with architects and handle contracts. The Friday evening sessions were devoted to reports from the international guests and media presentations by several mural groups.

Saturday morning the **PROBLEM OF FUNDING** was investigated. Representatives from NEA and NAPNOC suggested ways to work with existing programs and shared

information on coming changes in the funding picture. Saturday afternoon's session was a marathon of key presentations on the major theme of COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT by Ralph Waldrop (Artist-in-Residence for Lancaster SC), Roderick Sykes (St Elmo's Village, LA), Manuel Martinez (Denver CO), Patricia Rodriguez (San Francisco CA), and Tomie Arai (Cityarts Workshop NY).

Saturday night's REGIONAL CAUCUSES AND PLENARY resulted in a STATEMENT OF NETWORK GOALS that expanded on the original statements from the first conference. Besides our original goals of COMMUNICATION, MUTUAL SUPPORT and PUBLIC INFORMATION (fully set out in the first Newsletter) we added 2 new ones. The first is ADVOCACY. As a Network we will speak out on every level--local, regional and national--on art policy that affects the future of the mural movement and its accessibility. The other is our SOLIDARITY and FRIENDSHIP with similar mural movements in other countries.

We also hammered out a STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES by which we tried to define the common bond that unites us:

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

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

Southwest:

Christina Schlesinger
SPARC
685 Venice Blvd
Venice CA 90291

Karen VanFossan Post
W Dallas Community Ctrs
212 Dallas W Shopping Ctr
Dallas TX 75212

Robert Beckmann
594 Sierra Vista A-17
Las Vegas NV 89109

Northwest & Newsletter:

Tim Drescher
P O Box 40383
San Francisco CA 94140

Midwest:

Barbara Russum
Public Art Workshop
5623 W Madison St
Chicago IL 60644

East:

Tomie Arai
Cityarts Workshop
525 E 6th St
New York NY 10009

The regional caucuses recognized that many muralists are not yet known to the Network or could not attend the conference. The regions plan to spread the word and actively seek out muralists and groups within the region. Ralph Waldrop is hoping to get Southern muralists together to form a region of the Network in the near future.

The plenary agreed that MEMBERSHIP in the Network be self nominating through the regions. Frequency of regional meetings and amount of dues are to be determined on a regional level. As an example--the Midwest regional caucus decided to hold a regional conference in Chicago in the fall and to collect \$5 annual membership dues to help meet expenses. The question of possible incorporation of the Network was given to a committee for careful investigation and research.

The Network members from San Francisco volunteered to produce future NEWSLETTERS and no one tried to talk them out of it. The next issue is scheduled for fall 1978. All material for the Newsletter and the mailing list should be sent to Tim Drescher.

The plenary discussed ideas for the THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE and the West coast was proposed as the site. But people felt that a good deal more organizing work would have to be done before an exact date and location could be set.

In response to a letter to the conference from muralist Anton Refregier, the conference went on record in support of his murals in the Rincon Hill San Francisco Postoffice which are in danger of destruction.

GREETINGS TO THE CHICAGO MURAL CONFERENCE

Dear Fellow Muralists:

I have been spending the winter working on my Defense of Chile project here in the land of Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros.

The few artists I know of here of the "older" generation marvel and admire the scope, the vitality, and the strength of the revolutionary ideas of the public art movement in the United States. And I feel pride for that achievement. It's a movement that cannot be stopped--the momentum increasing and the search for deeper meaning for profound ideas will find realization in ingenious new forms.

Like the Mexican artists, the street murals of today carry on this influence to a vast number of people. They serve as a constant reminder of the people's struggle and the people's hopes. The achievements of the muralists in our cities is already becoming a movement that is increasingly recognized by the whole world. The influence is spreading.

Writing this, I am aware of the constant threat to our work. And today, once more, I am fearful for my Rincon Hill Postoffice murals in San Francisco. They were almost destroyed during the dark period of McCarthyism but saved by the joint efforts of labor, artists and museum people. And today their future existence is in jeopardy as the building is being abandoned by the postoffice.

Every month, every week, in some part of the United States a mural is being destroyed by the decision of some ignorant official, by some one who hates art, by some one reactionary who hates the ideas in the mural, by some one who is giving in to the pressure of reactionary forces.

It is evident that after we finish painting a mural, we then have to be alert to its preservation and protection. But, as you well know, when we paint something that people recognize as of importance to them, when people embrace it as their own, then we can walk away saying: "It is yours to protect, to preserve and to enjoy."

ANTON REFREGIER

Anton Refregier

april 15 - 1978
Mexico -

GREENWICH MURAL WORKSHOP

78 Kinveachy Gardens, Charlton, London SE7. Ph: 01 855 2828

Statement read by Carol at the Conference
representing England & France delegates views
also supported by Mexican group.

- ① As muralists each of us have a precise definition of who we are, what we are, what is our purpose.
- ② It is important for the United States to know the basic reason why they invited us to the conference. The struggles of each of our countries are peculiar to each country and are equally important.
- ③ Were we invited to the conference on an ideological level or just as muralists? Are we just muralists or artists involved in a political struggle? We would have liked to have seen a workshop where people could explain their ideology.
- ④ The most important concern of the conference seemed to be with finance and how the movement can continue. W.P.A. Stopped when funds were discontinued, will this happen to C.E.T.A.
It is important then to develop a common strong ideology while funds are available that will continue public art when money is cut off.
- ⑤ There are 2 levels to the communication of different networks.
 - ① That we agree with sharing information and experiences.
 - ② Can we share an international ideology
- ⑥ Can the Public Art movement exist in a capitalist system without a struggle?

NATIONAL MURALS NETWORK--2ND NATIONAL MURALS CONFERENCE

The growth and commitment of the mural movement was demonstrated at the 1st National Murals Conference held in New York in Spring, 1976. Over 150 muralists and mural groups attended 3 days of workshops, discussions and public sessions. A major accomplishment of the conference was the formation of the National Murals Network, loosely linking dozens of local programs and hundreds of individual artists in every part of the country. The conference also resulted in publication of the first issue of the National Murals Newsletter by the New York members of the Network.

Since the first conference many changes in government art policies, from the municipal to the federal level, make holding another conference an urgent necessity. A 2nd National Murals Conference is being called and hosted by Chicago coordinators from the Network: Chicago Mural Group, MARCH (Movimiento Artistico Chicano), and Public Art Workshop. The dates: April 20-23, 1978; the location: Chicago's COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

We are asking all regions of the country to send their most active and respected people, with a maximum of 100 delegate/participants. This will be a working conference, and delegates will be responsible for reporting back to the regions. Workshops will be held in: public policy and funding problems; media and techniques; group methods and relations to the community; and planning for better functioning of the Network.

The conference sponsors are working to provide housing and some meals for out of town visitors who will not be able to come otherwise. We are asking the regions to arrange transportation money for their delegates. More information and registration forms will be available shortly. If you want to be a delegate to the conference, contact your nearest coordinator:

EAST Tomie Arai or Lucy Mahler
Cityarts Workshop
525 E. 6th Street
New York, NY 10009
212/673-8670



CENTRAL

WEST Tim Drescher
211 Vicksburg
San Francisco, CA 94114
514/285-6192

John Weber
Chicago Mural Group
2261 N. Lincoln Ave.
Chicago, IL 60614
312/871-3089

Barbara Russum
Public Art Workshop
5623 W. Madison Street
Chicago, IL 60644
312/626-1713

Jose G. Gonzalez
MARCH
P.O. Box 2890
Chicago, IL 60690
312/376-3520 X58

Please complete and return to National Murals Network, CMG
2261 N. Lincoln Ave.
Chicago, IL 60614

I wish to be part of the National Murals Network. CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY.

Name _____
Address _____
(Zip code) _____
Phone _____

☐ Muralist ☐ Teacher ☐ Student

☐ Member community art group: _____

☐ Member of community organization: _____

☐ Area of interest: _____

☐ Please send me _____ newsletters (50¢ each)

☐ PLEASE CORRECT MAILING LABEL.

☒ Enclosed is a contribution: \$ _____

☒ Enclosed is payment: \$ _____

☒ Enclosed Conference registration, \$12

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO NATIONAL MURALS NETWORK

CONNECTICUT

Arturo Lindsay, former student of Nelson Stevens and Leonel Gongora, has done several murals in Hartford, most recently "In Homage to Puerto Rican Historical Figures." Youth paid by CETA assisted on the project, and Connecticut Public TV filmed the progression of the mural and the dedication for a series.

Ruth Resnick and Terry Lennox have been working hard on community mural projects in New Haven with CETA youth. They've encountered the usual difficulties working under government programs that were never designed specifically to fund the arts. Weighing the pros and cons Ruth now says: "If you have a good sense of what you want, these programs do offer the potential of serious work - so take it while it lasts, but always try to rely on the more sure and steady support of the community." Ruth and Terry are excited about their next project (a commission for the unemployment office) and are particularly interested in leases and contracts to protect the mural from being painted out. (Editor's note: please send information to "Lease Project," Public Art Workshop.)

LANSING

A group of artists known as the Popular Arts Workshop came together in 1976 in the capital city of Michigan. Their first project was 2 murals for a city funded mini-park. The murals depicted historical buildings which have disappeared from the community. Since then they've done a project for the Lansing Center for the Arts and one in cooperation with the Michigan State School of Art. Their latest project, an underpass mural inspired by the city's annual ethnic festival, will once again be funded by the city, but only after months of negotiations.

The Popular Arts Workshop wants to hear from other groups of artists about how they handle conflicts over members' rights and responsibilities. Please write: PO Box 15052, Lansing, Michigan 48901.

ST. LOUIS

At the Mid-American Cultural Center, On The Wall Production artists Bob Fishbone, Sara Linquist and others recently completed their latest mural, a portrait of Wolf Robe titled "Face of a Nation." Besides painting lots of murals in St. Louis, On The Wall artists are very active in promoting murals through slide presentations which they have given in many cities across the U.S. On The Wall artists are known for their technical skill and innovation in areas of wall preparation, paints, gridding procedures, and use of sophisticated scaffolding and riggings.

CLEVELAND

In the past 5 years dozens of murals in a tremendous variety of imaginative styles have been painted under the auspices of the Cleveland Area Arts Council (CAAC). They're on downtown buildings, neighborhood walls, along rapid transit routes, in mini-parks, and in housing projects. Funding has come from such sources as: NEA, Ohio Arts Council, the business community, CETA, the local housing authority, and the rapid transit authority.

The level of development of muralists in Cleveland can be illustrated by an example of how the problem of defacement was handled. Gloria Mark directed a mural depicting 2 black hands clasped over a map of Africa. When red paint was splashed over the area of southern Africa she felt the act symbolized the bloodshed there and let it stay. Next, one of the hands was carefully painted white. "It made me think someone's message was that blacks and whites should unite." But when a swastika appeared, about 45 people showed up to help paint over it and demonstrate that they were mad.

Unfortunately, Gloria and other important artists in Cleveland were dropped by CAAC because the Council seems to have taken a turn away from community arts and toward elitism. But the latest word from Cleveland is that community artists there are working to reverse this trend.

SCOTLAND

THE WALL OF NEGLECT

by Beth Shadur

The "Wall of Neglect", a 4000 sq. ft. mural located in the Special Unit at Barlinnie Prison in Glasgow was completed in September 1976. The project is significant not only in its theme but in its creation under somewhat extraordinary circumstances.

The Special Unit was set-up four years ago as a last hope to solve the problem of violence in Scottish prisons. Prisoners sent there were considered Scotland's most violent with several coming from the "cages" at Inverness. Staff members must volunteer to serve in the Unit. Prisoners are free to structure their own time and activity and to move about the space of the entire Unit. Decisions regarding management of the Unit are made in weekly meetings of staff and inmates.

Prisoners, staff and visitors with the help of American muralist Beth Shadur organized, designed, drew and painted the mural. Scaffolding was loaned by Barlinnie Prison. Paint and other supplies were donated by Imperial Chemical Industries.

The mural depicts a system of workers and machines all serving a semi-nude fat man sitting under a

(Editor's note: for more about prison murals see "San Quentin Mural Project", Jack Burnham, The New Art Examiner, Chicago, May 1977; and Prison Art, Shelly Killen, Embryo Books/Pluralist Press edition.)

NATIONAL MURALS NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER STAFF: Barbara Russum,
Andrea Shein Temkin, Marta Ramirez,
Celia Radek

DESIGN: Jose G. Gonzalez

beach umbrella with his belly cut away to reveal tiny men clinging to his internal organs. The workers, on panels between cell doors, contribute their produce to a conveyor belt. An endless street symbolically breaks the space of the prison.

The "Wall of Neglect" owes its success to the set-up of the Special Unit as an innovative, radical alternative to a notoriously brutal prison system, and, further, to the Special Unit community.

MILWAUKEE

During May 1st to the 5th 1977 an historic gathering of Chicano artists took place in Milwaukee. This was possible through the efforts of "EL MIDWEST CANTO AL PUEBLO". The "CANTO" offered free public cultural activities, one of which was a joint outdoor mural project. To the sound of live music and poetry, the artists worked for four days and completed the wall.

The list of participants looks like a "Who's Who" of the people's art movement: Manuel Martinez from Denver, Armando Estrella (St. Paul), Jose Antonio Burciaga (Menlo Park, CA), Zarco Guerrero (Mesa, AZ), Carlos Rosas (El Paso, TX), Mario Torero (San Diego, CA), Jose Montoya (Sacramento, CA), and Sal Vega, Marcos Raya, Aurelio Diaz and Juanita Jaramillo from Chicago.



SPECIAL THANKS TO: Jan Crebbs,
Roger Sein, Actors' Equity, &
United Scenic Artists

ATLANTA by Steve Seaber

In April 1974 Atlanta's "African Unity" mural was torn down, ostensibly to make way for a new highrise office building, but the land is still vacant. One of Atlanta's first "people's murals" it depicted the glories of past African cultures and the injustices of racism. It was painted about 1970 by 4 artists including an Ethiopian.

In contrast, the chamber of commerce using federal funds originated an "Urban Walls" program which resulted in 5 non-figurative murals in the downtown business district. The artists, who tended to be already employed by traditional arts organizations or connected with commercial galleries, received \$1000 commissions. None were Black and only one of them a woman.

By 1975 "Urban Walls" (now privately funded) awarded one of its commissions to noted Black artist Romare Beardon and he completed a mural titled "Homage to Martin Luther King." But its first proposed site on one of Atlanta's new building was vetoed by a prominent local architect. Beardon donated $\frac{1}{2}$ his commission to a local community art center. The remaining commissioned walls were non-figurative once again.

Meanwhile a new group of Black artists were painting a wall of faces of Angela Davis, Malcolm X and others under a commission from The Neighborhood Art Center. (Editor's note: see "Three Artists Paint Their Respect to Great Blacks on Wall in Atlanta," Jet Magazine, 9/23/76).

Although the tendency has been "grass roots" art in the ghetto but downtown walls in the hands of artists who follow the directions of the business community, change is on the way: Mayor Jackson's Bureau of Cultural & International Affairs is now funding muralists. For the first time local Black artists are being paid with city funds to paint for the public.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Muralist Ralph Waldrop has been employed by the SC Arts Commission as Lancaster's muralist-in-residence for 2 years. During the school year he directs public school students in mural making so that now every school in the county has its

own mural. In addition to projects involving youth, he recently completed a mural on a 97' long wall in downtown Lancaster.

"Forward Together" portrays 16 huge figures selected from hundreds of random photographs of the town's residents. Ralph sees the main theme of the mural as the spirit of a united community with anti-racism as a subtheme. In addition to the state arts commission, funding for the project also came from the City of Lancaster and NEA.

Ralph is anxious to hear from other muralists in the Southeast. He can be contacted through the SC Arts Commission at 829 Richland, Columbia, SC 29201. His work can be viewed on an upcoming PBS program called Studio SEE. (Check local TV listings for time and date.)

NEW YORK NEWS

by John Weber

Cityarts had a heavy summer with five major projects happening in: Harlem, Chinatown, Tomkins Square, the Lower East Side and Park Slope (in Brooklyn). All were highly successful except the Park Slope project. It became enmeshed in a controversy over theme between the youthful painting team and a group of conservative white residents. The controversy, which attracted considerable press attention, is still in negotiation, the mural remaining unfinished and defaced. Cityarts meanwhile is proceeding with ambitious plans to decorate the Essex St. subway station in mosaic.

Hank Prussing has been commissioned to do a mural for the old US Customs House. He is also still working on murals in a church in the Fort Green section of Brooklyn.

The Bronx Council on the Arts sponsored murals for the first time. The 5 murals were coordinated by veteran Jim Januzzi and painted by Bronx artists (including Clement Roach) working with resident youth. Both Clement and Clyde Santana were working in NYC again after a year as resident artists in the New Jersey schools (sponsored by the NJ Arts Commission).

Eva Cockcroft and Josely Carvalho have been experimenting with silkscreen images in murals. Since doing a small wall with community participation on elections, they have been working on a human rights theme on mylar sheets.

Susan Caruso Green tells us that New York enjoyed no less than three exhibits concerning the WPA this fall. (Hilton Kramer naturally did NOT enjoy them.) One of the exhibits, on Black artists of New York and Chicago in the 1930's will definitely be in Chicago in April for the Network Conference.

MADISON, WISCONSIN

The day before Caryl Yasko and Niki Glen were to start work on "Our Search for Knowledge in an Everchanging Universe" the president of a drug store chain who had committed \$1000 and the wall of one of his stores withdrew everything because he wanted a picture of the zoo or a cityscape of Madison. Rowley and Schlimgen, an office supply firm, rose to the occasion by offering their wall

and assuring the artists that they had complete confidence in them and their design. The new wall presented Caryl and Niki with another unique problem: it was 47' off the ground. Undaunted the muralists and their helpers painted from hanging scaffolding.

All this occurred after five grant requests to the Wisconsin Arts Board and other foundations were turned down, leaving the artists to depend on the community at large to raise a cash and in kind budget of \$11,766. This support came from thirty local businesses, five organizations, and 200 friends through a "Buy a Brick" campaign. "The small businesses on whose walls we paint are the traditional allies of the muralist. Muralists must hold that alliance while building a stronger foundation for public art," reflects Caryl.

Just two blocks from the state capital and across from a public park, the 2380 sq. ft. mural is proof of a successful combination of fantastic community support and two hardworking muralists who didn't let obstacles stand in their way.

Yasko and Glen overcome peculiar building features. (Where do those doors go, anyway?)



CHICAGO

CETA & ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

by John Weber

Job relief programs continue as a mainstay of many community art groups here. The efforts of the Coalition to Save CETA (for the Arts) met success in the granting of CETA Title VI slots to every group that applied. Mural Network groups played a major role in the coalition. However the difficulty of qualifying people under the strict guidelines meant long delays in hiring and loss of positions by some groups.

In October the Council on Fine Arts hired 100 "Artists in Residence" - the first time artists have worked directly for the city since the 1930's. The artists assigned to various city departments will execute projects ranging from bilingual pamphlets to arts programs in public housing. Of the 20 odd slots for visual artists, 5 went to muralists: Rogovin, Eda, Caton, Takata and Lipuma. Eugene Eda is to paint a mural at the former site of the Wall of Respect. Takata and Rogovin will work in schools, Caton in Board of Health clinics and Lipuma at the Zoo. The new executive director of the Council on Fine Arts, Jan Crebbs, formerly administered the CETA for the arts program. She is favorably regarded by artists coops and community art groups here.

PIONEER SOCIAL WORK & JUSTICE SPEAKS

Muralist Astrid Fuller has been painting for several years on underpasses in Hyde Park. Such walls as "Spirit of Hyde Park" (done with Bill Walker), "Women's Struggle" and "Rebirth" are familiar sights to thousands of residents and to commuters who ride the trains that run overhead. But her latest mural almost didn't get painted. "Pioneer Social Work" was sponsored by an organization of social workers, but a small vociferous group of people tried to prevent the mural. Their flimsy reasons could not hide a racist attitude that "murals belong only in the ghetto". The attempts to stop the mural resulted in a spontaneous outpouring of support from the community. Public statements of support

came from the Chicago Artists Coalition, Independent Voters of Illinois, and well known and respected members of the community. The Lawyers for the Creative Arts donated substantial services. The mural was painted.

At the completion of the mural, a joint dedication was called to also celebrate the adjacent "Justice Speaks" by Bill Walker. Present at the dedications was Delbert Tibbs, about whose landmark civil rights case Walker's mural was painted. Following the dedication a benefit party was held to raise funds to restore and seal the Hyde Park murals painted by Walker and Fuller.

STOP ARSON FOR PROFIT

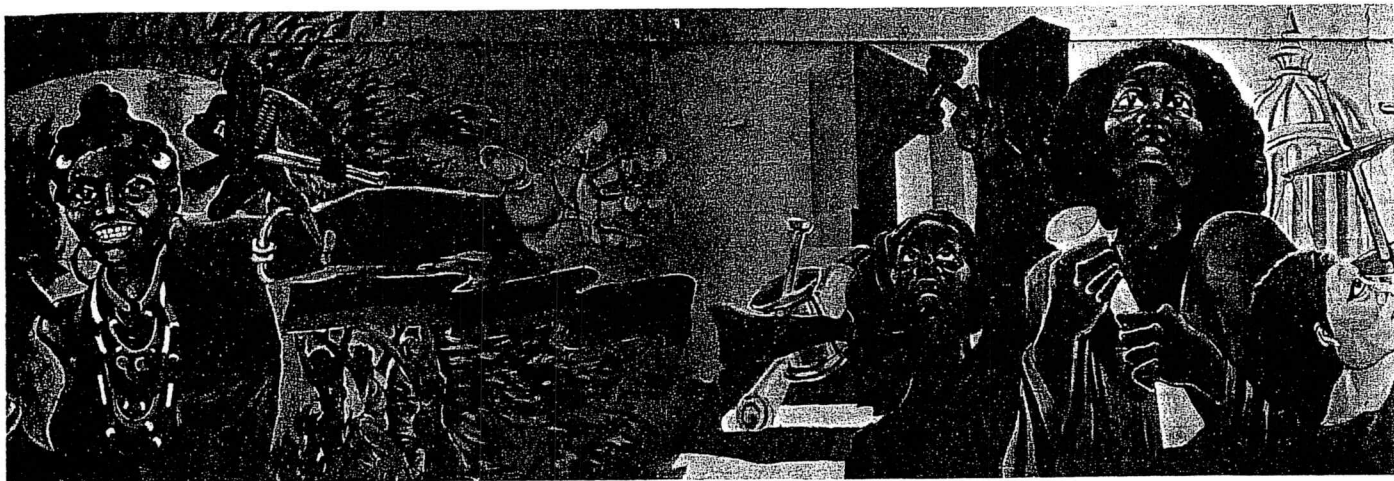
Holly Highfill's latest mural portrays a theme of enormous significance to the Uptown community. "Stop Arson For Profit" was sponsored by the Southern Cultural Exchange Center because arson is a common and severe problem affecting Housing occupied by Appalachian migrants. According to Judy McLaughlin of the Center the design is to encourage people to work together to stop these fires. Salaries for the director and team were paid by CETA.

Holly has been painting for several years in Uptown, doing both outdoor murals and indoor ones-- including a spectacular three story stairway at Goudy elementary school. It was painted on canvas which was then adhered to the walls. This past fall Holly took a leave of absence from Chicago to do advanced studies in painting at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

CMG'S COMMUNITY MURAL PROJECT

by John Weber

Funding tells the story: from 1972 through 1976 the Chicago Mural Group completed 7 or 8 major projects each summer-- staff funding from NEA Visual Arts matched by strong grass roots fund raising and in kind support. This year no federal support, unable to qualify group members on CETA VI, a skeleton staff, barely enough funds to complete 3 murals. Worth pondering: a recent issue of NEA's Cultural Post in an extensive write-up of the "Works on



Justine Devan overcame hostility of male gang members to complete "Black Women Emerging"

Art in Public Places" program didn't even mention murals.

Completed projects: John Weber replaced "Defend the Bill of Rights" with "Prophecy" at the Express Car Wash on a new billboard instead of the peeled warped one. The mural symbolically depicts contention over resources and repression of liberation struggles countered by the rising sun of the third world.

Justine Devan returned from Philly to paint "Black Women Emerging". After the sketch was painted out by local male gang members, Devan built a work team with local artists. McDonald's and Playboy contributed funds for the project.

Mitchell Caton and Calvin Jones painted "In Defense of Ignorance" on the theme of Black self-education.

Other CMG artists worked on restoring walls or helped community groups with projects. Over half the group had to take other jobs. By fall CMG was able to hire three CETA VI artists to do murals with children in public schools and workshops for teachers and parents.

PUBLIC ART WORKSHOP

In spite of funding setbacks PAW was able to continue its program of mural workshops for students and teachers in dozens of Chicago area schools. Mark Rogovin also initiated murals at the University of Nebraska during a short artist residency there, and with Lou Armstrong assisted four inmates at Indiana State Prison on their mural.

Kathleen Farrell completed a wall in a Paris working class neighborhood while studying at Art Deco. She directed

the Joliet (Illinois) summer mural program financed by CETA through the city's Department of Human Resources. While handling all administrative details, she also managed to direct one of the murals ("Books For Life") depicting the diverse cultural heritage of the neighborhood. PAW artists made frequent trips to Joliet to help on the walls there in between assisting with west side projects.

PAW's project to translate Siqueiros' book, Como Se Pinta Un Mural, is moving forward again after several problems and delays including locating a new translator. Mark has been in touch with Sra. Angelica Arenal de Siqueiros and has asked for an English language presentation on Siqueiros' techniques for the 2nd National Murals Conference.

BENITO JUAREZ HIGH SCHOOL

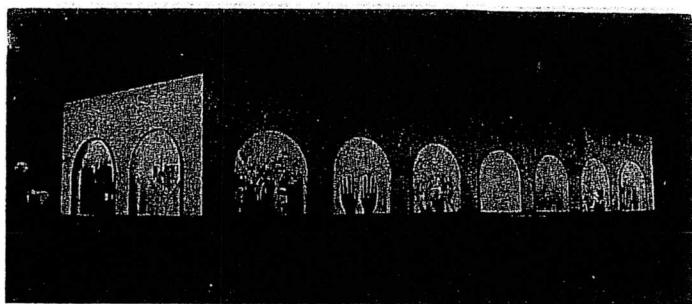
A brand new high school in the Chicano community was designed to encompass murals. The plan for murals was incorporated into the design of the building by architect Adrian Lozano of Berheim, Kahn & Lozano after discussions with members of MARCH (Movimiento Artistico Chicano). Works will be submitted to a committee that includes parents, students, artists and representatives of community organizations and the school. However, the cost of materials for the murals and artists' commissions was not made a part of the construction budget. The people who worked to get the idea of murals approved did not feel there was any way to get the Capital Development Board to also approve the funds. Now if we had a "1% for Art" ordinance here...

Work being done in murals and public art in Mexico is so diverse, that I only attempt to mention a few examples. People are painting in many parts of the country, and also, much work being done today is not lasting in nature.

For example, in almost all the big marches and demonstrations there are painted banners with symbols and figures: satires on officials, TV sets spewing lies, etc.

There are many artists who do such work on a continuing basis. One example is that of Reynaldo Olivares, a young print-maker and muralist who joined the Campamento 2 de Octubre, (an organization engaged in urban land struggle). "At first people said there was no need to paint figures on the banners," he remarks, "but later, they'd complain about banners with just words." Olivares has painted murals in the Campamento and in a related community in Chihuahua.

Huge mural in Guadalajara theater by Gabriel Flores



Guadalajara's Modern Art Center

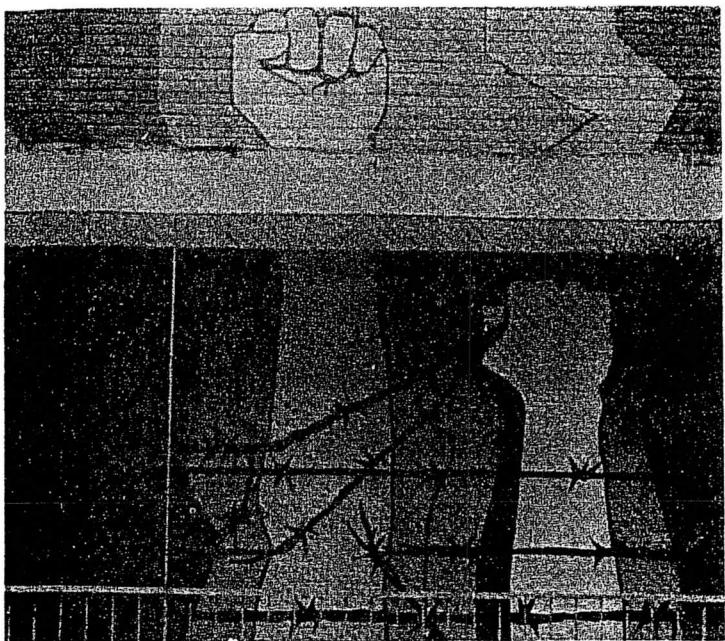
In Guadalajara, Guillermo Chavez Vega and Gabriel Flores lead a group that has painted in many public buildings. In the same city, a patron set up a modern art center where 21 artists each did a panel or a sculpture.

In Merida, Fernando Castro Pacheco has painted the myths and history of Yucatan in the state house. There are both lyricism and bitterness in the figures that fill the stairwell and a series of panels.

In Cuernavaca, Siqueiros' workshop has been reopened as a center for the study and practice of Mexican muralism. Luis Arenal directs the Taller Siqueiros, where some 20 young artists are now beginning projects. The Workshop has just republished Como Se Pinta Un Mural.

In Mexico City, Vlady is painting a monumental mural in the library of the Secretary of the Treasury (a beautiful reconstructed colonial building). The artist has finished about half of the 33,000 sq. ft. of the nave. He is working in buon fresco, portraying the condition of the human species with a brilliant palette and a very complex personal symbolism. ("It will take a long time for this accumulation of frequently tortured symbols to enter into the common domain," one critic has written.)

In Toluca, Leopoldo Flores did a mural that fills the inner courtyard of the cultural center. The painted figures rise and flow upstairs and downstairs, filling all the wallspace. For several years, Flores had been engaged in street art, working on banners hung on walls, and also painting directly on the pavement. Then he started painting a mountain: Coatepec, west of Toluca. Flores and his helpers have painted about 240,000 square feet, with no backing but sporadic aid from various organizations, including some trade unions



Guanajuato: Recent wall by Taller de Investigacion Plastica

and peasants' unions. The artist admits that this work is not lasting, but nevertheless he considers Coatepec a component of a New Muralism in an era of resurgency and expansion of mural painting.

In Guanajuato, Jose Luis Soto and his compañera, Isabel Esthela Campos, have led five other young artists in the Taller de Investigacion Plastica (Workshop for Visual Arts Studies). They've painted walls in spas, houses and schools. They hold workshops for their own collective development, and have begun painting in Michoacan now. They state that their objectives are: to create a public art that is not individualistic; to develop modern methods, and through them, a new realism; to work in both urban and rural areas.

Painter Arnold Belkin is one of the people who have acquainted Mexicans with what's happening in the US today. Belkin recently directed a group of his students in a mural about Freedom of the Press, in a side street near the "Esmeralda" School. This year the painter also did a portable mural on the Serdan family, heroes of the Mexican Revolution. He set up a temporary studio in the Palace of Fine Arts and worked there as part of his exhibition.

Arte Aca ("Art Here", with a certain connotation of "downhome") is a group of several painters and a writer, firmly rooted in the barrio of Tepito, a lower

class neighborhood of flea markets, of salsa music, a renowned quarter of Mexico City. Arte Aca has organized happenings (block party/exhibitions) in the barrio. The writer has had three books published, and now they are doing a funky comic. They've painted countless walls in the streets and courtyards of Tepito, including the tenants association building. Neighborhood people are proud of the murals, talk about them to visitors, say where more are to be found, etc. Members of Arte Aca define themselves as anti-solemn. They use phrases such as: "Ah, Nature!... How great to understand a whole fucking lot of things!... Art's what makes you feel alive, that's being here."

The Suma group was started in 1976 by students of painter Ricardo Rocha in the San Carlos School. They tend towards abstract expressionism (somewhat in opposition to the Bauhaus-geometric system of that school). Suma defines itself as an experimental group, seeking new means of expression to reach more sectors of the population in the urban context of an underdeveloped, dependent country.

Trying "to reconcile art with its society" the Suma group began painting bardas (the concrete fences around vacant lots). Each painter takes on a section, usually in a series of adjacent panels. They paint these panels in the busy streets of business districts -- passersby are the viewers.

In September 1977, Suma and three other groups of young Mexican artists set up an independent space for their participation in the X Paris Biennial. They did so to disassociate themselves from, and to protest against, an Uruguayan fascist functionary named by the French. In an introduction to the catalogue of the four Mexican groups, Gabriel Garcia Marques wrote: "These young artists were also alarmed by the suspect argument that the show was apolitical. In the first place, in these sad times in our continent, where fascism is advancing at the pace of a great beast, it is impossible to do anything that is not political. In the second place, life has taught us that those who claim to be apolitical are no more than reactionaries awaiting a better chance."

(Rini Templeton is a graphic artist from New Mexico. She has been working in Mexico recently.)

LOS ANGELES

Shifra Goldman reports that muralism in Southern California is flourishing-- there are over 1000 murals in L.A. alone. "If any trends can be detected they concern the stabilization of funding and the increase in private and/or business commissions for murals. Muralism as a form of architectural decoration...also seems to be on the increase."

Shifra's survey of muralists working in the Los Angeles area shows: commissions by small businesses in neighborhoods and quite a few projects in high schools, community centers, and housing areas like Estrada Courts (which has 60 murals) and St. Elmo's Village. Muralists worked through Brockman Gallery, Mechicano Art Center, Goetz Gallery, ASCO, Los Four, Mural Resource Center, and Chicana Service Action Center (an all women's organization).

CETA funding is still in the picture as is some NEA money channelled through community art centers. One of the larger CETA grants --\$127,000-- is going to employ 10 artists to paint in downtown L.A. which is presently undergoing redevelopment in the form of high cost housing and beautification of the business area.

One interesting project was a banner mural on canvas 3 stories high and 74' long commissioned and displayed

by the United Farm Workers Convention in Fresno. Gilbert Lujan worked with the help of over 30 people to complete the mural titled "Una Sola Union"

SAN FRANCISCO

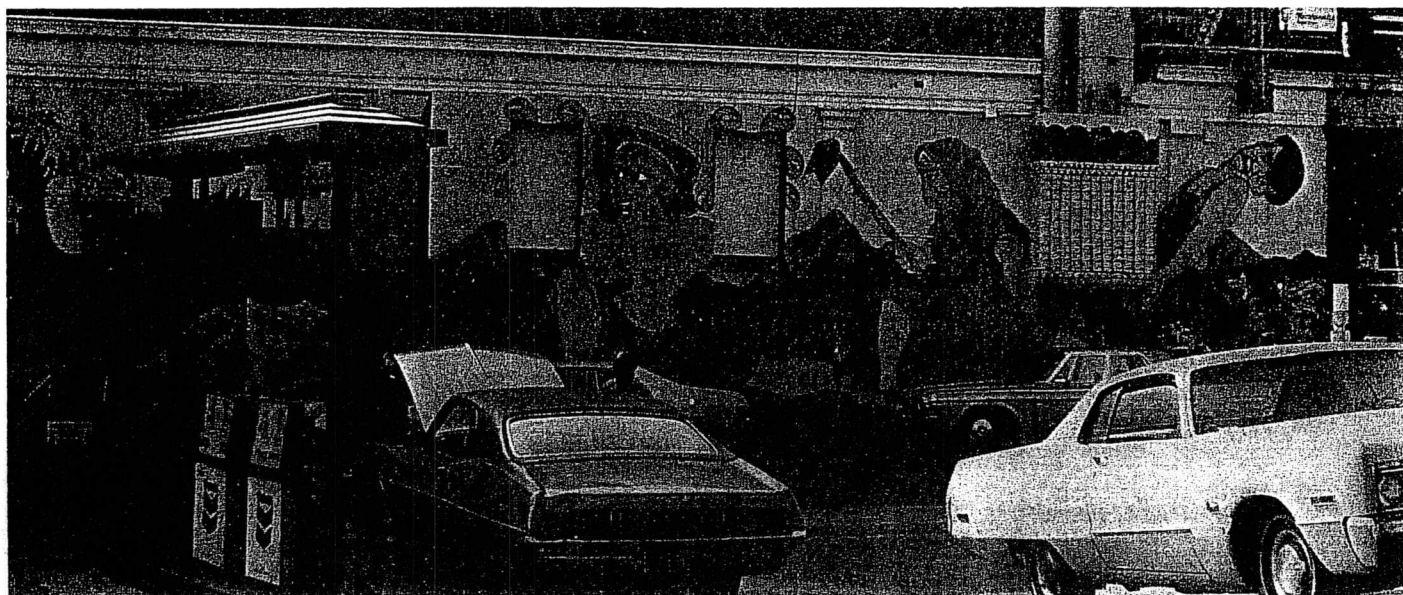
by Tim Drescher

Out in the land of drought, parched muralists continue painting. The Superstar in support continues to be CETA. There have been non-CETA murals too. But several muralists are concerned that CETA will breed excessive caution and conservatism in images painted.

Among CETA projects is Dewey Crumpler's firey wall at the Joseph Lee Recreation Center depicting aspects of Black peoples' lives in the U.S. (Editor's note: see "Walls of Fire: An Interview With Dewey Crumpler", The Arts Biweekly, 6/15/77.)

A major mural is to be destroyed in Chinatown-Manilatown where courts and the city have conspired with the Four Seas corporation to condemn the International Hotel. The tenants, mostly poor and Asian, fought for 9 years against eviction but were bodily removed and the hotel surrounded by police while waiting its demolition. This jeopardizes the famous mural painted on the side of the building by Jim Dong and the Kearny Street Workshop.

Is this powerful mural in San Francisco's Asian community doomed?



BERKELEY-OAKLAND

by Tim Drescher

There had been few murals done in the East Bay area since 1969-- until last year. There is now active CETA support and non-CETA murals too. The most exciting development is the establishment of a group called Communarts, a multi-racial, multi-cultural group with 2 full time CETA muralists, Ray Patlan and Brian Thiele. Member Irene Perez has been traveling to Fresno to work with women muralists there trying to start a group modeled after Mujeres Muralistas.

SAN DIEGO

In the early 1970's the Congress of American Cosmic Artists (CACA) began painting in Chicano Park where once ugly cement bridge pillars are now covered with murals. Mario Torero reports that CACA's years of efforts have born fruit in a CETA funded program called Community Arts. But unfortunately the City of San Diego just passed (without any public hearings) an ordinance regulating the "decoration of public structures by private citizens".

Mario states CACA's response: "In the past 4 years we've expressed ourselves on our park, the bridge pillars, freely with cultural subject matter, and now we're told we can't do that any longer unless the authorities are notified. We've collectively decided to ignore this insulting, degrading ordinance and go on painting as we have before."

NEW MEXICO

The strange sad story from New Mexico is that the famous St. Francis mural was painted over this summer. Strange because a fictitious "Mr. Greer" from the city supposedly instructed the owner of the building to paint it out, although at least one of the artists suspects the owner may have had her own reasons for doing it (her son is going to build a house there). Sad because it is one of the most powerful and well known murals in the US.

The mural was painted in 1972 by Los Artes Guadalupanos de Aztlan members including Sammy Leyba, Geronimo Garduño and Gilbert Guzman. Guzman, Garduño and a few other muralists are currently trying to work with the city's CETA funded Art In Public Places program.

In nearby Taos, Juanita Jaramillo (who worked on several murals in Chicago before returning to her hometown) and Enriquetta Vasquez worked with a team including Juanita's dad on a mural called "Un Puño de Tierra" (A Handfull of Earth). The artists say it is a statement on the encroachment of industry on the land and water.

NEW JERSEY

In Newark, architect Phillip Danzig is beginning work on the country's largest tile mural project. It will be designed and executed by tenants of the Columbus Homes public housing project under Danzig's direction. The tiles will hang in lobbies of the 6 buildings that comprise the Homes. The Newark Mosaic Tile Mural Project is funded by the Newark Housing Authority as part of a \$6.5 million modernization of the Homes that is finally beginning after a 4½ year rent strike.

Danzig has directed several projects in the past 2 years as Architect-in-Residence for the N.J. State Council on the Arts. A recent panel mural done with CETA youth in Paterson is titled "Paterson, Past and Future", and shows something of the social struggle and severe strikes of 1911-13.

Danzig became interested in tile murals when he worked with Pedro Silva on the Grant's Tomb project in 1973. He finds this permanent, durable medium exciting since "every square presents a design opportunity." The plan for the Newark project calls for 26 mosaic tile panels, each 30" by 6'. The tile is being donated by American Olean Tile Company.

Phillip will be working in the Homes for a year and would like to hear from muralists with experience in this medium or anyone else interested in participating in this unique project. Contact him at: 86 Edgemont Road, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043.

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COMMUNITY MURALS: PERSPECTIVES

Art world phenomena are generally short lived, but the community mural "phenomenon" continues to be prolific, widespread, lively and varied. In contrast to the blow-ups of studio art passed off as super graphics, we are seeing a true muralism aware of scale, audience viewpoint, architectural and spatial context. Although murals occasionally stimulate uproarious debate (how amazing that a whole neighborhood would argue about art!), they more commonly inspire community pride of ownership.

But straws in the wind indicate shifting struggles over the control of public art and its future. The question of control is one of the issues at the heart of the debate between "populists" and "elitists" concerning public funding for the arts. "Quality" can be a code word for control by a clique. Francis O'Connor's research on federal programs of the 1930's shows that the more care that was devoted to selecting quality, the more unerringly was mediocrity chosen-- ultimately a policy of minimizing risk, not a result of limited taste of the period. Although certain critics complain that public funds (a miniscule amount actually) are "wasted on programs that clearly had no other claim to existence but demographic", a commonsense position might suggest that demographic reasons are not such bad ones for spending public funds and that the taxpayers of Chinatown, Newark, or Grand Forks ND have a right to arts services too, and on their own terms. Certainly public funding helps make a large, diverse and geographically spread out art world-- beyond the ability of one individual to critically assess. For those who are nostalgic for the heyday of 57th Street galleries, for a cozy 1950's and very New York art world this is inconvenient, but the rest of us applaud.

(Editor's note: This is an excerpt from an article written by John Weber at the request of the New York Times. The Times declined to print the article.)



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