

# COMMUNITY MURALS

SPRING 1987  
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AN INTERNATIONAL VISUAL ARTS MAGAZINE





# EDITORIAL

## Must Aesthetic Impact Suffer?

"Must aesthetic impact suffer in proportion to the collectivity of a project?" Our answer is: only if we as community artists fail to do our job. Only if we cannot find a way to develop people's creativity in the project must the image's impact be reduced. This does *not* imply that everyone must become an accomplished artist (unless we believe that drawing and painting are the only forms of creativity.) If we do our job right, everyone's creativeness will contribute to the project, and those with the most developed skills will each contribute in the way that maximizes those skills.

What is most important in community projects is who creates, not just who paints. When a muralist wants to solicit mural

ideas, from an untrained group, for example, the question to ask is "What is important to you?" *not* "What do you want to see in the mural?" Too often, the latter results in visual clichés, record album covers, advertisement images and the like. But people know what is important to them and they will tell you in great detail. It is then up to the trained artist to give that importance a new and effective visual form (in constant consultation with the group, of course).

As for the project as a whole, this approach implies recognizing the value of contributions other than final painting, recognizing that in some cases keeping track of supplies and finances and artists' children are all *essential* to the effective pro-

duction of the mural *and* the production of an effective mural. If this is made clear at the outset, then all people who participate should be given equal credit. Painting and drawing are not sufficient in themselves; they are necessary, but so are a number of other skills, and all contributions should be recognized. This may threaten some artists' egos, but what needs to be kept clear is whether the primary goal of a project is only the production of an image, or whether, as in many of the strongest projects, production of an image is but one stage of an ongoing organization of people in a community to take greater control of their lives.



design—Lincoln Cushing

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Cover photo: P-9 Meatpackers Union Mural, Austin, Minnesota. By Mike Alewitz, Denny Mealy and crew, 1986. Photo by Sal Salerno. Story on page 14.

Back cover photo: *Lakas Sambayanan* (People's Power). San Francisco, California by Johanna Poethig, Vicente Clemente and Presco Tabios. Photo by Wilfredo Castanos. Story on page 16.

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## Deadlines:

Materials for future issues must reach us by the following dates:

Summer, 1987 by Thursday, April 23, 1987  
Fall, 1987 by Thursday, July 23, 1987  
Winter, 1988 by Thursday, October 1, 1987  
Spring, 1988 by Thursday, January 21, 1988

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**Correction:** In our Fall 1986 issue Vol. 11, No. 3, the article, "Oakland's Galvez Paints Murals in Massachussetts," was written by Anne Walsh, of the Cambridge Arts Council. We regret omitting her name.



# RESOURCES

## California Chicano Murals

### 1987 Calendar

SPARC  
685 Venice Blvd.  
Venice, CA 90291  
(213) 822-9560

Full-color reproductions of 12 murals from SPARC's California Chicano Mural Archive, which itself contains 3,500 slides and surveys over 1,500 artworks. Contact SPARC for more information about ordering the calendar or accessing the slide archive.

## MURAL CONFERENCE CANCELLED

The L.A. Mural conference announced in our last issue for April 24-26 has been cancelled due to lack of funds.

## Voices of Dissent

### A Symposium on the Arts as a Force for Social Change

230 Vine Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
April 10-12, 1987

Sponsored by The Painted Bride Art Center and coordinated by Big Small Theater, Voices of Dissent is a multimedia celebration of culture's role in defying injustice and demanding a better world. The symposium includes workshops, live performances, exhibits and media screenings. Artists include Eva Cockcroft (muralist), Guy Carawan (musician/civil rights activist), Bernice Reagon (Sweet Honey in the Rock), and John O'Neil (Actor/Writer).

## Made in Aztlan:

### Centro Cultural de la Raza 15 Years

110 pp., 9x10 format, \$15  
P.O. Box 8251  
San Diego, CA 92102  
(619) 235-6135

Centro Cultural has been a powerhouse of cultural expression in the Southwest for fifteen years. This new book presents the history of the center as well as reproducing the artwork of over fifty artists. (Full review in next issue.)

## Nicaraguan Cultural Alliance

1627 New Hampshire Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 387-4371

The NCA is a new organization which seeks to enrich U.S.-Nicaraguan relations through cultural exchange. Their first official undertaking is the Nicaraguan Poster Archives Project, which will collect, preserve and promote this rich visual form.

## Artists and Others Against Visa Denials (AVID)

1326 Shotwell  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
(415) 821-9652

AVID is a group of performing artists, art service organizations, managers, club owners, and cultural activists who are concerned about the threat to international cultural exchange. The U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) is tightening its interpretation of regulations which allow visiting performers to work temporarily in the U.S. There have already been several cases of visa denial, including the National Theater of Great Britain and Canadian singer Ferron.

For more information about the regulations and what you can do, contact Tripp Mikich at the above address.

## Speak: You Have The Tools Social Serigraphy in the Bay Area: 1966-1986

de Saisset Museum,  
Santa Clara University, CA  
Jan. 17 - March 15, 1987  
From the collection of the AOUON Archive  
c/o CSICSERY POSTERS  
P.O. Box 2833  
Oakland, CA 94618

This is the first exhibit of AOUON Archives (see *CMM* Fall, 1986) which attempts to present Bay Area poster art in a way that reveals its political and aesthetic evolution. The show includes over 60 posters and addresses a multitude of issues. A small catalog is available which includes an extensive history by archive curator Michael Rossman.

# STRIKE



D.S., *Strike!*, 1969, 87.5 x 58.5 cm, Collection of Michael Rossman, Berkeley.

## Subscriptions

United States individual subscriptions	\$12
United States institutional subscriptions	\$20
Foreign individual subscriptions	\$20
Foreign institutional subscriptions	\$30
Great Britain individual subscriptions	L20
Great Britain institutional subscriptions	L30

- \* All foreign subscriptions are sent airmail.
- \* Subscriptions in Great Britain may be sent to:  
*Community Murals Magazine*  
84a St. Stephens Ave.  
London, W12, England
- \* Back issues are \$3 each, when available.
- \* All payments must be in \$U.S., except for Great Britain mailed to the St. Stephens address, which may be in pounds.



## Printing Is Easy...?

### Community Printshops 1970-1986

86 pp., \$9 surface/\$15 air  
Greenwich Mural Workshop  
Macbean Centre  
Macbean St., London SE18 6LW

This directory is an informal catalogue of an exhibition held in Greenwich, England which surveyed the state of community printshops across the country. Each organization was allowed two pages worth of text/graphics, and represent a considerable range of strategies and methods. A questionnaire was sent to all which helped to frame the issues, and included questions such as:

"Community Arts began at a time when radicals in almost all professions were agitating to ensure that their skills were

available to working-class people and communities as never before as part of a general movement for demystification of education, health provision, architecture, etc. These days even community art has a career structure of sorts. Do you see this as a contradiction in terms?

Many groups started in the '70's as teaching workshops expecting users to learn how to do everything themselves. Did you/do you still work this way? How successful have you been in passing on these skills?"

As you can see, this exhibit was a serious attempt to assess the condition of a very vital aspect of the community art movement. Through the 33 workshop listings and the editors' essays comes a very provocative look at cultural work from the front lines.

## MORGAN'S STRIP BATTERSEA



## TO THE BONE PUBLIC MEETING

RENTAL & COUNCIL HOMES  
NOT LUXURY PLATS & OFFICES OF  
BATTERSEA RIVERFRONT  
BRAG 28 WHARF ROAD  
SW17 6TZ 9698

One of a series of ten BRAG posters highlighting local opposition to redevelopment plans for the Battersea riverfront 1980.

## RESIST RACISM

Police  
Harassment

Organized  
Attacks by  
Racists

Judicial  
Persecution



## GACARA

GREENWICH ACTION COMMITTEE  
AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS  
12B Buildings, Macbean Street, Woolwich SE18 6LW  
TEL 01 854 1188

First poster produced at the new workshop in Woolwich. Designed by Conrad and printed by Rick Walker with members of GACARA.

## A Call For Posters

Labor Art Project  
Northland Poster Collective  
127 N. Washington Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401



The Northland Poster Collective is looking for posters on the history, culture and present realities of the union movement and working people. These posters will be included in our Labor Art catalog to be issued in the summer of 1987. They will be distributed to individuals, stores, unions, schools and organizations throughout the U.S. -and to some points beyond.

## DEADLINE: MAY 20, 1987

Submissions and leads are welcome any time. Any posters which require lead time for research or production we should hear about as early as possible. Write for details on our terms of sale.

# MATERIAL AID

## What's Inside the Bottle?

## Resins and Binders Used in Artists' Colors

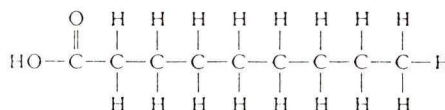
### Part Two: The Various Classes of Binders Used in Artists' Colors

For hundreds of years oils dominated as the major binder used in artist colors. All the old masters painted in oil and many modern day artists prefer this medium. The most common of the drying oils is linseed oil, obtained by pressing the seeds of the flax plant. The general properties of oils are:

1. Slow Dry—many artists like this property.
2. Dried film is relatively soft.
3. Flexible at first but gets hard and brittle with age resulting in cracking.
4. Poor exterior durability except in whites. Films yellow (inside) and chalk

(powder) badly outside. Not satisfactory in colors because of extreme fading on exterior surfaces. Should never be used by muralists.

Chemically, oils are triglycerides of long chain fatty acids. By chains, we mean a linked series of carbon atoms followed by what we call a carboxyl or acid group. It looks like this:



This fatty acid combines with the glycerin to form the triglyceride.

Nature is the chemist here. Linseed oil is not a synthetic or wo/man made product.

Most varnishes are blends of oil and synthetic or natural hard resins such as phenolic. The familiar spar varnish used in boats and bar tops is a combination of china wood oil and synthetic phenolic resin.

Oil based paints were improved in the 30s and 40s with the advent of alkyd paints (still called oil based paints in the paint store). An alkyd is the reaction product of a fatty acid, as we have shown above, with a chemical called phthalic anhydride and



a glycerol.

Alkyd resin based paints are still widely available in flat sheen paints and high gloss materials. They are the typical house trim paint, flat wall oil based paint, kitchen or bath enamel and floor paint. These binders have the following properties:

1. Much faster and harder cures than oils.
2. Much better flexibility when aged, particularly in exterior application. However, like oils, continues to cure more over time and can crack and peel.
3. With color added, better fade resistance than oils but worse than plastic paints.
4. Better alkali resistance than oils but still inferior to plastic paints.

The chemical structure of alkyds is too complex to draw. They can be made to all degrees of hardness by varying the amount of oil used.

Alkyd colors have been used by muralists but they are really not very satisfactory. They do not have the long range durability muralists require and do tend to fade and chalk resulting in loss of color hue and brightness.

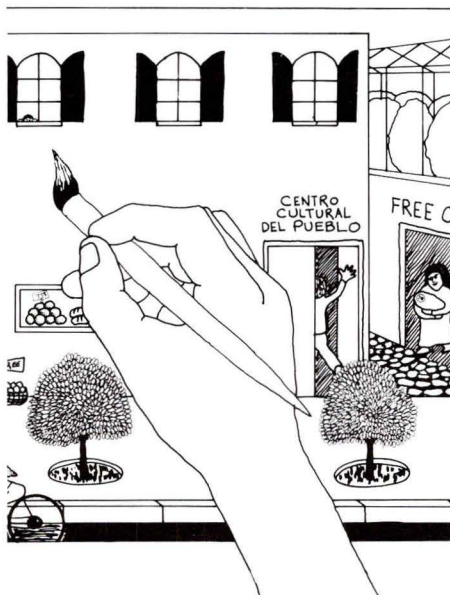
The most desirable binders or resins for muralist artist colors are used to produce the so called water-based plastic paints represented by the Liquitex and Politec type of product. Some of the history of their use by muralists was outlined in our last article for *Community Murals*. Another name for these binders is emulsion resins, so called because they are produced by an emulsion process. They are also called latex because the first form of them was with the use of rubber latex from the rubber tree.

These paints are a development of the post World War II period. Before this, common household water-based paints were based on casein derived from milk solids. Such a paint was Sherwin-Williams Kemtone which used to come as a powder in boxes with which one mixed water to make the liquid paste.

During World War II, the U.S. was cut off from the sources of natural rubber obtained in Java and the Far East. Chemists found they could make a synthetic rubber based on the chemicals styrene and butadiene. Tires were, and still are, made from the product. Later it was found that a quite flexible and water resistant resin could be made by altering the proportion of styrene and butadiene. Thus, styrene butadiene latex began to be widely available and used in paints like the current Sherwin-Williams Super Kemtone. Styrene-Butadiene, as a paint binder, set new standards for ease of use and overall paint properties. However, these resins were still not satisfactory for mural paints because they tended to chalk and fade. Subsequently, better polymers, based on monomers of vinyl acetate and acrylic, were made and these are the basis of modern mural paints today.

Most of the latex or emulsion resins we use today are produced in a process called polymerization. What is an emulsion? Basically it is a dispersion of a non-water soluble substance in water with the aid of a chemical called an emulsifying agent. The starting material is called a monomer—it is the building block for the polymer. In the last issue of *Community Murals* such a monomer was shown in its molecular structure. However, it was incorrectly identified as acrylic. The basic structures for the common monomers used in latex resins are given in table 1. If you are not into chemistry, ignore the whole thing. It is the properties which are important for you the muralist to know.

The polymerization process consists simply of adding these basic monomers to water with some chemical help. They link together in long C-C (carbon to carbon) chains to form the polymer resin. The choice of monomer, or blends, affects properties such as flexibility, adhesion, hardness of film, water resistance, exterior durability among others.



The outstanding resin for producing mural paints remains acrylic. Acrylic latex polymers are copolymers (blends) of acrylate and methacrylate monomers. Methyl methacrylate, a tough hard material, is used to make the clear acrylic plastics, plexiglass and lucite. Acrylic mural paints, such as Liquitex and Politec, have absolutely outstanding properties for use in exterior surfaces, especially brick, stone and masonry walls. Some of these properties include:

1. Outstanding long-term flexibility and durability outside.
2. Excellent resistance to UV (sunlight) attack. With proper color pigments, long term (5-10 years) resistance to fading and loss of color brilliance.

3. Outstanding adhesion to questionable surfaces—even over light chalk.

4. Excellent resistance to alkalinity—important on new masonry walls which are “hot” (high alkalinity which destroys many paint films).

5. Excellent transparency which allows clear bright colors.

6. Will even work over damp or slightly wet surfaces.

Clearly, acrylic plastic paints are the medium of choice for today's muralist interested in long term durability and appearance.

Finally, we will touch on another class of resins—those which cure by chemical reaction. Most of these resins are characterized by having tile-like hardness, a high degree of chip resistance, and excellent resistance to acid and alkaline materials. However, to get the tile-like surface and overall durability, something has to be sacrificed. The most important is ease of handling. These new synthetic resins are highly toxic and dangerous. The solvents used to reduce them are very dangerous to breathe and very hard on the skin.

The most common of these new chemically cured synthetic resins is epoxy. It is formed by the reaction of chemicals called Bisphenol A and epichlorohydrin. These resins are cured by crosslinking (combining) with other resins called amines or polyamides. The hard resins must be dissolved in solvents like ketones and esters. When the two components are mixed, the chemical reaction begins forming the final product. The combined paint must be used up the same day, or the next, otherwise it goes solid.

Paints based on epoxy can be used on metal, wood or concrete. They have outstanding hardness, acid, alkali and solvent resistance, good abrasion resistance, good gloss, etc. However, these resins are not really suitable for exterior murals because epoxy tends to chalk and fade when color pigments are added.

Polyurethanes are the newest of the synthetic resins which form tile-like films. Unlike epoxy, paints from these resins have good resistance to fading and chalking along with all the fine properties of epoxy as indicated above. The new ILWU mural on Mission Street in San Francisco is painted with this system on metal. As we have said earlier, we do not advise its use by muralists because of the extreme health hazards involved.

This completes our discussion on resins used in the production of paints, particularly paints used by muralists. The next two-part series will discuss in some depth, the nature of color, color pigments used by the artist and the properties of the various classes of color pigments.

William D. Meadows



# INTERNATIONAL

## El Amanecer

*"A teacher. . . must be a fountain of love,  
a defender and practicer of justice,  
a militant of beauty. . ."*

Cmdte. Tomas Borge

"El Amanecer", "The Dawn" is the name of a new mural painted in Managua, Nicaragua by artists from the San Francisco Bay Area for ANDEN, the national teachers' association of Nicaragua. The artists, originally part of the group "PLACA", which painted the large mural environment in Balmy Alley in San Francisco which took a stand against U.S. intervention in Central America, went to Nicaragua in September of 1986 at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture.

We stayed only three weeks, a very short time to completely design and paint a large mural. But with incredible support and help from ANDEN, Raul Quintanilla of The National School of Plastic Arts, and Leonel Surato of The National School of Muralism, the project was completed on schedule. Many Nicaraguan artists, including Noel Mendez and Noelia, Vicente, and Boanarges Surato worked with Juana Alicia Montoya, Miranda Bergman, Ariella Seidenberg, and Arch Williams from the United States.

As muralists from the United States, accustomed to a lot of difficulty and red tape, it was a welcome contrast to be somewhere where muralism is respected as a very im-

portant art form, and supported and facilitated at the highest levels of government. The new mural school is an inspiration for muralists throughout the world, offering all types of mural instruction, including fresco, mosaic, and sculptural techniques.

"El Amanecer" tells of the militant history of the teachers in the insurrection which led to the triumph of the revolution in 1979. It also shows the role of the teacher in present day Nicaragua, not only teaching students, but also participating in all aspects of Nicaraguan life, including coffee and cotton harvests, cultural activities, and defense. The center of the mural shows a group of people teaching and learning from each other, a basic concept of modern Nicaraguan education, demonstrated in the nationwide literacy campaign, one of the first programs of the government of national reconstruction, in which young students and others travelled all over the country teaching reading and writing to everyone. The large chilamate trees in the mural reflect those in the surrounding park, Parque de las Madres, full of these beautiful strong trees. The spreading roots represent the deep roots of the Nicaraguan people

and their branches dance in the dawn of new hope.

This mural was the second to be painted in the park, the first one done earlier in 1986 by a Chicano delegation from Los Angeles. It is envisioned by the Nicaraguans to fill the remaining walls facing the park with murals.

The experience of painting and sharing ideas, art, and laughter was inspiring and intense. We come back with new bonds of friendship and new determination to work for peace. Over and over again we were struck with what a colossal lie is being told to the people of the United States about the nature of the government of Nicaragua and the Sandinistas, in order to continue the criminal intervention of the U.S. government. If everyone could experience for themselves the reality of "Nicaragua Libre", as we did, it would be impossible for these lies to be successful. There is so much potential between our peoples for creativity and joy—little by little, through our art and our lives we will build that strong bridge of friendship and solidarity. We will be "militants of beauty", as are the dedicated teachers of Nicaragua.





# Muralist Orlando Suarez Dies in Havana

On November 15, 1986, the day on which the II International Art Biennial of Havana was inaugurated, Orlanda S. Suarez (b. April 29, 1926 in Vereda Nueva, Havana) died of a brain tumor. Best known in Mexico and the United States for his indispensable book *Inventario del muralismo mexicano (VII a de C.)* published by the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico in 1972 and distributed to U.S. muralists since the mid-seventies through the Public Art Workshop of Chicago, Suarez's own murals and history are little known here.

Until he retired from his post to dedicate himself to fulltime research, Suarez had been Assistant Dean of the Graduate Art Institute at Cubanacan, Havana. He was a member of UNEAC (the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists), of the International Association of Visual Artists, and vice-president of the Cuban-Mexican Society of Cultural Relations.

Suarez began his career as a painter in 1945; he was self-taught because of socioeconomic reasons. By 1952, he had established personal contact with the Mex-

ican muralists Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero (Rivera's assistant in the 1920s), Jose Chavez Morado, and others. Repeated visits to Mexico strengthened these ties, and made clear to him that Siqueiros was the artist with the greatest influence on his aesthetic, ideological and technical formation. Nevertheless, his murals of the 1950s seem more influenced by Rivera than Siqueiros, with the exception of the 1956 painting at the Liceo Artistico y Literario de Regla in Havana. *Marti of Liberty, Justice, and Love* in which a dramatic Jose Marti holding a book in one hand lunges forward toward the viewer at whom he points with an oversized foreshortened hand. In this mural, Suarez utilized Siqueiros' polyangular perspective which adjusts figures and landscape to the spectator's movement so the images are never out of focus. Between 1955 and 1958, he painted eight murals, four of which were dedicated to Marti. In the first year of the Cuban Revolution (1959), Suarez completed four murals, three in synthetic paints, and an exterior mosaic mural of naturally

colored granite heightened with silicate applications. By 1960 he had done twelve murals on different buildings constructed by the revolutionary government, making a total of twenty.

Between 1968 and 1969, the artist worked with Siqueiros at the Escuela Taller "Siqueiros" in Cuernavaca as part of the team engaged with the monumental "sculpture-painting" of 4100 square meters, *The March of Humanity on Earth and Toward the Cosmos*, which was installed in December 1971 in the Siqueiros Cultural Polyforum of the Hotel Mexico in Mexico City. Returning to Cuba, Suarez taught classes in art history at the National School for art teachers and, in 1972, was appointed to the faculty of the Cubanacan school as head of the newly established department of mural techniques.

By 1969, Suarez completed the sixteen years of research necessary to publish *Inventario*. Having travelled to many sites in Mexico to accumulate data on murals from the pre-Columbian to the modern periods, he also compiled biographies of the artists,



Detail: left and center. Photo by Fernando Lezcano  
COMMUNITY MURALS MAGAZINE/SPRING 1987



and the dates, locations, titles, techniques, and sizes, of their murals; wrote various chapters relating to technical matters, damaged, destroyed, covered and restored murals, statistical tables on mural production, and a brief history of the Mexican mural movement from 1905 to 1969. In 1975 Suarez completed his most impressive mural—*Dawn of the Revolution*—which was installed at the Interprovincial Bus Terminal in Havana in 1976, twentieth anniversary of the landing of the Granma. Painted in acrylic on canvas mounted on wood panel, the mural measures 4.11x14.50 meters; unfortunately it is not very well lighted. The main figure dominating the work is Marti, poet, intellectual, and revolutionary who died in 1895 at the beginning of the final insurrection against Spanish rule. At the left, the artist established the tobacco and sugar cane production that formed the economic base of the colonial Cuban economy. A slave uprising surges forward, continued by the mounted figure of the mulatto independence hero General Antonio Maceo leading a charge with a raised machete and, at his side, General Maximo Gomez calling for the attack. The two transparent figures are visible within the colossal

head of Marti to indicate the continuity of uprisings from 1868 to 1895, and the unity of revolutionary intellect and military struggle. The struggle continues to the right of Marti with students in the 1920s holding a banner reading "Down With Tyranny," referring to dictator Antonio Machado (1925-1933), one of several presidents heading the country after the United States (which colonized Cuba in 1898) established a pseudo-republic in 1902. The final figures on the right represent Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Camilo Cienfuegos in the Sierra Maestra mountains leading the revolution against the Batista dictatorship which triumphed in January 1959. The double image of Fidel—simultaneously holding an automatic weapon and extending his hand as he delivers a discourse—reiterates the earlier idea of the unity between the word and the action. Finally, the compositional rhythm of the mural is intended to suggest the shape of the island of Cuba.

The last work of Orlando Suarez, completed just before his death and intended for release during the Biennial, was the book *La jaula invisible* (The Invisible Cage), published by Editorial Ciencias Sociales, concerning the ideological penetration of

Yankee imperialism in the visual arts. When I left Havana on December 1st, the book had not yet appeared for sale, but Suarez's widow showed me her only copy and promised to send one when the edition was released. For interested readers, Mexican art critic Raquel Tibol published a review of the book in No. 528 of *Proceso*, December 15, 1986. Her opinion, in summary, is that Suarez accumulated and clearly organized the multiple data about the presence, development and expansion of monopolies in cultural areas as part of U.S. neocolonialist policy. However, concludes Tibol, despite the profusion of documentary material, the conclusions are not equally clear. I am sure that U.S. artists and intellectuals interested in the problem outlined in Suarez's last publication (and who read Spanish) will shortly be able to obtain a copy of the book from the Center for Cuban Studies in New York, and judge for themselves.

Shifra M. Goldman



Detail: right. Photo by Fernando Lezcano



## Mural: "Where has the Admiralstreet gone?"

Like lots of other houses in the most densely built area of West-Berlin, Kreuzberg, the house Admiralstreet no. 16 has been squatted since the early 80s by a group of young people looking for a lifestyle in accordance with their own ideas of living and working together in solidarity. After long negotiations we managed to get a contract from the city-administration; we received money to renew the house. After five years of (self-help) work we changed the "ruin" into a house of reasonable standard. It is our house but there is no private property for any of us.

The house is situated in a formerly very busy street with lots of community activities. Due to renovation-works the street has been divided into two sections; some houses disappeared and with them the people. Somebody who lived here in the 60s today wouldn't recognize the street anymore.

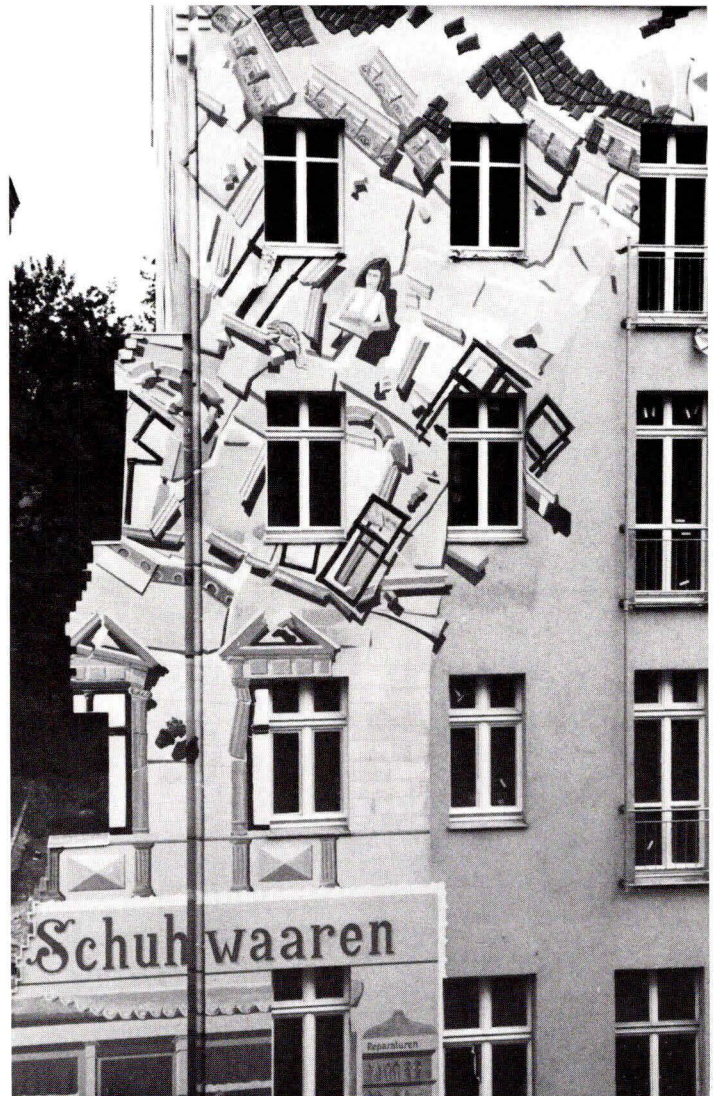
When the idea of painting a mural came up, there was no doubt about the subject: "where has the Admiralstreet gone?"

Although we had developed lots of ideas about the contents of the mural within our group, we had to accept a competition between 10 invited artists, since the city-administration financed the mural. C. Rothmann and J. Wadrich, members of the squatter-group and artists, finally won the competition and realized the mural with the help of the experienced art-group "Atelier Rheinstraße" in August 1986.

The idea was to reconstruct a part of the destroyed neighbourhouse and, as a ruin, make it a symbol of destruction due to urban renewal. The painting "divided" the house into two houses. By "blowing up" one house, it affects the neighbourhouse as well. We can see people and objects, shown in a placative way, like pieces, as if they were cut out of a magazine, toys for

bureaucrats, politicians, urban planners and speculators. And, of course, we wanted to integrate our own experience of defending the house: while spraying "no destruction" a young person is attacked by a policeman. This detail led to surveillance by the police, they documented it all, it came to a suit. We won it, "because the cudgel of the policeman is far enough from the head of the young man" and so it can't automatically be seen as an aggressive act of the policeman. This means, some inches of more or less distance changed the whole behaviour of the policeman; aggressive or not. We don't mind. After 4 years of preparation we finally find our fate and the fate of the Admiralstreet represented on the mural.

Text: Christian Rothmann  
Translation: Johann Bernhardt







## Mexican Mural Preservation

In early December of 1986 my good friend and colleague, Alberto Beltran, noted historian, printmaker and president of the editorial board for the Mexico City newspaper *El Dia*, for whom he also produces and publishes political and social commentary cartoons, had written and informed me of Mexico's national commemoration of Diego Rivera's centennial birthday. Alberto had sent me of a copy of his latest illustrated commentary—where he carefully depicts and summarizes the contributions. . . "No solo en el ambito nacional sino en el plano internacional." . . not only

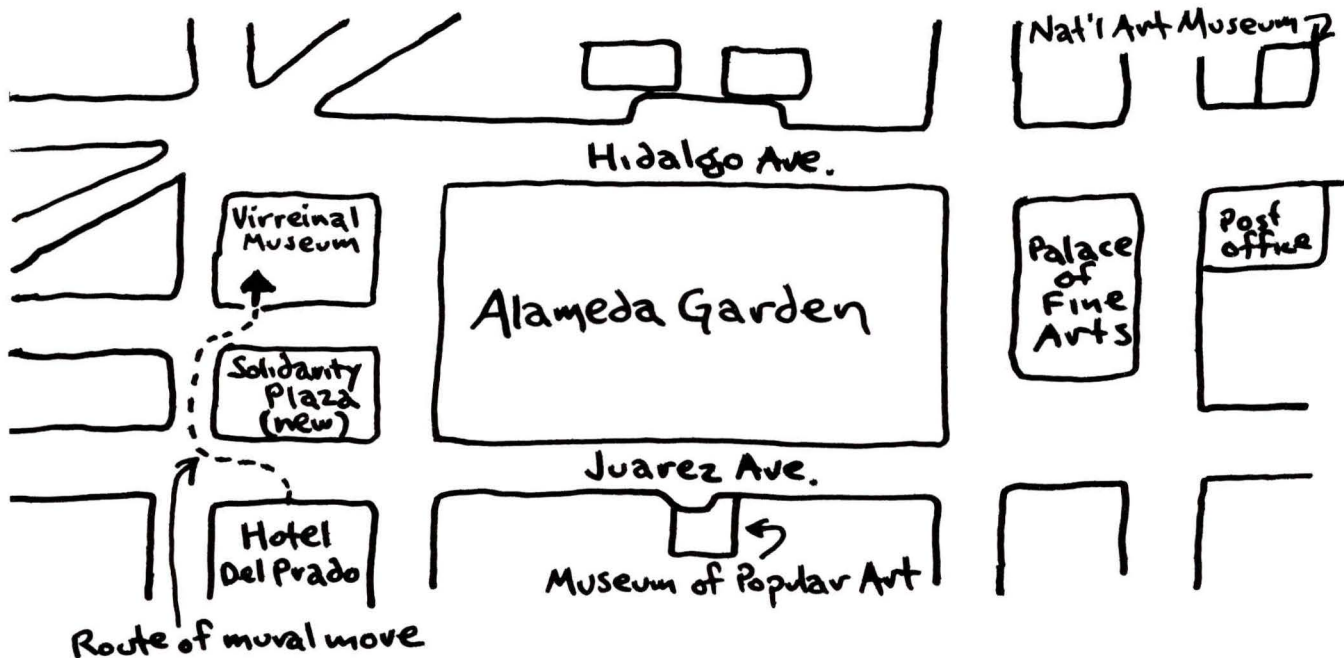
in Mexico, but around the world of Rivera's life and artistic work.

Alberto illustrated, at that time in December, the success of the Rivera exhibition that travelled from Detroit, Michigan to the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City and the thousands that had viewed the work.

Alberto closes his visual commentary with the news of the preparation of removal and relocation of Rivera's fresco mural, "Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Park" (1946-47), from the earthquake-damaged Hotel Del Prado. One

month later—January 10, 1987—I received correspondence from Alberto at which time he mentioned that the mural had been moved to its new site (please see map) and is temporarily under protective covering while construction of the new building around it is in progress. Authorities considered this the best plan, because any other way would have been difficult once the building was completed. Alberto stated in his letter that at that time, construction was continuing at a rapid pace so that once again the mural would be on view to the public.

Emmanuel C. Montoya





# The Puerto Rican "Plena" As Mural

Puerto Rico is not a country known for its murals. The few painted within the last twenty years have either not survived, or do not rank high in comparison with the graphics and easel painting done by the same artists. A recent program (1978-1985) for street murals and works in public places painted by Rafael Rivera Garcia and sponsored by the city of San Juan has proved a disaster for the poor aesthetic quality and trite images of the murals. It was therefore a pleasant surprise to discover the 1954 mural *La Plena* by veteran printmaker and painter Rafael Tufino just installed in a sumptuous lobby of the newly constructed Fine Arts Center in The Santurce section of San Juan.

*La Plena* appears to be the only mural Tufino has done in Puerto Rico, and was not a "true" mural in the sense of having been destined for permanent installation in a given architectural space. It was commissioned in 1951 by Amilcar Tirado who wished to include it in the footage of a documentary film on the popular Afro-Caribbean songs known as *plenas*. Painted in casein on sixteen masonite panels, the mural provided an imaginative visualization of the topics about which the songs were composed.

Caribbean musical forms, like other aspects of culture, are characterized by what has come to be known as "creolization," i.e. the "meeting and blending of two or more older traditions on new soil, and a subsequent elaboration of form." Almost everywhere, the creolization process brought into contact European and African musical traditions with a spectrum which ranges from neo-African to almost purely European. The plena of Puerto Rico can be located toward the middle of this spectrum. It originated with rural ensembles like village bands which developed a completely original song and dance style based on a corpus of folk traditions. *Plenas* are performed by two or three percussionists (*pleneros*) playing goatskin-covered instruments known as *panderos* or *panderetas* which are used like tambourines and accompany a "call and response" type of singing. Both the instrument and the song style are strongly African. The verses, like many songs of the Caribbean, are closely integrated with social and religious activities. They can be used as part of a ritual ceremony, as an invocation of Catholic or syncretic Afro-Catholic deities, or of legendary personages, as an accompaniment to communal labor, as dance music for weekend parties, or as social commentary. They often employ double entendre, irony, and veiled allusions, and can function as a means of social control.

The same year that Brooklyn-born and Puerto Rican-raised artist Rafael Tufino completed his mural, he and fellow artist Lorenzo Homar produced a portfolio of twelve linoleum cuts also titled *La Plena*. Homar, like Tufino, had returned to Puerto Rico in 1950 after a long residence outside the country: New York for Homar; Mexico for Tufino. While in Mexico, Tufino had studied for three years at the San Carlos Academy. Among his teachers was Mexican muralist and printmaker Alfredo Zalce. The Puerto Rican artist also admired the work of Mexico's Taller de Grafica Popular (TGP; the Popular Graphics Art Workshop) though he didn't meet artists like Leopoldo Mendez, Alberto Beltran, Angel Bracho, and others until 1958 when he was invited to exhibit at Mexico's First Interamerican Biennial of Painting and Graphics. Tufino's six prints in the portfolio show this Mexican influence which is also apparent in the mural on which he had been working irregularly since 1951. The prints also provide the music and words to some of the songs included in the mural: "Cortaron a Elena," (They Cut Elena); "Fuego, Fuego, Fuego," (Fire, Fire, Fire), "Santa Maria," and "Temporal" (The Storm). From Homar's six, we find "Ay Lola Lola," and "Tintorera del Mar" (The Shark).

In the intervening years between its completion and its recent installation in the Fine Arts Center, the mural was stored and suffered deterioration. When I saw it in May 1986, the lower right section (four panels of the sixteen) had not only been badly restored so that the figures appear wooden in comparison to the liveliness of the images in the unrestored portions, but had been varnished to a high gloss which made the section almost unseeable. It is to be hoped that the varnish will be removed, and a more sensitive restoration of this important and unique work will be undertaken in the near future.

True to the renewed interest in the indigenous culture of Puerto Rico that animated the fifties, the mural—like those dense canvasses of Brueghel that are a compendium of local customs enjoyed by the working and peasant folk of 16th century Flanders—sets the scenes of the *plenas* within a real landscape: that of Old San Juan, a sloping hillside of old houses and the forts built originally as a military stronghold by the Spanish to protect the island from invaders. A band of blue-tinted cobblestoned streets forms the lower portion of the mural on which a series of several events related to different *plenas* take place. Another band of densely packed figures, dominated by a huge fearsome rearing black horse, carry our eye into the second plane of space. From there, an elevated sea wall receding in space carries our eye up the hill to the upper left where a series of shacks hemmed on the beach

between the wall and the sea take us to the extreme left which terminates in a massive turreted fort. The sea wall actually exists, marking the termination of Old San Juan high above the ocean; the shanty houses below are those of La Perla, an old working class district where the artist visited his grandparents as a boy and which repeatedly appears in his paintings. (In recent years, the Puerto Rican government has unsuccessfully been trying to resettle the inhabitants of La Perla as part of its restoration of Old San Juan for the tourist ships that arrive several times a week in the nearby harbor.) To the right side of the mural, the snaky tail of the monstrous horse winds around its body and carries the eye once again into deep space dominated by a three-horned red devil, and a huge fire. The horse rearing to the left carries our eye with its flame-like tongue to an enormous green and black figure that sweeps across the swirling ocean whipping flying figures in its wake. The water eddies toward a large white factory in the upper right, to the left of which a great fish leaps into the air. Were it not for the horse, the green figure, the symmetrical movements into space, and a careful disposition of color uniting the scenes, the mural might have splintered into its disparate elements.

Reading the mural by episodes, we should rightly start at the restored section on the bottom right where three musicians with their *panderetas* are singing the songs illustrated. Within this group is "El Canario" (Miguel Jimenez) a *plenero* famous in the 1920s. The artist himself appears arrayed in an orange shirt, a tie, and a mustache, next to a black-coated man looking at his watch. The last corresponds to a song which tells us that "It was four o'clock in the afternoon when they killed Lola;" below we see the dead woman in a white dress. Above this scene is another set in a graveyard where skeletons arise from their tombs according to the ironic plena "So much vanity and so much hypocrisy / And after death the corpse belong to the cold tomb." The women in the cemetery refer to the song telling us that "When women love men / They buy four candles and light them in the corners." Two tiny figures in the mountains above the women concern the legend of the frightful "Monchin del Alma," a fleshless horseman with his head covered by a veil. The raging fire is "Fire, fire, fire in the quarry," which is burning the people and to which the firemen have been called. To the left is the Guanica Central, a sugar mill on the southern Caribbean Sea coast that was the scene of a bitter strike, and the leaping shark refers to the "Tintorera del mar" (literally, the dry cleaner of the sea) who swallows the lawyer representing the Guanica Central—a theme wonderfully carried out in Homar's linoleum cut of the same scene in a print that would do





credit to Mexico's Jose Guadalupe Posada.

Surrounded by supplicants, one extending a carved image of the Virgin Mary (Santa Maria), is the three-horned horse, described in the plena as having the face of an ox, the chest of a brave bull, and a yard and a half of tail. The song pleads for Santa Maria to liberate the supplicants from everything bad, from this terrible animal

whose tail leads the eye to the three-horned red devil in the mountains. Unlike the mural, Tufino's print shows some people attacking the horse and the devil with *machetes* (curved agricultural knives), sticks, and torches. To address the Catholic Virgin for aid against a non-Catholic demon—a legendary evil force not accepted by the church—illuminates the syn-

cretic nature of Caribbean (and Latin American) religion. To the left of the horse is the story of "Josefina," a type of Puerto Rican "Carmen" with a file of soldiers in attendance. Above is the San Geronimo fort, and the green personified Hurricane San Felipe swirling over the Atlantic coast from the plena "The storm, the storm / What a terrible storm / What will remain of





Puerto Rico / What will remain of my Borinquen / When this terrible storm passes?"

The final section of the mural is the story of Elena whose throat is cut in the upper left, who is "carried to the hospital" in a chair, and whose "mother cried / How could she not cry! / If her beloved daughter was carried to the hospital." Thus ends the circular movement of the mural.

The plenas of Puerto Rico, in their own social context, could be compared to the *corridos* of Mexico: songs of the folk that recount the sensational happenings of their lives and that are given plastic form in the mural and graphics of Tufino and Homar as the *corridos* were by Jose Guadalupe Posada and the Popular Graphics Art Workshop.

Shifra M. Goldman

\*For information about the plenas, I am indebted to Felix Bonilla Norat's article "Recuerdos: Ante el mural de la plena," *Plastica* (San Juan), March 1986; and to Lorenzo Homar who was also kind enough to give me a reprinted portfolio of *La Plena* graphics.



# NATIONAL

## P-9 Mural Defaced

***"If Blood be the Price of Your Cursed Wealth,  
Good God We Have Paid in Full"***

One of the most shocking cases of cultural censorship in recent times is taking place on the wall of a labor center in Austin, Minnesota. A mural, painted by and for members of a meatpackers union local, has been partly sandblasted away by the International union after it decertified the local and took over the building.

The members of the United Food and Commercial Workers were nine months into a bitter strike against the huge George A. Hormel company when they decided to produce a cultural statement about their situation. The mural's title is from a labor song from the 1920's, "We Have Fed You All a Thousand Years," and expresses the tremendous self-conscious solidarity represented by the prolonged strike. Denny Mealy, a P-9 member and self-taught artist, explains:

*"On April 9, 1986 Mike Alewitz, a professional artist from Hampton, Virginia came to Austin to assist in a rally for the P-9 strikers. He and I, along with others, prepared large banners for the rally. Afterwards we discussed an exterior mural, and when Alewitz returned to Austin in April we began reviewing literature on labor struggles which might help with the design.*

*A coordinating group was formed within the first week of the project, consisting of Alex Rottnier (an artist from New York who was working in Austin at the time), Ron Yocom (a P-9 member), Mike Alewitz and myself. All four of us worked on the scale drawing for the 16x18' brick wall.*

*While the drawings were being worked on, many P-9 members were applying sealer and priming the surface. The four coordinators then transferred the drawing to the wall. Volunteer help for the actual painting was asked for at the nightly union meetings.*

*Mike and I were busy making phone calls for material and monetary support. One of the largest donations came from Sign and Display Local 880 of St. Paul, Minnesota, who gave us several gallons of paint, brushes and pattern paper.*

*Once all the materials were gathered volunteers picked out colors and a portion of the wall to paint. Makeshift lighting was installed so that work could go on at any*

*time. Rumors were floating around that scabs hired by Hormel were out to destroy the project, so a motor home was donated to help us keep watch around the clock.*

*The mural was completed on May 27, 1986 after a long hard week of work.*

*We decided to dedicate the mural to Nelson Mandela, and got permission from the Austin Labor Center Board to hold the ceremony. We also applied for, and received, copyright for the mural in June.*

*A major blow came when the union local P-9 was placed in receivership and the labor center was taken over. The U.F.C.W. now had court authority to keep local P-9 out of the building.*

*The U.F.C.W. did not protect the mural in any manner, and as a matter of fact a security light in the center of the mural was turned off. On July 3 destruction of the mural began, with the word "Abort" written twice. Later, glass bottles filled with paint were thrown against the wall.*

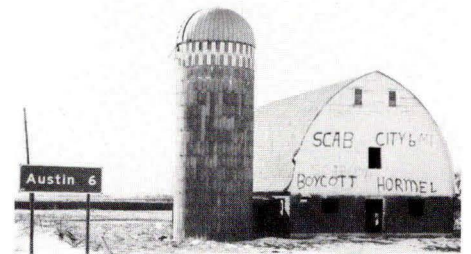
*On October 11, Deputy Trustee Ken Kimbro was quoted in the local paper as saying that no plans were made to destroy the mural. The following day the U.F.C.W. began sandblasting. A protest by P-9 retirees, members of the African National Congress and active P-9 members forced the U.F.C.W. to stop.*

*An injunction was handed down by Judge James Mork to stop the destruction, and an extension was made in November. Law suits are pending against the U.F.C.W. for the destruction of the mural."*

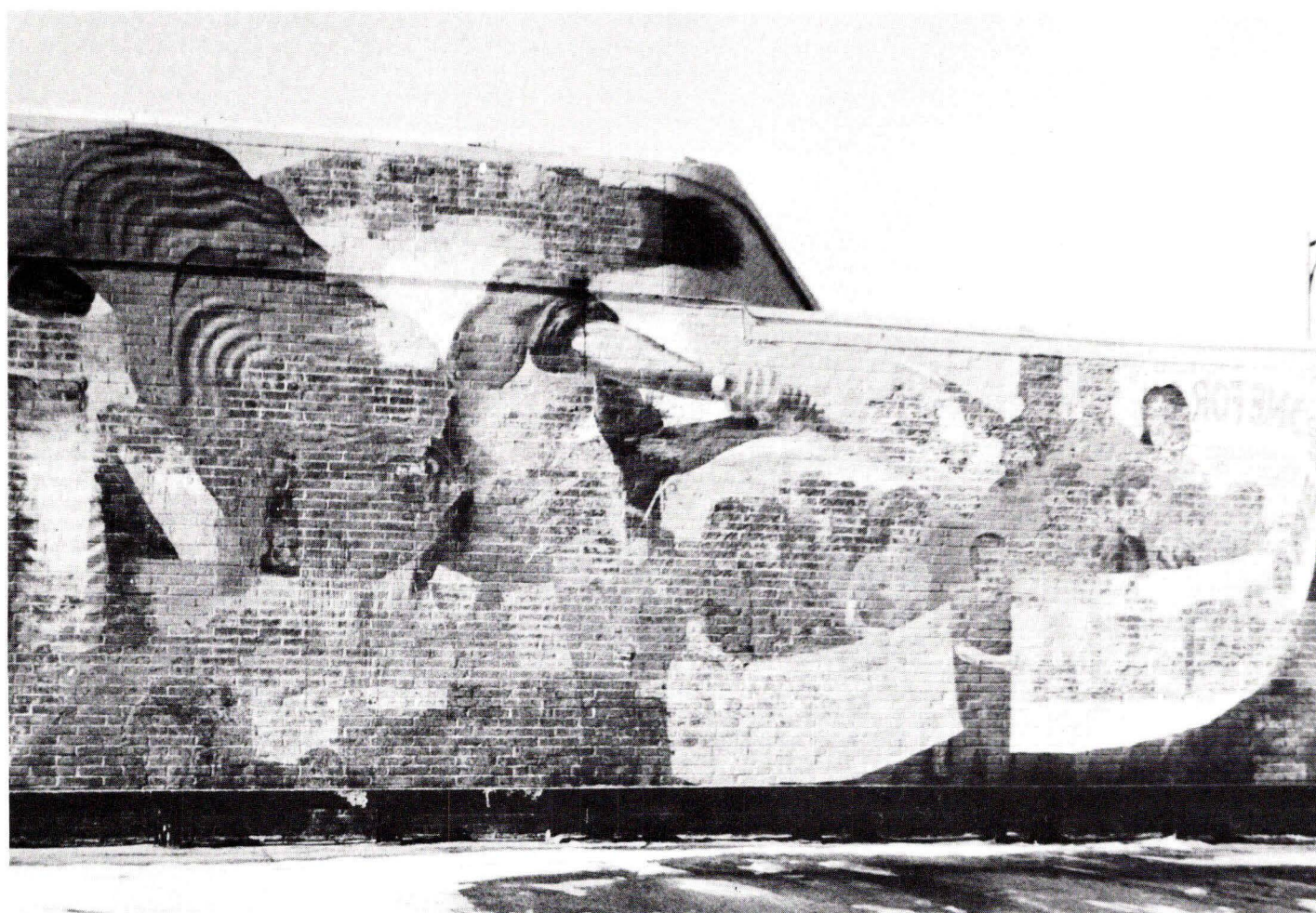
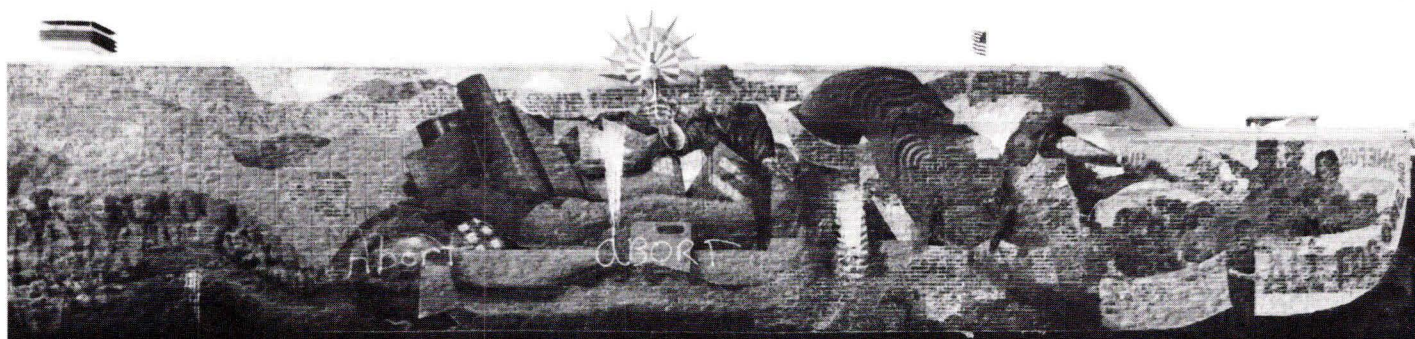
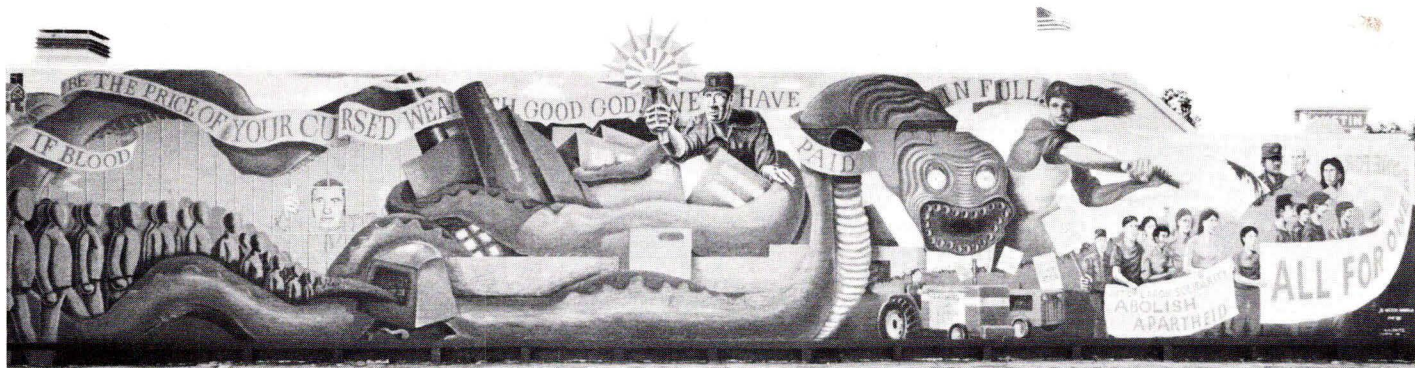
You can help support the P-9 strikers in several ways. There is a boycott of all Hormel products, which include many labels of canned and packaged meat products. There is also a full-color postcard of the mural which is being sold as a fundraiser. Finally, all direct contributions are welcome. Contact them at:

Metro Area Hormel Strikers  
Support Committee  
157 North Dale  
St. Paul, MN 55102

All photos by Sal Salerno









# Lakas Sambayanan

Lakas Sambayanan (People's Power) is a mural about the unfolding of events in the Philippines that surprised the world. After completing "Ang Lipi ni Lapu Lapu" in 1984, a mural about Pilipino immigration to the United States, the San Francisco's Mayor's Office of Community Development promised more funds for another mural about the Pilipino community. Having grown up in the Philippines, I wanted to paint murals about its culture, politics, history and heritage. Pilipinos comprise the second largest Asian community in the United States. I searched for two Pilipino artists to train and assist me in the process and met Vicente Clemente and Presco Tabios. Vic is an ex political prisoner held in detention for 2 years by the Marcos regime. Presco is a poet and playwright who grew up in San Francisco and is a long time member of the Pilipino American artistic community here. We are a unique combination of experiences, ideals, and talents with the same desire to express the beauty and complexity of the Philippines and the Pilipino community.

It took nearly two years for the promised funds to actually come through. By then the site had changed and a second design was emerging out of the events that were taking place in the Philippines. Timing was everything, and the strong images of Marcos' head breaking apart, people in front of military tanks manned by skeletons in fatigues, Cory Aquino holding her assassinated husband, victims of poverty and repression contrasted by beautiful scenes of a proud past and heritage made it through the various meetings and the many people from the community to whom the design was presented.

The environment was harsh, with cars and trucks screeching by us all day long. The wall faces the freeways 280 and 101 and is located on the Sun Valley Dairy which is right next to the Farmers Market. There are many Filipinos that live in the neighborhood, work, and come to the market on Saturdays. The community around us was quite a mix, and one significant part of it is the Black community and the housing projects where many of them lived right down the block from us. We were concerned at first about how they would react to a mural specifically about the Philippines. We were criticized by members of the Pilipino community for not representing the black community in our mural. We took time when we first started the mural to explain the design and ask our Black neighbors what they thought. Interestingly enough there was never a complaint from the Black community about the specifically Filipino subject matter, only a great interest in what was being dramatically portrayed and a lot of enthusiasm for the addition of a beautiful work of art into their neighborhood. The mural after all portrays the universal desire of the people to stand up against their oppressors and the military through an event that was uniquely non-violent, though the violence many have suffered in the circumstances around this event was and continues to be very real.

We did have one person accuse us of being satanists because of the Pentangle at the upper lefthand side of the mural which is actually and obviously a traditional Pilipino Christmas star ornament. And some people from the neighborhood did use our scaffolding to assist them in stealing, according to the owner, \$6,000.00 of

roastbeef and beer from his sandwich factory. One of the most fun parts of the mural, on the other hand, was the participation from the Girl Scouts, neighborhood kids, and other artists and friends in painting Imelda's shoes at the bottom of the mural. It was also inspiring when people seeing the mural from the freeway would honk, give us a thumbs up, or actually drive off of it to take a closer view and complement us on our work.

As time unfolds the lasting truths and lies of the amazing People Power event in the Philippines this mural will, in Vic Clemente's words, "not only depict the past events but also serve as a reminder for the future that any threat or reimposition of a repressive regime will be opposed by the people." This mural is dedicated to Rolando Olalia (portrayed in the mural) the former president of the Philippines' largest leftist political party, Partido ng Bayan, and chairman of Kilusang Mayo Uno, a militant labor organization, who was brutally murdered shortly after the People Power event brought Cory Aquino to the presidency.

I would like to acknowledge the Mayor's Office of Community Development for funding this project. I would also like to thank Luz de Leon of the Mural Resource Center for helping us find a second site and facilitating the project, as well as Friends of Support Services for the Arts for their assistance. Thanks to Philippine Arts in the Community, AT&T and Pacific Bell for their support.

Johanna Poethig



Photo by Wilfredo Castano



# The Painting of El Nuevo Fuego

In the fall of 1985, East Los Streetscapers completed their grandest mural to date—EL NUEVO FUEGO—80 ft.x85 ft.—near the corner of 2nd and Broadway in Downtown Los. The soaring composition which combines Olympian athletes with Aztec pageantry, was designed for the North wall of the Victor Clothing Co.

The original concept was designed by Wayne Healy, David Botello and George Yepes; and painted on a 9'x10' canvas at the 1982 Los Angeles Streetscene. The idea was to present the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee in an attempt to secure official sanction (and matching funds). After all, who could resist such a dynamic composition glorifying LA's two Olympiads? As it turned out, the LAOC could.

Biting the paint brush, the Streetscapers decided to paint the mural on Victor Clothing's funding alone. This decision culminated negotiations between ELS and Victor's that began in 1976. Eight years later, owners Paul and Ione Harter along with general manager Ramiro Salcedo, decided to go along with the project.

The Harter's have turned the Victor Building into an Art Museum inside and out. Inside are murals by Juan Garduno, John Valadez, and Eloy Torrez. Outside, EL NUEVO FUEGO joins monumental works by Kent Twitchell, Torrez and Frank Romero.

Staffing up for this monster job, ELS engaged the proven talents of Rudy Calderon, Bob Grigas, David Morin and Paul Botello. A total of ten artists participated in the skillful application of overlapping colors on 6000 sq. ft. of Downtown LA wall.

The design concept that sold Harter on the mural was based on the 52 year period between torch lighting ceremonies in ancient Mexico (EL NUEVO FUEGO) and 20th century Los Angeles (1932-1984). Additional impact was provided by the fact that EL NUEVO FUEGO was painted *after* the summer games. This allowed the Streetscapers to include gold medal champions in the composition.

Exhibiting unabashed provincial pride, ELS featured LA's inner-city Olympic gold medal heroes most prominently: Paul Gonzalez (boxing: 106 pound class) and Valerie Brisco-Hooks (track: 200m, 400m, 400m relay). Other illustrated winners include Koji Gushican (gymnastics), Greg Луганis (diving), Ernesto Canto (50km walk), and Pierre Vignon (pole vault).

As with past murals, publicity is ubiquitous. However, a media conflict-of-interest arose when an article on the mural was written for the *LA Times* Sunday Magazine by LA River poet Lewis MacAdams. At the time, soil samples were being taken for a parking structure that

would obscure both EL NUEVO FUEGO and Twitchell's *Bride and Groom*. Phone calls to the *LA Times* and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) failed to shed any light on any specific construction dates or architectural dimensions, not to mention the possibility of submitting our mural compatibility ideas to the powers that be.

The *Times* never published the MacAdams article which eventually appeared in the Fall 1986 issue of *High Performance Magazine*, headquartered in (where else?) the Victor Clothing Bldg. The article is part of a comprehensive anthology called *Nuevo Latino*. *High Performance* gets a Streetscaper high five for presenting the

pioneers and perpetrators of Chicano art in a realistic perspective.

The post-pregnancy blues that usually set in after a mural is finished never had time to set in after EL NUEVO FUEGO was completed. One month later, ELS closed escrow on their present studio in Boyle Hts. In the year since its acquisition, ELS have transformed it under the skillful craftsmanship of Al & Al: "Big Al" Andrews and Al "Betito" Gutierrez. They have transformed a cavernous warehouse into a functional multi-disciplinary workspace where visual art production includes drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, altars and graphics.

Pablo Xap

*El Nuevo Fuego*. Photo by David Botello



## Update: NMHU Mural Destruction

(See CMM Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 19, "New Mexico Highlands University Murals.")

The October 1986 Mural Forum in Las Vegas, New Mexico, brought together the many voices of unified support and commitment regarding the Mural Art controversy.

The destruction of three campus murals consequently led to an ACLU investigation and complaint to the Center for Constitutional Rights. The group 'Amigos de Los Muralistas' (Friends of the Muralists) is credited as a vital force in the effort to restore and repaint the former murals.

The NMHU Mural issue was also discussed at the Community Murals workshop as a feature of the recent Alliance for

Cultural Democracy Conference in Boston, Mass. A national network of muralists and artists facing similar defacement issues was formed. At this writing, a bill to be presented at the 1987 New Mexico State Legislature will require the preservation and protection of public art and will prohibit future "... intentional physical defacement, mutilation, alteration, or destruction... taken deliberately or through gross negligence."

The destruction of murals is a costly tragedy. The price that we continue to pay only perpetuates our never-ending struggle to create art for the masses.

!Hasta la victoria siempre!

LeFebre Rodriguez Arts  
Albuquerque, New Mexico



# Boston's Chinatown Community Unity

The Year of the Tiger was a year of courage and triumph for Boston's Chinatown—a year that indeed showed this neighborhood's independence of character. Chinatown's first community-created mural, begun in 1983, was completed and dedicated in September, 1986. An exhibit of over 60 photos detailing the mural process accompanied the dedication.

With its theme of "Unity—Community", the mural depicts the history of Chinese immigrants and Southeast Asian refugees as well as daily life in Boston's Chinatown.

From the first Chinese settling in Boston in the late 1870's and building a telephone exchange to the only jobs open to the Chinese men—laundries and restaurants—history begins to unfold in the muted tones at the top of the mural. From there, the mural continues toward the present, with more colorful images of Southeast Asian "boat people" now learning ESL; a multi-cultural, multi-lingual demonstration for housing and justice for all Asians; and daily scenes in Chinatown. The images at the bottom of the wall are forward looking and brightly colored. Women, such as a community doctor, are strongly placed throughout the mural. Tying history with the present and future, two centrally located garment workers weave the community together.

The project was conceived while I was Director of Planning and Development for the Quincy School Community Council (QSCC), the Northeast's largest multi-service center for Asians and sponsor of the mural. The idea for the mural, from the beginning, was that it should be created, designed and executed by the community and should represent its strength and direction. Inspired by the spirit and courage of individuals and by their daily struggle to survive as a neighborhood, the mural is the first of its kind in Boston's Chinatown.

Wen-ti Tsen, a painter and visual artist born in China, and David Fichter, Boston's noted muralist, were the principal and coordinating artists. They were assisted by Annie Chin, Arlene Chung and Valerie Jayne. All artists were selected for the skills, experience and varied contributions they could make to the mural. Their commitment to a community-based project and their knowledge of Boston's politics were also important. As coordinator, I worked to develop the process of community involvement and to foster an environment where the artists could create while feeling the pulse of the community around them.

I envisioned the project as an organizing tool. The mural would be a unique vehicle for community expression and a strong statement of a neighborhood's fight to beat back racism, encroachment, displacement, violence and economic hardship. It would

represent a united community standing proud and working toward a just future for its children. I saw the mural as a way to bring together Asian artists and Chinatown's Asian community; youth and adults and elders; and unrecognized Asian artists with established muralists. An additional and important goal was to include both Southeast Asians and Chinese in the planning and design—peoples who have a long history of animosity between them. The project more than achieved these ideals.

The Chinatown Community Mural Advisory Committee was formed to advise the artists. It was composed of Chinatown agency representatives and individuals living or working in Chinatown and assured that the community would determine the design and content of the mural. Over 100 people, including Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao-

tian and Chinese, were interviewed as to their ideas for the mural design before any preparatory drawings were committed to paper. While Chinatown is overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese, it is a diverse community and we wanted to portray the differences in background, country of origin, age, political orientation and experience.

In addition to Advisory Committee meetings with the artists, bilingual community meetings were held to discuss proposed concepts and designs and community leaders were continually asked for comments. A "comment book" was placed in an area of heavy foot traffic and human service providers displayed proposed designs and asked for suggestions.

Critiques of proposed ideas repeatedly sent the artists back to the drawing board for both conceptual and technical changes.



Photo by Wen-ti Tsen



The final design was agreed upon only after solicitation of any and all public comments and careful scrutiny by various segments of the community.

Upon arrival of the Advisory Committee, a great deal of energy went into developing a schedule of painting that would enable community members to paint their mural. Continuing the educational process begun with our first community meeting, artists met with pre-school and after-school classes to explain the meaning of the mural and show the role of children and their parents within the design. Children from the age of three helped paint the mural. Community organizations and individuals were contacted and encouraged to paint. Many responded.

This community process began in 1983 and intensified over the final year to include a wide divergence of opinion and perspective. The first two years were spent establishing a strong base of community support among human service providers, community leaders and youth; developing funding; finding a suitable site and selecting artists. The next nine months were spent organizing the community around specifics of the project. It took eight weeks to prepare the wall and paint the mural. As a result of our community process, I believe the mural is truly representative of the community where it is located. As one community member remarked upon viewing the completed mural, "This mural is now ours. We did it, from start to finish, and it's really us!"

The mural is located on a recently renovated building, the QSCC Annex, in Chinatown. The building has a long history of activism and provision of community services and is important to the Asian community.

Nova Color acrylic paint (5894 Black Welder Street, Culver City, CA 90230) was used on the 40'x30' newly repointed wall.

The project cost approximately \$25,000, with half that figure allocated for the muralists and project coordinator. Funding was provided by the Mass. Council on the Arts and Humanities (a state agency), The Boston Globe Foundation, Mass. Foundation For Humanities and Public Policy (part of the National Endowment for the Humanities), Boston Arts Lottery Council (arts programming funds set aside from state lottery earnings) and Haymarket People's Fund, as well as by the sponsoring agency.

The Chinatown Community Mural celebrates and pays homage to the spirit of survival that is so powerful in Boston's Chinatown. It portrays the community's individual and collective efforts to thrive, no matter the hardship or threat. The mural process and the resulting work of art are testament to the theme of "Unity—Community". What we cannot do alone, we most certainly can do together.

Eileen Hansen

## The Pullman Playsculpture

Seeing the Langley Playlot today, it is difficult to even visualize it as it looked only 4 months ago. The pavement was broken and littered with glass, weeds, grew everywhere, the sandbox was cluttered with broken glass and debris, the benches and swings were a mess of chipped paint and graffiti, and in areas which once contained playground equipment there were only concrete patches.

Now a "station platform" with benches and ticket booths surrounds the existing sandbox, the playground is repaved and cleaned, benches and swings are freshly painted, and a 50 foot long three-car redwood train (which is built with 6,295 pounds of wood) hosts a bevy of playful children.

The transformation of the Langley Playlot was the work of over 200 artists—artists are people with the vision to imagine new possibilities and the will to make those visions into reality. People of all ages in the community and surrounding areas came together to plan, raise the money, and to build the Pullman Playsculpture. It stands now as a place to have fun and as a monument to the people of Pullman who combined remembering their past with dedication to our children, the future of Pullman.

### Getting Organized

Looking now at a successful, completed, and paid-for project it is difficult to remember the uncertainty and anxiety of those first months as the plan was formed.

In the fall of 1983, Jon Pounds and Olivia Gude, community artists and Chicago Public Art Group members, asked the Pullman Civic Organization's Executive Committee for a vote of support to look into the possibility of securing funding to begin a project at Langley Playlot.

Surveys conducted at P.C.O. Meetings and through the Pullman Flyer in the fall of 1984 sought ideas on needed improvements and possible themes for the proposed playsculpture. A Core Committee of 13 community residents was formed which discussed possible ideas for the playground and whether it was feasible to carry out the project. We worried about many things—the problem of raising

money, how to design a safe playsculpture, whether permission could be secured from the Park District and a host of other things which, mercifully, none of us can remember now. The original members of the Playground Core Committee were Lou Bertoletti, Martha Brislen, Bill Brislen, Bob Bushwaller, Dave Curatolo, Patti and Roy Deveney, Lucia Espinosa, Jean Gladstone, and Ralph Larsen.

Children were drawn into the planning process through a Playground Party hosted by the Core Committee in March. The Pullman Players gave their first and only performance of *The Playground Pageant* which presented suggestions for the "Langley Liver Lot" and the "Pointy Playground." The kids having rejected the awful idea of the Playground Players drew pictures of their ideal playgrounds.

### Planning and Permission

The first real sketches for the playsculpture also included many strange and odd ideas—a giant chair and table, a miniature city, and a sculpture of a giant drop of water in a splash of wood. Eventually all of these rather odd ideas were discarded in favor of working with a theme which would be familiar and fun—the railroad history of Pullman. The first drawings of the train are pretty strange—every time we drew an engine it looked more like a steamboat or a miniature two-flat.

After completing sketches of the proposed project, the Committee had to secure permission from the Chicago Park District to build. We sent a proposal to Ed Kelly, the Superintendent of the Park District. Within a couple of days we met with Maurice Thominet, the Chief Engineer. Mr. Thominet was very helpful and encouraging, but he sent us home to revise our plans and to resubmit them for board approval. This began one of the most anxious times for the playground organizers—there wasn't anything to be done, except to wait. When the approval came through on May 20th, we were all elated, but also somewhat overwhelmed by the organizing and fundraising task which still lay before us.



Continued on next page



## Fundraising Kicks Off

On May 28th, 25 people showed up for the fundraising meeting at the P.C.O. We went over the suggestions for fundraising and settled on several ideas.

Seeing the energy and enthusiasm of so many people made the fundraising goal seem attainable. Within a week various events were planned and donations started to come in.

A Pledge Campaign, headed by Martha Brislen, raised the majority of the money for the project. Shawne Duck and Phil Baranowski did an excellent job of designing, ordering and selling almost 200 t-shirts. Beverly Ash-Larson organized a Dominicks Days fundraiser. Mickey Martin and Georgia Vroman coordinated a fruit kabob and desert booth at the Pullman Art Fair. Many Pullman seniors donated baked goods for that event. Olivia Gude and Jon Pounds had a maskmaking booth at the Art Fair.

The kids contributed to raising money through a car wash organized by Shawne Duck. An Auction sponsored by the P.C.O. and organized by Leo Papillon and David Donnelly raised \$400 and proved to be one of the most entertaining P.C.O. meetings in ages.

## Construction Begins

After some nerve-racking delays as the Chicago Public Art Group negotiated with the Park District over the amount of public liability insurance needed to get permission to build, ground was finally broken on July 12. The children became involved immediately. It is amazing how much dirt and asphalt a crew of enthusiastic children can move. They may have thought they were playing, but the children accomplished an amazing amount of work. The kids also worked to sift and sweep up years of accumulated glass from the sandbox and surrounding playground. Since that time, there has been no new broken glass in the Playground. We see this as a real mark of success!

Early in the project, a lot of time was spent with a jackhammer breaking through the layers of asphalt in order to dig 32 4 foot deep holes which support the deck and the train. Our worst fear was that a child would step into a hole before they were refilled with concrete and posts. We were wrong to worry about the children—it was an adult, Phil Baranowski, who stepped into a hole.

Other than that accident and the matching sprained ankles of Gude and Pounds

in July, the construction proceeded smoothly, though the entire project was delayed a couple of weeks by the late shipment of the redwood. Pullman Boys saved the delivery day by being on hand to unload the 6,000 pounds of redwood into storage in the Legion Hall. The Historic Pullman Foundation provided the invaluable assistance of allowing the Playground Project to use the Legion Hall for storage and to pre-fabricate some of the pieces of the train.

On October 5, the weekend before the house tour we frantically worked to finish the train. Our special Forsner 1½ inch drill bit which had drilled over 1,000 holes suddenly decided to bite the dust. Bill Brislen rushed off to find another suitable drill bit as the rest of us finished what we could without it. At 7 in the evening by the light of flashlights held by the kids, the final sanding on the engine was completed. At dawn on Sunday morning, Gude, Pounds, and Gladstone got up early to stain the train and then pronounced it finished.

Olivia Gude and Jon Pounds  
Community Artists for the  
Pullman Playground Core Committee



Photo by Jno Cook



# MIXED MEDIA

## Gender in Chinese Propaganda Images

Propaganda posters form a part of the Chinese popular media. They are an adjunct to a whole range of propaganda forms which spread information about current policies and changes.

The concept of propaganda is understood differently in China. Chinese ideologies do not proceed from the assumption that there exists some kind of ideologically "pure" communication. Propaganda is the result of efforts made to ensure a shared description of the world, to attain consensual understanding about change, to resist fragmentation. As such propaganda can refer to anything which seeks to educate people about social and political aspects of their society — road rules, the effects of drinking and driving, economic policies, laws, model workers, revolutionary heroes and so on. All this goes on within the understanding that the direction of change needs to be fostered and promoted by the ideologies of the Communist party.

Propaganda in China has tended to promote positive examples by way of presenting ideal images. This is especially true for posters, which are produced to inform, to educate, to instil values and to some extent, to decorate their immediate environment.

This tendency to promote ideal images, representations of solutions to problems, means that the walls of the bookshops where posters such as those shown here are sold can be read as the obverse side of an inventory of current concerns in China.

Looked at chronologically, we can see the historical development both of propaganda concerns, and of the ideal images which represent the resolution of those concerns. Propaganda images have frequently been concerned in particular with the overthrow of old values and the establishment of new ones, and one particularly interesting aspect of this has been the imaging of gender.

Of great importance in the establishment of the new society supported by the Chinese Communist party was the creation of new family relations and allegiances. Women were identified as an especially oppressed group and their support was secured by the promise of freedom from the oppression of traditions which valued women as men's natural inferiors and which validated women's exclusion from social activity as well as the absolute authority of fathers, husbands and sons. Women were recognised as a prime target for the incalculations of Revolutionary values because they had the most to gain and the least to lose.



2. "Selflessly love the collective".

At the same time, struggle and rebellion were values least associated with femininity in China, where docility and submission were the valued norm. Early images of revolutionary women reversed these ideal values. In Tien An Men Square, around the Monument to the People's

Heroes, are carved images of women in the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Their stride is long, their jaws set, their fists clenched. Their wrath and their vision of the future is evident in their stance.

As the revolution moved into the countryside and women of the urban bourgeoisie broke ties with tradition and became revolutionaries, the propaganda images of the bob-haired propagandist in peasant clothes, mixing freely and fearlessly with men was developed. The same appearance and attitudes were adopted as more women worked as guerillas and soldiers in the liberated areas.

The victory of the Chinese Communist Party and the establishment of the Peoples Republic extended propaganda emphasis to heavy industry and more kinds of work formerly the sole province of men. Model female train driving and fishing crews were publicised to prove that women "*held up half the sky*" and could indeed do men's work. Women's value as labourers in traditionally-defined male provinces was perhaps the strongest image. As the Marriage Law of 1950 was put into force throughout the country and slowly the possibility of marriage to a partner of one's choice began to be realised, so the ideal revolutionary woman was presented as the happily married equal partner of her husband, whom she'd chosen for his political outlook. Thus the new woman was associated with a peaceful, well run, politically correct family. Her qualities were strength, endurance and dedication. This was the propaganda image conveyed to the West of China's women.

With some shifts in alignment according to the employment situation, this has continued to be the model of a good socialist woman in China until quite recently. The asexual, austere anonymity of clothing and hair



styles that has typified revolutionary Chinese women since the 1920s was intensified during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976.

The Cultural Revolution officially ended with the downfall of the Gang of Four in 1976. Two years later, in 1978, China officially embarked on a programme of modernisation. While emphasis in the politics of the Cultural Revolution had been on the correct line, now technical expertise — material, rather than social, change was to be promoted. In September 1978 the Women's Federation, which had been disbanded during the Cultural Revolution, held its Fourth Congress. The themes of its report signalled a new era in the Chinese Communist Party's Women Policy; responsibility to home and family; birth control; employment in service sectors and unity with the national bourgeoisie.

Another important focus of propaganda is the campaign to encourage couples to have only one child. The propaganda is usually substantiated by material incentives and is closely linked thematically to the modernisation drive. Poster 4, "Holiday", shows an ideal, happy one-child family,



4. "Holiday".

while 5, a billboard in Peking, presents in more abstract terms the link between the two campaigns.

The caption reads "*Economy rising — population falling*". The dark work/sun stained man contrasts to the pale-skinned woman. The whole image is of a complimentary polarity which links the man to the phallic upward thrust of rocket/technology/economy, while the woman passively catches the baby drifting down in a



5. "*Economy rising population falling*".

magical birth from the sky. The back-to-back stance reduplicates the separation between mechanical (male), production and organic reproduction (female). As the woman rescues the baby, so too the implied division of labour rescues the nurturing role back for the woman. The image encapsulates the polarity in gender and in the world according to gender which typifies much recent propaganda.

The socialist ethics campaign was launched in 1982 and aims at improving the social graces of young people in particular. Correct attitudes to elders, neighbours, to service occupations, to the environment, to "culture", are all promoted. The campaign is aimed towards what are seen to be some of the effects of the cultural revolution, which at times was concerned to break down traditional attitudes and relations. In poster 7, a man offers a woman a safety rope. The caption is urging harmonious social relations from the workplace to the home and neighbourhood, and implies that the man is showing his care (by offering the rope), while the woman is respecting his advice (by accepting it). What is especially interesting in this poster, and in 8, which is about establishing "*democratic, harmonious and sexually equal families*", is the alignment of the gazes of the man and the woman. In both, the

woman is looked at, but herself looks out of the picture. The gazes suggest both female subordination and narcissism, and male authority and possession. It is a common implied relationship in both propaganda and advertising in China and elsewhere.



11 "*Everybody get to work: Plant trees, grow flowers, beautify the environment*".

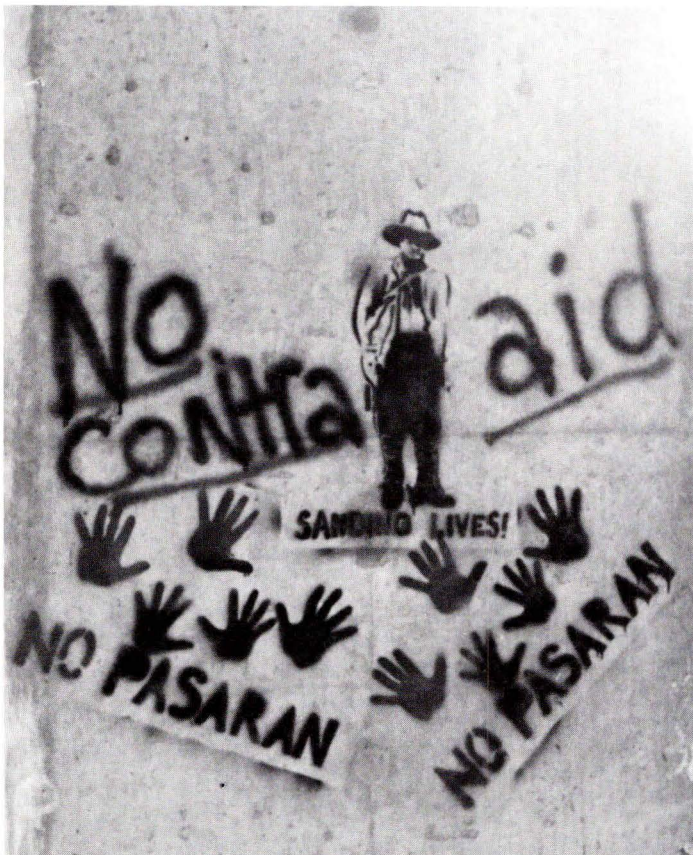
There are many important areas and meanings I have not discussed here. How can gender be separated from the bases of culture — history and tradition, (China — is still a *phallocracy*) — and political expediency? Why are these images seen as appropriate now? As pointed out earlier, propaganda images are ideals and generally have only an approximate equivalence with lived codes. As photographs become more widely used in propaganda, different images may emerge. Meanwhile, those Chinese women who seek a new definition of themselves which corresponds neither to the traditional stereotype, nor to the masculine prescriptions of earlier years will find little to inspire them on the walls of their cities and work units.

by Heath Grenville

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