



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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History of New Haven Murals

Since 1976 almost five dozen murals have been painted in New Haven, CT. by teams of people numbering several hundred, from children to seniors. A large portion of these murals were funded by public monies, and of that portion a very large percentage have been funded by CETA.

As part of the Mayor's Committee on the Arts — CETA Summer Youth Employment Program, 23 murals have been painted city wide over the past four years. Murals have also been painted by artists and teams in the City Spirit Program, the community outreach program affiliated with the Arts Council of New Haven. Funds for this program are from CETA, the CT. Commission of the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New Haven Foundation. Artists and muralists have been hired on funds from CDA, Title X (an apprenticeship program for students), and Title VII (visiting artists in schools). The Arts Council and the Board of Education have also sponsored some mural teams.

The current city administration, notably Mayor Frank Logue, has given instrumental and consistent support to mural projects. Logue has stated, "In a city which ignores the arts, a city which is destitute of art, the quality of life suffers. In fostering the arts, a city government may be playing its most meaningful role."

We (Terry Lennox and Ruth Resnick) have been working in New Haven since 1976 as mural planners, directors, teachers, painters, and consultants. In October of 1977 we received a matching grant which was awarded to CETA (then our full time employer) from the CT. Commission on the Arts to paint two or three murals in public places in New Haven. We wrote for the grant because we felt that after three years of directing murals and teaching mural painting we needed to develop further our own skills as mural painters. This, we felt strongly, would aid our future teaching and might open doors for professional murals in the city. Our first mural of this grant project, "We Can Do It All Better Together, In Peace, In Joy, In Love," 6' x 70', was completed in Feb. 1979 and is in the New Haven Department of Welfare. It is our first major mural project in the sense that we had enough time to research and develop the theme in depth with New Haveners, and also in that we had the time to develop our technical and compositional skills during the painting process. Though painted by two people, this mural represents the combined efforts of the city administration, CETA carpenters, the Welfare Dept. staff, local paint and art stores, other artists, as well as about 40 clients, staff, and friends who posed for us. And the mural theme represents the dialogue we had with our audience, the clients and staff of the Welfare Department as well as many others outside the department who offered opinions about welfare and suggestions for the painting. We are very happy that the mural has



Office Panel of city welfare mural, New Haven, Connecticut by Terry Lennox and Ruth Resnick. Full Mural is 6'x70'.



*'Song to Marti'—
collective mural*

From the People's World, June 30, 1979

MEXICO CITY
HOMAGE IS paid to Jose Marti through the "Song to Marti" mural (detail shown at right) a collective work carried out in the cultural institution that bears the name of the hero of Cuban independence. Creation of the Mexican artists Orozco Rivera and Luis Nishizawa and the Cubans Mariano Rodriguez and Fayad Jamis, it symbolizes the traditional friendship between Mexico and Cuba. The mural links the image of the tireless fighter for the unity of the peoples of America to those of Benito Juarez, Simon Bolivar, Emiliano Zapata and Camilo Cienfuegos. The work, which is three meters high and 28 long, resumes the history of this continent's struggle from the last century up to the present, and maintains alive the action of these men and their peoples for freedom and against oppression. The Jose Marti Cultural Center is at the corner of Avenida Hidalgo and the Paseo de la Reforma, opposite the historic Alameda in Mexico City.

**GIANT RIVERA DRAWINGS
DISCOVERED**

Earlier this year, in a basement storage room of the Detroit Institute of Arts, sets of large drawings by Mexico's great muralist Diego Rivera were discovered. Spread out, they would occupy nearly a quarter-acre of floor space. They were drawn as full-size guides for Rivera's "Detroit Industry" frescoes executed in the museum's main hall in the 1930's. The drawings recently discovered represent about a third of the final design. The Institute's graphic arts department is studying them for use in a special exhibit commemorating their 50th anniversary in 1983.

from Chicago Tribune, Friday, June 22, 1979.



Hallway Panel of mural at city welfare office, New Haven Connecticut titled "We Can Do It All Better Together in Peace, In Joy, In Love," directed by Terry Lennox and Ruth Resnick, 1977-79. Photo: Terry Lennox.

generated interest well beyond the painting. It has been the most publicized and is the best known community art work in the city to date.

We feel the reception of the mural is related directly to its relevance to the people of the city, that it is about New Haveners and that it is a message of hope. The theme is one of outrage and of joy. We wanted to communicate the injustice we feel is taking place against people on welfare, not only in terms of their suffering, but because society tends to blame exactly these people for their suffering. We want our mural to help shift the blame from the victims of poverty to where it really belongs — to the institutions and system which work against assuring the basic necessities of life to all individuals in that society. The mural is about the strengths of people as they meet their problems. It is about the vitality, heritage, and humanity of our community. It is about those who have grasped the confidence to effect positive change in their personal lives and in their community.

We hope that this mural and our next mural which will be in the city jail result in an increased awareness of art as a component of community planning, the beautification of the urban environment with art, and the increased awareness of art as a mouthpiece of and portrait of a community. With this grant, our intention is to paint in public buildings which are visually depressing, and which historically are the last to house art of any kind.

Opportunities for public artists are diminishing in New Haven. Most full time CETA artists have been terminated over the past seven months due to tightening federal guidelines. Plans for future CETA art projects are minimal at this time. The City administration which has actively supported the arts lost the recent primary. Many artists are now unemployed and are questioning the future climate for the community arts in New Haven.

There are a few programs in which community artists can find employment. One of these is the Title VII Emergency School Aid Act program to promote harmonious inter-racial, inter-cultural understanding among youth in the school system. Another program is the City Spirit Program which originated in 1976 in New Haven.

City Spirit, in its fourth year, is moving to incorporate as a non-profit community artists' cooperative. Murals will be only one of several disciplines involved in the program. As muralists, we feel that an artist administered structure will best facilitate more comprehensive mural planning in New Haven. We are involved with City Spirit because its aim is to develop as an ongoing, community-linked organization which will provide employment for community artists, and which will last beyond changes in administrations and public funding, and changes in its membership.

Dartington College of Arts Department of Art and Design in Devon, England

recently set up a new course concerned with art and society. The intention is to explore new forms in art and to question existing assumptions upon which art and art education are based. Students are to work in the community as artists and assist others to participate in the arts. Included on the faculty are David Harding, who has worked for the last ten years as "town artist" at Glenrothes New Town. A newspaper has been produced with pages taken from diaries, sketchbooks, photographs, notebooks, and articles written for the **Dartington Voice** to show some of the results. Students worked at Housing Estates (low income housing projects), community centers, prisons, railways, factories, council offices, schools and farms. Much work remained at doing research and arriving at impressions of social consciousness. But many students worked directly in the community.

Two students, Jennie Bancroft and Vicki Champion, worked with 14-17 yr. olds to form a group named Matt Vinyl and the Under-Coats.

"Once we had overcome their initial justifiable distrust of officialdom, their reaction to the question of what we should do changed from 'Uh...I dunno', to a positive stream of ideas and suggestions. Their ideas were of primary importance to us in most decision-making situations. As we frequently pointed out to them, they would have to live with whatever changes we made in the space." They produced a mural in an arts center shared by two schools.

David Harding writes "I don't think we have this course on the right beam yet, but we are working hard at it and hope we can crack it."

Scotland Project

Elizabeth Kemp writes about working with Craigmillar Festival Society Community Arts Team. "The project of painting the Youth Club Hut was conceived as part of a scheme to upgrade the Niddrie/Bingham Tunnel area in Craigmillar; the workers involved in the designing and implementing of the scheme being . . . 3 "outside" artists, 3 local adults and 8 local teenagers — all . . . employed under a Jobs Creation Programme . . . The children, the team and I decided that the monsters theme would compliment the prehistoric scenes in the tunnel, painted a few weeks earlier. A day's drawing and designing with some 50 children later and we had 4 monsters which would eventually menace, amuse and brighten up the neighborhood . . . Over the 8 months (with time off for winter) of the Hut's painting, the C.A.T. (Community Arts Team) developed a friendly and hard-working relationship with the youngsters in the area . . . No aspect of the Team's work was unaided by the kids whether painting or laying slabs and we all worked together in a happy atmosphere of cheek, adventure, fun and companionship which built up lasting friendships between all involved. (In) the final celebration of our work . . . (we) congratulated ourselves on as good bit of work, feeling that we had satisfied two major precepts of public painting in a living environment. Firstly, the inclusion and involvement of as many interested people and children as possible, and secondly, the attainment of technical

quality which makes the finished mural an attractive thing to look at for those who have not, perhaps, been involved in the actual painting. These two aims . . . are personal ones and are obviously affected by the lack of overt social and political beliefs readily translated into pictorial form (where) I have worked in Scotland, in contrast to most mural work in the States."

Children Are Our Future/Nuestros Niños Son Nuestro Futuro

Chicago Mural Group, Humboldt Park Area, California and Bloomingdale Artists: Celia Radek, Catherine Cajandig, John Weber

Notes on Community Relations and Hand-Build Cement

The artists' goals were to do a mural incorporating large amounts of text-poetry, statistics, etc. concerning the International Year of the Child (the stats were of local drop-out and youth unemployment rates) together with relief materials handled somewhat abstractly. Two of us were salaried as CETA supervisors by Youth Service Project Inc., an independent agency existing largely on government contracts. YSP wanted a showpiece and in addition wanted to please the two aldermen who had helped obtain funding for the program. YSP asked us to do "matching" murals one each in the two adjacent wards. With this heavy load of technical, aesthetic and "political" requirements, we set out to find a site — assbackwards. We hoped the community would go along.

The site possibilities along the ward boundary were quite limited. Our information about organization in the immediate vicinity was even more so. Our main concern was acceptance by a local gang. Failing to make effective contact with gang leaders at our first site, a large wall on a major corner, we chose an underpass (with one side in each ward) where we knew the local branch of the club. With our team we remade our entire concept to fit this semi-enclosed more pedestrian oriented space. We decided to emphasize the character of the space by shifting to cement relief with hand-set mosaic ornament, materials which could warm up an underpass, but which would be lost to traffic at a major intersection. All these considerations were legitimate but they overlooked the specificity of the audience. On the day we brought our crew over to begin work, two older residents asserted this specificity by threatening to kill us all if we touched the white paint which they, as it turned out, had been maintaining for years. Their block club (another belated discovery!) refused to oppose them. In desperation we turned for advice to the Westtown Concerned Citizen's Coalition. The new site, a half mile further east seemed scruffily industrial but the residents and local businesses welcomed us. Determined not to make the same mistake twice in one summer, we spent many hours introducing ourselves door to door, getting to know block leaders, older residents, teachers, precinct captains, etc. This attention to "detail" continued throughout the project. The "pay-off" was a dedication largely organized by the residents with a surplus of home-made refreshments and a mural untouched by graffiti.