

"Let the Walls Have Tongues" MOTTO OF THE PUBLIC ARTS WORKSHOP, CHICAGO

Today Murals represent an art form very responsive to the life of the community in which they are painted. Like the performing arts, murals need an audience. In the past murals have served more as records, celebrations and commemorations of specific events or people. Murals belonged to the monied few and served them. As such, as Mayor Logue pointed out at the mural unveiling on Aug. 4, 1976 in the Farnam Neighborhood House, the artist(s) was very removed from the murals and if he or she appeared in them at all, it was only in an incidental fashion, or in a manner surely not of celebration or importance. Mayor Logue cited, among others, the Sistine Chapel's mural of the Last Judgement by Michelangelo. The point he was making, and which I think to be very valid, is that murals then served very official, specific purposes, whereas today their nature has changed. They are looked to to enhance a community and for to be an expression of the artist(s) involved and the

community needs. Murals no longer have the taint of commissions from 'higher ups'.

Murals no longer merely observe and record ~~the~~ societies and their changes, but are indeed involved in those changes. When murals serve to brighten a community's walls they reflect the fact that people are conscious of their surroundings, and, even more important, conscious of their power to improve their surroundings. When murals express an idea, when murals voice protest, when murals celebrate, when murals cry out in agony, they are serving the artists and collaborators and they are speaking out ^{to} the rest of the community. When murals are a result of a team's efforts they represent the conscious decision of ^{those} individuals ^{involved} that the unity of their ideas and labor is valid and necessary to accomplish their goals.

In the beginning of this century murals played an enormous role in the Mexican Revolution and post-revolutionary times there. Murals in the New Deal

● Era in this country celebrated U.S. history so they helped "bring art back to the people."

The mural at Fernam Neighborhood House represents this changed nature of murals. Rather than the artists ~~to~~ remaining anonymous or removed from the work they are here the very subject and center of the mural, for in it the children have painted in their silhouettes. I must say, the final mural itself was almost secondary to the process involved in its creation, for in the process all the different personalities of the children influenced each days work, influenced the group dynamics and were finally record visually. Their egos, their self-concepts are now to be seen, in the poses they took, in the clothes they painted on their shadows, the expressions they put on their faces and the colors they chose. At Fernam, and with all the other

● mural projects in which I have been involved, I am most impressed by the group dynamics and expressions and therefore hope the final mural serves

and reflects them, rather than the group becoming subservient to the visuals and final mural product.

Tim Drescher in the MURAL MANUAL today writes that "The best murals are allies of the people giving strength in realizing their fullest human potential." In all humility I will say at this point that this is one of the hopes I have as I direct and/or design the murals I work on. I hope for the other team members involved to not only begin to gain a confidence, a voice, but also to convey those feelings in their work. Granted the day to day activities sometimes remove us from these impressive sounding aspirations as paint gets splattered and morale of a team rises and falls, but nonetheless these ~~not~~ aspirations are valid and constant. As we strive to make murals we are striving to bring art out of the galleries and into the streets and places where people normally work & pass by.

The art we create is not remote, is not removed, is not esoteric and does not hang quietly in a corner.

As Mr. Drescher further expressed, "They (murals) are not merely painted on walls, but speak of the walls, of the community and its people and demand justice and human dignity."

This is what I hope ~~the~~^{my} mural work of the past has at least begun to do, and this is also why I am entering this competition. In the past I have worked with many different groups of people, many, many individuals, and I am happy for those experiences and learned a great deal from them. Now I welcome this new opportunity to not only help others execute their ideas and imagery on walls, but to express mine as well. And I am intending that my mural shall speak to all who see it of justice and human dignity, or at the very least, it shall begin that dialogue.

Ruth Resnick, December 21, 1976