

LEFT CURVE

art & revolution



Prehistoric Hands,

Circa 25000 B.C.

no. 5 \$2

LEFT CURVE

art & revolution no. 5

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EDITORIAL

Several times people have asked us "What's Left Curve?", "Where's it coming from?", so in response to such questions we felt it appropriate to begin this issue with 4 questions & responses by the editors, Csaba Polony & Richard Olsen. We hope that the responses will add some clarity, at least with respect to where we're coming from as individuals. It is also fitting that we should have printed our responses, as starting with this issue Bruce Kaiper is joining our editorial staff.

This issue has a lot of material in it so we raised the price to \$2.00. Even that will barely cover our expenses, so if you haven't yet, please subscribe! This price increase will effect only newstand & individual sales; subscription price remains the same.

Two articles, one by Tim Drescher and the other by Ron White, explore the function of museums in shaping our consciousness of art. Tim's takes on this theme through the analysis of a performance work by a group of artists (DINT). The article by Ron White approaches the problem of museums analytically, exposing the non-historical "architecture of contemplation" atmosphere through which museums, in effect, deform works of art as being "sanctified" "beyond" the every day struggles of life. Both articles address an important problem for revolutionary artists: how can established cultural institutions be utilized (or can they?) without negating the content of the art?

The posters from Portugal need no explanation. The importance of the Portuguese Revolution seems to expand beyond the political struggle to the cultural as well.

The 5 paintings of Richard Olsen reproduced in this issue present an effective visual reflection of the historical process, tying together modernist techniques of object-making with relevant social content.

The two poets, Margaret Randall and Michael Peterson, focus, each in their own way, on an important problem for socially-conscious artists: the relationship between personal expression and political struggle. Michael's are particularly interesting in the poems' affirmation of the positive experience of comradely recognition, of the awakening of class consciousness, of the common bond among the oppressed. A recognition that engenders warmth, strength, and a sense of purpose.

Bruce Kaiper's visual/verbel essay tackles the problem of the alienation of the labor process in work as well as art under capitalism. The article is a selection from a manuscript entitled "Work, Art, and the Capitalist Commodity."

There are a lot of other good things in this issue worth mentioning, particularly the article by Clarita Roja and the interview of Alfredo Rostgaard, but we'll have to leave it to the reader to make the discoveries. As usual, all comments and criticisms are welcomed.

--the Editors

4 QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

(Ed.'s note: people periodically have asked us what this magazine is all about, where we're coming from, and where we want to go. We summarized the majority of these questions into four. Each of us then answered them separately. The questions and our individual answers (Csaba Polony's on the left-hand column, Richard Olsen's on the right) are as follows.)

WHY DID YOU BEGIN LEFT CURVE?

Basically it was all I could do to deal with the frustrations of being an artist who was also politically conscious. I mean I had been doing my own work which was intrinsically opposed to the established art world, yet my own work because of its more esoteric concerns was by no means applicable to immediate political work. My own work was on a pretty high theoretical level concerned with problems of art-process via conceptualism, becoming conscious of all elements & variables of art-making, but the content was trying to deal within a Marxist philosophical framework, like problems about the theoretical constructs of consciousness transformation, of understanding the conceptual process, the steps, of transition in an analytical way, of the relationship between intuitive expression & conscious knowledge of the world, of what art is, of how that fits into revolution, or whether the whole problem was just bullshit & an evasion or what. Anyway, all this plus my own personal problems of working at different jobs to survive, of being unable to coopt to "professional" positions which would require a violation of my ideas & integrity, of conflicts caused by this & my family's future, of being involved for several years

It was really all I could do. At the time, I was really in a void. A frustrated void. All my previous stabilizing structures were all but smashed. Up to just about the time I began working on the first issue, I was still pretty much anti-art. Or post-anti-art (the year before, after 3 years in "highart", I was into Dada, published a satirical paper, threw garbage in museums, etc, only to realize that I was being turned into the same shallow entertainment that I was protesting against. That I had to go deeper and attack the material base. And yet, for numerous reasons, both subjective and objective, that didn't materialize. Or materialize in any true Marxist sense. Part of the reason was that in my Dadist stage, I had negated Conceptualism with unfettered emotions, and, becoming political, my emotional disposition (then "ultra-left") outran, and ultimately negated my ability to think. What finally materialized was inverted oscillation, both on a theoretical & practical level). Anyway, beginning LEFT CURVE was, in a sense, beginning at zero. Objectively, it was to create a space for serious artists (or x-artists, as the case might be) to present their problems and working solutions.

in the "movement" & finding all kinds of problems there - the "unreality" of it, the lack of connection to real life problems, the ego-tripping, etc. - all this had left me disillusioned with "the revolution", & all this had caused an acute alienation worse than I had when I was just making pure art. Yet my conscious outlook was by now Marxist & once you recognize reality for what it is you have to live by that understanding or else be a hypocrite or go crazy, anyway I wanted to start something in which I felt I could deal with all this. I guess that it was important enough to deal with as it did reflect in some way the basic changes happening today, problems which a lot of people try to hide from.

Subjectively, it was just to try to do something, to try to get "moving" again. The fact that the reasons for continuing it have changed, testifies, I think, to the partial accomplishment of those desires. Which isn't to say that I don't have a lot farther to move, or that LEFT CURVE has become any Novy Lef, or, in fact, that I've even stopped oscillating (in fact, I've recently entered a similar state as issue #1, but on a higher level). But my theory has grown, as has my practice, and the magazine's function, I think, is beginning to solidify: to become a journal that in an honest and non-opportunist way tries to deal with issues surrounding art and revolution. One last note: both Csaba and I came from a Conceptualist background that broke through reified artforms (such as painting) and replaced them with forms of information. Therefore, it was "easy" for us to make a magazine in that we saw it as a legitimate extension of our own art.

PROBABLY WHAT DIFFERENTIATES LEFT CURVE FROM OTHER REVOLUTIONARY ART MAGAZINES THE MOST IS ITS MIXTURE OF "HIGH" (SPECIALIST) THEORY & MASS (POPULAR) ART. HOW DO THEY GO TOGETHER?

This really is a practical problem of what a magazine is for & who it is to serve. Obviously, at this stage Left Curve is not meant to be a direct political tool, its really a place for politically conscious artists to explore problems of their work & at this point that covers a large area. I mean there's a difference between an agitational newspaper, a leaflet, &

Well, one thing we like to do is present art & revolution from a "many-sided" view, from different fields from where it is rising. And it is rising in the "intelligensia" as well as the "people". This sometimes makes for awkward juxtapositions (at least on the surface of things), but it is a form we are experimenting with. There is also a subjective factor in that both, and

Capital or Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks, the common ground is not so much immediate applicability or comprehension by the average worker, but rather its the systematic coherent way of looking at reality: Dialectical Materialism & Historical Materialism. Of course since the dissolution of the 3rd International there's been a lot of different interpretations of what that world view is in all its particularities, as is reflected in the dismemberment of the international communist movement into conflicting tendencies (the material base of which, as far as I can tell, has yet to be adequately explained). I personally don't know of an all-encompassing integrative system which also has universal applicability. That's on the level of concrete politics, its even less clear in the area of art & culture. There's a lot of work that has to be done, things are still at an early stage. Its the commitment that's important now, out of all this struggle on all fronts, political, philosophical, aesthetic, etc. some clarity will come in keeping with the objective developments in this country, but it should strive to be a universal theory & practice, recognizing the importance of the U.S. in the world. When there's a revolution here it will be the greatest qualitative leap in history. Anyway, within that kind of perspective, Left Curve is on a pretty lowly & humble level. But I do want to keep the vistas open for serious investigation, as well as continually show & look for concrete practice being done right now. The main thing for me is to try to look at things clearly, openly, coupled with practice, doing work that seems real &

not always in a harmonious way, exists in both of us too-- tendencies towards abstractions of a specialized nature ("Modernism" for instance) and work with a more popular base. But the main thing centers around this idea of a "many-sided" view --to allow for serious work on different levels. Not only "allow for", but hopefully to help their development, and what could become a future synthesis of their most progressive parts... Revolutionary art, despite some good things, is underdeveloped in this country, ultimately reflecting the stage of the revolution itself. There is not only alot to learn from each, but, it would seem, a necessity to. If not in terms of immediate applicability, at least in terms of heightening one's awareness of the general processes, levels of knowledge and practice, and points of debate going on...

concrete rather than some self-perpetuating "alternative" trip.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH MARXISM, ANYWAY?

Strangely enough through art, through a systematic exhaustion of bourgeois art (avant-garde: conceptualism), by getting down to the very basic elements in art making I came to see what consciousness consisted of, & then I worked to find out where consciousness came from, where its content came from & it was society & then I realized the different types of consciousness depended on where a person was in society, what the social, class position was & also culture, national culture. On the theoretical level I came to Marxism by trying, first through idealistic processes, to understand how reality worked as reflected in the process of making a work of art, & I found that reality worked through contradictions, negative-positive, light-dark, analytic-synthetic, form-content, etc., that an art work "worked" if these basic principles of dialectics were part of the making of the work, of where an intuitive drive to creation was counterposed to the means of making the work, idea (subject/object), process, materials, context, etc. Well, it was all idealistic dealing with art as an abstraction, but the principles were true, in their adherence in a coherent way to formal dialectics. From there through the exhaustion of art elements I was lead into the real world, as that is the content of consciousness, & I then had to take that content

In a sense, I've already answered this-- generally speaking, by going through Dada, realizing that I had to go deeper and "attack" the material base. Dada was the last established structure within bourgeois culture that I was in in any systematic way. And yet, just as Conceptualism took me to the extremes of positivism (reducing everything to a tautology), Dada took me to the extremes of "pure" response. My initial politics, consequently, were very anarchistic and ultra-left. My practice remained as spontaneous as Dada, and my theoretical understanding (or non - understanding) was as undialectical as my positivism was... Anyway, through experience, through mistakes, I was forced to reevaluate my actions and study Marxism on a more serious level. I found that it not only explained the world (and things I had gone through, including the above, the base of which was not only my petty-bourgeois roots, but the objective stage of the U.S. itself), but it layed out the correct principals and methods needed to change it (I might add that this was certainly no even progression. There were many twists and turns and periods of stagnation, LEFT CURVE itself having arisen from one. Indeed, the process is still going on...

seriously & understand what the basic contradictions of society are (class struggle) & then get involved in social practice outside of "art", in the process I began to change from idealist dialectics to material dialectics: Marxism.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE LEFT CURVE DEVELOP?

Basically by its being in touch with the essential development of art & culture in the world, of progressive art, views that want to change concrete real social (& that includes personal) relationships in a way which will lead to the end of exploitation for the masses of people. I would like the magazine, on the one hand to deal with concrete examples of political art, art in the service of progressive change, and on the other hand theoretical work & experimental work which tries to deal within a revolutionary context. I would like to see Left Curve develop with and be part of the revolutionary movement, to be part of forces that will lead to our liberation.

In terms of any concrete plans, it's hard to say. Basically, to continue to deal with real issues in a non-opportunist, non-careerist way. Certain structural changes seem possible. One would be to expand our editorship (the advantages are obvious. The magazine, however, would be less the vehicle of our personal expression than it is now --I'm speaking about the magazine as a totality-- although I also think that's a needed leap). The second possibility is to radically change its internal structure by focusing on one particular theme for each issue. Also, as we become more defined, or the objective situation does, the magazine inevitably will be too. Ultimately, I'd like to see LEFT CURVE develop "out of existence" by way of an actualized revolution...

DINT: Museums and Society

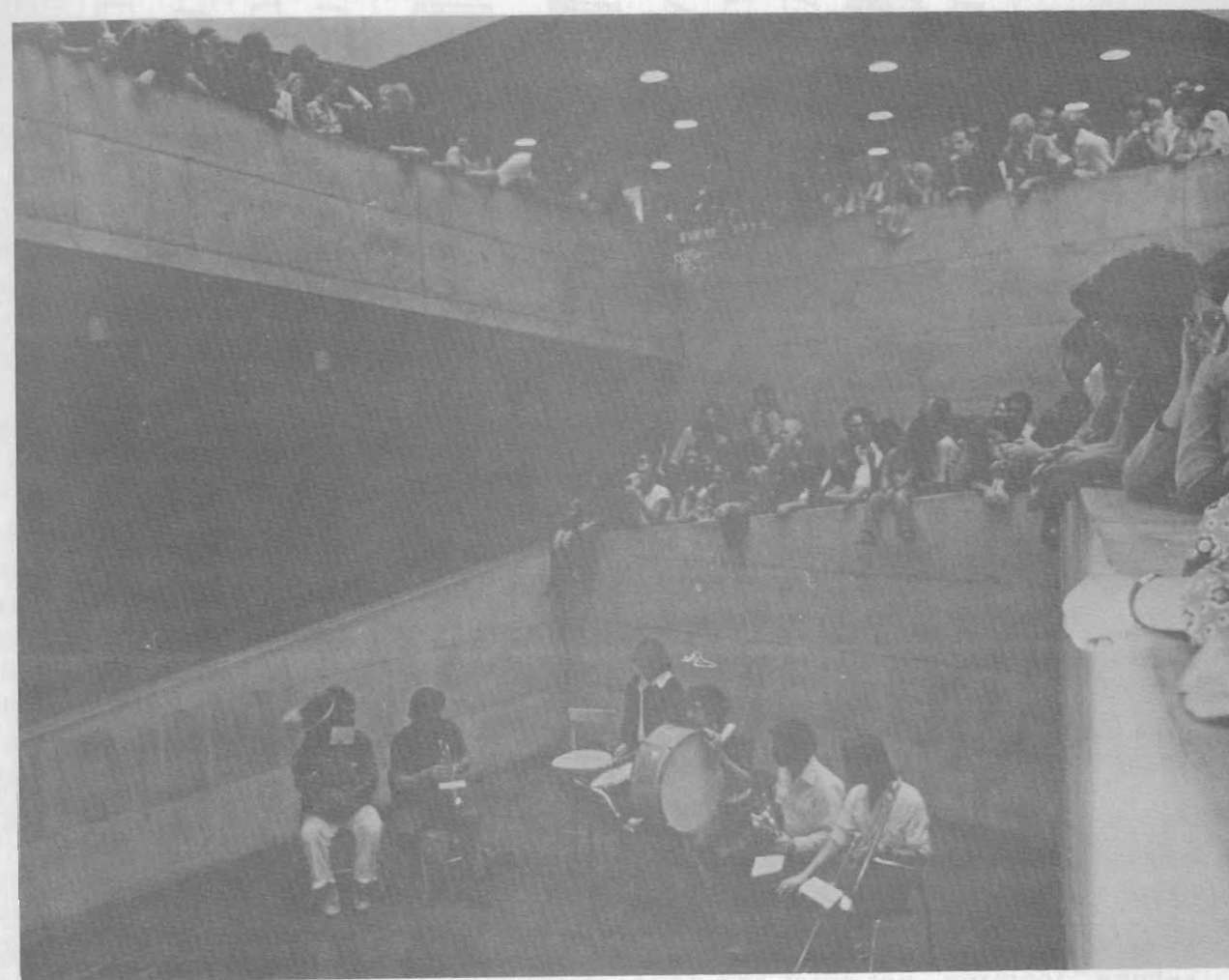
by

Tim Drescher

How should revolutionary artists relate to museums? The normal responses are either to avoid them or to accept them as necessary vehicles for the development of one's individual role as an artist, but these responses are fraught with compromise of revolutionary spirit. Avoiding museums might be the best course to follow in some instances, but it might also be a refusal to come to grips with an important influence on artistic values in America. Accepting museums' "rules" of exhibition may mean being coopted personally (by "selling out") or artistically (by having work exhibited in such a way as to rob it of any significant impact), or both. It may be that at this point the most that can be hoped for is museum exhibition of artwork which is demonstrably critical of museums' roles in our society. Recently, such a work was successfully presented in the Bay Area.

On July 7, at the University Art Museum in Berkeley, a group of nineteen people (alphabetized on the program by first names) presented a piece written by Peter Veres and Eugene Turitz which was a critical examination of the role museums play in the community and, writ large, their function in perpetuating bourgeois ideology throughout society. In the performance of DINT: A Play Without Words, several things happened simultaneously. What is most instructive is not the action of the play, however, but the relationships it elucidated. DINT was ostensibly about a prison-like setting in which sadistic guards, just doing their duty, brutalize and kill helpless prisoners until the prisoners collectivize and rout their tormentors. This much, when performed in an America replete with documented instances of torture from Chile to Mexico to Vacaville, can be taken as a metaphor for the operation of a class-divided society.

Museums tend to be large, imposing buildings, architecturally resembling either ruling class mansions or, if newer, concrete prisons (or, not coincidentally, schools or factories). Inside, visitors are expected to remain quiet while viewing what are presented as the most exciting and vital expressions of human spirit. No one feels at ease in such surroundings. What is the lesson? If paintings were hung in prisons would that help keep their populations pacified? DINT shows that there are different kinds of prison-like experiences in our society, and that, ironically, some museums have walls quite a bit like some prisons'. The experience of the performance as a whole suggested that museums function to impose a conformity on our values and our aesthetic sensibilities. One thing we learn in museums is what is "real" art, what is "good" art. By exclusion, what remains is something else, perhaps handicrafts or folk art. DINT is not a criticism of particular artworks in museums, but is a serious questioning of museums' efforts to imprison our cultural values.



(photo: Greg Huddleston)

Two other elements of the performance should be noted. First, there was music provided by six musicians who sat in a semi-circle facing the play action across a polished concrete floor. Second, the musicians began the piece by walking together down the ramps of the museum, through the spectators, and onto the bottom level where the spectators looked down on them and the play over concrete railings, like fans at a bullfight. These relative locations are illustrated in the first photograph.

The marching-in theme, written by Eugene Turitz, was:



It was a marked contrast to the slow, methodical actions of the guards as they raked scraps of paper into neat piles among the body-bags on the floor. The dialectical tension these contradictory auidial and visual aspects produced created an atmosphere of expectation. The mood did not come from the music. It did not come from the action. It came out of the dialectical unity of both. At this point it was clear that the museum opening had become quite serious and non-escapist, and the spectators took note.

The second photograph illustrates part of the contradiction. It shows the guards doing their grisly work in front of the head guard's desk and two massive walls, one made of newsprint hung from the ceiling to close off the rear portion of the museum space. The action of the performance lasted less than thirty minutes. In that time guards brutalized, tortured and killed anonymous, blindfolded prisoners, removed the bodies which were put into burlap body-bags, then returned and dumped onto the polished concrete floor. New prisoners were brought in from a holding area behind the paper wall, and the scene repeated. All was done without words except for the garbled grunt-shouts of the head guard when he ordered his minions to torture a new prisoner.

As the photograph shows, the guards were indeed monstrous; moreso in dialectical combat with the music. Their uniforms allowed no signs of humanity --huge, looming, yet quiet and deliberate and fastidious as they went about their ugly tasks. The torture was mostly out of sight, behind a door, and only shrill squeaks emerged during the sessions--appropriately hidden for those of us who might attend a museum opening and not want our "aesthetic sensibilities" bruised. It was not apparent whether the music or the agents were dominant; the audience was forced to apprehend both music and brutality simultaneously, and thus, especially, their dialectical tension.

While museums encourage ignoring the concrete and dwell on the "transcendant" (sic) beauties of art, DINT refused us this luxury. The tension between the two, auidial and visual, artistic and brutal, was the focus. The agents acted

seperately, hierarchically; the music cooperatively. Although during the play the music was mostly drumrolls, the scraping of the guards' rakes on the smooth floor, their cart's squeaks and raspings beneath its load of bodies, was also musical in a way, and the clap of their weapon attacked and shocked the audience--literally. The audience was included into the piece by the guards as it had been earlier by the musicians' entrance through it. In doing this, DINT pointed up the centrality of process in a progressive artistic presentation: the artwork was symbolic, but the audience's experience was real. Museums typically offer only a momentary shock in occasional works which is immediately submerged in the surroundings of "art" and museum. DINT made this cooptation clear by inverting the relationship and emphasizing the surroundings. The effect was startling enough for someone in the audience to shout "No!" as the guards killed prisoners, but shouting was not enough to stop it. Shouting never is.

The contradictions of humanist aesthetics in a brutal society were, inadvertently I think, raised on another level of the performance when the museum officials, who viewed rehearsals and had read the script for DINT, apparently thought it would be nice, or co-optive, to have a highly amplified modern music group framing the performance. Their inconsiderateness was wholly appropriate because the result--extremely loud, fast tempo modern music before and immediately after DINT's solemnity--made it seem like DINT was simply a longish intermission in the high decibel impatience of the other group's music. The effect was that the other group framed DINT in a kind of auidial bared wire, much like sensitive and progressive artworks are framed inside a concrete-walled art museum.

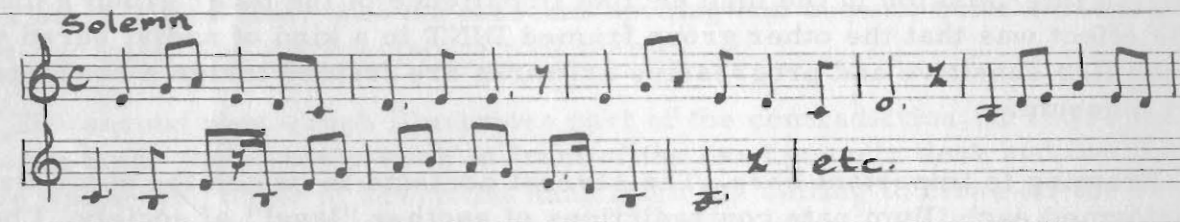
Framing is important here. The several contexts in which the piece was performed each illuminate contradictions of another "level" of society. I have mentioned the music-torture contradiction already, and the way in which it included the spectators in the play itself. Another way in which the same thing was done was simply by utilizing the architectural characteristics of the location as parts of the dramatic set. It is ironic that the actual walls of the museum are so perfectly appropriate as prison walls. Look at the second photograph again. Remember, this is an art museum, not a penal institution. After the play, paintings or other artworks might be put in place of the guard's desk. The question this raises is whether or not there is much difference between the function of the two uses of the space. Again, are museums aesthetic/ideological prisons? DINT does not answer simply "yes" or "no." What it did was raise the possibility to the level of awareness in the spectators. By extension, it pointed out that all artwork insofar as it represents human creativity, stands in contradiction to a society predicated on profit regardless of human needs.

Art critic John Berger suggests that "anybody who is not an expert entering the average museum is made to feel like a cultural pauper receiving charity..." DINT further suggested that feeling like an object of charity and feeling like a prisoner are not very different. What is more, the larger point was made that both prisons and museums can and do function to oppress human beings. Museums and bourgeois art critics would have us believe that art is liberating. Period.

DINT showed that we are not quite there, yet; that art is still only potentially liberating and depends for its effectiveness on a consciousness of its relation to the rest of society, to its social contexts. Paintings hung in prisons-- literal or metaphorical prisons--are not the liberators of mankind.

The prisoners finally get together in the piece, and by acting collectively overcome their tormentors. To do this they must break down the walls of their prison, and they do this by literally tearing away the huge paper wall at the far end of the performance space, rushing their and covering them with paper, symbolically subduing them. The lesson is extremely literal: museum walls, prison walls, and oppressive bourgeois walls in general are only paper tigers. Art is potentially liberating because it contains within it the possibility of realizing humans' social dimensions as it communicates between people and expresses collective experience in individual action. DINT shows us artistically that when individuals act collectively they realize not only group liberation, but increase their individual stature by grasping their social potential simultaneously with their individual growth.

The collective audience liked the performance. Some, those who stayed silent after the ending, were moved by it. When the prisoners overcame the guards they first tended their wounded, and they then solemnly walked out with the musicians, guarding the guards. The closing musical theme was the Vietnamese tune "Uncle's Love Illuminates Our Life":



The effect was one of profound dignity as the measured, even stately tune conveyed that marvelous sense of strength, suffering, love and life which is so appropriate in the year of Vietnam's liberation. For those who recognized the origin of the final theme, the parallel could not have been clearer between the struggle of the Vietnamese and the need of focused, collective struggle in this country.

Applause was inappropriate to the experience, yet I suspect that an art museum audience feels awkward at expressing reaction to live art. Such audiences are accustomed to dealing with inanimate objects, where it is easier to mask response in cliches, as instructed. The awkwardness of the applause was a compliment, albeit not without contradiction.

Most of all, DINT raised questions of process and relationships beyond simple action of the piece. In the audience and in the location of the performance the shock of contrasts and the tension they illuminated was considerable. Not only because of the coexistence of the two worlds shown--free, imprisoned, collective-single, sensitive-brutal, etc.-- but also because of the cynicism of the culture which shows them side by side. Bourgeois art and prisons, together in this performance, along with progressive artists process showed that the

key to remaking our lives is people, but not as individual. At this stage, the state apparatus was portrayed (accurately) as the dominant aspect of the state-people dialectic, but DINT showed that creative, artistic motivations currently subsumed by a commercialized museum-artworld, can be a source of the profound and liberating realization of humans' social potential.



(photo: Greg Huddleston)

POSTERS FROM PORTUGAL

During "normal" times there's a lot of controversy over the role artists are to play in the process of social change. However, when faced with an actual period of rapid upheaval, when the seemingly immutability of old structures can no longer function in the old way, the immediate needs of practical politics determine what is to be done. The necessity to propagate the aims & purposes of the revolution become the priority of all socially conscious artists. The struggle is played out, no longer within "art", but rather as an integral part of the over-all political struggle. This has been true during all modern revolutions the world over.

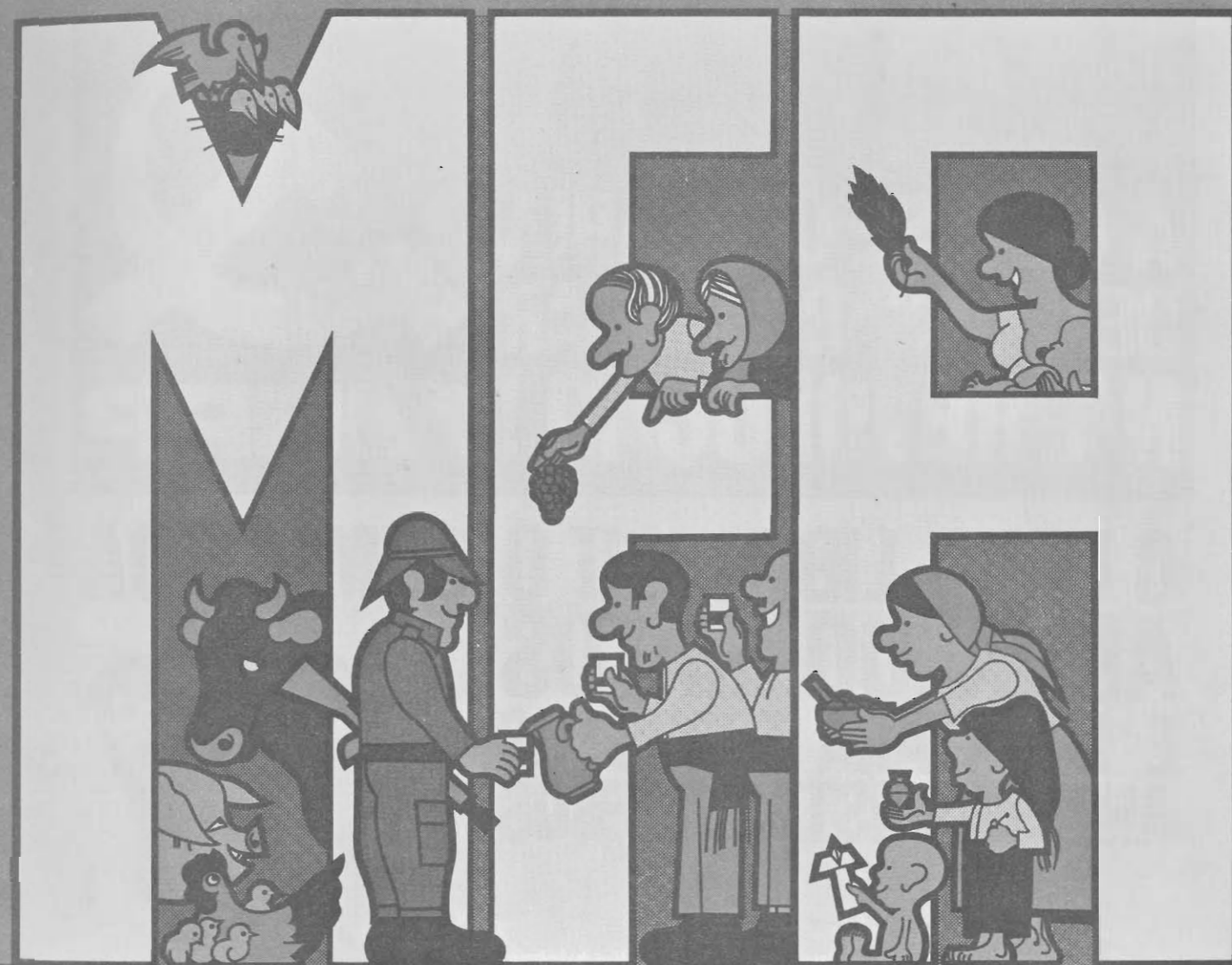
Portugal is no exception. The ruling Armed Forces Movement (MFA) has instituted its own "Cultural Dynamization" program, part of the task of which is seen as "revitalizing cultural associations, establishing a relationship between the people and their local reality, motivating the people as a collectivity to set their sights on a common goal." (quoted from *Granma*, July 20, 1975). A good example of the kind of work done as part of the Cultural Dynamization program is a mural which was completed in the northern city of Viseu. Slogans such as "Revolution", "Imagination is yours", "25th of April", and "Freedom" were surrounded by birds, flowers, trees, and imaginary figures. The whole project also involved the holding of a series of talks with the people, exchanging views and explaining things concerning the project. The MFA Information bulletin reported on the Viseu experiment as follows: "real knowledge is that which we acquire through our own experience. In the course of the revolutionary process... other murals and other collective efforts will be made mainly in those communities in which freedom of expression is needed as much as bread."

Posters, of course, are playing a very important role in the Portuguese Revolution. All the various political parties use the poster as a way to mobilize the masses and put forward their line in an easily comprehensible way. The posters used by the MFA are part of the Cultural Dynamization program. Other groups, from the "Socialist" Party to MRPP also have their posters compete for the bare walls of Portugal's cities, towns, & villages.

Fred Drecker, a student at the California School of Arts & Crafts, recently returned from a trip to Europe which included a sojourn in Portugal. We are reproducing some fairly representative examples of the kind of posters now being made in Portugal which Fred collected. The majority are MFA posters. Also included are 2 examples of posters by Leftist groups, one by the Movement for the Reconstitution of the Party of the Proletariat (MRPP), and another by the Proletarian Revolutionary Party - Revolutionary Brigade (PRP-BR) which we have learned has gone underground in the face of the current "moderate" government's attempt to disarm the people. The next stage of the revolution could very well be armed struggle.

The uniqueness & originality of these posters would seem to be a reflection of the unique course of the Portuguese Revolution to date.

○ POVO ESTÁ COM ○



DINAMIZAÇÃO CULTURAL · ACÇÃO CÍVICA

COMISSÃO DINAMIZADORA CENTRAL

GRANDE COMICIO

CAMPO PEQUENO/SEXTA 18 JULHO 21H

**A CLASSE OPERARIA
DEVE OUSAR AVANÇAR
NA REVOLUÇÃO!**



**O POVO LIBERTOU O CAMARADA
ARNALDO MATOS
E LIBERTARA TODOS OS
ANTI-FASCISTAS PRESOS**



Os meninos e a Revolução



A flor da liberdade

DIA MUNDIAL DA CRIANÇA — PORTUGAL 1975

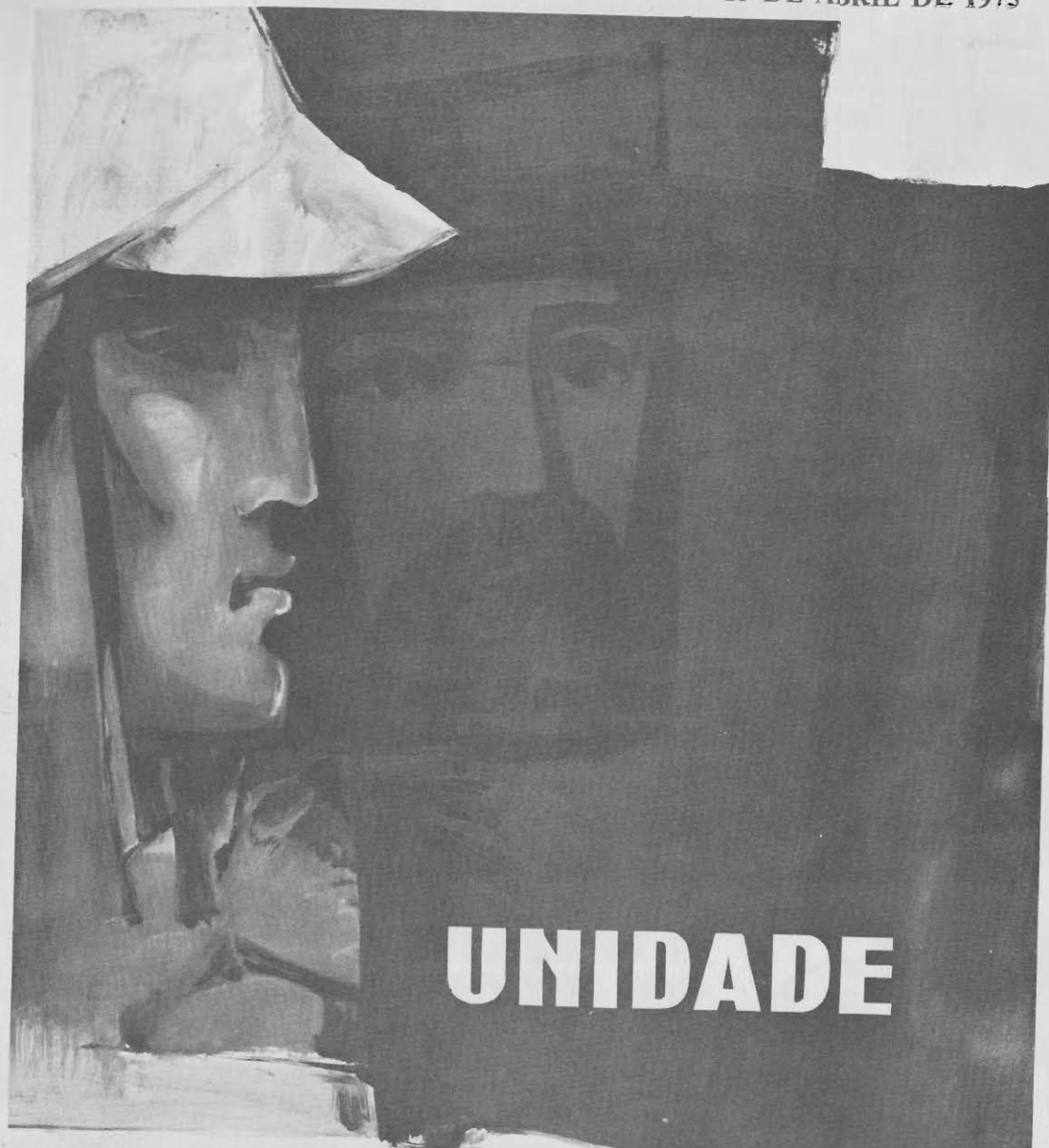
DINAMIZAÇÃO CULTURAL • ACÇÃO CÍVICA



desenho de catarina joão — 8 anos — 1975

25 DE ABRIL 1974

25 DE ABRIL DE 1975

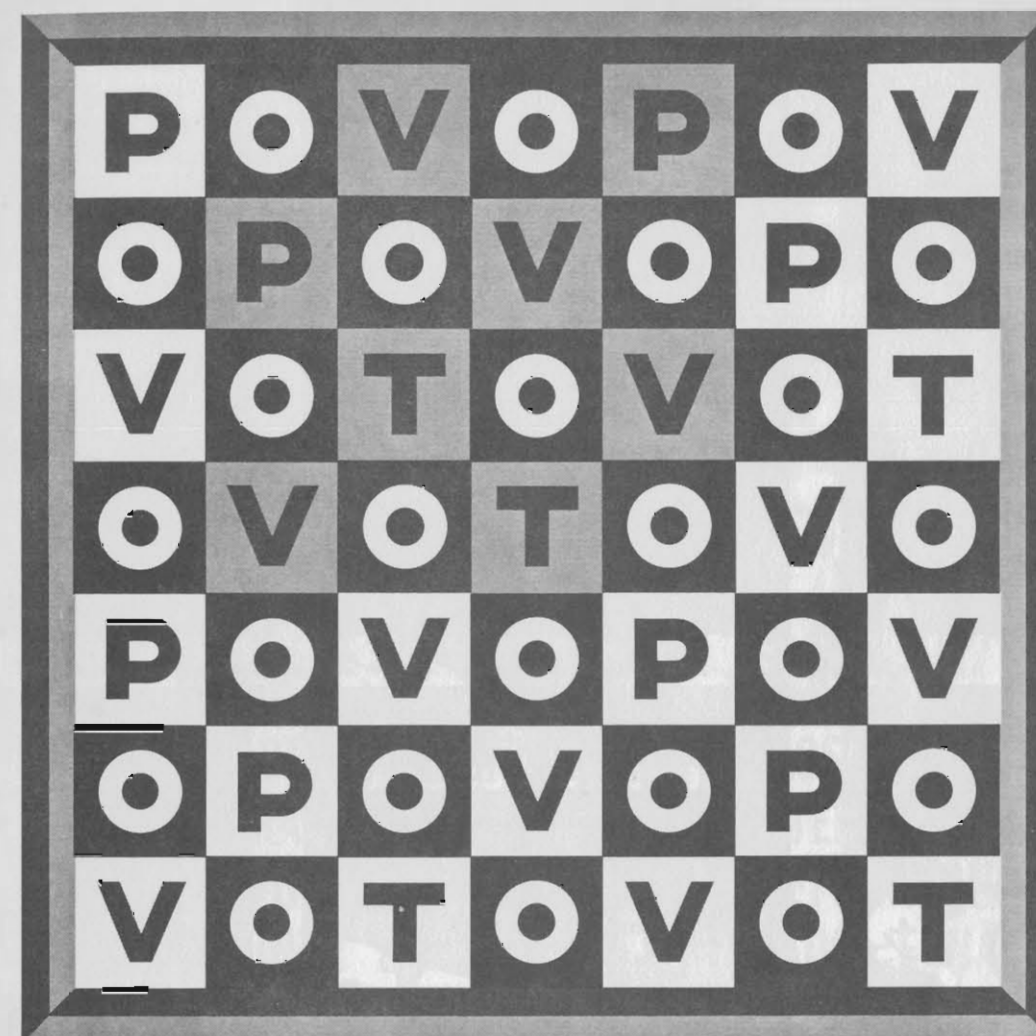


UNIDADE

POVO-MFA

DINAMIZAÇÃO CULTURAL • ACÇÃO CÍVICA

ex. c. Diário de Lisboa



**NÃO FAÇAS
O JOGO DA REACÇÃO
VOTA PELA REVOLUÇÃO**

MOVIMENTO DAS FORÇAS ARMADAS ■ DINAMIZAÇÃO CULTURAL • ACÇÃO CÍVICA

UNIDADE PARA O 1.º DE MAIO

não dê ouvidos
à reacção



o boato
é venenoso



o boato
é uma arma
da reacção



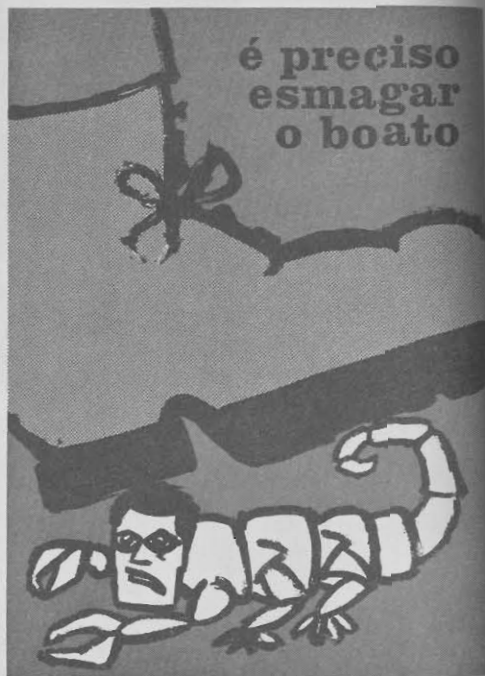
o boato
é reaccionário



o boato
serve a reacção



é preciso
esmagar
o boato



DINAMIZAÇÃO CULTURAL • ACÇÃO CÍVICA

1.º DE MAIO

PARQUE EDUARDO VII
15 HORAS



FACE ÀS MANOBRAS IMPERIALISTAS E AOS SEUS CÚMPLICES SOCIAIS-DEMOCRATAS, O PROLETARIADO TEM QUE CONSTRUIR UMA SAÍDA REVOLUCIONÁRIA. HÁ QUE DEFINIR ONDE ESTÁ A BURGUESIA E ONDE ESTÁ O PROLETARIADO. E NÃO ACEITAR MAIS ALIANÇAS COM A BURGUESIA.

SOLDADOS + MARINHEIROS + TRABALHADORES ARMADOS = CONSELHOS REVOLUCIONÁRIOS = EXÉRCITO REVOLUCIONÁRIO.

CONTRA A ORGANIZAÇÃO DA BURGUESIA-REVOLUÇÃO SOCIALISTA. O PRP-BRIGADAS REVOLUCIONÁRIAS NÃO SE MANIFESTA COM O P.P.D. E O P.S. O PRP-BRIGADAS REVOLUCIONÁRIAS PROPÕE UMA MANIFESTAÇÃO REVOLUCIONÁRIA E DE UNIDADE PARA O

1.º DE MAIO

PRP-BRIGADAS REVOLUCIONÁRIAS

MARGARET RANDALL: 2 POEMS

INCLUDING HUMAN RELATIONS

--for Marge Piercy, after reading
Small Changes...

Lumpy. Bloated or fat.
Fat isn't so bad after tearing "the real you" away.
Heavy or full.
A matter of getting used to it.
It used to be arching the neck, raising my head up
and slightly forward. A trick.
Like my mother telling me to hold my teeth apart
with my mouth closed. To make your nose look smaller she said.
I never wanted my nose to look smaller.
Even when I was suppose to.

But now I sit, one fist prodding my jowl,
everything's going off, off into space and time,
a huge arc or wave of sinews and clouds.
At 37 and suddenly, parenthetical (or pathetic?)
I think of early premises:
the future preacher, we climbed a nighttime rock together
and talked about god.
The red-headed future marine who kissed me like turning a bayonet
into living belly.
The dark football captain from the downtown school
who tore my clothes off and reeled beneath my thrust knees
and didn't run after me all the way home,
crying, panting, peeing in still-virgin fear.
Or Sam, the first husband, riches and madness.
The older Art Professor carving away at his profession and me.
The ones who wouldn't talk.
Just fuck, that's all. Not a word.
The ones who came and left.
The second husband, the one who walked backward,
demanded more than he got. Demanded his head. Got nothing.
The tippers: the one who threw me a quarter,
waitress-heavy and playing, still playing.
The ones who did talk, somehow, love, talk, live,
give,
give richly and surely.
But left finally. Finally leave.

One image or another touches me now, through all those years.
An image. A memory. Even a number or a book.

The word bloat brings only to mind
the bodies on the Mapocho River.
Heavy is the struggle,
sung, lived, handed from sister to brother,
the people
rising together.
Teeth apart or together, the struggle will be a long one,
we will learn to eat with these teeth, eat away at them,
beat them at their own game
which for us is no game
but life.
From each according to his ability to each according to his work.
Or hers.
From each according to her effort to each according to her need.
Including human relations. For sure.

(La Habana, Cuba
June 5-6, 1974)

Miguel Enriquez: hero of the Chilean resistance,
October 5, 1974

Miguel Enriquez they had to kill you from behind a desk
from behind a tank from behind 500 dead mercenaries
against your live human arrow
that stayed and stayed and stayed.

Everything moving around that, circles.
Great expanding circles that dance and trap.
Ghost Dance. Beyond words. Beyond release.
The circles contract, hoist like a noose.
Expand like breathing.

I look around me: every street corner, every familiar place
should have changed but hasn't.
Erosion or construction in direct ratio
to intensity of experience.
Hasn't enormous time passed? Hasn't it? Hasn't it?

Conscious of how the enemy has hurt me.
You. All of us. The painful bond.
Our mending process.
Our raging process.
Our process.
Our solid birth that keeps on working.

Miguel: it was as if Fidel had been cut down in the Sierra
or Che in Bolivia where he really was.
But Fidel or Che,
Miguel it is harder for us to see that you left us a Party
than it was for you to know you did.
Because you built it, man by man,
woman by woman,
and knew your work.

Enemy: prepare to die
by people's war
made of our love, scientific and human,
our hate, scientific and human,
the length of Saturday, Thursday rain, everyday
now and tomorrow...

(November, 1974)

3 POEMS BY MICHAEL PETERSON

FINALLY FOUND OUT

I feel good
tonight.
I'm closer
to the truth,
the struggles,
the strife.
I've got
a feeling
deep inside,
of Debs,
of Browns,
the fighting masses
and their plight.
I'm looking
over misconceptions
from childhood,
each individual
lie,
rearranging history,
seeing through
different eyes.
The eyes of a nation,
of rank and file,
are finally, too,
my own.

DEAR COMRADE

Chances are
we'll never meet,
except right here,
where in each line
we work
together,
laugh
and cry,
exchange secrets,
dreams, and
reality.
Right now we are
one.
2000 years of trying,
we've finally made it,
right here on this page,
together.
Smile with me
Comrade.

I,
Michael,
your brother
and comrade
in struggle,
patiently endure
the creeping pace
of our march
toward freedom
even from this
prison cell.
On this night
I see truth:
a loud cry
which directs
me to write
for all brothers.
I turn to see
the direction
from which this
cry comes;
and beyond
these bars
I see the living
answer -
the dusty worker:
labor's lusty sparkle
in his eyes.
At this,
compelled
by a newness
of love,
my hand grips
this pen...

I write
what I see,
what is now,
and what will be.
These words
are for those
who have
struggled,
who are lifted
high.
I see their deeds,
their hard work,

their perseverance.
I smile
that they
will not tolerate
the controlling rich,
knowing they have
given them
their chance;
they have failed,
they are false
masters.

They have persevered,
have endured
hardships
through unity;
they have struggled
and have not
grown weary.
They show the height
from which they
have climbed.
Hands joined,
they do things
they have done
for all time.
Unite!
because they have
learned
that if they don't,
the rich will scatter
their goal,
leaving them
to work at the mercy
of the rich.

But they have
the sense,
the love,
the plan
for victory.

He who has an ear,
let him hear
what the rank and file
have to say.
To him who
overcomes,

victory will give
the right to peace
and happiness,
universal unity,
comradeship
to all.

These words are
for those
who have been
together
as always.
I know their afflictions
and their poverty -
yet they are
rich.
I know the injury
of those
who say they are
your rightful leaders,
but are not;
the petty
rich.

Do not falter
in your suffering!
This is the wish
of all rich,
their way
to victory.
Be faithful
to your comrades,
to the struggle,
even to the point
of death!
Our children's future
will be a just
reward -
the sparkle in the eye
of the entire
world.

5 PAINTINGS

Notes

They are not "modernist" in the sense of being about art (one of the attributes of "modernist" art). Nor are they "abstract" in the sense of containing some hidden code. They are totally obvious if only the viewer sees what's there. Paint is paint and images are images and contrasting images are those images contrasted, the dynamic between them constituting the essence of the piece...

Attached to each thing is a history of meanings. Find things that reflect a meaning in no uncertain terms. A prehistoric painting is seen as a reflection of early Man, magical, without rational knowledge (that grew later with the division of labor). The fist is a sign of the struggle against decaying capitalism (note that the primitive hands are open). The color red (on which it is placed) is a sign of communism, the future for which we fight. In between (unseen) are thousands of years of class struggle, carrying us forward, into the present...

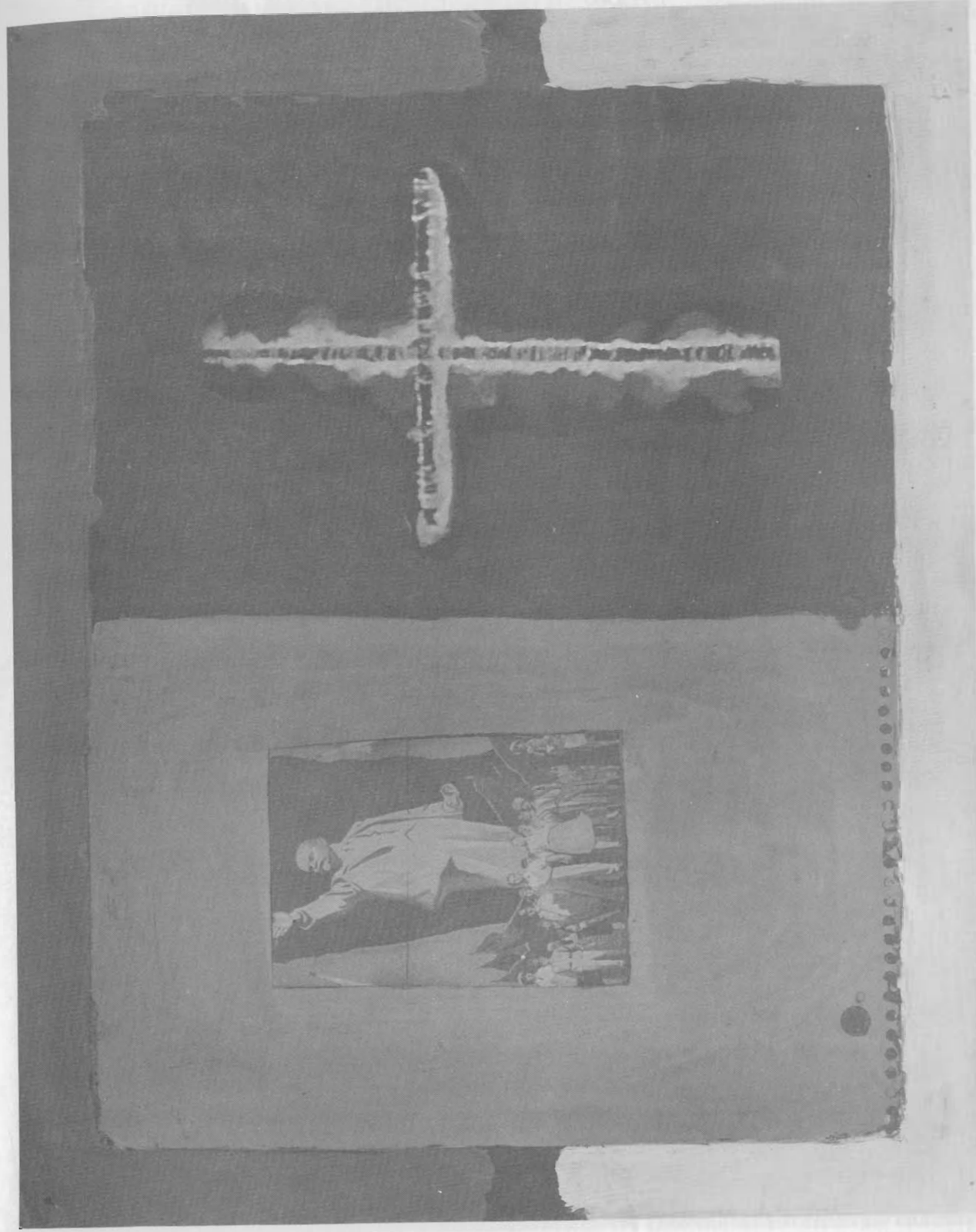
The thin line, the tension, between the thing in itself and what the thing means, what it points to outside itself. The tension between a thing's presence and what it represents. To exploit this tension in such a way as to heighten the presence of what's represented, to give it the "sense" of a material thing...

They are not verbs (in the sense of political acts), they are nouns (in the sense of things to understand). They are not agitprop, but theoretical presentations of a general nature. (They are not talking about specific struggles, but about some of the laws and processes that contain and are contained in all our struggles...)



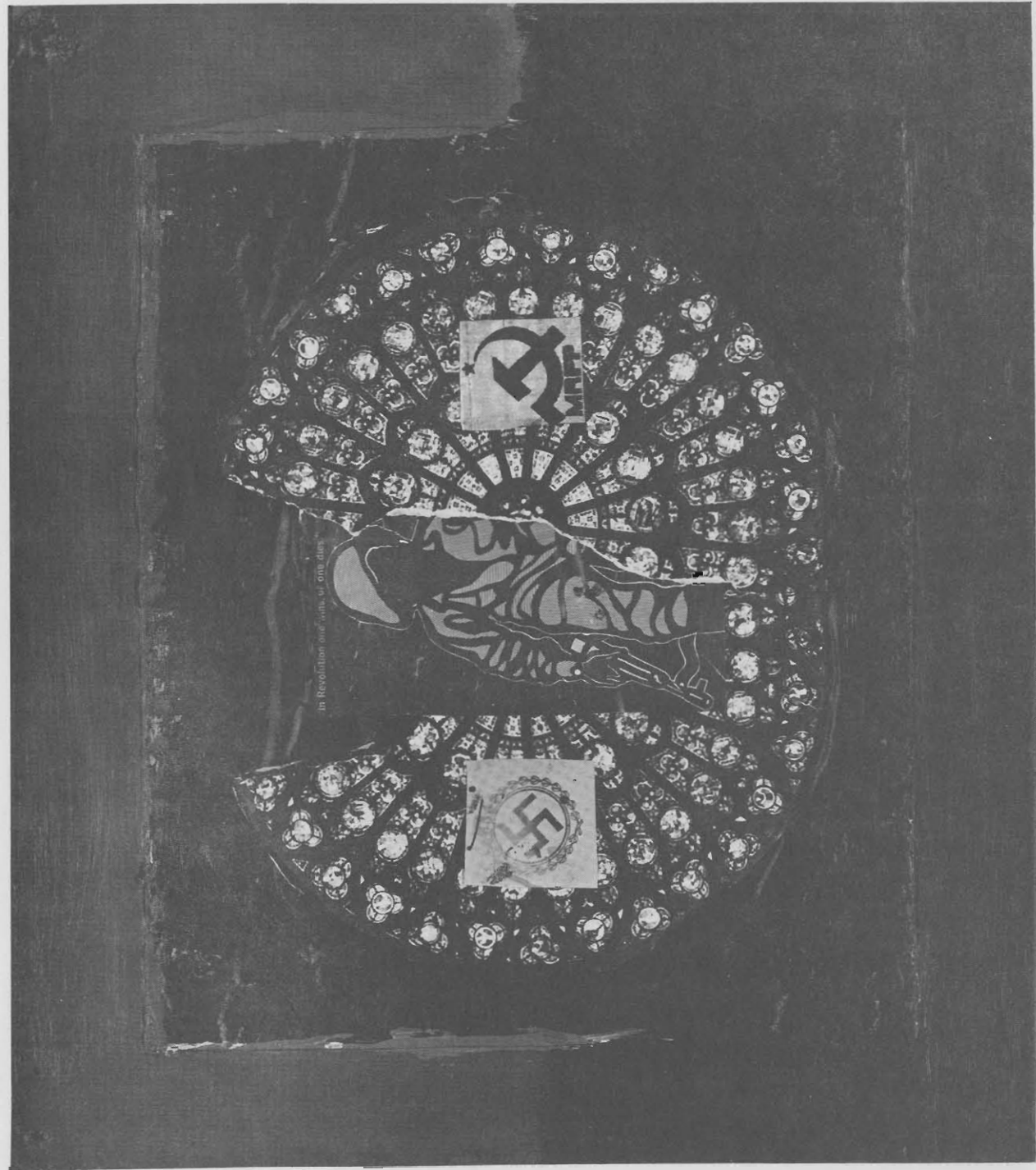
HISTORY SPIRALS FORWARD

9 1/2" x 13"



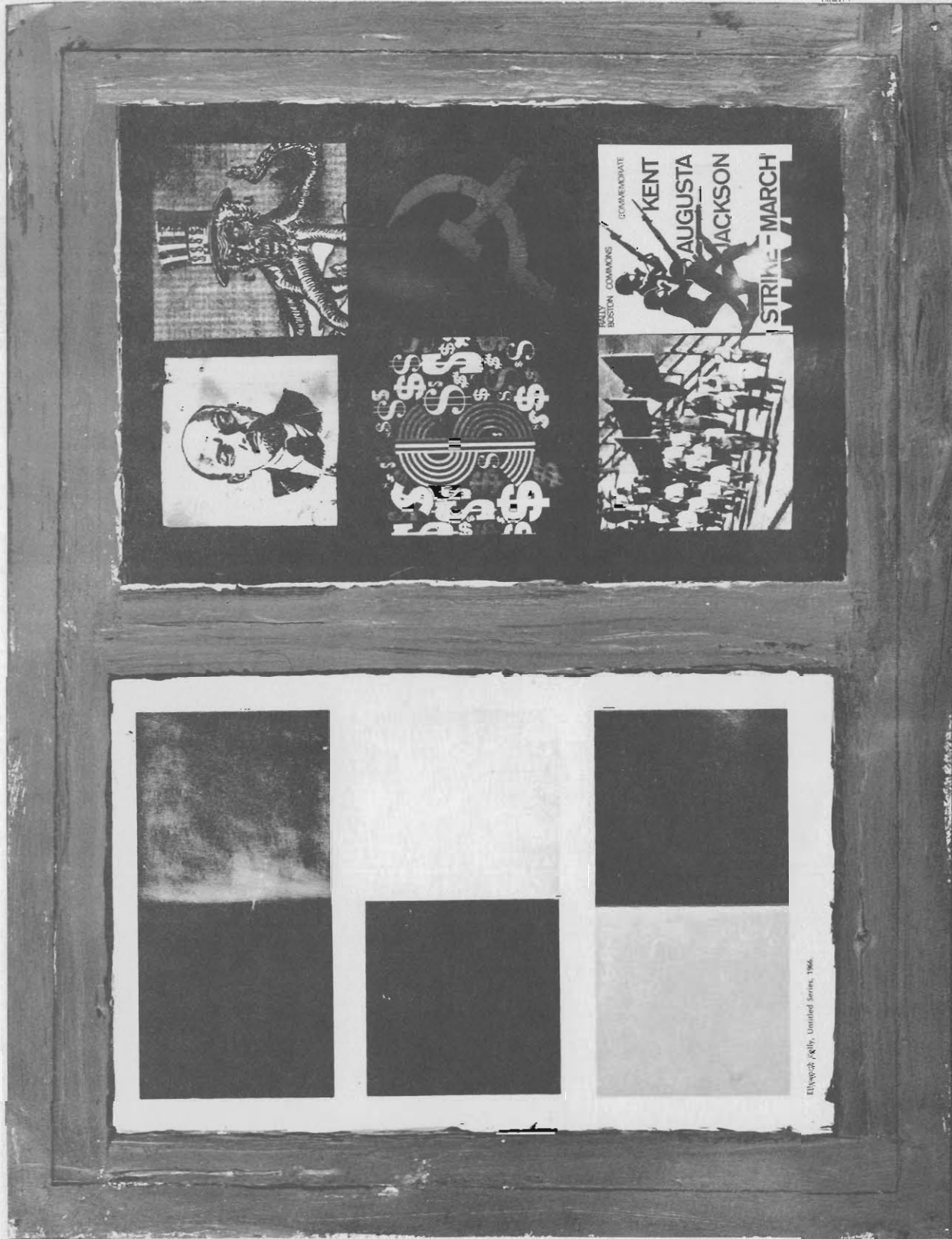
CONTRADICTION #3

10 1/4" x 12 3/4"



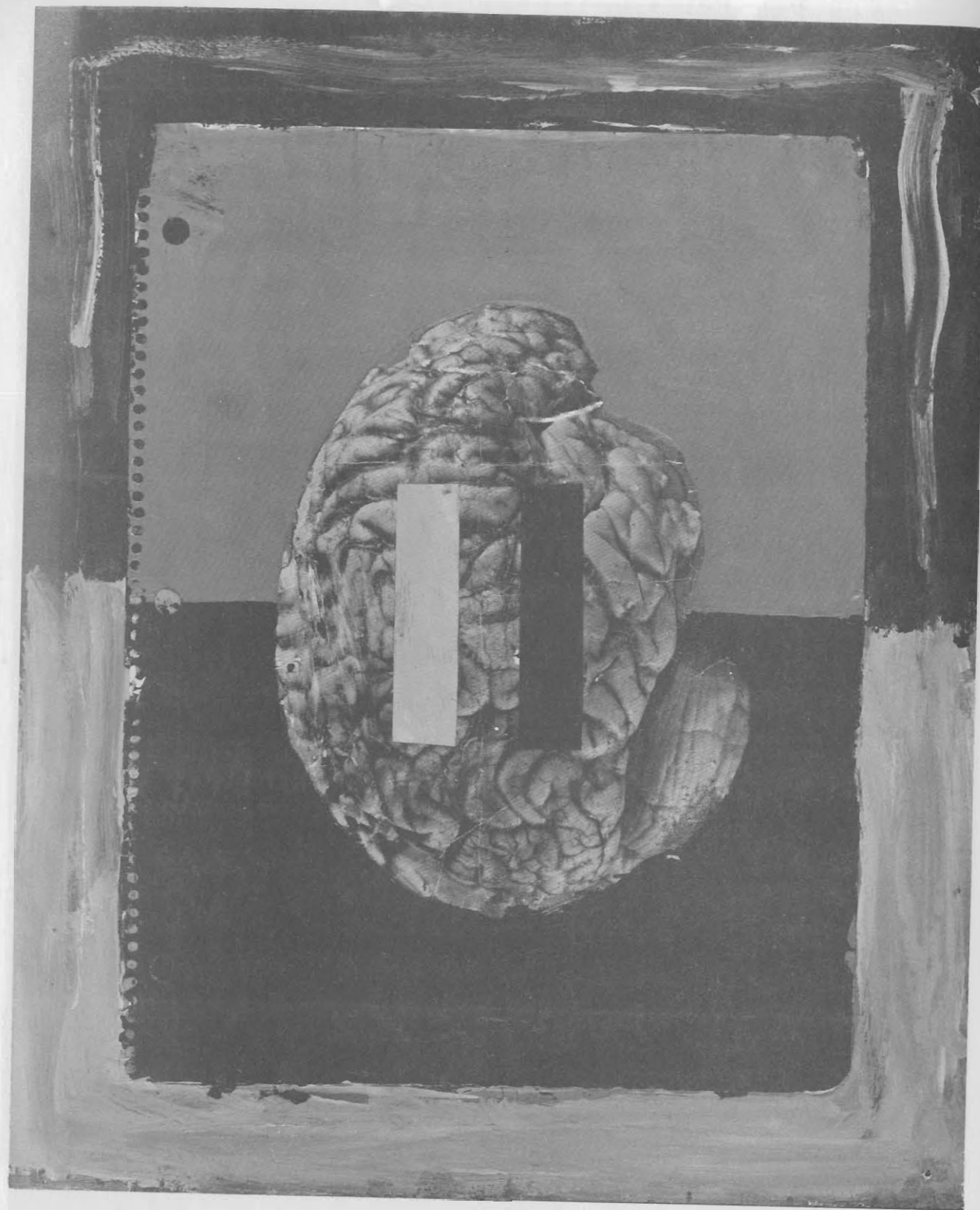
DIVIDE ONE INTO TWO

11" x 12 1/2"



IDEALISM / DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

11" x 14 1/2"



11" x 13 1/2"

CONSCIOUSNESS IS A REFLECTION OF OBJECTIVE REALITY

MUSEUMS ARE POISON
(I'll have mine on the rocks, if you don't mind)

By

Ron White

I think we all agree that museums have become an elite institution. And I think it's safe to say that many artists are not overly fond of museums. (That seems vague enough for everyone to agree on, without feeling as if they're committing themselves.) But by far the most common response to this situation has been to demand "equal representation". For instance, in the late 60's and early 70's, The Art Workers' Coalition put a lot of pressure on New York museums, particularly MOMA, to show more work by minorities and women (the rights of producers); they also demanded free admission and extended hours (the rights of consumers). For financial reasons, the museums were more willing to alter their "aesthetic" policies than they were their admission policies (though MOMA did try free admission, one day a week, for awhile). But at least they made concessions, not a complete victory perhaps, but apparently a victory nevertheless. More recently, artists have been making a stink about the way museums treat photographs, hiding them in back rooms so they virtually disappear in the shadow of painting and sculpture. It's becoming clear that museum directors will eventually throw up their hands and give in to these demands too, at least in part. Apparently "equal representation" will have to learn to live with success; apparently artists and museums can be friends after all, it was only a misunderstanding.

This is rather touching perhaps, but not, I think, very surprizing. I suspect that the strategy of "equal representation" will turn out to be very short-sighted, and if taken alone may turn out to be counter-productive. I suspect that we have to transform museums these days not by demanding to be shown but by refusing to be shown. On the face of it, this suggestion may seem coy: as we all know, the best way to become a star is to bite the hand that feeds you ("Yes, Mrs. Rockefeller, it's only a letter from some artist we've never heard of, saying he's glad we've never heard of him." "Well ask to see his work.")). But I'd like to look a little closer at what we've "won" during the past several years. That is, I'd like to look at the way "losing" has been built into the very act of "winning".

It's true that museums have become powerful because they have a lot of control over which art is granted recognition and which isn't (i. e., the predilection for modern French painting common to American museums, which results in the coddling of formalist art in general). But their real power lies in the way they exhibit this work. In the long run, it doesn't matter which work a museum shows, because it all comes out looking the same anyway. In the past, American museums used to recreate complete rooms in order to display the cultural and historical context of an art work. Even today some museums, though not many, have "period

rooms", where paintings and sculptures share the limelight with other objects in the environment, and where environments change from room to room. During the early part of the 20th century, however, museums began to refine an Architecture of Contemplation: textile-covered walls began to give way to neutral white walls and a constant neutral white space; works began to be hung in a horizontal line, each claiming a certain amount of space between itself and the other works, rather than ganged up vertically. Exhibiting art in this manner meant that paintings and sculptures became important as special, individual works: instead of being an integrated part of a world (the "period room"), each individual art work became a world of its own, self-contained world. Essentially, the Architecture of Contemplation destroyed the social/aesthetic context of art works; that is, by displaying them in a socially and aesthetically sterile environment, it isolated art works to such a degree that they became their own social/aesthetic context. Perhaps the greatest single influence on this tendency was the construction of the Museum of Modern Art in 1939.

This was a very important step in the development of museums, however "natural" this kind of space may seem to us now, because museums thus became the architectural equivalent of "art for art's sake" (formalism). Or perhaps it would be better to say that museums thus became the perfect place in which to display art for art's sake. As soon as you walked into a museum you could tell that you were in a separate world, at least one step, though probably closer to ten steps removed from the "real" world. Museums merely refined architecturally what others had refined verbally: the notion that art works "have a moral and aesthetic existence of their own". Museums became a world devoted to contemplation, escapism, voyeurism, the discreet charms of the bourgeoisie ("Pass the tea and cookies please, I'm off to see Manet").

In fact the Architecture of Contemplation also developed, I suspect, as a largely unsatisfactory projection of private space onto the level of public space. That is, while the Architecture of Contemplation has only recently become de rigueur as interior decoration for private homes and apartments, it has, from the start, relied on the freedom from distraction common to private (genteel) viewing. Contemplation, remember, is a rather delicate state, and in a sense we are supposed to "tread lightly" in the presence of art; it is difficult, after all, being absorbed into a work (art as a self-contained world) if people parade in front of you constantly, mill around, talk about their latest lovers and the business benefits of TM. ("Now shut up and get out of my way, William, you know Pollock stimulates my peripheral vision".) But this kind of milling around is precisely what happens in museums, which is one reason contemplation is largely unsuited to museums; this situation is aggravated by the need to attract larger and larger crowds in order to meet steadily rising expenses. So there is certainly a contradiction between the way we're supposed to look at art and the way we usually have to look at art. (Don't forget that most people have to confine their viewing to the weekend.) Psychologically, then, contemplation becomes a very alienating experience. But then contemplation is already alienating to begin with, since it primarily induces passivity. Art isn't something to do, it is something to look at (contemplate), something a bit separate (and "above") our day-to-day lives. In the very act of becoming a revered object, the crown jewels, art is simultan-

eously robbed of any political power it might have. Contemplation thus reinforces the apolitical world of art for art's sake, while at the same time it reiterates that "high" art is merely a trinket of the ruling class.

It's not likely this kind of exhibitionism would have developed if formalism hadn't been as popular (entrenched) as it was, since formalist works were certainly self-contained worlds, demanding contemplation. (Cezanne may have loved to paint Mme. Cezanne, but more importantly he loved to paint paint, since "paint" was his real subject-matter, not Mme. Cezanne; she became the "ground" for an evolving "figure" of paint quality and spatial planes.) On the other hand, since museums display art in a way which denies the specific time and place of creation (neutral white space), they may be the result not only of formalism, but of art history as well. For neutral space is also the concrete, architectural equivalent of a discipline which tries to isolate the "universal" in art, the "essence" of art--which is to say, tries to wrest art from both time and culture. It's clear that the notion of a "masterpiece" presupposes this suspension of time and space; it's "art for the ages". Less clearly, perhaps, the division of art into "styles" and "movements" makes the same assumption, for these divisions have been pretty much determined by formalist standards: the "history of art" becomes the "development of formalism". It's as if centuries of artists have been gradually reducing art to its bare essentials (at this point color, edge, surface; sometimes mere "information"), and specific periods were characterized by specific kinds of reduction. This is one reason why modern artists are always being compared to former artists, as a means of establishing the "links". In this way, an activity which exists both in time and in distinct cultures becomes an activity exclusive of time and culture. Rembrandt was doing the "same" thing we are, but he was less "developed", the poor old sot. (From what I understand, the Metropolitan Museum in New York is putting on an exhibition--"The Age of Revolution, 1774-1830"--which doesn't presuppose the usual formalist categories of Neo-classicism, Romanticism, etc. Instead they choose to concentrate on the way politics influenced art in France during this period, emphasizing that these "styles" tended to exist simultaneously through time, as facets of a changing political situation. This would seem to be a step in the right direction, though probably club-footed.)

What we're left with, then, is an extremely sterile, yet extremely "loaded" exhibition space. And I hope it has become by now that as far as I'm concerned it is an extremely oppressive space as well. For once art is severed from our lives, once it is placed in a neutered environment and sucked dry of its social roots, it becomes an object only; when we go to museums we are forced to look at a series of discrete, isolated objects of contemplation, not vital activity. The passivity associated with contemplation enhances this process; because we become objects ourselves in a sense, an object looking at an object. Of course artists can always claim that we get a lot out of going to museums, that they're a great place to rip off ideas; as such, we are somewhat less passive. But most people aren't so "fortunate"; for them, art is little more than another taste of consumerism. Oh it's true that art may be dipped in glitter, and people may go to museums out of a feeling of "cultural guilt"--something which doesn't accrue to many other consumer activities--but their actual participation in the production of art remains minimal or non-existent. Viewing art in museums

is not a matter of experiencing "connections"--psychologically, culturally, aesthetically--but experiencing "disconnections". Obviously this is particularly true from a class point of view. And this whole process of psychological alienation is augmented by the concerted attempt (through corporate investment, government support, tax breaks) to cordon off museums as the exclusive, specialized showcase for "high" art (and "equal representation" falls right into the hands of this strategy).

Now my own feeling is that this has limited not only the way we look at art but the way art is made as well, that most recent American art has been specifically made for this kind of space to begin with; in other words, all the tendencies of pubescent formalism have been increased ten-fold in the last several decades, now that a ready-made space exists for this work. (Recent art has lived up to its own scenario of art history. How surprising!) Certainly this is true of art which proclaims itself an "object" (the work inaugurated by Stella), or depends of the internal coherence of color, surface, edge (virtually all painting and some sculpture), or depends on premeditated arithmetic permutation (from Johns through Judd, Lewitt and beyond), or even proclaims itself a "process" (the self-referential work begun by Johns and continuing through Conceptual art); it is also true of most photography, film and video. For the subtle relationships which form the content of formalist art demand isolation--of works from each other (horizontal display), of works from a dominant space (the controversy over the Guggenheim and Pasadena museums), of art itself from culture (since questions of objecthood or edge or structure are virtually gratuitous to the world at large, both temporally and spatially). Even Morris' notion of the gestalt, or the installation aspects of Judd's work, or Andre's and Flavin's, didn't contradict isolation. It's true, these works were self-consciously designed for, or otherwise incorporated, the space they inhabited. But they all depended on the autonomy of the object-as-shape; or, more abstractly, on the autonomy of a "positive" or distinct figure against a "negative" or comparatively neutral ground. All the waffle about the object becoming less "self-important", about the museum space becoming more important, all this simply mystified (on the level of "aesthetics") the fact that (on the level of production) museums reinforced rather than undermined the autonomy of the object. (This was mystification from another angle as well, since this kind of thinking shifted direction slightly and quickly led to the belief that museums (-as-media) were somehow "antagonistic" to art, rather than its *raison d'etre*; this in turn made environmental and Conceptual art appear to be much more unconventional than in fact it was.)

Now it's true that not much of this art was done by minorities or women, and that virtually all of it was in fact formalist (apolitical) art. But the point is, I think that most of the work done by minorities and women, at least those in the "high" art world (which is what this discussion is confined to), was also formalist; the only significant difference is that they did it, not someone more culturally privileged. The major reason, I think, that museums became such marked targets is that almost everyone's work was geared to that kind of space and that kind of viewing experience anyway. (As several people have pointed out, the basic contradiction of The Art Workers' Coalition was that they protested museums and the Vietnam war, but *their actual work* never changed; they continued to produce art made for museums, art which was apolitical (and

thus implicitly supportive of the status quo).) I wish this weren't true, but I think it is. There have been some museum shows (not many) composed exclusively of women artists or minority artists; but this work did nothing, or very little, to undermine either the authority or the psychological alienation of museums. Nor is this simply a matter of selection, the more "political" artists being excluded. For many co-op galleries have been formed by traditionally excluded artists, and they unquestionably adopt the same kind of exhibition space that museums do, and the work does little to transform the consumer aspects of art. (I'm most familiar with the co-op galleries in New York; perhaps it is different elsewhere.) I think that in the long run "equal representation", at least if taken alone, has had more to do with careerism (or at best, with a very naive notion of "radical" art) than with the actual transformation of art, or museums, or the relationship between art and museums. And the trouble is, it is almost invariably treated as a single-issue campaign; when other issues are involved, they are usually demands for a more liberal admissions policy (leading the lambs to slaughter) or rather sketchy programs which would allow artists to retain some control over work once it is sold, which would allow us to withhold our work from museum shows we disapproved of (transferring all the blame to museums, as if we aren't to blame for having made museum-art in the first place).

On the otherhand, I don't think that even art which is more specifically "political" in content fares much better in museums. The context of the museum completely severs "political" art from its own culture, thereby diluting it as a political response to a particular set of circumstances. We are encouraged to look at it (generally with a slight disdain) from the point of view of formalism, contemplation, art history. At best, perhaps, it will be seen as a "universal" statement about "man's inhumanity to man". But this whole framework is gratuitous to "political" art; in fact it should presumably be considered reactionary from a political point of view. The psychology of dissent, the will to act against specific circumstances, is sapped of its strength by museums, at least as they are presently constituted. (The Louvre, the first real museum in our terms, was founded as a revolutionary act, though it quickly came to symbolize the status quo.)

Of course, quite a few attempts have been made to by-pass museums. Many Conceptual artists in particular dabbled in the possibilities of reproduction, especially that of printing and photography. At the time, this was considered a relatively "political" decision. But it has become increasingly clear that Conceptual art was merely formalism in disguise, that it did very little to bridge the "gap" between art and life, art and politics. (There is now an "art park" in New York, a "special" place to go see Conceptual and environmental art in the great outdoors, a "museum without walls". This kind of isolation, singling out areas for art, may exist for bureaucratic reasons--the necessities of funding, etc.--but it exists nevertheless, and always has.) Many Conceptual pieces looked swell in museums anyway; indeed, quite a few Conceptual artists seem to be "returning" to painting (e.g. Heizer, Bochner). I suspect that Conceptual art was in large part made possible by an underwriting grant from the rapidly expanding art market, and now that the market has collapsed there is a rush to return to the business of painting-as-usual.

The question is, where does this leave us? This is always the hard part, unfortunately, and a point I've come to myself only fairly recently. But what's become clear to me is that "high" art necessarily (not contingently and not only certain parts of it), that "high" art necessarily results in oppression, and that truly "radical" art has to exist outside of "high" art altogether. I think we can no longer be seduced, as I think many of us are, by the idea of co-op galleries, since, for reasons I have just indicated, even co-op galleries seem to perpetuate the same kind of reified art practice. (Perhaps they don't have to, though the notion of a "gallery" seems an a priori separation of art from the rest of the world, an object of contemplation. Perhaps "galleries" could become "workshops", a place to do, rather than look at art; but then they aren't really "galleries" anymore.) What's even more important, however, is destroying the myth of art as a "mystical" experience--an association which is almost always confined to "high" art (rather than, say, "low" art). In many cases this myth is supposed to justify the separation of art from politics; conversely, it is sometimes singled out as the reason why art is "political" (a "revolution of the senses"). But I've increasingly come to realize that this notion comes awfully close to (and in my opinion both results from and reinforces) the asocial, apolitical, and passive world which art for art's sake, art history, and contemplation also seek to establish. That is, this notion of "mysticism" seeks to remove art from the world, to shelter it; it is no accident that art is frequently seen as a "revolution of the senses" (whatever this means). Such art isn't threatening to the ruling class, why the ruling class can slice it up like pizza pie, yum, yum; and the fact that art is displayed in the way that it is, means that very few people are even going to experience a "revolution of the senses".

What we have to do then is distinguish between those strategies which appear to be "radical" and in fact aren't, and those strategies which do promise to really transform art practice. Demanding to be shown in the Museum of Modern Art is only likely to help appropriate dissent, architecturalizing out of existence (assuming there is some contradiction between the art and MOMA to begin with); making films about a local strike or participating in a neighborhood mural is likely to help transform practice (see Summer, 1975 issue of this journal). What I'm trying to say, really, is that there is nothing in "high" art to fall back on, nothing to re-emphasize, nothing to resurrect. We have to begin dismantling it. But insofar as it remains a tool of the ruling class, insofar as it remains part of the ruling class, we cannot do this by just ignoring it, by just confining our work to murals or what have you. We have to actively dismantle it, we have to continue to harrass it directly (at least some of us do). I would like to think this article is one way of doing this.

One final note (in case you were wondering what might happen to museums in this scheme of things)... Museums should be retained, I think, I don't see why not. Of course they would have to be changed. For one thing, they would have to become only one alternative among many for making art available--not the single most dominant alternative. For another, they would have to change the way they destroy "context" whenever they show art works, that is, they would have to increase their efforts to educate us about the historical and cultural presuppositions of specific art works (a la the "Age of Revolution" show at the Met, but much more thoroughly). Finally, they would have to cease determining the kind of art that

is made (a responsibility resting more on the shoulders of artists than museums). But it is a fact that certain art works have to be "isolated", at least physically, since they will deteriorate otherwise; and it would certainly be a shame to lose this art, since it is important from a historical point of view. If for no other reason than this "museums" should be retained. As long as their liabilities aren't treated as their assets--as long as neutral space, contemplation, and art as a "mystical experience" are buried somewhere in the Utah salt flats-- museums shouldn't be too oppressive.

THE HUMAN OBJECT AND ITS CAPITALIST IMAGE*

by Bruce Kaiper

"(Commodity) fetishism achieves its greatest force when it attaches to those products of men's hands which, in the form of machinery, become capital. Acting for the master in a way which he plans with inexhaustible care and precision, they seem in human eyes to act for themselves and out of their own inner necessities."

Harry Braverman
LABOR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL



1. PREHISTORIC HAND PRINT



2. HERBERT BAYER 1939

Human objects are different from those of nature in that they are made by us, not merely found in nature by us. The human mind uses the eye to choose objects of nature to be changed for human use. A person's hand grasps, shapes, and eventually transforms objects of nature into human objects. These newly made things and their respective shapes and functions are material embodiments of what the human maker imagined them to be. The hand is a historical symbol of humanity's creative power in relation to natural objects.



3. STRONG WIND, OJIBWAY

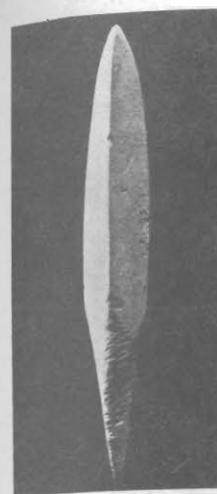


4. EL LISSITZKY 1924

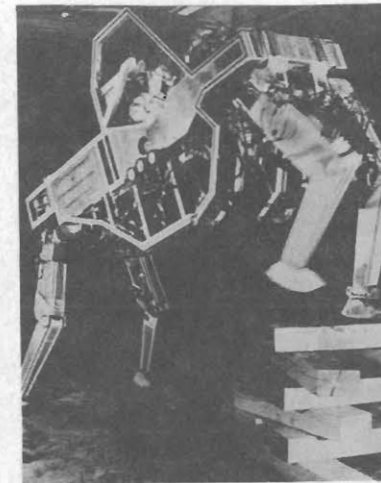
A human object is a product of our consciousness. Our consciousness is, in turn, shaped by the making of things for human use. Our hands, eyes, and minds are inseparable parts of the object-making process. The elimination of any one of these organs in the making of objects ultimately harms the human maker. Humanity of our past and present have honored their unity.

* This is a visual essay. Study the images given as to their meaning. Then study the relation between the paired images. How do they correspond or contrast with each other? Finally, study the relation between the images and the written text underneath them. No attempt has been made to give all the possible meanings of the images. That is the reader's task.

B.K.



5. PARKER PEN AND PREHISTORIC SPEAR

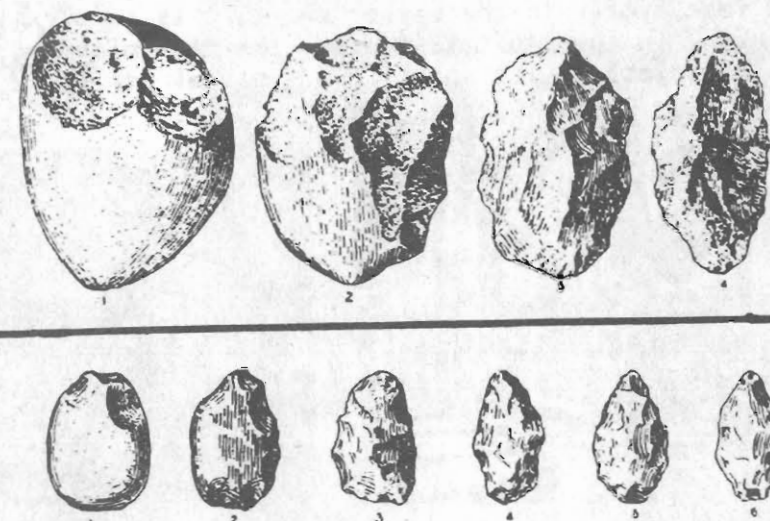


6. CYBORG ROBOT



7. COMPUTER BY CARTIER-BRESSON

Tools and machines are human objects used as instruments of labor. They are made by us to extend our ability to perform tasks necessary for our growth. A machine is useless without us. It, like other human objects, is merely raw material until molded to our purpose and its function by our hands and minds.



8. STAGES OF MAKING A PREHISTORIC TOOL

Tools and machines are products of human memory, limitations, imagination, and practice: memory, in that our ancestors repeatedly confronted situations in the past requiring labor that they could not perform immediately; limitations, in that they had to invent aids to their hands and limbs which, in themselves, could not meet the test; imagination, in that they tried to mentally see relations between objects that would complete the task that they couldn't do themselves; practice, in that they tested through trial and error objects made to their design until the right object was discovered. The resulting tools, therefore, were products of human development visualized in material forms. Their stages of development signify the growth of their human makers.

Special thanks to Richard Bermack, Aron Laub, and Ellen Kaiper for their help with this paper.

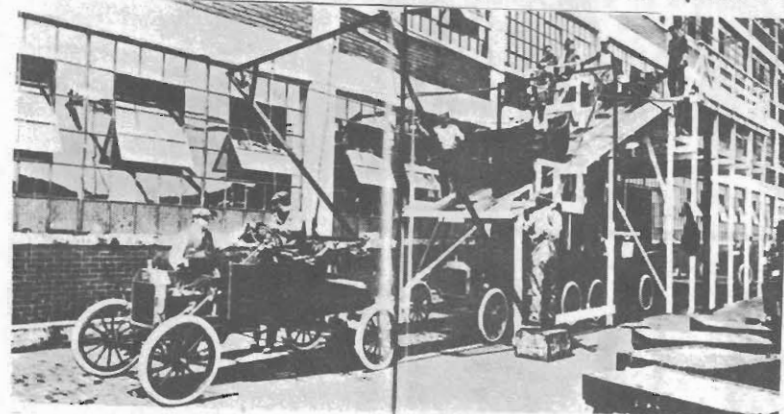


9. GOODYEAR AD.



10. GOODYEAR ASSEMBLY-LINE WORKER

All human objects are products of specific historical periods entailing unique social relations. Nothing we see or use that is human-made is without its specific history. For example, the Goodyear tire in this ad symbolizes, in its object form, notions and experiences of speed- physical speed, speed-ups at its place of creation, and fast profit in the market where it is sold. All of these notions are only meaningful in the capitalist era. The tire pictured in the ad "objectifies" or makes an object of its specific historical period.



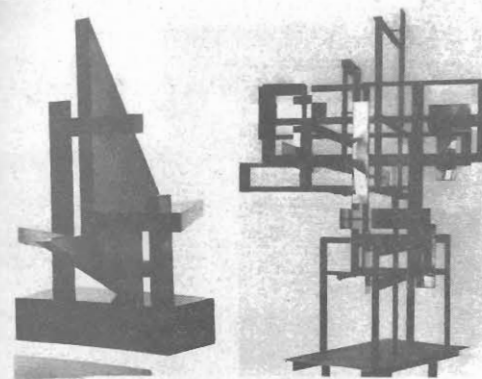
11. FORD ASSEMBLY-LINE 1913



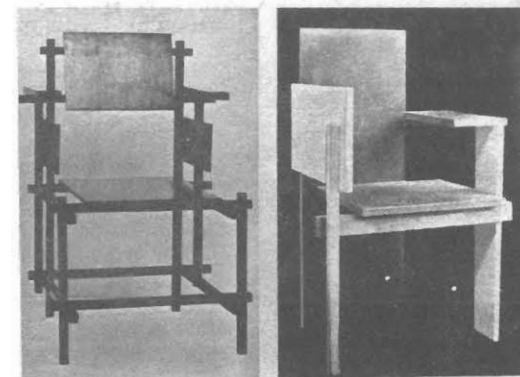
12. WOODSAWYER AND APPRENTICE 1840

The qualities of a human object partially indicate the social relations at the place of its creation. A Model T Ford (seen above) was a product of the first industrial assembly-line of 1913. Its material parts tell us something about conveyor belt construction. The standardized, interchangeable parts of the car are linked to the interchangeable forms of labor on the line. The cheap wages paid. A machinist told me that Ford even used wood from boxes that contained machine parts for the "T" as floorboards in order to save material and skilled labor costs. Ford's "car for the people" was, in fact, an object that devaluated in its image and material form the skills of the people who made it.

In contrast, lumber products in 1840 embodied in their concrete forms the craft skills and social relations of their makers pictured here.



13. SCULPTURES BY VOLTEN 1958 AND SCHOFFER 1953

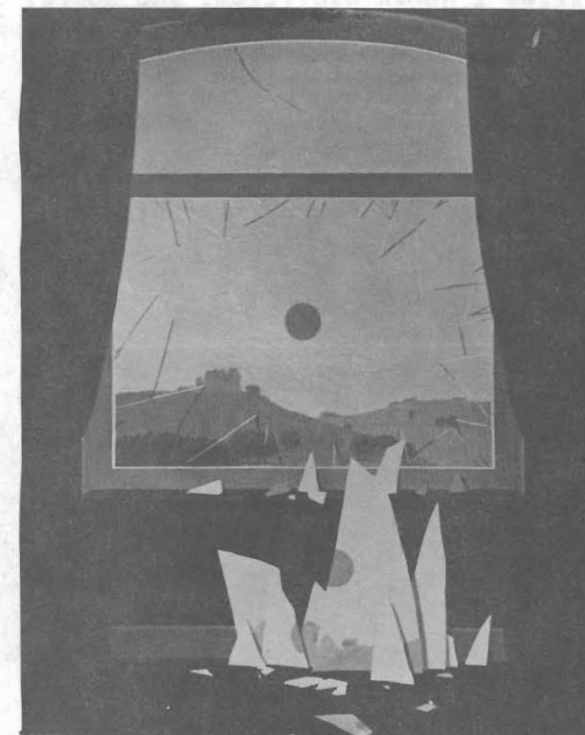


14. BAUHAUS CHAIR 1919 AND BERLIN CHAIR 1923

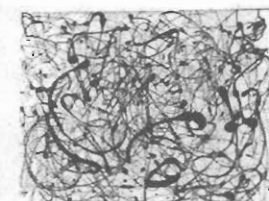
There are two types of human objects: objects of utility and art objects. Both include creation and labor. Objects of use are made to fulfill our day to day needs. Art objects are made to remind us of our creative power; they symbolize our ability to transform our material world into objective forms expressive of and essential to our humanity. An art object and an object of use have many similarities including similar construction methods, materials, and similar forms. At times they are indistinguishable from one another.



15. PUEBLO POTTERY 1200A.D.



17. MAGRITTE'S "EVENING FALLS" 1964



16. POLLOCK'S "NO. 14" 1948

An art object is not a mirror of reality. It is not a representation of nature. How could it be, if, as was said, it manifests in its material form the human transformation of the world. The reality of an art work is its humanness.

Our human consciousness can be objectified in many ways including realistic, surrealist, or totally abstract works of art like those above. But an art work denying reference to its human creator or denigrating humanity's creative power ceases to be a human object. The same argument applies to objects of use. They both become alien objects to humanity.



18. SONY AD.



19. EARLY TIMES WHISKEY AD.

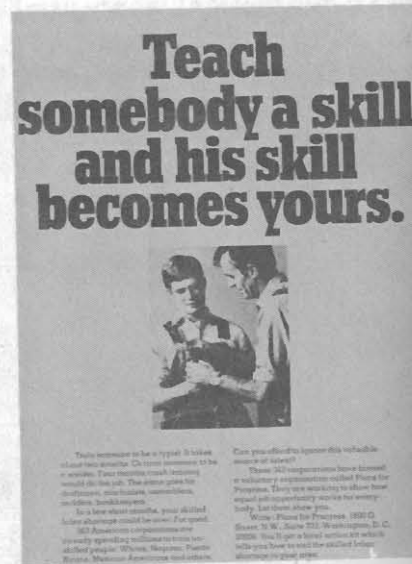
In capitalist society, the human object becomes an alien object to most of us. It becomes an object of exchange in the marketplace. The usefulness of the object to our lives becomes muddled with references to prices, packaging, and "deals". Our labor contained in these objects becomes invisible. The object we make is made into a commodity by capitalists. The function of a commodity is sales and its image no longer corresponds with its traditional purpose of utility for us. Commodities are given independent "identities", human qualities, and social relations by corporations that, at times, seem superior to our own. Why does this happen in capitalist society?



20. KELLY GIRL ADS



21. PITNEY BOWLES AD.



22. PLANS FOR PROGRESS AD.

In the capitalist era, the makers of objects are treated as objects themselves. Workers are purchased by capitalists as objects of production, similar to machinery or tools. Look at the Pitney Bowles ad for a moment. Is the ad emphasizing Ethel's skill or her personal abilities, or is it pushing her exchange value? Ethel is a human commodity for sale in a labor market. She is denied her right to claim her skill as her own. She cannot claim her labor as her own. The capitalist is the only human at work who has that right. It is not because he makes things. He doesn't. It is because the capitalist owns and commands the personnel, machinery, and materials used in the making of things for society. The commodity's image in the marketplace emphasizes sales because its human "maker" is the capitalist who's primary work is making money. As in periods of slavery, the real makers of objects are denied reference in the images of what is made.



23. "THE TINKER" BY A. LEGROS 1800'S

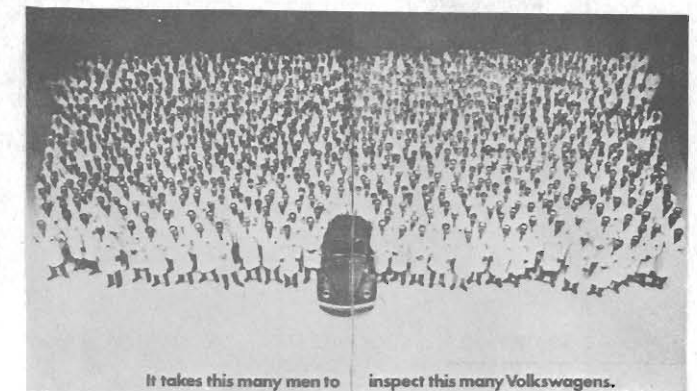


24. "RETURN OF THE GLEANERS" BY JULES BRETON 1859

Before capitalism, object-making was divided up in society into different occupations and crafts. This was socially necessary for the development of humanity. No one member of society had to make or know everything in order to live. Being human meant being social and being social meant the sharing of knowledge, skills, and the objects made with one another. Each worker would choose or inherit a craft and would learn all of the techniques, traditional work methods, and knowledge of that craft. The thing made represented the unity and totality of its maker's life experience. The object was crafted well because it represented the integration of its maker with the rest of society.



25. AUTO ASSEMBLY 1915



26. VOLKSWAGON AD.

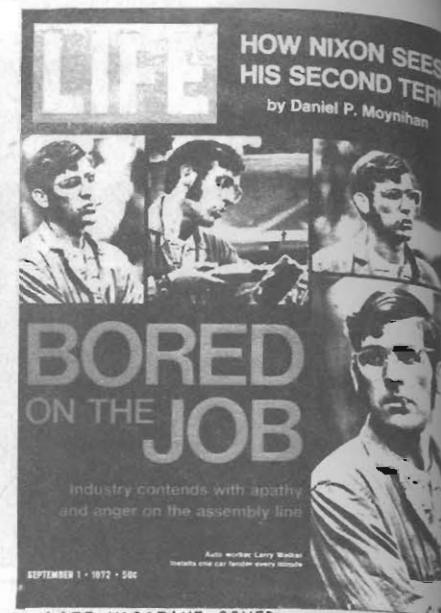
In capitalist society, however, object-making becomes a fragmented human experience. On the one hand, our jobs are divided into small repetitive tasks requiring little skill or traditional knowledge as in previous historical periods. On the other, we no longer feel that this type of work has social value or meaning, since the things we make no longer necessarily have social utility. Object-making loses its unifying character in capitalist society.



27. OFFICE WORKER BY PETER GOODMAN

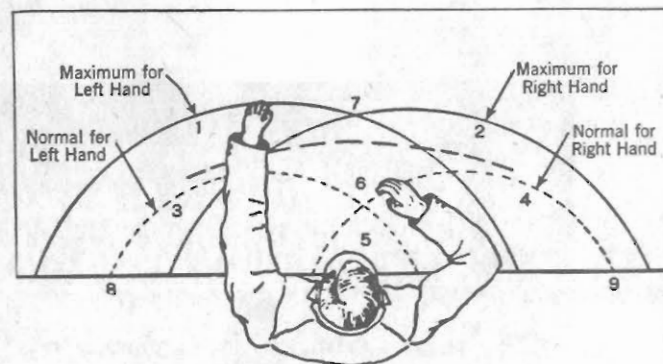


28. ASSEMBLY-LINE WORKERS



29. LIFE MAGAZINE COVER

The capitalist division of labor divides up object-making so that no one worker knows the total process of how to make something at work. No longer does a secretary or a machinist know everything about their respective trades. The things we make are merely parts of a larger object that we rarely see in its entirety until we confront it as a commodity after work. This is a fundamental departure from all previous forms of human labor. In the past, a maker of objects had to have a total conception of the work at hand, no matter how faulty it might have been at first, in order to organize and initiate the job. The craft tradition of a trade offered that conception to all beginners who were willing to learn. But in contemporary capitalist workplaces, all that is passed on to newcomers is simple technique and a code of submission, requesting that we stick to our specific tasks without complaint. The result of work fragmentation is boredom and anger.



30. ASSEMBLY WORK MOTION DIAGRAM

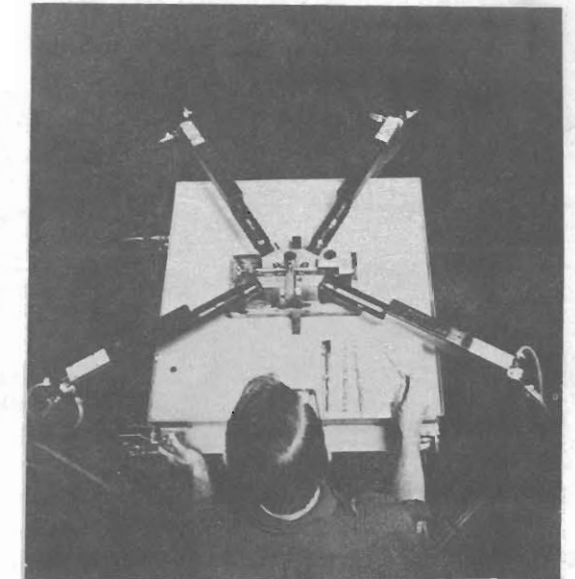


31. ASSEMBLY WORK HAND MOTION BY STEICHEN

The capitalist division of labor increasingly replaces the hand as the basis of object production with machines. Whereas in precapitalist societies the hand was essential to handicraft and manufacture (as their names imply), in capitalist society the machine takes the place of our hands. Hand-making of objects is first reduced to manual operations and motions consistent with machine operations. It is exceedingly difficult to distinguish the movement of our hands from the machines we operate. Capitalists study hand, finger, eye, body, and head movement and alter their natural movement patterns to a prescribed pattern **considered** necessary for the performance of a specific job. Note the similarity between the management drawing of how they want us to work and the photo showing how we work in fact.

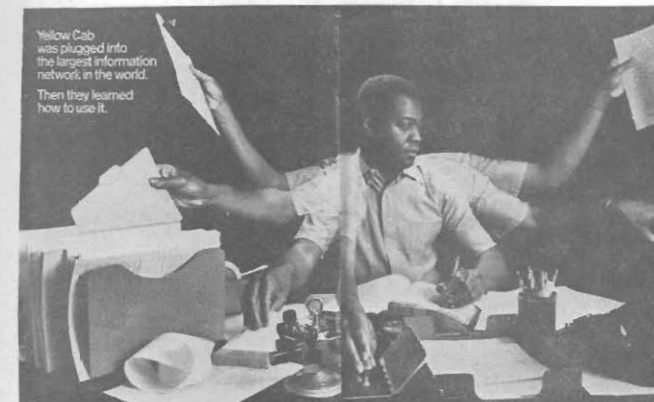


32. A.T.&T. AD.



33. GARDNER-DENVER AD.

Simultaneous, cyclical hand motion is the corporate ideal for work assembly. In time, however, machine "hands" are substituted for human hands altogether in automatic assembly operations. For the first time in human history, the hand at work becomes inactive. The Gardner-Denver advertisement celebrates this event as a step forward in the history of human objects.



34. A.T.&T. AD.

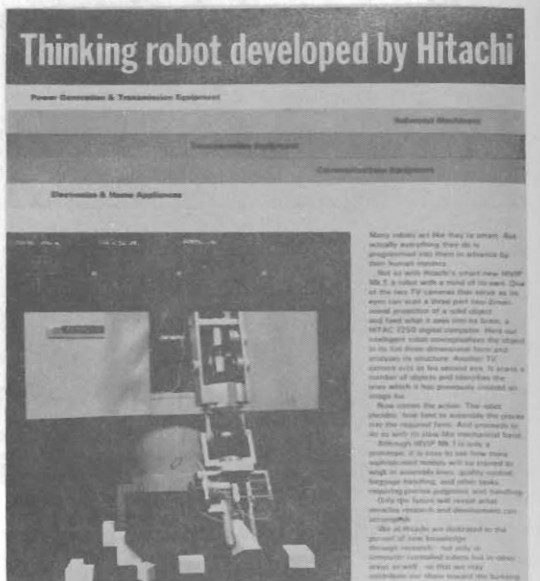


35. MOBIL AD.

Capitalist management breaks up the vital relation between thinking and making, conception and execution in our construction of products. It assigns thinking to one location (the engineering department) in the division of labor, and making to another location (the shop). The makers of objects no longer conceive of them as shape or function before making them. Workers merely perform tasks assigned to them by management planners. Thinking is a manager's job, making is our job. Managers embellish their importance as decision-makers in ads by using disproportionate scale to signify differences in occupations and rank between themselves and workers. Managers are pictured as large; their employees are pictured as insignificant beings hidden in the landscape. Can you find the worker in the Mobil ad?

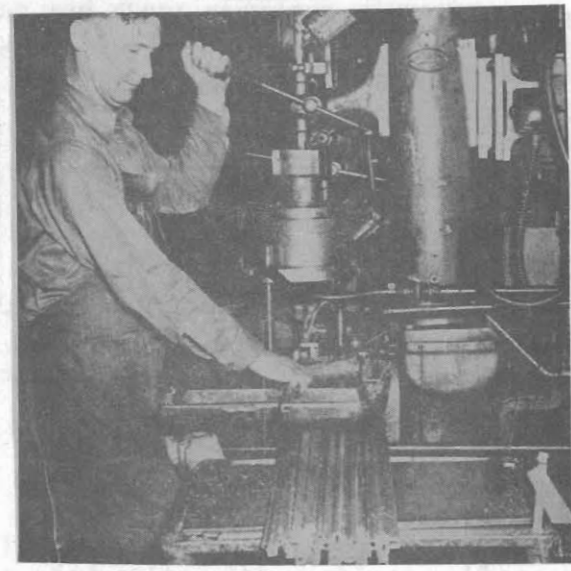


36. S&H AD.



37. HITACHI AD.

Since management only plans our work and its profitable returns, they rarely use their hands or body on the job. They assign manual tasks outside of their sphere of decision-making. They program their machines to perform their manual tasks and our mental tasks. They consciously sever the unity of making and thinking at both ends of the division of labor. The capitalists unknowingly fragment their own humanity as well as our own.

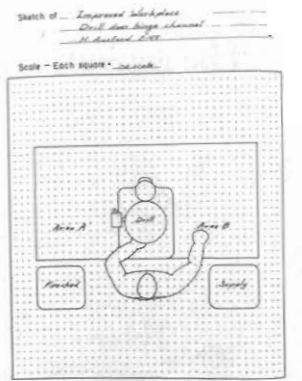


38. DRILLING OPERATION OF A HINGE CHANNEL

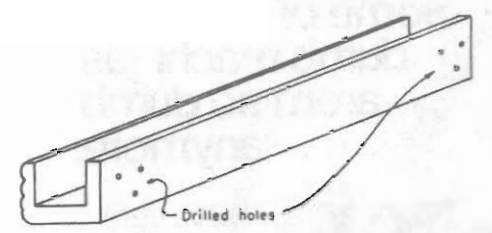
BASIC CHART FORM			
Operation	Type of chart	2-79	Department
Proposed for Mach D-4	Orig. or proposed	H. Sanford	Chart by
Door hinge channel 24x1-1/2	Subject charted	2-79	Date charted
Queue	Left hand description	Symbol	Symbol Right hand description
	For right hand	○	To supply tub
	To channel in fixture	◇	Pick up channel
	Remove from fixture	○	To fixture
	To table	○	Place in fixture
	Turn end & place	◇	Place in fixture (last channel only)
	To area A	○	To area A
	Help R.H.	◇	Pick up 20 channels
	To area B	○	To area B
	Help R.H.	◇	Place 20 channels
	For R.H.	○	To area B
	To channel in fixture	◇	Pick up channel
	Remove from fixture	○	To fixture
	To finished tub	○	Place in fixture
	Place in tub	◇	Place in fixture (last channel only)
SUMMARY & RECAP PER PIECE			
Quantity			
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY
○	◇	○	◇
41	41	22	20
4	4	6	78.2
2	2	20	2.0
2	2	12	10.0
TOTAL	10.2	14.2	20.9
		92	21.6

39. OPERATION CHART OF A HINGE CHANNEL

Capitalists separate hand from mind, mind from hand, hand from objects made via machines, and mind from objects made via representational abstractions- the blueprint or work diagram. Human vision, previously necessary in locating for our mind and hands the material object in nature and the means to transform it, encounters an abstraction of this process instead. The work diagram outlines the steps required by management for our completion of a product.

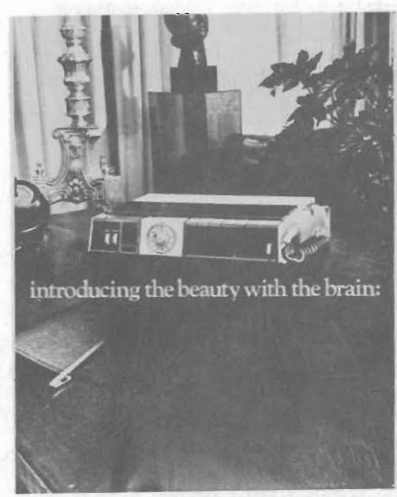


40. SKETCH FOR IMPROVED WORK LAYOUT

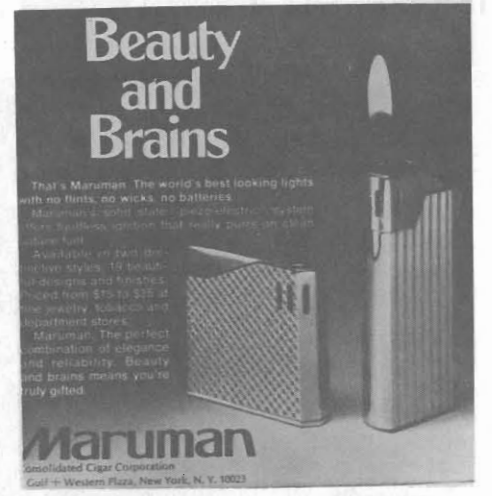


41. DIAGRAM OF A HINGE CHANNEL

A work diagram, in and of itself, can be very helpful to us in making things if we are involved in the conceptualizing and abstracting process. Since we perform the labor and know the material difficulties and work processes involved in making products, our knowledge and experience would seem crucial to the operability of an engineer's drawing. But in capitalist production we are not consciously included in this phase of object-making. Instead the engineer or planner includes us as a part of the construction problem to be abstracted. Our movements including our skill, the time we take and our work relations are made into symbols, signs, mathematical equations, and lines. To us, the blueprint seems "foreign" to our daily work experience, and yet it possesses authority over our work. It is a visual command from management as well as a procedural guide for making things.



42. LANIER AD.



43. MARUMAN AD.

Our need for human participation in the work process that fulfills our identities is not only denied us through abstraction. Our identities, themselves, are transferred to the things we make or those that we use to make things for the market. Both the machines we work with and the commodities we later buy are given similar human identities that we need ourselves. Much of what is sold to us in commodity form off work convey images of the human personality, totally unrelated to their use, which are denied us at work. We are denied the use of our brains at work, but the machines we use have brains we are told and we can buy back our intelligence in a commodity.



44. CONRAC AD.



45. POLAROID AD.

The humanity we seek is transferred to the thing we make by the capitalists. Marx calls this act of transference "fetishization" of the things we make. The commodity seems to mysteriously possess social relations and identities that we once had, but no longer seem to possess. Our work experience is hidden in the commodity, and in its fetish form it claims an existence independent of its makers. But this is a smokescreen used by the capitalists to make us forget our creative power and our humanity. The "humanized" commodities divert our attention away from the inhuman working conditions we experience in making them.

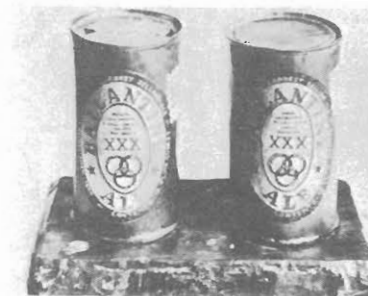


46. COLLAGE BY B. KAIPER

Human objects are those that refer to their makers. Capitalist commodities merely name their corporate owners. What if everything we made had our names on it instead of the company name? A dent of a hammer, a union label, or a person's name means more to us than who owned and sold it. Its history derives from its creation in human labor, not from its exchange on the market. Yet in capitalist society the corporate title is the only permissible sign on objects made by us.

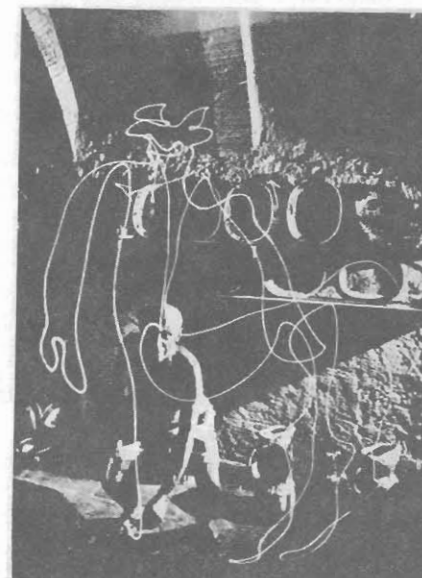


47. BILLBOARD



48. SCULPTURE BY JASPER JOHNS

In capitalist society art objects are not free from the economic laws that govern objects of utility and exchange. Both types of objects are products of a social and political culture that is financed by and, in turn, that represents the capitalist market. Capitalism strives for unanimity of world outlook through cultural, political, and economic division, diversity, and diversion; division, in that the ideological importance of art is kept separate from other commodities; diversity, in that while an art object is ideologically separated from other commodities, it is advertized as a unique product for sale along with other commodities in the same marketplace; diversion, in that an art object's rarity, craftsmanship, and ingenious nature is celebrated by the market mainly to divert our attention away from its imprisoned role as a profitable commodity. Art has in many respects become the "ideal" commodity for the market and at times symbolizes, in its forms, its economic function.

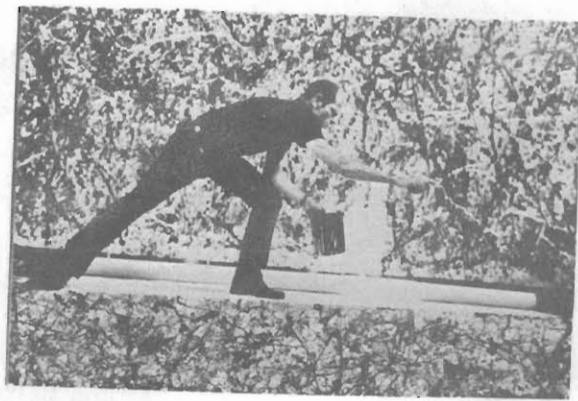


49. PABLO PICASSO



50. ALEXANDER CALDER

The work of art in capitalist society is an historical irony. Its human maker is celebrated as a genius, not because he or she necessarily expresses the creative ideas and visions of humanity in the things they make. Instead, the artist is celebrated for having creative notions and visions at all! The artist is celebrated for being able to make things that represent his own consciousness. The artist is honored for being able to make things with his own hands. What in the Middle Ages would have been taken for granted as skilled work, is today a work of genius.



51. JACKSON POLLOCK AT WORK

Capitalism has changed object-making to such an extent that any creative ability that is demonstrated independent of the factory or office is labeled "art". The artist becomes the creative individual in a society denying the rest of us either creativity or individuality at work. However, the capitalists are aware of the threat of artistic independence to production in that it might inspire us to strike out on our own too. Therefore, capitalists are attempting to close the gap between artistic labor and production through corporate hiring, sponsorship and commercializing of artists as marketable elements in the economic system.

CalComp presents a brilliant new film producer.

52. CAL COMP AD.

Creativity in corporate finance

Is knowing how to free real estate for greater productivity.

One of the most significant parts of...
Kiddier, Peabody & Co.

53. KIDDER PEABODY & CO. AD.

Who's afraid of Leonardo da Vinci?

Is there a place in today's automated, computerized, specialized, customer society for a Renaissance man?

PENNSALT

54. PENNSALT AD.

Many artists have struggled and continue to struggle to preserve the art object from the fate of a commodity. However, the capitalist market determines the fate of most things made in capitalist society and, unfortunately, the market increasingly absorbs works of art, previously considered relevant to museums and galleries, into the mass market and factory. As the division of labor in industry expands, it requires art ideas, skills, and personnel in production work. Not only are capitalists hiring artists for industry, but capitalists themselves want to be "artists" in industry. Characteristically, their tendency toward egomania has led them to the belief that they are the artists of industry. To capitalists, artistic vision is supervision, manual creation is manipulation. This self-conception has been voiced by their apologist McLuhan in his Understanding Media, "To prevent undue wreckage in society, the artist tends now to move from the ivory tower to the control tower of society".



55. MOHOLY-NAGY 1940



56. COLLAGE OF TATLIN BY R. HAUSMANN 1920



57. MARCEL DUCHAMP 1952

Around 1900, many artists (Cubists, Constructivists, Futurists, Bauhaus) began to take seriously the developing trends in production toward scientific discovery and technological invention. The Cubists, for example, identified with the scientific nature of these trends and tried to discover laws of visual forms and their relations, whereas the Bauhaus identified more with developments in technological engineering and applied their art to these ends. Many of these artists saw the opportunity to use the new industrial materials and methods in art. In turn, many saw their skills of vision being applied to industrial problems. Most of these artists accepted the new technology without seeing its relation to the increasingly inhuman forms of labor used in its manufacture.

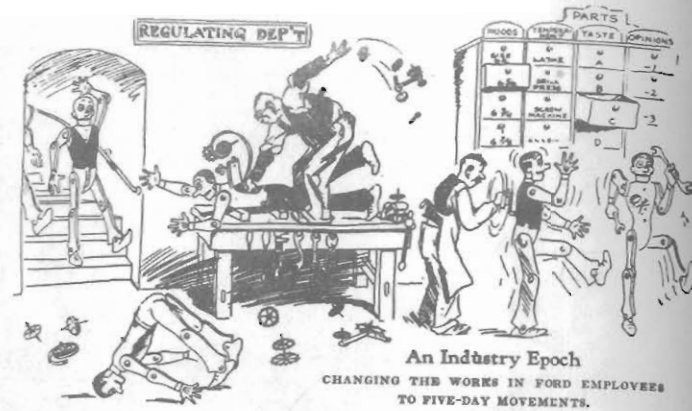
Maholy-Nagy, for example, considered himself a socialist, but did not understand the necessity of reorganization of work relations and teaching of new skills to employees who were replaced by labor-saving machines which he favored. He, also, tended to romanticize the effect of machines on human labor, as if machines could cure a specifically capitalist-caused malady. Tatlin, of the Constructivists, also applied the new materials and methods of capitalist industry in Russia, but did so before the government was ready for such ideas.

These artists, although fulfilling the avant-garde tradition of the merger of art and technology, art and science proclaimed by St. Simon, misunderstood the political dimension of that tradition. They were cut off, by and large, from the historical class deemed the major actor and benefactor in the avant-garde tradition—the working class. They were cut off from the drudgery of the assembly-line. They tended to associate with engineers and managerial personnel because these were the people experiencing the euphoria of scientific and technological discoveries in production. They failed to see why working people were not celebrating changes in the means of production. They failed to see that invention and discovery in capitalist industry was partially a by-product of the exploitation of workers in industry. The excitement over new technologies diverted artists away from the human drainage considered necessary by capitalists for increases in production and invention.

Many of these artists unwittingly accepted the fetishized object world of capitalist industry without seeing the real world of dehumanized labor. This fatal error in judgment has distorted the humanist vision in art to this day.



58. TIME STUDY: STOP WATCH MEASUREMENT

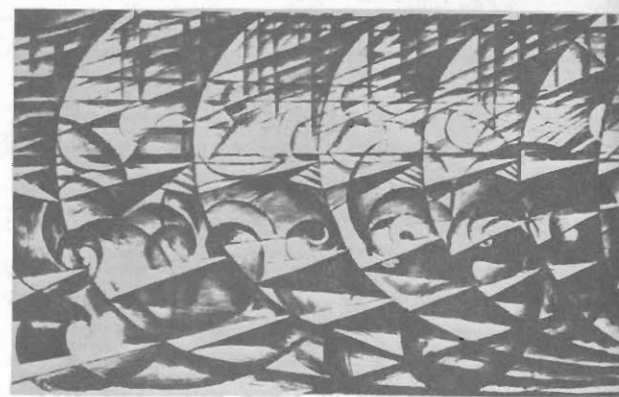


59. CARTOON OF FORD ASSEMBLY LINE 1913

By 1913, aesthetic principles used in art became almost indistinguishable from the technical and scientific principles used in industry. Time, for example, became objectified in both art and production. Frederick Taylor, an American engineer, launched time studies of industrial labor in order to determine how fast jobs could be performed without undermining the steadiness of output. Work methods, craft knowledge, and work speed became subject to total rationalization and management control. Workers were denied a voice in the performance of their jobs. They began to feel like robots. In 1913, Ford introduced assembly-line conveyors as a means to regulate and standardize the time taken to complete the assembly of cars. Speed, mechanical time, and mechanical human motion became industrial forms of object-making.



60. "UNIQUE FORMS OF CONTINUITY IN SPACE" BY BOCCIONI 1913



61. "DYNAMIC EXPANSION+SPEED" BY BALLA 1913

During this period, artists became intrigued with similar notions of mechanical time. To the Futurists, time was interchangeable with speed. Natural time, necessary for human growth and development, became replaced by machine time symbolized by the locomotive or car. The force of an automobile in a split-second time frame had more "life" to these artists than did the weary shuffle of a worker coming home from the job. The earlier period of romantic rebellion against machines by Western artists because machines were considered evil to humanity was naively fatalistic. But with the Futurists, the machine became a symbol of a force superior to humanity, which was naive optimism at best!



62. CHRONOPHOTOGRAPH BY E.J. MAREY 1890



63. A.T.&T. AD.

Not only did time become mechanical in industry, human motion became an object in mechanical time. Time and motion economy was introduced by Taylor's friends, the Gilbreths, which was an attempt to reduce human movement to that of machines for purposes of regulating output. Time-motion economy was a method of control built into the production process. The Gilbreths wanted to standardize the techniques, skills and procedures used by workers in such a way that management could determine through a worker's movements exactly what he or she was doing and whether it was consistent with output objectives. Their denial of normal human motion at work was, in fact, a denial of the human notion of work altogether. Does the worker in this ad look like he enjoys his work?

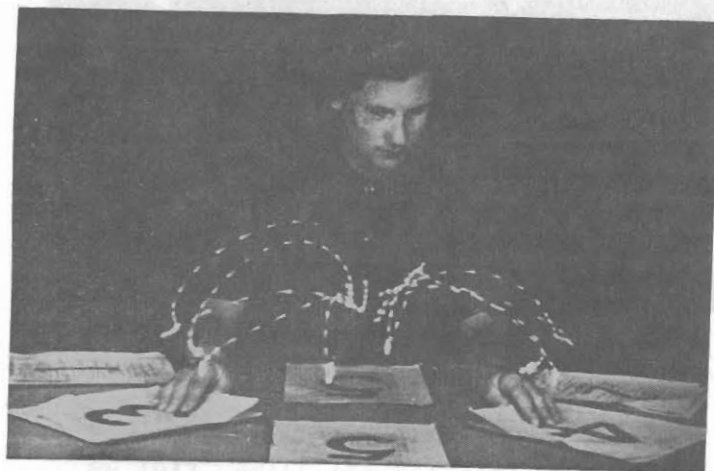


64. "NUDE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE" BY MARCEL DUCHAMP 1912



65. CHRONOPHOTOGRAPH OF A NUDE DESCENDING

One method the Gilbreths used in time-motion analysis was sequential photography. The sequential stages of work motion of any job could be recorded on film using multiple exposure lighting from stroboscope lamps. Strobe lights were invented for this purpose. Marcel Duchamp, as well as the Futurists, was fascinated with their application to artist problems of time-motion. His famous "Nude Descending a Staircase" painting, which reminded many viewers of a robot, was a direct outgrowth of his interest in sequential photography.



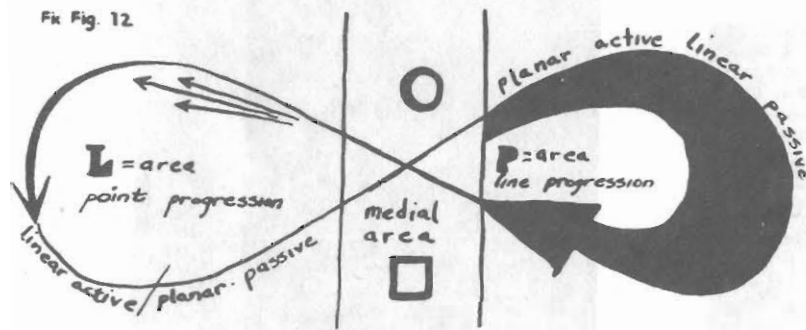
66. CHRONOCYCLEGRAPH OF OFFICE WORKER



67. CHRONOCYCLEGRAPH OF A MAN UNDRRESSING

The next phase of time-motion analysis was linear abstraction. The Gilbreths introduced the chronocyclegraph which was a photo recording of lights attached to a worker's body during a specific job operation. The light would make a linear impression of the worker's movement on film. Work became a line image. In capitalist industry, human labor became objectified by linear imagery indicating time, motion, output and technique.

Fig. 12



68. DRAWING BY PAUL KLEE 1925



69. POLLOCK'S "NO. 14" 1948

Whereas to the Gilbreths, line was essentially an abstraction of the physical nature of human behavior, to artists in the early 1920's (Klee and Miro) line was considered an abstraction of the spiritual life of humanity. This fascination with line as an expression of human feeling has been indicated in art objects right up to the present. None of these artworks would have developed in the forms that we know them today without their borrowing from industrial photoanalysis of human labor. It is unfortunate that these artists could not see the degrading effects that time-motion economy had on the workers used as the basis of these linear abstractions. The spiritual life symbolized in a Pollock or a Klee would have taken on an entirely different meaning.



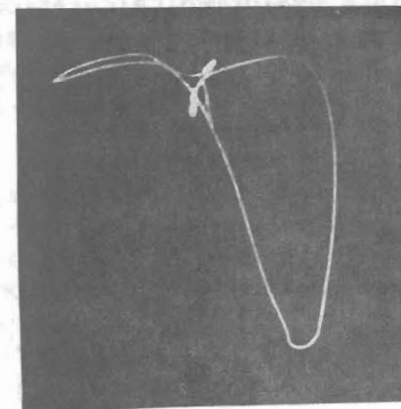
70. AUTO FACTORY FORTUNE MAGAZINE COVER



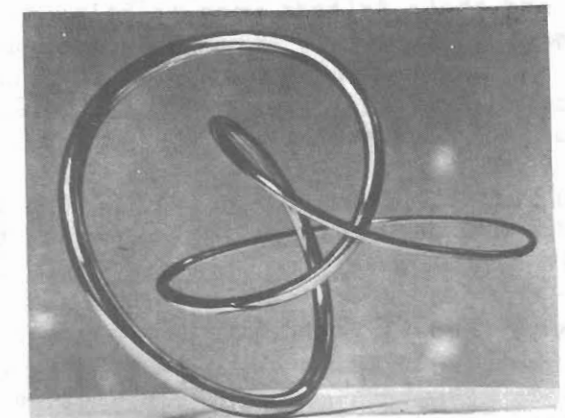
71. PICASSO'S "FACTORY AT HORTA DE EBRO 1909

Time and motion became objects in space to capitalists desiring total material control of production. In turn, space became a time-motion problem to them. "Walking costs us money" stated Henry Ford in reference to the problems he was having keeping his employees at their designated stations. His plan was to fix every auto-worker at a specific task in a specific place. Spatial layout became a paramount issue in factory design and work organization. The workplace was divided into a series of cubicles, planes, and rectangles with moving belts connecting all the parts. While workers were made spatially static, the workspace itself was made spatially dynamic by management. The factory was organized like a Cubist artwork.

It is interesting that the notions of the simultaneous creation of objects in space and the definition of space by the objective forms existing within it were shared by Cubists and capitalists in their respective areas of interest. Both viewed space as an object in itself interchangeable with and related to other material objects. To both, space, time, and motion were objects to use for their own ends. Does the reader see any spatial similarity between Picasso's painting of a factory and an actual factory seen at the left?

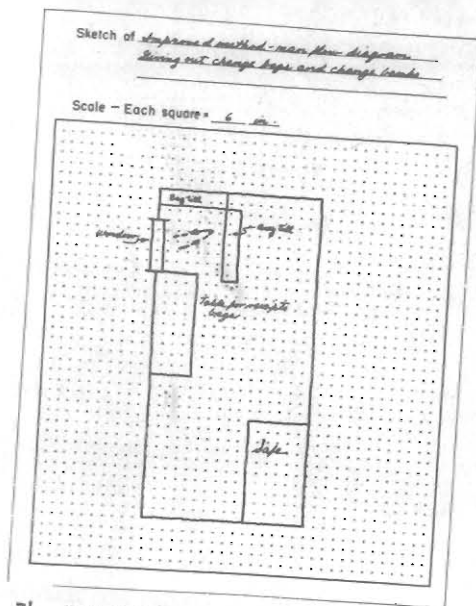


72. MOTION MODEL BY GILBRETH 1912

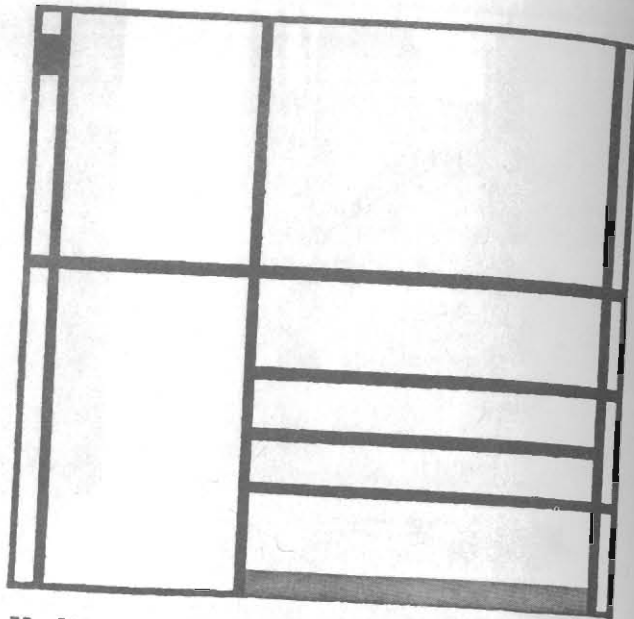


73. DE RIVERA'S "CONSTRUCTION NO. 35" 1956

The objectification of space is further exemplified by the wire models made by the Gilbreths to demonstrate proper work movement in visual forms. The Gilbreths copied the images recorded in their time-motion photographs in wire and used these "sculptures" as teaching aids to management. Many artists have considered these models beautiful and have done variations of them as art. Artists forgot or simply were not aware that the human movement symbolized in these forms was not natural movement, but motions performed under managerial scrutiny and duress. Alienated labor became an "art" image.



74. MAN-FLOW DIAGRAM OF AN OFFICE



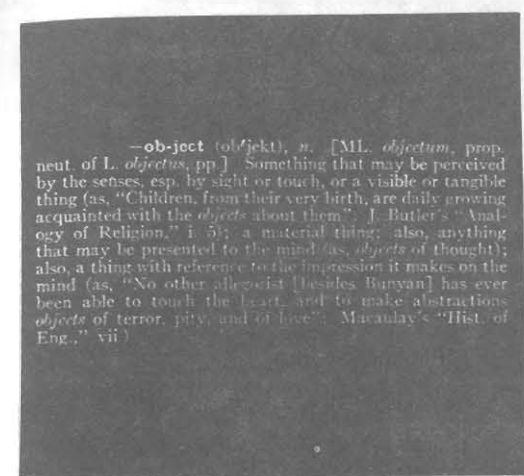
75. PAINTING BY MONDRIAN

The work diagram also became a model for art. Real space, time, and motion became reduced to lines, planes, and geometry by Cubist and Constructivist artists as well as industrial engineers. The blueprint was used by capitalists as abstract shorthand which symbolized procedures, materials, work instructions assigned to employees for actual completion in commodity form. Management saw a direct correspondence between an object drawn on paper and how it would be made in a work space during work-time.

Artists, however, had a different notion of the diagram as a space-time object. The Cubists and their allies created a kind of blueprint that plotted the relations between objects in space and between space as an object form in relation to other object forms. A cubist painting had the appearance of a production unit floor plan, but the objects and lines painted had no functional correspondence with reality. The Cubists and their friends were painting like scientists performed calculations on a blackboard in that they were not concerned with the human aim of their experimentation. But whereas the Cubists had no intention of painting objects that symbolized what occurred in real space and time, their later followers (Bauhaus, et al.) attempted to apply Cubist notions to reality. They became artistic engineers.

The Bauhaus, for example, applied Cubist space-time notions to architecture, industrial design, commodity design, and even to scientific management. Moholy-Nagy cites, in his book *Vision In Motion*, his use of collage in industrial planning, labeling it- the production illustration. He also praised the use of time-motion studies because they visually aided management in documenting methods for increasing output! The Mondrian painting above was, in time, applied to industrial architecture in that management consciously divided up work spaces with color partitions resembling Mondrian's color spacing at its best.

In our present working life, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish the "art" in industrial design from its production function. This fact indicates the degree to which contemporary artists have been "successful" in making their art relevant in capitalist society. The significant question is simply- to whom is their art relevant? Unfortunately, artists have repeatedly forgotten the human subjects abstracted out of existence in the production diagram- working people. This is the first time in human history that artists have failed to see their direct relation to other forms of human object-making.

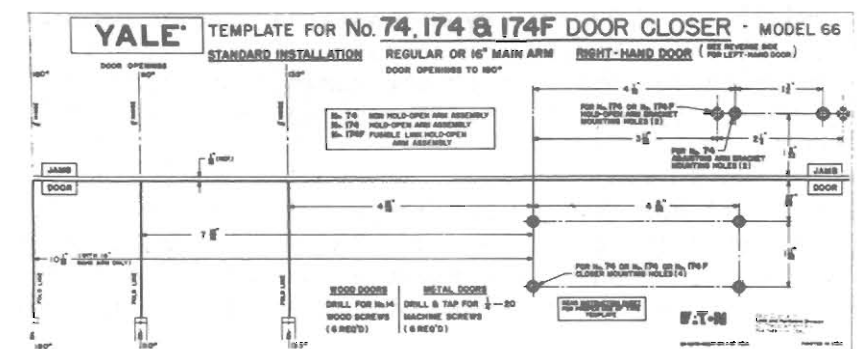


76. KOSUTH'S "TITLED (ART AS IDEA AS IDEA)" 1967



77. BALDESSARI'S "EVERYTHING IS PURGED. ." 1966

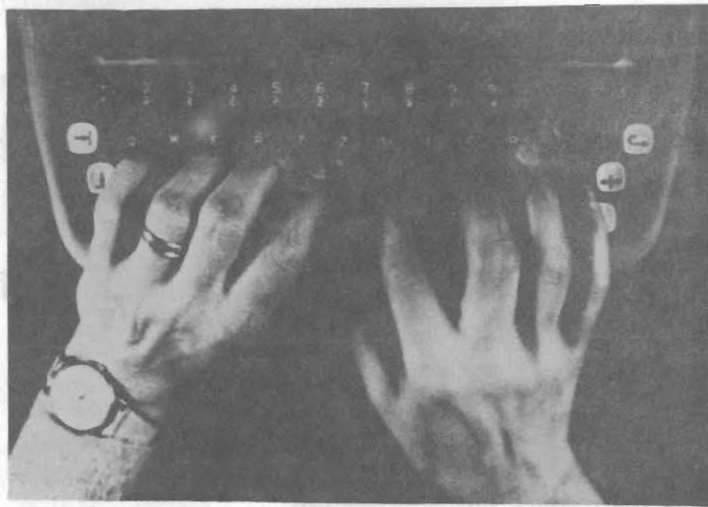
Considering the extent to which the object-making process in industry and art has become abstract, it is no surprise today to see artists replacing their work construction with machinery and words as well as the captains of industry. Some artists solely use machinery to convey their ideas in object form. Others solely use words as their vehicle. These latter artists have called into question the importance of making of objects altogether. This radical break from our past history of making things requires more discussion here.



Richard Artschwager. Hydraulic Doorcheck. 1968.

78. ARTSCHWAGER'S "HYDRAULIC DOORCHECK" 1968

Look at this "conceptual" art work for a moment. Would the reader know this was an art work if the artist's name and the work's title wasn't included with it? It looks like a template diagram and, in fact, it is a template diagram except that an artist has labeled it as his conception. This bold act, which to many is an act of plagiarism, is partly an affront to the capitalist commodity market. The market abstracts the human makers of commodities in their fetishized forms. We never know who made what we buy except for the company name. But with this template image, we do know now that it is made by somebody, even if it isn't this artist. Conceptual artists force us to examine the reasons why the images of objects sometimes falsify the objects' themselves in terms of their meaning, use, and origins. This, to my mind, is the positive side of conceptualist artwork. But there is a negative side that potentially undermines its importance to our making of things.



79. STEMBERA'S "HANDPIECES:
DAILY ACTIVITIES, TYPE-
WRITING" 1971

Conceptualist art-making is a specialized segment of a larger division of labor within art as a whole. The divisions in artistic work both reflect and, increasingly, service the capitalist industrial division of labor. In both of these "industries" there are specialists including those who plan, think, and administer, and those who make. The industrial division between conception and execution in capitalist production is equated by the artistic division between "conceptualism" and art-making. Conceptual art suffers from its conscious attempt to be rationalistic and specialized. Much of what it "makes" in words or actions can be equated with "shop talk", so commonplace in industry. It is self-referential and without meaning to others who might benefit from its creation. Conceptualism reinforces the fragmentation of human labor without realizing that it is doing so. By emphasizing "ideas" as objects without making them concrete with their hands, the conceptualists negate the historical unity of conception and execution so important to the human conception of life on this planet. They negate the unity of our eyes, hands, and minds in art, much as our employer does at work.

We become conscious of our ability to change the world in the objects we make. The human object is the changing of the world. But what is made in capitalist society becomes alien to its human makers because the social conditions in which it is made are increasingly inhuman. The human object needs a human world. This we must build.

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FRAGMENTS, NOTES, MISC.

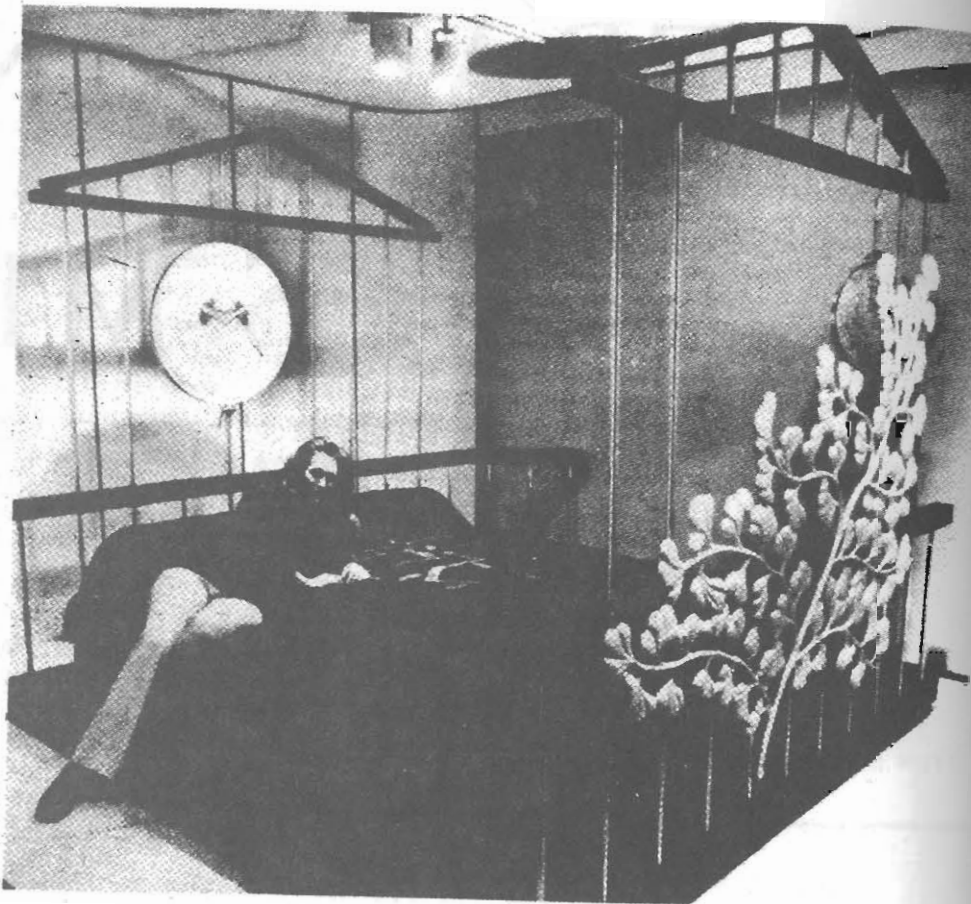
ROCKEFELLER'S BED 62 JOHN CURL 63 THE FLOATING SEMINAR 64 ROGER TAUS 65 ALFREDO ROSTGAARD 66 CRSS-76 71 ALBRECHT D. 72 JEAN TOCHE 74 CSABA POLONY 77 ROQUE DALTON GARCIA 78 CLARITA ROJA 79 RUCHELL MAGEE 84 CRITICAL CULTURAL CENTER 90 EXHIBIT ANNOUNCEMENT 91 LETTERS TO THE EDITORS 92 "CONFESSIONS" 101 EXCHANGE ADS 102.

Still looking for 'the soft life'

In an apparent attempt to cope with sleepless nights, multi-millionaire Nelson Rockefeller just spent \$35,000 on a "bed" (right) which will grace the master bedroom at his vice presidential mansion in Washington.

Designed by surrealist painter Max Ernst, the bed is complete with seven-foot mink coverlet, stereo controls and hidden lamps. Ernst calls it "Apparatus for Dreaming," obviously in anticipation of Rocky's ever-growing need to find a way to defeat the advance of revolutionary forces at home and abroad.

But even \$35,000 worth of conspicuous consumption (who says it's out of style?) won't help much. The lithograph on the bedspread, also by Ernst, is entitled, appropriately, "The Great Ignoramus."



MAY 28, 1975 — GUARDIAN — 9

WHEN I ENTERED THIS HOUSE

When I entered this house
they told me,
"There's opportunity here for all.
You'll make it, kid,
if you work hard
& you've got something on the ball."

But since then I've wandered
up & down the dim-lit stairs
& met philosophers pushing brooms
& nincompoops swivelling
in carved walnut chairs;
& since then I've peeked
in their secret rooms
& glimpsed how they really run this thing.

I just want to warn you, kid,
in this house
the toughest crook is king.

John Curl

The Floating Seminar

Those of you who were among the more than 200 people who attended Floating Seminar #2, "A Survey of Alternative Art Spaces" (held Oct. 2, 1975; at "The Farm"), know that the meeting provided a valuable cross-section of various non-commercially oriented art organizations which operate in San Francisco.

The transcription of that meeting will be available very soon.

The following people gave statements about the operations and goals of their groups.

David Robinson	80 Langton St. Gallery
Robbin Henderson	The American Can Collective Gallery
Csaba Polony	Left Curve Magazine
Lynn Hershman	The Floating Museum
Sam Samore	The Samore Gallery
David Maclay	South of Market Open Studios
Phil Linhares	1218-32 Folsom St. Galleries
Rene Yanez	Galeria de la Raza
Karla Tonella	The Women's Art Center
C.E. Loeffler	la mamelle magazine
Terry Fox	The Museum of Conceptual Art
Kathan Brown	Vision*
Bonnie Sherk	The Farm
Brian McPartlon	63 Bluxome St. Gallery
Michelle Linfante	The Goodman Building*

The 1½ hour discussion which followed these statements touched on the problems of the determination of audience, elitism, responsibilities to the public, isolationism of groups, and other subjects.

The transcription of this meeting is a unique document which chronicals the attitudes and opinions of these people and the groups which they represent, at this very active time in the San Francisco art community.

If you would like a copy of the transcription, send your NAME, ADDRESS, and ZIP CODE, along with a check or money order for \$3.00 for each copy, to:

The Floating Seminar

c/o Paul Kagawa
513 Valencia St.
San Francisco, Ca. 94110

This 80 page document is being made available in a very limited quantity, so please place your order soon. All proceeds will go toward the organization of future seminars.

Please allow 3 to 4 weeks for delivery.

*(These groups were not approached prior to the meeting.)

THREE POEMS by Roger Taus

Sitting in the Tub

4/15/75

My son
Christopher
8 months old
stands on his own two feet
holding on
to the tub
me in it
every evening
making faces at each other
I have waited all day long for this!

Robert
my neighbor on the right
laid off five months
he's a machinist
three kids
wife working
\$65 a week out of work pay
he says
soon he'll take anything
even 3 bucks an hour somewhere
now the full heavy horror
of the depression
as I trudge up the hill
after a visit.

Caught Idling on a Stack of Pallets

The lowest little devil
money can buy
the loading dock boss
says son
think you'll ever
amount
to anything?
a fucking dummy
no idea
none
I'm one of Marge Piercy's many oxen
lumbering into history
with horns and hooves
and tons of muscle.

direct FROM * CUBA

Interview with Alfredo Rostgaard, art
editor of Tricontinental magazine

B Y W A Y O F I M A G E S

By Marta Sosa

PRENSA LATINA Feature Service

"The new Cuban artists should be loved, because they love people, they suffer from the tribulations of humanity. They have no brushes for the vain and the guilty of the earth, only for the hurt and the creators."

Jose Marti

Cuban designer Alfredo Rostgaard was born to his art with the birth of the Cuban Revolution. Before he became a designer of the Cuban Revolution. Before he became a designer, he was a painter. The revolutionary victory found him taking his first steps in the world of art at the Joaquin Pejeda school in Santiago.

Now, at 32, Rostgaard is at the peak of his artistic development and, thanks to his incessant creative work, he has earned himself a place among the country's best graphic artists.

His experience and successes in the profession placed him in the artistic editorship of Tricontinental magazine, organ of the Organization for the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL).

But this artist, already has a long history in his professional work as evidenced by the prizes and honorable mentions he has won in national and international contests and shows. He won the July 26 National Poster Prize in 1968-69 and honorable mention in the following contest. Since then he has been a member of the panel of judges.

His latest international shows include the January-February 1974 exhibition of Cuban posters in Conakry, Guinea, and in June of that year, he showed two tempera paintings, one of Jose Marti and the other of Antonio Maceo, both 19th century independence leaders, forerunners of the present Cuban Revolution.

But above all, this artist has made good the quote by Marti that heads this article, in asserting that his work is difficult because it is committed ...

PRENSA LATINA: What does the expression of an idea mean to you, how do you see the object of the designer's job?

ALFREDO ROSTGAARD: Most of the country's designers don't come from the design world; almost all of us studied in the schools of painting before the Revolution. So the start of the revolutionary process found us without a proper background for handling the problems of revolutionary propaganda and all that could reach the masses in visual form.

This is closely linked with the emergence of graphic design in Cuba. That is, the development of designers able to communicate the content of the ideas of the Revolution, its goals, its watchwords.

All revolutionary beginnings have a first stage of construction that includes all spheres of the country and we found ourselves in that process of revolutionary changes.

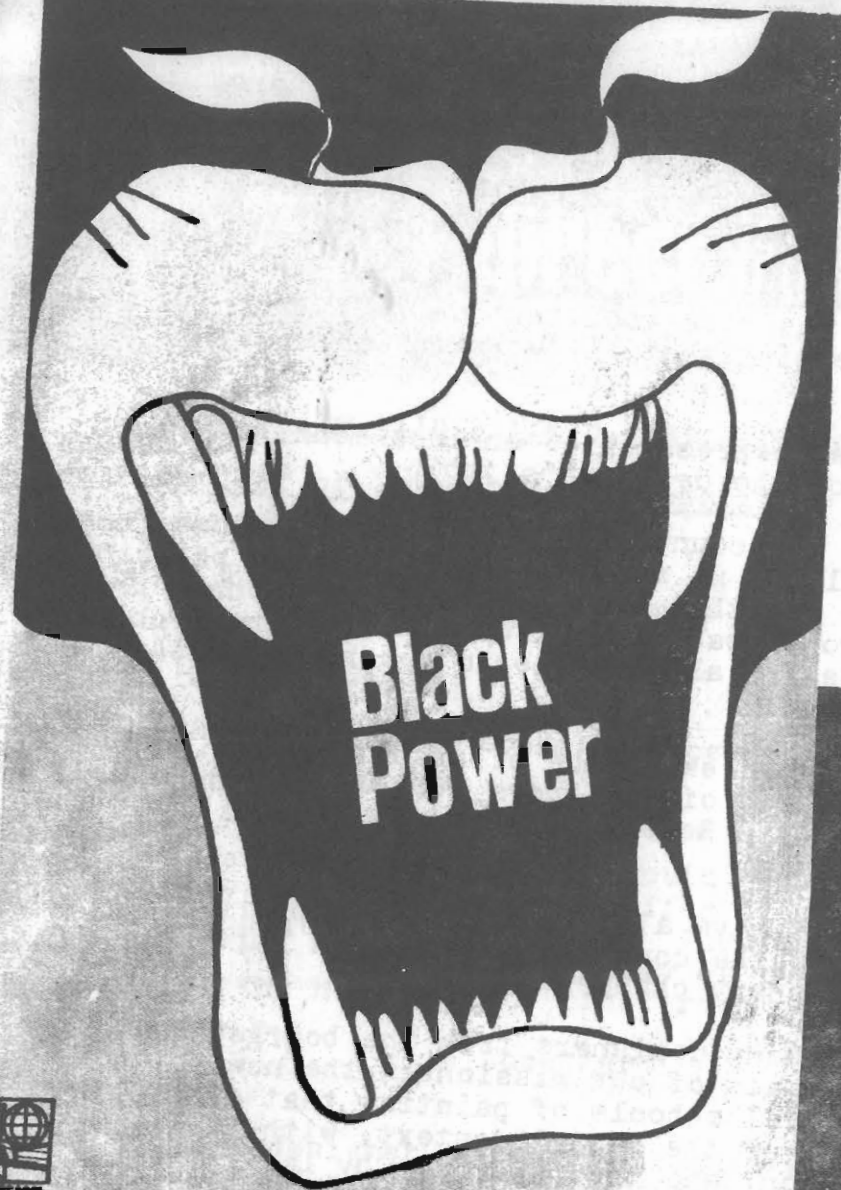
In that process of change, many designers from the bourgeoisie did not understand the real aim of our mission in the new society; they answered to the classical schools of painting that saw only personal attainment outside of the social context, with a commercial notion of the profession, and they ended up by leaving the country.

Meanwhile, without any training as designers, with the realization that our knowledge was adapted to painting, we began our initiation in the graphic language of communication. Around that time, our posters were really paintings of signs.

In time we learned that our job was more than that; we realized that design was the transmission of a message, of an idea that should be expressed in the most comprehensible way in order to reach everyone. And we began to develop in that direction.

We started by showing that in socialism artists have all the possibilities for creation and that the bourgeois theory that the best artists are the ones who are not committed was not true at all.

But what helped us most in the quest for our own forms of expression were the conditions to which our country was subjected by the U.S. imposed embargo. This had limited the arrival of design materials, and hence, from the need to solve our material problems, we began to discover new forms. Finally, despite the blockade, we developed



RETALIATION TO CRIME: REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE
RÉPONSE AU CRIME: LA VIOLENCE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE
RESPUESTA AL ASESINATO: VIOLENCIA REVOLUCIONARIA

The Black Panther poster commemorated the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968.

Alfredo Rostgaard, 32, is one of the best Cuban graphic artists.



innovations and a legitimate mode of expression.

In that quest we discovered that there were many resources that could be used, for instance, poetry, surrealism as a poster technique, but above all we realized that the revolutionary context did not limit us. Quite the opposite, it was a broad framework in which we could develop our ideas, our personal creation.

PL: One of the most important jobs you have now is the art direction of Tricontinental magazine. What can you tell us about the search for ideological expression in design in that publication?

AR: In our work at the head of the design team at Tricontinental magazine we take as our starting point that it's an international publication. That is, you have to take into consideration that most of its circulation is abroad. That means that when we find out what message is to be conveyed, we prepare a design in line with what is known today as international graphic language. We have to deal with the external factors present where the magazine circulates, such as capitalist propaganda and the political level of the people to whom it is directed.

We don't stick to a single form, rather, starting from the objective to be expressed, we make use of as many modern techniques as we need to. The important thing is that the message we want to convey gets there and is comprehensible for those it is supposed to reach.

We make use of a host of techniques such as photography, composites, painting, caricature, drawings and others.

PL: At what level of militant expression do you feel we've reached?

AR: We think we have a pretty good level in design in terms of other countries, including the capitalist ones. Our posters are highly esteemed abroad, especially the political posters. As far as the socialist countries are concerned, the Poles are the most advanced, their technique is extraordinary and we're learning from them.

It's true that Poland has a special school for training designers, while we're still autodidacts, which in my opinion gives us an advantage, in that we receive influences from all over and we use them when they jibe with our form of expression.

I also feel that in time schools of design won't be necessary since graphic design is growing increasingly internationalized, and its resources, if they're good and suitable, can be used to enrich what already exists. In addition the public with whom we communicate is constantly growing and the use of international techniques gives us the chance to cut across language barriers so that our message can reach people all over.

That's why nowadays the political poster has acquired its present strength. It's a medium that can reach everyone and which can convey an unimaginable number of ideological, educational and other content.

(Rostgaard doesn't say so, but two of his own posters have gone round the world thanks to their content and their aesthetic quality: one is the thorned rose that was the emblem of the 1967 Protest Song Festival in Havana, and the other is the woman Black Panther done at the time of the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968).

PL: There is an old Chinese proverb that says an image is worth more than a thousand words. Do you feel that the image is really superior to the work in expressing ideas?

AR: Some years ago that was a topic for discussion. There was a kind of emulation in regard to the expressive value of the word and the image, especially because the image is not so concise.

An image is like a direction for thinking. You can see in it an infinity of things and ideas. That's why it's so hard to convey a political message through images. But when it does succeed, the results are highly positive because the message is captured in its full dimension. I think, really, that the image outdoes the word in disseminating ideas.

PL: In education just how important is the use of graphic symbols?

AR: In our world the use of the graphic arts is growing constantly and their importance in the education of people has been proven. Also we realize that this field provides such vast possibilities for expression that they can't even be fully fathomed.

That is why we are concerned by the way so much talent is wasted in capitalist societies in advertising, in which the artist-wage earners sell their abilities in such brutalizing fashion and help to create "needs."

The Cuban designers look upon that kind of propaganda that makes use of the most modern techniques as a challenge because those means can be adapted to attain human goals including real education. But despite all that, we've already shown that in the revolutionary camp too there are fine talents that are not for sale.

PL: How would you define the designer's objective in a single phrase?

AR: The objective can be expressed in a single word: COMMUNICATE. But, besides, I'd add that for a revolutionary designer the first requirement must be usefulness. Whatever beauty that our work might possess must be there because of its communicative function. Besides, a designer has to be original, because that's the only way to capture the attention of the people to whom the message is directed.

(Ed.'s note: this was sent to us by Chris Robinson of RECON)

CRSS-76

The Conference for a Relevant Social Science will hold its fifth annual meeting in Chicago during March, 1976. The Conference for a Relevant Social Science is dedicated to enhancing radical and alternative progressive scholarship by bringing together people from all disciplines of academia and from outside of academia altogether. Focus is upon a wide range of theoretical and concrete issues, problems and situations that are relevant to humanity.

Persons who wish to present papers, take part in workshops or suggest topics for conference sessions should send their proposals, by November 1st, to:

William A. Pelz, Program Coordinator
Box 198 - Political Science
Roosevelt University
430 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60605

albrecht d.: SKYLAB IM
DIENSTE DER AUSBEUTUNG
DER DRITTEN WELT

1973 - SIEBDRUCK
DIN A 2 - violett auf
weißem papier oder
fluoresco-grün auf
weißem papier
unsigniert - gefaltet
im DIN A 4 umschlag
dm 3.-
signiert - dm 15.-
(inclusiv porto
und versand in
einer rolle)



albrecht d.: CAPITAL
straub über unterneh-
mer: vaterlandslose
gesellen.....

1973 - SIEBDRUCK
DIN A 2 - violett auf
weißem papier oder
fluoresco-grün auf
weißem papier
unsigniert - gefaltet
im DIN A 4 umschlag
dm 3.-
signiert - dm 15.-
(inclusiv porto und
versand in einer
rolle)

albrecht d. (from the 1974/75 catalog of reflection press
7 Stuttgart 1/ Friedenastr. 21)



albrecht d.: chile be-
weist wieder.....

diese grafik ist schwarz
(offset) auf die unten
rechts abgebildete seri-
grafie gedruckt worden.
diese serigrafie (grie-
chenland) gibt es in
verschiedenen farben:
ocker/orange oder braun
größe der grafiken:
DIN A 3 - überformat
SET MIT BEIDEN GRAFIKEN
NUR DM 15.-- !!!(sign.)

UNIKATE MIT AUF-
COLLAGIERTER WM-
BRIEFMARKE UND
BESTEMPELT.....
SET MIT BEIDEN
GRAFIKEN NUR
DM 40.--

als DIN A 3
OFFSET-PLAKATE
können Sie zwei
exemplare für
eine mark in
briefmarken
im umschlag
gefaltet zu-
gesandt erhal-
ten!
farbe:
schwarz/
violett



P R E S S R E L E A S E

FROM: The Jean Toche Defense Committee
351 Broadway - NYC 10013.

CALL: Virginia Toche
(212) 431-4118

SUBJECT: Dropping of charges by the U.S. Government.

DATE OF RELEASE: July 23, 1975.

THE COMPLAINT AGAINST BELGIAN-BORN ARTIST AND ACTIVIST JEAN TOCHE (A/K/A JEAN X. VAN IMSCHOOT) HAS BEEN DISMISSED BY THE UNITED STATES FEDERAL COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, AT THE REQUEST OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE.

Artist Jean Toche, who for many years has protested, through his art, discriminatory policies and questionable priorities of museums and other cultural institutions, had been arrested by the F.B.I. on March 31, 1974, for allegedly sending to various museums, newspapers and individuals in New York City 60 handbills, which strongly criticized various policies of those museums, and specifically, an event that took place at the Museum of Modern Art of New York. Following a complaint from the Metropolitan Museum, Toche was charged with allegedly sending a so-called "kidnap threat" through the mails.

The government alleged that on the basis of that act, and because Toche picketed the Metropolitan and other major museums in "an attempt to disrupt normal course of business", and because he and 3 others were accused by the Metropolitan of having allegedly "released cockroaches onto the dinner table during a banquet" at that museum, that Toche was suffering from mental disorder.

Artist Jean Toche was never indicted and never was given a hearing. Nevertheless, on November 27, 1974, he was forced by the government to undergo a psychiatric examination. Now, more than a year after Toche was arrested, the government is dropping the charges. This clearly indicates that the government's intent was to harass, threaten

Page 2
P.R. 7/23/75
J.T.D.C.

free speech, discredit dissent and blatantly appease the cultural power structure that includes, among others, Nelson Rockefeller and C. Douglas Dillon. The government's acts can now be seen quite clearly as an attempt to protect and maintain the cultural power structure's point of view to the exclusion of any other. The capitulation of the government in this case is a victory for alternate points of view and dissent.

The government also lost in that Federal Judge K. Duffy limited the scope of the psychiatric examination solely to the question of whether or not Toche understood the charges against him and was capable of assisting in his own defense. Judge Duffy specifically forbade the government's attempt to question Toche's sanity at the time of the alleged acts.

The fact remains that the insidious use of forced psychiatric examination by the government to silence, punish and discredit those people who are involved in criticizing and questioning the establishment is a dangerous practice which seriously restricts and restrains constitutional freedoms.

Furthermore, in this instance, Toche never was permitted to have a hearing on accusations made by the Metropolitan Museum, the F.B.I. and the U.S. government - false accusations which formed the basis for the judge's order for a mandatory psychiatric examination. Just this denial of such a hearing and the resulting enforced psychiatric examination has created an irreparable chilling effect on dissent in the art community. However, such illegal and repressive actions on the part of the government were limited by the active support of the art community which prevented the indictment and an absurd trial

by exposing the purpose and intent of the government.

It is urgent that we continue to speak up and fight for our freedoms. We will not be silent.

Virginia Toche

Virginia Toche, President,
The Jean Toche Defense Committee,
351 Broadway - New York, N.Y. 10013.

SAY IT OR CREATE

by Csaba Polony

(to say it or create
appropriate images
which are supposed to
convey the felt-impression)

like:

I.

"The soft evening breeze
whispers relief
to wounds
burning in acid coldness"

or:

"After a series of painful
rejections
a warm wind
brings relief
from somewhere
far away"

like:

II.

"The coming tidal wave
now welling up from the lowest
depths
will wash the decaying
land clean
allowing for the birth
of new life"

or:

"The oppressed masses
will liberate all
man/womankind."

El Salvador: Death of a Revolutionary

El Salvador, June 1975

Ideological struggle within El Salvador's guerrilla movement resulted in the death of an internationally respected revolutionary last May. Roque Dalton Garcia, Salvadoran poet, writer, and long-time revolutionary, was assassinated in El Salvador by a faction recently expelled from the Revolutionary People's Army (ERP), one of the country's principal guerrilla groups.

The expelled faction broke the news of the murder in a bulletin dated May 26 and signed "ERP Chiefs of Staff." The group accused Dalton of infiltrating the ERP as a CIA agent, and held him responsible for the death of two ERP members. The so-called "Chiefs of Staff," without mentioning concrete details, insisted that there were "innumerable proofs of Dalton's work as a traitor inside the organization."

Following publication of the May 26 bulletin, the ERP's official newspaper, For the Proletarian Cause, #16, denounced the assassination and charged that the "militaristic ERP band is responsible to the people and to history for the death of Comrade Roque Dalton." The official ERP organ stated that Dalton's assassination was "not an isolated act, but rather the desperate deed of a militaristic band that attempts to cover up and suppress the ideological struggle...by representing it as a problem of CIA infiltration in revolutionary organizations." The assassination, it added, "plays into the enemy's hands because the CIA is satisfied with this crime. It allows the bourgeoisie and imperialism to launch an offensive in psychological warfare that harms the revolutionary struggle and frustrates the masses by confusing and demoralizing them."

In San Jose, Costa Rica, a group of exiled Salvadoran intellectuals, including former presidential candidate and university dean, Dr. Fabio Castillo, publicly condemned Dalton's death as "an odious crime." Dalton, they said, "made a great personal sacrifice in abandoning his family and children to return to his country and join the popular struggle there." Dalton's life, they added, was "an example of revolutionary dedication."

Dalton was exiled to Cuba in the early 1960s following the overthrow of a progressive government triumvirate. He re-entered El Salvador clandestinely in early 1974 to join the Salvadoran ERP. His considerable writings and poetry include The Window in the Face, El Salvador: A Monograph, and Miguel Marmol: The Events of 1932 in El Salvador.

Two weeks prior to Dalton's assassination, the ERP national leadership released a bulletin announcing the expulsion of the small ultra-left group for its "militaristic deviation." The group's militarism, it said, was "the manifestation of a petty-bourgeois deviation that attempted to impose itself on the proletarian consciousness of the great majority of ERP cadre." The three expelled members formerly occupied high-ranking military positions inside the organization, and according to the official ERP bulletin, "were attempting to usurp the ERP's name" after expulsion. In response to the accusation and attacks of the ERP leadership after Dalton's murder, the expelled faction responded, "There is nothing more to discuss. The case is closed."

Along with the National Liberation Forces (FPL), the Salvadoran ERP has carried out numerous military actions since it was formed three years ago. Scattered bank robberies, arms expropriations, and bombings of military establishments and equipment have been its most publicized activities since 1972. Actions with a more obvious political content include the takeover of a radio station, the armed expropriation of eggs and their distribution to a city slum in 1973, and the assault on the Central Elections Council prior to the fraudulent elections of March, 1974 (see G&CAR, No. 4). There are allegedly several campesino nuclei within the organization. For the Proletarian Cause is a monthly ERP publication with a wide distribution.

The current ideological struggle inside the guerrilla organization comes with extreme crisis conditions of rising unemployment and inflation and increasing mass discontent in El Salvador. As class contradictions sharpened, the ERP leadership divided over correct strategies and tactics for the popular struggle. Although little information is available at this stage, it appears that Dalton, among others in the ERP leadership, was attempting to reorient the organization towards agitational work among the masses, and away from isolated military actions. His death, then, is a blow to revolutionary forces in El Salvador and around the world.

ON HEADACHES

*It's beautiful to be a communist
even though it gives you lots of headaches.*

*And the thing is that the communist's headaches
are supposed to be historical, that is to say
they don't go away with aspirins
but only with the realization of Paradise on
Earth.*

That's how it is.

*Under capitalism our heads ache
and they decapitate us.
In the struggle for the revolution the head is
a time-bomb.*

*In the construction of socialism
we plan headaches
which doesn't make them any less frequent,
just the other way around.*

*Communism will be, among other things,
an aspirin the size of the sun.*

GENERAL MARTINEZ

*They say he was a good president
because he gave out cheap houses
to the Salvadorans who were left...*

-- ROQUE DALTON (1933-1975)

ON ART AND THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

By Clarita Roja

Last week I received a letter from the United States written by a progressive American publisher to a friend of mine. The letter contained a commentary on a collection of poetry from the Philippine struggle which my friend had submitted for publication. It so happened that the commentary used as examples two poems of mine.

The essence of the commentary was that most of the poems included in my friend's collection were bad poetry because they contained "venom" and propaganda (in the publisher's words). The prime example of this "venomous" poetry was "Damn the Dictatorship," from my book DARE TO STRUGGLE, DARE TO WIN! On the other hand, one of the examples of good poetry used by the publisher was "To A Beloved Friend, On Parting," a more recent poem of mine.

This is my own conclusion, but perhaps the reason the American publisher considered "To A Beloved Friend" good poetry is that it is lyrical and has a melancholy tone to it.

In any case, what is more interesting is that I read the publisher's letter on the eve of my departure from a certain city where my presence had been recently exposed to the enemy. As the quickness of my reflexes spelled the difference between continued work in the underground, a life sentence or even death, I merely smiled off the letter and requested a comrade to burn it-- for security reasons.

A few days later, safe in another sanctuary and having nothing yet to do, I remembered the commentary and connected it with another letter addressed to the same friend by another progressive American. The letter informed on two North Americans who were trying to sow Trotskyism in the Philippines. Their names were John Glenn who was operating from the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City, and Mike Price who was operating from the University of the Philippines in Los Banos, Laquna.

We had uncovered the operations of these two Trotskyite agents years ago, but did not feel the need to engage them in any major battle. They never managed to build a mass base anyway, while we were expanding by leaps and bounds.

When I showed this letter to a responsible Party member, he laughed it off, just as I had smiled off the publisher's criticism. His comment:

"These Americans. Their problem there is still on the level of ideas. Our problem here is the problem of life and death. The Trotskyites are not our problem anymore. Our problem is the enemy agents and informers around us."

The same can be said of the Europeans I have talked with. They are much concerned with heavy and complicated theoretical formulations. We are also much concerned with correct theory, but the exigencies of years of practical struggle have taught us to think more simply and in more concrete terms.

In any case, many progressive Europeans and Americans have already started to understand our deep concern for a very practical aspect of revolutionary theory --and struggle-- and its concrete expression-- arms. But that has taken numerous discussions as well as the sudden and unexpected deaths of underground workers whom they had talked with and learned to love and respect.

How can we convey to others the rhyme and rhythm of our struggle? I am hoping this poem "To a Foreigner" will help.



TO A FOREIGNER

By Clarita Roja

You accuse me of sloganeering
And being unpoetic
My writing lines like
"Damn the U.S. -Marcos dictatorship."

Friend, my reply is
You do not understand
The weight, the ocean depth
Of our class hatred.

Yesterday I heard
A comrade had been ambused.
One of five bullets
Had been smashed through his young heart.

When my ears caught
The uttered syllables of his name
The muscles of my jaws tightened
To the hardness of a gun butt

My fingers curled up
To a firm trigger-squeeze
And the heat of anger exploded
Like bullets out of my eyes.

Have you not heard
What the masses do to the traitors
Who betray their precious ones?
They cut them up

Into pieces so small
You could hardly tell
They once had the force
To murder a Red fighter.

You are a foreigner indeed,
Foreign to the rhythm of our struggle.
In the face of class murder,
How can we be lyrical?

--May 20, 1975

DAMN THE DICTATORSHIP

Damn the U.S. -Marcos dictatorship.
My people starve
While Imelda lives it up with Christina Ford.
Thirty days after San Juanico
Usurped sweat of Filipino people,
Rice queues longer than any vaunted
"Seventh longest bridge in the world."

Damn the U.S. -Marcos dictatorship.
My people starve
And all the land's riches off to America and Japan.
Ferdinand kisses the corns of the new U.S. ambassador
While cocunuts vanish from the stands,
Lapped up by a cabal of compradors
Who careen in olive oil while soap prices soar

Damn the U.S. -Marcos dictatorship.
My people starve
The rice queues lengthen
The prices soar.
While Ferdinand schemes to prolong his reign
At least seven years more,
Seven miserable years of civil war.

Damn the U.S. -Marcos dictatorship.
Damn it with a million armalites
To utter destruction.

--Clarita Roja
Manila, Philippines, Aug. 6, 1973

TO A BELOVED FRIEND, ON PARTING

How lonely it is,
The harbor lights
Shimmering on the dark waters
As our boat drifts slowly away.

Beloved friend,
Between us lie
A million harbor lights
Shimmering the years

Out of sight.
But the salt water sprays my cheeks
And I am brought to life,
Cherished comrade,

In my mind's eye
The fishermen's boats dotting the harbor
Their low, mysterious lights
Bringing glad tidings

To an angry, expectant people.
We shall fight,
On so many fronts
We shall arm our people to fight.

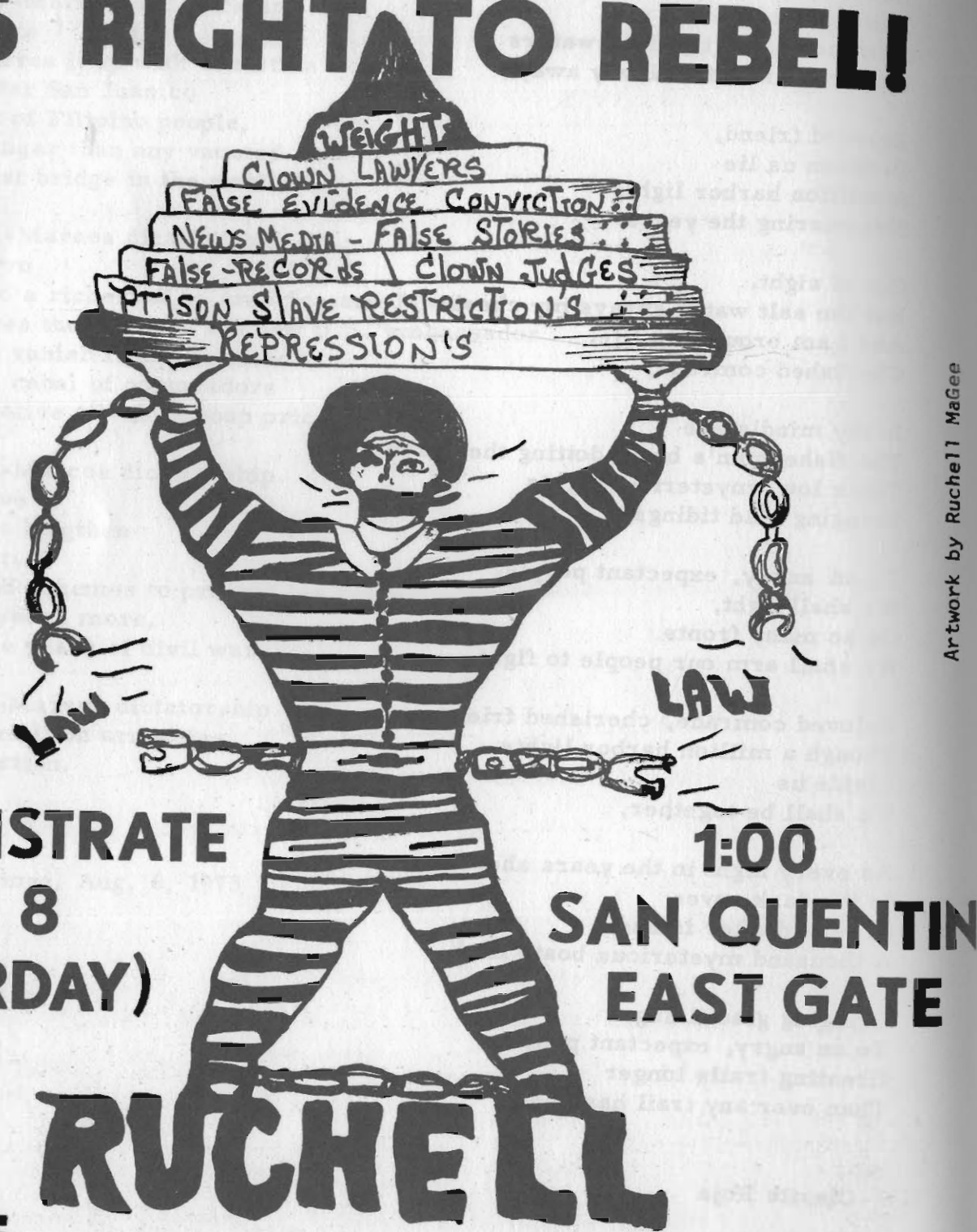
Beloved comrade, cherished friend,
Though a million harbor lights
Divide us
We shall be together,

As every night in the years ahead
In the dark coves
Of island after island
A thousand mysterious boats land,

Bringing glad tidings
To an angry, expectant people,
Creating trails longer
Than ever any trail has been.

--Clarita Roja

FREE RUCHELL! IT'S RIGHT TO REBEL!



Artwork by Ruchell MaGee

**DEMONSTRATE
FEB. 8
(SATURDAY)**

**1:00
SAN QUENTIN
EAST GATE**

Carpools:

SAN FRAN.
Asian Community Center
846 Kearny (between
Jackson & Washington)
12 NOON

BERKELEY
corner of Bancroft
& Dana
12 NOON

SAN JOSE
255 E. William
(corner 6th & William)
11 AM

PALO ALTO
Lytton Plaza
downtown Palo Alto
11 AM

For info call: (San Jose) VVAW-WSO: 998-4210, (East Bay) John: 848-3534

Ruchell MaGee
Box 992051
Tamal, CALIFORNIA
94964

September 30, 1975

(Ed.'s note: this letter was written to both LEFT CURVE for publication, and care of LEFT CURVE to an inmate in another prison... The adjacent picture, by the way, was suppose to have been published in the last issue, but due to a production error, it wasn't.)

Natural knowledge will control natural forces.

We may dedicate ourselves to developing nonviolent means, but to achieve fundamental social change, we the people must take up ARMS and slay the clown pigs (judges, lawyers, Presidents, Governors, PRISON officials etc.)

These are extremely stupid CREATURES masquerading as law-enforcement who are extraordinarily damaging to the mind of the people.

ENERGY with guns & bombs in the fight to break the chains must come from a strong united front is the proper thing to do in the interest of the communities.

Detrimental to the whole community is this California Department of Corrections

Conspiracy with the courts.
Projecting is a defense of the stupid
pigs. The pigs call it Racism, when its a
plain matter of pigs being dumb & stupid
to the point of helplessness and misery.
Commit CRIMES and project-themselves
in NON-limiting or ending stupidity.

These are educational facts of
Stupid pigs Corruption;

1. I filed Civil suit "DECLARATORY
Judgment" September 10, 1975 with the
United States District Court (Central District)
at Los Angeles in the case titled, Ruchell
MAGEE vs. U.S. Magistrate RALP GEFEN; Court
Reporter VESTA MANNICK, et AL, No. 75-3059-R-
(T)

I am now informed (September 24, 1975)
of the federal order to REASSIGN CASE, FROM
Geffen's to a Magistrate VENETTA S. TASSOPOULOS
because Geffen being a defendant (openly
known CRIMINAL) in the suit voluntarily
disqualified himself.

Contained in the suit are allegations
ready to be proved by preponderance
of the evidence.

Pending also, is the writ of
Habeas Corpus of Ruchell Magee vs.

WARDEN Robert REES, No. 75-1009-EC in the
same federal court before Judge E. CRARY.

CRIMES after CRIMES, in the suppression
and falsification of the L.A. trial records
are being committed to cover-up.

I have been filing Civil and
CRIMINAL Complaints against the old
Stupid Reporter for 12-years in the
federal & state courts for suppressing
records and conspiring with the attorney
General to use false transcripts.

with false transcripts, each judge
taken turns "projecting" themselves for
years saying that my complaints was
"Frivolous."

The meaning of FRIVOLOUS: Little weight
or importance.

Convicted on known false evidence,
Chained & gagged in court for objecting
to the jury hearing a false insanity PLEAD
by a deputy sheriff (Clay H. JACKS) posing
as my lawyer, suppression of evidence
and unlawfully slavery are courts holding
very significant importance realities, but
the stupid judges not being publicly
watched or known written up orders

Saying frivolous. The pigs never was called upon to answer or Rebuttal one allegation = my suits!

In a civil action where the right to a hearing is guaranteed,

Summons must be permitted served as shown by the Ruler in the case of Brown vs. Brown, NO. 21, 005 (Nov. 18, 1966, U.S. 9th Cir. Ct.). The judges SCREAM FRIVOLOUS as a technical ploy to avoid a confrontation in which defeat is foreseen and inevitable.

Any judge that project himself to decide an issue in behalf of unknown parties (if they are unknown) when he does not have the full side examination facts, is stupid!!! In truth the allegations to begin a civil suit may be light, however, at the hearing the weight could be of such weight that the exposure would strip NAKED the corruption that exist within the courts. Another way they (judges) veil their & conspiratorial actions are by holding the victims in the prison hole isolated from the public, as they hurl their insanity at peoples heads!

" Suppress you in a way you can't serve summons and then wait a long period

to double back accusing the victims of want of prosecution for not serving summons - The pig Ralph Gaffen has went outside the U.S. Magistrate's office with this stupid act! They know not when to stop in such violence til we counter it with violence!

Through violent tactics these stupid pigs Gaffen's has robbed me of my youth, as they conspires to strip society of its youth & humanity.

If ever I break the chain, I'll personally blow Ralph Gaffen stupid, (backwards) brains out! He knows that!!

Evelle Younger has fucked up the L.A. Court Records! As shown by the pending suit, the transcripts used by Younger in the prior federal courts and state courts which they refused to recognize as fraudulently, was for years 115 pages of non-sense. Now, in the Habeas proceedings the transcript increased to 200-pages with the attorney General twisted up in their own stupidity and crimes. These fools have no respect for society!

People must go inspect the federal court files (evidence). WARDEN REES must be stopped

Demonstration by people with guns need be hear at San Quentin Prison!

Ruckel ungue matter

CRITICAL CULTURAL CENTER

In the last decade or so a growing number of artists have turned to new institutional & personal channels as a means to express their art. This phenomena has been paralleled by the increasing bankruptcy of established art practice & institutions. In the area of fine art ("art world") the complete institutionalization of the traditional "avant-guard" revolt sensibility of the last 100 years or so, has created an academia of innovation & "newness" - a contradiction in terms felt by more and more artists. By making the "revolt of the artist" the official academic sensibility of the "art world", the very basis of free authentic artistic inspiration originally formulated in opposition to the philistinism of bourgeois society, was usurped. It was therefore inevitable that people would begin work outside of the established "art world". From community based art, art of protest movements, various forms of activist political art, all have developed outside of official art institutions. Yet as all societies consist of intricate networks of diverse connections and groupings all forming into a diffuse yet organically functioning whole, the connection between old & new, "fine art" & "popular art", commercial art, corporate design, urban planning, managerial operation systems, and all super-structural elements of sensibility ordering systems must be understood. Only by a careful understanding of just what the "ruling aesthetic" is and how it functions, can serious minded artists begin to formulate concrete antitheses to the forces which manipulate our minds and everyday lives, both at work and play.

It is with such a basic sentiment that a few people, some professional artists, others not, have gotten together to formulate an ongoing project wherein such ideas can be explored, researched, and presented to the public in various ways. The proposed center is to function in several ways:

- 1) To create a forum for the investigation of art processes as they are currently being used on all levels of society (cultural institutions, communications, advertising, business operations, urban planning, etc.)
- 2) To provide space for the ongoing display & performance of works by artists who are in various ways trying to develop an art which critically examines our social/personal reality in contradistinction to the aesthetic reality spoon fed us by the ruling structures.
- 3) To provide the opportunity for lectures, discussions, & instruction to art students & other people interested in broadening their understanding of the forces of society and how they relate to art.
- 4) To publish a periodical, as well as other works, on a regular basis so as to present the work and activity coming out of the center.

5) To develop an archives of all pertinent publications, books, tapes, etc. of works which relate to the areas of inquiry pursued in the center.

6) To provide a service to the community through the presentation of programs, slide shows, exhibits, etc. as a means of establishing a reciprocal relationship between the center and the community, both at home & at work.

The Critical Cultural Center is to function as much as possible through an objective understanding of today's culture both through theoretical work & involvement with the movements for change in our society.

People interested in working on this project are encouraged to write us care of Left Curve magazine, 1016 Greenwich St., San Francisco, Calif., 94133.

EXHIBIT ANNOUNCEMENT

Preliminary announcement of an art exhibit to be organized by Left Curve magazine. The exhibit is to be an investigation into contemporary artwork which (1) deals with or comes out of concrete political struggle, and (2) "post-modernist" work by artists who have been through modernism and are investigating means to get beyond it and move in a political direction.

Works will be selected according to the following criteria:

- 1) Dialectical materialist methodology and world outlook.
- 2) Works which deal with reality either:
 - a) reflectively
 - b) produced in conjunction with political struggle.

Exhibit to be held in San Francisco sometime during the middle of 1976. Open form. Each artist must take responsibility, including shipping costs, for work submitted (slides and/or proposals accepted).

More detailed announcement forthcoming.

Interested parties should write to:

EXHIBIT
Left Curve
1016 Greenwich St.
San Francisco, Ca.
94133

SOME LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Richard & Csaba--

...I like a lot of the stuff in LEFT CURVE-- & I've learned from it. Re your editorial in #4, I think you might be underestimating the political function of language, especially in a "closed shop" like modern art. The so-called analytic stuff of Art & Language was gone through by 1970, it served as a way into a problematic for us. However one is always characterized by whatever first becomes public. Which is a function of formalist/ avantgardist mentality. It seems we all fall victim to it at one time or another...

Best Wishes,

Ian Burn
New York, N. Y.

Dear Richard & Csaba,

Received both copies of LEFT CURVE. Most of us were as surprized as we were pleased. We had a nagging suspicion that LC would be some kind of watered down, semi-social/democratic literary affair. And then to find an essentially Maoist, essentially anti-revisionist mag -- well, hell, congodamngradulations. We really feel good about your work, wishing you the best, comrades to comrades.

Especially liked the interview with Single Spark Films, Clarita Roja's poetry, and the two articles on the Cultural Workers Front of Our America (mainly the valid criticisms). But all the stuff was good, we felt, save for the article by Ian Burn (which we felt resolved nothing, added no clarity to the questions, and did not even pose the question correctly). Also, Latin comrades felt the MIR translations could have been better, that they lost something in English through the attempt at a literal translation, rather than capturing the essence and flow of the statement (even if a certain amount of improvisation was necessary that would not revise their line)...

Take care, our greetings to all.

In Solidarity,

Gary Allan Kizer
#31131
Comstock, N. Y.

My dear friends,

Thank you for LEFT CURVE 3 & 4. I have been anxiously waiting. I am gonna be back at school in Kent this fall, "studying" art "history".

My commentary on the issues for what it's worth: issue 3 -- liked MIR poster history; I find Truitt's stuff sometimes above my head, I do not have that much

experience in art theory; E. San Juan provides a good history, though I really am not too keen on the Maoist dogma (look at Ceylon, 1971); Csaba's work on pp. 54-55 is very striking--I really like this type of thing-- great for mental stimulation, the contrast and all; the fragments, notes, misc. I always find interesting-- particularly Christer's letter; PROFIT= DEATH!!!!

Issue 4: Single Spark Films seem to be trapped in the same Maoist dogma as "Prairie Fire" duo. Csaba's "26" is as good as dialectical square #1. May it be reprinted in a sheet we have at Kent called "Guerrilla"? Liked Red Star over Superman very much-- sent Richard a separate letter about all that. Larry Felson's critique of Rubenstein is unfair. I think it's based on religious attachment to Bolshevism, not revolutionary thinking. Sure, most criticism of Russia 1917-1924 by anarchists is shit, but there are some very legitimate points to be considered. Felson's last paragraph reeks of this dogma.

Don't take my criticism of Maoist dogma to be a criticism of Mao or the Chinese people. It's just that most revolutionaries have this religious attachment to one figure or another, be it Mao or Trotsky. And this religious attachment gets them nowhere except into a non-productive sectarian position. They seem to forget about the revolutionary essence and only play up the shiny outside. That's why Mao is popular on the Left today-- he is loved by ex-collegians now "organizing" the class...

Communist greetings,

Cliff Berns
Univ. Heights, Ohio

Dear Csaba Polony:

It was wonderful getting both copies of LEFT CURVE - issues 3 and 4, with your letter. The magazine is GREAT! It's so good to finally see people dealing with these problems, and in new and strong ways...I used to think Walter Benjamin was the last person in my country to really be concerned with the relationship between art and struggle. Now it's happening all over. From New York, Chicago, San Francisco, the magazines come. And the letters. I wish I could be there, to be a part of it! I'm glad you were able to use the piece on the three Vietnamese women writers. The whole Cultural Workers Front of Our America project is exciting. And seeing the MIR poster series laid out like that (my oldest son also has it up in his room, running around the room at the very top of the walls, just below the ceiling)...

Love, struggle,

Margaret Randall
La Habana, Cuba



September 1, 1975

Dear Comrades of Left Curve:

As one of the founders of Smyrna Press and as publisher of Three Red Stars I was disappointed to see Comrade Felson's review in Left Curve cluttered with all the intellectual rubbish that has put Marxist criticism in the literary sandbox. The review consistently quotes out of context to meet ideological criteria that have nothing to do with the work being analyzed.

Let us begin with the critique of the poetry of b. p. Flanigan. Comrade Felson complains that the poems are filled with negative and isolated people. It happens that Flanigan grew up in a tough neighborhood, was a junkie, worked in factories to support himself, and went to Vietnam as a marine. His poetry is a record of those experiences. One of the recurring themes is Flanigan's anguish over the divisions within the working class and the acceptance by the working class of much of the capitalist cultural-materialistic delivery system. His is the reality of Lordstown and Detroit. He will have no truck with the false revolutionary triumphalism or the myopic optimism which is the coin of would-be Marxist critics of Comrade Felson's ilk. Flanigan's reality is the reality which faces the communist organizer who wants to organize real American workers rather than the two-dimensional mannikins of the sectarian broadside.

Comrade Felson's attempted analysis of the Rubenstein story follows another typical route of arguing the politics of the Kronstadt rebellion rather than dealing with what this particular story was all about. Rubenstein is sympathetic to the rebels, but he is also sympathetic to the dilemma facing the Bolsheviks. The plot centers on how the party rallies its rank and file to the final assault. Comrade Felson says the story indicates the Bolsheviks were full of shit, but this is Comrade Felson's own inability to think showing through. Rubenstein ends his story with a tragic image, "Even the brightest man will break his hands and legs, burn his feet, and eventually tear open his heart." First hand accounts tell us that the cadres crawling across the ice to smash the rebellion had tears in their eyes. Comrade Felson appears to have no such compassion. To the profound problems of mortal divisions within the revolution he brings slogans.

In dealing with the work of Georgakas, Comrade Felson's misinterpretations are so strange we must wonder if the man can read. He has no trouble with the first poem which is an homage to the October Revolution, but of course, he cannot understand the second poem which uses strong sexual images to attack German nihilism. Attacks on religion, astrology, hip counter-culture, and bourgeois individualists are seen as despair. The pains of working people are seen as

SMYRNA

Box 841, Stuyvesant Station

PRESS

New York, New York 10009

defeatism. Georgakas calls frequently for armed resistance and clearly identifies Marxist solutions, but Felson demands hagiography, "There is no attempt to show . . . that huge masses of working and oppressed people under the leadership of communists are organizing to seize power." Obviously Comrade Felson does not inhabit the United States the rest of us inhabit. His inability to read the story about the Greek resistance fighter is a clear sign of a reading disability. The main character is a long time card carrying member of the Greek Communist Party associated with its militant wing for decades. His final act of resisting the coup is not a desperate individual act of defiance but an affirmation of the revolutionary line of a party whose official line had led to its cadres being lead placidly to the torture chambers.

The writers Smyrna Press has been publishing for some ten years now are usually considered too political by the literary world which considers political commitment anathema and too literary by the political world which considers any sense of style or sophistication a sell out to the bourgeoisie.

Whose political interests are served by reviews of the type penned by Comrade Felson? The reviewer cannot recognize the very masses he lauds when he sees them written about. He is locked into a pre-deterministic right Hegelian concept of art. We have no doubts where he would be in the Lukacs-Brecht debate. Critics like Comrade Felson have effectively blocked the growth of any proletarian realism in this country. Unconsciously he does the work of the ruling class by spreading slander about cultural workers. What in fact is HIS revolutionary practise? No evidence of it is seen in his review, only a thinly cloaked Menshevikism. His kind of thinking led to the destruction of the German CP so cunningly planned by Herr Hitler and his Nazi Party. We would be regress in our revolutionary commitment if we did not demand a criticism-self-criticism plenary session of the Left Curve staff, Smyrna Press staff, and said Comrade Felson to investigate the roots of this objectively reactionary course and if you don't get the joke by now, we give up! (or is that defeatism?)

For the liberation of the world,

E.B.
Elias Bokhara

Dear Elias Bokhara:

We do "get the joke" but we regret being unable to arrange for the criticism-self-criticism plenary session you requested due to the distance(s) between us. The review of Larry Felson's which we published in Left Curve #4 was meant as a way to encourage debate as we feel it is needed among politically conscious artists. As stated in the editors' note above the article, the review was not meant as an editorial position. We as editors have criticisms of Felson's article-- his one-sided approach for example. We feel that a more dialectical method of criticism, dealing with the work's positive as well as negative aspects, the relation-

ship between form & content, understanding the particular space the work functions in, etc. would be more useful. We were particularly critical of the unwarranted antagonism, fine for enemies, but not for people struggling with these problems like ourselves (& Felson too). We were disappointed, however, to see that you have fallen into the same trap-- rejecting Felson's critique point-blank just as he had rejected 3 Red Stars. For criticism to be of use to people (& it should be of use to all interested writers & not just the parties involved) it can't resort to trashing individuals from the start. We feel that both the review & your reply fall into the same trap. The point should be to clarify issues, an understanding of which would improve our work, politically & artistically.

Nevertheless, there are some important issues underlying this little exchange which should be brought out, such as: the function of socially conscious art, is it to describe "objectively" a personal experience (b.p. Flanagan) or is it also necessary to distil the social essence beyond personal experience (we feel it should be both)? What exactly is "partisan" writing (Engels), can our subjective sympathies for a human dilemma be the main determining factor in our approach (Rubenstein) or would it be better for that dilemma to be juxtaposed to the tragic yet objectively necessary decisions which occur in history - decisions which require a clear stand? Or is it enough to express an outrage through a valiant, yet nevertheless individual act of armed defiance? Or would a story be better, more meaningful, if that act was placed more clearly within the context of the overall historical struggle for liberation? A struggle which is going forward in Greece today (as it is the world over), partly due to the mistakes of the past? (Georgakas)

Those are just some of the specifics, but other larger questions also come up: the question of directness of art in political work, the place for reflective work (good literature of lasting historical value) & applicability to needs of organizing. This last question is really a question of categories - both are needed.

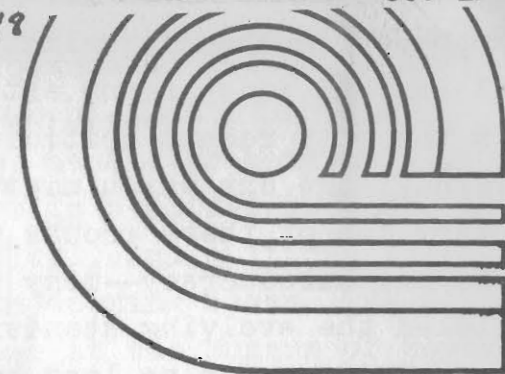
We can sympathize with the dilemma of Smyra Press in being "too political by the literary world... and too literary by the political world." We've also experienced similar problems. But by doing so doesn't mean that we want to face the problem one-sidedly and dismiss "orthodox" Marxist approaches which view art as being an appendage to revolutionary organizing under party control - that whole question must be faced by all artists who take their politics and art seriously.

You also allude to the Lukacs-Brecht debate, but we wish you would have elaborated a bit since we're not quite sure which side you take either (which would seem to imply that there's a right & wrong side here). From the context it is used in your letter it seems that Lukacs=Stalinist Orthodoxy, Brecht=Modernist flexibility(?). However, the way that we understand the debate, it was really a debate about style of literature (Lukacs=reflective Classical form, expressing a historical "Totality", etc. vs. Brecht=directness, audience engagement aimed at provoking action). We're not sure which side your writers would fall under, or even if they fall within the parameters of the debate.

We do hope this letter will be taken in the spirit of comradely criticism (no pun implied this time). Please keep us informed about your activities.

Fraternally,

Editors of Left Curve



Dear Csaba,

We've been in Belgrade two weeks now and have just concluded a four-day seminar on cultural imperialism, hosted by the Student Cultural Center. It's hardly enough time to get more than a rough idea of art and the problems of artists in Yugoslavia, but this may provide a brief introduction. The Student Center itself is a result of 68, since students here were experiencing many of the same frustrations, many of the same institutional hat-tricks and bureaucratic betrayals of the workers. (Worker self-management may be working better in Yugoslavia than in most socialist countries, but it is constantly diluted, reified by the state bureaucracy. Not that the bureaucracy is necessarily opposed to the workers, as it is in the U.S., merely that it tends to get top-heavy-- this "inefficiency" leading to a reification of the bureaucracy itself, the power of administration.) Anyway, the Student Center was established in 71, and includes facilities for a number of activities, including an art gallery, and has one of the largest periodical libraries in Europe. (Never forget this about imperialism: "dependent" regions generally know more about us than we about them, the real prize of arrogance. The two of us were rather stupid to think that all we had to concern ourselves with was a working knowledge of the art world of the West.) The Center is funded by the University of Belgrade and the Association for the City and the Republic, both public state institutions. It doesn't get much money from either. In fact, the Center has become a kind of prisonhouse of dissent; that is, it has become an institutionally (financially) sanctioned means for students, and particularly artists (most of whom are no longer students), to register some kind of dissent, but a means which virtually excludes all other means. Almost everyone here works for the bureaucracy in one way or another, and artists and others involved in art (critics, historians, curators, directors of the Center, etc.) are no exception. The need to work through institutions, the virtual impossibility of independent organization and action, is as overbearing here as it is in the U.S., though for different reasons. (Bureaucratic support for artists in particular has largely replaced the need for a

"market" in the capitalist sense.) This situation helps explain the history of independent art groups here in the last decade or so, as well as the most recent criticism of the art bureaucracy for its refusal to acknowledge art which might embody self-management. (Of course not every one of these groups was intentionally political, or critical of the art bureaucracy--many were short-lived and their work closely paralleled the evolving standardization of "international art".) Having been ignored for so long by the West, while being culturally dependent on the West, has led some of the more ardent (read: defensive) supporters of Yugoslav culture to claim that Conceptual Art (in connection with Grup OHO) or Op Art (in connection with the 50s "New Trends" movement) is historically indebted to Yugoslavia. Against the backdrop of "international", formal, and ultimately imperialistic modernist cultural history this may score a few points in the West. But persons less "officially" tied to the administration of the Student Center have other ideas--namely that Yugoslavia's cultural future should in no basic way resemble its Paris--and recently, New York--dependent--past. For us, the latter perspective acknowledges and strengthens the local cultural context of Yugoslav art of the 50s and 60s, the former runs the risk of sacrificing this cultural identity to Western-oriented "fame" and "prestige"--by now a gratuitous spit in the historical ocean. So the Student Center provides the old answer: something is better than nothing. But presumably its even a little more optimistic than this, since the artists we've met at the Center, apparently among the few artists actually devoted to undermining the imperialism of American/European art and to at least trying to link art with class consciousness, these artists aren't in fact supported by the bureaucracy. Because of their work they have been excluded from this privilege--as are most artists doing newer kinds of art (the bureaucracy makes little distinction among newer kinds of art, thereby lending credence to the idea that avant-garde art has "revolutionary" potential, even if its bourgeois art)--though they do get an occasional prize (they know some of the right people), and they do get to lecture occasionally, the token "niggers" of dissent. With the Center, then, they now have a place to show their work fairly regularly; and they have a generally receptive audience as well, even if not too many "workers" show up. Not that their work can change very much, of course. Which is the overwhelming impression we've been left with: something is better than nothing, yes, how true, but it's all so frustrating, the same ground covered time and again, the same discussions, the same exhibitions, "art and revolution" "art and revolution". (The

art in factories is generally Impressionism, or so we've been told, the universal cultural solvent.) In this sense we felt as if we'd never left New York, or our own discussions about "art and revolution", our own strategies for The Fox, the infinitesimally slow, hand over hand pull against the bureaucracy and the market. But that is a difference, the market. Yugoslavia is a socialist country after all, and cultural institutions are "responsible" in some sense to the working class. We have a friend, a woman, one of many women in power at the Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade, who periodically has to justify the museum's activities to representatives of the workers. This seems to be another instance, however, where theory takes precedence over praxis, since the discussions apparently don't get very far--our friend feeling as if the representatives need a great deal more education, and the representatives feeling as if she is too "abstract". Actually, this is a rather interesting educational situation, since the representatives do have to learn about, that is, internalize to one degree or another, highly bourgeois art simply to be able to criticize it from a class point of view; while the museum staff should realize that in educating the representatives it should ideally be signing its own death warrant as the bastion of Modern Art, the Western avant-garde. This self-destruction of Modern Art will be rather difficult, however, since Official Art, the art singled out for prizes each year by the bureaucracy, is like every student-show you've ever seen at art schools in the U.S.--and we don't mean the graduating class. We went to this year's Official Exhibition and it was, once again we understand, truly hopeless, in the most despairing sense of the word. These artists weren't even students, no excuse there, they were fully-trained artists "working for" the bureaucracy. And most of them were party-line Modernists, not good Modernists mind you, but Modernists nevertheless. (There is a joke about one Yugoslav artist who went to Paris during the early 20s--he became a "6th hand" Cubist.)

So what's left to say?...all the rest, everything...This is at best a mixed review, mostly just a gut reaction (on a Serbo-Croatian typewriter), since it's a bit sad seeing all the frustration here, at least among the people close to us, the people who invited us here and those we've spoken with most since we've been here, and since a harder historical analysis, a second look, would have to be much longer and would take a great deal more reading and talking. But not having such information at our finger-tips reiterates the idea of us as imperialists: it gets back to the tendency for us, and other artists in the U.S., to take our imperialism for granted, such that we expect Yugoslavs to know more about

us than we about them. (Try to imagine a Yugoslav artist in New York (or San Francisco for that matter), conducting a similar seminar on imperialism, using Yugoslav artists. Question: how many Yugoslav artists do you know of? Probably none, though there are quite a few, and the connections between European art, which Yugoslavs contribute to, and American art, are much more complicated than first meets the eye.) Perhaps we helped to rectify this situation a bit--certainly future co-operation between New York and Belgrade seems the most optimistic result of the seminars--but imperialism clearly runs silent as well as deep. While we weren't completely naive about our imperialism (we knew that our seminars necessarily reiterated and depended upon a local interest in New York art), while we did our best to outwit it, we still have a long way to go.

NB. Perhaps this can serve as an introduction to a more in-depth look at the situation here, the course of the seminars, as well as the work of those as yet unnamed artist-friends of ours. We will suggest that they send you some work on their own; but they are always dependent on the availability of free translations into English by sympathetic friends. Which is to say, we would have liked to include their work with this letter, but nothing was translated. There is an upcoming show, the "20th October", being held at the Student Center, which largely consists of the work of those artists we've been talking about. The poster is OK to look at, though it's in Serbo-Croatian. At any rate the show is worth covering, at least the more politically inclined texts. It would probably be good for everyone if you also contacted them personally, and opened up some channels of communication. We really can't do more than that ourselves right now.

Sincerely,

Michael Coris
Andrew Menard

Student Cultural Center Gallery
Maršala Tita 48
11000 Beograd,
Yugoslavia

"CONFESSIONS"*

Your favorite virtue—Simplicity.
Your favorite virtue in man—Strength.
Your favorite virtue in woman—Weakness.
Your chief characteristic—Singleness of purpose.
Your idea of happiness—To fight.
Your idea of misery—Submission.
The vice you excuse most—Gullibility.
The vice you detest most—Servility.
Your pet aversion—Martin Tupper.
Favorite occupation—Bookworming.
Poet—Shakespeare, Aeschylus, Goethe.
Prose writer—Diderot.
Hero—Spartacus, Kepler.
Heroine—Gretchen.
Flower—Daphne.
Color—Red.
Name—Laura, Jenny.
Dish—Fish.
Favorite maxim—*Nihil humanum a me alienum puto* [I regard nothing human as alien to me].
Favorite motto—*De omnibus dubitandum* [doubt everything].

*This was a game played by Marx and his daughters, Laura and Jenny, in which he supplied the answer to their questions.—Ed.

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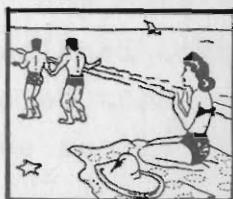
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CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN CURL, poet and carpenter, lives in Berkeley... ALBRECHT D., coordinator of Reflection Press, lives in West Germany... TIM DRESCHER, a teacher at San Jose State, was the editor of Mural Manual; How to Paint Murals for Street Corner, Community Center, and Classroom... BRUCE KAIPER is a former union organizer, a welder, and a print maker. He is presently giving slide-shows with a collective called "On Our Own Time"... RUCHELL MAGEE's struggle is well known. He has been a prisoner since 1963 when he was arrested and framed on a \$10 robbery/kidnap charge... RICHARD OLSEN and CSABA POLONY are editors of Left Curve... MICHAEL PETERSON is incarcerated at the Great Meadows Corr. Fac. at Comstock, N. Y. His poems have appeared in Folio, Niagra Magazine, and the Inner Voice, a prison newsletter of which he is a co-editor... MARGARET RANDALL lives in Havana, Cuba. She is the author of a number of books and of poems and articles that have appeared in periodicals throughout Latin America and the U.S.... CLARITA ROJA is a revolutionary and a poet in the Philippines... ROGER TAUS is employed as a production worker in a Los Angeles factory. He is presently at work on a long manuscript of poems, The Headstrong Porter, from which the poems in this issue were taken... RON WHITE is an x-N. Y. artist who has recently moved to L. A. Another one of his articles is to appear in the Fox (Vol. 1, No. 2).

"BY ACTING ON THE EXTERNAL
WORLD AND CHANGING IT, (MAN)
AT THE SAME TIME CHANGES
HIS OWN NATURE."

-- K. Marx (Capital)