

UPFRONT

A PUBLICATION OF POLITICAL ART
DOCUMENTATION/DISTRIBUTION

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON DISPLACEMENT

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A PUBLICATION OF
POLITICAL ART
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November 1985

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL: UPFRONT ABROAD
IN MEMORIAM: Aaron Roseman 1
HOMELESS IN NEW YORK:
The Art of Caring, Edited by Maggi
Sutherland 2
IMAGES OF DISPLACEMENT:
Elizabeth Kulas and Maggi Sutherland 8
COALITION:
We Want It, We Need It, We Ain't Got
It Yet,
By Jim Traub, Charles Frederick, Susan
Perlstein, Pregones, Lucy R. Lippard 22
SECOND SUNDAYS
AGING & AGELESS: Irving Wexler and
Helga Kopperl 24
WOMEN WORKING OUT:
Joan Jonas, Diane Torr, Zawole Zollar . 26
OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND (III):
Lesbian and Gay Performance
(Split Britches, Keegan and Lloyd) by
Marguerite Bunyan 28
LUNACY AND LAUGHTER:
Political Clowning 31
IT ONLY HURTS WHEN YOU VOTE:
Fourth Wall Political Theatre 34
ART AND APARTHEID 36
LA LUCHA CONTINUA:
Murals on the Lower East Side, by Eva
Cockcroft 38
GUERRILLA GIRLS:
Feminism '80s Style 40
INTERNATIONAL NEWS 42



Panangis Ni Ina, Adi Baeris Sartos

Although PADD is a New York-based organization, we see UPFRONT as our cultural attaché, moving out to the rest of the U.S. and the world. The Left in this country is terribly fragmented, and its activities are little known elsewhere. Culture offers new ways to act and interact—the glue for a new international activist collage.

In May, 1985, PADD member Susan Crowe went to the Philippines to visit an old friend. She took with her copies of UPFRONT and has written the following account of their reception. We hope this will be the first of many reports on responses from abroad to our work.

"My friend has lived in the Philippines for seven years—five in Davao City on the island of Mindanao, and two in Quezon City/Metro Manila. Over that time she has become increasingly politically aware of the injustices that surround her, and the role of the U.S. government, through supporting the Marcos government and its corrupt policies (crony capitalism). She now works with human rights groups.

"As I packed my bags, I kept recalling the question my friend and her husband asked frequently: "Do you think there will ever be a revolution or uprising in the States?" I always answered No, that the majority of people here are still too comfortable, or think they are, to bother questioning the actions of their government or to explore the reasons why some people might not agree. But . . . I would add that there is a growing number of people who see the injustices in our society and question the foreign policy of our government. Many of my friends who are artists speak out through their art, whether it be painting, writing, or performance.

"To reinforce this statement, I packed several issues of UPFRONT, Sue Coe's and Holly Metz's *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, and slides from State of Mind/State of the Union's "Choice Works" exhibition (work by women on reproductive rights; see UPFRONT No. 10).

"The day after I arrived in Manila, I attended a seminar and met Filipino activists, artists, teachers, and church people. During my three weeks in the Philippines, I was constantly asked to share the slides and publications. On the whole, Filipino artists and activists responded to UPFRONT with great curiosity; they were surprised that artists in the States were politically aware and socially concerned and showed it in their work. (Central American issues especially interested them; most Filipino activists are watching the situation in Nicaragua very closely.)

"Not only were people impressed that an organization like PADD existed, but they were amazed that we had an office, and praised the quality and content of UPFRONT. I noticed, while giving a slide presentation to GABRIELA—a Manila-based coalition of women activists' organizations—that the entire audience had been given xeroxed copies of UPFRONT. Even on the way to the airport, one of the participants intercepted us to hand me slides of Filipino work, saying, "We want members of your group to know that we are active too. We want them to know what is going on in the Philippines." Upon my return, I sent off many more issues of UPFRONT, and will continue to do so."

EDITORIAL: Upfront Abroad



photo: Clarissa Sligh

Time Does Not Dry It, Aaron Roseman

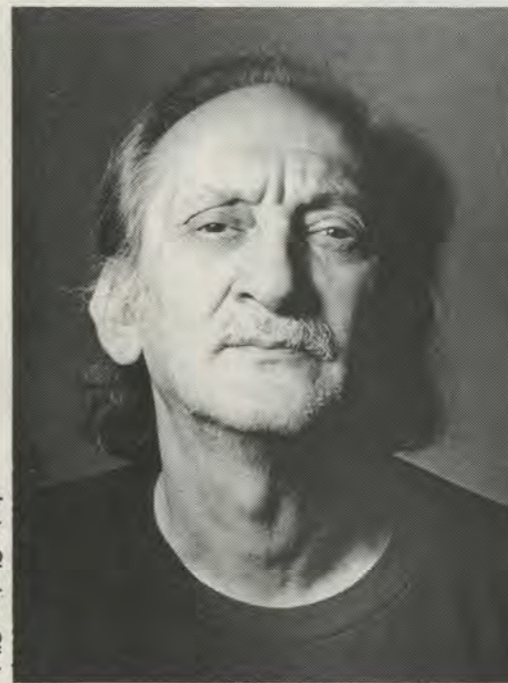


photo: Clarissa Sligh

Aaron Roseman

1922-1985

Aaron Roseman died of lung cancer in November at the age of 62. With his wife, artist Clarissa Sligh, he was committed to art activism. Aaron participated in the Artworkers Coalition, Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, worked with Amiri Baraka in the Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union, supported Ad Hoc Artists, PADD, and Artists Call. It was Aaron's banners that floated high across West Broadway during Artist Call's *Verdadera Avenida de las Americas* in January 1984. He was the driving force behind "The People's Monument" at the November 12 march against intervention in Washington, in 1983, and worked on the PAC-SAM performance/sculpture for April 20, 1985, though he was already ill.

Roseman was raised in Detroit, where at the age of 20 he began to make woodcuts. He said he was "born in the radical movement" and was "involved in politics from age 12"; his father was a union man, a Bundist, and Aaron himself worked as a tool-and-die maker, was a shop steward, then organizer for the UAW. In 1946 he moved to Chicago and, while working for Douglas Aircraft, took a 6-month drawing class at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he met artists—lots of them, including Leon Golub and Nancy Spero, Irving Petlin, and Joan Mitchell. He was part of the alternative Momentum Group, made jewelry, and theatre sets, painted, showed, and took part in the "Monster School." He moved to New York in 1958, hung out at the Cedar Bar, worked as an engineer, and continued to paint.

It was not, however, until the '70s that Aaron began to "mix art and politics." He blamed the long separation on the fact that he had been a Trotskyist, following the line that such a mixture was "incorrect," that because the proletariat had not yet come to power, all art was bourgeois. The drawing reproduced here is one of the last three he made, after photographs of recent events in El Salvador. We will remember and miss Aaron's passion for both art and politics, his sweetness and his hard work.

(Thanks to Kelly Jones for quotes from her October, 1985 interview with Roseman.)



HOMELESSNESS:

Edited by Maggi Sutherland

You don't have to be clairvoyant to understand the relationship between housing cuts and an old woman out on the street. You can talk to her and find out that she just got squeezed out of her apartment as it went up in rent, or was converted into a cooperative or condominium of some kind . . . From the people who man the missions where drifters eat and sleep, from the police on the beat who keep them in line, comes the word that the

recession has changed the caliber of their clientele . . . From Denver's Department of Social Services: "We're seeing people who are well-educated, with skills, who have just exhausted their unemployment compensation." (Mario Cuomo, 1933/1983—*Never Again, A Report to the National Governor's Association Task Force on the Homeless*, Portland, Maine, 1983, p. 36,33.)

Home for the Homeless Stencil Project, Storefront for Art & Architecture



THE ART OF CARING



Homelessness is an escalating problem in America. The people who traditionally have been homeless in this society—the bums, the winos—are now sharing their sidewalks with a new population: the unemployed, the insane, and whole families. One reason is that little housing is being built in the U.S. that is affordable by people with middle and lower incomes. Condos go to the wealthy. Low-rent neighborhoods are being invaded by the gentrifiers, often with artists serving as the front line, driving up

prices and squeezing out the poor. The situation in New York City is critical now, because there is scarcely any low-rental housing left. People are forced to struggle among themselves for shelter, and the people who can least afford to lose are losing.

As part of the Storefront project introduced below by Kim Higgins, artists interviewed homeless people, worked in soup kitchens, and visited shelters. The section following the introduction consists of excerpts from that project. —M.S.





East Village, Lauren Sunstein



Stencil Project

photo: Jeffrey Schwarz

The public project entitled "Homeless at Home," organized by the Storefront for Art and Architecture, originated from the recognition that Home is an essential foundation of human existence. Those without a home are wrongly alienated from society and therefore denied the dignity and justice necessary for healthy and productive integration with others. With this in mind, the "Homeless at Home" project strives to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To motivate, mobilize, and provide a forum for creative efforts to address the problem of homelessness.
2. To increase public awareness and understanding of homelessness.
3. To stimulate individual and public action on behalf of the homeless.

Since conception of the project in 1983 and the organization of a planning committee in April, 1984, the main work has been geared toward the formation of a solid core of creative people who have developed an understanding of the complex issues associated with homelessness. These people will use creative talents and abilities to communicate the specific needs to the public.

The "Stencil Show" in October, 1985, was the public introduction of the project. Artists created stencils on the issues surrounding homelessness and sprayed them on the streets and walls of New York. The effort continues through organized discussion groups, and exhibitions are planned. In March of 1986, there will

be a show of models and drawings of buildings, shelters, houses, and rooms designed specifically to meet the needs of the homeless. In May, there will be an exhibition of art in all media depicting persuasive and positive images addressing the basic physical and emotional elements that form an individual's conception of HOME.

Through these exhibitions, we will attempt to find the most effective forms for dialogue with the general public. Those that prove most successful will be included in a major "Exposition" scheduled for Fall of 1986. The "Exposition" will take place in a busy public space where art is not usually exhibited, so it can reach all kinds of people. Grand Central Station would be ideal for size and symbolism. For years, its unused tunnels have sheltered a large homeless population. Others displayed in the exhibition will include: photo and written documentation depicting the history of Home in America; photos and information about the best current programs and facilities for the homeless in the U.S.; and photo documentation of the existing living conditions and lives of individual homeless people in New York City.

It is our hope that the "Exposition" will most directly stimulate public action. Once individuals and public sector agree to work together, we can begin effectively to assault the entire problem, to work towards some long term solutions, to eliminate homelessness in America. For more information, please contact the Storefront for Art and Architecture, 51 Prince St., NYC 10013 (212-431-5795).

—Kim Higgins, Co-Director, The Homeless Project

THE SHELTERS

Street dwellers exploit the surplus utility, the "waste" potential, of public facilities in the interest of personal survival. They "misuse" waiting rooms to sleep in, restrooms for doing laundry, garbage dumpsters for storage in, subways to pass the night safely... cultures have ways of stigmatizing waste products in powerfully negative terms. Waste defiles, it corrupts, it pollutes. Things and persons classified as waste do so likewise.

(Mario Cuomo, *Ibid.*, p.27)

December 2, 1985: Mayor Koch's order to take people off the streets when the temperature dips below 32° is implemented for the first time. 8,084 homeless people, some against their will, are taken to City shelters. It's the largest number since the Depression. In northern Brooklyn, along the border between Greenpoint and Williamsburg, a barbed wire fence encircles a building complex. Dimly lit, with many of the windows cemented up, the site is forbidding. It is the former Greenpoint Hospital and presently a men's shelter run by the city. The men are told by the guards to wear their shoes and to sleep with their coats under their pillows. From the shelter, they are turned out each morning to wander the streets of Williamsburg. The city has recently expanded by 150 the number of homeless from Manhattan bused into this shelter. Other shelters in Brooklyn have been established in East New York, Williamsburg, Fort Greene, and there are rumors of a shelter to be opened in Bushwick. All are areas that already suffer from severe housing problems and an inadequate supply of services. Assemblyman Vito Lopez, within whose district these shelters fall, worries that with 47% of his constituency already on public assistance, the additional homeless will intensify the crisis. The homeless bring with them not only the enormous problem of housing, but many need medical care, mental health care, and drug rehabilitation.

Williamsburg/Greenpoint already has its own homeless population. Arson and the proclivity of landlords to permit the gradual deterioration of buildings to the point of uninhabitability are the traditional causes of homelessness. And there are the "hidden homeless": families doubled or tripled in apartments. They may be camping out with relatives or friends whose patience and welcome will surely wear out at some point. Added to these factors is

the increased desirability of Williamsburg as a refuge from the exorbitant rents of Manhattan.

Mary and Emilio Gonzales have been married twenty years. She is, in Emilio's words, "a California girl." Emilio is from Puerto Rico. For years they lived on Ellery Street in Williamsburg. Mary had been trained under CETA. She wanted computer training, and qualified, but had to settle for training as a billing clerk. Emilio, an ace carpenter, had his own construction company.

The Friday night before Thanksgiving two years ago, they returned home to find their building in flames. Both of them ran into the burning building. "I don't have any children," Mary said, "but I had a cat. And I loved that cat." She suffered from smoke inhalation. Emilio tried to rescue a neighbor, an alcoholic whom no one had warned, and was burned. Everything they owned was destroyed, including all of Emilio's carpentry equipment. Mary called her job to explain the tragedy and take the three days before Thanksgiving as "sick days" to recover from the smoke inhalation. When she returned to work the following Monday, she was informed that she had been laid off.

"We never got back on our feet," she explains. They tried Puerto Rico, where Emilio's mother lives, but high unemployment there drove them back to New York. They have stayed in abandoned houses where rats crawled on them, and have stayed in city shelters, to which they will not return. They prefer to walk all night. They have been mugged twice. The second time, Emilio's arm was broken.

Mary admits she has an alcohol problem. This is not atypical. In their experience, many homeless turn to alcohol or drugs. Mary explains, "At a certain point you don't care anymore, you just don't care." Mary speaks in slow deliberate words and wants to be understood correctly. "I'm not proud of this. I've got it under control now. I've realized that now I'm number one." She looks at Emilio. "I love my husband very much. He understands. I have to look after myself."

At 38, Mary looks considerably older. She says, "I don't got out there fighting. I want a peaceful life." This they feel they have found at Most Holy Trinity Shelter. For them the cleanliness and good food are only part of it. "Here," Emilio says, "it is one big family."—Carol Bundy.



photo: Mel Rosenthal



Women in Shelter, George Cohen



Roberto Clemente Shelter, George Cohen

In 1983, Mary Agnes Smith and Catherine Hazard curated a show, "Food for the Soup Kitchens," at Fashion Moda, in the Bronx; proceeds went to the University Soup Kitchen. For over a year, she and other artists staffed the University Soup Kitchen every Sunday, until it was taken over by New York University.

Three years ago I volunteered to work for an evening at the 13th Street Women's Shelter. I had thought that I'd sit in a small booth and watch sleeping women all night. Instead, I and two other volunteers sat around a big table in the sitting room as the women came in, sat with us, and talked. I listened, afraid to speak. Talking to the homeless as *people* threatened me. Then Barbara sat down next to me, and began to talk. She had been an actress, traveling all through the United States and Europe with acting troupes. She worked on Broadway doing small parts, which became fewer and fewer, so she retired. After a short trip to Florida to see her mother, she returned to find that she had been moved out of her apartment. Finding another apartment was impossible, so she moved onto the street. About 4 AM, she said, "Aliens have landed on earth. They are everywhere, in government, arts, science, everywhere. You can spot them easily once you learn how. The way to find out how is to watch cartoons on TV. The messages are there." I understood immediately what she meant. I, too, knew people who seemed like aliens, or at least, not human. When I left in the morning, I walked down Sixth Avenue. A street person, a mad young man, lunged right in front of me and screamed in my face. Through talking with Barbara, I had lost that invulnerability to pain that I had and he and I were suddenly on the same level. I thought, there but for the grace of God, go I.

—Mary Agnes Smith



Soup Kitchen, George Cohen

WELFARE HOTELS

Nearly half the tenants in New York City currently spend at least 30% of their gross income for rent and utilities. In 1981, 31% of all renters spent more than 40% of their income for rent. . . . Among households receiving public assistance, the figure is 72% . . . Fully 38% of all renters with incomes under \$6500 live in dilapidated or severely deteriorated housing. . . . Financial sacrifice by poor New Yorkers does not guarantee occupancy of adequate housing.

(Mario Cuomo, *Ibid.*, p. 40.)

The Storms—Dick, Abigail, and their six children—have lived on the eighth floor of the Martinique hotel for two years. They are Christians, and their twelve years of marriage have been nomadic, spent traveling around the States making money by picking crops and doing odd jobs. Abigail's ambition is to be a country western singer, singing the songs her husband writes. As they traveled, she took her guitar into bars, played and passed the hat. It's a style of living that is fast becoming harder to maintain. The Storms came to New York in September of 1982, hoping to find the "big break" that this city promises so many. Ill prepared for the costs of New York, they eventually wound up living in an abandoned pier on the West Side. Someone saw them and called the authorities. The Storms were given a hard choice: go on welfare, or lose your children. They went on welfare for the first time in their lives and moved to the Martinique on Broadway and West 32nd Street.

The welfare housing allowance for a family the size of the Storms' is \$385 a month, which is much too low for an apartment in New York. For the two years that the Storms have lived in the hotel, the city has paid \$70,000 in rent. Once, during the first year, they woke up to smoke. Someone had taken a trashcan and set it on fire right outside their door. The Fire Department soaked the rugs putting out the fire. The Storms couldn't get the hotel to replace them. They lived with the wet rugs for over a month. Finally, Crisis Intervention sent Health Department inspectors to check for violations. They ordered the hotel to replace the rugs, because of the danger of the children developing a heart fungus from them. It was after this that Abigail became an activist.

The legacy of the English Poor Laws with its invidious distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. . . . demanded that relief had to be made so onerous, so degrading, as to ensure that it would be an option of desecration. . . . In this way, all but the "truly needy" would be deterred.

(Mario Cuomo, *Ibid.*, p. 26.)

Abigail thinks that because of her background, she became vocal. "It's hard to get other people here to say anything, because most of them have lived in the welfare system for so long. If people complain about things, the hotel management threatens to evict them. It's demoralizing. You go to the office and you can sit for hours, before anyone even calls your name. I was there once, and they were trying to send this pregnant woman to a shelter. I told her, 'You don't have to go there. By law they have to put you in a hotel.' People just don't know and they keep you ignorant. Sometimes the Emergency Assistance Unit sends people to shelters they know are full, or won't accept them, just to make it look like they're doing something."

Right now, the Storms and Prim Green are the main activists in the hotel, watchdogging the management, and making sure people know their rights. They've contacted public officials, trying to enact a plan where the city would put a 1% surtax on all corporate landlords' rents. The money would go toward a trust fund that would be used to ease the housing situation. So far, the plan is in limbo. Abigail called up Mayor Koch to tell him about it, and he said, "Why the big stink all of a sudden? You people have always lived like this." Abigail would like to move, but also feels living on the outside would make it difficult to fight for the homeless' rights: "People only listen to you if you have money or a compelling interest."

(From an interview with the Storms, by Maggi Sutherland.)



151st Street Shelter, George Cohen

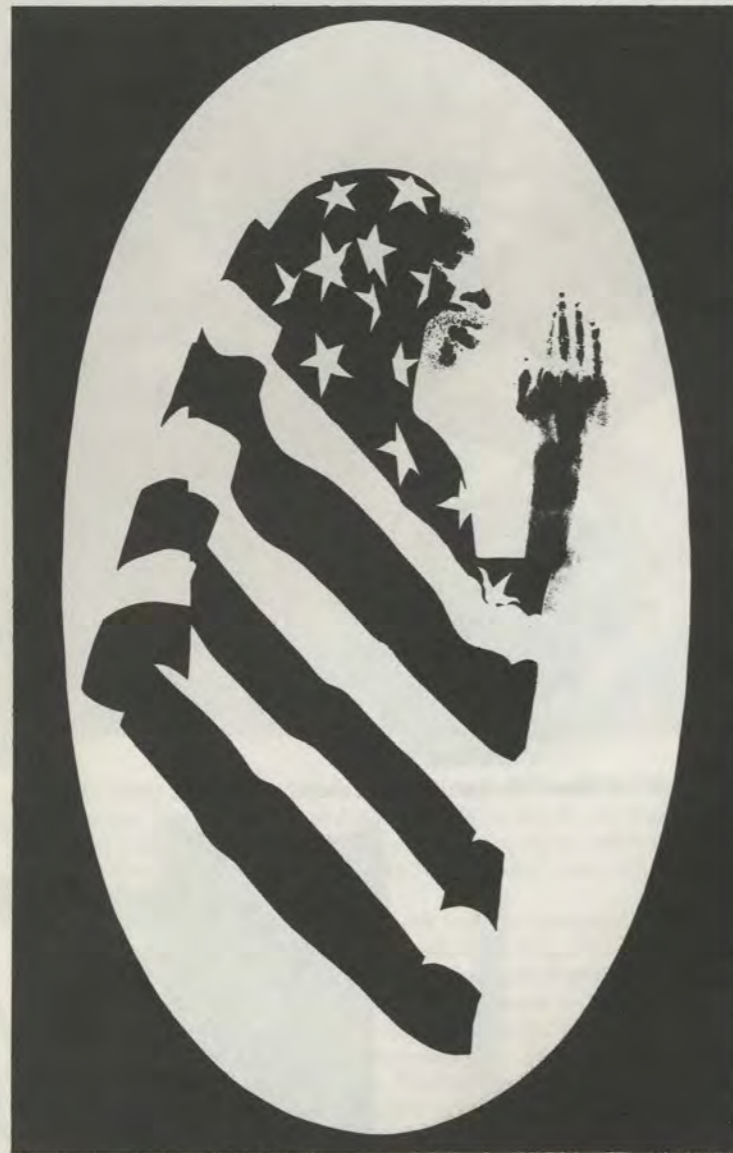


Carter Hotel, Marilynne Herbert

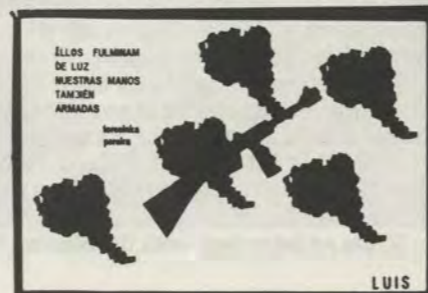
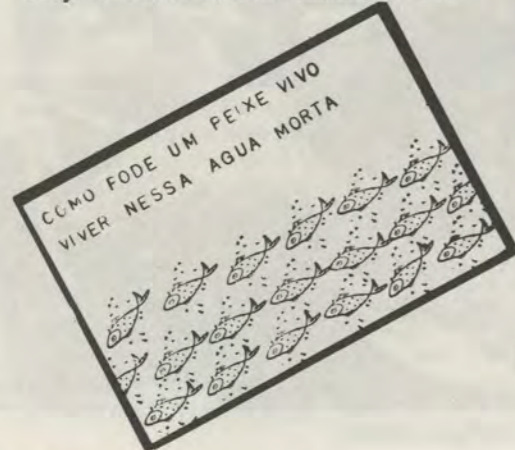
DISPLAC

"A displaced person: one living in a foreign country who has been driven from his (or her) homeland by war or tyranny."

—American Heritage Dictionary



Pray For America, David Hammons, 1969



From its very origins the U.S. has been a land of displaced peoples. It was founded on an act of displacement—the genocidal removal of American Indians by warfare, slaughter and enforced migration. Our earliest settlers came here to escape religious persecution and famine. Slaves by the hundreds of thousands were forcibly brought to these shores shackled in the holds of slave-ships from Africa. And even now, in its current reactionary stage, America continues to offer the myth of asylum for millions of refugees seeking opportunity and freedom from oppression and war.

In the past few decades displacement has profoundly broadened its definition and impact as an urban, national and global problem. Today it strikes not only at refugees from war and dictatorial regimes, but at people in their own countries. Thus, it can range in form from destruction of whole communities by means of gentrification, through widespread homelessness in urban centers, to the harassment of immigrants in the U.S., the denial of land and water rights to American Indians, and the violent removal of blacks in apartheid South Africa to impoverished outlying areas. We see it too in our rural areas, where farmers are losing their lands through foreclosures to huge "agribusinesses."

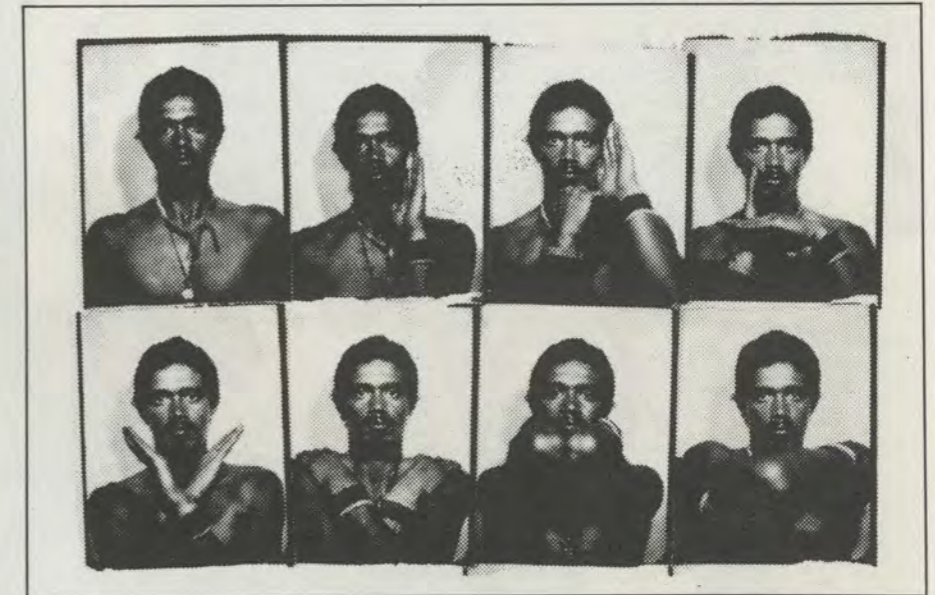
Here in our own city—the world's richest—the plight of the displaced is tragically underlined in the thousands of homeless wandering the streets or living in squalid welfare ho-

EMENT

tels; the older people suffering under appalling conditions in nursing homes; the refugees from authoritarian regimes; the mentally ill deinstitutionalized without medical care or means of support. Its effects on those displaced are despair, disease, alienation, hunger, hopelessness and premature death. Or conversely, as more people understand the problem, it can engender a struggle on the part of groups or individuals who support the right of the displaced to survival and a full measure of justice.

As socially conscious artists, we are aware that displacement, far from being a "natural" phenomenon, is structurally inherent in systems of government rule that place the greed of multinational corporations, banks, and real estate interests over human needs. Greed over need! We see this in our own personal lives as neighborhood after neighborhood (from Soho to Loisaida) become high-rent enclaves of the wealthy under the guise of "urban renewal." So it is that artists who lose their homes through gentrification join the ranks of the displaced.

In a very real sense, then, displacement—whether by eviction, foreclosure or apartheid—is a declaration of war by governments and corporations against their own peoples. Semantically, as well as physically and psychically, terms are redefined, so that "ethics" in the age of Reagan becomes the law of the strongest; welfare recipients are called "cheats"; and the homeless branded "lazy" or



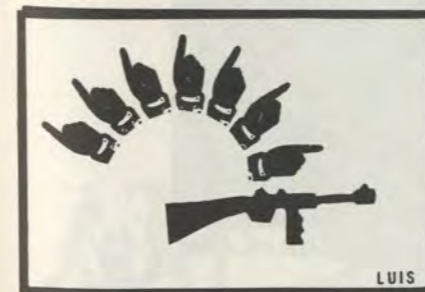
The Indications, Auto-Portrait Times Square, NYC, p 1984; Gregory is a homeless person. This is his own piece. Leon Klayman

"incompetent." And this displacement of terms, by which the victim is blamed for his/her victimization, becomes as inhuman a weapon as the dispossession of wealth or land itself.

Several months ago, recognizing the need for cultural activists to become more active in the struggle against displacement, PADD addressed an appeal to artists/writers/performers in New York and beyond for artworks in all styles and medias that dealt with this subject. These artworks—we wrote—would be used in a variety of ways: for UPFRONT and other art-activist publications; for

general distribution through our Archives; and as an overall resource for groups working with the displaced here and elsewhere. The following portfolio of artworks represents only a few of the outpouring of paintings, drawings, photos, stencils, slides, page art, video, performance and street-theatre images that came to PADD in response to our appeal. We hope that these works throw important light on a broad scope of human oppression and, beyond that, move audiences from empathy and indignancy to active involvement in social change.

—Elizabeth Kulas and Maggi Sutherland



Luis, Brasil



Vietnamese Man—Long Island, Mel Rosenthal

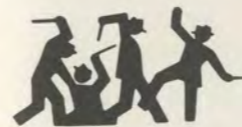


South Africa 1985, Catherine Allport

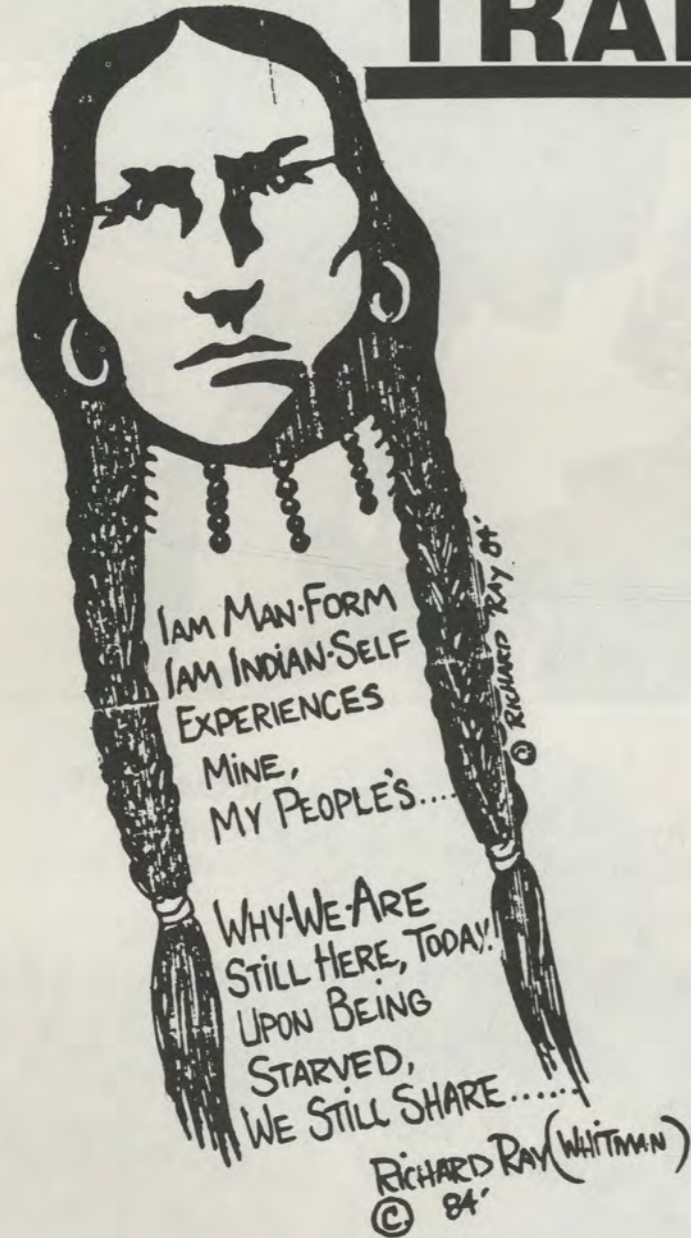
"Not only have people been displaced by war, but by the greed of their own governments . . . it's as if they have declared war on their own people."



Jon Peterson



NO MORE TRAIL of TEARS



*in our language
there is no word for Re-location
only to disappear,
go away.*

Only the Names Remain

The last full blood Tasmanian was a woman who died in 1887, and yellow was Van Gogh's favorite color, and you are the night with your hair in a white bowl, you fly by me, your cuff wet with dew.

I think of the calendar Jesus tacked to the wall of a dream, scratching the hieroglyphics of the names that we give to each other, Pile of Wood. Bird Faraway. Splintered Bone and Tired of Being Well Dressed.

In a room that smells of my own humanness, my feet stink, don't ask me why. I have walls to climb, fingernails to chew and several questions to ask. Who is it that keeps coming along behind me and unplugging my words?

Where are you?
I am here slipping lines inbetween my words and not listening to the nose upon my face.

Joe Nevaquaya



Street Chief, Richard Ray Whitman

Street Chief

The non-Indian vantage point (attitude) of always having to change those different to be like them (capitalist, industrialist, christians, etc.) as though they can mold our contentment, happiness.

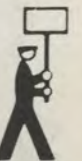
Until they accept us as "significant people" (on our terms), we resist and remain at variance with Dominant Society. They have to begin to deal with this *Attitude* towards the natural world also.

The "survivor" in this photo represents many tribes, nations, broken hearts, vanished dreams. He is the living evidence of how we cannot be programmed for progress and custom killings.....

"For All My Relations"
Richard Whitman

**OH!
THOSE SOUTH
AFRICAN
HOME LANDS
YOU
IMPOSE
U. S.
INDIAN
RESERVATIONS**

© 1985 Edgar Heap Of Birds





- It is estimated that $\frac{1}{3}$ of Metro/Manila's population are slum dwellers, 60% or more are squatters.
- On "Smokey Mountain" in the Tondo section of Metro/Manila, squatters make their living off of discarded plastics, metals and rubber—anything that is recyclable. "Smokey Mountain" is also their home.
- Tens of millions of dollars in U.S. aid for housing to the Philippines are channeled through the Ministry of Human Settlements, which Imelda Marcos heads.
- The Marcos' real estate holdings in New York alone are believed to be \$350 million alone.

On February 26, 1986, Ferdinand Marcos fled the Philippines after 20 years of rule.

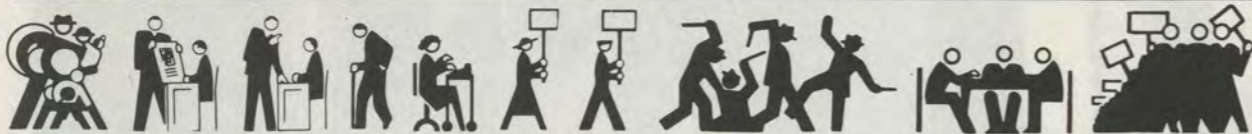
On top of "Smokey Mountain", Manila, Philippines by Susan Spencer Crowe



by Marguerite Buryan



Monument to Homeless People, Wards Island, Rae Langston



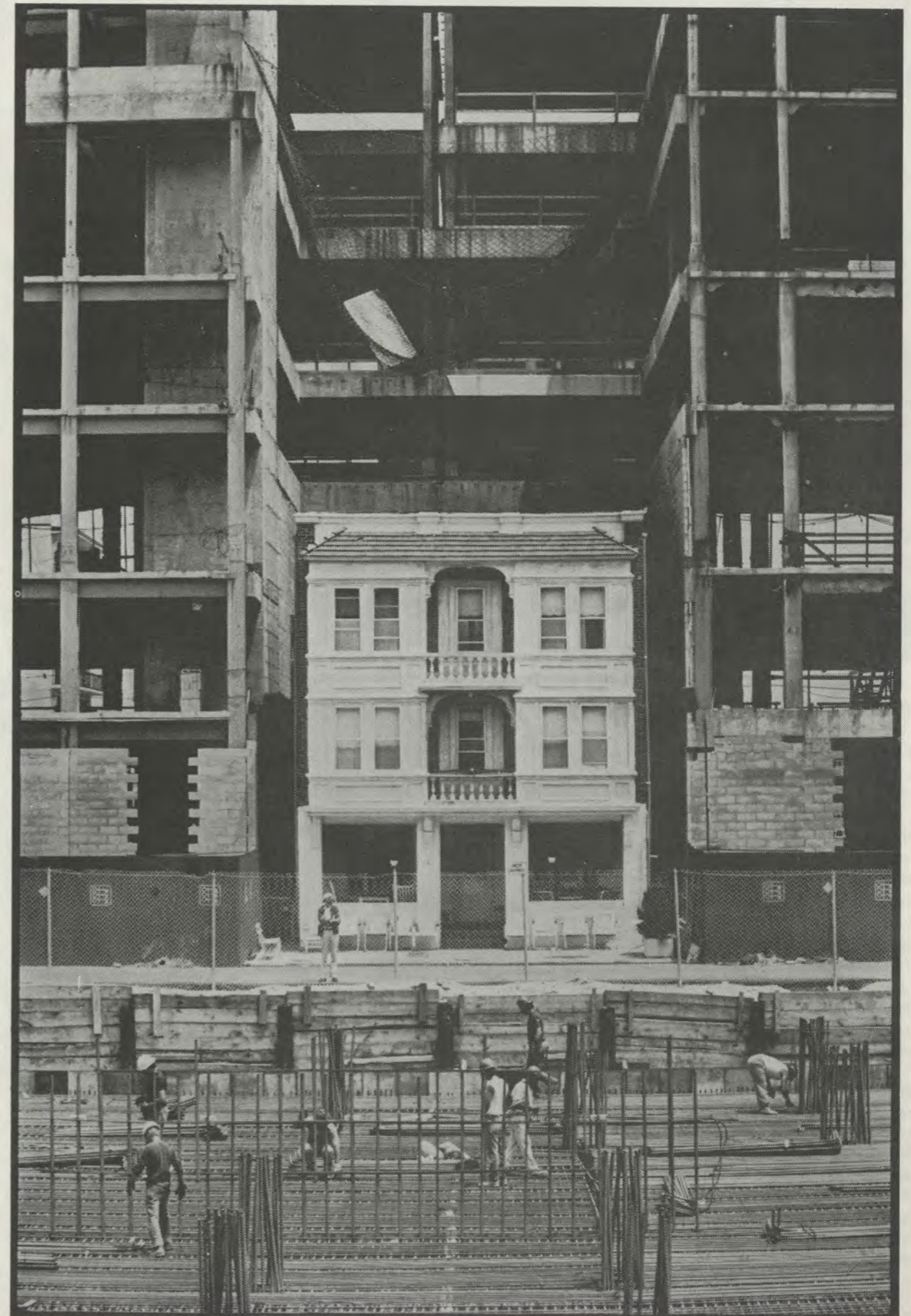
People I've met in the shelters for the homeless run by the City of New York have told me they feel betrayed by the economic, political and judicial systems. They realize that the words equality, justice and democracy have been newly defined for them. All they wanted to do was to make a decent living, bring up a family and have a little leisure time. The system shows them in many ways that you can't aspire to that anymore. The real definition of equality, justice and democracy is "survival of the fittest." And if you are not "fit," your job disappears, your neighborhood crumbles, your children are not educated and health care is unreachable. You may even lose your home.

Where do you go? Do you turn to your kin and friends who are being squeezed too? No. Either you live on the streets or you go to an institution. The shelter.

In the city-run shelter you get a cot, a locker, a shower, a meal. Attempts are made to find you an apartment or hotel room. If you are sick, attempts are made to heal you. Attempts. But in the end, you are just surviving.

This is not Ethiopia. No famine here. No distended bellies. But high crimes are being committed. Homicides. In the shelters, death is in the air. A slow subtle death. If you are not strong enough, you become panicked, you are tortured mentally and become confused. You are stripped of your dignity.

—George Cohen, 1985



Atlantic City, George Cohen



Home 1984, Willie Birch



Untitled, Ellen Horan



On the Street, Virginia Maksymowicz



On The Street (A Lesson in Social Stratification) was a site-specific sculpture installation by Virginia Maksymowicz on the steps of the Federal Hall National Monument (at the intersection of Wall and Nassau Streets across from the New York Stock Exchange) from October 21 through October 25, 1985.

A dozen, larger-than-life-size, wooden, silhouetted figures, painted metallic gold, were placed in a hierarchical order with corporate-looking males at the top descending through female office workers to bag ladies. The (five) men were positioned with their flat surfaces facing forward toward Broad Street; the (seven) women sat on the steps with their flat surfaces visible only from the sides (from Wall Street). Because of this orientation, the men were highly visible from several blocks down Broad Street; the women were invisible from a frontal view—they were only noticed as one walked by.

"On The Street" was about several levels of displacement—from the worker who eats a brown-bag lunch there because the company has provided no cafeteria to those who have been forced by the social pecking order to make those steps their home.

As if to highlight the intent of "On The Street" on the Monday of its installation, Mayor Koch and a group of Wall Street bankers and executives feasted on a gala luncheon behind the locked front doors of Federal Hall; on the steps, we others sat and ate our sandwiches.

"On The Street" was funded by The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.





A Summer Place...

I visited my grandparents farm last summer. It's empty. They're dead. The house once a weathered turn of the century farmhouse is now a gallant, spanking white. The blown glass windows are gone, replaced by storm windows and bars. I've been inside for 'a tour of the restoration', á la Good Housekeeping. The fireplaces have been boarded over. The old wood has been painted various pastels. Where there were once wood stoves, there is now a central heating system. My grandparents bedroom, once a wonderfully mysterious and precious

place for us, is now a fake wood-paneled hunting den, Early American Dream.

All her perennials and fruit trees are dead. They even cut the lilacs. How could they have cut the lilacs? I mean who cuts lilacs down? To what purpose?

All the apple trees are gone. How can you kill an orchard? Why would you kill an orchard? There wasn't even one, lone, rebel raspberry bush hidden in the fenseline, escaping the carnage. Even the incline on which the raspberries had been spread, was gone. Everything had been 'graded'. It was 'lawn', now. Where was the character of the earth's placement? And the willows? Where

were they? The swamp? What happened to the swamp?

I walk to the back of the house, near the pantry. The pantry is now 'a breezeway'. I walk over the new flagstone patio, outside the breezeway. On the corner is a farm implement my grandfather use to use. It's rusty now, 'rustic'. A tasteful decoration. I tried figuring out what he used it for. A plow? I touched it. I wanted to touch him. As I saw it laying on the corner of their patio I wondered "what meaning could it have to them?" It was my grandfathers. It was alive once ...it had worked with the energy brought forth from his hands. It had given us life. What possible meaning could it have to them? As I touch it I try to touch him, again. The iron is cold.

I sit for a moment and witness. It's like I have died. A piece of me. I don't know what to think. I can't feel. I knew it would die. I had continued to live knowing that ...so what should I feel now? Numb? I can't cry. I've known with pain for too many years what I have finally come here to meet.

I sit near, I couldn't sit next to, a 'rustic farm machine' that use to be pulled by my grandfathers horses. Once, it spread the hay evenly so that it could then be pitched into piles. It was one of the most beautiful of the earlier pieces of machinery. When tractors and trucks took the place of the horses it was just pulled out to the back and parked, where it stood for years. Today, it is a 'lawn ornament'. Tastefully placed on a cement base 'upon which it is displayed'. It is on display now. 'A piece of art'. "Perfect," I thought, "in case a Better Homes & Garden's photographer happens by, taking 'rustic' New England scenes".

"A Summer Place...", An excerpt from a story about gentrification in the New England countryside. Rural, family farming has been put out of business by Agribiz and now these homesteads serve as the summer playgrounds of the urban rich. Elizabeth Kulas



Our fathers cleared the bush,
Ann Newmarch



photo:
Catherine Allport



photo: George Cohen



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WE WANT IT, WE NEED IT, WE ALREADY GOT IT YET.

Artists Call meets in
Leon Golub's studio, 1984



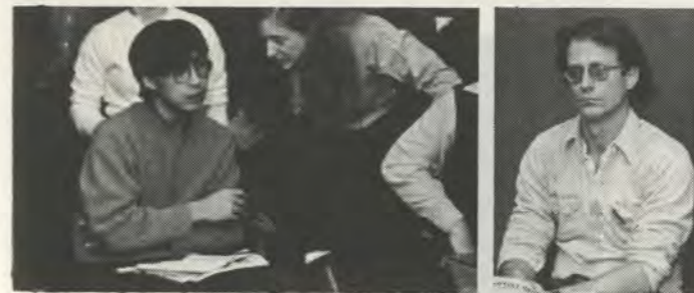
In response to the lies, idiocies, and complacency of life and art under Ronald Reagan, the last several years has seen an explosion of oppositional political culture. Political art and performance have made it into galleries and spaces, and sometimes even into neighborhoods. Demonstrations have been transformed into cultural events. And cultural workers have created organizations—PADD, the Alliance for Cultural Democracy, Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America, Art Against Apartheid, Artists in Action—to carry on sustained work.

In meeting after meeting of various groups, the need for a coalition of cultural activists is articulated, and dreams of what it might be are built. A coalition could publish a regular calendar of progressive cultural events, coordinate scheduling of related events to increase their impact, demand better representation for cultural workers within larger political coalitions, create more and better publicity and critical attention, promote more effective outreach to communities and to organized labor, encourage sharing

of accumulated experience and knowledge, and better articulate the connections between each group's issues and concerns.

But if coalition building is definitely on the agenda, it's an item that keeps getting tabled. The effort is frustrated by familiar problems. People have too many meetings already and too little time to work on their own ongoing projects. Resources are scarce. Political or personal or esthetic differences exist or are felt to exist or might someday exist which make people wary of working together. To establish some trust, some suggest that a coalition form to work on a clearly defined project; others point out that recent experience shows that project-oriented coalitions do not survive the life of the project.

The La Lucha Continua mural project about the struggles for self-determination in Central America, South Africa, and the local community (see pp. 34-35) made a vital political point—the struggles are linked. And a vital political task was suggested—the strugglers should be linked. —Jim Traub



A coalition is a political form. A political form is not abstract; it is a flexible envelope which gives order to a process. It must arise concretely as a political practice from a perceived need and must be fluid within the conditions of the participants in the coalition. It must be the articulation of the consensus of the participants. It cannot be willed into existence, although there must be a political will to create the coalition. To set up and maintain a political form (organization), it is necessary to identify the political objective the form articulates and the political practice the form organizes.

When groups of individuals (unofficially representing groups and organizations) discussed the possibilities of a cultural coalition for New York this fall, a list of needs surfaced, among them:

The need to combat racism, elitism, and other forms of oppressive division among our communities by people working together. The need to make better connections among the varieties of issues of political concern. The need to be more effective with political agendas by combining with other artists, expanding the resource pool of activists and organizers, sharing political and esthetic knowledge, resources, skills, and information. The need to reflect on experience, successes and failures, and to communicate more successfully with society at large . . . —Charles Frederick



For the past six years we at Pregones have been joining efforts with Latin American theatre workers here in the U.S. and abroad for the advancement of our art and for our survival in society. Several links bond us and make our work together something more than actions addressing particular issues.

For example, in New York City alone there are approximately two million Hispanics. In all the United States there are close to twenty two million, including the undocumented. If the trend continues, within the next fifteen years 20% of the U.S. population will be "Hispanic" (a term used in the U.S. to identify all of us who came from Spanish speaking countries: Central America, the Caribbean, and South America; in our countries of origin, we have our specific national identities).

Therefore our art is a container or recipient of various active forces: national identity, links with the people of Latin America, preservation of our language, and the promotion of new theatrical forms—the use of bilingualism, the participation of our population in their revindicative struggles, here and in our countries of origin, and the search for new forms of theatrical expression.

We tend to view the coalition process as one that serves to enhance our audience and makes viable the interchange of resources that will insure our continuing presence as well as one that will strengthen the artist's position in society. —Alvan Colon-Lespier and Rosalba Rolon, for PREGONES, a Touring Puerto Rican Theatre Collective

Why should cultural workers join together to build coalitions? For what purpose? with whom? Given Reaganomics and the pervasively reactionary times we live in, political artists are needed to work in community settings, both to engage in daily image-making as an alternative to mass culture of McDonalds and video magic, and to educate themselves and their community to new ways of thinking, talking, imagining and creating. We need to create alternatives for ourselves and our communities to present-day isolation and impoverishment. As a performing artist working with the elderly community I have learned history, patience and respect for the developing artistic voice in the community. Support for our cultural work can come from building coalitions with community-based groups. —Susan Perlstein



Last year, Artists Call and PADD spent a lot of time discussing the crucial necessity of linking issues and coalition-building with "community-based" (as distinguished from "issue-oriented") groups. The "communities" considered in particular were those absent from our own largely white middleclass (and straight) groups. We realized that this would be a long, hard process, involving mutual education and support. While the channels had been opened, cross-traffic was not exactly heavy. The few inter-organizational meetings held were friendly, but vague—not failures, but premature. A great deal more commitment is called for in terms of one-to-one and group-to-group support and collaboration. How often do we go to "other" neighborhoods for cultural events presented by these communities? (For that matter, how often do we know about each other's events? Connection by mailing list or calendar is a prerequisite.) How can we move away from well-intentioned tokenism in our own programs and publications? Coalition-building is based in both individual and collective relationships. We can't just "call a meeting" and expect everybody to come to us. We have to lose the sense of ourselves as "center." Easier said than done, but it's beginning . . .

—Lucy R. Lippard





mother saves
nothing flows
least of all her bowels

old nurses serve tea
on gold rimmed plates
warding off savagery
like the gardener
who came seven days a week

she burns through fog
no idea why she is staying
choked in rooms
anemones in dresser drawers
smell of fish of halibut eyes

hot house with death
forgets fear
each day is each day
in forgotten places
small hands reach
the cat has become many
cats on the stairs
two little girls
in pigtailed
do not answer

the emptiness comes
close to beauty

lying in darkness
she tears up memories
by the roots

in her youth she dreamed
this ending the gardener losing
to the jungle

Go Out And Burn The Sun

April Second Sunday:
"Go Out and Burn the Sun" was created by Helga Kopperl and included Mervyn Taylor, with music by Michael Sirotta and Andrew Saldenberg, and choreography by Richard Biles. "The Death of Me," by Irving Wexler, included Joel Cohen and Marlene Terwilliger. Lighting for both performances was by Richard Silsby; sound by Nancy Sullivan.

Being considered a "quite young woman" is a relative thing for me, since I've seen myself in the process of aging from the time I was a little girl. Now that I'm on the cusp of middle age, I'm weighing what it is that I have to surrender—and gain—in the next decade. The things I'll be giving up are superficial—like appearance, some ability to do physically what I'd like, a certain liquidity of mind. My own attitude toward aging is—I'll become more fragile, yet stronger in some ways.

Go Out and Burn the Sun examines these themes largely through the "fighting" responses of different women to the prospects of growing old and dying... by living their lives to the fullest. First, a 60-year-old woman, who has conquered her own fear of death and is living on the edge of excitement, writes a letter to her 40-year-old daughter who is afraid of dying. Next, a baglady, in her old age, confronts her basic problems of survival. Finally, a daughter comes to terms with her father's suicide by exploring—and comparing—her life to his at the same age at which he died.

Doing this work was part of my own struggle for wholeness; the attempt of self to contemplate its hunger, to serve as a mirror, and to accept (leaving behind definition) its universal spirit of indeterminacy.

—Helga Kopperl

The Death of Me



At 68 I find myself increasingly obsessed with mortality, not simply in terms of personal annihilation, but insofar as my unreasoning terror of death throws into sharp relief the meaning of my whole lived life. As a radical I look on death—at least theoretically—as the inevitable final phase of a cycle which is transcended by the continuing struggles of those who come after me. In reality, however, I am assailed by an angst that my own death, solitary and fearsome, will come upon me abruptly, like a period to a fragmentary, unfinished sentence. Precisely because I cannot deal philosophically or emotionally with this question, I created a performance in which I confront—no, I actually *provoke* Death, so that I might experience dying, and by going into and through it, leave my obsessions behind. Alas, no such easy answers are crystallized. Only a resolve to conduct my life moment by moment as if I were never going to die, with a commitment to love, taking risks and... down to the very wire... believing in the future.

—Irving Wexler

photo: Diane Milder



(Facing the audience, I invite Death to come and take me. Two figures in black enter behind my back. One throws a red flower between me and the audience. I pick it up, turn and see the twin figures. I scurry in horror toward a ladder.)

(Me): Oh no, Daddy Death, sorry if I provoked you, but this is only a rehearsal, a charade among friends. And thanks, Sister Death (I toss her the flower) I won't need this. My heart, listen, it's beating wonderfully well. (They move ominously toward me. I mount the first step.) No, no, I don't feel terminal in the least. Do you see any farewell in my eyes? Please, I beg you, there's so much left undone... A new poem, a peace parade. (Shouting) My teeth need capping! (Hold palms up) Now see what you've done. You've made my palms bleed. (Placating) Dear friends, I've never even seen the other side of the moon.

(They reach their arms out toward me.) Who's going to free the political prisoners under my skin? Will either of you water my mother's ivy? (They gesture for me to come down. I cup my hands.) So many arguments left unsettled. Words unsaid. Signs of love never offered. Visions unfulfilled. (The two shake the ladder.) No, the world needs changing. I will not go out meekly into that dark night...

—from *The Death of Me*

Women Working Out



Diane Torr on the front line in *Go Go Girls Seize Control*. (Photo: Mariette Pathy Allen)

"The Go Go girl sells her sex blatantly, not covertly. She encapsulates the sleaze of living in a society where morality demands a budget. When the line is clear, she can see you as the object too."

(Torr performed another piece for the Second Sunday, for which documentation was not available.)

The March Second Sunday featured three multi-media performances in Celebration of International Women's Day, by Diane Torr, Jawole Zollar (artistic director, the Urban Bush Women), and Joan Jonas. A discussion followed, unfortunately not recorded.

PERFORMANCES

He Saw Her Burning is based on two news stories, one from the *International Herald Tribune*, July 1982, about an American soldier stationed in Mannheim, West Germany, who stole a tank and drove it down the main street of the city, causing panic and confusion. He finally drove onto the bridge over the Neckar River, turned it around, lost control, and tipped backward into the water. There was no explanation for his behavior. It took a 100-ton swimming crane to get the tank out of the water.

The second story is about a Chicago woman who burst into flames for no apparent reason (from the *Journal American*, Rome, August 1982). A witness sitting in his car told police that suddenly the woman was on fire. There was nothing left but a pile of ashes. Eight incidents of human spontaneous combustion are listed in reference books.

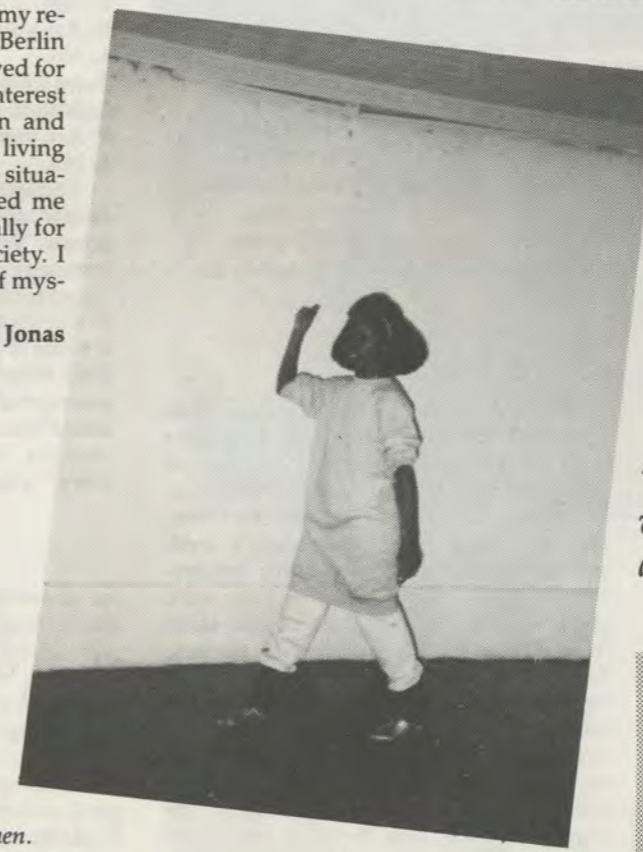
The two stories are intercut and linked throughout the performance, experienced and witnessed by the characters, a man and a woman, who also tell the stories. Passages and quotes from an Icelandic saga are also used in this allegory, pointing to the timelessness of current events.

The work developed from my relation to the landscape of Berlin (past and present), where I lived for eight months, and from my interest in listening to the American and English radio stations while living in a comparatively isolated situation. The two stories attracted me because they stand symbolically for specific conditions in our society. I was drawn by the elements of mystery and crisis.

—Joan Jonas



Joan Jonas, *He Saw Her Burning* (1982). (Photo: Francene Keery)



Jawole Zollar, artistic director, *Urban Bush Women*.

"Moving through the spirit of what improvisation is all about."



Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw of Split Britches

LESBIAN AND GAY PERFORMANCE

By Marguerite Bunyan

The May Second Sunday was the third in the ongoing "Out of Sight/Out of Mind" series, exploring cultural diversity, the art of "minority" communities, and the possibilities of cross-cultural coalition work to make visible that art which is virtually invisible in the mainstream. (See UPFRONT Nos. 6-7 and 9 for coverage of Black and Native American, Asian and Hispanic arts.) Participants were Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw, two members of the Split Britches theatre company, and the performance team Tom Keegan and Davidson Lloyd. Marguerite Bunyan's account of the evening was written with the aid of Alan Steinfeld's videotape.

The Split Britches pieces explored sexual identity and conflict, illusion and fantasy, politics and culture. Each fragment moved effortlessly into the next to become *Retrospective of Performances Past and Present*.

*Of all the roads I've known
And I've known some
Before androgyny, I was lonesome
And I took my two sides,
both good and gentle guys
They led me places I wanted to be.*

(In her bobbysocks and saddle shoes, Lois walks out and sits down next to a table with an open suitcase which contains all the props for the evening's performance. With her curled blond hair, red '50s dress, and white gloves, she evokes a well-groomed young lady of another generation. Peggy follows, clad in gray suit, shirt, wide yellow tie, loafers and short hair. Peggy leafs through old photos, hums.)

Peggy: Do you think that I was Butch when I was born?

Lois: Do you think that I was Fem when I was born?

(Each pulls out a baby dress, blue for Peggy, pink for Lois, holds it up to her shoulders and sings: "How I love my pretty baby, sweet and precious pretty baby, how I love my pretty baby, honest to

goodness I do..." They softly kiss. They are romantic, playful, laughing. They toss the dresses back into the suitcase.)

Lois: I don't know. If I was such a queer baby, how come it took me so long to say the word Lesbian? I think maybe I was just too busy maintaining my generic gender.

*Both masculine and fem
are within me
To suppress one side would be
just ghastly
If we use only one
we miss out half the fun
So we let both yin and yang hang out.*

In a scene where the lovers first meet, Peggy badgers Lois. "Why don't you get real, honey! I bet you're a Lesbian." There follows a stream of questions meant to pin down that deceptive quality, identity.

P: Are you a feminist?

L: (sings evasively) "I'm in the mood..."

P: Are you gay?

L: No.

P: Are you straight?

L: No.

P: Are you a bi?

L: No.

P: (searching) Are you a vegetarian?

L: (shocked) No!

P: Are you woman-identified?

L: No.

Endless absurd questions, which Lois finally does manage to stop. Peggy, it seems, was once the only woman in a company of thirteen drag queens, a male impersonator. So whose identity is really in question? But if Peggy has a problem, it's due to a male-dominated society, a society which she passionately believes has attempted to destroy anything which doesn't conform, i.e., isn't male, white, straight. History becomes literally "his story," a lie which must be re-examined.

*It's all in your head
You heard what I said
So let it all hang out
Androgyny.*

Lois, embarrassed by Peggy's tirade against the male aggressor, stops her. But within minutes she herself becomes the personification of rage. She needs an ar-

tistic framework before she can safely vent her own seemingly unfocused hate. And so she reads from Macbeth and enacts a heroine's anger. Then, uncontained, she throws down the book and launches into her own fury, screams at the audience and relishes the pure experiential pleasure of hate: "It's psychedelic, you hallucinate, you have visions, it's sex, it's orgasm."

Peggy: You're so beautiful when you're angry. (And they're into yet another scene, this one, their own version of Beauty and the Beast. Beauty (Lois) has no interest in Beast (Peggy) until Beast offers her illusion and fantasy.)

P: I'll be Gertrude Stein to your Alice B. Toklas, I'll be Spencer Tracy to your Katharine Hepburn, I'll be James Dean to your Montgomery Clift.

L: Well, I always wanted to be Katharine Hepburn.

P: I always wanted to be James Dean.

L: I was Katharine Hepburn.

P: I was James Dean.

Each in turn reminisces about a past role played with a lover. Lois becomes Hepburn, mimicking her voice and movements. By playing this role in college she was able to deny her love for another woman—"Spencer Tracy." Peggy, in the role of James Dean, is able to fall in love with a woman who in turn falls in love with her. These respective relationships unfurl, but neither will last:

P: I got all my shit together, and moved in with the woman from work, only it didn't work out, 'cause she thought she was James Dean.

L: I found out later that she wasn't Spencer Tracy at all, and I found out much later that I had been in love with her.

*There's two sides of you
They both want to do some living so
give yourself a break
You can say macho, macho, it's just
another word
You're hiding half your treasure just
to go with the herd.*

Country Western culture blatantly assigns stereotyped sex roles to individuals and, as such, becomes Split Britches' next focus. Traditional male-female roles are mocked. Peggy plays the lonely Texas cowboy as a woman. Lois recites from a rather insipid poem by Tammy Wynette on the pain of being a long-distance mother. A tape of a Country Western song is played, Peggy mouthing the male and Lois the female singer. Lois is particularly offended at the line sung by Peggy: "I want you as much as a child wants his

mother." But in their next song, "True Love," they express a very romantic vision of love, a personal longing for their own version of "The American Dream," endless love, security, and lives built and shared together.

Even this love isn't to last. There are other issues. There is political reality. There is Reagan, and another song: "Reagan, moral shaper, he's a slob and a woman hater, Reagan, baby-maker, just a cowboy like you." Here, a disturbing element is introduced. "Just a cowboy like you," is repeated several times throughout the lyrics. I think the audience is finally being confronted and asked where we stand. Does Reagan's "cowboy" mentality perhaps enter into our consciousness in ways we do not care to see? By

confronting their own personalities, their own fears, conflicts, dualities, Peggy and Lois make us like and feel secure with them. Now it is their turn to ask us to come to grips with ourselves.

Peggy: What circles do you move in? Do you have a toilet? Do you have food, do you have friends, do you like to share your life with others, to tell stories?

*There's yang and there's yin
We've all got it inside our heads
So let it all hang out
Out of the closet and into the streets.*



Tom Keegan and Davidson Lloyd

LAUGHTER & LUNACY

CLOWNING

On June 17, PADD collaborated with Everyfool, Inc. for an evening of "Political Clowning: Performance and Forum," which took place at the Truck and Warehouse Theatre, courtesy of the Fourth Wall Repertory Company. The performers were Jim Calder, Cheryl Cashman, Deborah Kaufmann, Stanley Allan Sherman, and Paul Zaloom, each working solo. The forum was moderated by John Townsen of Everyfool. Participants were the performers, Joel Schechter (editor of *Theatre Magazine*), Gordon Rogoff (a theater critic for *The Village Voice*), and Irving Wexler (performance artist and PADD member).

Tom Keegan and Davidson Lloyd's moving performance, *I'll Love You Forever*, depicts the relationship of a gay couple, based on their own six-year relationship. They begin by juggling and dropping sticks. Slides of them as a happy couple flash on screen. To one side is a paper house on which is tacked numerous postcards and pictures, mementoes of their relationship. They sing in turn:

"You're the love of my life."
"You light up my life."
"When I need love . . ." and lines of other popular love songs.



They approach each other, but when Lloyd starts to kiss Keegan, Tom covers his mouth with his hand. The anger and frustration in this relationship is presented through movement as well as through verbal enactments of quarrels. They struggle wordlessly on the floor, their touching strained, aggressive. When they stand, their words reveal tension over living together, joint bank accounts, and ill-spent vacations. Lloyd, with a sense of romance that has been betrayed, longs for warmth and security from a lover. A tape-recorded conversation is played, numerous lovers, male and female, distant and recent, are discussed. Keegan and Lloyd dance around each other, catch and or miss one another as they fall. Tension, anger and love intertwine.

The tape stops, real conversation is resumed and Keegan announces that he met someone today, rather attractive, with whom he might like to sleep. Lloyd, visibly upset, insists that he doesn't care, that they are free to sleep with whomever they choose and that their relationship is certainly strong enough to withstand that, whereupon he forcefully pushes Keegan away. They race around the room, Lloyd taking the lead. It is a competition. He needs to burst ahead, to win, to remain young.

Lloyd reveals that when he first started living with Keegan, he had the idea that Keegan could make commercials. With Tom's curly red hair, how could he miss? They would have lots of money, cars, live in Malibu. (Keegan is never told this fantasy.)

Keegan has his own expectations. Lloyd had promised to be in business suits by November. This never happened. Lloyd's sign, Capricorn, led Keegan to expect that Lloyd would prove hardworking, steadfast, a social climber.

When Keegan begins to practice massage, Lloyd develops another silent fantasy. Keegan will become a great massage

guru, rich and famous. They start to race again, this time with Keegan in the lead. Lloyd pleads, "Can't we just walk together?" And they sing "No one can see me like you do. No one can see you like I do."

They are lovers, in a relationship of struggle, control, dominance, bound together by understanding and personal history. They enact other roles. One becomes sick and the other rushes to comfort and care for him. But Keegan does not believe in Lloyd's sincerity and insists that they switch roles. Keegan, when he depicts Lloyd, portrays him as disinterested at best, actually more concerned with the danger of becoming ill himself. As Lloyd, Keegan finally bursts out, "I have to go to work, one of us had better bring in some money."

Lloyd (as Keegan): I'd rather take care of myself.

Keegan: Just promise me one thing, don't die.

And more arguments. One is sloppy, one leaves cans of frozen orange juice to melt on the counter, one never fills in his check stubs, one has a tasteless rug, the other a hated cat . . .

Lloyd demands of Keegan whether he will see this other person, insisting that in all the years they've been together, he's never slept with anyone else. Keegan is unimpressed. They argue about who is in control of this relationship. Keegan clearly feels he is not. The fighting, once contained, mounts and threatens physical violence.

Holding the kitchen knife with which he was simply cutting vegetables, Keegan yells, "I want personal empowerment. I want us to be with ourselves, not some rosy dream you have."

They fight, back to back, fists thrashing out at the air:

We talk.
We Talk.
WE TALK.
WE TALK.

And in the mist of this battle, their house collapses. Lloyd goes over, picks up a postcard and reads from it: "Miss you but not neurotically." He remembers their first year.

They kiss, embrace, and repeat their opening dance. But this time it is different. With the destruction of the house there can now be an end to illusion. They are truly left with each other. Their movements are fluid, they caress with love. There is no trace of the former hostility.

Lloyd jumps up and writes on the wall:

"I'll love you forever."

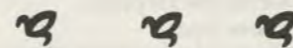
Keegan writes:

"Or at least until Friday."

Lloyd:

"O.K."

Slides of them together again flash on screen. They happily jump into each other's arms, embrace, and dance with each other.



After the performances there was a discussion with the artists, led by Alisa Solomon. Differences and similarities were raised. A striking similarity was the performers' use of memorabilia and images taken from popular culture and song. When you are sexually outside the mainstream of culture, it becomes difficult to define your own culture. So by taking images, co-opting them and making them over, giving them your own meanings, you can create your own culture. Lois described it as a love/hate relationship. By portraying famous people, Split Britches show their desire to be a part of that mainstream culture, along with their suspicion of it.

As Keegan has explained elsewhere (*Village Voice*, April 24, 1984): "We have a relationship which is two men, and we're making a statement not only about two men having a relationship, which is political in itself to get up there and say, but it's more than just us—it's all relationships. The fact is we also go beyond gay. And we've had that kind of feedback, all kinds of couples who ask 'Were you listening through the walls? . . . It's hard because you always get put in a slot. Oh, you're gay? Oh, you're doing gay theatre. And that's really not what we want to be saying. We really don't want to just be playing to gay audiences.'"

Lloyd says, "It's relating, it's not the sex. I mean, sex is wonderful. I love it. But it's not the whole person. . . . It's now a time to look beyond black, a woman, a man, a gay—whatever. There are a lot of people who aren't ready to move beyond that, but what we try to do is nudge them gently and say, 'Come along on this journey with us. You can always go back. You don't have to come all the way.'"



Cheryl Cashman



Jim Calder

photo: Jim Moore

photo: Jim Moore



"Humor has its own discourse. It does not exist in a vacuum. It is class-rooted and changes as societies change. One person's joke is another person's pain in the ass."

—Irving Wexler

Schechter: In terms of comedy and satire in the U.S., there's been either a low or conservative political consciousness. Our clowning traditions, as they are espoused by Ringling Brothers and others, have discouraged politics. But there is a long tradition of political clowning in Europe. I'm sure some of you know the work of Dario Fo, and of Karl Valentin, who influenced Bertolt Brecht. . . . In the U.S., it's been difficult for performers because there's not a political movement, there's not a large audience of politically conscious people. I hope I'm wrong, but I don't think I am. Perhaps these things go hand in hand. That is to say, the art of political clowning may develop as people become more interested in political action.

I'm impressed by the cathartic violence of some of tonight's routines—the acting out of destruction. Opposing that destruction and ridiculing it at the same time is intriguing. For instance, Paul Zaloom takes existing government information and turns it against itself, ridiculing the government with its own ammunition.

Wexler: And Deborah Kaufmann deals with the cult of puppetry of middle-class obsessive motherhood in this strangler relationship, in which mother and child are hurt by false values of nurturation. Jim Calder ends his piece with a repetition of the words "American Morality," having gone through a subtle process of mis-education that has left him powerless. Cheryl Cashman deals very movingly with the whole question of aging and age-

ism, the marvelous life that's left in the old, the refusal to give up sex. She calls for a new kind of life for the old and the young. Stanley Allan Sherman's three pieces are metaphors for the endless lunacy of war and hurling the bomb, in which you see a very conscious and cunningly laid-out strategy of semiotically destroying patriotism and all that other shit.

I'm at a disadvantage compared to Joel and Gordon. As a Marxist, I'm obligated to come up with some kind of answer, which I don't have. What is the difference between political humor and generalized humor? Sigmund Freud said, Humor is the way of tolerating the natural inhumanity of human beings, to make life tolerable. George Meredith said it was a release of tension, hostility, and fury. Henri Bergson said that it was a way of getting free of our life energy, that we couldn't live without humor. We all know that humor tumbles over ordinary consequences; it ignores time, it's an imaginative metaphor, but what is it that makes political humor?

Humor has its own discourse. It does not exist in a vacuum. It is class-rooted and changes as societies change. One person's joke is another person's pain in the ass. Of course there are universals. The bourgeoisie can laugh at itself, and doesn't everybody laugh at Groucho Marx's ridicule of ordinary logic? Isn't Woody Allen a terrific scream as he projects himself as this little nebbish who captures every *shiksa* north of Bloomingdale's? But radical humor uses the kind of

irony that observes the difference between what is and what might be. Radical humor not only releases tension, says the unsayable, but in one way or another liberates the will, the desire to change the situation. Radical humor goes beyond the symptom to the jugular. Flo Kennedy says, "You don't ever get so vague and pitiful that you can't put pressure where it hurts most. We must not let our rage go without expression. If you're too scared to fight and too proud to suck, then try humor."

Radical humor cannot reinforce oppressive social relationships like racism or sexism, at the expense of the victim. Radical humor subverts at the fundamental level, tearing down, ripping up, and reconstructing everything, even by implication. Radical art demystifies, it undermines and cuts through contradictions. Finally, to quote Paul Buhle, radical humor fights "on the side of life against the death machines, knowing that our humor spells may yet help to turn back the course of destruction and help to bring humankind to its full, unrealized potential." It's a hell of a lot to ask for a simple little joke. But what do we have to lose but our chains?

Rogoff: It's not easy to give yourself over to just a simple humor, and that by itself is a political act. What I'd like to see happen first of all in the U.S.A. is a public that was actually conscious for a change—just conscious, aware of its own interest, aware of what's being done to it from day to day. I wish everybody would just be aware of all

"It's great, because the government writes the material for me and all I have to do is present it in a nice way."

—Paul Zaloom



the destructive events, like the fact that on television all we see are cars moving, doors slamming on cars, doors being opened and shut on refrigerators. This eventually becomes the material by which we are supposed to see life and it is such a terrible distortion. Theater itself hasn't really provided anything fundamental beyond that, to counteract that ghastly message. Here tonight is a beginning. I gather this is a bit unusual, that not all clowns today are politically interested. Here is a gathering of people who are a bit more interested in this form at a moment in the second term of Reagan in which the only thing that can happen in this country is political consciousness, or we're dead.

Towsen: I want to ask the performers: How do you work differently when it's political? How does your working method change when you are working on a piece of material that you realize is political? How intentional is it? How planned is it? Do you go for as many laughs? How important are the laughs? How does it affect the character? Do you need to be liked?

Cashman: I never adjusted to society. So I started doing plays about breakdowns. My work is as political as I am. I can only feel "I'm angry about this, upset about this, I love this and it's being destroyed"—and it'll come out in my work. Now I'm totally politically committed. . . .

I feel my job is to work a basically simple level of alienation. I want to make a difference on a very simple level, but not just

like "us and them," you know! By the time I'm finished people are comfortable with me, and I'm comfortable with them. There's a dialogue set up and a demand made on the audience to participate that is political in itself, just because we acknowledge each other's presence.

Kaufmann: It's really more important for me to just let the issue come through instead of trying to point the issue at a work, or point a work at an issue.

Zaloom: It's very hard to take a political issue and create a piece of art around it. But at the same time, I have not been able to create a piece of art and then magically somehow the politics comes out. I have to be more conscious about it. It's great, because the government writes the material for me and all I have to do is present it in a nice way.

Calder: Basically the whole question of political theatre for myself is that you come to a certain point where you don't decide to do political theatre, you just get mad enough and you have to say something. . . . I just listen to people and whatever they tell me I try to put on stage, or I just listen to my own past.

Sherman: A lot of political theatre that I see is statement theatre. They go out, they make a statement, and then usually the audience agrees with them and everybody applauds and Hip Hip Hoorays, and leaves smiling. For me that's somewhat empty. A good strong political the-

atre has to be subtle. It could be blatant, hit you over the head too, but it has to make an audience think and it has to kind of sneak up on them. If I could do the same show as I did here tonight for a bunch of Republican National Rifle Association rednecks and get a positive response and make them question a few things, that is something good. My good political stuff should be able to go into almost any venue.

Towsen: Irving Wexler asked how come clowns seem to be more political these days and stand-up comics have gotten less political. Stand-up comedy today is very commercial. There are a lot of people doing improv and ending up on Saturday Night Live and then in Hollywood. The clowns I know not only don't make money, but I don't think they dream of it. (They may think of a grant that will let them do their work.) Their work is more personal. They do their work to do their work; it's more what they see in life.

Rogoff: Over twenty years ago I remember hearing John Arden—then the most politically obsessed playwright in England—remark at a conference in Edinburgh that you could never change people by a play, but you could confirm them in what they are beginning to feel. An evening like this, the presence of five political performers working mainly with themselves and a few props, is itself a political act, when the theatre is so expensively produced almost everywhere that it's become a shopping trip for images.

"It
only
hurts
when
I
vote!"



The November Second Sunday program was a series of musical skits by the Fourth Wall Political Theater, titled "It Only Hurts When I Vote!" Written, directed, and staged collectively, with alternating casts, it is one in a long line of plays and revues attacking the status quo by this 11-year-old group. Their focus is anti-war, but ballooning budgets and bureaucracies, racism, Central America, South Africa, and the hot-cold war are among the targets of their lampooning.

"Our intent theatrically is to dramatize the insanity of the nuclear escalation here, and to promote understanding of the issues among citizens of the world, here and abroad," they write. "We work toward mobilizing a greater number of informed people into coalitions of citizens groups that work together against the U.S. military and corporate policies which have for many years made deepening divisions between east and west."

Fourth Wall members are volunteers who make their livings at other jobs; they are musicians, writers, teachers, scientists, carpenters, lawyers, and students. They perform at demonstrations, voter registration drives, marches, teach-ins, colleges and fundraisers, in parks and in the streets. For seven years they have had their own "Truck and Warehouse Theater" at 79 East 4th Street in the East Village, where they produce both adult and children's plays. The group has also co-produced with Parallel Films three documentaries, all directed by founder Joan Harvey: *We Are the Guinea Pigs* (1980), *America—From Hitler to M-X* (1982), and the recent *A Matter of Struggle*, featuring Richie Havens.



photo: Herb Parr

As James Sheehan has written (in the *Villager*): "Mary Poppins knew the value of a spoonful of sugar and, in the same vein, Fourth Wall employs comic acting to get across the heavier themes of political dissension. There aren't too many forums where you can kick up your heels and sing about irradiation, and this group takes full advantage of theater as a stage for satire."

Of course, there's always someone out there who can't take a joke. The Truck and Warehouse Theater has not been the scene of any quick strike invasions to safeguard the rights of innocent students in the audience, but reaction to past productions fills the spectrum from nausea to conversion."

"We always have some people who walk out and some challenge from the audience," says Harvey. "Usually the mood is more like intense listening. They begin to read the papers and talk to each other and I think that's a wonderful reaction to theater... If you don't challenge the politics, then you accept them... Keeping political realities fresh is part of why we exist."



Is it quantity or economic decline that makes living a "drag"? Fourth Wall Political Theatre at Franklin Furnace.

Art Against



Marcia Ethel Hicks, Lorenzo Pace and Brenda Johnson take a bow after *We Dance in the Spirit of All South Africans*.

For December's Second Sunday, PADD was host to performers from *Art Against Apartheid*. Artists Lorenzo Pace and Marcia Ethel Hicks, performed a dance, accompanied by music performed by Brenda Johnson. Poet Safiya Henderson-Holmes read her poetry and Milton Parrish performed his one act play, "Decision at Ciskei." The large audience was appreciative and moved by the spirit of the performances. Descriptions of and excerpts from the performances and the discussion moderated by Hillary Harris, follow.

A dark stage, illuminated by a slide picture of the African veldt. Lorenzo Pace, enfolded in a large bag, emerges from the back and dances joyfully. He is not one man. In his amorphous form, he's the black people before colonization by the white man. Soon another bag, the colonizer, white and covered with metal, joins him. This newcomer's movements are angular, sculptural. At the height of its dance, it becomes an amoeba, swallowing the other bag. A long struggle ensues. The creatures separate and the first one overcomes its attacker. Victory.

Marcia Ethel Hicks: The dance was basically to show the freedom and way of life that was experienced by the indigenous people of South Africa, prior to the intrusion. In the manner of having several guests pop up for supper and not leave. Just sort of help themselves to your home.

Milton Parrish's "Decision at Ciskei," is a monologue delivered by John Moguntani, a black South African migrant worker who has just lost his job. The decision he has to make is whether to go and work as an "illegal" (i.e., without papers). The excerpt below, tells of how he lost his job:

Stay away from Jacob Manleda. Jacob Manleda is no good. Jacob Manleda is a trouble maker. Jacob Manleda is a communist. If you want to keep your job, stay away from Jacob Manleda. So I stay away from Jacob Manleda. For two years I stay away from Jacob Manleda. Then one day all the boys are leaving from work. "Everybody stop! Line up!" It's the security. We all line up, standing straight. They come down the line, looking into each one's face. They pass me. I did not know I had stopped breathing. Down the line they pull out Jacob Manleda. Who else, eh? And they march past with him.

Jacob Manleda is a big man, with big fists and big feet—rough, tough guy who could fight. But when he come past, his eyes look so tender.

Well, all night we listen to the screams coming from the security building. No one can sleep! One of the security, a black boy, who was friendly, was at the interrogation. "Manleda," he says, "is a fool. Security find a list that belongs to him—with his initials on it. It is in code. Each time

they ask him 'Manleda, toothpaste, what does this mean, toothpaste?'"

"I thought he was an intelligent man," I say. But this intelligent man leaves a list for security.

I go down to the mine. But I can't stop thinking about Jacob Manleda. And toothpaste. Why toothpaste?

Then it strikes me, and I begin searching my pockets. Like a crazy man. But I can't find it. Can't find the list I had written the day before. I wrote this note to myself to remind myself what I would buy at the commissary. Bath soap. Chewing gum. And toothpaste. And I look at it, and because this toothpaste on the paper does not look like it belongs to me, I put my initials on it. But I can't find it.

If the list is mine, then I should go to the security. I should go and say, "This is a mistake. This is my list." I should say "This is my toothpaste."

That night there was more screaming in the security building. I said to myself, "You must go and say to the security, 'This Jacob Manleda is for John Moguntani, not Jacob Manleda. It is John Moguntani. Of Ciskei.'" But I didn't go.

Three days later they found Jacob Manleda's body by the road side.

Milton Parrish: There was one thing I wanted to bring out: at what point does a man make a decision to do something? . . . That's a very critical thing for a man, for a woman, for everybody. To reach that point and then to make that radical change in your life, that radical act that changes everything. Nothing can ever be the same again. What makes you do that?

Apartheid

An excerpt from

Quilt For Grandma Patsy:

maroon felt buttons of canned sugar beets
overlays of creamy silk, senior choir sundays
swatches of advice about no money Mondays
tough double stitching around the magenta wool of Dred Scott
tougher still around the mohair patch of Little Rock

back stitching for Harriet, Frederick, Fanny Lou, Nat
Sojourner, Biko, Josina
reinforcement with an array of angora blues
for Bessie, Billie, Ma Rainey
I believe in the night, they pour their 'way down'
ovah me . . .

Harlem and Soweto, big base stitches
running real close to my ear
got big maple-brown corduroy decagons
of Malcolm, Martin, Fred, George, Emmit
stabilizing the rear

Vietnam slip stitches at the corners
WWIII pulls at the seams
sea-green terricloth circles for labor pains
at the border
rose-red tassles of new births
dangling in between
lavender ribbons of children
spinning with The Duke's cashmere moons
walnut and cinnamon-brown polka dotted
beep-bop women bouncing in the lining
from some Sam Cooke tune

stuffing of dream books, bible
wedding pictures, dried flowers,
bat wings, bluejays, fireflies,
welfare checks, unpaid bills
padded bras soaked with wonder
of them good ole back seat thrills . . .

everyday when I get tired
of fighting and smiling in the rough
I lay awhile under them stars, moons,
oceans of blackfolks my Grandma sent
and feel free,
sure enough.

Safiya Henderson-Holmes



Marcia Ethel Hicks and Lorenzo Pace perform *We Dance in the Spirit of All South Africans*.

Because you can betray everything. You can say 'Let Jacob Manleda go to his death, because you're afraid to go up and say, 'This was my list.' You can do nothing to defend his murder. And people often do. Do nothing . . . I've always been interested in what the process is that makes you go through so many defeats and finally decide 'I have to do something.' My feeling is that life begins in a death.

Safiya Henderson-Holmes: (When asked why she dedicated her poem, 'For Ben and All the Hued Men,' to Michael Stewart) There is a relationship of systems that are very similar. I dedicate the piece to a particular person in the U.S. who has suffered under those similar systems that are in South Africa . . . What I feel, not only as an artist, but as a person, is a responsibility for me is to not separate the issues; to educate people of similarities as opposed to differences. To educate them around the fact that racism in South Africa is called apartheid, racism in the U.S. is called: nigger, or lynching, or Eleanor Bumpurs, or Michael Stewart, or Raymond Evans and forever . . . I don't want us to forget that. To say: that's over in South Africa. This is called Ciskei as opposed to the South Bronx, or this is called Mississippi as opposed to Harlem, because there are relationships we tend to forget.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

By Eva Cockcroft



La Lucha Continua project, collective mural directed by Eva Cockcroft

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES/LA LUCHA CONTINUA project consists of 24 murals painted on four buildings around a central plaza—La Plaza Cultural—between 8th and 9th Streets at Ave. C in New York City's Lower East Side. The transformation of this vacant lot into a political art park is the result of two months of work by more than 30 artists who donated their time and talents to the project. The more than 6,310 sq. ft. of murals treat the themes of Intervention in Central America, Apartheid in South Africa, and Gentrification in the local community.

The project was organized by Artmakers, Inc., a non-profit, multi-ethnic community murals group founded two years ago. It was executed in conjunction with Charas, Inc. a neighborhood housing and cultural organization.

The decision to do this project repre-



Ceramic Mural, Dina Burstyn

sented a desire to return to the organic feeling of the early mural movement, when the personal conviction and politics of the artists and the aroused communities coincided. Coming on the heels of the Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Art Against Apartheid exhibitions in New York, it seemed essential that the project deal at least with those two issues. The third issue—the housing struggle, or gentrification—is the most pressing problem in the local neighborhood. The equivocal position of artist in the gentrification of the Lower East Side, due to the burgeoning East Village gallery scene and the use by Mayor Koch of artists' housing as an opening wedge for real estate interests, has created a movement of artists working against gentrification. In addition, we felt that it was an important educational and political statement to link these three

LA LUCHA CONTINUA



by Karen Batten

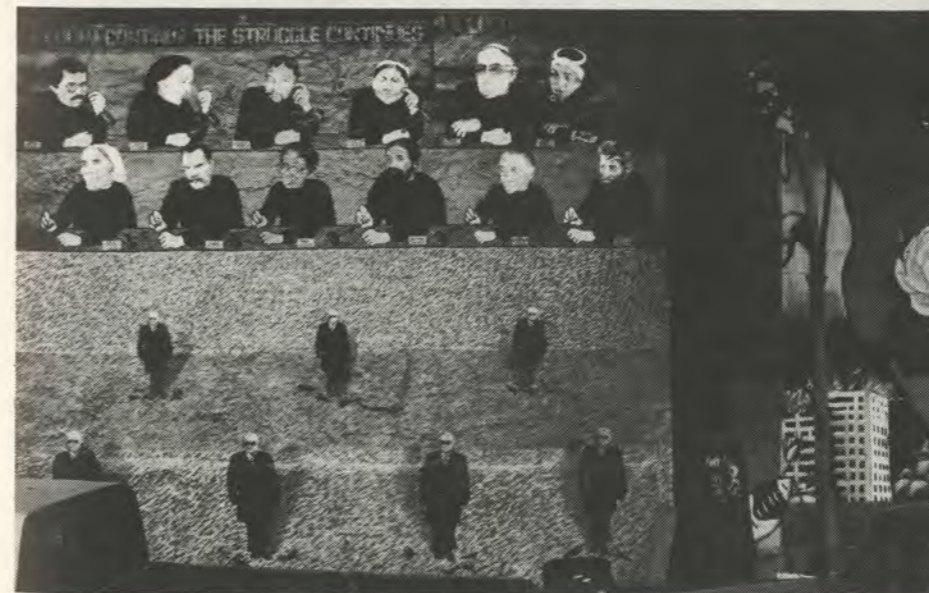
struggles and emphasize the fact that they are the same struggle against the same enemy. The universality of this struggle for freedom and justice was emphasized in the project by the use of the words "the struggle continues" in many different languages, as a logo to frame and separate the individual murals.

In mid-April a call was sent out by Artmakers for "artists of conviction" interested in painting political murals to come to an open meeting. These, and other artists recruited from the Art Against Apartheid group and the local community, formed the core of the project. The group was culturally and stylistically mixed, including minority, political, graffiti and East Village artists. Design proposals were submitted and approved by a committee composed of Artmakers, Charas, and other concerned community people.

The keynote mural, 40' x 40', on the north wall of 131 Ave. C, was designed

and painted collectively by a group of twelve artists directed by me. The main image is an immense crystal ball within which a possible future is seen. Around it are scenes of the reality of gentrification today and the community's efforts to fight back.

One of the most popular murals is *The Last Judgement* by Kristin Reed and Robin Michals, which includes portraits of international leaders and local characters. A ceramic mural by Dina Burstyn relates the Mayan past to current reality. Cliff Joseph, a well-known Black artist included in the Studio Museum's recent exhibition, "Tradition and Conflict," uses the flag image to portray South African resistance. Women fighters are honored in murals by Rikki Asher of Arts for a New Nicaragua and Susan Ortega of Art Against Apartheid. *World War 3 Illustrated* editor Seth Tobocman, treats police brutality and the Michael Stewart case in his mural. Other



The Last Judgement, Robin Michals & Kristin Reed

murals are by Karin Batten, Amy Berniker, Ken Bloomer, Willie Birch, Pat Brazil, Chico, Keith Christensen, Maria Dominguez, Luis Frangella, Noah Jemison and his daughter Nora, Leon Johnson, Noel Kunz, Allison Lew, Etienne Li, Leslie Lowe, Betsy McLinden, Marilyn Perez, Camille Perrottet, and Nancy Sullivan.



by Seth Tobocman

This is only a beginning. Now that the images exist they need to become widely known. Hopefully, the La Lucha project can serve as the model for many more political art parks in other cities and countries. Painted images cannot stop wars or win the struggle for justice, but they fortify and enrich the spirit of those who are committed to the struggle and help to educate those who are unaware.

For the local community, the result is more tangible. An empty lot has become a place of beauty. For myself and the other artists who participated in the project, there was the sense of joy that comes from working successfully with others and the satisfaction of having accomplished something public and coming directly from the heart.



FEMINISM: '80s Style

The Guerrilla Girls

WHAT DO THESE ARTISTS HAVE IN COMMON?

Arman
Jean-Michel Basquiat
James Casebere
John Chamberlain
Sandro Chia
Francesco Clemente
Chuck Close
Tony Cragg
Enzo Cucchi
Eric Fischl
Joel Fisher
Dan Flavin
Futura 2000
Ron Gorchov

Keith Haring
Bryan Hunt
Patrick Ireland
Neil Jenney
Bill Jensen
Donald Judd
Alex Katz
Anselm Kiefer
Joseph Kosuth
Roy Lichtenstein
Walter De Maria
Robert Morris
Bruce Nauman
Richard Nonas

Claes Oldenburg
Philip Pearlstein
Robert Ryman
David Salle
Lucas Samaras
Peter Saul
Kenny Scharf
Julian Schnabel
Richard Serra
Mark di Suvero
Mark Tansey
George Tooker
David True
Peter Voulkos

THEY ALLOW THEIR WORK TO BE SHOWN IN GALLERIES THAT SHOW NO MORE THAN 10% WOMEN ARTISTS OR NONE AT ALL.

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM
GUERRILLA GIRLS
CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

SOURCE: ART IN AMERICA ANNUAL 1984-85

Guerrilla Girls—"The Conscience of the Art World" or "The Women Artists' Terrorist Organization"—is one of the liveliest manifestations of art feminism around. Hard-hitting street posters have nailed galleries showing 10% or fewer women artists (as well as the male artists showing in those galleries), and NYC museums for their miserable records in mounting one-woman shows. In the past year: Guggenheim-0; Metropolitan-0; Modern-1 (0, if you're counting *live* women); Whitney-0.

These statistical indictments were followed by devastating analyses of the writing records of many leading art critics,

among them Tom Lawson, Donald Kuspit, Kim Levin, Dore Ashton, and Edit DeAk. The most recent of these "public service messages" concerned *The New York Times* coverage of women artists (reproduced here). *Village Voice* columnist Ellen Lubell complained that this was unfair to critics, who "usually aren't free to write about whom they choose; they're restricted by their editors, who in turn may be pressured by publishers pressured by advertisers. . . . Critics operate within the same circumscribed artworld as artists, a world essentially defined by curators and, of course, dealers. They're the ones who should remain poster-fodder."

Guerrilla Girls replied: "We realize that the critics are locked into the same system as artists, but we want to open up dia-

logue about that system. We were criticized earlier for 'picking on' male artists because artists were not directly responsible for the choices of their dealers. We feel that critics and artists should be more aware of the economic and political forces that determine their situations. If there are male artists who are trying to persuade their dealers to take on more women and if there are writers trying to persuade their editors to print more articles about women, then our posters can be seen as a support for their endeavors. We would hope that others would join us in exposing sexism in the Art World. . . . And we would welcome an open discussion about the difficulties they operate under. . . . However, it is difficult to believe that critics like John Ashbery, Hilton Kramer, Donald Kuspit, Robert Pincus-Witten, Carter Ratcliff, John Russell, and Calvin Tompkins don't choose their own topics most of the time!"

A good deal of street action takes place around the GG posters. One wheatpaster (disguised in a gorilla mask) was attacked twice by a maddened man. The posters are often vehicles for graffitied dialogue. Some samples: "Less than 10% of the artists of the world are women!" "Wrong!" "What about Third-World artists?" "Women's Work Doesn't Sell." "Right on, women!" "What else is new?" Galleries' and artists' names are crossed out and defended.

When the ten works of art were stolen from the Musée Marmottan in Paris, credit was taken by the Berthe Morisot Brigade of the "Filles Guérillas France-Belgique"—Morisot being the author of the only woman's work in the theft, a symbolic representation of the proportion of women's art in world museums. To those who complain that all this is only "artworld politics," Guerrilla Girls responds that artists are workers and have a right to show their work and be paid for it. They see it as a union issue: Equal Opportunity and Fair Pay.

One thing is clear: women artists who haven't even seen a GG poster or the huge Palladium exhibition of women artists curated by GG in October are experiencing a surge of energy because a smart, funny, young '80s style women's action has sprung up amidst the boutiques, the gourmet cheese stores, and the trendy but mindless New York City art scene. May it be contagious!



THESE GALLERIES SHOW NO MORE THAN 10% WOMEN ARTISTS OR NONE AT ALL.

Blum Helman
Mary Boone
Grace Borgenicht
Diane Brown
Leo Castelli
Charles Cowles
Marisa Del Re
Dia Art Foundation
Executive
Allan Frumkin

Fun
Marian Goodman
Pat Hearn
Marlborough
Oil & Steel
Pace
Tony Shafrazi
Sperone Westwater
Edward Thorp
Washburn

SOURCE: ART IN AMERICA ANNUAL 1984-85

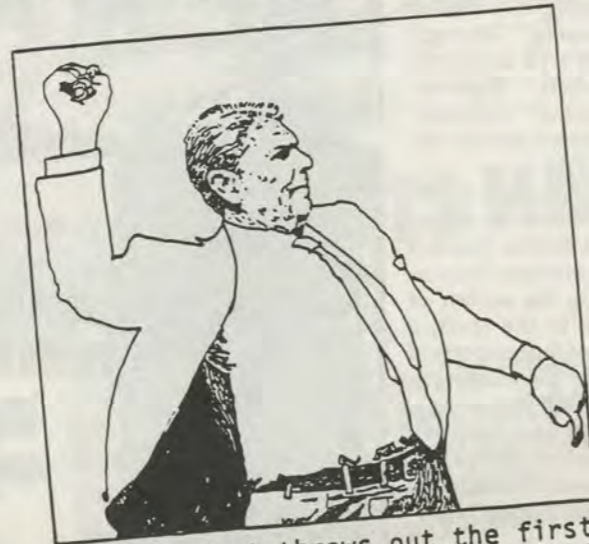
A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM
GUERRILLA GIRLS
CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

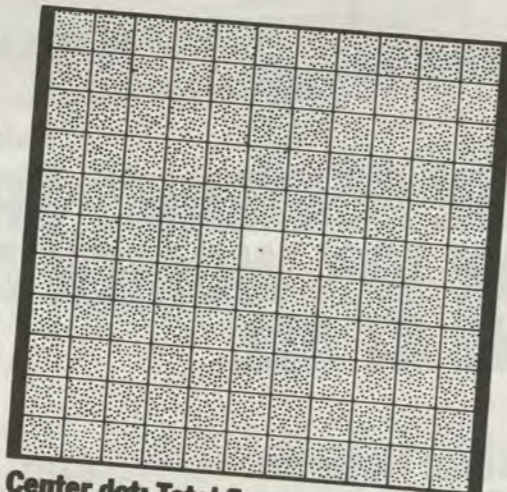
HARD LOOKS: Common Knowledge is a group of three British artists (Glyn Banks, John Coleman, and Hannah Vowles) who create art-and-architectural installations with titles like *Popular Front*, *Try Another World*, *Direct Action*, *Work from the Ruins*, and *Our Wonderful Culture*—"hit and run demonstrations of the politics of positive interference." Their statements are provocatively "post-modern": "As we wander from fragment to contradictory fragment through the ruins of common knowledge, willfully misreading what we see, we realize that we are all terrorists in the museum of ruined intentions that is our fragmented (post-modern) present . . . Beware the dispossessed lest they rise up in revolt against everything held sacred to the prevailing order and inherit the ruins of a shattered ideology."

Common Knowledge, as Nigel Pollitt writes, "organize their own exhibitions and flaunt their 'glorious failure' with critics and Galleries of Influence. They write too, in the first place because no one else would write about them, then as a means of engaging with art-world bullshit. Trouble is, their verbal parodies just don't communicate. Unlike their art, which does." Included in the "everyday sights, signs, and objects" of *Try Another World* were: a stuffed fox in front of a woodland vista; a gridded collection of visual puns as cultural artifacts; a figurative mural (by Graham Stewart, now working in Chicago); a wall drawing of a town at night with gravestones, statue of liberty, smokestacks . . . Sounds like it has to be seen to be believed (or deconstructed and *disbelieved*), and sounds interesting.

●A new board game on the market is called *Junta*. It sounds pretty cynical, no matter how you read its hype: "The game of power, money, intrigue and revolution. Come to a country where *anyone* can be President—a land of equal opportunity. All you have to do is bomb the Presidential Palace, start a riot at the docks, or send your army brigade into action . . . All the while you will secretly funnel big chunks of the national budget into your Swiss bank account. Sounds like fun—Eh, Señor?" The Chicago Peace Museum just had a war toys show called "Child's Play," but it sounds like adults could use some help too. Recently a group of Vietnam Vets picketed Toys-R-Us store, handing out child-size body bags, pointing out that war toys are habit-forming, and if you have weapons you're going to need body bags too. Another suggestion (from the Shadow Project newsletter): Dress up like Santa Claus and go to your



The President throws out the first grenade at the opening invasion of the season. *by Chuck Segard, 1985*



Center dot: Total firepower of WW II
The rest: Today's nuclear arsenal

Bay Area Artists for Nuclear Sanity Poster, Jim Geier and Sharyl Green

local toy store/war department; lecture shoppers about playing with guns. Make it a media event.

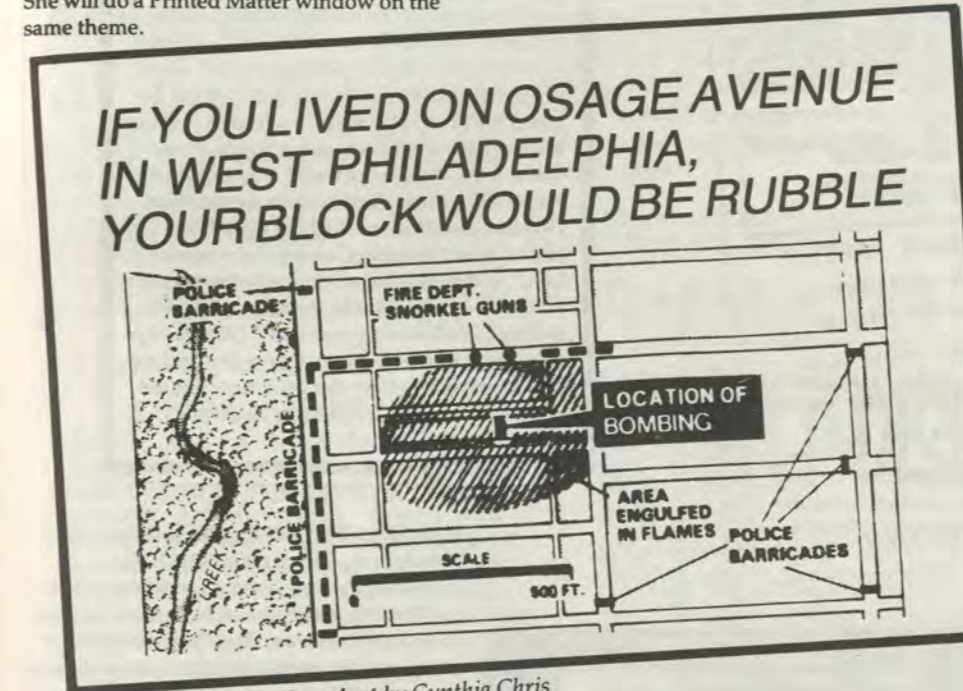
IN THE STREETS: The "Lifeyard" project proposes temporary public monuments to the Living—now, before nuclear war makes graveyards obsolete. Lifeyards have been created so far in New York, California, Oregon, Massachusetts and Minnesota.

●On the way home from a recent UPFRONT meeting, we passed an alley off Lafayette Street when we heard screaming. It turned out to be creativity, not crime—"A Midnight's Stripping," a play by Ellen Waldinger about the city, the streets, the earth, and an overview from the moon—which held its entire run in the alley.

●Students from four schools in Queens, working under the motto "Down with Graffiti," have painted 14 murals in the Van Wyck subway station on the E line. They will be covered with plexi to protect them from vandalism. The project is part of the MTA's Adopt-a-Station program, to bring local community organizations and the private sector into collaboration with the MTA.

●Artist team Gude/Pounds, who have long worked with community groups in their Pullman (Chicago) neighborhood, completed a playground this summer which features a wooden train. Over barriers of race, age, and ethnicity, they raised more than \$7,000 within the community, and found that as the kids helped them construct the playground, it changed their attitudes and behavior. There has been no graffiti or destruction because "it belongs to them." Some older people, who felt "our kids don't deserve" such a nice place, changed their minds too. The train, by the way, is emired in concrete ("the trains leave without our kids"), but also veers to the Left.

●In Chicago, Cynthia Chris has reacted to the Philadelphia bombing (of MOVE) with street stencils, and postcard, and other works, reading: "If you lived on Osage Avenue in West Philadelphia, Your Block Would Be Rubble." She will do a Printed Matter window on the same theme.



Postcard and stencil project by Cynthia Chris

●Last summer, Tilly Woodward completed ten 10' x 20' billboard paintings on Interstate 70, between Saint Louis and Kansas City, where she lives. Many of the photo-based, slightly expressionist realist paintings are of tragedy or violence: the corpse of assassinated Filipino opposition leader Benigno Aquino; Andropov's funeral; refugee children playing with guns; torture victims (but also a nursing sow, and a friend's portrait). Woodward hoped her work would have a political effect by making people think about their common humanity. She depicts situations that are "political in nature, but the pieces in themselves are not political statements. Rather they are a method of inspecting humans in political situations." By employing billboards (this is her second such project), "I was able to use an entire state as an exhibition space."

Missouri wasn't quite ready. One billboard was pasted over after five days. Portraying the 1941 hanging of two Russian resistance fighters (one a woman) by the Nazis in Minsk, it became the center of controversy in the German community of Concordia, Mo. It was called depressing and pro-Nazi. From Sweet Springs, Mo., a man called about a painting of Eisenhower reviewing the troops before D-Day, because he thought the piece might be about communist sympathies and if so, he was going to burn it down.

(This phrase is a graffiti from the Prince Street Post Office, NYC)

●"Media artist" Les Levine did a "Blame God" billboard series in London this September, sponsored by the ICA and the Artangel Trust and featuring paintings of (Irish) people labeled "Hate God," "Starve God," etc. "At first appearing to be the result of anti-theistic excess," notes the Artangel flyer, "Levine's images and words point up the absurdity of strife and genocide world-wide in the name of God, deriving their inspiration principally from the tribal intransigence of Ulster's civil strife." Artangel also funded Krzysztof Wodiczko's "City Projections" in August, which projected a huge tank tread and overlapping hands on the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square; it was accompanied by a temporary guerrilla strike—a swastika was projected briefly onto South Africa House. Artangel subsidizes innovative and socially aware public art and is accepting proposals for the June, 1986 Venice Biennale. (Send written proposals to Director, Artangel Trust, PO Box 437, London SW3 5QF, England.)

HISTORIA: One of the major (and reportedly most fun) conferences on "The Role of Art in the Process of Social Change" took place in New Orleans Nov. 20-22 as "A Valediction Without Mourning for the Free Southern Theatre, 1963-1980." The FST, a pioneer in Black theatre, was born at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, and played an historic part in the Civil Rights Movement. By making this "funeral" (and "reunion")—five years in the planning—a full-fledged, three-part conference/performance festival/celebration, director John O'Neal called attention to the continued need for responsible culture and for production of the FST plays—not yet, alas, outdated.

People were uncomfortable, Woodward conceded, "because they were not told what to think about the pieces," which were uncaptioned. In an editorial in the *Kansas City Star*, Garry Noland observed that if the artist had researched the heritage of these towns, and solicited comments and support from nearby communities, the I-70 project would have been more effective.



One of ten billboard paintings along Interstate 70, Tilly Woodward

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

OUR BOYS HIT THE BEACH



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SIGN UP TODAY

by Chuck Segard, 1985

●In memory of Guatemalan art critic, poet, activist and feminist Alaide Foppa, who was disappeared in 1980, Spanish artist Natalie Drache organized an exhibition in Mallorca last June. "Yo por Ti" (I for You) had a unique structure that could be used anywhere. Each of 148 painters and sculptors received the detailed history of a political or religious prisoner threatened with torture or execution. These cases, from all over the world, and the artists' visual responses to them, made up the show. Drache called this "art without quotation marks, an art of energy, an art of confrontation," and hopes that anyone who buys such a work will be offered, like the artists, "the experience of a bitter communion." (Alaide Foppa's fate is still in question; letters demanding an investigation of her disappearance should be sent to the new president of Guatemala: Marco Vinicio Cerezo.)

●Artists all over the country (and world) continue to work on U.S. public opinion about South Africa and Central America. Art Against Apartheid is sponsoring a multitheme exhibition on "Apartheid and the Family; Divestment; and Parallels: Apartheid and Racism U.S.A." at Boricua College in Greenpoint, Brooklyn (a new "art neighborhood" where the gallery Minor Injury recently opened, to be devoted to "young, innovative, and experimental minority artists"). Artists Call has co-sponsored events with two Chilean exile groups and the Salvadoran music group Cutumay Camones, on its first national tour. Multicultural cabarets and slide/film/video outreach are also in the works. In November, Ventana sponsored the visits to New York of Nicaraguan primitive painters Julie Aguirre and June Beer, who were run ragged with speaking engagements, complicated by the fact that their visas were held up for a week.

REAGAN



The wimps want his Nicaraguan policy to fail. But they made one mistake. They forgot they were dealing with Ronbo.

RONBO
 MORE BLOOD PART II
 No Congress, no law, no Sardinista can stop him.

●Chicago artist Esther Parada won *The Village Voice* "Contest for Artists who make Political Art." Her effective photo-text on "racketeer for Capitalism" General Smedley Butler had already been censored out by the Chicago Transit Authority, when Artemesia Gallery projected it for bus and subway use (along with pieces by Holzer, Revelle, Kruger, and others, all deemed "too controversial"). The contest was protested by the ten major activist art groups in New York, with an ad critical of the fact that the *Voice* could trivialize and buy off "political art" with a single shot, rather than covering it regularly, like all other art. A less exploitative example of newspaper art is a series of eight full-page pieces in the Fall, 1985, issue of *CANTO* (Cultural Workers and Artists for Nicaragua Today) c/o 911 East Pine, Seattle, WA. 98122.

PUBLICA(C)TIONS: Real Comet Press (932 18th Ave. E., Seattle, WA. 98112) just published the long-awaited activism anthology *Cultures in Contention*, edited by Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier, including essays on art, murals, media, criticism, street theatre, etc. by 26 writers ranging from German guerrilla journalist Gunter Wallraf to Ernesto Cardenal, Bernice Johnson Reagon of Sweet Honey in the Rock, Richie Perez of CAFA, Holly Near, Archie Shepp, Hans Haacke and Abbie Hoffman. For Further Inspiration, read: Donald Kuspit, *Leon Golub: Existential/Activist Painter* (Rutgers University Press); *ABC No Rio Dinero*, edited by Alan Moore and Marc Miller (156 Rivington St., NYC 10002); Douglas Kahn, *John Heartfield: Art and Mass Media* (Tanam Press, 40 White St., NYC 10013); Jim Goldberg, *Rich and Poor*, an extraordinary photo-text book on class (Random House); David Wojnarowicz, *Sounds in the Distance*, taped raps that uncover America (Aloes Books, London); and Hans Breder/Barbara Welch, *Portrait of Rosa/Retrato de Rosa* (Chicago Books)—the two latter available from Printed Matter, 7 Lispenard St., NYC 10013.

●El Frente Cultural de El Salvador has published from Managua (Apto. Postal 4315) the first issue of *CODICES* (*Centro de Documentación y Investigación Cultural de El Salvador*)—a magazine of the arts from Salvadorans in and out of the liberated zones, and in exile: "Our force is modest and limited, but we believe that, little by little, *CODICES* will become a medium by which the reader can enter into direct relationships with Salvadoran artistic and literary production."



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