

PUBLIC ART WORKSHOP

MARK ROGOVIN muralist, director

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-- the Artists' Statement

The following statement was written by muralists WILLIAM WALKER, MARK ROGOVIN, EUGENE EDA and JOHN WEBER, and distributed at their month-long exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, February 15 - March 15, 1971. The muralists painted before the public during Museum hours on portable panel murals, and upon completion of the exhibit, the murals left the Museum for display elsewhere.

The movement to create Peoples' Art on public walls in Chicago began in 1967 with the inspiration for the "Wall of Respect" at 43rd and Langley Streets. This wall was initiated and supported through the cooperation of OBAC, a group of Black artists, and the 43rd Street Community Organization, working closely with the people in the community. This wall, like others that have followed, has been celebrated, loved, and protected by community residents because they had a part in it.

While Black artists gave leadership to the Mural Movement, a small but growing number of Latin, Chicano, and white artists have followed their example. Since 1967, over thirty murals have been painted in Chicago neighborhoods, bringing Peoples' Art to the people of these communities.

This past summer, for the first time, grants from federal, state, and local foundations have made it possible for muralists to work on a larger scale. With the increasing press coverage, we came to the attention of Joseph R. Shapiro, President of the Museum of Contemporary Art. In November of 1970, he approached us with an idea for an exhibition at the Museum. We have been commissioned to paint portable-panel murals--the lower gallery of the Museum will be our studio--which will be

donated to these places of our choice on completion: Eugene Eda, Olivet Presbyterian Church; Mark Rogovin, National Angela Davis Defense Committee; William Walker, South Side Community Art Center; John Weber, Pedro Albizu Campos Center for the People's Health.

Since this exhibition will be one of the first such Museum exhibits devoted to mural painting in a decade, it will hopefully give more exposure to the Mural Movement, aid in opening new sources of support for future projects, give us a welcome chance to create new murals for Chicago, and perhaps lead Museum patrons and visitors to seek out various murals in neighborhoods where they have been created.

Our former projects are located on streets in working-class communities; our patrons, critics, and new art-lovers are those living in the neighborhoods surrounding these mural sites. We work with the support of local community groups, and are aided by the community residents. They have never asked for our credentials or the prestige of a "name." They demanded only that the artist bring respect, commitment, and vision to his work. Ultimately, it is the community residents and passers-by who most greatly appreciate the involvement of the artist. Unless one is actually witness to the enthusiasm, curiosity, and serious discussions of these newly-in-

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involved art-lovers, one does not realize the vitality and the potential of the mural as a public art form.

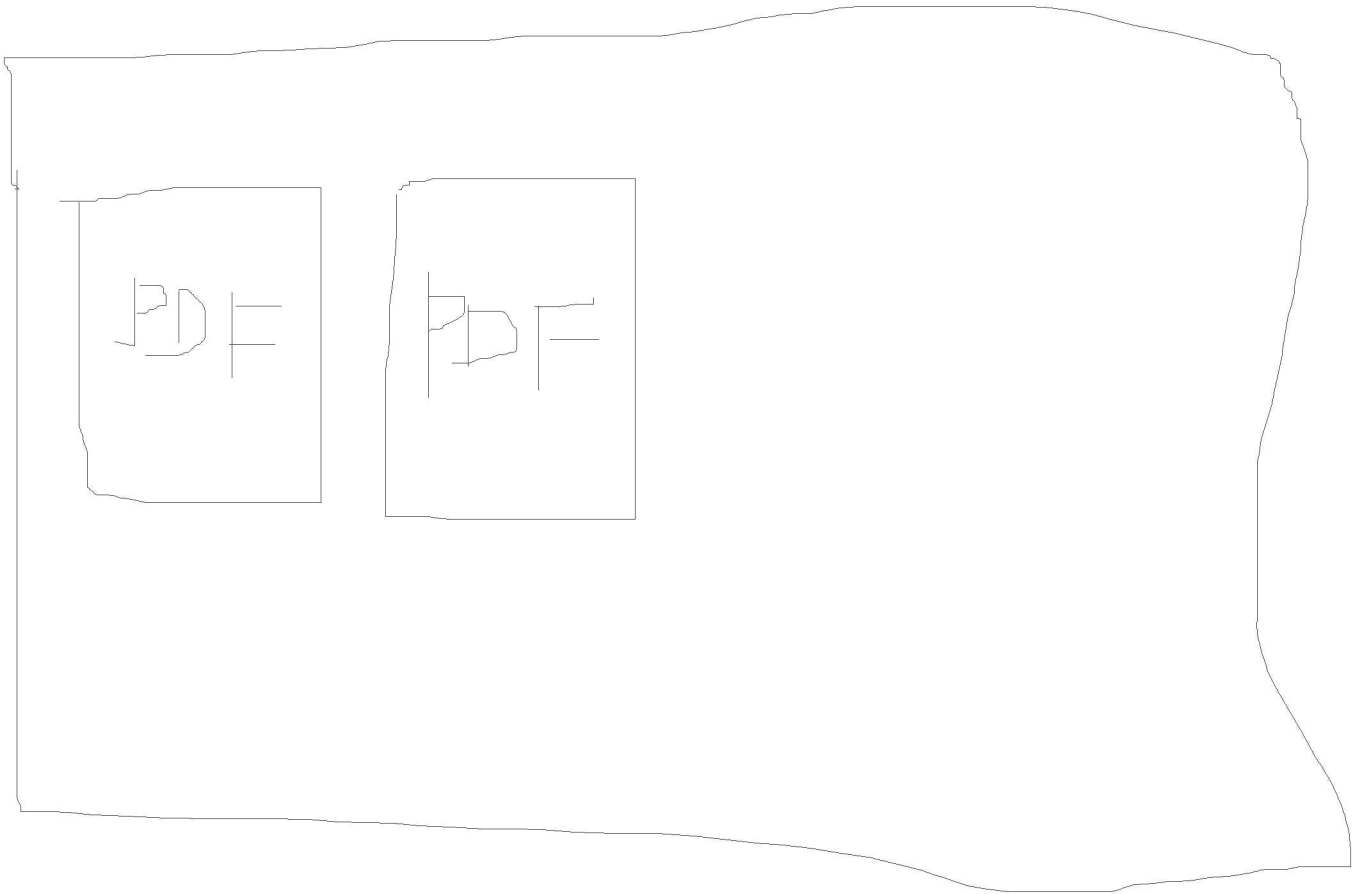
We are dedicated to becoming artists for the people, entering into a living relationship with this vast audience, drawing on the peoples' boundless potential for creativity. In the words of Bill Walker, "Artist-to-people communication is the kind of relationship that would place the artist and his art in a position of respect, pride and dignity, all of which the artist should have. These views are not based on the feelings of an idealist, hoping for something that cannot be or believing in something that he has never experienced; they are founded on the grounds of knowing from experience, of talking with people in a community during the time that the art project is in progress, of discussing the conditions of their problems and the world, and of realizing how art can become more relevant to the people of the world. During the course of these experiences, the artist is seen in a different light. The people no longer view the artist as being a "buffoon freak of the ages..." This new position that the artist can now feel gives him the dignity which will allow him to paint the truth with integrity, showing man what he has become--his inhumane ways, his inhumanity to his fellow brethren, his inability to be sensitive to others' feelings, and his tremendously developing skill in refining more devastating weapons with which to render himself into nothingness. Art is also seen as a force designed to dethrone ignorance from its pedestal of influence in the affairs of man...People are now realizing that public art is essential because it is relevant to each of them... Art is a universal language."

We have joined together through necessity that demands that all creative forces work together for the benefit of men and women in struggle. We hope to end the boycott that keeps mention of the Mexican muralists and the Public Art Movement of the 1930's in the United States out of textbooks and lectures in art schools throughout the country. We want museums to go out into the communities, to truly be schools for the people. We want the walls of Chicago to be art galleries for the people. We are anxious to encourage more artists in all fields to "take to the streets," to become involved, and to work for the people.

Our murals will continue to speak of the liberation struggles of Black and Third-World peoples; they will record history, speak of today, and project toward the future. They will speak of an end to war, racism, and repression, of love, of beauty and of life. We want to restore an image of full humanity to the people, to place art into its true context--into life.

The new Mural Movement is not limited to Chicago, it is international. In the United States in recent years, murals have been created in virtually every large city, as well as in some smaller cities. Several different approaches are being tried, as well as many individual styles. We welcome this rich variety of experimentation. We would, nonetheless, like to cite Sun-Times art critic Harold Haydon's warning:

"...Genuine people's wall painting, with its artist-to-people communication, could be neglected in the current move to decorate the city. It is easier and safer to sponsor exercises in abstract form and color. But this is a time when communication is important..."



Please print my PDF on yellow paper. I would like one yard of metallic magenta fabric purchased from the Textile Warehouse in Pilsen. The address is 2121 West 21st Street (between Leavitt and Hoyne). Please pin the PDF on both top corners of the document. Let me know if you need pins. I'm also happy to come install my piece since i live in the neighborhood.

Thank you!

-Victoria Martinez