

Blue Umbrellas, 1998,
30" x 30", acrylic on canvas.

various examples of Eva Cockcroft's political artworks. Throughout her career, she has used her creative talents to provide perceptive commentary about some of the major issues of public controversy. From her opposition to the Vietnam war and police brutality to her support of feminism, civil rights, and struggles against colonial domination, she has been a front-rank figure in American political art since the early 1970s. Her striking environmental drawings complement her murals on the same theme. Her drawings highlighting Sandinista women fighting for a more humane society and South African women resisting apartheid also celebrate working lives devoted to profound social change. Her portraits of major historical activists encourage audiences to augment and deepen their own knowledge. More generally, viewers of these works can see and appreciate the tremendous impact of

visual social commentary.

Since her arrival in Los Angeles, Eva Cockcroft has complemented her artwork with writing and teaching that reflect the same progressive principles that inform her paintings and drawings. Her co-authored book on the mural movement, *Towards a People's Art*, has been revised and republished in Fall, 1998 by the University of New Mexico Press. Highlighting the public art tradition of which she has herself been a prominent participant, the book encourages readers to explore the dynamic visual works that have pervaded major American cities since the late 1960s. Most important, Eva Cockcroft remains devoted to her artistic craft. Like her visual subjects, she too has achieved remarkable success in establishing her own working life committed to a humane vision of individual perseverance and social progress.

Eva S. Cockcroft

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS (select list):

- 1997 Beachin', LA, 46'x54', & 3 10'x30' ea. round towers, & 30'x25' tower, acrylic.
- 1996 Earth Memories, Belmont High School, LA, 3' to 45'x580', acrylic.
- 1996 Recycle, Repair, Renew, Restore, Santa Monica, 10 to 14'x280', acrylic.
- 1995 Compton, Past Present and Future, Compton MTA Station, 600 sq. ft., ceramic.
- 1994 Global Chess, (with Paul Botello), Berlin, Germany, 72'x120', acrylic.
- 1992 The Chain Undone, LA, 16'x79', acrylic.
- 1992 Open Minds, Open Hearts, Building the Future, Long Beach, 10x50', acrylic.
- 1991 History of Women in the Labor Movement, LA, 7'x60', acrylic.
- 1990 Oil Life and Ecology, Long Beach, 13'x72', acrylic.
- 1986 Homage to Seurat: La Grande Jatte in Harlem, NYC, 2 walls, 30x30' ea., acrylic.
- 1986 Push Crack Back, Artmakers collective mural, NYC, 15'x40', acrylic.
- 1985 La Lucha Continua, political art park (artistic director), NYC, 30'x40', oil enamel.

ONE PERSON SHOWS:

- 1988-9 Gallery 1199, 310 W. 43rd. St., NYC , 11/9-1/5.
- 1987 P.A.C.A. Gallery, 131 E. 7th St., NYC, 5/6-5/31.
- 1984 Gallery 345, 345 Lafayette St., NYC, 5/12-6/9.
- 1982 Gallery 345, 345 Lafayette St., NYC, 9/11-10/9.
- 1979 Cayman Gallery, 381 W. Broadway, NYC, 10/12-11/10.

GROUP SHOWS (select list)

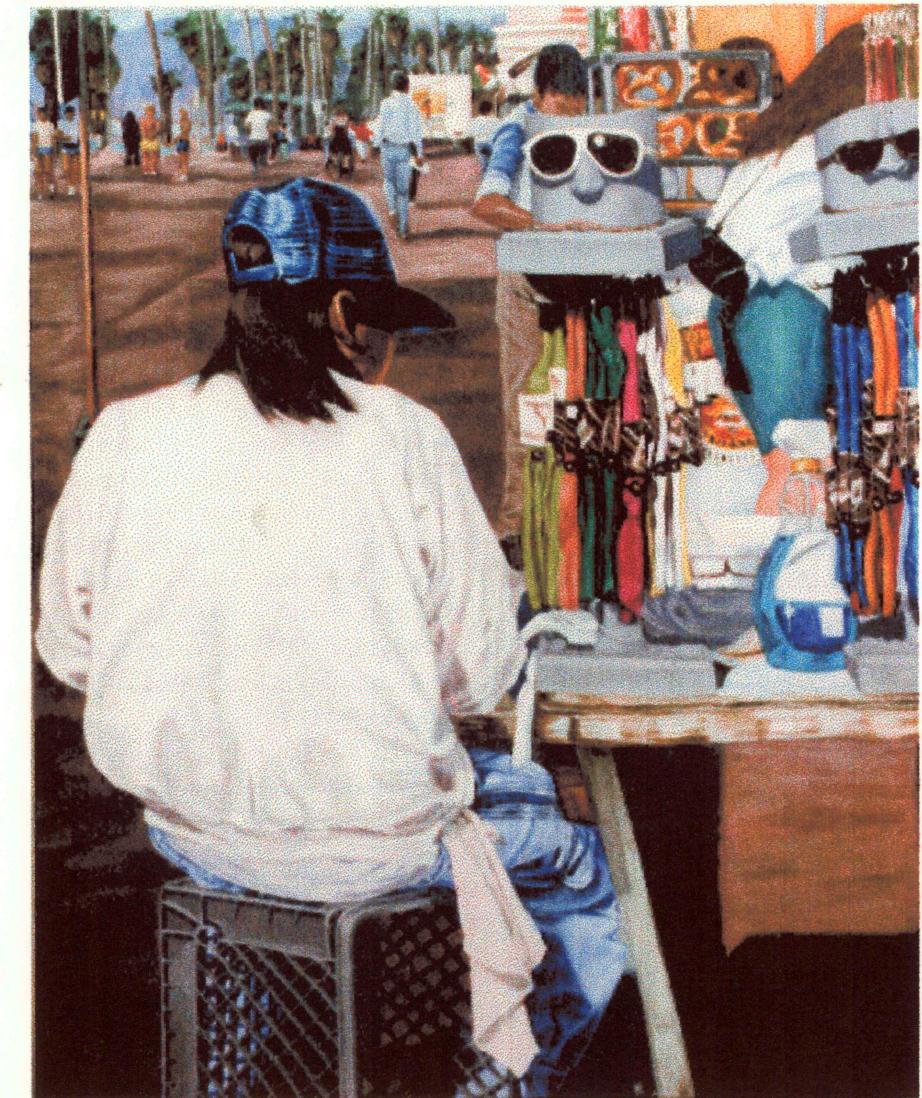
- 1993 Directors Guild of America, "The Art Speaks for Itself X", (curator: Jeff Phillips).
LA Municipal Art Gallery (curator: Harry Hopkins).
- 1990 Hillwood Art Museum, "The Political Landscape," (curator: Mary Ann Wadden)
PS 1 Long Island City, "China: June 4, 1989," (curator: Susanna Leval).
- 1989 Hillwood Art Museum, "Lines of Vision: Drawings by Contemporary Women,"
Toured US. and Latin America. (curator: Judy Van Wagner), catalog.
- 1988 Museum of Modern Art, NYC, "Committed to Print," Touring. (curator: Deborah Wye), catalog.
- 1987 Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, 584 Broadway, NYC, catalog.
- 1986 Bienal II, Havana, Cuba, "Por Encima del Bloqueo," catalog.
El Chopo Museum, Mexico City, "En Camino," catalog.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS:

- Museum of Modern Art, NYC.
- Flint Institute of the Arts.
- NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation.
- Wifredo Lam Institute, Havana, Cuba.
- Eli Broad Family Foundation.
- San Francisco Art Commission.

Eva Cockcroft

September 13 - November 3, 1998
A Shenere Velt Gallery, Los Angeles



Venice Beach: Sunglass Vendor, 1993, 54" x 46", acrylic on canvas.

Working Lives: Eva Cockcroft's Recent Works By Paul Von Blum

In contemporary America, a few visual artists have maintained a consistent moral vision throughout their entire careers. Resisting the ever changing fashions and trends of the art world, they have used their talents to provide a more authentic and sympathetic view of human beings in all facets of their lives. Their paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, and other works chronicle people's triumphs and tragedies, validating their hopes and aspirations and responding empathetically to their fears and frustrations. For almost 30 years, Eva Cockcroft has exemplified this tradition. Her enormous body of socially conscious artworks has made her a widely recognized, highly respected artistic presence in the 1990s.

Her sustained commitment to socially conscious figurative art informs and pervades the present exhibition. "Working Lives" affords Southern California audiences an exciting opportunity to see and appreciate several examples of Eva Cockcroft's work for the past decade, coinciding generally with her move from New York to Los Angeles in 1989. These intriguing artworks reflect a powerful humanist consciousness ranging from

sympathetic portrayals of ordinary working people in Manhattan and Venice beach to more specific social and political commentary on such issues as the environment, the historic struggles against South African apartheid, the civil conflict and American intervention in Nicaragua, and the need for racial and ethnic reconciliation in the United States. Although the works at the Workmen's Circle represent only a small fraction of her career artistic production, viewers can well appreciate her remarkable fusion of technical excellence and social insight.

One of her most engaging series emerged from her own experiences as a New York resident. Daily, she observed the anonymous men and women riding the subways and walking the streets. Sometimes lonely and sometimes desperate, they struggle for years to build lives that work. Despite their intermittent success, they retain a dignity that sustains them throughout their recurring travails in an indifferent, often hostile urban landscape.

Cockcroft's paintings penetrate deeply, revealing the basic humanity of people who will never experience Andy Warhol's legendary fifteen minutes of fame. She shows that despite their marginality, they get up in the morning, they go to work during the day, and they return home in the evening. Constantly reminded of the glamour surrounding them, they work hard

to survive, revealing a resilience that is scarcely acknowledged in mainstream society. In validating their existence, Eva Cockcroft joins a larger art historical tradition, including such luminaries as Honore Daumier, Kathe Kollwitz, Ben Shahn, Dorothea Lange, and many others, that celebrates the lives of the unheralded people without whom society cannot function.

Equally engaging is her Venice Beach series from the early and mid 1990s. A longtime resident of that vibrant community, Eva Cockcroft is a perceptive observer and artistic chronicler of colorful and frenetic boardwalk scene. Her acrylic paintings capture the spirit of the local shopkeepers, rollerbladers, body builders and other beachside denizens



Beauty and the Beast,
38" x 38", acrylic on
canvas.

who cater to the thousands of tourists, who have collectively made Venice beach the rival of Disneyland among domestic and foreign visitors.

Like their New York counterparts, many of these men and women--and boys and girls--labor at society's margins. But they have also constructed working lives that are often personally meaningful and socially productive. Moreover, they generally have the added advantage of spectacular weather and unrivaled contact with the human population. Their collective presence has made Venice Beach a unique locale, a contemporary signifier of a larger historical spirit in Southern California that has attracted millions from other states and nations to visit and often to

stay.

Visitors to the "Working Lives" exhibition have the added pleasure of seeing some of Eva Cockcroft's mural drawings and sketches. Since 1970, she has been in the forefront of the American mural renaissance. Several prominent art and cultural critics have acknowledged many of her works in New York and elsewhere as among the finest examples of mural art in the late 20th century. Her Los Angeles area murals during the past decade have added to her distinguished record in this domain. They have also

Design for the Chain Undone, 11" x 33", acrylic on paper.



Portrait of Mother Jones 14" x 21",
oil pastel on blue paper.

contributed to her reputation as a major social and political artist, whose commitment to public art has enabled her to reach audiences who rarely patronize the dominant institutions of the art world.

Her large-scale works address several major social themes and problems. Among her most powerful murals are those that protest environmental degradation and that call for concerted efforts to protect our natural resources. Such powerful examples as "The Chain Undone" (West Los Angeles), "Oil, Life, and Ecology" (Long Beach), and "Recycle, Renew, Repair, Restore" (Santa Monica) are striking examples of contemporary socially conscious public art. Viewers who appreciate the sketches in this exhibition will doubtless want to see the larger works themselves. Her mural drawings on racial understanding "Open Minds, Open Hearts: Building the Future" (Long Beach) and "History of Women and the Labor Movement in California" (South Central Los Angeles) will similarly encourage visits to these impressive mural sites.

"Working Lives" also contains