

Obituary

Eva Cockcroft; Venice Muralist Who Used Art to Explore Social Themes

By MYRNA OLIVER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Eva S. Cockcroft, a muralist who depicted social themes including the dignity of labor and racial unity on walls from Germany to Los Angeles, has died. She was 62.

Cockcroft, who also taught art, died April 1 in Los Angeles of breast cancer.

Her final mural was "Homage to Siqueiros," an East Los Angeles reconstruction of the Mexican artist's mural titled "America Tropical." Siqueiros' work was considered controversial, and had been obscured by whitewash for 50 years until Cockcroft and muralist Alessandra Moctezuma recreated it last year.

Cockcroft was also lead artist on the 540-foot-long mural titled "Earth Memory" near Belmont High School in downtown Los Angeles. Painted in 1996, the mural represents the history of the universe.

"Public art in general gives a neighborhood an identity, creates beauty and something for people to see as they walk by," Cockcroft told The Times during her work on the Belmont mural. "In this case it's sort of fun and educational. It's not a terribly serious mural. It doesn't have any political content, although some people might consider evolution to be a political statement."

"But we consider it just the kind of science that's taught in the schools in the United States," she said. "What I like to see is public art that relates to the people in the community, that is something they



JONATHAN ALCORN / Los Angeles Times
Artist Eva S. Cockcroft in 1996.

want and they understand."

Before moving to Los Angeles in 1989, Cockcroft created murals in New Jersey and New York City. Among them was her homage to French Impressionist Georges Seurat in upper Manhattan, which she titled "La Grande Jatte in Harlem." Instead of the white Parisians strolling in the park of Seurat's masterpiece, Cockcroft painted the black residents of Harlem.

Although most of her work was on outside walls, Cockcroft also created large paintings and drawings of the scenes near her Venice Beach studio. A selection of those pieces was exhibited last year as "Working Lives" at A Shenere Velt Gallery in the Pico-Robertson

area of Los Angeles.

Those displayed works, a Times critic wrote, "showcase her ongoing commitment to the experience of ordinary working people. Cockcroft's large, inviting paintings throb with color and motion; there's something happening in nearly every inch of these generous canvases."

Born in Vienna, Cockcroft was brought to the United States as an infant when her parents fled the Nazi takeover. She studied art at Cornell and Rutgers universities, and began painting murals in New Jersey in 1972.

In later years, she painted murals in Germany and Mexico along with others in the United States.

An expert on as well as creator of murals, Cockcroft coauthored "Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement," published first in 1972 and in a second edition last year.

She wrote several articles in art journals and taught art history and studio art at Cal State Long Beach and UC Irvine.

Cockcroft is survived by her father, Dr. Otto Sperling; her brother, Dr. George Sperling; three sons, Ben, Eric and Peter; her companion, Bruce Snyder, and seven grandchildren.

A memorial service is scheduled at 2 p.m. May 1 at the Social and Public Art Resource Center, 685 Venice Blvd., Venice.

Donations in the artist's memory may be sent to the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, 6120 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90044.

Obituary

Eva Cockcroft; Venice Muralist Who Used Art to Explore Social Themes

By MYRNA OLIVER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Eva S. Cockcroft, a muralist who depicted social themes including the dignity of labor and racial unity on walls from Germany to Los Angeles, has died. She was 62.

Cockcroft, who also taught art, died April 1 in Los Angeles of breast cancer.

Her final mural was "Homage to Siqueiros," an East Los Angeles reconstruction of the Mexican artist's mural titled "America Tropical." Siqueiros' work was considered controversial, and had been obscured by whitewash for 50 years until Cockcroft and muralist Alessandra Moctezuma recreated it last year.

Cockcroft was also lead artist on the 540-foot-long mural titled "Earth Memory" near Belmont High School in downtown Los Angeles. Painted in 1996, the mural represents the history of the universe.

"Public art in general gives a neighborhood an identity, creates beauty and something for people to see as they walk by," Cockcroft told The Times during her work on the Belmont mural. "In this case it's sort of fun and educational. It's not a terribly serious mural. It doesn't have any political content, although some people might consider evolution to be a political statement."

"But we consider it just the kind of science that's taught in the schools in the United States," she said. "What I like to see is public art that relates to the people in the community, that is something they



JONATHAN ALCORN / Los Angeles Times
Artist Eva S. Cockcroft in 1996.

want and they understand."

Before moving to Los Angeles in 1989, Cockcroft created murals in New Jersey and New York City. Among them was her homage to French Impressionist Georges Seurat in upper Manhattan, which she titled "La Grande Jatte in Harlem." Instead of the white Parisians strolling in the park of Seurat's masterpiece, Cockcroft painted the black residents of Harlem.

Although most of her work was on outside walls, Cockcroft also created large paintings and drawings of the scenes near her Venice Beach studio. A selection of those pieces was exhibited last year as "Working Lives" at A Shenere Velt Gallery in the Pico-Robertson

area of Los Angeles.

Those displayed works, a Times critic wrote, "showcase her ongoing commitment to the experience of ordinary working people. Cockcroft's large, inviting paintings throb with color and motion; there's something happening in nearly every inch of these generous canvases."

Born in Vienna, Cockcroft was brought to the United States as an infant when her parents fled the Nazi takeover. She studied art at Cornell and Rutgers universities, and began painting murals in New Jersey in 1972.

In later years, she painted murals in Germany and Mexico along with others in the United States.

An expert on as well as creator of murals, Cockcroft coauthored "Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement," published first in 1972 and in a second edition last year.

She wrote several articles in art journals and taught art history and studio art at Cal State Long Beach and UC Irvine.

Cockcroft is survived by her father, Dr. Otto Sperling; her brother, Dr. George Sperling; three sons, Ben, Eric and Peter; her companion, Bruce Snyder, and seven grandchildren.

A memorial service is scheduled at 2 p.m. May 1 at the Social and Public Art Resource Center, 685 Venice Blvd., Venice.

Donations in the artist's memory may be sent to the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, 6120 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90044.

NEWS

For His Eastside Council Seat

pendent."

Another challenger, Nick Pacheco, who is endorsed by Mayor Richard Riordan, said he does not believe Alatorre's backing will do much for Cetina.

"I think the councilman gets mixed reviews in the district," Pacheco said. "I don't think this helps his campaign or gives it any boost at this point."

But Cetina, who also was endorsed by former state Assemblyman Richard Katz, says he is a consensus builder who won't be beholden to anyone if he wins.

But even Katz's endorsement comes with baggage, because he ran into controversy during his bitterly fought race against former Councilman Richard Alarcon for the state Senate last spring. Alarcon's consultant wrote a mailer, funded by state Senate Majority

Leader Richard Polanco (D-Los Angeles), falsely linking Katz to a 1988 incident in Orange County in which Republican candidates posted guards at polling places to intimidate Latinos.

Polanco has endorsed Victor Griego for the council seat that Cetina is seeking.

Katz said he wanted to add his name to Cetina's endorsements only because Katz believes the 34-year-old candidate is dynamic and committed to improving the district. "I'm not in office and I'm not running for office," Katz said.

Cetina said he is pleased to have both endorsements and that he believed Alatorre "took an interest" in his campaign early on. Alatorre also added a handwritten note seeking contributions on the back of Cetina's fund-raising envelopes, and his influence can be

seen in some of the campaign contributions Cetina has received, including one from Alatorre's son.

Cetina, a Metropolitan Water District engineer, has never held public office. He downplayed any negative influence his campaign may suffer from the endorsement by Alatorre, who tested positive for cocaine use recently and whose personal finances are the subject of a federal investigation.

"Whatever problems he had are his," Cetina said. "That's not me. I'm a completely separate individual."

The other candidates in the 14th District race are: Jim Beckham, Juan Jose Gutierrez, Armando Hernandez, Juan Jimenez, Cathy Molina, Ramiro Moseley, Sylvia Robledo, Juan Marcos Tirado, Zeke Quezada, and a write-in, Yolanda Gonzales.

Holden Says Bradley Backed His Candidacy

■ Politics: Councilman visited his onetime bitter foe just before his death and received endorsement, a letter says. Ex-mayor's daughter, others skeptical.

By PETER Y. HONG
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Los Angeles City Councilman Nate Holden has announced an endorsement from an unlikely supporter in his fourth and final run

she said.

"Tom Bradley would roll over in his grave if he knew that anyone was suggesting he endorsed Nate Holden. This will backfire. Their differences were well-known, and this smacks of what it is: Nate Holden trying to use the good name of Tom Bradley," said Lomax, who represented a former Holden staffer in a sexual harassment lawsuit against the councilman.

Holden commented on the endorsement and subsequent criticisms only through members of his council staff. His deputy, Dana Sargeant, said that although Holden and

