

"OPENING THE DOORS OF CULTURE"

1. A unity between different kinds of people. Culture as a pathway of communication between different groups and strata. Culture as the measure of real social progress. Culture as an aid to functioning democracy.

*use of "culture" different elitist vrs democratic*

Thus: Cultural activity towards the unification of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and other groups. A common democratic bond between all.

*rel. bet. cult. & polit. economy = obviously within limits*

In Botswana culture as a unifying factor in the struggle for development.

In South Africa, culture as a unifying (not divisive) factor in the struggle against the Apartheid regime.

2. Culture in the context of the fight against racism. Art and culture in the context of meetings between different races, (different cultures.) Culture as a standing (and functioning) "committee for racial peace". Art as a major vehicle for cross-cultural understanding.

In Botswana: reaching out towards and sharing all cultural perspectives of value.

In South Africa: the forging of a common and unified culture, created in spite of the alienation and desolation Apartheid has caused. The endless discovery and re-discovery of the images and symbols of the liberated South Africa which in many ways, already exists.

*= conscious creation of culture (in broad as well as narrow sense)*

3. Unity in action between artists (of all kinds) and between different artforms. Opening the doors between different disciplines. Genuine exchange of ideas between all sectors of cultural workers. End of artistic elitism, end of the conspiracy of mystification in which culture is so often presented to the world. The building of vibrant artforms capable of meeting the people and meeting their needs. Cultural forms capable of having social meaning in the broadest sense.

In Botswana: working to build an increasingly active and skilled cultural community.

In South Africa: the establishment of common programs for all cultural workers. First item on the agenda - the total discrediting and destruction of the culture of Apartheid. A cultural offensive by a unified artistic community against every manifestation of exploitation, class and colour discrimination, oppression, Apartheid fascism.

4. The practical democratization of culture. Giving culture back to the people. Workable cultural programs in the community. Opening the doors of culture to all. Building pathways to these doors and signposts to these pathways.

In Botswana: increasing the community involvement of artists.

In South Africa: artists learning to struggle side by side with the communities. Placing their abilities and their energies at the disposal of these communities. Disciplining their work accordingly and merging with the people in cultural action for freedom.

*SADCC - links bet. econ struggle & polit. struggle (against apartheid +)*

P&R/Jan 1982

*Mobiliz. against apartheid  
Culture as a constructive force to ~~isolate~~ make people  
recognize struggle...*

# Going beyond LIP - comments (Muff)

## General

Article is well written and some points made (eg. about LIP's portrayal of women seeing themselves in isolation, and LIP's concentration on "women's consciousness type articles) are incisive and valid criticisms.

However, the article could be improved considerably:

## A Stylewise

- ① It needs to be shortened by five pages. Two pages for a review of this nature are adequate.
- ② There is too much repetition; ideas could be expressed more succinctly.
- ③ Judy must be careful not to use oppressor language (eg. "raid")
- ④ The title doesn't fit the article. As it stands, this article is not about the search for women's art in Southern Africa. Hence the title sounds pretentious.

## B Contentwise

- ① From what I've seen of the book, LIP makes an ideological mistake of concentrating on ~~the~~ feminist battles instead of women in the struggle. This should be the springboard from which a criticism of LIP is sprung. Instead, Judy has allowed herself to be caught up in feminist debate and spent a hell of a lot of time (and space) making statements about the media-created woman stereotype. To me, her article reveals more about her own attempts to be "relevant" as a woman and cultural worker than <sup>it deals</sup> with the issue at hand, which is:
  - (a) What is the point of LIP and does it succeed? What are its good points and what its bad?
  - (b) Does it aid the struggle? If not, why not?

IMAGES OF A REVOLUTION (Mural art in Mozambique)  
by Albie Sachs/ published by Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1983.

It has long been part of the <sup>perennial</sup> culture of Southern Africa ~~for people~~ to paint pictures on the walls of their homes. <sup>And again,</sup> Historically, the patterns on walls <sup>and floors</sup> in the rural areas were never simply pretty ~~patterns~~ <sup>and reflect the region's</sup> patterns; for the people living in those areas, they were infused with meaning, they symbolised the universe in which a peasant family grows and farms and dies. But our people have been forced off the land, forced to live in matchboxes they could not own, or tin rooms patched with cardboard and plastic; forced to work in factories they cannot control, doing alienating and mind-dulling work; they are permitted to gaze at the ominous and dominating marble facades ~~belonging of~~ <sup>hence</sup> the oppressive state. We do not own the walls around us, <sup>and</sup> ~~the habit of painting~~ <sup>need for</sup> on the walls has ~~been~~ <sup>left us,</sup> is leaving us.

But in Mozambique in 1975 the people took back control over their destiny. They took back the walls. And they covered these walls with the expression and understanding of their struggle: first with spontaneous slogans and symbols, later with more formal murals. A new art was born.

This birth is the subject of the book, Images of a Revolution. The book begins:

Revolution is a highly conscious act. It permits the unthinkable to be thought, the inconceivable to be imagined, and the unspoken to be shouted out loud. When Independence came to Mozambique in 1975, people celebrated not only the end of centuries of Portuguese colonialism, but also the unfolding of a deep process of internal transformation, the sudden flowering in bright sunlight of all that had been hidden in darkness and fear.

Images makes a first attempt to describe and explain the development of mural art within the context of the Mozambican revolution. In doing so, it puts all our graphic <sup>work</sup> into a new perspective. It forces us to look again at the <sup>pressures</sup> ~~forces~~ acting upon our art, to think where we may begin to go in future. Find a copy and read it, look at it. This is a new road in front of us, stretching to the ends

of our imaginations, and beyond.

But having said that, we must ask: what are the lessons we can learn from this book? What does the graphic work from Maputo teach us? And what about the book itself -- given that most of us cannot go to Mozambique, we are dependant upon the books presentation of the work to inform us. How well does it succeed?

The overwhelming lesson of Images is the intimate link, indeed the <sup>homonym</sup> unity, between cultural work and the liberation of the people. "Opening the doors of culture" is not a sweet liberal sentiment. It is a matter of hard material fact and concrete political direction.

To paint murals on the walls you must first take over the walls. And you must have paint. Images points out that the first wave of Mozambican wall-painting subsided with the growing paint shortage. Again, tragically, the beautiful revolutionary posters of the late 1970's in Mozambique have had to be curtailed because there is no paper to print them on. This sad fact alone shows that the material well-being of our people must lie at the very foundations of our art. We cannot paint on dreams alone.

The second material fact in the development of Mozambican mural art lay in the sponsorship. The murals were intended from their earliest conception to have an audience of the whole community, "the people". They were commissioned by the people's republic. They were painted in public places, on the walls of the people's state. They were not hidden in galleries or museums or sold to the private collections of the rich, or an alien audience far away.

Working from this material base (at the time when they had paint), cultural workers in Mozambique began to develop new symbols and imagery to <sup>express</sup> capture the richness of their revolutionary experience. In our unliberated societies we are taught that art can only explore our private perceptions, and that we will succeed as artists only if we can present such perceptions in an individualistic manner differing from every other human being around us. But in Images we find the graphic artist struggling to express the deep knowlege of history, the concious awareness, that has <sup>overcome</sup> caught up the the people of Mozambique. ~~Images are developed that epitomise the all~~ <sup>The pictures drawn on the walls</sup>

piece (SIC)

\* 1. Ngugi peice. focusses first on the cultural legacy of colonialism, and secondly on the failure of the national bourgeoisie to escape this legacy!

\* 2. Disbandment of Pen:

- a. Needs an introduction giving context (when, why was PEN disbanded)
- b. The audience he addresses is right-- South African writers.
- c. The points are valid: who benefits from Pen disbanding? who pressurizes black writers against working with whites and why? what is the role of white artists/ colour in defining "identity"?
- d. I found the writing confusing-- he skips around, continuity is difficult to follow. Perhaps this could be helped by spacing-- double-space between "sections"?

\* 3. Interview with an Artist in Exile:

- a. Who is it? The interview needs a context! (Could some kind of introduction be written without knowing who it is?)
- b. Audience: The language of the first part-- "national democratic revolution", reference to the Soviet Union etc, may assume too much political background not shared by our audience -- would it come over as jargon?  
The answers are good (focusses on political significance of the sculpture), but the interviewer does not appear to have much idea of African art. . . .
- c. Fits fairly well with Ngugi article
- d. We have had nothing on sculpture.

4. Art in Education:

- a. Primarily a Botswana audience? Would it be useful to people outside Botswana?  
(-- perhaps try Zebra's Voice?)
- b. A change in pitch-- not so theoretical.
- c. If we use it we should cut the stuff about the van - its not useful to our readers.

\* 5. Albie Sachs letter:

- a. The points are good-- but I'm not sure it stands on its own. Follows much better from Part III of Ngugi. Needs introduction?
- b. I think it addresses the right audience (inside SA) although from a foreign point of view. Useful as cross-cultural input?

\* 6. Professionalism article: addressed to Medu members in the first place, although the points are relevant to non-members. . . . again perhaps fits better with Part III Ngugi. (-how we go about creating a new national culture.)

\* - I would like to use it (definitely).

7. Art can Never be Neutral and Art is not neutral: these were written for Staffrider and have not yet been rejected-- can we wait until their status is known? Also, they follow from two peices by Dikobe WaMogale (of which only one has appeared in Staffrider).

8. To Every Birth review:

a. It is written from the point of view of "Literature" (capital L), rather than how the book affects us. The review analyses the book as a political novel in the abstract, following the standards of Western Literature (does it idealize characters etc). Aren't these the wrong standards?

b. I don't agree personally with the ~~explanation of what~~ review on what the critical events of the novel are. It ignores the political development of the novel, especially at the end, looking only at characters in the context of politics. The analysis of the role of the Movement in uniting the society shown is good.

c. "African humanism" is WRONG (Kaunda has ruined it as a term.)

-- Its well written, but can we do better?

\* 9. No More Lullabies: I like it. Not sure I understand stanza 4; the ending is strong.

10. Morake poems:

1. The only one I would consider is the last, You'll Hear Him.
2. Oh my Friend, Shot Them, Rest in Peace have no resistance, only moaning.
3. Thula Nana Thula is OK but I'm not sure the point (anti-religious) would be useful to us?
4. 1943;1976 doesn't effectively make the point in my opinion.

X 11. A Seed must seem to die review:

a. good points-- perhaps too overwhelmingly positive about the book, which I have not read (although after this review I would very much like to)? I like the way he shows the relations between the poetic devices and the politics.

bx

b. I like the extensive quotes from the poetry.

X 12. Seeds of War review:

a. Very good analysis, especially of the end of the play.

b. My one real problem is that the reviewer calls it a "novel" throughout, and page 2, which looks at the form of the book, ignores the play format-- so that comments like "no attempt to portray character" seem strange. Could this be changed?

13. Muff Andersson review:

a. The political comments are interesting-- but it seems to me to argue with specific details without looking much at the overall political structure of what Andersson is trying to do with the book-- what is she trying to say about the music industry etc? Does the reviewer's disagreement with her facts refute her approach? The point about protest folk music at the end of the review is good.

b. The point on pg. 2 about Andersson basically ignoring African jazz and folk songs is good but I feel that this particular criticism of Music in the Mix could be much stronger and more general. Andersson fails to give much credit at all to the positive aspects of African music; it is NOT all corruption by the industry!

c. I also feel more credit could be given to her very informative analysis of the effects of the commercial music industry; and her rather inventive and involving format-- a good approach to getting across a lot of research to a popular audience.

14. Opening the Doors of Culture:

a. I like the points, but;

b. is Medu newsletter the right audience? The paper assumes a fundamental agreement on many points that may not exist even within Medu itself. . . .

X 15. Shades of Change poem-- I like it.

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