

New Haven Mayor's Other Constituency: the Arts

By LUISA KREISBERG

ON THE eve of his inaugural for a second term as Mayor of New Haven, Frank Logue took a 72-hour vacation from politics in New York City. There, with his wife, Mary Ann, he attended a concert by a musical punster named P.D.Q. Bach, a performance of the modern dance troupe Pilobolus, an art exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum entitled "The Age of Spirituality" and a Broadway show, Eugene O'Neill's "A Touch of the Poet."

It was typical of the Mayor to wind up a hard-fought campaign with a cultural hiatus. "The arts are a great relaxer," he said. "I need to do things that aren't related to politics."

Despite the disclaimer, the arts are very much related to the Mayor's politics. As chairman of the Task Force on the Arts of the National League of Cities, a Washington-based organization that represents the interests of 15,000 cities across the country in matters before the Congress and the executive branch, he has taken a leadership role in forming a national urban policy for the arts.

The task force includes mayors and councilmen from 16 cities, and Mayor Logue assumed the chairmanship last June because, as he put it, "The time had come for municipal government to do more to make the arts accessible to all the people."

One way to make that happen, he felt, was to amend the 123-page National Urban Policy Statement of the National League of Cities "to place the arts within the context of municipal priorities." The task force spent six months drafting amendments that were approved unanimously in December by delegates to the league's Congress of Cities meeting in San Francisco.

"By taking such action," Mr. Logue said later, "the league recognized the importance of the arts as a city service on a par with other city services, such as police, fire and other essential services. With national municipal policy set, local officials should be more inclined to take action. Action follows policy."

Action has indeed followed policy in New Haven. Recently Mr. Logue announced that he would create an Office of Cultural Affairs within New Haven's city government. Modeled after existing municipal agencies for the arts in Boston, Atlanta and San Francisco, New Haven's Office of Cultural Affairs will



The New York Times/Ken Laflair

Mayor Frank Logue of New Haven with publicly-funded mimes Betsey Folsom, Susan Block and David Brennan

be an arm of the Mayor's office. It will perform a variety of roles, from providing technical and financial assistance to cultural groups to the development of new programs that will enhance the city's economy and atmosphere.

The new municipal department was recommended by a Cultural Affairs Studies Committee appointed last May by Mr. Logue to assess the potential for growth in the city's cultural life. The committee concluded that New Haven's "quality of life" was wedded to the arts. The "arts" were broadly defined, covering the city's many visual and performing arts organizations as well as archi-

ecture and environmental design, parks and recreation programs and educational institutions.

Mayor Logue's interest in the arts has been developing since he was an undergraduate at Yale University and "soaked up the humanities," including "all the Russian novels." Literature was almost a discovery for him after years of interest in baseball as a child. "When I was 12," he said, "the person I most wanted to be was Joe DiMaggio. I had a classical American boyhood."

After completing his freshman year at Yale, he served two and a half years as a soldier in the infantry, then returned to

Yale "greatly matured and aware of the possibilities."

"If you're 21 and know how to use the rich opportunities at a university, the world is your oyster," the Mayor said.

Among the "possibilities" he discovered were symphonic and chamber music concerts in Woolsey Hall. He became particularly interested in 17th- and 18th-century chamber music. He also went to plays and later became interested in — and married — a young woman who had studied ballet for many years.

Since then his interest in music, theater and dance has never abated. "I sing

Mozart's 'Figaro' in the shower and I conduct Beethoven's 'Eroica' in my living room," he said, smiling. "But the thing that weds my love of the arts is at Christmas when the New Haven Chorale performs excerpts from Handel's 'Messiah' and I'm asked to do readings from the King James version of the Bible. It's the ultimate experience."

Since winning the mayoralty of New Haven in 1976, Mr. Logue has made it clear throughout the city government that he values esthetics. He has advocated public-service employment for artists under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and has

passed judgments on everything from whose paintings will hang in City Hall to selecting the winning musical composition for rendition on the new bells in the City Hall tower.

He has also fostered interest in urban design. He intervened to save the century-old jail tower on Whalley Avenue from the wrecker's ball and to preserve a cast-iron staircase for the new City Hall. The latter act won him a "lump of steel," in gratitude from the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture.

Mr. Logue is particularly proud of the city's role in preserving property on Audubon Street for arts use. "A good example of that," he said, "is when we sold the old Dixwell Avenue firehouse to a dance school for very little money. There were other people who wanted to use the building for commercial purposes, and from a financial point of view, it might have made sense, but from an esthetic point of view, what was done was much more important. It helped give the arts their due place in the city's life."

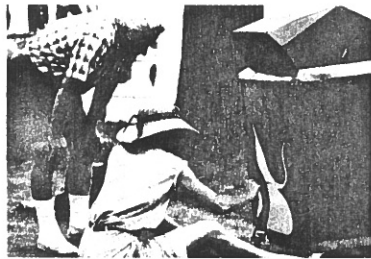
Similarly, he has emphasized the importance of esthetics in the design of the new City Hall, which he feels has significant visual impact on New Haven's picture-postcard "green." He has made it clear, too, that the open spaces in and around New Haven Harbor should remain open, so views of the water are accessible to pedestrians.

Accessibility is the key to a number of arts projects that the Mayor has endorsed. A summer arts program financed last year by grants under the training act, for example, involved 80 inner-city youths in mural "crews." The crews painted bright, decorative murals in community centers, health-care facilities, schools and public-housing developments.

"The people who live with the murals were as proud of the murals as the mural crews," Mr. Logue said. "There's been very little graffiti."

"I think where the city government really has a role is to see if the arts can play a part in the lives of people who are basically untouched by the arts. There is hunger everywhere for esthetic experiences, but many people have no access to the arts. More and more mayors are becoming aware of this and are doing something about bringing the arts to people."

"In a city which ignores the arts, a city which is destitute of art, the quality of life suffers," he said. "In fostering the arts, a city government may be playing its most meaningful role." ■



Street Scene

A grant from Artsjobs through the Connecticut Commission on the Arts matched CETA dollars to bring ten artists to New Haven's streets during the summer of 1976. Musicians, dancers, a puppeteer, mimes, street actors, sidewalk painters and sculptors showed everyone from tiny tots and the handicapped to senior citizens and lunch time strollers that they could be artists and enjoy a wide variety of art experiences. As shown here art was often created from found objects.

Bridging the gaps with ethnic arts

Many inner city residents will not leave their neighborhoods to participate in art programs, so CETA funds several artists as outreach workers to facilitate the growth of a variety of ethnic arts in neighborhood centers and the city jail. Hispanic, Italian and Black poetry, dance, music and visual arts are getting new life. Festival '77, staffed by two Public Service employees brought many ethnic groups to the New Haven Green for four days of cultural exchange.



Teaching the teachers

Twelve CETA artists are working through the Board of Education to train school staffs and community organizers in the skills of their art forms. They share their techniques in creative dramatics and writing, music, dance, crafts and environmental design while introducing children and adults to various life styles, career opportunities and options for further study.

The Children's Museum, converted from an autobody shop by CETA work crews, believes that parents should work with their children to learn about the world through art experiences. One of their most exciting programs employs a CETA music and art therapist to teach parents of the handicapped how to make their children's lives more exciting through art.



By using Public Service Employment and youth monies, and supplemental grants, CETA in New Haven has demonstrated that people of all ages can work and learn in new and exciting ways. Art in its many forms has begun to change the face of New Haven. The community is discovering that art is for everyone and that it is work and self-expression, not merely an ornament.

Art works



City of New Haven
Employment & Training Administration
Frank Logue, Mayor • Thomas S. Corso, Administrator

Brochure design: Carol Barden; Photography: Jehanne Arslan, Susan Coffey-Frost, Richard Quirk

ceta arts

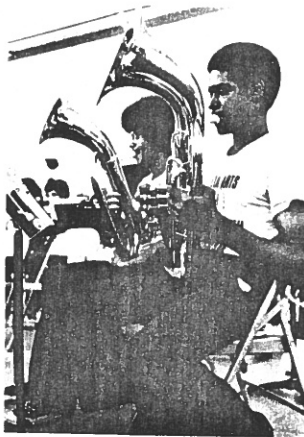


new haven



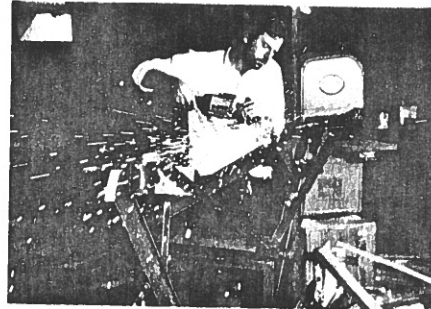
Community art works

Vacant lots, street corners at lunch time and neighborhood centers are getting new life through CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) funded art projects. CETA support for the arts is based on the premise that art is valid work like any other profession and that artists should be given a chance to earn a living from their chosen trade. But New Haven has discovered that funding jobs for artists does much more than provide paychecks for unemployed individuals. Funding artists with public dollars brings the visual and performing arts to the public and involves people of all ages in the creation of those arts. CETA funding in New Haven supports the arts as cultural enrichment, work, education, training, public property, a participatory process and a means of uniting people.



For youth - an alternative to the assembly line

"I thought you had to do something you don't like in order to make money" was the reaction of one youth who participated in an innovative CETA Summer Youth Employment Program designed by Mayor Frank Logue's Committee on the Arts formed in January of 1976. Over 150 kids got a chance to study and perform with professional artists. A band, chorus, Puerto Rican theater group, dancers, mimes and budding photographers learned to look at life and communicate in new ways. These new skills, and the increased self-respect they bring, are important whether they pursue careers in the arts or not. Their hours of rehearsal and performances culminated in a CETA Youth Arts Festival on the New Haven Green in which they shared their talents with the whole community.



'The walls have tongues'

CETA Public Service employees have created over 20 city murals with teams of youngsters who never knew they could paint. The walls speak about feelings of joy, anger and unity. They bring new life and color to the urban environment. The process of working on the murals is just as important as the end product — kids learn how to work and make decisions as a team. Whole neighborhoods organize around the creation of a mural. One project is brightening the walls of such places as the welfare and unemployment offices.



Sculpture moves out of the museum

An environmental sculptor showed urban families how to make a museum out of their garden with lifelike scarecrows. In the winter months he gives pottery lessons to inner city youngsters. Another sculptor is designing and building a carousel for the central city. As shown here, he is welding the stanchions that will support the carved figures.

A lifeline to the elderly

A CETA muralist at the Jewish Home for the Aged encouraged men and women in their 70's and 80's, some of them in wheel chairs and one who is legally blind, to pick up brushes to depict scenes from their past — a flower vendor and immigrant garment factory workers. Their smaller pieces were put together into a triptych for their community room. This is one of several art projects which are getting the elderly out of their rooms and into new activities.



Mimes speak and teach without words

Recognizing that people lead fuller lives if they can express themselves in a variety of ways, the Mayor's Committee on the Arts hired three CETA City mimes to perform each noontime on and around the New Haven Green. They encourage people to become more aware of their actions and feelings by "inviting" people to interact with them without words. In addition to their own work, they have formed a mime troupe as a part-time after school job for CETA youth. One of the mimes explains, "We provide an outlet for channeling excess energy other than fighting and drugs. Mime is an artistically pleasing and socially acceptable mode of releasing frustration and telling others of your feelings."



Mayor Frank Logue

