



Los Angeles Times

Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

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PST, A to Z: 'Peace Press Graphics 1967-1987' at UAM CSULB

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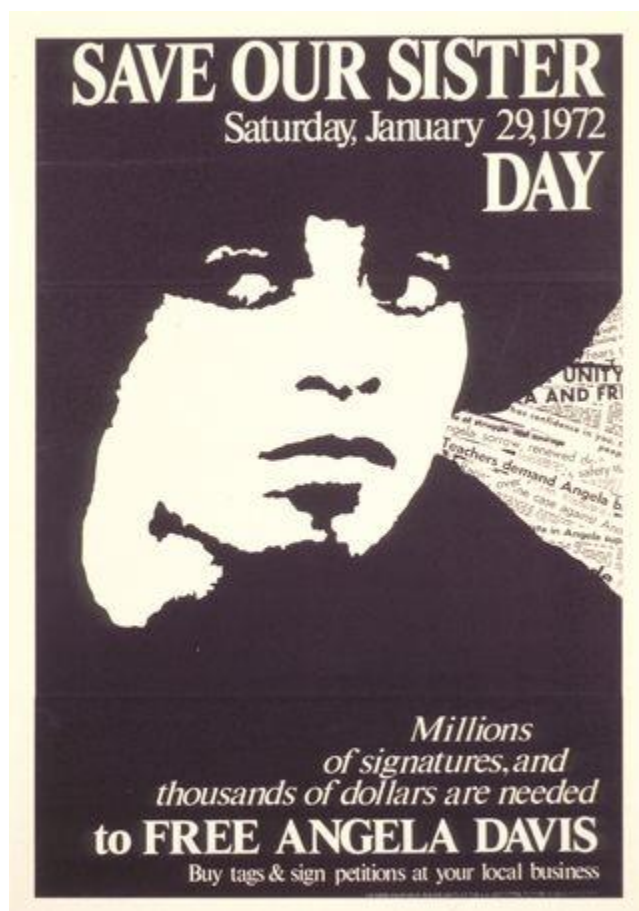
Pacific Standard Time will explore the origins of the Los Angeles art world through museum exhibitions throughout Southern California over the next six months. Times art reviewer Sharon Mizota has set the goal of seeing all of them. This is her latest report.



"Libertad de Expresión," a 1968 print by Mexican artist Adolfo Mexiac, is a powerful image.

So far in my Pacific Standard Time adventures, I have seen the stark portrait of a man gagged with a thick, padlocked chain five times: three times in "MEX/LA" at the Museum of Latin American Art (see my recent post), and twice in "Peace Press Graphics 1967-1987" at the University Art Museum at Cal State Long Beach.

The latter exhibition explores the output of the Los Angeles collective dedicated to printing posters, fliers, bumper stickers and books in support of just about every left-wing cause imaginable. Drawing largely on [the collection of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics](#) (full disclosure: I volunteer for the center), the show includes more than 100 posters dealing with such issues as the Vietnam War, human rights, civil rights, feminism and the environment. It's basically a time capsule of left-wing activism from the massive upheavals of the late 1960s through the less volatile but no less impassioned anti-apartheid, anti-nuclear and anti-imperialist movements of the 1980s.



At the time Peace Press was formed in 1967, commercial presses often refused to print radical posters or fliers, and they certainly couldn't do it with the speed that activist organizers needed. In a short but informative video, the press' founders and early members recall how they wanted to make movement materials more professional, and how by controlling the press themselves, they were able to print fliers

quickly in response to events such as the assassinations of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. They also instituted such idealistic practices as collective decision-making and free staff lunches, cooked on the premises.

But to return to Mexiac's image: Its visceral expression of censorship and oppression is likely what has kept it circulating (The original image, on view in "MEX/LA," appears above). In the Peace Press show, it pops up on a 1984 poster for an antiwar art exhibition and, more intriguingly, on one supporting "The Harriet Tubman Prison Movement," which sought better conditions for prisoners and their families.

Across from Mexiac's image is a full-length illustration of Tubman toting a rifle. The poster is not a great work of art, but it captures a particular moment, circa 1971. Common cause is made between prisoner rights, Mexican anti-censorship struggles and the history of the anti-slavery movement in the U.S. It's a remarkable synergy, mostly because such big-picture connections feel so far away today.

-- Sharon Mizota

University Art Museum, Cal State University Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, (562) 985-5761, through Dec. 11. Closed Mondays. www.csulb.edu/org/uam

Upper left photo: Adolfo Mexiac, "Libertad de Expresión," 1984 reprint of 1954 original. Credit: Center for the Study of Political Graphics

Upper right photo: "Support the Harriet Tubman Prison Movement And Its Objectives," 1971. Credit: Center for the Study of Political Graphics

Lower photo: "Save Our Sister Day," 1972. Credit: Collection of Jonathan Kawaye © Rupert Garcia



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