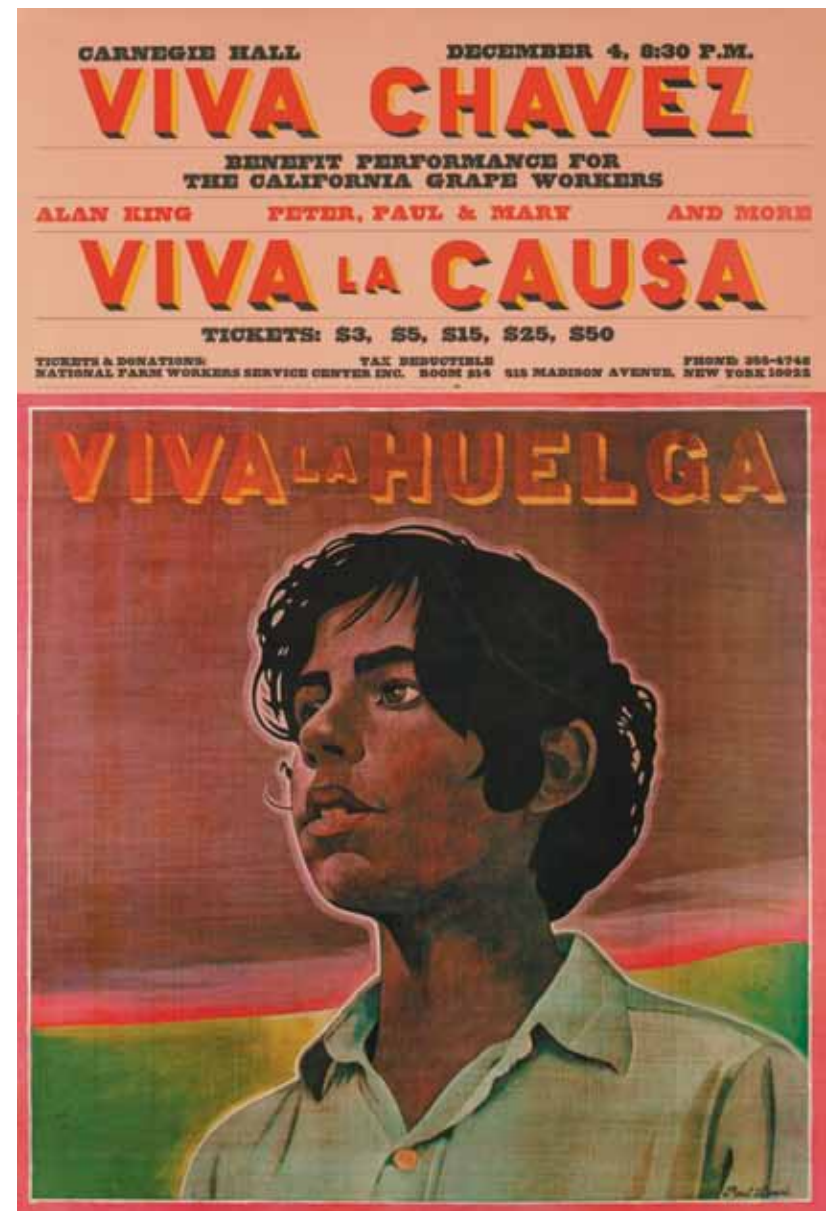


IN THE WORDS OF

PAUL DAVIS

Born in 1938, Centrahome, Oklahoma
Resides in State College, Pennsylvania



QUESTION: How does a graduate of Will Rogers High School in Tulsa land commissions from Evergreen Review and Joseph Papp? In 1955 upon graduating high school I boarded a Greyhound bus and went to New York City where I attended the Cartoonists and Illustrators school. C & I became SV A in 1957 and the rest is history.

QUESTION: The reaction to at least one of your Evergreen covers was literally incendiary. After the publication of your memorable Che Guevara cover and poster, the magazine's offices were firebombed. Did you ever feel personally threatened? Has any of your work since elicited as strong a response? I never did feel that I was in any personal danger as a consequence of the posters that I created. In 1971 I had an exhibition at Southampton College and several pieces were stolen. All were returned except for one, a large silkscreen print of Sonny Liston. In 1977 there was a large exhibition of my work at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The original art for the cover of the Charles Portis novel *True Grit*

was stolen. In 1978 I had an exhibition at the Portland Center for the Visual Arts. The show was vandalized and a couple of pieces were stolen. The vandals seemed to be offended by the *Colored Girls* poster although it wasn't clear which side of the fence they were on. None of these events were as serious or violent as the reaction to the *Che Guevara* poster but I did wonder what it was about my work that seemed to attract trouble.

QUESTION: Your work has influenced countless illustrators and artists. Who influenced you? I was influenced by my teachers at the School of Visual Arts. In particular, Phil Hays, Robert Weaver, George Tscherny, Eugene Karlin and Tom Allen. My teachers in Tulsa were also very powerful influences, Hortense Bateholts at Will Rogers High School and Mr. Higgins and Mrs. Ownby at Woodrow Wilson Junior High. When I was 15 I worked for a summer for David Santee in his studio in Tulsa. He was a marvelous artist and taught me a great deal. When I was in high school Mrs. Bateholts showed us the Saul Steinberg book *The Passport*. She also showed me several books about Georgia O'Keefe, Edward Hopper, and we went on field trips to the Philbrook and Gilcrease museums. The Gilcrease had one of the best collections of western art; Charles Russell, Frederick Remington, Albert Bierstadt, George Catlin, as well as collections of Native American art and artifacts. At the same time I was reading *Mad Magazine* and admiring the work of Jack Davis, Wally Wood, Harvey Kurtzman, Will Elder. At SVA I began to look at the work of Andre Francois and continued to study Saul Steinberg. Later I became fascinated with primitive art and colonial American art. I began to look at the early Renaissance artists; Giotto in particular. Then the surrealists. I love Magritte. Piero della Francesca, Man Ray, Chester Gould, Walt Kelly, Bill Mauldin, Al Capp, Vincent Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Leonardo Da Vinci, Caravaggio, Henri Rousseau, Edward Hicks. It might be easier to say who didn't influence me.

QUESTION: When you were getting started, the market for illustration was very different from today. There were several large format magazines, large format record covers, and art directors such as George Lois, Henry Wolf, Sam Antupit, and others who encouraged more provocative, challenging cover designs. Is there anything comparable today? How would you advise the beginning illustrator today? Some other art directors who should be mentioned are Richard Gangel, Frank Zachary, Art Paul, Otto Storch, Walter Allner, Bill Cadge, Allan Hurlburt, Will Hopkins, Ken Deardoff, Lou Dorfsman, and probably several more that I'm leaving out. They had more power than most art directors have now and control of more space in their publications. I am sure that young illustrators know the contemporary market better than I do.

QUESTION: Also, publications like Evergreen, Ramparts, and Avant Garde once provided a platform for artists and designers. Outside of the blogosphere, is there anything remotely comparable on the newsstand today? No.

QUESTION: The *Huelga* poster contains one of your most enduring illustrations. Who is the model for the young man in the poster? Did you

design the poster also, or did you work with a graphic designer?

The model is Wesley Strick. When I painted the poster image he was about 15. Today he is a very successful screenwriter in Hollywood. I did not design the typography for the poster as I was going out of town for some reason. It was designed by Richard Hess. I had a different idea for the type and never really liked the solution provided by Hess. I didn't get a chance to see it before it was printed.

QUESTION: In fact, most of your posters focus on the interplay between type and illustration. Can do describe the process? Frequently the type is hand drawn. Does the image inspire the type choice?

It is best when the image and the typography are conceived together. I find that the process for me continues to evolve.

QUESTION: Do you still find the time to do pro bono work for advocacy groups? How do you choose which causes you support? Usually they come to me. I can't do everything that I am asked to do so it depends on my schedule and how interesting the project is,

QUESTION: How can illustration and graphic design encourage social change? By getting ideas out into the world in compelling and provocative forms.

QUESTION: What is your next project? I am making a series of paintings with the Hudson River as my subject. There will be a book and several exhibitions of the work when it is finished.

