

COMBAT

ARTE, ARTIVISMO E CIDADANIA. UTOPIAS E FUTUROS IMAGINADOS

ART, ARTIVISM AND CITIZENSHIP: UTOPIAS AND IMAGINED FUTURES

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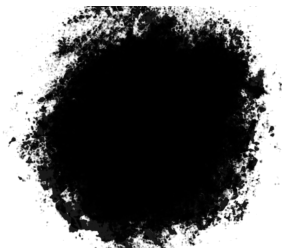
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Art, activism and citizenship. Utopias and imagined futures



(In)Visibilidades urbanas: Mulheres Artistas de Graffiti na Cidade de Salvador

Urban (In)Visibilities: Women Artists of Graffiti in Salvador City



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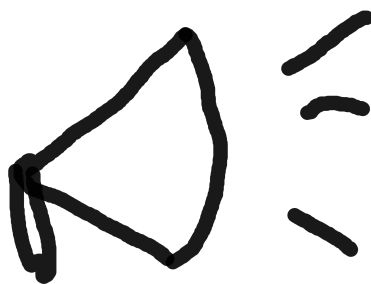
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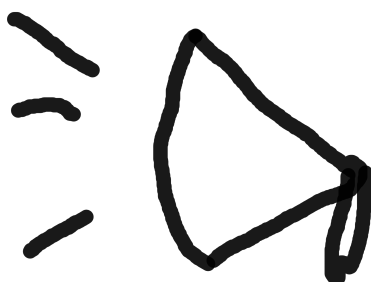
Este artigo pretende abordar as relações entre o feminino e o campo do Graffiti, entendendo-o como um fenómeno inerentemente urbano cuja linguagem está ligada às representações culturais periféricas; procurando compreender as possíveis transformações presentes nesta área, ocupada principalmente por homens. Considerada uma prática artística da cultura visual urbana, as mensagens transmitidas através do Graffiti são dinâmicas e articuladas, artística e politicamente, indivíduos tornados invisíveis na sociedade. A fim de compreender este processo de representação política através da arte, apresentamos a produção de cinco artistas Graffiti cujas obras estão localizadas principalmente na cidade de Salvador - Bahia, artistas que utilizam o Graffiti para difundir mensagens desrespeitadas pelo status quo social. Através de entrevistas com estes artistas, as questões de género, raça/etnia e classe foram abordadas à luz do feminismo interseccional. Pretende-se contribuir através desta investigação para as questões de género nas artes visuais e para a investigação sobre o Graffiti em geral.

Palavras-chave: Graffiti, Mulheres artistas, Invisibilidades, Salvador, Brasil.

Abstract:

This article intends to approach the relations between the feminine and the field of Graffiti, understanding it as an inherently urban phenomenon whose language is linked to peripheral cultural representations; seeking to understand the possible transformations present in this area, occupied mainly by men. Considered an artistic practice of urban visual culture, the messages transmitted through Graffiti are dynamic and articulate, artistically and politically, individuals made invisible in society. In order to understand this process of political representation through art, we present the production of five Graffiti artists whose works are located mainly in the city of Salvador - Bahia, artists who use Graffiti to spread messages disregarded by the social status quo. Through interviews with these artists, issues of gender, race/ethnicity and class were addressed in the light of intersectional feminism. It is intended to contribute through this research to gender issues in the visual arts and to research on Graffiti in general.

Keywords: Graffiti, Women artists, Invisibilities, Salvador, Brazil.



1. Introduction

Among the possible notions associated with urban art, we highlight the art of Graffiti - commonly studied through the lens of artistic expression and transgression -, whose language is linked to the daily life of the city, composing the peculiarities of urban visuality. In this sense, we start from the assumption that such artistic expression comes to life through the questions inherent to the individual who produces it, about the society it is inserted into, as well as the echo of these works and the effect generated by its presence. Creating, in turn, a new dialogue of relationships and tensions with the recipients.

The art/transgression of Graffiti has practical and tangible repercussions, given that its very existence subverts the logic of private property in the urban context. In other words, the very act of painting a wall, which supposedly belongs to someone else, already characterizes it as a subversive act. This article interprets this language as social communicational action, as it is intended to "shout" a specific message on social issues and generate reflections that reach different layers of meaning.

Graffiti brings the dimension of identity in its language since it says something about the specific individual who makes it. Still, it also represents communities dispersed in the urban fabric, often under-represented and/or marginalized groups. It can then be understood as "a kind of anti-power created within the most disadvantaged social groups" and as a powerful "instrument of resistance or political will" (Montero, 1993,p. 170).

This art is inserted in everyday spaces, full of articulations, segregations and social ruptures, whose meanings must be seen in their specificities. These practices are among the supports of territoriality that are established in them. From this perspective, they are present as a means to modify or reflect this territory, consolidating identities and knowledge sets.

On this matter, we agree with Santos (1996), who conceptualizes territory beyond its materiality, considering its relationships, uses and feelings of belonging, having a political motive at the heart of its production. In this way, the manifestations of urban art can act politically against the hegemonic discourse in the urban space through multiple possibilities of development, considering that "they can create situations of unprecedented visibility and presence, point out notable absences in the public domain or resistance to exclusions", promoted there disrupting expectations and create new relationships, opening up to a myriad of motivations" (Pallamin, 2002, p. 108).

Thus, to start from the communication of groups considered underrepresented in the social, cultural and political spheres, the manifestations through Graffiti and their developments aim to speak for themselves and their close ones and, therefore, help to tension and question homogenizing ideas about such groups. As Anderson (2012) puts it:

The corollary to this isolation and containment is the invisibility of inner-city minorities' identities, voices, and very bodies, as segregation wipes them from the national consciousness through spatial and social exclusion. Resisting this oppressive socio-spatial arrangement, graffiti in turn operates through space. This resistance, this creation of counter-spaces, gives graffiti its true artistic and emotional force. (Anderson, 2012, p. 6)

We can also relate this with the idea of imagined communities of Benedict Anderson (1983) or even to the idea of technology of the self by Tia DeNora (1999), considering Graffiti art as language in both cases: on imagined communities understanding groups as united by one geography and territory that share the same language and solidarity for themselves, reacting out groups; and on Tia DeNora's technology of the self, getting Graffiti art as a way to empower their identities and make their own narratives as subjects and agents, standing for a social and political agency.

This transgressive art intends to make people see and know about issues of invisible populations. This structural and systemic condition deprives non-hegemonic groups over patriarchy, heteronormativity and eurocentrist logic.

Therefore, the narratives of five female artists whose works are located mainly in the city of Salvador-BA are relevant to this article. Consequently, it is not intended to understand the totality of the scenario(s) experienced by these women, a task for which long and in-depth research would be necessary, but rather to understand the different approaches in terms of experiences, themes and practices.

They are artists who were chosen for using the communicative intention of Graffiti to spread messages disregarded by the Bahia and Brazilian social status quo, such as religious racism and African ancestry, among other issues. Being women artists and active as such in the Graffiti local community, as criteria.

As part of qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain an overview of both urban and political contexts. The methodological proposal of open-ended questions was intended to make the interlocutors talk about their experiences in urban spaces and their vision within the current social and political context, raising fundamental points on the subject of invisibility and misogyny. For example: Can you tell us about your background as an artist like when and how you started? or Can you describe how it is being a woman artist from Graffiti? Have you been working during the pandemic? The interview results were put together by themes as the answers converge or diverge, producing sort of a collective narrative, point by point.

We agree on feminist theories with a constructionist approach inside intersectionality, Henning (2015), in defending how vital the discourses of women in different situations of oppression, in their complex relations of class, race/ethnicity, sexuality and their power as agents should be privileged. Hence, giving visibility to these invisible groups to recognize and strengthen the voice of the various feminisms that simultaneously differentiate but also bring together women in their struggles for equal social and civil rights.

2. Women: (In)visible Bodies

The production of knowledge has been presented, throughout history, from a masculine point of view and adopted as universal. This vision automatically excluded women and deprived them of being understood as creators of works of art and equal human value to men. Women have been considered as the "other" in relation to men, that is, "as an exception – as those who have to be identified as such" (Vicente, 2017, p.353).

Whether through art or other means and mechanisms, hegemonic thinking prevails in the social mentality, building a reality and naturalizing discourses, especially in the field of arts, even more so in Graffiti, when women produce knowledge and propose to star in their narratives, they rebel against the prevailing normativity.

Women are made invisible as creators and owners of their narratives but placed in the spotlight when they present themselves as a naked body available for male pleasure, as cheap labor for the labor market earning lower wages than men to perform the same functions, or as an unpaid force in domestic and family work.

The importance of black, indigenous and lesbian feminism is emphasized, which by existing as a struggle, inevitably guides fairer models of society since the oppressions that affect these women cross-class, gender, race/ethnicity and sexuality differences, placing them at the center of various difficulties. Supported by Crenshaw's^{81.)} intersectionality concept, - although she is not the only one proposing this debate, the term has become popular through her work from 1993 - we have followed the growth in the number of authors interested in promoting the theory of intersectionality from their places, for instance: Avtar Brah^{82.)} (1996); Patricia Hill Collins (1990); Angela Davis (1981), bell hooks (1984), Audre Lorde (1983)^{83.)}; Sueli Carneiro (1985), Luiza Bairros (1995); Lélia Gonzales (1988) and Beatriz Nascimento (1989)^{84.)}.

In art history, several theories and criticisms developed by feminists, mainly North Americans from the 1960s to the present day, questioned the place of women in this field, such as the authors Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin; and art collectives like the Guerrilla Girls. However, in other international scenarios in the history of Graffiti, women have been present since the beginnings of this language, often being excluded and/or forgotten in official historical narratives, their little-told stories.

In the history of Graffiti in Salvador, Bahia, the pattern is repeated and remains, excluding women artists from the great art circuits and even from the records of their history. Moreover, as the public space is perceived as inappropriate for women, and the city is considered a violent city, this art presents difficulties for women to enter. From the imminent danger of having their bodies violated when going out to paint to reconciling motherhood with artistic creation and the difficulty of time to improve their techniques, among other issues.

Thus, the records of women Graffiti artists are scarce, and even the existence of these artists in total activity becomes something rare, being more common to find an abundant presence of male artists. For example, according to the census of graffiti artists working in Salvador in 2017 (Cruz, 2017, p. 217), out of 137 artists, only 19 were women^{85.)}.

According to Morena (2009)^{86.)}, female Graffiti from Salvador has been created for approximately 15 years. Although the Graffiti artists reported difficulties dedicating themselves to this art, they could still articulate themselves to move the Graffiti scene made by women in this area. According to the speech of Graffiti artist Sista Kátia in an interview with Cruz (2017):

^{81.)} Intersectionality is a conceptualization of the problem that seeks to capture the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more axes of subordination. It specifically addresses the way in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression, and other discriminatory systems create basic inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes, and others. Furthermore, intersectionality deals with the way in which specific actions and policies generate oppressions that flow along such axes, constituting dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment. (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 177)

^{82.)} Which allows us to think about feminisms of differences through the lens of the experience of non-white women in the Kingdom United.

^{83.)} The authors of North American black feminism.

^{84.)} Brazilian black feminists who did not work with the concept itself, but with many premises that precedes it.

^{85.)} The reported Graffiti artists are Bonomo, Chermie, Kapitu, Mihro, Mônica, Monique, Nila Carneiro, Passaro Daniela, Pita, Quel, RBK, Rebeca, Singa, Sista K, Srt.as, Su, Talitha Andrade, Tatá and Thita Flor. (Cruz, 2017)

^{86.)} The Graffiti artists Mônica, Kátia and Tétis are interviewed in her work.

(...), we organized, in 2009, a national meeting of a network of graffiti artists called Graffiteiras BR. There were several national edition meetings over the years, and the third of these meetings was here in Salvador; we articulated it, at the time, it was Sistas Crew, but Mônica also came with the organization Toque Feminino, her crew. There were four days of workshops. There was self-defense, the creation of a statute for the network; there were several drawing and graffiti workshops, and, in addition, there was the official painting on the Politeama viaduct, which today is known as the "viaduto da treta"⁸⁷⁾ (Cruz, 2017: s/p)

Another important event for the representation of women artists in Salvador was the Bahia of All Colors Festival^{88.)}, which the Graffiti artists Chermie and Mônica organized, as well as other women in the communication of the event, such as the photographer Carol Garcia, designer Milla Carol and publicist Luciana Vidal (Cruz, 2017). Moreover, in its 2nd edition, this festival featured a chat about women empowerment as urban artists.

According to Cruz, (2017), in addition to the Sista Crew (formed by Sista Kátia)^{89.)}, Toque Feminino (by Mônica)^{90.)}, and Donas do Rolê (by Chermie), a special mention should be made for Mônica Reis, considered a reference, admired by the artists interviewed, as the first female Graffiti artist in the local scene. Years later, with her pioneering presence, she unleashed a movement of women increasingly aware of their place and respective representation in urban art.

The paths of five Graffiti artists in Salvador are presented below, who, through different paths, have been present and resisting using their art as a tool of feminist militancy.

3. The Graffiti Scene in Salvador: Presenting the interviewed artists

The artists interviewed were: Monique^{91.)}, Ananda Srtas^{92.)}, Ani Ganzala^{93.)}, Mapam^{94.)} and Chermie^{95.)}, who compose different profiles ranging from the most to the least experienced. They understand Graffiti as self-expression, that is, the manifestation of their thoughts, wills or feelings;

^{87.)} The Politeama viaduct, known among graffiti artists as "viaduto da treta", which means something like "scuffle viaduct", allows us to understand the resistance of women in Graffiti, since, after the event reported by Sista K, only the side where it contained women's productions was superimposed by interventions by local graffiti artists. (Cruz, 2017: s/p)

^{88.)} More specifically, the women artists Mônica and Chermie and the men Bigod, Lee27 and Vidal, members of Coletivo Vai e Faz, were responsible for holding the 1st edition of BTC (Bahia de Todas as Cores, in portuguese), which took place in Salvador between the 12th and 15th of March, 2015. (Cruz, 2017: s/p)

^{89.)} Female, 35 years old, born in São Paulo, graffiti artist and cultural producer, currently living in Salvador, Bahia.

^{90.)} Female, 39 years old, born at Salvador, graffiti artist, considered one of the firsts women artists of graffiti at Salvador, Bahia.

^{91.)} Andressa Monique, 29 years old, was born and raised in Salvador, Bahia. She graduated in Architecture and Urbanism and is a graffiti artist and illustrator, black feminist and activist.

^{92.)} Ananda Santana, 26 years old, known as Srt.as, is a graffiti artist and illustrator from Salvador. She is also a black feminist, a Bachelor of Arts candidate, was trained as a technician in Visual Communication and works in a print shop.

^{93.)} Ani Ganzala, 34 years old, is a visual artist from Salvador, graffiti artist, mother, lesbian and macumbeira (practitioner of afro-brazilian religion), living exclusively through her work with art, mainly as a book illustrator.

^{94.)} Isadora Ramos Furlan, 29 years old, better known as Mapam in the Graffiti scene and Pam in Pixação, holds a Bachelor of Arts and has lived in Salvador since she was eight years old. She currently works with visual production for music artists.

^{95.)} Sara Regina Ferreira de Oliveira, 34 years old, known as Chermie, was born in Manaus - AM, lived for nine years in Bahia, performing as a Graffiti artist and cultural producer events such as Graffiti Queens, an international Graffiti festival made by and for women that takes place in the city of São Paulo and Bahia of all colors, a graffiti festival in Salvador and its metropolitan region. Chermie has been working with Graffiti for 17 years, currently living in São Paulo.

moreover, they see it as a dialogue with an audience that will be able to understand the social issues that cross them in different ways as Brazilian black and not privileged women. It is necessary to highlight the importance that all of them seek to use this urban art as a tool for feminist and anti-racist struggle.

As such as Montero (1993), Anderson (2012) also insert in his essay entitled "Going 'All City': The Spatial Politics of Graffiti" the idea of graffiti as an identity and political device used by social and marginalized groups to create "counter-spaces" and "resist this oppressive socio-spatial arrangement" in the cities. (Anderson, 2012, p. 7)

That is what these artists are doing, articulating themes on walls that go from the reconnection with their ancestry through the representation of black women and deities of Afro-Brazilian religions, as in the work of Monique (Figure 1); representativeness of black women through Ananda's "Ladies" (Figure 2) or Ani Ganzala's gay characters (Figure 3); representativeness of uncharacterized indigenous peoples in the urban context of Chermie (Figure 4); or even the underground freestyle, still in training, as is the case of Mapam (Figure 5).



Figure 1 - Monique's Graffiti on a wall in Vila de Abrantes, Bahia, Brazil.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.



Figure 2 - Ananda Santana and her Ladies, on a wall inside the Graffiti Queens Festival, São Paulo, Brazil.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.



Figure 3 - Ani Ganzala and her Graffiti on a wall in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.



Figure 4 - Uncharacterized Brazilian indigenous representation in the work of Chermie, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.



Figure 5 - Mapam in front of her Graffiti in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.

The paths that brought these women to the world of Graffiti were the most varied. However, most already had some aptitude and contact with drawings from a very young age, and they developed this skill until reaching Graffiti.

Ananda (Figure 2), for example, had her connection with drawing during high school while training as a technician in Visual Communication. However, it was from her participation in the event "Feminismo e Graffiti"^{96.)} given by MUMBI (Mulheres Militantes do Bairro à Internet)^{97.)} who had the opportunity to get together with other women to start painting in the streets.

Similarly, Monique (Figure 6) started to practice urban art in 2014, pasting poster-bombs in the streets of Salvador and started Graffiti in 2015 after participating in that same event.

For Ani Ganzala (Figure 3), her urban art production began in a moment of personal discovery about affections and sexuality, which was transformed into strength and poetics and launched on the city walls. In comparison, Mapam (Figure 5) reports that from age 16, she made illustrations and drawings "out of paper," doodling everywhere until she ended up in urban art years later. Another essential encounter was moving to live next to the artist Ani Ganzala, her neighbor, mentor and inspiration in her initiation into urban arts.

Chermie (Figure 7), the interviewed with the vastest experience in Graffiti, began her work in 2006 within the Hip Hop culture in the Amazon to encourage women in this field. She came to live in Salvador a few years later.

The artistic initiation of these women took place in different ways in their careers, leading them to develop their paths and poetics according to their experiences and realities. The artists' view of urban Graffiti art is presented in the next section.

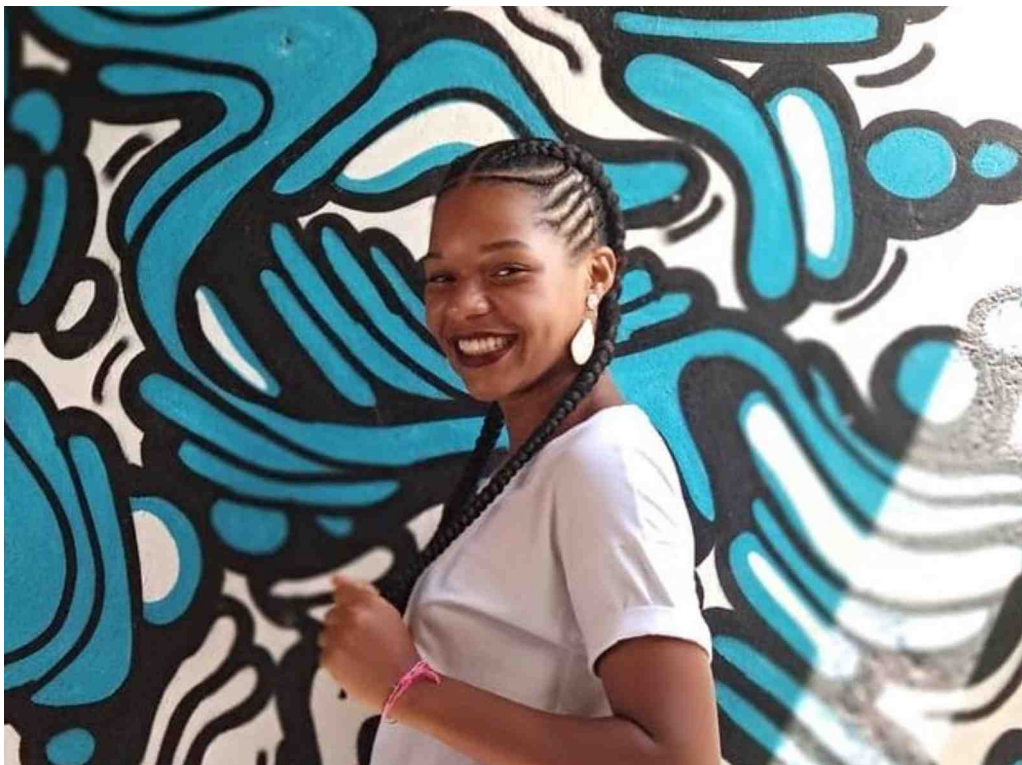


Figure 6 - Monique, architect, Graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil in 2019.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021..

^{96.)} "Feminism and Graffiti" our translation.

^{97.)} "Militants Women from the Neighborhood to the internet" our translation.



Figure 7 - Chermie and her Graffiti, in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.

4. Graffiti as a way of life and political action

All the interviewees consider that urban art, more than an artistic aspect, is a way of life and a form of expression of a political nature. Agreeing with Anderson (2012), when writes about the connection between graffiti and space saying that "graffiti uses the built environment of the city to accomplish and convey its artistic politics. If not performed on the public and private landscape, graffiti loses its meaning; its meaning is in fact anchored to spatial contexts." (Anderson, 2012, p. 7)

I understand Urban Art as a powerful tool for artistic communication. Because it starts from certain freedom, not being shaped by a curatorship, and it is occupancy of public space, a kind of claim for that space and a voice that usually has no space in other places. In the practice of Graffiti, each artist works with a theme that is important to them. I chose to talk about black women. Since then, I have produced about black and gay women also because I noticed the lack of expository representation of what it is to be a black woman and the complete invisibility of non-normative affectivities. (Ani Ganza-la, 34 years old, visual artist, Salvador, Online).

That note of graffiti not being chosen by a curatorship, presented on Ganza-la's interview relates to Lady Pink's statement about "graffiti in galleries cease to be graffiti because they have been removed from the cultural context that gives graffiti the reason for being, a voice of the ghetto." (Anderson, 2012, p. 7)

Santana (interview, 2021) considers urban art a voice tool through drawing, pixo, Graffiti, performances and music. According to her, "urban art pulsates, moves the streets, gives color, positively breaks our daily lives. I am always pleased to see paintings on the avenues." (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

For Chermie (interview, 2021), urban art is a political act of resistance mainly because women were created for the private space, and this art is part of the public space. She understands and uses Graffiti as a tool to fight xenophobia, racism against indigenous people and gender inequality. She is currently working with public notices, workshops, and cultural production of events and initiatives focused on Graffiti and the position of women in these movements. In that sense we agree with Anderson (2012) when says:

Graffiti artists put in relief the fact that space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations, but is also producing and produced by social relations. In creating counter-spaces offering a new set of socio-spatial relations, graffiti resists and disrupts the hegemonic organization of space which entrenches the ghetto's function of containment. (Anderson, 2012, p. 8)

In that way, the reception of art on walls by people circulating through city is as important as graffiti events focus in show the world how much this art has to say.

For Mapam (29 years old, Visual producer, Salvador, Online), Graffiti is intrinsically linked to urban intervention and to the message you want to convey, which is thought of socially and collectively, as she reports:

Graffiti work is not something I think about alone, but I think about collectively. I can look at the city, see if it is an area that will be painted soon, whether there is already pix on the wall or not. Observe the rules of the city, the game. (Mapam, 29 years old, visual producer, Salvador, Online)

In her opinion, developing the art of Graffiti without experiencing the streets is challenging, as the intervention needs to minimally understand the rules of the collective in the urban environment. Writing and painting Graffiti in the urban environment not only undermines the ownership of space that contributes to inner-city youth's oppression but also conversely remarks those spaces as "belonging" to them. This includes the battle over "public" space and who is and isn't represented in those spaces. (Anderson, 2012, p. 9)

All the interviewees consider Graffiti in their lives as significant beyond the professional relationship, understanding this technique as their most authentic form of expression and freedom:

In addition, Graffiti, for me, is not just that act of painting, the painting itself, but it is a lifestyle, a choice in which risks are taken, and a big desire to convey a message to the universe. I see it as work that is very responsible and beautiful. You have to have a lot of love. That is why only love explains us going out early, carrying weight on our backs, being under the sun to paint. (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

My relationship with Graffiti is the best thing I do in my life because that is when I'm doing something just for me. (...) I do it because it is the best way to be seen and heard. How do you enter the city without raping it and not being raped by it? Graffiti is my moment, and I have no financial motivation; Graffiti and pixo mean to speak and be heard, to be artistically alive, to immortalize somewhere. It is a way of being seen and heard. (Mapam, 29 years old, visual producer, Salvador, Online)

The interviewees report that they grew personally and professionally through the practice of Graffiti, having opportunities they would not have access to if it were not through art. Their experiences have allowed them to give workshops in schools, associations, and community libraries, participa-

te in exhibitions, TV campaigns, newspaper articles, important Graffiti events, joint efforts and crews, and travel nationally and internationally for work.

Santana (interview, 2021)^{98.)}, for example, proudly cites the large-scale work he did in Sierra de Leone, Angola, her first international trip, where she produced work with two faces: "one of a lady and the other of a girl; representing ancestry, renewal and hope, which both go together and represent that place." (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)



Figure 8 - Graffiti of two faces representing ancestry and renewal. Authored by Ananda Santana in Sierra Leone, Angola.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021

Still, concerning the trips, Ani Ganzala relates with emotion the opportunities she had to graffiti on the themes that cross her and create a dialogue not only with her own history but with that of so many other communities:

I did Graffiti in an African refugee center in Vienna, which made me very happy because I realized it was also crucial for other people, you know? The ones being represented. It was Graffiti that addressed the theme of diaspora, the sea, ancestry and, in short, I am pleased to have had the honor of being there. Another one, also in Vienna, was being able to graffiti an LGBTQI reception building with Nenê Surreal and represent these people on the facade of a historic building. And it was a whole bureaucracy to ask for authorization from the city hall and have to convince them of the importance of making that art. (Ani Ganzala, 34 years old, visual artist, Salvador, Online).

^{98.)} Pixo is a code of contestation that imposes itself on the urban fabric, concretizing and standardizing the speech of the other, the presence of the excluded, the letter, the poetry, and the image of the artist on walls.



Figure 9 - Ani Ganzala and her Graffiti that was made for an African refugees house in Vienna, Austria.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.

In addition to these experiences, the artists report learning from their professional colleagues, provided through these occasions "(...) it is the moment of reunion, a moment when we grow and exchange lots of art, observing the process of each one that is extremely unique." (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

Graffiti also provided them with diverse experiences that would otherwise hardly be possible: in the case of Monique, Ananda and Ani Ganzala; they mention their trips to Angola and Mozambique as encounters to reconnect with their African ancestry and exchanges with local artists from every city they passed through.

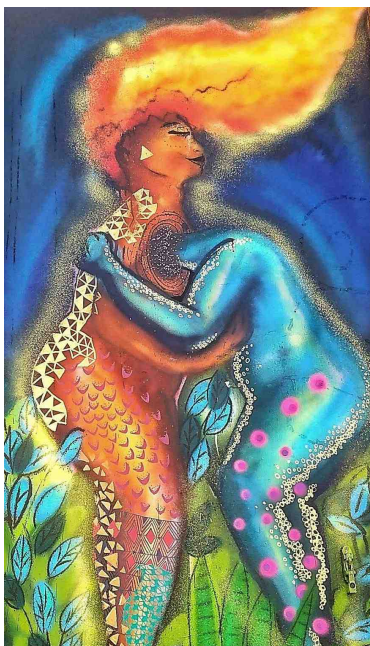


Figure 10 - Graffiti for the facade of the LGBTQ+ reception building. Authored by Ani Ganzala, Vienna, Austria.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.



Figure 11 - Graffiti for a wall in the Ribeira neighborhood, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Authored by Monique.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.



Figure 12 - Graffiti for a wall at Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil. Authored by Chermie.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021.

Chermie (interview, 2021) emphasizes the reconnection with her Manauara identity, her indigenous grandmother, the books she participated in and her daughters, generated by her relationship with a person from the hip hop/Graffiti scene. "Everything that happens in my life is because of Graffiti. I have been working with Graffiti for 17 years." (Chermie, 34 years old, graffiti artist and cultural producer, Salvador, Online)

4.1. Urban invisibilities

Given the political and social context in which these artists are inserted, as they are independent artists, non-white women in underprivileged economic conditions living in Brazil, a country of inequality and insecurity for women, it is understood that there are many invisibilities towards these women in the Graffiti field: from the more practical and apparent difficulty of the fear of going out alone and being attacked, to the problem of having equal opportunities getting jobs and earning equivalent salaries in the same activity when compared to their male colleagues.

As Anderson (2012) puts, calling artists of graffiti as "writers" of this visual and social language throughout city:

The need for Graffiti writers to make visible not only their individual identities, but also their lived spaces, demonstrates the linkages between spatial confinement, social mobility and identity. In order for the writer's identity to escape from the invisibility of social exclusion, the space the writer occupies must also be transformed, as it is essential in constituting that identity. (Anderson, 2012, p. 8)

About the challenges in order to escape from the invisibility of being a woman artist in Salvador, Mapam (interview, 2021) reports that it is challenging to be on the streets because "the public space still does not accept women well" and she prefers to be accompanied when she goes to do Graffiti, as she feels exposed to dangers concerning physical and emotional integrity. As she adds:

Being a woman and an artist is constantly proving what you know. Even to make a suggestion, you must explain why you are suggesting it just to be heard. The difficulties as an artist are much more related to the structural issue of being poor in Brazil, which makes any profession invisible. (MAPAM, 29 years old, visual producer, Salvador, Online)

Similarly, Chermie (interview, 2021) emphasizes the difficulty of making a living from art in Brazil. Unlike the position of her colleague Mapam (interview, 2021), she argues that there are no extra difficulties for a woman in Graffiti in Salvador besides being a woman by itself, although she recognizes that Salvador is a challenging city, because of sexism and racism. In her own words:

We, women, have always been invisible even within Graffiti. Lady Pink is a world reference^{99.)}, but many others are not remembered. Men have always told the story. Few women are making money from Graffiti. Men make us invisible, not men as people, but sexism itself." (Chermie, 34 years old, graffiti artist and cultural producer, Salvador, Online)

The artist A. Ganzala (interview, 2021) agrees that there is a big difference between genders in this artistic production, which is even worse in the case of trans people. Sexism is established from the invisibility of women's production and female themes; even though black Graffiti artists, for instance, create collective Graffiti projects; although, on many occasions, they do not get support or structure to carry them out:

It is not a space created for us, it is a space that we occupy, that we invade and are welcomed to a certain extent, but everything works so that we cannot technically develop our art, so that we do not have visibility within the city. We cannot create big things, right? Or even learn, especially if you are a woman who has no relationship with men. In the end, everything is a game of relationships, of affections. (Ani Ganzala, 34 years old, visual artist, Salvador, Online).

Specifically about the situation of black women in Salvador in Graffiti, Santana (interview, 2021) considers invisibility a severe problem that sometimes affects in a subtle but omnipresent way.

Invisibility is everywhere; they try to erase us as artists, women, and black women, so it is as if the system understands that each person has their demarcated place, places that are more invisible than others and when we seek to leave these places, invisibility always tries to remember us to come back. (...) the feeling is that we are discredited all the time; we can say something, but if someone comes from a better class in any aspect, that person is believed, and I am not^{100.)}. This happens very often, unfortunately. I see it as something recurring that we must always face. (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

^{99.)} Chermie in that point made reference to Lady Pink, the graffiti women artist born as Sandra Fabara at Equator and "the rare female artist who has carved out a space for herself in the boys club of street art, Lady Pink began tagging trains as a high school freshman, back in 1979." Cascone (2019: online)

^{100.)} Miranda Fricker (2007) called that feeling of women or other social groups marginalized being discredited by your knowledge or words, by epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice means, according to her, that statements by members of particular groups are systematically neglected or discredited, for instance because of negative social stereotypes associated with them.

Still, on the same subject, Monique (interview, 2021) emphasizes her vision, agreeing that mechanisms of invisibility exclude women artists from the Graffiti scene.

(...) there are Graffiti events that do not even have our presence. There's not a black woman or man selected. Even nowadays, with so many discussions on the agenda, we often have our work less valued than a white artist who paints black people. There is still a lot to improve; the strategy I've been observing for us black artists is to organize our own way to articulate and consume our products among our community. (A. Monique, 29 years old, architect, Graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

This artist believes that having their work valued - including financially - is the central struggle of street artists, especially when they are black female artists, because there are barriers and various difficulties such as "(...) expensive material, dedication, studies, racism, sexism, causing many to give up on continuing on this path." (A. Monique, 29 years old, architect, Graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online). Monique is currently part of the Mutirão das Minas team, organized by women and for women, created in 2017 in Salvador.

It is possible to relate Monique's experiences and financial difficulties with Anderson's argument on "the construction of urban space along racial lines thus not only establishes segregation but perpetuates it. In an economically coercive cycle, ghetto spaces are hemmed in and isolated from the rest of mainstream society." (Anderson, 2012, p. 6)

Regarding the challenges of an artist living off Graffiti in Salvador, Ananda (interview, 2021) says that she still does not make a whole living from this art, even though there are opportunities for remuneration. She highlights the difficulty in getting works with Graffiti in Salvador, mainly because there is no diversity of artists. Instead, there is no rotation of artists to gain public notice and works with greater visibility. The difficulty is even more significant as a woman, according to the artist:

(...) we are rarely called for anything here. It is also a welcoming city but violent with women. We are on the streets, we need to think a lot about how to go and paint because our bodies are on the streets, and men in the city often cannot just look at our work without saying anything about our bodies, or else they often make our work inferior. This is quite tiring." (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

The artist Mapam (interview, 2021) also reports the issue of the low turnover of Graffiti artists in public notices and other contests destined for this area, as she puts it:

The environment does not change that much. Salvador's Graffiti artists are practically 5 people. It does not rotate the artists, it does not let artists show themselves in significant opportunities like official events. (MAPAM, 29 years old, visual producer, Salvador, Online)

This scenario discourages everyone, as Ganzala (interview, 2021), for instance, who says that she feels led to a stagnation of her career and production due to the difficulty of disputing spaces of greater visibility on the walls for more significant works. She reports that she tries to break with these issues of big jobs, occupying buildings to get the visibility and remuneration necessary for the work. These strategies allow, to a certain extent, to occupy spaces that white male or female artists commonly occupy.

Rarely do we get to see black women occupying large spaces, doing large Graffiti and this has to do with everything we talk about. With who I am as a homosexual, it has to do with who I am as a woman and with all this logic operating in the art scene. When

someone needs a job like this, they first look for male Graffiti artists, who have more visibility, if the budget is high, they start looking for women because they know the price will be better, after all we need to work too and it's already very difficult to maintain as graffiti artists, working only with that. (Ani Ganzala, 34 years old, visual artist, Salvador, Online).

Another challenge that most of the interviewees mention as another contribution to the greater invisibility of women in the countryside is the fact that Graffiti is a high-cost art, with materials that not everyone can buy. Furthermore, according to Ananda, sometimes there are difficulties in painting some works due to the lack of respect for their themes. Another issue would be dealing with the police, who treat them as artists and at other times as criminals; besides the fact that women Graffiti artists are questioned and have their work put in doubt all the time, unlike their male colleagues.

About the invisibility that the artist Mapam brings, for her, female invisibility permeates the point at which we were not taught, as women, to take leadership. Most of the time, the woman serves as containment and support for those around her, but they end up not putting themselves in the protagonist's place. The same happens with self-esteem, psychological and historical issues that often do not allow us to do so. In her words:

The problem of invisibility that I live with I bring to myself, even if it is not my fault as a woman. But I realize there is a lot about me, in this sense of sabotaging myself and breaking with these psychological barriers built historically, which say we cannot. Not being a black woman makes it a lot easier; that's not even an issue for us. We know it makes it more accessible. (MAPAM, 29 years old, visual producer, Salvador, Online)

Despite so many challenges and difficulties, Santana (interview, 2021) points out that before the crew formed in the Graffiti and Feminism course, the women's Graffiti scene in Salvador did not have so many active women, so this new generation managed to renew this movement. So it would be a very positive aspect of everyone's work. Monique (interview, 2021) confirmed that

(...) I can say my experience was peaceful compared to that of other women, like Monica, the pioneer of Graffiti in Salvador, who at the time started her work on the street. She was the only woman and suffered a lot of prejudice and sexism. There were no other women to support, or give her strength, so the context of the generation of women who started making Graffiti art with me was much better. (A. Monique, 29 years old, architect, Graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

Another positive aspect that Santana considers is "(...) being painting in communities and finding women asking if women can paint, saying they wanted to paint and learn, this is powerful, it is a responsibility, it is caring, representation." (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)

(...) Another Graffiti would be a painting I did in the neighborhood of Águas Claras, a community in Salvador, where two girls were very involved and delighted with my work, one of them claiming to be her, that the eye was the same, at that moment I felt the when art is strong, we have no actual dimension of its power, it is all very intense. (Ananda Santana, 26 years old, graffiti artist and illustrator, Salvador, Online)



Figure 13 - Ananda Santana with two girls from the neighborhood of Águas Claras, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Source: Artist's collection, 2021

Therefore, she considers being a woman Graffiti artist in Salvador a great responsibility and explains that it is necessary to have patience and dedication to reap the fruits of this work. Furthermore, it is necessary to show that the work of women Graffiti artists exists and that it has good quality, especially from the black artists, so as not to succumb to total invisibility.

Mapam adds that it is crucial to be alert to place themselves in spaces and perceive other forms of existence, such as that of trans people, valuing and attending places that do not have the presence of women in the city. "The street is ours. We can occupy it even if we actually cannot." (MAPAM, 29 years old, visual producer, Salvador, Online)

Afterall we agree on vision of Graffiti as "voice" of ghetto, as LADY PINK says on her statement given to Anderson (2012):

For her [LADY PINK], Graffiti's spatial presence lifts the conceptual ghetto and the identities of its inhabitants from their invisibility, reaffirming the existence of the "silenced" ghetto residents by making their voices physical and concrete on the urban landscape. This function of creating visibility lies at the heart of Graffiti from its very beginnings. (Anderson, 2012: 7)

The work of the artists interviewed on this paper showed that they are resisting the hegemonic spatial constructions of the urban landscape by giving mobility to youth identities throughout the city of Salvador; and also through their own history and identities as subjects.

Final considerations

Despite numerous challenges to continue producing Graffiti in the city of Salvador, Bahia, as highlighted in this article, these artists have persisted in their trajectories and managed to continue their productions. Therefore, in addition to the points already mentioned during this article, we bring common points and unanimous positions in the speeches of these artists:

- Insecurity of making Graffiti art on the streets of Salvador. Despite this, they are facing this issue as valid and necessary both to affirm their self-expression as communicators and artists and to represent the female presence in the Graffiti movement and as women in the city;

- Feminism as empowerment among women Graffiti artists, and the building of a network of affection and connection with women allows them to get some of their works and travels. But mainly, it is a network of emotional support and mutual learning that intensifies in the events they participate in together, where they have the opportunity to observe and learn from each other and conclude that feminism means a great value to their lives and their work;

- Graffiti is still a masculine medium. Despite not directly having suffered any direct violence from men in this field of work, women artists face the difficulty of not being as constantly inserted in events, struggling to make connections with other artists, which makes them depend a lot on the connections between women to strengthen and enhance their work;

- Challenge in maintaining themselves financially through art generally results in only some being able to live exclusively from their art. However, others need to work in parallel. Specifically about Graffiti, all of them report that the art produced by women lacks appreciation and, for this reason, it becomes difficult to live exclusively from this activity.

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Founding

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