

Tropical Futurism Aesthetics: The Impact of Latin American Women's Urban Art on Social Change

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of women's urban art of Latin America, emphasizing how artists have utilized public spaces to construct visual discourses that challenge sociocultural norms and promote gender justice. By integrating elements of popular culture, advertising visual language, and plural feminist thought, these artists transform their work into aesthetic tools of cultural resistance. The analysis explores how feminist visual narratives are enriched through decolonial, tropicalizing, rhizomatic, and tropical futurism aesthetic approaches, enabling diverse interpretations that challenge traditional visual paradigms. In countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, and Puerto Rico, as well as their diasporas, artistic interventions have sparked discussions on women's rights and directly confronted patriarchal structures. These practices democratize access to art, strengthen cultural identity, and embody a futuristic re-imagining of tropical spaces as inclusive, resilient, and transformative. Women's urban art reconfigures cultural urban landscapes, fostering social activism, strengthening the social fabric, and reshaping public perceptions of gender and equality. Ultimately, this movement serves not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a catalyst for sociocultural change, a defense of women's rights, and a vision of a more equitable and dynamic tropical future.

Keywords: Latin American women artists, feminist pluralism, tropical futurism aesthetics, visual language, sociocultural change, urban art

Tropical Futurism Aesthetics and Feminine Urban Art of Latin America

The concept of futuristic tropicality envisions a forward-looking perspective on tropical spaces and cultures, embracing their multiplicity, adaptability, and potential for sociocultural transformations. By reinterpreting the tropics as spaces of resilience, hybridization, and creative potential, as Quicho (2021) suggests, these regions can influence global narratives through innovation and cultural syncretism. In other words, the notion I propose in this paper of tropical futurism aesthetics has the ability to reimagine the relationship between tropical cultures and ecologies and is capable of speaking through visual language towards a regenerative future-making (Quicho, 2022). The theme of plural and multicultural feminine urban art in Latin America harmonizes with this notion, positioning tropicality as a dynamic and transformative force rather than a static stereotype, which traditionally only represented exoticism and sensuality, primitivism and “savage” aesthetics, exotic labor and landscape, and escapism and idealized nature.

Latin American feminine urban art epitomizes futuristic tropicality through its vivid reinterpretation of cultural codes, its celebration of diversity, and its bold capacity to challenge and reimagine societal norms. These artworks channel the energy of tropical spaces—defined by their biodiversity, cultural hybridity, and resilience—into visual narratives that confront issues of identity, power, and social justice. According to Velázquez (2021), in Mexico, feminist, ecological, and mestizo racial perspectives merge, as reflected in Gleo's art, who, inspired by Colombian legends, uses her work to engage in dialogue with her city and the world. Her art serves as a mirror of the continent, capturing not only cultural identity but also social struggles and collective visions. Likewise, the Moriviví Collective serves as an example of artistic creation dedicated to amplifying the voice of its community in the public sphere (Arteinformado, 2013).

Moreover, the intersectional approaches adopted by these artists echo the intricate interconnections of tropical ecosystems, where diverse elements coexist in harmonious balance. This perspective aligns with Plumwood's critique of patriarchal and colonial exploitation of both women and tropical environments, emphasizing the need for a more integrated and respectful approach to diversity (Plumwood, 1993). Similarly, Povinelli's investigations into geontologies highlight how artistic practices in tropical regions reflect struggles over life, land, and identity, underscoring the critical role of art in envisioning futures grounded in justice and equity (Povinelli, 2016). By integrating themes such as race, gender, culture, and environmental

consciousness, this art not only reflects the stratified realities of tropical societies but also inspires their evolution toward more inclusive and equitable futures.

From a futuristic lens, the growing prominence of Latin American women's urban art seems to be signaling a shift toward a redefined tropicality—self-aware, globally resonant, and transformative. This redefinition shifts tropicality from a narrative of marginality and exoticism to one of agency, reflexivity, and interconnectedness. The innovative visual language employed by this movement, rooted in both traditional and contemporary contexts, defies colonial legacies while forging new narratives that celebrate tropical spaces as sites of empowerment and boundless creative possibility.

Thus, connecting plural feminist urban art in Latin America with futuristic tropicality reveals how this creative practice serves as both a mirror and a blueprint for imagining an inclusive and transformative tropical future. Tropicality in this context transcends traditional Western representations of the tropics as static, exotic paradises. Instead, feminist urban art redefines the aesthetic and sociopolitical dimensions of tropical spaces by embedding narratives of empowerment, resilience, and coexistence within its visual language (Drazer, 2021; Pérez Santos, 2018). For instance, murals by Bastardilla, Pau Quintana, and Gleo o Panmela Castro merge natural motifs with human forms, symbolizing the interdependence of communities and ecosystems. Such works project futures grounded in harmony and sustainability while actively challenging exploitative paradigms.

Street art performs these imaginaries of futurity in ways that are inherently democratic, transforming public spaces into interactive platforms where cultural identities and aspirations are negotiated and reimagined. Unlike literary texts or urban planning, which often remain inaccessible to broader publics, murals and other urban artworks invite direct participation and engagement, fostering inclusive dialogue. In this way, feminist urban art not only reflects the stratified realities of tropical societies but also actively participates in reconfiguring their futures, positioning the tropics as dynamic spaces for reimagining identity, agency, and collective potential.

This article investigates how Latin American women's street art constructs diverse discourses through the appropriation of elements from advertising visual language, popular culture, and pluralistic feminist thinking. By incorporating intersectional approaches such as decolonial, tropicalizing, and rhizomatic theories through the

lens of tropical futurism, this study analyses the social transformation potential of visual language in the context of feminist artistic practices. This framework underscores the potential of feminine urban art to envision inclusive and regenerative futures within tropical spaces (and their temperate diasporas), redefining their cultural and social dynamics.

Visual Strategies as an Aesthetic Method for Social Transformation

The methodology hinges on the central role of visual strategies in qualitative research, recognizing that images do not merely reflect social and cultural realities but actively shape and reconfigure them through their aesthetic and symbolic dimensions. Feminist urban art exemplifies this dynamic, as murals and public artworks engage with and challenge colonial narratives, embedding new imaginaries of agency, inclusivity, and resilience. By incorporating natural motifs, human figures, and other symbolic elements these artworks mirror the interdependence of communities and ecosystems, aligning with the role of visual strategies in constructing meaning (Balmer et al., 2015; Barbour, 2014; Glaw et al., 2017). Moreover, the participatory and democratic nature of street art invites direct interaction with diverse publics, fostering collective reimagining and reshaping of cultural identities. This transformative process aligns with the idea that visual representations are active agents in envisioning and enacting equitable and inclusive futures (Mah, 2015; Thomas, 2009).

The research design integrates multiple data sources: specialized articles, photographs of street art, interviews with artists and specialists, and the analysis of works by eight internationally recognized Latin American artists: Lady Pink (Queens, USA-Ecuador), Panmela Castro (Brazil), Bastardilla and Gleo (Colombia), Mariela Ajarás (Argentina), Pau Quintana (Chile-Germany), Eva Bracamontes (Mexico), Martanoemí Noriega (Panama), and the collectives Mujeres Creando (Bolivia) and Moriviví (Puerto Rico). This approach enriches the analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of how these artists have configured and transmitted their messages through their visual works from 1979 to 2024.

A content analysis approach, structured in two dimensions, was employed to analyze the visual data. Firstly, the social context and performative scenes of the artists were explored, highlighting their origins, themes, messages, iconography, and cultural representations. This contextual analysis situates the works within a sociocultural framework, revealing how the artists use their identities and cultural experiences to

shape their artistic expressions. Secondly, I examined the visual rhetorical strategies the artists use to construct feminist narratives and representations of femininity, including: their iconographic and chromatic freedom, the use of popular visual rhetoric, the plurality of female narratives, and heterogeneous, polysemic discourse. I analyzed these strategies to understand not only the aesthetic qualities of the works but also how female identities are articulated and negotiated in urban public spaces. This analysis connects tropicity and futurism by exploring how the artists use cultural and geographical elements to challenge colonial narratives and reimagine tropical spaces as sites of empowerment. Their works transcend present-day representation, envisioning inclusive, equitable futures through feminist narratives. By employing iconographic freedom and polysemic discourse, the artists push conventional boundaries, offering alternative visions for a transformative future in urban and tropical settings. This forward-thinking approach directly engages with the themes of futurism, presenting art as a tool for imagining and creating new possibilities.

Furthermore, decolonial, tropicalizing, and rhizomatic approaches are closely linked to pluralistic feminist thinking. The decolonial approach seeks to dismantle the legacy of colonialism by challenging and redefining dominant power structures, focusing on the importance of recovering and valuing marginalized knowledge and histories (Lundberg et al., 2023b). The tropicalizing perspective emphasizes the dynamic and transformative potential of tropical spaces, viewing them as sites of resistance, resilience, and cultural innovation (Lundberg et al., 2023b). Note that the concept of tropicity in cultural and symbolic terms transcends strict geographic definitions and can be applied metaphorically or ideologically to represent spaces characterized by diversity, hybridity, and dynamic social and cultural interactions. The rhizomatic approach, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), highlights the non-hierarchical, interconnected nature of knowledge and identity, where multiple, fluid connections emerge rather than linear or centralized structures. The application of these theories allowed for a deeper understanding of how these artists navigate and negotiate their identity, resistance, and creativity in multicultural and changing contexts. The analysis addressed historical and cultural contextualization, the revision of representations and symbols, the impact on identity and empowerment, the study of motifs and colors, the aesthetic and thematic approach, the interaction with the public, networks of influence, the interconnection of themes, and the evolution and adaptation of the artists' work. The combination of these approaches provided a holistic understanding of the art of these women.

Sociocultural Context and Performative Scenes

As evident in various theoretical analyses of these artists' work, their creations reveal a profound connection to the history, geography, and cultural and political discourses of the Latin American region (Drazer, 2021, 2022; Fleischmann & Mann, 2018; Pérez Santos, 2017; Recio, 2020). For example, they show a commitment to establishing dialogue with viewers in the different spaces and regions they intervene in or to creatively denouncing the social and gender issues affecting the region's female population. Despite their diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, these artists share a remarkable ability to transform their experiences and knowledge into socially engaged art that challenges and redefines urban spaces.

Many of these artists have received formal university education in artistic disciplines such as Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Visual Communication, Illustration, Psychology, and Social Sciences (Editores da enciclopedia Itaú Cultural de Arte e Cultura Brasileira, 2024; Gallego, 2023; Íñiguez, 2022; Rodríguez, 2016; Merodea, 2016; Gehrke, 2011; Lady Pink, 2023; Vázquez, 2022). While Bastardilla's formal education is not detailed, her significant impact on the urban art landscape demonstrates the potential for self-taught artists to contribute meaningfully to the field. The diversity of these artists' academic backgrounds and personal contexts underscores the importance of inclusion and diverse representation in urban art, inspiring new generations to explore their own identities and artistic expressions.

Cultural influence is another key factor shaping the urban art of these women. Drawing from the rich indigenous and mestizo cultural traditions of countries like Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, and Brazil, these artists incorporate elements of pre-Columbian mythology, colonial history, and contemporary realities into their works. Pau Quintana, for example, pays homage to Pachamama (Mother Earth) and life in Chile (Figure 1), while Eva Bracamontes draws inspiration from pre-Hispanic Mexican culture (Figure 9). This deep connection to their cultural roots allows them to explore historical and social narratives while challenging and redefining gender stereotypes and cultural identity in public space.

Figure 1. *Pachamama is singing a song for you*



Wooden walls project, Asbury Park New Jersey, 2015. Photo courtesy of Pau Quintana.

The educational and cultural influences of these artists are likewise reflected in the thematic depth and visual sophistication of their murals. Mariela Ajrás, with her background in Psychology, integrates a unique understanding of human behavior and social interaction into her urban art. Mujeres Creando, a Bolivian collective with studies in Psychology and Communication, addresses complex issues such as female emancipation and resistance to patriarchy from multiple perspectives, enriching their artistic practice with an interdisciplinary approach.

In summary, the educational and cultural backgrounds of Latin American female artists significantly influence their approaches to and representations of themes in urban art. From formal training in visual arts to self-taught practices and connections to cultural roots, these women use urban art as a platform to express diverse identities, challenge social norms, and promote social justice. Their educational and cultural contexts enhance the visual and conceptual depth of their works, contributing to the vibrant and diverse urban art scene in Latin America and beyond.

Visual Rhetorical Strategies in Latin American Women's Urban Art

In the vibrant context of Latin American urban art, female artists have emerged as dynamic creators who skillfully employ visual strategies akin to those used in advertising and masterfully employed in subvertising or adbusting (Vega, 2012; Borghini et al., 2010). Utilizing vibrant colors, striking compositions, and symbolic

imagery, these artists captivate audiences while conveying complex social messages related to gender, identity, and resistance. By strategically combining popular culture and advertising techniques, these artists repurpose urban spaces as platforms for social justice discourse, thereby democratizing aesthetic experiences and ensuring a broader reach for their critical messages. Each spectacular image they create is designed to capture attention from the first moment, employing a visual rhetorical device known as spectacularization. Artists such as Eva Bracamontes, Gleo, and Mariela Ajrás integrate historical and architectural contexts into their works (Iñiguez, 2022), enhancing their resonance with local communities while addressing universal themes of identity and resistance.

Figure 2. *Coração da Africa.*



Elements of spectacularization in the image of Eva Bracamontes. Lourdes, Portugal, 2016.
Courtesy of Eva Bracamontes.

Beyond solely aesthetic embellishment, these artists utilize their work to underscore significant themes of identity and social justice. Furthermore, through their use of metaphor and visual impact, they democratize the aesthetic experience and engage the public in meaningful discussions about cultural empowerment and resistance. Lady Pink, for example, focuses on the bodies of women and racial minorities to capture attention and initiate a visual dialogue. In the same vein, Eva Bracamontes fuses pop art with national symbols to create beautiful images that delight passersby. The collective Morivivi addresses female emancipation and Puerto Rican identity from this same perspective, and Gleo explores the duality between the real and the dreamlike.

Figure 3. *Five Point Lady Liberty and Monkey*



Voluptuous body of the racialized Statue of Liberty. Lady Pink mural painted at 5 Pointz, Queens, New York, 2006. Image: Timothy Vogel, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/vogelium/302309411/>

A central theme in the work of Latin American urban artists is that of identity, as mentioned above, often explored through a social justice lens. In this sense, the portrayal of the female body in urban art stands as a central motif of empowerment and resistance. Artists like Pamela Castro and Bastardilla use stylized female figures adorned with symbolic elements to challenge patriarchal and colonial

narratives, positioning the female form as both a focal point and a message of resilience.

A distinctive feature of these Latin American female artists' work is the strategic fusion of traditional and contemporary elements, a technique commonly used in advertising to challenge stereotypes and appeal to a wider audience. By combining pre-Columbian imagery with contemporary social commentary, artists like Eva Bracamontes and Martanoemí Noriega engage in a dynamic conversation between tradition and modernity. This approach not only celebrates cultural heritage but also tackles current social issues. Bracamontes, through her reinterpretation of Mexican folklore in modern portraits, and Martanoemí, who weaves together poetry and Panamanian cultural motifs, exemplify how this blend of styles not only honors tradition but also ensures its relevance in today's world.

Figure 4. *Contribución de los afroantillanos al desarrollo del país*



Poetic images by Martanoemí of the Afro-descendant contribution in Panama. Section of the Mural on the fence of the Museo Afroantillano de Panamá, 2019. Courtesy of Martanoemí Noriega.

In short, their strategic deployment of visual rhetoric, through large-scale formats, vibrant color palettes, and techniques of aestheticization and spectacularization, effectively amplifies their voices within public spaces. By transforming urban areas into open-air galleries, their murals become powerful visual experiences that communicate complex social discourses on equality and cultural identity. This approach ensures that their messages reach a broad audience, leaving a lasting

impact on collective memory and reshaping the way we engage with both art and urban environments (Figure 5).

Figure 5. *A forest of dreams*



Gleo creates a symbiosis of her images with the urban space.
Festival de Arte Público Constructo, 2018. Image author: Arco Mexico, retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:CONSTRUCTO.jpg&oldid=844473056>

Aesthetics of Resistance in Feminine Urban Art

Decolonial Approaches to Popular Culture

At the beginning of the feminine urban art movement, the techniques and styles used by women were similar to those of their male counterparts, as they sought to demonstrate their determination and ability to paint at the same level. However, over time and with experience, their artistic style evolved, marking a clear distinction from the masculine approach. Pioneering artists such as Lady Pink (Arbat, 2023), Miss

Van (Vega, 2012), and Mariela Ajrás (Drazer, 2021) recount how they decided to move away from the predominant masculine style in graffiti, exploring the use of color and developing new figurative formats. This shift allowed them to stand out as women and to craft a unique artistic identity. This evolution involved breaking away from traditional urban art codes, adopting a more diverse color palette, and incorporating elements of popular culture, which allowed for the creation of more inclusive and accessible narratives. This approach not only highlighted women's skill and creativity in urban art but also contributed to redefining the female expressive identity in a predominantly male field, fostering greater acceptance and visibility of the urban art movement as a whole.

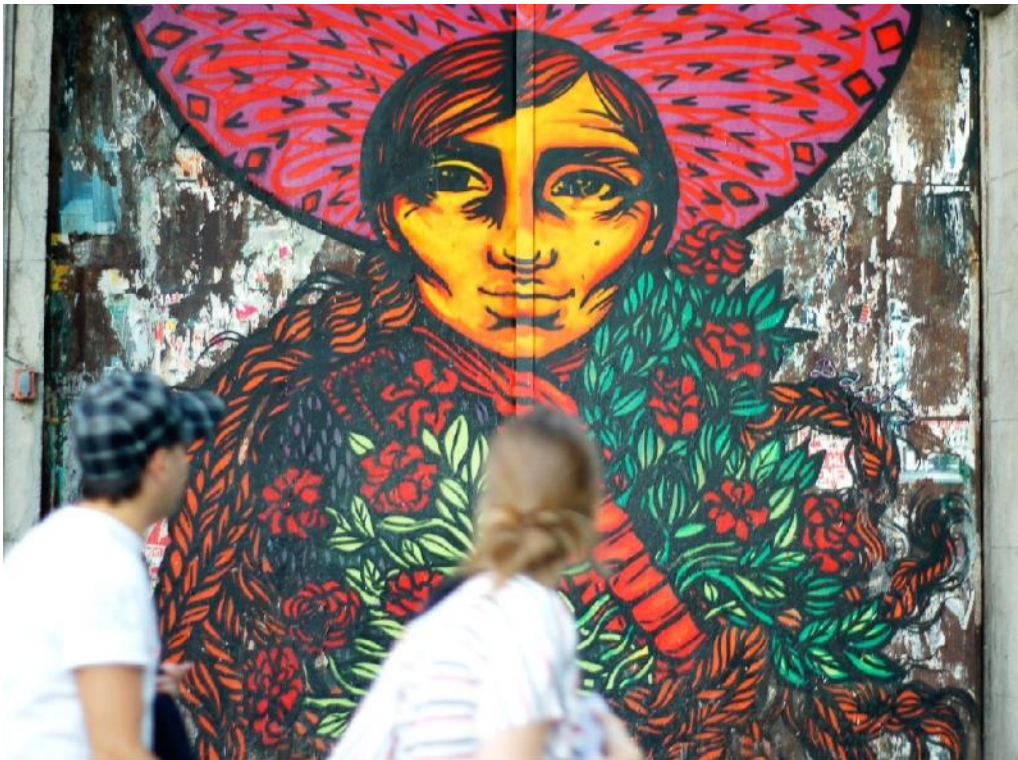
Over time, Latin American female urban artists have developed a distinctive style that represents a reaffirmation of local identities to create inclusive and accessible narratives. This evolution, influenced by plural feminist thought, reflects a resistance to hegemonic narratives. By harnessing cultural diversity and integrating elements of popular culture, as Lundberg et al., (2023a) point out, these artists offer a decolonial perspective that challenges prevailing power structures.

The collective Mujeres Creando in Bolivia is particularly noteworthy for its interventions in public spaces. By using childlike scripts to convey powerful messages of de-patriarchalizing (Pérez Santos, 2018), these artists question and subvert patriarchal and colonial structures, as seen in graffiti written on the streets of La Paz: "*No se puede descolonizar sin despatriarcalizar*" [You cannot decolonize without de-patriarchalizing]. They ingeniously use the Marian icon not only to honor their cultural roots but also to question and subvert oppressive structures (Arcos Herrera, 2024). This symbolic resistance, which utilizes a familiar religious representation, is a powerful act of decoloniality, promoting women's disidentification with social models that seek to subjugate them, as seen in another graffiti: "*Tú me quieres virgen, tú me quieres santa, tú me tienes harta*" [You want me to be a virgin, you want me to be a saint, you've worn me out]. Similarly, Panmela Castro's work in Brazil explores sexuality, sexism, and mythology, using urban art as a platform for critical social literacy (Editores da enciclopedia Itaú Cultural de Arte e Cultura Brasileira, 2024).

This artistic representation integrates indigenous and local cultural elements into their works, rejecting colonial narratives while celebrating their cultural roots. By blending pre-Columbian motifs, popular legends, and the folklore of their countries with contemporary social commentary, they engage in a rich dialogue that honors

tradition while addressing modern challenges of the present and into the future (Pérez Santos, 2017; Bacánika, 2019; DW, 2022; Oldskull, 2023).

Figure 6. *Florista de la Fábrica de Tabacos*



Powerful women who perpetuate legends and popular folklore in the images of Bastardilla. Fábrica de Tabacos, glorieta de Embajadores, Madrid, España, 2010. Image author: r2hox, retrieved from [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Bastardilla_\(5133912454\).jpg](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Bastardilla_(5133912454).jpg)

In Colombia, artists like Gleo or Bastardilla use urban art to recover and celebrate Indigenous roots, revaluing history and strengthening the image of women as central figures in the country's cultural and social narrative (Velimirović, 2016). Eva Bracamontes represents Mexican legends and folklore through portraits of diverse women, adapting traditions to contemporary contexts and keeping them alive for modern audiences. Pau Quintana's work magnifies life through non-Christian deities associated with fertility, such as Pachamama (Mother Earth) in the Andean Quechua region and Yemayá, a sea deity whose Hispanic version comes from Cuban Santería and is widely venerated in the Caribbean, South America, and the United States, emphasizing the connection to the earth, sea, and nature. These claims of fundamental beliefs have the value of contrasting with (neo)colonial hierarchies, validating cultural elements that have coexisted in Latin American societies for

centuries. In her work *Yemaya and her sea birds* (Figure 7), Pau Quintana presents us with a marine goddess with soft, sensual silhouettes whose blue hair represents the sea, protecting the vigor of marine fauna and flora depicted in warm colors.

Figure 7. *Yemayá and her sea*



Wooden walls project, Asbury Park New Jersey, 2019.

Photo courtesy of Pau Quintana.

Martanoemí Noriega's murals celebrate Afro-Panamanian heritage, highlighting the contributions of Afro-descendants to the country's culture. Her work is a form of cultural activism (Samaap, 2016), vindicating African slave and Afro-Antillean history in Panama and challenging negative stereotypes. The detail of the mural painted at the Afro-Antillean Museum of Panama (Figure 8) shows an Afro-Antillean worker from the time of the construction of the first interoceanic Atlantic-Pacific railroad carrying a shovel. It depicts the labor force behind the locomotive that helped to forge the development of Panama and the American continent from the mid-19th century, thus valuing and making visible the contribution of these Panamanians to the construction of the country and to the history and culture of Panamanian society.

Figure 8. Section of the mural: *Contribución de los afroantillanos al desarrollo del país*



Museo Afroantillano de Panamá, 2019. Photo courtesy of Martanoemí Noriega.

The decolonial approach in the urban art of Latin American women stands as a powerful tool of resistance and cultural revaluation. By subverting colonial narratives and reclaiming local identities, they not only reconfigure public space but also offer a scathing visual critique of colonialism and modernity. Their works, rich in plurality and discursive complexity, rise as beacons of social transformation, challenging multiple forms of oppression and constructing new epistemologies from Indigenous and Afro-descendant roots (Velimirović, 2016; Samaap, 2016). In this way, their art not only celebrates resistance but also reaffirms the power of creativity as an act of cultural and social reconstruction and futuring.

Tropicalizing Motifs

Latin American women's urban art is characterized by its vibrant color palette, which reflects the region's tropical vitality. These colors, deeply rooted in the artists' cultural contexts, transcend mere aesthetics, serving as powerful symbols of identity and social justice. Artists such as Mariela Ajrás and Eva Bracamontes (Figure 9) seamlessly blend Indigenous and mestizo influences with contemporary realities, creating visually complex narratives that invite viewers to engage in critical reflection.

Figure 9. *Lunaison*



Mix of Mexican cultural symbols with current elements in Bracamontes' murals. Toulouse, France, 2019. Photo courtesy of Eva Bracamontes.

Pre-Columbian motifs and historical elements intertwine with contemporary realities, enriching the visual representations and highlighting the cultural complexity of the Latin American region. Stylized figures of flora and fauna and ancestral symbols not only celebrate cultural heritage but also serve as visual metaphors for current challenges affecting the tropics (Lundberg et al., 2023a). Bastardilla's "Woman and Jaguar," created for the Bienal Art Urban 131 in Cochabamba, Bolivia, 2020 (Figure 10), exemplifies this approach. In collaboration with Erica il Cane, Bastardilla depicts a young native woman confidently riding a jaguar to stop the destruction of a forest. This powerful image speaks to the urgency of environmental issues and references the protest movement to protect the Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS) ecological reserve.

Figure 10. Mural alluding to the TIPNIS conflict



Powerful women with ancestral symbols of flora and fauna to defend nature. Neighborhood in Cochabamba, Bolivia, 2020. Image author; Mika Di Viacha, retrieved from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4a/Mural_Bastardilla.jpg

Rhizomatic Intersectional Model of Feminist Art

The representation of the female body in these works is not merely aesthetic but serves as a potent symbol of empowerment of women and the environment with which women have been strongly associated with. The images of voluptuous women and stylized figures in the works of Panmela Castro and Bastardilla highlight the importance of female representation in art, addressing issues of gender and sexuality with a critical eye. In her piece created for the Funarte Prize for Women in Visual Arts in Brazil, 2013 (Figure 11), Panmela presents us with the enigmatic image of a woman's head in a horizontal position, depicted in vibrant colors and adorned with symbolic elements. The woman's gaze, at once sad and defiant, suggests a complex exploration of identity and gender. The hand covering one eye, and the stylized eyelashes allude to themes of protection, censorship, and the resilience of women in the face of societal expectations.

Figure 11. *Female allegory in red.*



Live graffiti performance during the Funarte Prize for Women in Visual Arts in Brazil, 2013.

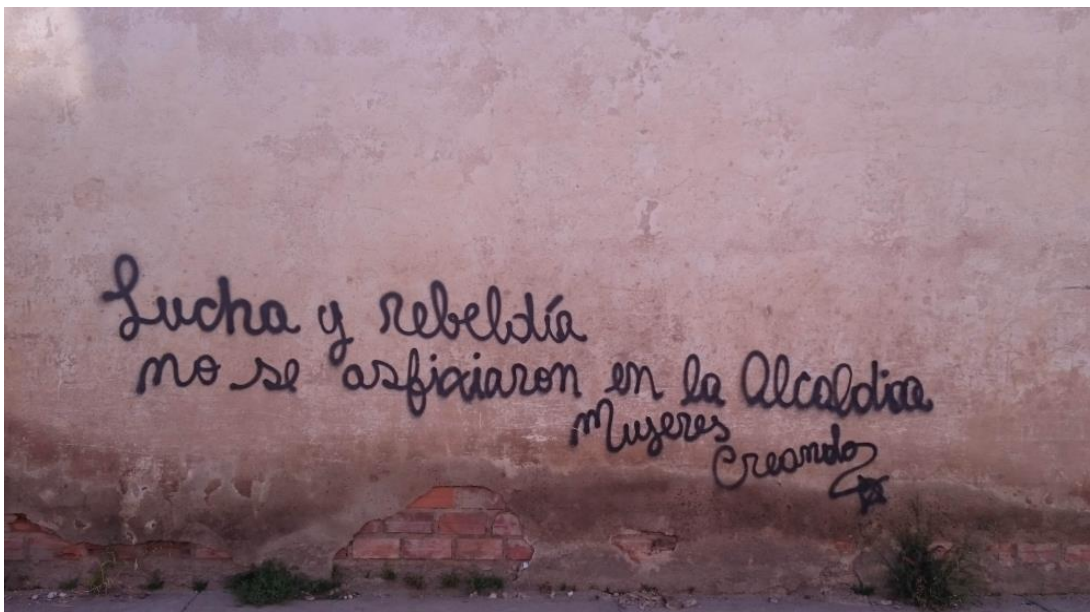
Image author: Ministério da Cultura do Brazil, retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Panmela_Castro%27s_graffiti_-_Funarte_4.jpg&oldid=626530472

Feminist art, as a crucial tool for women to articulate their experiences and challenges through innovative expressions (TheArtStory, 2017), has emerged as a potent force in urban art. Since its inception in the 1960s, it has interrogated gender norms and given visibility to women's struggles and realities, particularly in multicultural contexts such as Latin America. With the incorporation of an intersectional approach in the 1990s (TheArtStory, 2017), feminist art has broadened its scope, addressing not only gender and queer identity but also issues such as race, culture, and sexuality, enabling a more inclusive and diverse representation of women's experiences.

With its intersectional approach, Latin American feminist art offers a dynamic and expansive vision of women's experiences. The interconnectedness of gender, identity, social justice, and cultural heritage is central to this artistic movement (Drazer, 2021). This rhizomatic model, exemplified by the Mujeres Creando collective in Bolivia, connects multiple forms of oppression—patriarchal, racial, and economic—into a coherent and powerful visual discourse (Pérez Santos, 2017). Through their graffiti and actions, they create compelling messages that resonate with the population, transforming and reconfiguring urban spaces. As can be read on the walls of La Paz, messages of empowerment and validation of their struggles stand out: "Struggle and rebellion were not suffocated at the city hall" (Figure 12).

This resonates with Glissant's idea that cultures should not be understood in isolation or as binary opposites but rather as systems in constant interaction and transformation. Moreover, their use of urban spaces to convey messages of empowerment, such as the signs in La Paz, encapsulates Glissant's notion of opacity, where cultural expressions and struggles do not need to be fully explained or reduced to comprehensible frameworks to be legitimate (Glissant, 1977).

Figure 12. Graffiti Mujeres Creando.



Wall in El Alto Bolivia, 2016. Photo: Caleidoscopic. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Graffiti_Mujeres_Creando.jpg

By intertwining Indigenous, African, and mestizo influences with contemporary struggles, these artists create works that are polysemic and thus open to diverse interpretations. Bastardilla's works, whose female representations unravel layers of content that address identity, resistance, and community life, are prime examples.

The representations of the female body depicted by these artists embody empowerment, resistance, and self-affirmation. They reclaim the body as a field of confrontation, challenging gender norms and promoting equality. Such images emphasize the importance of female presence in political and cultural spaces. These artists present themselves as agents of transformation, questioning traditional roles and claiming their space in society. Bastardilla and the Moriviví collective are prominent examples, portraying empowered women in diverse situations. The

intersectionality in female experiences is explored in depth, showcasing women of different ethnicities and social contexts. This depth of representation encompasses not only gender identity but also race, culture, and sexuality. Martanoemí Noriega's work, incorporating both ethnic figures and diverse symbols of Panamanian ethnicities, illustrates how art can celebrate and reflect diversity through cultural activism.

Another striking characteristic of Latin American feminine urban art is the deep solidarity and collaboration among its artists. They form a network of cultural and artistic exchange that extends globally. Lady Pink, a pioneer of graffiti, has inspired numerous urban artists in Latin America and beyond. Her influence has created an intertwining rhizome of creativity that extends in multiple directions. Social media and digital platforms have transformed the way these artists share their work with the world, enriching the movement in all its dimensions. The ability to connect and collaborate on a global scale expands these possibilities and strengthens the impact of their messages, creating a more diverse and dynamic artistic fabric.

Latin American Feminist Urban Art and Futuristic Tropicality

Feminist Latin American urban art, through approaches such as popular visual rhetoric, the narrative resource of intimacy and sexuality, and heterogeneous and polysemic discourse, embodies futuristic tropicality by reimagining tropical spaces as dynamic, inclusive, and transformative. These artists challenge established norms, using their visual narratives to provoke reflection, revalue women's experiences, and mirror the multiplicity and hybridity inherent in tropical ecosystems. Their work fosters pluralistic perspectives, seamlessly blending tradition with modernity while promoting resilience and empowerment. In doing so, this art not only critiques societal norms but also redefines tropicality as a vibrant, evolving space that celebrates diverse identities and collective empowerment.

Popular Visual Rhetoric to Seduce

Women urban artists have adopted seductive visual strategies to attract their audience, using a visual rhetoric that resembles that of commercial advertising. Through vibrant visual elements, these artists embody futuristic tropicality by reclaiming commercial aesthetics to amplify narratives of gender identity and feminism. Their works transform tropical (and extend to temperate) spaces into dynamic hubs of cultural innovation, resilience, and social equity, projecting inclusive

and transformative futures. This approach has a decolonial feminist perspective, as it seeks to dismantle the dominant Eurocentric narratives that have historically shaped the representation of women in art. By using elements of subculture and popular culture, these artists not only democratize access to art but also reconfigure visual paradigms to include and celebrate the diversity of female identities. This decolonial strategy implies a constant dialogue with local and popular cultures, challenging the cultural homogenization imposed from a Western perspective and promoting a feminist aesthetic that is both plural and situated.

Intimacy and Sexuality as Narrative Resource

Latin American women's urban art embodies a rhizomatic transformation of public spaces, redefining them as territories of resistance and platforms for marginalized narratives. This rhizomatic approach is evident in diverse and interconnected ways. By embracing a multiplicity of meanings and rejecting linear or hierarchical frameworks, these artists address themes such as intimacy, sexuality, and bodily autonomy. In this context, the female body becomes a symbolic battlefield, intertwining the personal with the political to challenge patriarchal norms, decolonize narratives, and affirm agency and self-determination. Through the resignification of walls as spaces for inclusive and pluralistic discourses, their works transcend their ephemeral nature, linking local and global struggles while reshaping urban dynamics. This rhizomatic practice not only amplifies the voices of marginalized communities but also reimagines urban spaces as sites of dialogue, reflection, and strengthened community bonds.

Heterogeneous and Polysemic Discourse

The visual discourse of Latin American urban female artists is inherently multiple and contradictory, reflecting the diverse realities and experiences of women in complex sociocultural contexts. This rhizomatic approach allows works to be interpreted from multiple perspectives, recognizing the diversity of experiences and the different forms of oppression and resistance that women face. Representations of powerful and active women in the political and cultural sphere also adopt a tropicalizing stance, highlighting characteristics of femininity that are specific to their local contexts and, in doing so, subverting colonial narratives that have stereotyped women of the Latin American region. The images that these artists produce not only challenge the traditional roles assigned to women but also suggest a multiplicity of identities and ways of being a woman, which are both local and global, personal and

political. This heterogeneous and polysemic discourse reflects a commitment to pluralistic feminist thought that recognizes the intersectionality of gender, class, race, and other identity categories, offering a vision of urban art as a space for resistance and social transformation.

In summary, the visual narrative of feminist urban art in Latin America, supported by decolonial, tropicalizing, and rhizomatic approaches, allows for a deep and nuanced exploration of the complexities of femininity in local and global contexts. Artists use their works to communicate a discourse that is simultaneously personal and political, intimate and universal, challenging established power structures and promoting an inclusive and diverse vision of female identity. Through their works, these women not only claim space in the public sphere but also reconfigure the meanings of gender and femininity, offering new perspectives on the female experience in the contemporary world.

Towards Tropical Futurism Aesthetics

Latin American female urban artists, through their vibrant and hybrid visual narratives, align with tropical futurism by transforming urban spaces into dynamic platforms that address issues like violence, gender inequality, and oppression. Their works reimagine these spaces as inclusive and forward-thinking, reflecting a futuristic vision where resilience and social justice thrive within a redefined tropical cultural context. By utilizing public spaces for education and awareness, these artists have transformed urban environments into platforms for cultural expression and social change. By integrating elements of popular culture and local traditions, this movement strengthens cultural identity and fosters community pride. Furthermore, feminine urban art stimulates social activism and solidarity, democratizing access to art and encouraging greater citizen participation in the defense of human rights. These artists have used urban art as a powerful tool to question and subvert traditional narratives, raising awareness of issues such as gender violence, cultural identity, women's empowerment, and the protection of the environment.

In countries like Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Puerto Rico, and Colombia (Ryan, 2016; Allan, 2020), artistic interventions in public spaces have generated discussions about women's rights and challenged existing patriarchal structures. Urban art of Panama, Chile, and Ecuador, as with other Latin American works, draw on powerful Indigenous and cultural female symbolisms. Collectives such as *Mujeres Creando* in Bolivia have used art as a form of protest and direct action against social

oppression, achieving recognition of feminine art as a legitimate means of cultural and social resistance (Dietrich, 2006).

Additionally, these artistic practices have promoted greater inclusion in public space, giving voice to historically marginalized sectors and creating greater empathy and understanding of women's experiences in cities. The use of feminist and decolonial aesthetics in urban art has allowed Latin American female artists not only to express their personal and collective experiences but also to reconfigure the urban cultural landscape, contributing to the strengthening of the social fabric and the promotion of changes in public perception regarding gender and equality.

In conclusion, the transformative power of Latin American women's urban art aligns with the principles of tropical futurism. Through their works, these artists are not only challenging and reshaping traditional gender roles and social norms but also envisioning a future where tropical spaces are redefined as dynamic, inclusive, and empowering environments. Their art becomes a catalyst for social change, a tool for decolonizing narratives, and a platform for promoting justice in the region. By reimagining urban spaces as sites of resistance and dialogue, these artists are leading their communities toward a future where collective empowerment and plural identities flourish, marking a profound shift toward a more just and inclusive society.

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