

Transformations of graffiti from the perspective of global flows: representativeness in the city of Belo Horizonte

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Abstract. *Graffiti is an artistic and, above all, social manifestation being, thus, susceptible to the transformations that occur in this area, such as those related to globalization. This paper aims at analyzing if globalization weakens local qualities present in this kind of work, thus encouraging mass phenomena. Initially, the text outlines a brief history of this urban art, along with its essential concepts and values. The following section focuses on the theories of globalization, both from the homogenization and heterogeneity perspectives. It regards the current scenario of graffiti as an experience guided by the diversity and intensity of global flows, deployed in various coexisting layers, which create particular virtual worlds, or scapes. These scapes result in a new concept of culture, now deterritorialized and multiple, as proposed by Appadurai (1996). Finally, these concepts are inspected within the context of graffiti in the city of Belo Horizonte, based on interviews made with local artists. This leads to the understanding that, although there is a strong foreign influence, mainly American, it is added to the individual life experiences of each artist, creating new identities, and thus, the presence of various styles on the walls of the city.*

Keywords. *Graffiti. Urban art. Globalization. Street art. Homogenization. Belo Horizonte.*

1 Introduction

At a time when social practices change with information received about themselves (HALL 2006), new possibilities arise for the articulation of identities, that no longer impose themselves as a kind of nationality, restricted to a territory – they have become “an imaginary construction that narrates itself” (CANCLINI 1999: 148, our translation). In the globalized context, the dialectic relation between Time and Space defies the sustainability of cultural subjectivities.

Artistic and social manifestations are a direct reflection of this process – within which we will focus on graffiti, as a product of daily life. Motivated by the restlessness of young people and as a form of social resistance in the scene of the New York ghettos around 1960 (VIANA 2007), graffiti has spread throughout the world. The purpose of this paper is to analyze this diffusion, questioning to what extent this process consists in a cultural homogenization or acquires meaning through articulations with local culture. The starting point of the research is Appadurai's (1996) proposal for the understanding of cultural “scapes” in the globalized world. Formed by the overlapping of different flows, the concept is applied as an instrument for the construction of the “scapes” of graffiti.

The focus of the research is the panorama of graffiti in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, considering its origin, ancestry, principles and, above all, the representativeness of local culture against the threats of globalization. With this purpose, interviews were conducted with four artists from the city who, despite sharing a technique, have different life and artistic styles. In order to create a better perception of the “scapes” of each artist, the interviews were held in their preferred places: in the street, while working, in the studio itself, in the park with the family. They were conducted as unstructured interviews, being recorded and subsequently transcribed and translated.

2 A brief contextualization and origins of graffiti

Graffiti is composed plastically of drawings or writings that present themselves as a means of social manifestation. It goes beyond the artistic expressiveness guaranteed by the abundance of colors and abstract forms: in a direct and plural form, it represents the realities, conflicts and yearnings of contemporaneity. Present in walls, facades, subways and viaducts, there are no rules for its implantation, since its language is born from an ideal of freedom. In this way, the registers

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spread and overlap themselves in the urban landscape, building from the ephemerality resulting from a dynamic context (VIANA 2007).

Although of recent recognition, the term, derived from the Italian *graffito*, corresponds to the "inscription or drawings of ancient times, crudely scratched with a tip or coal, in rocks, walls, etc." (GITAHY 1999: 13, our translation). Thus, it is possible to recognize it as an inherent practice of human existence, already represented by cave paintings, egyptian murals, and by the records of ancient Roman civilization (GITAHY 1999).

In the XXth Century, muralism was a rather significant expression in this sense. Developed in Mexico, it was an artistic movement concerned with transmitting ideals of valorization of local identity based on communist principles (GITAHY 1999). This type of manifestation was reinforced when new technologies for industrial use – such as latex paint and spray paint - emerged, in the 1950s. In Paris – during the 1968 student revolution, the silent walls of the city were filled with claims for freedom and improvement of the quality of life (VIANA 2007).

However, the great development of graffiti, as it is known today, occurred in the late 1960s in American ghettos, where blacks and *latinos* were relocated because of social conflicts. Graffiti was then inserted into a large set of cultural expression forms, translated not only through drawings, but also through music and dance - such as Hip Hop and Break - and through the ideals of appreciation of the black community's society and identity. It was also used as a way of fighting against violence, poverty and trafficking (VIANA 2007).

In Brazil, this manifestation has also emerged around 1950 and has gone through the 1960s and the 1970s to consolidate itself as artistic language in the 1980s (GITAHY 1999), acquiring, then, greater visibility and acceptance. At first, it was mostly practiced in poor neighborhoods, mostly in the city of São Paulo but, nowadays, it is widely spread all over the country (SANTOS 2009).

Despite the idea of marginality, graffiti have been more and more reaffirmed as a street form of art, which contrasts with the absence of life of the big blocks of concrete found in modern cities, leading to a re-signification of the collective imagination (VIANA 2007). Therefore, it is an expression which transforms itself over time and it has become a reflection of all the activities and specificities of each time.

3 Globalization and the vision of flows

In a common sense, globalization is understood as a current process, which expands with the consolidation of the capitalist model, ensuring interconnection between various parts of the world through communication, information and transportation technologies. However, it has begun much earlier: examples are the circulation of ancient merchants, travelers and explorers from the great navigations of the XV and XVI Centuries, and even before that, multiple interactions between peoples

through wars and conquests of territories or pilgrimage (APPADURAI 1996).

This reflection leads to the idea that globalization is a phenomenon inherent to much of human history, even though sometimes it occurred through sporadic, arduous and costly contacts. In contrast to the idea of the emergence of a contemporary globalization, we can therefore say that there has been a quantitative transformation, a differentiation in terms of scale due to the available technological framework. That is, what has happened is a change in the relation between time and space – a consequence of an intensification of the global connections that the innumerable innovations of the XVIII and XIX Centuries allowed for (APPADURAI 1996).

Thus, the new contacts that capitalist ambition allowed have changed cultural relations: before more stable and confined within physical limits, they have now become increasingly fluid and deterritorialized. If before it was possible to refer to a cultural identity and to relate it to a certain locality, this possibility has been dissolved with the expansion of global networks (APPADURAI 1996; CANCLINI 2001).

Within a context of "liquid modernity" (BAUMAN 2001) characterized by volatility, uncertainty and insecurity, various interpretations and theories have emerged on the theme of globalization. Basically, they follow two lines: homogenization and heterogenization (APPADURAI 1996). According to its own name, the first one is based on the idea of massification, on the constitution of a single world culture, while the second one demands a redefinition of what has been known as culture, allowing for the insertion and sharing of a lot more complex dimensions than the previous idea.

According to Crane (2002), it is very difficult to explain or frame the existing global processes, but she identifies four basic theories that may help in their understanding. The most widespread one refers to "cultural imperialism". It is based on the idea of the domination of the peripheral countries by the economically central ones (in this case, the United States). This situation would lead to an elimination of the cultural peculiarities of the more fragile places, which would become mere cultural recipients when submitted to the pressure from the strong presence of multinational or transnational corporations. According to the second theory, the flows are not unidirectional, they are configured as a rhizome, in the model called "*cultural flows or network model*". In this case, there would be an exchange in which there is no distinction between central and peripheral production and reception. The result would be a "*cultural hybridization*".

According to a third approach, the "reception theory", local cultures resist to the influences received. In contrast to the earlier process described, in this case, there would be a multiculturalism in which global influences are accepted, but interpreted in various ways, according to the life experiences of each group.

Finally, Crane (2002) describes a model of "cultural political strategies" adopted by states and organizations. Through these strategies, states and organizations create a scenario of competition among themselves, allegedly

to maintain local particularities. In reality, their actions aim at encouraging consumption, promoting (and not restricting) cultural globalization. Claiming to be protecting heritage, promoting tourism and providing subsidies for local producers, they privilege themes such as urban marketing, cultural marketing, or cultural industry.

Appadurai (1996), however, considers such theories rigid and thus incapable of understanding a complex and volatile cultural reality. He proposes a vision of the world in which it is moved by flows. These flows are loaded with differences, or "*disjunctures*," existing between the various political, economic, social, and cultural groups and their articulations. The flows would provide for the creation of single horizons, or "*scapes*." This term is then adopted as a suffix in an attempt to structure concepts for a possible analysis of this multiple world phenomenon. In this scheme, there would be five dimensions of global cultural flows, which the author calls: *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, *mediascapes* and *ideoscapes*.

Ethnoscapes constitute the inhabited world in movement, composed by tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, etc. *Technoscapes* correspond to the configuration of the technologies and their rapid development, which allows for the breaking of barriers previously unimaginable. *Financescapes* refer to the rapid global network of capital speculation and circulation. *Mediascapes* represent the distribution of the capacity of information production and diffusion through Media, providing an extensive repertoire of images, narratives and differentiated visions. At last, *ideoscapes* are composed of ideologies or counter-ideologies, based on images and ideas such as freedom, democracy, rights, and so on (APPADURAI 1996).

Therefore, the *scapes* described by Appadurai constitute a proposal for the interpretation of reality, which contemplates its complexity and dynamism: the understanding of global events will not be granted by "the binary logic that seeks to understand culture through mutually exclusive terms such as homogeneity/heterogeneity, integration/disintegration, unity/diversity" (FEATHERSTONE 1990: 8 apud ZIGLIO; COMEGNA 2005: 95, our translation). It's necessary to accept the proposal that there is a transversal dimension through which different flows overlap, coexist and relate, creating new virtual localities that are in constant transmutation.

4 Globalization and the "scapes of graffiti"

Considering that graffiti is a social manifestation present in all spheres of daily life, it is nothing more than a product of the fluxes that overlap at each moment.

Contemporary cultures, especially urban cultures, are open and oscillating forms. Because they are created in the multiple territories of the metropolises, they are open to exchanges, interactions and intersections. Graffiti inserted in the set of urban manifestations also acquires this expansive character to the extent

that it embodies other elements and aesthetic, political and occupation references to the public spaces; also, when it comes close to the media, contemporary technologies and, above all, the arts (VIANA 2007: 227, our translation).

Within this approach, the fear of homogenization extinguishes itself. It becomes coherent to use the term hybridization, responsible for the structuring of "third cultures", which, however, should not be seen as concrete, defined – or it would lead to a second massification (FEATHERSTONE 1990 apud ZIGLIO; COMEGNA 2005). Postmodern hybridity is projected into multiculturalism, into the instability of borders that allow constant dialogues between multiple cultures (CANCLINI 2001).

This understanding is coherent with the proposal of Appadurai (1996), because these hybrid formulations would be exactly the result of the overlapping of the "*scapes*" proposed by the author. Graffiti, as "a syncretic and transcultural medium" (CANCLINI 2001: 338, our translation), is configured as a changing representation of global flows, inconsistent, flexible. It is, therefore, configured as the own art of flows, a global art.

The *ethnoscapes* expressed by graffiti represent one of the dimensions responsible for the combination of influences in this context. Moving around the planet has become a collective desire, a part of the social imaginary (APPADURAI 1996). In this scenario, artists and their works are no longer restricted to a place, they can be scattered throughout the world. People's flows result in cultural exchanges and values incorporation that lead to practices and customs initially unique to a country. One's traditions are uprooted, assimilated and expressed by others. *Mangas*, originally Japanese, now represent the concept of universality - the representation of a common, generic urban culture that often overlaps with local customs. The language of *comic books*, of American origin, has become a global communicational phenomenon due to its structure, practically intuitive: formed by images and simple plots that guarantee the understanding, they make the use of a common language superfluous. *Pop art*, originally English, conceived for consumption and mass reproduction, has diffused itself instantaneously and has melted various cultural values together. Hyper-realism (American), on the other hand, narrates everyday events, facts of modern life and their ambition, associating globalized urban routine and the capital appeal.

These "mixes" have been made possible by the flows forming *technoscapes*, which make them increasingly simple and accessible. We refer here to a set of technologies that allow the development and diffusion of the means of cultural communication. Relevant to graffiti, we can highlight: transport technologies, which continue to dramatically reduce costs and travel time; new materials for industrial use, such as sprays - which are at the origin of graffiti - and the stencil; design and editing software - such as Adobe Photoshop®, Adobe Illustrator® and CorelDraw® - and equipment such as tablets and digitizing tables, that allow the preparation and preview of graffiti in digital format. Finally, there is

the role of digital media, essential for the dissemination of graffiti and the ideas it conveys beyond its original boundaries. Such technology - above all, the Internet - allows the instantaneous reproduction and exchange of information and images, connecting different worlds through virtual flows, being, thus, responsible for the combination of influences and the propagation of aesthetic trends.

With regards to *financescapes*, graffiti is always at risk of being subsumed by the overwhelming market forces - as well as a large part of cultural values. Having acquired the status of art, it is clear that "the process of commercialization of this artistic practice has been growing and becoming more sophisticated over the years" (SANTOS 2009: 45, our translation). This leads, therefore, to its institutionalization and arises the danger of imposed labeling and norms, created to make the works fit "in artistic, commercial and legal molds, that is to say, submit themselves to the logic of profit, to the search for visibility and to the rules of the consumer market" (CAIAFA; SODRÉ 2007: 257 apud SANTOS 2009: 45). Brazilian icons, such as the duo Os Gêmeos, Nina Pandolfo and Nunca, among many other artists, work nowadays not only with urban spaces, but also with consumption-oriented canvas, which already have international recognition and great market value. Several other graffiti artists market their works, as a vehicle for the promotion of products and stores.

The questioning of this submission to the financial flows is tangled with *ideoscapes*: one wonders about the validity of the institutionalization of a practice that had its origin in a political and liberatory ideology. "In its origin, graffiti were informal, marginal" (SANTOS 2009: 46, our translation). Due to the great quality and unusual forms of the works, they are an outstanding manifestation of the streets, of the peripheral public. However, there is also a growing trend, which seeks to insert the works inside galleries and museums, or to transform them into marketing strategies for selling other products. Opinions differ on the subject. For many artists - somehow the ones who are the most politically engaged - the relationship between graffiti and the street is inseparable, so that its presence inside buildings or stamped on shirts makes it just a technical craft. From a milder perspective, both forms would be graffiti, because even when used in other contexts, it still represents the subjectivity and the absence of patterns, the use of new styles and techniques. In relation to the works themselves, controversial and provocative themes are highlighted and demonstrate the flow of ideas that permeate the practice: immigration, prejudice, environmental and cultural devastation, violence and social vulnerability, as well as other forms of criticism. It carries the reality of its origin, and transmits these messages to other localities. As examples, we have the graffiti of the Gêmeos - and of the artist Nunca, who spread the influence of Brazilian characters throughout the world - the first ones showing typical northeastern people, the second, indigenous people.

Graffiti, as a vehicle of communication, is an integrating part of *mediascapes*. It brings information, highlights new perspectives of reality, stimulates

discussion, and it can even bring certain discussions up to the official agenda. At the same time, it is influenced and interacts with other forms of media, with emphasis on social media, from which it rebuilds an infinite share of content at all times. Such media and, more specifically, social networks, are able to provide large visibility to the technique, thanks to immediate popular contact. At present, the pages created by Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest, as well as personal websites, are very efficient in this sense. There are also projects aimed at collaborative mapping of these works - inserting them into a tourist circuit - such as the Street Art Locator, which maps works in several countries, and the "Olhesse Muro", in the city of Belo Horizonte.

Different reflections of reality are permanently generated from the combination of the several flows associated with the life experiences of each artist - unequivocal product of these exact types of flows - although with distinct contents. Thus, although departing from a model initially imported from the American suburbs, graffiti expresses aspects of the specific identity of each location and time, within the vision of each artist - reconfiguring itself continually. "There is increasing evidence that the consumption of mass communication causes resistance, irony, selectivity and, in general, impulse to action" (APPADURAI 1996: 19, our translation). Therefore, heterogeneity is formed through the tools of homogenization, ensuring not the defense of territorial singularities, but the tensions present in the coexistence of global, national and local influences (ZIGLIO; COMEGNA 2005).

5 Graffiti in the city of Belo Horizonte: local or global representation?

The first mural manifests in the city of Belo Horizonte appeared in the 1970s, in the form of political, poetic or humorous phrases (LODI 2003). The capital of the state of Minas Gerais is "historically and spatially segregated" (PINHEIRO 2016: 5) due to a planning strategy based on the delivery of the central areas to the most favored classes. Therefore, these manifests appeared as indicators of the transformations undergone by the metropolis over the years, such as the growth of slums - *favelas*, *vilas* and agglomerates.

Like other Brazilian cities, such as São Paulo and Brasília, in the 1980s, Belo Horizonte began to receive New York influences in a significant way, resulting in the first groups of Hip-hop, formed mainly by young people from the periphery (VIANA 2007). Following this line, graffiti spread and strengthened, conquering more space and a larger number of adepts in the late 1990s (LODI 2003). Within this context, the first workshops and social projects emerged, mainly as a means of fighting drug trafficking and violence. The connection of graffiti with other "street" manifestations was also reinforced, resulting in events such as "the Duel of MCs", meetings that have gathered rappers, skaters and other publics of Hip Hop, besides graffiti artists since 2007 (FERREIRA 2014).

In the current scenario, a great number of artists work in the city, showing a wide variety of styles. Considering the rapid diffusion, combination and overlapping of cultural flows, the influences received and the values expressed are set within a range that goes from universal or global to local, often including a portion of each. In order to identify the roots and origins of the works content and possible readings, it is important to understand the artists' backgrounds and the context that influences them. With this purpose, four artists working at the city were interviewed: Seres (Davidson Gonzalez do Nascimento), Wera (Wemerson da Silva), Othu (Jessen Eduardo de Jesus) and Tina (Ana Cristina Assunção Leite).

Wera is considered one of the first ones to engage with graffiti in BH, and has been coloring its walls for more than 20 years: "I'm a dinosaur, and I'm proud of it! The first event of graffiti in BH, called *Grafitando BH...* I was there, man, I was a kid there" [Wera]. Seres also attended this first event. He started with graffiti at the end of 1997 and states that it was from this time that this kind of artistic manifestation became relevant in the city.

The emergence of graffiti is therefore connected to the diffusion of technology - mainly the Medias - in the metropolis. Although the artists had finite resources in terms of techniques and materials, and relied primarily on "wanting to do", the infusion of technology was enough to affect old flows and boost the formation of others:

I learned by fighting, with courage. You would take a spray can and it would make a stroke of that size [...] it was crazy! And I was learning alone, and then globalization comes, right? I bought American magazines, I had access to them, right? And from that, I began to develop works and techniques [...] [Wera].

Seres also points to these magazines as an initial reference:

Can you imagine? The magazines were distributed only by the Gêmeos in Brazil. [...] We asked them to send the first one, and it came, and we said, ok, let's ask for a "*Gringa*" one [imported] now! For a "*Gringa*" there was a sixty-day delay. [...] And from then on, it was all letters exchange: letters from here to there and letters from there to here [Seres].

And then, graffiti entered the city, but collided with its reality. Technological means, local customs and habits as well as the urban form itself They were all very different from those of its place of origin. There was therefore a fusion process: adjustment, compilation of life fragments, shared and remodeled along time.

As for production inputs, there would also be diversity comparing to those found in other countries: "Brazil works a lot with latex. [...] this material generated a way of making graffiti at a reduced cost, appropriate to our reality" or "Here everyone grew up using vehicle paint" [Seres].

Othu and Tina are part of the second-generation groups, mostly apprentices of this first generation. Their first contact with graffiti occurred around 2005, still within more limited environment conditions when

compared to the present ones: "There was no technology, no access" [Othu]. He refers mostly, and above all, to the Internet. The transformations and possibilities created afterwards are irrefutable, especially in terms of cultural interaction. For Tina, this informational and communicational tool allows for a new perspective concerning feminine empowerment. It also provides opportunities that allow the few women working in this environment to rise. However, there is a common sense shared by artists when the question is the risk of homogenization:

There is not such a risk, man, there isn't, for two reasons: first it's not in the university that we learn graffiti, it's on the street. I have no academic education; everything I learned was by reading books, taking drawing courses and so on. Now imagine that each one is going to carry a little piece of this [personal experience] to the walls. There's no way it's going to be the same [Wera].

Such reflection leads us to believe in the persistence of certain connections with the territory. However, "territory" is now a mutable and floating concept, free from geographical boundaries. In addition, there is a great deal of concern among graffiti artists about building a style of their own, as the single means of recognition. "You can get references from certain things [...] but style you cannot, you have to create yours" [Othu].

There would thus be a differentiation linked to spatial boundaries - but not in terms of colors and forms - "What differentiates graffiti from Belo Horizonte? The artist!" [Wera]. From this perspective, the local component would arise from the opportunities and life experience possibilities provided by the inhabited space, be it concrete or virtual.

The contact with outside cultures is desired: not for the purpose of appropriation, but for the disclosure of one's own medium. One of the four artists interviewed, Seres, has already held international exhibitions, which assure greater recognition, new learning processes and possibilities. However, street culture, graffiti's genitor, prioritizes the cradle: "I feel like prospecting outside, but I want to succeed with the name of my place, I want to show my origin" [Wera].

This is the structure of *ethnoscapes* for graffiti in Belo Horizonte. As to *Technoscapes* and *mediascapes*, they have now attained a level of satisfactory performance. With the diffusion of technology originated in other countries, local artists now have a range of new possibilities that places them - if not at the frontier - at least at a comfortable place for exploring the potential that has become available to all - software, social networks, websites, electronic devices, etc. In a way, the use of these resources make works converge to a commercial path. They allow for a greater agility and provide tools that make graffiti closer to marketing - and to other fields, such as photography, design and audiovisual production.

"The orders related to the media industry that we have today is what makes our work viable. And this Media stuff, man, throws us forward" [Wera]. The artist, who was at the time of the interview finishing off a

commercial work with partner Othu, states: "This work would make a lovely shirt print." By coincidence, he was wearing a similar one: "This print is from a friend of mine, and nowadays, this is fashionable! I say, this here is pure fashion. Folks hate sprayed graffiti, but when they see a shirt with it, everyone gets it, where did you buy it and so on - and everyone wants one" [Wera].

However, among the artists interviewed, there is a clear cut between graffiti as a manifest and graffiti as a means of earning money (*ideoscapes* and *financescapes*). Outside the streets and associated to financial scapes there is no more graffiti, but a marketing tool.

Certain bonds break the paradigm of graffiti. Graffiti is based upon the freedom of expression; it is all contextualized in that sense, understood? You have to go out with your tools and make it [...] without waiting for something in return [...] donating yourself [Seres].

Although I am using the graffiti technique, it is the customer who dictated the rules. Graffiti for me is the willingness to do, the imperfect-perfect, it does not have to look good. But not everyone accepts this. [...] We feel a bit like prostitutes at certain times, of course [Wera].

"It's advertisement, right?" [Tina]. So, torn between social (occupation and urban awareness) and personal responsibilities, they seek some balance: "Commercial work is important for you to support yourself, support your family. But the street is [...] your escape valve, right? It's where you meet your friends" [Othu].

All of these interviews provides a perspective that goes beyond the thesis that speculates over a homogenous reproduction in this artistic-social medium. "The graffiti artist can fit in anywhere" [Wera], fact that stems mainly from graffiti's imaging content. However, eventual adjustments made to fit in do not correspond to the replacement of old convictions. The dense global diffusion that propagates technology and culture does not make local specificities less legitimate. It promotes their development and evolution according to whatever the new flows have to offer. Therefore, graffiti in Belo Horizonte still happens in an extremely familiar environment – maintaining ties that were formed from the recognition of values and intentions – based upon the appreciation of peripheral culture, still astray and suffering from prejudice.

6 Conclusion

Globalization, as a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, is synchronized with technological progress. The metamorphic rhythm of the Information and Knowledge Age has overcome the rhythms of the past. The new reality has led to the transcendence of connections that were mostly based on financial aspects before, replacing them by matrices of influence that include different components of culture. Faced with this process, various approaches seek to understand the new global articulations and their consequences.

Within the context presented, it seems very unlikely to have the consolidation of a model that privileges a

global homogeneous culture. On the other hand, the perspective that placed identity as a kind of nationality restricted to a territory is unlikely to prosper in the contemporary world (HALL 2006). The emerging trends point rather to a multicultural scene, resulting from different overlaid flows that create dynamic *scapes* according to the interaction with local reality and influences. (APPADURAI 1996). The present idea of identity is built through an articulation that can operate on several levels.

Graffiti, immersed in this dynamic network, has gone through fiery political, social, spatial, ideological and technical transformations. Globally widespread, the evidence of its New York genesis is still present, but does not impose limits or molds for conception - now nonexistent: this influence is placed as one of the many layers of meaning that compose the work. Therefore, the dreaded homogenization is giving way to the new possibilities that emerge every time a new artist rises. Although influenced by universal tendencies, artists reformulate and mix them with the reflexes of their daily life and strains, keeping their local identity alive.

This identity does not refer to a stable, but to a fluid, ephemeral and multiple character: the very flows that create it make graffiti a global art since urban spaces share traits, problems and scenes with one another. The research made in Belo Horizonte outline the quest of the artists for a personality of their own related to the bonds with space and time – the city and the contemporaneity.

These themes keep the city alive, whether as a political expression - a claim to the right to the city - or as an artistic expression. They transform the landscape of the lived space, and allow its appropriation providing the artist with a possibility of participating in its configuration

Information about distant cultures mingles with information about the artist's aspirations and personal history; digital Media provides access to new ideas and techniques, which are processed and reflected into images, which are dense with meaning and cultural references.

The conjunction of the different features of the context re-elaborates patterns and values, "proposing new sources of perception and thinking, broadening the spectrum of how we understand art, politics and aesthetics" (VIANA 2007: 136, our translation). Technology, especially social Media, guarantee the instantaneous dissemination and accessibility of the works, highlighting important themes of collective appeal that go far beyond artistic and commercial ideals since they also bring aesthetic and ideological values.

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