

Graffiti, Migrant Women, Intersectionality: Artistic Experiences in Portugal

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ABSTRACT

The latest world events have impacted the socioeconomic and artistic life of migrants (pandemic, wars and climate change). The feminization of migration has caused a change in the profile of migrant women. These migrant women have been suffering countless experiences that denounce iniquities, some expressed through graffiti art. **Objective:** To analyze the artistic experiences, resistance to differences and oppression of gender, social class, race and nationality, experienced by a female graffiti artist migrant in the context of COVID-19 in Portugal. **Method:** Study carried out through action research, netnography and oral history, in dialogue with some concepts: Coloniality, Decoloniality, Intersectionality, Migration, Art. **Results:** The artist's individual work is present on the walls of Lisbon, portraying peoples in diasporas in different contexts, through aesthetics that reveal Angolan matrices, gender oppression, social class, race and nationality; The artist's collective work has interfaces with social, political and cultural dimensions; During the pandemic, the artist reinvented herself to survive. **Conclusion:** The artist's work is inserted in the globalized world, where nationality has no borders, bringing to light the colonial discourse that hierarchizes society in race, gender and nationality, reverberating power relations, oppression, intersectionality in an aesthetic and political way.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Migration, Art, Decoloniality, Graffiti.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Time, like the world, has two hemispheres: one superior and visible, which is the past, the other inferior and invisible, which is the future. In the middle of one and the other hemisphere are the horizons of time, which are these instances of the present that we are living, where the past ends and the future begins"[1].

From this perspective, the emergence of ideas, models, arrangements and ideologies are transversalized by the intentions already introjected in human relationships that are outlined in the collective and/or individual imagination. In these paths we find different approaches of meanings in relation to the past, present and future, where the past ends up dissolved in the embodiment of worldviews and life conducts of Communities/States/Countries[2].

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In dialogue with Vieira [2], we can infer that the past materializes in the flow of the individual and the collective through symbols, concepts, memories and imagination, shaping worldviews and modeling life behaviors, through the concerns of the present, in a movement of displacement and interruption of the status quo. Memory declines in the present and is the impulse of action for the future [3].

Following this line of thought, we begin to reflect on the influence of the past, specifically Portuguese colonization, and we enter into the discussion around the decoloniality process and its intersectionality, within the scope of the migration of women and the graffiti art carried out by these women. In this sense, we adopt the perspective of decoloniality, as a theoretical framework that allows understanding the impacts of coloniality on the present issue.

Colonial conflicts, coloniality, decoloniality are theoretical concepts that express the dynamics of social relations established in the globalized capitalist, patriarchal society marked by political, social and cultural disputes. Disputes that have conservatism on the one hand, which maintains the legacy of colonial power and, on the other hand, progressive, decolonial forces [4]. Coloniality means the continuity of the colonial power structure, based on racialization, Eurocentrism and the hegemony of the nation-state. For Santos [4], colonialism refers to the mode of domination anchored in the denial of recognition of the humanity of given populations, considered subhuman for ethno-racial reasons and therefore treated as disposable, such as migrants, women, and black people.

Ballestrin [5] analyzes that the spread of colonial thought is linked to a matrix that is expressed essentially in dominant relations of "power, knowledge and being", Colonialism, in addition to all known dominations, was also an epistemological domination, an extremely unequal relationship of knowledge-power that led to the suppression of many forms of knowledge specific to colonized peoples and nations, relegating other types of knowledge to a space of subalternity [6].

The forms of resistance, which we will call Decolonial, are paths of continuous struggle in which we can identify, make visible and favor 'places' of exteriority and alternative constructions [7]. Decoloniality is a movement capable of provoking a position –

“a posture and continuous attitude – of transgressing, intervening, insurging and influencing” [7]. This struggle seeks to change the status quo of an unequal society, class, race, gender and ethnic oppression produced by the colonial process.

Amaral [8] corroborates Walsh's [7] view when he states that migrant women transgress and intervene to break the dominant epistemologies that are expressed through oppression, restrictions and denial of access.

For Quijano [9], *“colonial domination is perpetuated through coloniality, even after the end of the colonial system, in an indirect way”*.

The duality between colonialism and decoloniality is historically present in societies. Manifestations may change at each historical moment, but their bases are social, cultural, political and economic. As for example, in the view of Santos [10], the ecology of knowledge recognizes an epistemological multiplicity, allowing knowledge to intersect, and recognizing the existence of multiple versions.

Another broader conceptual view of colonialism can be found in the writings of Lugones [11], who built a path of investigation and understanding of gender coloniality in an intersectional way, articulating race, social class, gender and sexuality. For this author, decolonizing gender is necessarily a praxis based on the critique of racialized, colonial and heterosexualized capitalist gender oppression.

Therefore, the way migrant women experience migration is different given their singularities, black, African, Brazilian, Central American and poor women face difficulties in their daily lives, work and survival, facing racism, xenophobia and other oppressions.

Crenshaw [12] corroborates this view by stating that women are subject to discrimination based on gender, class, race, color, ethnicity, religion, nationality, although, for the author, these are *“differences that make the difference”* and that can be together, and women will experience discrimination and oppression simultaneously. In addition, she also points out that the intersections contribute to increasing the vulnerability of different groups of women. Thus, we understand that intersectionality is an important concept for reflecting on the issue of migrant women.

“[...] 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 [12].”

Oppressions have their origins and continuity in societies of the global economy, with their triple dimension *“power, knowledge and being [13]”*, which promotes processes of social exclusion of men and women, reaching gigantic proportions [14]. These oppressions become more profound in the midst of migration, which presents itself in a constant and non-linear historical movement, with varied characteristics and origins.

According to the United Nations Organization [15], there has been a significant increase in migration in recent years, despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic, caused by SARS-CoV-2, with the closure of borders in many countries. This pandemic situation has led to greater vulnerability of migrants, especially

women, refugees and asylum seekers, caused both by the pandemic itself and by violations of the 2005 International Health Regulations and by the violation of the right to migration enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Migrants, especially women, experienced extremely harsh socioeconomic conditions during the pandemic, having to live in unhealthy conditions, in overcrowded spaces and without adequate hygiene, situations that violated the guidelines of the World Health Organization. Also, these women had to face several barriers during the pandemic, such as: difficult access to health, education, housing and employment; the lack of mandatory documentation; lack of adequate information about programs and public policies; and digital exclusion [16-19]. In addition, migrant women suffer intensely from xenophobia, all types of violence (physical, mental, sexual, political, institutional, etc.), oppression based on gender, race, nationality and social class [19-22].

The arts, which play a fundamental role in the processes of resistance and struggle against oppression resulting from historically established coloniality, was one of the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic period. Even so, the art of graffiti managed to impose itself in the period of social isolation and transgressed the norms in order to carry out the reappropriation and re-signification of urban spaces in the period of the pandemic. The existence of a profusion of transgressive expressions in graffiti can be observed in the landscapes at the time of the pandemic, both on surfaces and underground in large cities, representing the symbolic universe of the “silenced” (socially excluded groups) who were able to evoke the dissonant and peripheral voices [23].

Based on these theoretical assumptions, the movements that influenced the life of a migrant woman, graffiti artist, Angolan/Portuguese, were analyzed in the migratory, artistic, gender, nationality, social class and COVID-19 pandemic context in Portugal.

2. METHODS

This is a research with a qualitative approach, with a mixed method that includes: Action research; Netnography; and Oral History, which aims to understand the experiences and resistances of the research subject (a female migrant graffiti artist who lives in Portugal).

Action research is characterized as a type of engaged participant research, linking research to action/practice, developing knowledge, and enabling a deep understanding of the subjects involved [24]. For Baldissera [25], action research is engaged, considering the parties involved in the investigation. With this method, it was possible to deepen the subjectivity of the research subject, in a reciprocal process of subjective and collective exchanges with the main researcher.

Netnography is a research method that uses different forms of communication mediated by computational technologies as a data source for the understanding and ethnographic representation of cultural, digital and communal phenomena [26]. With Netnography, it was possible to follow the cultural artistic production of the research subject in digital communities (Instagram and Facebook).

Oral History is a method that allows interviews to be seen as living memories and testimonies that mirror certain representations and experiences [27]. This method made it possible to deepen the relations between the past and the present of the subject of this research.

This research was developed in 02 Stages: **First Stage:** It was characterized as an exploratory field research and netnography. A mapping was carried out to identify female migrant graffiti artists in Lisbon/Portugal. In this process, some graffiti artists were identified in an active search on social networks (Instagram and Facebook). After identification, a process of articulation with these women was carried out, in order to select the research subject. Furthermore, this stage was aimed at articulating the networks of the Graffiti cultural scene, with the aim of identifying and approaching key informants who could indicate possible female migrant graffiti artists living in Lisbon. With the mapping from the field and netnography in hand, contacts were made with key informants who live in Lisbon/Portugal. Initial virtual and face-to-face contacts were then made with the research subject, presentation of the research and subsequent meetings scheduled for data collection. **Second Stage:** It was characterized as an Action Research and Oral History. This stage was intended to carry out artistic and cultural experiences, as well as face-to-face interviews, informal conversations and participant observation. In the process of monitoring the artist's experiences, the following questions were raised: (i) History, Memoirs, Narratives; (ii) Daily life in times of COVID-19; (iii) Artistic Expressions and Cultural Matrices; (iv) Gender, Race, Social Class, Nationality Oppressions; (v) Resistance Processes and their Relationships with Intersectionality and Activisms.

In this perspective, we sought to answer the following research question: How does a female migrant graffiti artist of Angolan origin live, express and resist gender, social class, race and nationality oppression in Portugal?

Inclusion criteria

The research subject was selected based on the following inclusion criteria: Gender Female, Migrant, Graffiti Artist, and living in Lisbon/Portugal.

Data analysis

The data were worked through Bardin's content analysis [28] and the analytical dimensions proposed by Vogel & colleagues [29], seeking to understand the artist's experience and her aesthetic expressions and cultural matrices, and oppressions of gender, race, social class and nationality. For this purpose, the following provocative words were used: a) where; b) when; c) who; d) what; e) how.

For the analysis and counting of words, the WordArt program was used, which made it possible to identify the frequency of the words that most appeared in the analyzed materials. We group the analysis of the material and participant observation into three categories, which will be presented in detail in the results and discussion. **Category 01) The Research Subject in Its Essence.** In this Category, the life course of the research subject is presented. **Category 02) Woman; Migration and COVID-19: Graffiti in Context.** In this Category, the following dimensions were identified: Woman, Migration, Graffiti, Feminization, COVID-19, Resistance and Decoloniality. **Category 03) - Life Experiences: Daily Life and Reinventing Life.** In this Category, the following dimensions were identified: Oppressions of gender,

social class, race and nationality, experienced by the graffiti artist and migrant in the context of COVID-19 in Portugal, and its relations with intersectionality, graffiti and resistance.

Ethical aspects

This project is part of a postdoctoral research linked to the Institute of Sociology of the University of Porto and complied with all the ethical principles contained in the Declaration of Helsinki.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Category 01 - Research Subject in Its Essence

Moami, the research subject, is an intuitive artist and has African and artistic ancestry. She reports that from a very early age she brings with her childhood memories, when at 05 years old, she drew non-stop, with pens borrowed from her uncle who was an artist, in her hiding place, under the table in her house in Angola.

This profoundly marked her art, life experience, personality and identity. Her childhood and early adolescence were marked by her dedication to drawing alone and in silence, in Angolan spaces of creation "... I've always drawn, since I understood myself as a person. I have memories from that time as a child and I never stopped"

Moami Stélia Zamora is a 39-year-old black migrant woman, graffiti artist, whose roots and ancestry are Angolan. She migrated to Portugal at the age of 13 in 1997, along with her brothers to study, as her father was already in Lisbon working in civil construction.

In 2004, she began her graffiti experience in Portugal and commented that the only thing she had not experienced in Angola was graffiti, painting buildings and using a spray can as her main tool.

"When I started with graffiti in Portugal, I just continued the art I was already doing by drawing, because the only thing I still didn't do was paint the walls. Got the spray can, come on, friends. Spray painting has a different knowledge and skill".

The initiation of street painting implies the construction of the tag, which will be the writer's identity in the world of graffiti. Every artist creates "your street name" which is your tag, made up of a set of letters, usually in cursive, handwritten style, made with spray or markers. A tag's typography can vary, be far, oblique, straight, or pixels, and have various dimensions. This creation is not formal or secondary, but has a central dimension, as it will be how they will be recognized by their peers [30].

Designing a tag seems like a simple process, but it has a symbolic value and important learning, as it is the key to entering the Graffiti subculture. When the artist constructs his tag, he creates his artistic identity, before himself and his fellow members of the subculture. He becomes known through his tag and it is the duty of the graffiti artist to preserve, defend and honor his tag [31].

The tag represents a coded form of identification, it is a collection of letters, whose composition brings a symbolic meaning. For Campos [31], the process of improving the aesthetic language makes the tag start to be constructed in a more elaborate and complex way, with larger dimensions, with high plastic and chromatic sophistication. The tag chosen by the research subject

was “Moami”. According to the artist's own testimony, this name has several meanings according to the origin and culture of the people, for example: In Angola it means (My Heart), in Hawaii (Shadows of the Waters) and in Japan (Tricot). The tag, in general, evokes a verbal, imaginary meaning of the diversity of peoples and cultures, and gives an identity to its creator. Even if it's only known by a small number of people.

Campos [31] when defining graffiti, rescues that it is the letters on the walls, it is the calligraphy, it is seeing the written scenes, it is seeing the tags. That is, graffiti is the inscriptions in the city space: walls, benches, walls, etc. The tag is the *“verbal and iconic lexicon of graffiti culture [31].”*

Since Moami started graffiti, she never stopped. Initially, she dedicated herself to the letter and for that she developed the ability to build letters with technical and aesthetic quality and later began to multiply them in the city. The letter is nothing more than the enlarged tag.

The artist's initial learning of graffiti was collective, in groups of boys, at first close to the graffiti artist's residence, in a territorial dimension to later expand to the entire city. The graffiti groups that Moami participated in exchanged knowledge about the *“street experience”* [32], which was practical knowledge of those who paint on the street, circulate in the city, fleeing repression, and also transmit technical and aesthetic knowledge.

Rahn [33] speaks of the do-it-yourself character as a set of knowledge constituted in experience, in everyday life, and in exchange with peers. These groups construct the subculture's identity, values, and ethics. These groups of exchanges and construction of knowledge were formed by male graffiti artists, and the artist believes that the speed she acquired to develop her art is due to that time, *“For a long time I only painted with men. They pull more from me in the sense that they do it fast and I have to keep up with them quickly.”*

During the first years of her life as a graffiti artist, she dedicated herself to lettering, which requires a lot of technique and a lot of dedication *“And I wanted to master the lyrics. I really wanted to master the lyrics.”*

Due to her passion for drawing, for shapes, and stimulated by her graffiti companions, Moami moved towards graffiti more connected to characters *“I started trying to give more time to the characters and not the lyrics.”* The characters in the artist's work vary between women and animals, they are symbolic expressing emotions and the artist's subjectivity.

“What my mother taught me, and what my father taught me, I'm always representing in drawing. My characters and all the work I've been developing over the years is everything I am, I feel, I think, I desire, which is the mixture of various influences from Angola, Migration and the life I have here.”

Moami reports that her characters are always looking at reality and questioning it, expressing diasporas, violent thoughts and desires that are represented by shapes, colors, textures and the dissonances between the dimensions of wanting and the ability to make them real during the creative process *“My characters are a sign of resilience, persistence. It's been so many years doing this. Always willing to question the human being, to show inequalities.”* In her work, she uses characters: panda, moamis,

little monsters, stars, spherical shapes of different sizes and colors, brightness, shadows, building movements and luminosities. Moami has a true passion for graffiti and is aware of its importance in building her identity *“It is my essence. I like to paint, it's a love, it's a passion”*

Category 02 - Woman; Migration and COVID-19: Graffiti in Context.

Since 2020, we have been experiencing a period of global crisis, due to the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and its multiple variants, affecting all dimensions of social, economic, political, cultural and artistic life worldwide [34].

With the pandemic, social inequalities became even more visible, expressing themselves in differences in access to public policies related to various sectors, such as: health, work, education, art, housing, among others. These disparities were more visible when comparing the countries of the North and the South, which showed profound differences in access to social and economic benefits [35]. The COVID-19 pandemic has disorganized and disrupted societies globally, deepening the social and structural inequities of the contemporary world.

It is also undoubted that the life-death dichotomy has become part of everyday life as human concerns. These human concerns seem to have induced the search for subjective and/or collective expressions and overcoming by many means. In this sense, the arts emerge as alternatives for disengagement and a path of expression and subversion, and at the same time it presents itself as a form of resilience and hope, where subjective and collective issues begin to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the subject.

This context is characterized by restrictions on holding face-to-face cultural and artistic events (i.e. theatrical shows, shows, concerts, cinemas, exhibitions), as well as the closing of sociability spaces in urban settings, whether bars, cafes, parks, cultural centers and places traditionally occupied by different forms of expression in the artistic sector. This situation led to the transfer of the arts to the virtual universe, which until then was predominantly face-to-face [36]. The virtual universe has become the meeting place for people, where silence, inert bodies and moving minds meet *“Everything was silent. I like to enjoy my silence, but not this COVID - 19.”*

As a result, contemporary cities have moved from scenarios of pulsating spectacles of human relationships and interactions, *“to an empty context, absent of forms of expression of social life”* [36].

Portugal, for example, had its urban landscape completely modified in 2020, due to the lockdown imposed by the pandemic. Graffiti was one of the artistic forms of expression that most represented this moment, with a rupture of aesthetic concepts on walls, viaducts, subways, etc. The graffiti in these spaces began to narrate the pandemic through images that represented the use of masks, the representation of the virus, health professionals who appear as silent heroes, among others.

As an example, the mural in honor of health professionals, which was painted by Vhils, graffiti artists from Portugal. In this way, we can say that since the beginning of the pandemic, graffiti has been present in the real world of urban spaces. These graffiti chanted screams, messages, health care guidelines, somehow bringing the pulse of life in cities, reaffirming the centrality of

the image in contemporary societies and the aestheticization of everyday life.

Thus, we can infer that graffiti can be a form of activism, characterizing itself as an active and interdisciplinary art [37], where artistic action is presented in everyday life in a dynamic and changeable way. Also, we can consider that the history of graffiti is rooted in processes of resistance, subversion and contestation [38], and this art represents a social intervention, where its narratives can trigger new processes, relationships, evocations and production of dynamics and knowledge in different societies [38]. Graffiti has a transgressive character by nature and is marginalized par excellence, taking into account there are questions around graffiti and activism.

This space of transgression is also a space of order and integration. It is built as a sociability network centered not only on looking at the social, but also on the way of doing with its norms, aesthetic and bodily ethics. *"Unauthorized graffiti is much more exciting, it makes the adrenaline go through the roof, and you don't know what could happen."*

"I do both. When they pay me to do graffiti, I do it. When they don't pay me to do it, I do it too. Because making graffiti is my essence."

Therefore, it is important to rescue the historicity of graffiti, which has always revealed ways of being in cities, as ways of occupying urban space. Campos [39] corroborates this view, when he states that graffiti mobilizes different resources or capital so that it can foster a multiplicity of actions that, in turn, are endowed with a strong collective, ideological and political character.

When we talk about graffiti, one aspect to be considered is the participation rate of women, which is considered very low, representing only 8% in relation to men [40]. This statement refers to the lines of the research subject.

"Women have always been marginalized in graffiti... There are few women still painting yet." They were seen as an accessory and a sexual object... after so much struggle that has changed, I think that today men see us more as artists..."

In the same context, Colon [41] states that the participation of women in graffiti has been a history of resistance and struggle against power relations and inequality between genders. The research subject reaffirms this maxim *"In my graffiti pieces, several were spray-painted with sexist and prejudiced phrases."*

We can also make a parallel between graffiti and Hip-Hop, as the participation of women in graffiti is marked by the struggle and resistance against the sexist values of the Hip-Hop subculture, which has as one of its characteristics being a conventional, patriarchal, binary culture, where cisgender men and boys build and affirm their masculine identities and women are seen as accessories and sexual symbols [42], the result of a colonial, patriarchal and sexist society [43-45]. The subject of the research also dialogues with this view.

"To overcome machismo: I dominate the spray can because of this my struggle has been to show these people that I am very good at writing, I am very good at graffiti."

In this context, we can say that the multiple oppressions of gender, race and nationality are part of the lives of women graffiti artists. This becomes more evident when these women are black and migrant. In graffiti, due to its roots in patriarchy, women face exclusion, devaluation, objectification, tokenization, hypersexuality of their bodies. Corrêa & Corrêa [46] describe that the urban art of several women is marked by challenges during its construction, as the graffiti artists go through processes of gender and racial oppression.

Kilomba [34] argues that the colonality of power submits the dominated/colonized to a situation of inferiority that influences and/or determines racism and xenophobia. This context, reaffirmed in the research subject's speech.

"Portugal since the beginning of the colonial period, the maritime expansion, the age of discoveries - As if it were possible to discover a continent where millions of people live - Since that period the power relations between Europe and Africa are profoundly unequal, it is imposed Africans a place of subordination and inferiority". This situation, experienced by the research subject "I've already been told - Go to your black land."

Xenophobia is "aversion to foreigners", and there is no need for any other element of color, language, or specification as to the country of origin for its characterization. However, a simple observation of the subject is enough to realize that the offenses against foreigners, in their great majority, are perpetrated against black immigrants [47]. The research subject has also seen himself in a situation of nationality oppression, expressed in the following lines:

"Whoever wrote history didn't write everything. We have to know that a third of humanity is Africa and we have to see it like this.... the Portuguese-speaking colonizers behave as if they had discovered us."

In this sense, it was possible to verify the oppression of gender, race and nationality, experienced by the research subject. This, without a shadow of a doubt, is reflected in the processes of migration, integration and colonality of peoples, especially in the context of female migration, as migrant women are considered by dominant cultures to be hierarchically inferior.

"Because I know I'm black and I'm a woman and I'm a migrant. The European people think that because I'm black and Angolan, I don't know anything, I don't have intelligence, and I'm not a graffiti artist."

In Portugal, studies show that migration is becoming more feminized [48], with language, gender, race and nationality barriers [49,50]. According to Quijano [51] and Grosfoguel [52], gender inequalities in the context of migration are made invisible, but even so, women stand out for the process of resistance and reinvention of themselves and of life. They create new forms of social relations, permeated by imagery, artistic and technological languages and are globally connected in networks transversalized by diverse artistic activities and expressions, many of them revealed in graffiti, performances, music, literature, urban occupations, among others, present in numerous countries [51,52].

The pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 brought about significant changes in the work of migrants living in Portugal, since social

distancing measures made it impossible to carry out work activities in person. As an example of this context, the research subject had her plans, projects and dreams limited by the pandemic, but she advanced in the construction of a virtual path, developed her brand with products that she started to sell, and held graffiti workshops to survive. She reports that during the pandemic, the in-person graffiti collective work was on standby, in addition, she had to reinvent herself. As a strategy, she sent emails to some companies during the period of social isolation, proposing the incorporation of her designs in masks, T-shirts, sneakers, etc., obtaining a positive return. In the periods between lockdowns, even though she was afraid of being contaminated by SARS-CoV-2, she managed to work in a food factory.

"In a minute they answered me - Look, we like your work and we're going to get in touch with you so we can start working, okay? [...] And since then we have been working together."

"At the beginning of the pandemic, I was isolated with my sister and worked remotely. When it was possible I went to work in a food factory. - I worked packing food; [...], helping the cook. I was afraid, so I said that "we would be crowned", we will be crowned in the sense that everyone will get COVID-19."

Although many migrant women during the pandemic have access barriers to public policies for coping with the pandemic and vaccine coverage, the subject of research did not experience these situations. "I took all the vaccines and when necessary I went to the medical service."

Category 03 - Life Experiences: Daily Life and Reinventing Life.

The subject of the research is characterized by being a woman, black, migrant and graffiti artist. Her daily life is all about her passion for graffiti. Every week she takes a day off to graffiti, expressing her art on buildings in Lisbon, Lourds, Sintra. When the artist finds herself unable to carry out her graffiti, she experiences anguish, stress and nervousness, as graffiti is a basic need for her. It's a basic need *"I like it, it's love, it's a passion and I don't want to give up graffiti."*

She has her creative experience free, but sometimes she plans, pre-idealizes what she will graffiti. To ensure the realization of the graffiti, she does other types of work, since the materials are very expensive and what she earns with her art is not enough to pay for her graffiti. It is possible to observe in her graffiti art the predominance of strong colors and her daily experiences and her movement as a woman artist, in a space conquered and of belonging, *"I feel at home, in this space that is my skin... and I live in it."* Her drawings are quite varied, such as panda images, balls and lines that have significant meanings and symbols and her love of graffiti (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Drawing by the artist on the walls of Lisbon.

The "panda" is one of her graffiti characters that came up with the other doll characters, and moana. However, the panda

assumed a symbolic importance in the artist's work. Everything about Panda is symbolic in Chinese tradition and culture. It symbolizes fragility, extinction, the fragile land, the rupture with ancestors, the family rupture, with a solitary characteristic, *"I'm just a Panda. The figure is me, I am a panda. Like it or not, I'm a panda. I am light, but I can also get angry."*

In this context, we can suggest that the figure of the Panda, symbolically, represents the research subject's life process, with all the structural dimensions of power rooted in her daily life. Below is a representation of the woman with the Panda (Fig. 2).

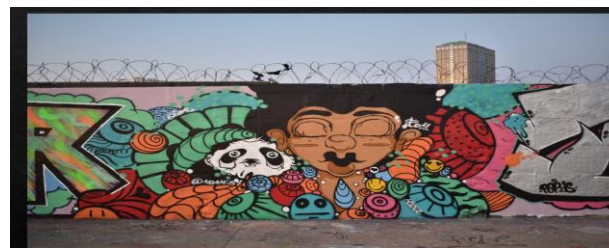


Fig. 2: Representation of Women with a panda

The artist reports that, for more than 20 years, her characters have been materializing into symbols of resilience and persistence that are present in the murals in the form of women and animals, representing her personal symbol of intimacy and historicity. Her speech also reflects her context as a woman, black and migrant and a past and present of imperialist, colonizing, xenophobic and oppressive practices, which need liberation. Kumar & Kamble [53] point out that graffiti, poetry and poetic practice provide the communicative platform to express oneself against injustices and oppressive practices. Furthermore, for these authors, graffiti represents collective experiences that generate empathy and resistance movements.

The graffiti artist, like most graffiti artists, projects her emotions and desire for her art to be recognized on graffiti. *"I really want my art to be really known, much better known than it is now"*. It was observed that the graffiti artist brings a duality in her personality, if on the one hand, she is considered introverted and of few words, on the other hand, she shows herself as an empowered, self-confident, determined and self-assured person, as can be seen in the following speech.

"Empowerment for me is showing that I do and can do my things. No one pays my debts or my bills. That to me is empowerment."

The artist brings in her art and speeches a process of decoloniality and intersectionality, detaching himself from a logic of a single possible world, and interacting with her totality of being: woman, graffiti artist migrant, black, and African origin.

"I have already heard the following phrase - Go to your Land. I am already in my land, I pay taxes here and as long as I pay my taxes in Portugal or in another European country, it is my land."

With regard to the artist's collective experiences, it was observed that in her daily practices, her graffiti is predominantly carried out individually. But it also demonstrates the form of collective actions, through workshops with children, migrants and their families, aimed at promoting the empowerment of the target public.

“To make them understand the word empowerment [...], there are many women who do not know what it means and my intention is exactly this, to teach children the word empowerment so that they can later teach their adult mothers.”

The first participation in artistic life of the subject of research was in a community project offered to children, as she describes.

“The idea of the project was that the teacher who had an art would teach that art to the children. My art is painting, so I started to teach my art to children and I did it for a long time for free. As a way of educating adults through children.”

This project led the graffiti artist to carry out other social inclusion projects, which later opened the doors for her art in Portugal. From this experience, her art gains recognition beyond the walls of Lisbon. For example, her exhibitions were held in: New York; Guatemala; Seville; and Mexico.

4. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the transfer of the arts to the virtual universe, which until then was predominantly face-to-face. This virtual universe has become a meeting place for people, a meeting place for silence, inert bodies and moving minds, and the contemporary cities have gone from scenarios of pulsating spectacles of human relationships and interactions to an empty context.

Graffiti artists transgressed the COVID-19 barriers of social isolation, and turned graffiti art into one of the artistic forms of expression that most represented this moment of the pandemic, breaking the aesthetic concepts on walls, viaducts and subways, in Lisbon.

In this study, it was observed that the research subject reinvented herself during the pandemic. In addition to seeking alternatives to finance her livelihood, she also expanded the use of her art. The research subject's life context is surrounded by questions and situations that are very connected with their dimensions and/or intersectionality of gender, race, nationality and social class. All these intersectionality/dimensions are reflected in her art, symbolizing peoples in diasporas in different contexts.

The duality of her praxis, situated in the segmentation between his individual and collective activities, does not detract from the centrality of her art as a process of resistance and struggle against all colonial oppressions. It only expresses its own way of acting in the world, very typical of contemporary times.

Despite this, his art brings to light the denunciation against the colonial discourse that hierarchizes society in terms of race, gender and nationality, reverberating the relations of power and oppression. The artist's graffiti represents the overcoming and transgression of the status quo, aligned with the perspective of life that is inserted in the context of a globalized world, where nationality has no borders.

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