

THE CITY OF STREET ART / THE STUNNING STREET ART OF BUENOS AIRES

ONE WALL, PREFERABLY LARGE, DOES NOTHING IF IN THE EXTREME SUBURBS OR IN AN ELEGANT RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD, TO UNLEASH THE CREATIVE FLAIR OF GREAT STREET ARTISTS. THIS IS WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING FOR YEARS NOW IN BUENOS AIRES WHICH, DESPITE THREE DEVASTATING ECONOMIC CRISES, HAS NOT LOST ITS PRIMACY AS THE SOUTH AMERICAN CAPITAL OF STREET ART.

Street art in Buenos Aires began with paid political propaganda in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, it has developed as a reaction to politics and social and economic issues, rather than as a support. Today artists such as Jaz, Alfredo Segatori, BA Paste-Up and BLU respond to the controversy with bold public statements. As you walk, many streets are charged with energy, injustice and passion; but just as many are full of humor and artistic flowering. Permissive laws and a culture that venerates art have led Buenos Aires to be one of the leading cities in the world for street art. Where some cities require municipal permits and bureaucratic steps to skip, here in BA the artist typically only needs permission from the building owner or owners association, something that is often given with enthusiasm.

Buenos Aires, the capital and largest city of Argentina, is an incredibly angular metropolis that looks a bit like Europe with a Latin American twist. Local and international street performers are drawn to Buenos Aires due to its abundance of abandoned buildings and blank walls, making the canvases perfect for inspiring murals.

What makes the city even more attractive to street artists is that there are hardly any restrictions on where they can paint in the city. You don't need to get permission from local authorities and all you need is the owner's consent. In recent years, Buenos Aires has developed a reputation for being a capital for graffiti and street art and is one of the best cities in the world to see huge murals painted on the walls of its buildings and homes. In 2014 Buenos Aires Street Art partnered with Google Cultural Institute, which aims to document the world's street art and graffiti in a virtual library.

The Google Street Art Project was launched in Buenos Aires and Paris last year. It features over 270 images of Buenos Aires, created by over 130 emerging and famous artists from around the world. It is the freedom that artists have to paint

what they want, where they like it that makes Buenos Aires a unique and exciting destination for large-scale murals.

Alongside this openness of painting platforms, artists are also free to choose their subject, which is sometimes politically motivated. In 2011, for example, the Italian street artist Blu came to Buenos Aires and painted a mural of people with eyes covered in a continuous blindfold in the colors of the Argentine flag. However, politically charged works are less common than other light-hearted murals that often depict something from the lives of the artists who paint them.

During the Argentine military dictatorship, many buildings in what is now the Villa Urquiza and the Coghlan Art District were abandoned or demolished. Since 2007, the abandoned buildings of Villa Urquiza have become a haven for graffiti and street artists. The giant, colorful murals that cover the walls of neighborhoods like Villa Urquiza bring abandoned buildings back to life and transformed an urban desert with stunning outdoor art scenes. The murals have become a big draw for foreign tourists, and many photographers and fans of the medium travel to Buenos Aires from all over the world just to see its street art.

International street art festivals have helped put Buenos Aires on the map, cementing its place as one of the street art capitals of the world. Argentine street artist Martin Ron created his famous mural of a lifelike sea turtle exploding in a tube at the Meeting of Styles festival held in Buenos Aires in 2012.

Buenos Aires Street Art has organized and sponsored dozens of mural projects in Coghlan and Villa Urquiza where there are more than 50 murals by international and local street artists, which have helped transform these adjacent neighborhoods into the city's first urban art district.

Featured artists:

Jaz - Known for its larger than life zoo animals. Jaz uses a blend of cheap asphalt paint, gasoline, and emulsion as a nod to the restrictions artists felt during the 2001 economic woes.

Alfredo Segatori - An artist whose figurative work appears throughout the city, sometimes incorporating elements of sculpture, but always with an impressive scale.

BA Paste-Up - A group of six local artists, each with a unique style. Their work can be both comic and political.

Nicolas Romero Escalada - A Buenos Aires artist who openly criticizes current politics and social contexts, with colorful figurative murals.

Martín Ron - A local artist known for his photorealistic skills, which he blends with elements of the surreal.

QUARTERS

Coghlan

It is a tiny residential neighborhood north of Belgrano. So small, in fact, that many locals have not even heard of it and have grouped us in Belgrano. But despite being small, it's a great destination for Buenos Aires street art and there are plenty of things to do in Coghlan to make the trip worthwhile.

Hospital Pirovano: This public hospital on Avenida Monroe has beautiful murals on three of its facades (just not Monroe's). There were others recently that have been repainted, but many remain, my favorites are on Calle Roque Perez.

- Rhino by Ice at Estomba 3184 - A 3D mural of rhinos coming out of the wall. Just across the street is a painting of a beautiful African woman.
- Mural Jeo Daley by Primo in Estomba 3101 - A portrait of the jazz musician Jeo Daley.
- Yaguareté Mural in Nuñez 4035 - I love this mural of a jaguar on the wall of a garage on the corner of Nuñez and Estomba!

These are just a few examples of the Buenos Aires murals that you can find in Coghlan.

ROADS

Nuñez 4035 and the huge Jaguar mural here: the perfect introduction to the bold and fearless art of Buenos Aires.

Avenida Melián. At 2925 you will see El Marian's Siempre Verdadero mural, depicting a man and his dog.

Estomba: at 3184, see Ice's 3D rhino exploding from the wall and a delicately painted African woman in front; in 3101, Primo painted a portrait of Jeo Daley.

Villa Urquiza

Stop at the corner of Doctor Pedro Ignacio Rivera and Holmberg to see El Cuento de los Loros, a stunning mural by Martín Ron. The four-story mural features the face of local architect Clarindo Testa, parrots, Michelangelo's David, and an expressive portrait, all on a skateboard. On the corner of Pedro Ignacio Rivera y Holmber there is a huge mural. El Cuento de los Loros occupies the entire side of a 4-story apartment building. Martín Ron is the artist of this city government sponsored piece. The parrots were an afterthought, added later to appease the complaints of modest neighbors who had taken offense at the naked boy. A man's head with his tongue out was inspired by a photo of an artist's friend at a barbecue. The old man sitting on the skateboard on the right is Clorindo Testa, a well-known local architect. El Cuento de los Loros on the corner of Holmberg and Rivera. This strange flamingo is one of the many BA murals and street art in the small Coghlan neighborhood.

Palermo and Colegiales

Palermo is Buenos Aires' most radical-chic neighborhood and Colegiales is its modest neighbor. Start with the Plaza Matienzo. Here you will find murals by the likes of Jaz and Jim Vision, painted as part of the Meeting of Styles Festival in 2011. In Conesa, on Avenida Dorrega, there is the Mercado de las Pulgas. This block is known for its street art. In 1735, Campos Jesses painted a modern version of Frida Khalo. On the back wall you will find a piece from the Urban Mirrors series by Alfredo Segatori: a Cartonero who takes a cigarette break. Look for the stencil of artists who require more painting by Santiago Spirito; a popular theme after the 2001 economic crash.

Subsequently, the Calle Santa Rosa in Palermo Soho. A building here was taken over by BA Paste-Up. The Palermo Soho area is full of bizarre alleys. Check out the decorated bars of Pasaje Soria and Pasaje Russel in particular.

Further south to the Desarmadero Bar for a drink and a snack. Outside, Segatori carved a portrait on the wall with recycled garbage.

North of Palermo are the Bosques de Palermo. Under the flyover, Alfredo Segatori filled the white walls with murals of tango dancers, portraits of Carlos Gardel and

a man playing the bandoneon. Then, just to the south, in Recoleta, is the Centro Cultural Recoleta. The facade of this museum is repainted by a different artist on an almost monthly basis, in time with the temporary exhibitions.

Villa Crespo

Don't miss the portraits of Nicolas Romero Escalada, each with the characteristic color of the rainbow flowing from their eyes. At 982 Serrano, an Escalada mural depicts Karl Marx with nine kittens.

Almagro

Abasto Shopping Center. The Casas Fileteadas, each painted in a similar style, with flowers, swirling patterns and flags. On Pasaje Zelaya, dozens of Carlos Gardel.

San Telmo

Heading further south you will come to San Telmo. In Mexico at 257 you can see a piece of Cyzer lighting up an otherwise vandalized building. On Avenida Independencia, a mural here by BLU depicts a crowd of people with their eyes and mouths covered in the Argentine flag. A figure, believed to be president Cristina Fernández Kirchner, guides them.

La Boca

Usina dell'Arte. Home of the ColourBA 2016, this area is filled with impressive works of art. On the side of the Usina there is a two-story cowboy sleeping on a horse. The nearby overpass houses many other works of art. Then, south towards the Caminito, more works were produced during ColourBA by international artists. Stay one block, but look for the works of Ben Eine and Jaz.

Barracas

South of the city. In Calle Lanín, the artist Marino Santa María had his workshop. Santa María wanted to bring her works to the people, and so 35 of the houses here bring her painting or mosaic work.

A half-hour walk south along Vieytes will lead to El Regreso de Quinquela, one of the most important works of art in the city, and an impressive final stop. This is the largest mural in the world painted by a single artist. Segatori painted this

2,000 m2 mural in homage to artist Benito Quinquela Martín and the La Boca neighborhood he loved.

Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos A powerful insight into the history of the city's unrest, this additional stop shows just how important street art can be in addressing social issues. Look for the wheat pasta collages of the faces of those who disappeared during the dictatorship of the 70s and 80s, Milu Correch's barcode girl on the entrance gate and the Nazza Stencil mural with the Sons logo and of the Daughters for identity and justice against oblivion and silence.

Calle Lanín, Barracas

Thanks to its resident artist, Marino Santa María, Calle Lanín in Barracas (the neighborhood bordering La Boca to the south) is entirely covered in a rainbow of mosaics. Santa María resides and runs her workshop in Lanín 33. With the help of her neighbors, the city government, the Buenos Aires Museum of Fine Arts and UNESCO, there are now over 35 painted and mosaic houses on Calle Lanín . His idea was to bring art to people, rather than hiding it in a museum.

El Regreso De Quinquela, the longest mural in the world by an artist, Barracas

Benito Quinquela Martín is a revered Porteño painter. Living from 1890 to 1977, he is famous for his representations of everyday life, mainly of the colorful port district of La Boca. Alfredo 'El Pelado' Segatori painted this 2,000 square meter mural in Barracas, bordering Quinquelas' beloved La Boca. It extends over various buildings, paying homage to Quinquela with a large portrait of the artist, images of La Boca and its people. El Regreso de Quinquela stretches across the entire facade of this building before turning the corner and continuing along various buildings. Even more scenes of daily life typical of La Boca are part of El Regreso de Quinquela. This old house in La Boca covered in blue skies and a rainbow is a must-see piece of Buenos Aires street art. It is located just two blocks from Usina del Arte.

La Boca And L'Usina Del Arte

Everyone has heard of the Caminito. This colorful open-air museum is a sight for all who visit it. It is even on the cover of almost every Buenos Aires guide. Take your time to wander the blocks surrounding the Caminito and you'll find plenty of Buenos Aires street art. Just make sure you don't stray too far. But there is actually more to La Boca than the Caminito. The blocks surrounding this museum

(and the stunning historic building) are filled with some of the best street art in Buenos Aires.

Fileteado & Gardel, Almagro

There are a number of colorful murals in the busy central district of Almagro and especially in the blocks surrounding the Abasto shopping center. In the neighborhood that the famous tango singer Carlos Gardel called home are the casas fileteadas. Their facades are completely covered in this Porteño style of painting with all the characteristic flowers, flags and scrolls that come with it. Around the corner of Pasaje Zelaya are more portraits of Gardel than you can count. Look how many you find. My favorite is painted on the door of a warehouse one block from the casas fileteadas. My favorite of the many Carlos Gardel murals in Almagro.

Recoleta Cultural Center

In Junín 1930, just steps from the famous Recoleta Cemetery, this cultural center hosts rotating exhibits featuring modern art, murals, interactive children's exhibits, and more. The most interesting part of the cultural center, however, is the facade. In August 2019, the historic building was covered from head to toe by a pop culture mural that looked perfectly out of place in such a classic building. Approximately every month it is renewed with a new mural that accompanies each new exhibition. It was certainly met with criticism from those who would prefer the classic structure to be respected with a classic coat of paint. Personally, I love it.

Palermo Tango Murals

Just at the corner of the Bosques de Palermo parks, under the bridges that pass over Avenida Libertador (corner with Avenida Bullrich) are a series of large tango-themed murals. They are painted by Alfredo Segatori. Find the legs of tango dancers in the middle of the dance, a man playing a bandoneon (iconic tango instrument similar in appearance to an accordion) and portraits of Carlos Gardel.

Combine these murals with lunch or a cocktail in the restaurants set up in the arches under the train tracks in Arcos de Rosedal. The Palermo tango murals under the railway bridges are located just around the corner from the famous Bosques de Palermo park.

The Pasajes Of Palermo Soho

I recommend wandering aimlessly around Palermo Soho: the alleys (or pasajes) of Palermo Soho are practically littered with great graffiti and Buenos Aires street art. Palermo Soho is a trendy and very young district. It is full of bars, restaurants, boutiques and outdoor cafes. It comes alive on weekends as locals indulge in the shops and with a beer or two in the sun. Some of the coolest graffiti in Buenos Aires can be found right in the alleys or pasajes of Palermo Soho. Pasaje Soria and Pasaje Russel are two of the coolest alleys in Palermo and the most popular.

Villa Crespo

From Palermo Soho cross Avenida Cordoba into Villa Crespo. This residential neighborhood is home to some of the finest street art Buenos Aires has to offer. On the streets near Cordoba you can find many murals without much effort. All my favorite pieces of Villa Crespo street art are by the same artist, Nicolas Romero Escalada, or @eversiempre. One of his most famous murals is of Karl Marx with 9 kittens in Serrano 982

Frida & Mercado De Las Pulgas, Colegiales

Avenida Dorrego 1735: Another must-see mural is this two-story Frida Kahlo on the border of Palermo Hollywood and Colegiales, at Dorrego 1735. Best to visit early in the morning to try and get a photo with no cars or passersby in your way.

Just across the street a block from Frida is the Mercado de las Pulgas (flea market). The outside of the market is covered in cool murals and graffiti. Frida Kahlo in Dorrego 1735 in Colegiales.

Barrio Chino, Belgrano

Buenos Aires's Chinatown may be small, but its four blocks are home to great street art. Barrio Chino is located in the northern district of Belgrano. On Juramento Avenue in front of the large gate at the entrance, there are some large murals in the background that make for a great photo! To top it off, the next few blocks have a number of murals to look out for including a shop covered in a dragon and a huge peacock. I love this mural seen below from below, from the gate.