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Talking walls and figurative polyphony in Buenos Aires

In Buenos Aires, many buildings powerfully assert their individual identity by showing façades with vividly decorations, almost like an antidote to the monotony of urban layout, based on the repetition *ad libitum*, in the vast expanse of the city, of the urban grid, composed of square blocks.

Some of these facades, in particular those ascribable to the *Art Nouveau* style, show a drawing, already belonging to the original imprinting of the building, with an imaginative plant composition.

Instead, in most cases, the decoration of the facade intervenes at a time subsequent and seems juxtaposed, as a dialectical element, with the architecture of the fronts, often canonically entrusted to the use of classical orders.

The language adopted by these figurations can be traced back to two distinct iconographic traditions: the muralist one, widespread throughout Latin America, and that of the *fileteado porteño*, a decorative style typi-

cal from Buenos Aires, recognized since 2015 as Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

In its double declination – with own peculiar techniques, graphic codes and semantic values - the figurative decoration of the building fronts has become so closely part of the urban landscape of Buenos Aires as to have been adopted as main instrument for the regeneration of some urban parts, as, for example, the case of redesigning the façades of calle Lanín, collectively drawn by the inhabitants under the coordination of the artist Marino Santa María, and the transformation of calle Jean Jaurès into *Paseo del Fileteado*, by the most famous *fileteadores* masters.

Keywords:
Buenos Aires; Street Art; Muralism; Fileteado porteño; Argentina

INTRODUCTION

A typical element of the image and urban landscape of Buenos Aires are the facades of its buildings, which show a great wealth of design with vividly colored decorative motifs.

This linguistic and chromatic exuberance was probably adopted as an antidote to the planimetric monotony of the urban morphological structure, present in the genome of the city since its foundation [1], which today - due to the absence of orographic and hydrographic constraints to its expansion - looks like a vast settlement structure, extending isotropically over a flat surface of over 200 sq km, with a grid of square blocks, each with 100 meters long sides.

The building environment is essentially composed of houses, whose construction has gradually saturated the internal surface of the blocks, within which even the most important and representative monuments and public buildings have adapted. In addition, a process of continuous building replacement on individual lots has produced an incredible typological and social mix, in which recent tall buildings coexist alongside the low houses of the early twentieth century, where the rooms, once overcrowded by migrant families or elegantly furnished to celebrate the rites of a recent conquered bourgeois life, they gather around the internal *patios* (fig. 2).



Fig. 1 - The linguistic and chromatic exuberance characterizing the urban landscape of Buenos Aires.

In such a potentially alienating urban scenario, street fronts are the mediating element between the large scale of the metropolis and the teeming life in the blocks, so that the facade has assumed an autonomous role, and sometimes even pre-eminent if compared to the building as a whole, to the point that it was often built or significantly modified in a phase subsequent to construction, causing the birth of the professional figure of the *frentista* (D'Amia, Iarossi 2019, p. 15), often a simple foreman, but a specialist in this specific activity.



Fig. 3 - P. Pinzauti, Decoration of the *Casa de los Azulejos* façade (1911).



Fig. 2 - Views of Buenos Aires built environment.

In particular, in the *Art Nouveau* façades, even if designed together with the building, their decoration always establishes a dialectical relationship with the articulation of doors and windows, intertwining with them in a counterpoint of imaginative plant compositions. The realization generally makes use of different artistic techniques, often hybridized together, in an osmotic relationship between wall painting, plastic modeling and mosaic decoration with great communicative intensity.

This synergy between the architectural and construction elements of the building and the decoration of the facade is particularly evident in the case of the *Casa de los Azulejos* [House of Tiles], built in 1911, in Paraguay street, on the architectural project by Benjamín Trivelloni. The line of the thin cast iron columns, placed to support the balcony on the first floor, first continues in the elaborate railings of the balconies and then in the sinuous plant motifs that frame the rural scene of the wall decoration, made of majolica tiles designed by the ceramic sculptor Pio Pinzauti, finally it climbs up to merge in with the frames of the windows on the top floor. (fig. 3).

INFORMATIVE AND RETHORICAL APTITUDE OF THE FAÇADES

In the context of the street curtain, sometimes the building fronts represent a real signage element, aimed to communicate not only the architectural identity of each building, but also its end use. In these cases, the façade acquires the sematic

value of an *architecture parlante* [speaking architecture], as intended to designate the works and architectural thought of the so-called revolutionary architects, in the context of the French Enlightenment, of which the Argentine Republic had declared itself heir, since its claim of independence from Spain in 1810, inserting in its own national coat of arms the Jacobean Phrygian cap and the two hands shaking, respectively symbol of *Liberté* and *Fraternité*. The saying, *architecture parlante*, which will be reused by Émile Kaufmann a hundred years later in a laudatory sense, was used for the first time in an unsigned article that appeared in 1852 (Anonymous 1852), for the purpose of deprecating the reduction of the architectural language to a mere code for the transcription of non-architectural and purely utilitarian content by CN Ledoux. [2] A similar communicative intent can be recognized in some buildings where the pictorial and/or sculptural decoration of the front has the explicit purpose of point out the activity, most often commercial, located in the building.

This is the case of the frieze of the building where the *Proveduría Marítima del Sur*, a ship supply company, was originally located (fig.4). It is a sculptural frieze in decorative concrete, created by the self-taught artist Vicente Walter [3], a legendary and little-known figure of a mason-sculptor, who lived in the building (now in a painful state of neglect) between the seventies and nineties of the twentieth century. The frieze, originally developed along the entire façade, in the strip above the ground floor, and of which unfortunately only a part remains today, depicts a series of production activities, mainly maritime and agricultural, in bas-relief. Among a few prow of ships, pylons for the cultivation of vines, barrels and ropes, a large group of characters appears - sailors, harbor unloaders, farmers and masons - plastically portrayed with vibrant *pathos* while carrying out their respective jobs, the ones to produce the goods that were sold in the store. Despite the intense narrative expressiveness characterizing this work, its location in a fascia between the doors and the windows sills makes

Fig. 4 - Façade of *Proveduría Marítima del Sur* and detail of the three-dimensional frieze by Vicente Walter, (undated).





Fig. 5 - When Street art express itself on the facade of a historic building, it establishes an antagonistic relationship, through a color palette in violent contrast with the *Similpiedra* plaster.

it perfectly inserted in the front of the building (certainly pre-existing) and free of contrasts with the *Neo-Renacentista* architectural framework, with the effect of situating the bas-relief halfway between a commercial sign and an architectural ornament in the strict sense of the word. Instead, in most cases where in Buenos Aires Street Art is expressed on the façade of a pre-existing building, it tends to establish an antagonistic relationship with it, which is manifested by the use of a palette of vivid colors and in violent contrast with the soft nuances of the *Similpiedra* decorative cement, used for plasters and cornices in most of the building fronts dating back to Eclecticism. (fig.5) The adopted language is attributable to two distinct iconographic traditions - the muralist one and that of the *fileteado* - to which correspond techniques, graphic codes, iconographic repertoires and semantic values, originally clearly distinct, but often coexisting and intertwining with each other in the great melting pot of the artistic *porteña* production.

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THE MANY SOULS OF MURALISM

Although from a purely lexical point of view the word mural designates any painting or decoration made on a wall, with muralism we now tend to indicate the artistic current that has established itself in the Mexican political-cultural climate between 1910 and 1928, through the figures of Diego Rivera, José C. Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. From the beginning, this movement was characterized by its accentuated politicization and reference to pre-Hispanic indigenous iconographic matrices as alternative models to colonialist culture, academic art and easel painting. This program was set out in the *Manifiesto of the Sindicato de Obreros, Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores*, published in 1923 by the editor and first signer David Alfaro Siqueiros. (De Micheli, 1976). Siqueiros himself stayed in Buenos Aires for a few months in 1933, during which, in team with a group of local artists (the painters Juan C. Castagnino, Antonio Berni, Lino E. Spilimbergo and the Uru-



Fig. 6 - David Alfaro Siqueiros (together with J.C. Castagnino, A. Berni, L.E. Spilimbergo, E. Lázaro), *Ejercicio plástico* (1933).

guayan sculptor Enrique Lázaro), he painted in the cellar of the house of his patron, Natalio Botana, the mural entitled *Ejercicio plástico*, a singular and highly innovative work compared to the muralist tradition in general, but also to the artistic production, earlier and following, by Siqueiros. It is a representation - extended for 123 square meters on the vaults, curved walls and floor of the basement where it was originally placed [4]- in which sensual figures of female nudes seem to float in an amniotic aquatic space. (fig.6) The elements of singularity are recognizable both in the lack of a straight political-educational content (an aspect constantly present, on the contrary, in all the previous and later works of the Mexican artist and of the muralist movement in general) and for the innovative process of realization.



Fig. 7 - Brigada Castagnino, *Sin título*, (1983). Street art spreads in Buenos Aires through the foundation of muralist brigades by the artists who had collaborated with D. Alfaro Siqueiros.

The female figures represented were in fact traced on the wall, to then be sprayed in a second time, projecting through the use of an episcope the glass negatives, obtained from photos of Blanca Luz, Siqueiros's lover-model [5]. The movement of the episcope, used as a projection center, during the different stages of the tracing, produced an enveloping and almost dream-like effect, similar to that of an anamorphosis. Probably, precisely these aspects of technical

Fig. 8 - M. Noel e M. Escasany, *Paysaje de España: Zamora, Salamanca y León*, (1934), Moreno Station. The *azulejos* representations in C Line of Buenos Aires Subway reproduce the European model of the urban view.



Fig. 9 - L. Matthis de Villar, *Entrada triunfal del General Urquiza en Buenos Aires*, (1939). In the wall decorations of the E line of Buenos Aires Subway the reference is that of the commemorative engraving of historical-patriotic events.

innovation, together with its almost Michelangelesque expressive power, have assigned to *Ejercicio plástico* the founding milestone value of Argentine muralism [6] and induced the artists who collaborated in its realization to export this new and revolutionary language on the walls of Capital, becoming promoters themselves, through the establishment of brigades and cooperatives of muralists (fig. 7), working in synergism with the many mutual aid companies and free associations

present in the *Bonaerense* social structure or even under the system of self-commissioning.

This role, during the dark decades of the sequence of Argentine dictatorships, has gradually transformed into a form of political militancy which, unlike Mexican muralism, has not been tied to the stylistic features of indigenous iconography (whose culture, however, in Argentina had been almost eliminated, through the genocide of the Indians, during the military campaigns to conquer the *pampas* and Patagonia, between 1872 and 1884). For their part, the various regimes, which followed one another during the twentieth century, were not slowed in perceiving the mass communication potential of urban wall decoration and in using it, within the most frequented public spaces, as a propaganda tool, however sweetening the message for rhetorical-hagiographic purposes and "taming" the muralist language in more conventional forms. This is the case, for example, of the representations located in the stations of the C and E subway lines, made in the 1930s, under the dictatorship of General José F. Uriburu, characterized by the adoption of iconographic codes of European matrix and, above all, still hinged on nineteenth-century models, as well as consolidated, for the *Paysajes de España* in C line, in the urban view as a memento of the *Grand Tour* (fig. 8), and, for the patriotic scenes in E line, in the model of the historical painting or of the commemorative engraving (fig. 9).

Moreover, the adoption of the *azulejo* technique, of clear Hispanic origin, also seems to affirm the cultural ties with the figurative tradition of the Iberian peninsula, whose dictatorial regimes, Spanish and Portuguese, the Argentine one maintained strong political relations with [7].

The waiver of any compositive, or even merely executive, experimentation, in fact, will mark a thematic and linguistic differentiation of muralist production (which would last for over half a century) based in public assignment rather than the one promoted by associations or self-commissioning, in which technical and formal experimentation constitutes the medium for communicating progressive and libertarian requests.



Fig. 10 - Néstor Portillo Mural Workshop for UTE-Unión de Trabajadores de la Educación, *Educación o esclavitud* [Education or Slavery] (undated.)

For many prominent protagonists of Argentinian muralism, after the coup d'état of 1976, political militancy was firstly combined with clandestinity and then by activity suspension and exile, causing a real diaspora of Argentinian artists, who, among the 70s and 80s of the last century, sought refuge in Cuba or in the newly formed Sandinista Republic in Nicaragua

or even in Europe, as in the case of Ricardo Carpani, active founder in 1959 of the *Grupo Espartaco* (Ruiz 2011, p. 16).

Since 1983, with the end of the dictatorship and the progressive repatriation of the escaped artists, artistic activity starts again and, assuming an institutional form, it saw the activation of *Arte Público y Muralismo* workshops in teacher training institutes, where the pedagogical activity and the social role of the teacher often become the object of a reflection conducted through muralist representation. (fig. 10).

Thanks to the institution of muralism courses, the gap between State art and self-promoted art, which had characterized the beginnings of Argentine muralism, finally comes to an end, while the widening of thematic and expressive horizons, once again accompanying technical experimentalism, finds an opportunity to make use of the stimuli received, during the previous period of the diaspora, through contacts with other cultural contexts.

Between the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the globalization of languages, the tendency to hybridize

Fig. 11 - Art installations through luminous projections on the facade of Recoleta Cultural Center.



Fig. 12 - View of *Catalinas Sur* Theatre, with three-dimensional elements and dummies.

expressive techniques was further accentuated, experimenting with the use of light projections instead of painting (fig. 11) or by inserting, in the two-dimensions of the façade, of some three-dimensional elements or dummies, often leading to mocking theatrical effects (fig. 12).

Furthermore, since Argentine muralism, unlike the other Latin American regional variations, has never included among its formal matrices those of pre-Columbian cultures beloved by Diego Rivera or those of *campesina* rhetoric, typical of a certain Latin American mannerism, the iconographic models multiply and there is a tendency to make use of graphic and chromatic codes deriving from advertising, tag art, graffiti or comics.

Without too many hesitations, however, subjects and references derived from the world of classical art or academy, so reviled by the majority of Latin American muralists, are also taken as starting materials.

The canons of academic sculpture, for example, inspired Paola Delfin's work, painted on the facade of the birthplace of Cata Mortola de 'Bianchi, an extraordinary figure of painter and engraving teacher at the Academia de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires in the early twentieth century. The mural reproduces the figure of the Angel placed in 1882 by the sculptor Giulio Monteverde to guard the sepulcher of the Oneto's family in the Genoese cemetery of Staglieno, revisited with the graphics



Fig. 13 - P. Delfin, *Tribute to Cata Mórtola de' Bianchi* (1975) e G. Monteverde, *Oneto's Family Tomb*, Staglieno Cemetery, Genoa (1882).



of the black and white comics. (fig. 13)
Another important example is the mural realized in 2014 by the collective of artists Fileteadores Conurbano - as a tribute to the Argentine filmmaker, writer and songwriter Leonardo Favio, who died in 2012 - on the façade of an abandoned building, located on the corner of a block in the historic district of San Telmo (fig. 14).
In this work, which since October 2019 has been recognized as a part of the *Patrimonio del Casco histórico de la Ciudad* [Heritage of the historic center of the city], the image of the director

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stands out, portrayed with his head covered by his characteristic bandana, while directing a cinematographic shot with a megaphone. Nevertheless, his figure, enclosed in a monochrome medallion in shades of blue, appears, however, as part of a wider figurative context, characterized by the style and typical elements of the *fileteado porteño*, which together with the muralism, and perhaps even more markedly than it, constitutes the typical iconographic language of Street art in Buenos Aires.



Fig. 14 - Fileteadores Conurbano, *Tribute to Leonardo Favio*. (2014), since 2019 recognized as Heritage of the historic center of the city.

THE ART OF THE *FILETE* ON THE WALLS OF BUENOS AIRES

The *fileteado* is a decorative style, widespread only in Buenos Aires and in the area of the Río de la Plata, whose name derives from the word *filetear* (tracing fine lines), by which it is indicated the procedure for drawing, and then painting with bright color glazes, compositions of images and written texts, framed by borders and draperies, stylized forms of characters, plants and animals. (fig. 15)
Created at the beginning of the twentieth century - by two Italian origin young people, apprentices on repairing car bodies and carriages - to adorn commercial vehicles and mask any dents, at first, this style spread rapidly, only to adorn wagons and



food-transport vehicles and, then, also to create signs and wall decorations.

The implementation takes place through the overlapping of layers, according to a rigid succession of the processing phases (Genovese 2007), which follows the operating methods used in the painting of vehicles.

It is characterized by the polychromatic and popular reinterpretation of compositional patterns and ornamental motifs derived from the language of the classical orders and the Eclecticist decorative apparatus, recalled in three dimensions, thanks to the use of shadows and effects of grazing light. (fig. 16)

These elements are closely integrated with textual communication (which is not in pure *Castellano*, but in *Lunfardo*, a dialect, still used throughout the Rioplatense area, derived from the linguistic contributions of the multitude of arrived immigrants), also treated as a figurative element, with the adoption of codified graphic characters (which in the older compositions was the Gothic font, probably copied from the old banknotes) and transformed into three-dimensional elements with the addition of decorative flourishes (the typical *firuletes*), drop shadows and white lights.

Thanks to its massive use for signs in neighborhoods with a marked commercial vocation (such

Fig. 15 - The *fileteado porteño*, recognized, since 2015, Intangible Heritage of Humanity, identifies a specific figurative style, which integrates painted images and written texts.

Fig. 16 - The *fileteado* style reinterprets the architectural elements of Eclecticism in a pop version and with the addition of shadows and white lights.



as La Boca and Abasto), the *fileteado* ended up overlapping and merging with the architectural structure of the buildings. It contributes significantly to defining the landscape and urban image (Iarossi 2017), in an osmotic relationship between building and commercial sign, which should not surprise in a city like Buenos Aires, where the building façades can be made of sheet metal and wood, as in La Boca, and commercial signs in decorative concrete, such as the signage frieze by Vicente Walter.

Despite its massive diffusion, it is only since 1970 - coinciding with an exhibition organized in the Wildenstein Gallery by the Catalan painter Nicolás Rubió and his wife, the Argentine sculptor Esther Barugel (Barugel y Rubió 2005) - that the *fileteado porteño* has been recognized as autonomous pictorial style and, in 2015, its contribution to the Intangible Heritage of Humanity was ratified, by virtue of its cultural and identity role in the urban area of Buenos Aires. Following this recognition, numerous workshops and training courses in the *fileteadora* art have been activated, to safeguard it and allow old masters to transmit its secrets.



Fig. 17 - In 2004, following the *El Abasto y el fileteado porteño* competition, six facades in calle Jean Jaurès were decorated in *fileteado*.

STREET ART AS A MOTOR FOR THE URBAN REGENERATION

In 2004, in conjunction with the refurbishment of the old general markets in the popular neighborhood of El Abasto, the Secretaría de Cultura del Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires launched the *El Abasto y el fileteado porteño* competition, which was attended by the best-known fileteadores masters.

The winners were obliged to carry out the decoration in the Jean Jaurès street and to keep it for at least one year; but the intervention - although it involved buildings not always of architectural value (it even includes a mechanical workshop) - configured a real urban unit and today the street is currently called *Paseo del fi-*

leteado (figs. 17-18), demonstrating the power of the decoration of the fronts and of the chromatic element to act as an instrument for the regeneration of entire urban parts.

In fact, in Buenos Aires, chromatism has always played a central role, also as an improvised solution for degradation processes, as demonstrated by the widespread practice of repainting the degraded buildings façades in violent and unusual colors, adopted when (presumably for economic reasons) organic architectural restoration work cannot be carried out.

In this context, of particular interest is the case of Calle Lanín, a narrow street, close to the railway embankment in the degraded district of Barracas, flanked by forty modest houses, with one or two floors, without any architectural pretension.

Fig. 19 - Calle Lanín has been restored through the figurative redesign of the facades by the inhabitants, coordinated by the artist M. Santa María.

Fig. 18 - Calle Jean Jaurès is now known as *Paseo del fileteado* and the decoration of the fronts has represented the instrument for its refurbishment.



The transformation of Calle Lanín was, in fact, gradually implemented, through a process of partnership with the inhabitants, who collectively designed the decoration of the houses fronts, under the coordination of the artist Marino Santa María (fig. 19).

The restoration started in 2001, originating from the approval shown by the neighbors, for the composition of abstract blue-white-yellow forms, that had been created by the artist Marino Santa María on the façade of his home-studio, located at no. 33 of the street. More and more neighbors began to ask him for the decoration of their homes façades, starting inner workings in order to involve other artists, activating forms of bank credit as financial support for the interventions and also setting up a sort of deliberative council, called *conclave de vecinos*, with the task of assessing in advance the proposals for intervention on the façades. In 2005 this *conclave* authorized the adoption, together with the pictorial expression, also of the sculptural and mosaic one. Thus, if the painted facades are joined by others decorated with mosaics, sometimes even



using broken tiles and other recycled materials, restoring the customary technique hybridization that seems to have always characterized the decoration of the city street fronts.

The variety of authors and techniques, claimed by the inhabitants as a choice of normality and non-museumization of their life context, has given the street a particularly domestic aspect, homogeneous in its inhomogeneity, producing an extraordinary effect of chromatic polyphony that -also involving elements of the handcrafted urban furniture (for example, colorful crocheted nets for the protection of tree trunks) - seems to characterize this place as a constantly evolving urban landscape (fig. 20).

CONCLUSIONS

The most recent experiences show the potential of street art to offer itself not only as a language for visual communication, but also as a tool for urban renewal and even integration and socio-cultural promotion. Undoubtedly, these possibilities are favored by stylistic heterodoxy and habit to hybridizing the techniques that have always characterized the decoration of the Buenos Aires street fronts.

However, in light of the new dimension of mass communication opened by social networks, it remains to be understood how this long tradition of openness and unconventionality, which forms part of the *arte callejero porteño*, will be able to meet the challenge offered by the new digital fruition tools.

The web offers artists the opportunity to make their production universally known; however, as Ignacio Soneira (Soneira 2016) has clearly highlighted [8], the muralist works virtually disseminated become visible no longer in their physical context and in their dimensional evidence, but from a screen, through images necessarily reduced and surrounded by other images and

Fig. 20 - The mix of authors and techniques, together with the artisanal production of street furniture elements (such as the crochet protection nets), gave Calle Lanín an extraordinary effect of chromatic polyphony.

NOTE

[1] In fact, Buenos Aires was founded twice, and what historians indicate as the first foundation corresponds to the building a rustic fortress, surrounded by an embankment, by Pedro de Mendoza in 1536 on the banks of the Rio de la Plata, which in a few months is completely razed to the ground by the natives. Then, in order to ensure the Spanish crown territorial control of the Atlantic outlet of the strategic river route of the Rio de la Plata, along which all the silver of the Peruvian mines traveled, Juan de Garay founded in 1580 a new city, *Ciudad de Santísima Trinidad y Puerto de Santa María del Buen Ayre* (Luna, 2002), in an area near the current La Boca neighborhood and following a pattern based on the *Leyes de Indias*. This expression indicates a weighty juridical corpus, formed by the set of laws issued by the Spanish Crown between 1512 and 1680, in order to regulate the different aspects of political and social life of the New World. In 1680 they were revised and collected in the *Recopilación de Leyes de las Indias*, divided into nine books, of which the fourth one concerns the territorial conquest, establishing the methods of settlement, soil distribution, realization of public works and mineral resources exploitation.

[2] “*Ledoux était partisan de ce qu'on a appelé depuis l'architecture parlante; il croyait avoir trouvé une merveille en faisant la maison d'un vigneron en forme de tonneau; il eût sans doute faite celle d'un buveur en bouteille, etc. Cet système d'architecture eut alors quelques adhérents et aujourd'hui même les partisans de l'architecture parlante ont fait des tentatives qui, nous l'espérons, auront*

peu de succès” [Ledoux takes the side of what would later be called speaking architecture: he believed he had found a marvel in doing the winemaker house with the shape of a barrel; he would no doubt have done bottle-shaped that one of a drinker, etc. This architectural system had, at that time, some adherents and even today the supporters of the speaking architecture have made attempts that we hope will have little success.] (Anonymous 1852, p. 288). The same saying will be reused, in a laudatory sense, by Émile Kaufmann, in his well-known essay dedicated to Boullée, Ledoux and Lequeu (Kaufmann 1952, p. 447) to designate the common informative and rhetorical aptitude, characterizing the works of these architects.

[3] Vicente Walter was a singular and almost mythical self-taught artist figure, who lived, between the beginning of the sixties and his death, in 2004, in Buenos Aires, in the popular and transgressive La Boca neighborhood, where (according to the meager verbal information found on site) he was firmly rooted and well known. In the daytime, in fact, he worked as a bricklayer, while, during the night, he was a frequent visitor to the Boquense cellars, where he produced part of his works, giving them to his friends and other customers. Only very recently it is beginning to recognize his artistic value, as it is documented in some articles in the local press (Vesco, 2016) and his mention in the section *Muralismo* (Toranzo Calderón 2020) of the internet portal by *Ministerio de la Cultura* and of *Comisión para la Preservación del Patrimonio Histórico Cultural de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*.

[4] The mural, starting in 1989, has been subjected of a complex and daring operation, lasting over twenty years, consisting of its disassembly, restoration and reassembly inside the building of *Museo del Bicentenario*, where now it can finally be visited. (Schávelzon 2013).

[5] “... fue el intento de sintetizar concepciones nuevas de unión entre la plástica con el cine y la fotografía, sobre la base de las ideas del ruso Sergei Eisenstein y que aquí, más modestamente, se intentaron aplicar.” [it was the attempt to recap new concepts of fusion between art, cinema and photography, based on the ideas of the Russian Sergei Eisenstein and which here, more modestly, we tried to put into practice.] (Schávelzon 2013, p. 27) “... el sistema de proyección de transparencias de vidrio negativas (aún no existían los slides o diapositivas, de film de plástico) sobre los muros permitía trazar con lápiz las líneas principales, [the process of projecting transparent negatives on glass (slides or plastic films did not yet exist), allowed us to draw the main lines on the wall using a pencil.] (*Ibidem*, p. 220).

[6] The paradigmatic value of *Ejercicio plástico* is attested by its statement as an asset with national historical and artistic interest, according to decree n. 1045 of 11.11.2003, in whose motivation it is declared that “... reviste una especial importancia por la originalidad y (...) constituye una obra paradigmática del muralismo latinoamericano por la concepción plástica espacial y por las innovaciones técnicas que introdujo [“... it is of special importance due to its originality and (...) constitutes a paradigmatic work of Latin American muralism due to

the plastic spatial conception and the technical innovations it introduced]”. In: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121004000733/http://www.diputados-catamarca.gov.ar/ley/BO2003/BO121103.PDF>

[7] At the time, the construction company and licensee of the Buenos Aires subway was led by R. Benjumea, former Public Works Minister in Spain, during the Falangist dictatorship, and then recalled to Spain by F. Franco in 1948 (Belej 2012, p. 260).

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