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INTRODUCTION:
A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS
Patrick McCreery

University students in large cities sometimes struggle to build networks of stimulating peers—although the right people are there, finding them amidst the distractions of the city can be tough. This is particularly true at Gallatin, where the paths students follow in the course of their individualized academic concentrations often diverge from one semester to the next. Interaction within and beyond the classroom is happily inevitable, however, in Gallatin’s three unique honors groups: the Albert Gallatin Scholars, the Americas Scholars, and the Dean’s Honor Society. Student-scholars in these groups work closely with faculty mentors to examine questions of global concern—investigations that occur both in the classroom and in annual study trips.

Each student-scholar brings a unique personal interest and academic approach to the group. The faculty mentor engages student interests while sharing her or his own academic expertise, exposing students to new histories, cultures, and concepts. During the 10- to 12-day trip, students consult not only with the faculty mentor but also with each other to make sense of their observations and discoveries. Many scholars develop long-term friendships from these shared experiences.

This year, we have extended the idea of community with this issue of Mosaic. Previously the annual publication of the Albert Gallatin Scholars, this issue is the first to include contributions from each of the three honors groups. Featured here are scholarly and personal essays, poems and song lyrics, and artwork and interviews from more than 30 scholars who traveled in 2014 and 2015.

The Albert Gallatin Scholars explored the theme of “Past and Future of Movements” in Argentina and Chile in 2014, and of “Cultural Revolutions” in China in 2015. The Americas Scholars likewise traveled to Argentina in 2015, but that trip incorporated an excursion to Uruguay, which allowed travelers to examine intersecting identities in both countries. The Dean’s Honor Society visited England in 2015, exploring the idea of London as the model of a 21st-century global city.

The reflections in this issue are place-specific, such as those about graffiti artwork on the buildings of Buenos Aires and Santiago, London’s storied museums, and the use of the colors red and yellow in Beijing. Nonetheless, you will find similarities in the introspections of students who grapple with the complex emotions that “foreign” places evoke—emotions ranging from reverence to discomfort. I invite you to witness their journeys.
MEMORIALIZING THE PAST

Kirsten Sweeney

American citizens are aware of the significance of September 11 in their nation's history. On that day, thousands of people lost their lives, and the entire country reeled in the wake of this unspeakable tragedy. Chile suffered a national tragedy on September 11 as well, albeit about 30 years earlier, when a military coup marked the start of Augusto Pinochet's 17-year dictatorship. Argentina also suffered for a number of years under a military regime. Citizens of both Chile and Argentina saw gross violations of their most basic human rights as tens of thousands of people were disappeared and killed. Every nation has a history of triumphs and tragedies, and the challenge for countries throughout the world is in choosing how they memorialize their darkest moments.

The 9/11 Memorial in the US was built on the site of the Twin Towers as a way to commemorate the lives of those lost in the attack and to keep the memory of one of America's most tragic moments fresh in the minds of its citizens. The memorial is a beautiful but somber place. Its main features are two fountains, built out of the holes that the destroyed buildings left in the ground. Encircling the fountains are two walls inscribed with the names of those killed in the attacks. The statement this memorial sends is not that the attacks on the World Trade Center are something we can reflect upon and then move on from; the stark emptiness of the pits signifies the immense impact the tragedies continue to have on our nation to this day.

When the dictatorships of Chile and Argentina thankfully ended, these nations were left with the task of memorializing the tragedies in the best way they could. We visited many different sites of memory on our trip to Chile and Argentina, and each of them had a slightly different approach to their methods of memorializing. Some utilized actual places of torture in order to better highlight the atrocities that occurred all those years ago. Others used the terrible history of the place to create something beautiful.

ESMA (La Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada, or the Navy School of Mechanics) was, in my opinion, the most powerful place we visited during our time in Argentina. It was used as a secret illegal detention center during the nation's military dictatorship from 1976–83. Thousands of people were brought through ESMA during this period, and they suffered torture, disappearance, and execution.

A tour guide took us around the property, informing us of what had occurred there over the years of the dictatorship. She led us into a building where many of the detainees had been held, and we explored it from the basement to the attic. Placards in all the rooms displayed facts about the specific rooms as well as quotes from the detention center survivors about their experiences, supplementing the information provided to us by the tour guide. The goal of the ESMA tour is to educate people on the history of the Argentine dictatorship and to show people firsthand the atrocities committed by human beings against others. Allowing visitors to walk through ESMA and receive the gruesome facts and painful anecdotes from the tour brings this painful era of Argentine history to the forefront of everyone's minds.

It was very moving to stand in rooms where people had been tortured and killed, and to see the barren cells where thousands of terrified innocent people were kept until their eventual interrogation and death. The entire tour felt very personal and intimate; walking through those empty rooms, it was almost as if you were reliving the experiences. The memorial is a window into the past and a grim reminder of its tragedies.

The Londres 38 house in Chile had a bleak atmosphere similar to that of ESMA. Like ESMA, it is a memorial created on the site of a secret detention center, where prisoners were interrogated and tortured during the years of the Chilean dictatorship. You are meant to go in there and be transported back through the years, seeing the place as the detainees saw it. Yet, it is different from ESMA in the extent to which it offers this realism. Londres 38 has not been renovated in any way since the detention center it contained was shut down, and there is no tour guide to take you through the rooms and fill the empty space with words. You are left to fill in the blanks with your own imagination, which almost makes it more powerful; you can almost imagine screams echoing around the barren walls.

The most interesting feature of the building was a room on the top floor, the only room that had been altered in any way. It was filled with photographs of various revolutions from Chile and all over the world, from various periods in history. In addition to the suffering
faced by victims of Pinochet regime, this space showed the hardships faced by people living under oppressive dictatorships in other countries today. In this way, Londres 38 serves the purpose of memorializing not only the lives lost within its walls but also those who continue to be put in danger across the globe. It sends the message that the fight for human rights is far from over.

Chile's Villa Grimaldi, like ESMA and Londres 38, was previously used as a torture and detention center and was by far the most notorious during Pinochet's regime. Unlike the other two memorials, however, Villa Grimaldi memorializes its tragic history through beauty. It was one of the first places I visited during our stay in Chile, and it was my favorite by far.

The entire space has been turned into a beautiful park complete with a lush flower garden and an elaborate fountain. The cells that contained the prisoners are represented by trees and stone paths. Some of the original structures remain, such as the tower where the worst tortures took place, and the pool where a prisoner was supposedly drowned. Like ESMA, the park offers informational tours, offering a historical account of what happened in each area of the park. There is also a wall of names in remembrance of all those disappeared from the Villa.

Despite the somber history of the place, visiting the park was a more peaceful experience than a depressing one: it was filled with color and life. I think that that is an important representation of the message the place is trying to send. The Villa pays its respect to the people who were tortured and killed on its premises and makes visitors very aware of how terrible conditions were there, but it also evokes a sense of new beginnings. It reminds the Chilean people that they can remember and mourn everything they lost during the years of the dictatorship, that they can grow and change for the better because of it, and that while no one should forget the tragedies of Chile's past, no one should let it hold them back from creating a more beautiful future.

REFLECTIONS ON MEMORY

Olivia Scandura

The field of psychology teaches us that memory is the mechanism by which the mind stores information—a simple neurological process; however, the concept of memory has more depth. Memory can be infused with emotion, inhibit or encourage action. Memory can be one of the most powerful forces used to engage the public, but its fleeting and subjective nature makes it a controversial tool.

During my visit to Chile and Argentina, I learned how those who lived through former dictator Augusto Pinochet's reign in Chile and the military junta's rule in Argentina are using collective memory to cope with the instability and extreme and widespread violence of the past. Pinochet came to power on September 11, 1973, as the result of a military coup d'état. What followed was almost two decades of strong political suppression, intense economic reform, and widespread fear. Within just the first three months of Pinochet's reign, thousands of political activists were rounded up and tortured, never to be heard from or seen again. One of the central detention centers during the regime was Villa Grimaldi, located on the outskirts of Santiago. Previously used by its owner as a vacation home and a space to host cultural gatherings, it was controlled by the secret police from 1974 to 1978. Over 4,000 people were tortured, beaten, burned, and abused there. The most common form of torture was electrocution: victims were tied to metal beds and shocked by devices placed on sensitive areas of the body.

The Villa Grimaldi has now become the beautiful Parque por la Paz, opened in 1996 as a memorial to the victims of the Villa. Everything is landscaped, and multiple mosaic plaques mark important sites, allowing visitors to see that this was once a luxury estate. The audio tour is shocking in comparison. As you pass an unfilled pool, the guide describes how the prisoners were tied by their wrists and ankles to the corners of the pool, face down, and repeatedly plunged into the water simulate drowning. The
Drugged prisoners would be strapped to steel rails and dropped out of airplanes over the ocean to drown. Various organizations gathered to protest the dictatorship and the lack of information surrounding the desaparecidos (disappeared persons), but it wasn’t until 1983 that democracy was reintroduced to the country through elections.

The Argentine Naval Academy, commonly referred to as ESMA, located in the northern area of Buenos Aires, was the largest and most notorious detention center of the regime. Between 1976 and 1979, a back entrance was used to transport prisoners into the basement of the school’s officers’ compound. Most prisoners were brought to ESMA blindfolded and remained that way through the entire ordeal, from the interrogation through the time they were taken to a separate area to be held indefinitely. Those who survived often didn’t find out until later where they had been held. As we walked towards the entrance, where prisoners were delivered in cars, our tour guide explained how a chain was lowered to the ground so the cars could pass, and that the two bumps that the car encountered signaled to prisoners that they had been detained at ESMA.

Visiting ESMA was a completely different experience than visiting Parque por la Paz. ESMA is much larger and much more run down. Unlike Parque por la Paz, ESMA has been left deliberately bare, in the same condition as the junta left it when they were forced out. One can clearly tell where, every day, a list of prisoners to be “transferred” was compiled. Those on the list were taken to the nurse’s station and given a heavy sedative before being taken on the death flights. In another room, our tour guide talked about the pregnant women who gave birth and had their babies immediately taken away, to be given to military families while the mothers remained detained.

During our visit, the campus was undergoing renovation as various organizations were building headquarters there to preserve the memory of the Dirty War. I do not know how ESMA will change once the renovations have been completed, but I can say that it is currently a place to expose the secrets of the regime and help others understand the suffering that went on, as a way to preserve the memory of those who have disappeared.

A deep sense of tragedy and pain is apparent and perhaps even amplified by the starkness of the surroundings. There is no attempt to soften the horror of the place’s history with beauty. In one corner of the basement was the nurse’s station, where, every day, a list of prisoners to be “transferred” was compiled. Those on the list were taken to the nurse’s station and given a heavy sedative before being taken on the death flights. In another room, our tour guide talked about the pregnant women who gave birth and had their babies immediately taken away, to be given to military families while the mothers remained detained.

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It is difficult to judge which of the two sites is better or more correct, as each is a reaction to a specific historical trauma. Personally, I found ESMA made a more immediate impact than Parque por la Paz, where it took me longer to process the experience. I felt that Parque por la Paz served as a place of reflection, creating beauty and peace out of a place which had so long elicited pain and fear, whereas ESMA’s starkness unsettled visitors so long elicited pain and fear, whereas ESMA’s starkness unsettled visitors and called them to action. Each place, however, remains equally important in paying tribute to those who were lost and providing a safe place in which people can learn and question history.
These photos were taken in Santiago, Chile, at the remains of Villa Grimaldi, a torture center active during Chilean dictator Pinochet's regime. The words come from sociologist Tito Tricot, who was a political prisoner during the Pinochet regime.

“No one can really understand what being tortured means until that fateful moment when you find yourself naked, blindfolded and tied up at the mercy of your captors.”

“Your entire life is confined to that fragile moment when darkness becomes your enemy; yet at the same time the dark is your only ally, a refuge from madness. There is neither past nor future, only the present of screams, fury and impotence when you find yourself defenseless at the mercy of the torturer’s rage and coldness.”
“You just try to stay alive, breathe madly after every electric shock, because you scream so much and so loudly that you feel that even the earth’s entire air supply will not be enough for you. But you keep on screaming amidst an explosion of a thousand colours that burn your flesh and shake your body.”

“You never know when he is going to hit, shout, kick, hang, electrocute or kill you. You wait in darkness, disoriented, trying to guess where the next blow will come from, your heart escaping through your dry mouth hoping that your bones will resist the incessant pounding.”
“You can’t control electricity, you can’t tame electricity, but amidst the bewildering storm of sparks and death rattles you can dream of green unicorns and the first time you made love right by the sea. Then it becomes somewhat easier to dream of the day when no human being would ever torture another human being just because he thinks differently.”

THAT VANQUISHED PRETENSE

Daniel McElroy

Ese gran simulacro by Mario Benedetti

Cada vez que nos dan clases de amnesia como si nunca hubieran existido los combustibles ojos del alma o los labios de la pena huérfana cada vez que nos dan clases de amnesia y nos conminan a borrar la ebriedad del sufrimiento me convenzo de que mi región no es la farándula de otros.

en mi región hay calvarios de ausencia misiones de porvenir/ arrabales de duelo pero también candores de mosqueta pianos que arrancan lágrimas cadáveres que miran aún desde sus huertos nostalgias inmóviles en un pozo de otoño sentimientos insoportablemente actuales que se niegan a morir allá en lo oscuro.

el olvido está tan lleno de memoria que a veces no caben las remembranzas y hay que tirar rencores por la borda.

en el fondo el olvido es un gran simulacro nadie sabe ni puede/ aunque quiera/ olvidar un gran simulacro repleto de fantasmas esos romeros que peregrinaran por el olvido como si fuese el camino de santiago.

el día o la noche en que el olvido estalle salte en pedazos o crepíe/ los recuerdos atroces y los de maravilla quebrará los barrotes de fuego arrastrarán por fin la verdad por el mundo y esa verdad será que no hay olvido.

That Colossal Pretense by Louise B. Popkin

Each time they lecture us on amnesia as if there were no such thing as a soul’s inflammable eyes or voices of orphaned grief each time they lecture us on amnesia and warn us we’d best get over our drunken binge of suffering I’m more convinced than ever I don’t belong in some people’s masquerade.

where I belong there are cavalries of absence amputated stumps of the future / slums of sorrow but card sharps and pipedreams too pianos that draw tears corpses still peering out from kitchen gardens nostalgia floating in an autumn puddle feelings unbearably real that refuse to die off in some dark corner

forgetting is so filled with memory that sometimes there’s no room for reminiscence and we have to toss our grudges overboard.

in fact forgetting is a colossal pretense try as we may / none of us can forget a colossal pretense alive with apparitions all wandering like pilgrims on the road to santiago.

the day or night that pretense explodes bursts into pieces or goes up in flames / all our memories / ghastly and great will break through the fiery bars finally roam the earth trailing the truth behind and the truth will be there is no forgetting.

13

14
In the face of great suffering, events are burned into the minds of the oppressed. Terrible memories are created. Visions of horror are repeated. Sensory triggers are activated. Then, in the aftermath, a new impulse: to forget. Letting go of nightmares is the easiest way, victims often think, to return to “before.” However, as the great Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti writes in his poem “That Colossal Pretense,” forgetting is truly full of memory: the more a group tries to forget, the more Benedetti’s “apparitions” present themselves for haunting.

People were not yet ready to talk about such terror, it is not surprising that Benedetti was still waiting for that time. Over 10 years after the end of the dictatorship in Uruguay also suffered the oppression of a military regime, from 1973 to 1985—almost as long as Augusto Pinochet held power in Chile. Like many Chileans and Argentines, Benedetti—already a prominent writer and a potential voice of dissent—was forced into exile during that time, and he must have felt the pain of the atrocities committed against his people despite not being there to experience it with them. Benedetti writes in his poem that “where I belong there are cavalries of absence / amputated stumps of the future / slums of sorrow.” In 1995, ten years after the end of the dictatorship in Uruguay, Benedetti also wrote of a time when “all our memories / ghastly and great / will break through the fiery bars / finally roam the earth trailing the truth behind.”

The first space of memorializing to be reclaimed was Villa Grimaldi, on the outskirts of Santiago, Chile. Cessing operation as a detention and torture center in 1978, it remained empty until 1987, when it was sold for demolition. Neighbors of the site were outraged at this attempt to erase the memory of Villa Grimaldi and saved it from development, although most of the structures had already been razed. Those involved began to regain their voices, and in 1997 the site was inaugurated under a new name: Parque por la Paz (Park for Peace). Today, as visitors walk the grounds, listening to audio tours with cameras raised, they are at once confronted with the harsh realities of truth and a hopeful vision of the future. While the site itself has certainly been turned into a park with rose gardens, a fountain, and seating, the audio guide speaks of blindfolded prisoners walking the same grounds, silently communicating through gentle touches, listening to their friends being tortured. The experience is a powerful one; we are both humbled and inspired. The local Human Rights Assembly responsible for the park’s preservation has succeeded in not recoiling from the history of the place while also not belaboring the misery of the events.

Within the last decade, two other infamous torture sites have been opened to the public: Londres 38, in the heart of Santiago, Chile, and the Naval Academy—better known by its acronym ESMA—in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Both of these embody similar memories and potent political statements.

Londres 38 is located in Santiago’s famed Paris-London neighborhood, which is known for its European-style architecture. Colectivo Londres 38, an organization formed of survivors, took charge of opening the building to the public as late as 2005, and their vision was a powerful one. Londres 38 epitomizes Benedetti’s poem and the need to actively remember the past. Visitors enter a building that is empty—the exact condition in which it was found. The bleak negative space is the main exhibit, and it evokes empathy: one can literally feel the “cavalries of absence” to which Benedetti so beautifully refers. Argentina’s ESMA does much the same. During its operation as a clandestine Center for Detention, Torture, and Extermination from 1976 to 1983, ESMA saw many thousands of desaparecidos (the disappeared) pass through its rooms. In the basement, skilled prisoners were put to work forging legal documents for members of the government and developing photographs for doctored passports. In the attic, many more were held in tight quarters, blindfolded day and night until they were selected for extermination.

By opening these three sites to the public, the Chilean and Argentine people have counteracted the tendencies against which Benedetti warns. Instead of submitting to the impulse that has begged them to pretend to not have lost friends and relatives and years of freedom, these people have “tossed their grudges overboard,” so to speak. A collective devotion to political action has been a societal constant in Latin America, and these sites—and by extension, their creators—prove a testament to a collective sense of identity.

By creating areas where memories are permanently stored and easily accessible, Chileans who visit Parque por la Paz for an afternoon may always remember the terrible events that happened at Villa Grimaldi. Argentines may go to ESMA to relive the painful experiences of their desaparecidos as a kind of unique mourning. The tangibility of these places allows for the entire society to see, to be aware. Yet, the people behind the memorials respond to an intricacy of Benedetti’s argument...
that he does not address: as much as one cannot and must not forget, focusing too much on remembrance can impede progress.

These spaces propel the Chilean and Argentine peoples forward. Like the hopeful and more cheerful elements of Parque por la Paz, both Londres 38 and ESMA call for change and a more positive future. The final room visitors pass through at Londres 38 is a photography exhibit of rallies and demonstrations from the last decade or so, during which the student movement has grown in size and prominence. The exhibit is a patriotic one, showing a mostly united Chile fighting for its causes. It aims to inspire visitors to pursue action. ESMA, on an even more political level, has actually begun allocating many of its unused buildings to well known organizations, most notably the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a group of mothers of desaparecido who are still searching for answers.

True progress can come only from simultaneous reflection and action. The natural starting point for this necessarily calculated and politicized combination of past and future is the spaces within which terrible atrocities have occurred. Benedetti refers to “feelings unbearably real / that refuse to die off in some dark corner.” Perhaps it is this sentiment that Chileans and Argentines have taken most seriously. Putting their worst memories on display—in the very spaces where they were formed—while simultaneously maintaining deep pride in their cultures, their countries, and themselves, they move ever closer to reconciling the past with a more hopeful future.

where the streets have many names

rogue fong

i. chilean streets
the buildings are closer to the ground here. the streets are narrower.

it’s comforting in a sense, but ominous. to look up is to know you are watched.
there may be no cameras, but with a past of oppression, overhanging roofs insinuate unwanted intimacy.

the people are crowded here, tiptoeing on radiating asphalt with a bag in one hand

and agua sin gas in the other. the metro is muggy but alive.

it might be the effect of nestling itself in the andes. bird-nested santiago,

swallowed by the smoke of a fire.

ii. argentinean streets
the buildings jut higher here. the streets are wide and empty.
sidewalk tiles waver under the press of a heel. to not watch yourself is to fall.

a state run by dictatorship, paranoia has spread deep into the veins of the city,
down into the crags of a ground fallen to neglect.

but life goes on. the city looks skyward though your mind is spread thin
by the urban sprawl.

each thought you think will float away, seized and put on display.
you are still judged through the haze of an apathetic, barren, sprawling city.
iii. museo de la memoria y los derechos humanos
lungs have no capacity for air.
gas expands, but here
    lungs
    lie
    flat.
brains have no capacity for thought.
walking through here is like
walking through a maze but
    breathless
    thoughtless.
we become an empty vessel.
unconsciously we acquiesce to the request
of sacred memories pleading for
    prayers
    wishes
    remembrance.
the air is clean but we cannot breathe.
the room is open but we feel so small.
the gravity claws at us and stings
    of murder
    of disappearance
    and of exile.

iv. esma
we are salmon swimming upstream
faced with a waterfall of will,
eyes bulging and watery.
with liquid forced down our throats,
a hot arsenic feeling
    of confusion
    and fear
    and pain
is awash.
questions like
    why and
    how
bubble to the surface
in sulfuric points of contention.
the silence is
    insidious.
    traitorous.
we have no questions or pleas answered.
our own minds
are a cesspool
for treason.

v. expreso imaginario
print me a piece of subversion.
give me what the government cannot.
show me the world through vivid eyes
because clarity is freedom through thought.
write me a work filled with fun.
let me escape from the suffocating streets.
i love to see that the state hasn’t won
through a mirage of secret feats.
feed me the media of the world.
introduce me to the borders beyond.
permeate the membrane the state has erected
and soon the world might respond.

vi. hotel bauen
what i see is scurrying ants
flitting about the grounds.
like clockwork they run
into rooms and offices,
maids and chefs making rounds.
behind the façades of unequal work
and a hierarchy between occupations,
there’s a secret here
of successful communication
that laid down trusting foundations.
when they talk of each other
when they talk of themselves
in voices of reverence and thankfulness,
the things i see and the things i hear
make me believe that their teamwork excels.
SOLIDARITY:
The United States and Chile

Caitlin MacLaren

The Cementerio General in Santiago is one of the most extraordinary places I’ve ever been. Far from the deserted depositories of bodies I’ve visited in the United States, Chile’s most illustrious cemetery was full of families watering plants, decorating their loved ones’ resting places, and strolling through the avenues of mausoleums.

On the outskirts of the cemetery—away from the well protected bodies of prominent Chilean families, enclosed in concrete and glass rooms—were miles of modest graves, each designated with a simple white cross. Many bore no name and had only one date: circa 1973. These were the unidentified bodies of people deemed threatening to Chilean dictator Pinochet’s regime.

The grass around many of the white crosses was shriveling from the intense heat. Tiny cabanas had been erected over some graves to shield them from sun damage. One fortunate group was covered by an entire circus tent. As I came closer, I learned that this was the monument to the circus workers union, whose members are resting in eternal solidarity.

There is a history of organizing in Chile and it was easily noticed, whether in murals at a university or at syndicalist burial grounds. It was hard not to contrast the seemingly dynamic political climate in Chile with what I’ve experienced in the United States, where even the most centrist politicians can be red baited.

I wasn’t the only one making such a comparison; the students we met with at a preuniversitario (college preparatory school) demanded to know why students in the United States hadn’t taken to the streets the way they had. Although my immediate reaction to this inquiry was to be defensive, I had to admit it was a good question. There are a number of students in the US who are organizing for free tuition, workers’ rights, divestment from fossil fuels, and the end of occupation, among other things. However, the fact remains that we don’t have anything comparable to the University of Chile’s Student Federation (FECh) in terms of organization or legitimacy. Granted, although most of the world might have first noticed the FECh in 2011, it did not emerge spontaneously. It developed across decades of student organizing. Yet, as the students at the preuniversitario pointed out, there are too many connections between the struggles in our two countries for US students to not have a similar response. I would even take it so far as to say that we need a
coordinated response.

The links between the US and Chile became very visible throughout the trip. When I attended a protest against school closings at the education ministry, I was reminded of the many similar demonstrations I’ve been to in the US against school closings and other cuts to people’s basic needs. I noticed the same sort of stakeholder coalition, the same urgency to stop disinvestment from already struggling communities. I also noticed that the education ministry was surrounded by metal police barricades, which I was told have been there since the massive student protests of 2011. This was not an unfamiliar sight either; in New York City, we might have more barricades than people!

It struck me that more and more barricades are going up while barriers to trade seem to be constantly coming down. The Heritage Foundation ranks Chile seventh in the world in terms of “economic freedom,” thanks in large part to the economic reforms implemented by the Pinochet regime with support from the US government. These reforms emphasized less government spending and more freedom for capital.

Chile and the US are among the countries poised to take “economic freedom” to the next level with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would expose 40% of the world’s economy to a massive free trade agreement and to the power of multinational companies that can challenge national laws they don’t like in international courts.

Perhaps that is why, in the Cementerio General, I found myself feeling so somber while standing in front of the tomb of former Chilean President Salvador Allende: because the motivations for and consequences of his overthrow are far from a distant memory. And because the problems in the US and Chile are not just similar but are joined through history, international trade, ideologies and the people that implement them, and a powerful class that transcends borders. This not only invites international solidarity but requires it.
1999

Ian Fletcher

We know our hearts will fold in two,
Outgrown from the bodies they belong to.

We try to defy, to deny,
That what goes on inside our heads, they know to be true.

We know our parts, are told our dreams,
Unfold to the lies that we hold on to.

We’re blind, we’re defined within their iron sights,
But our desires are just a mask to hide the truth.

In ‘99 I thought that I would find my eyes,
But they thought I would never believe them,
They thought I would never believe them.

We’re blamed; our hands are stained with greed.
Soaked deep with a red as rich as autumn.

Our eyes sewn tight to let us justify,
That we were victims to our lies, because we had bought them too.

In ‘99 I thought that I would find my eyes,
But they thought I would never believe them,
They thought I would never believe them.
Repainting the Façade: How Argentina’s Street Art Changed My Perceptions of Graffiti and Respect

Patrick Martinsen

Growing up, “graffiti” implied disrespect. The word always evoked images of either crime or immature rebellion. It made me think of the gang tags that crowded my city’s bridges and trains. I knew the tags were used to mark gang turf, commemorate fallen gang members, and advertise drug dealers and sex workers. The bridge near my home was a favorite tag spot for teenage troublemakers; it was covered in names, phone numbers, profanity, and sex organs. Graffiti also made me think of the various other obscenities that my friends and I created, that brought us to uncontrollable fits of laughter. We failed to notice that our irreverent “tags” looked more like the handiwork of five-year-olds let loose with aerosol paint in art class than the hilarious acts of rebellion we thought they were. Our greatest work was probably a vague cannabis leaf under the roadway, or a crudely drawn penis on a friend’s locker. Or perhaps it was the crudely drawn penis on my friend’s driveway.

These were my own unfortunate, personal, and assuredly very limited experiences with graffiti, which made me think of everything but political activism, culture, or art. Yes, I had heard of some of the legendary street artists like Banksy and Basquiat, but they were rare exceptions—celebrity artists who happened to use graffiti as a medium. I certainly did not think graffiti could be valued as a socially acceptable art form in anything beyond perhaps a small subculture. This all changed after my tour of the street art of Buenos Aires during our Albert Gallatin Scholars’ trip to Argentina.

The walls of Buenos Aires were covered with brilliant, bright flashes of color from the city’s street artists. The facades of entire buildings were completely obscured by vibrant designs; the scribbles of teenage hoodlums this was not. One wall featured a detailed explosion of orange and yellow cartoon fish fused with machines. Another wall was covered in a vibrantly colored mob of cartoon characters. Still others featured various monsters, animals, and locations so vividly detailed that they could only have been created by the most skilled and attentive artists. Colossal, bright, intricate, psychedelic, and often humorous, Argentine street art was a major departure from the criminality and obscenities that I had previously associated with graffiti. There was not a penis or an apparent gang sign in sight. In fact, there was very little graffiti that seemed even the slightest bit crude or unprofessional.

I was awestruck by the respect the Argentine people grant their street artists and their work. Artists are allowed to finish massive displays on public buildings without running into trouble with business owners or police. In fact, many businesses such as bars and restaurants actually encourage the city’s more famed street artists to work on their buildings in hopes that their art will attract more visitors. I was even more taken aback by the amount of respect between different artists. On our tour, we learned that while artists face no penalties for painting over other artists’ designs, some of the city’s most famous street art has remained untouched for well over a decade. What’s more is that, out of the hundreds of tags I saw both on the tour and during our exploration of the city, I cannot recall a single instance in which an artist’s work was defaced in any way.

I cannot conceive of such respect being granted to street artists and their work in the US. I know of no American businesses that encourage street artists to cover their walls, nor do I know of any place where street artists are given free rein to tag with impunity without being arrested on the spot. Furthermore, I cannot fathom a street art scene in the US on such a grand scale that has maintained such respect between artists. The difference in the attitudes towards graffiti in the US versus...
Argentina can perhaps best be explained by looking at the unique history of street art in Argentina. Graftimundo, a nonprofit organization that promotes street artists and their creations through guided tours in Buenos Aires, traces the origins of Argentine street art to Mexican muralism. Starting in the 1920s, Mexican mural paintings served as public art with a sociopolitical message that attempted to boost national pride following the Mexican Revolution. Muralism spread across Latin America until it found its way to Argentina.

Under Argentina’s strict dictatorship, free speech and public expression were severely restricted. Despite its popularity, muralism was outlawed. When the dictatorship ended, Argentina’s streets became enveloped with politically minded graffiti, flyers, and stencils that drew inspiration from muralist paintings. The dictatorship left the Argentine people with a deep respect for the power of free speech and expression, and street art was viewed as another method worthy of protection.

Originally, graffiti in Argentina was viewed as a largely political form of expression, much like the Mexican muralist movement that inspired it. This changed when Argentina found itself in a major economic crisis between 1998 and 2001, a period now known as the Argentine Great Depression. During this time, the streets became inundated with heavy-handed political graffiti and dark art because of the growing number of unemployed. In an attempt to reduce the propaganda and improve public morale during those years, street artists formed co-ops such as DOMA and FASE, which produced gargantuan apolitical displays on buildings in places in Buenos Aires hit hardest by the depression. Instead of espousing social messages and spreading political propaganda, these artists focused on entertaining the public with cartoon characters, psychedelic designs, and fantasy worlds.

It seems these co-ops have succeeded in their mission, as their graffiti and distinct characters have become beloved fixtures of Argentine culture. What’s more is that street artists continue to maintain respect in the community and amongst one another. Reflecting on the history of Argentina’s history and cultural climate, I can’t help but feel as though the artists are able to maintain this respectful atmosphere because the political hardships their country faced during the dictatorship fostered in them a profound respect for their freedom of expression.
ESMA is a site of violence: it is a naval academy that doubled as a torture site during the dictatorship. After the fall of the regime, it was dismantled and left bare in order to destroy evidence—evidence that had already been successfully hidden from two human rights investigations while the tortures were occurring. ESMA has remained bare while investigations and trials continue, but I could see discolorations where interior walls and facilities once stood. The emptiness is haunting, especially at such an otherwise lovely site on a busy street in the middle of Buenos Aires.
tenemos memoria, tenemos futuro
(we have memory, we have future)

Accompanying the words is the iconic headscarf of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, mothers and grandmothers who took to the plaza for their disappeared children. This is but one of the remarkable explosions of the people that came out of the tragedies of the dictatorships. The newer generations have integrated this activism into their graffiti and ideologies. In both cases, the people have taken ownership of public spaces and have spoken up by commanding the most conspicuous element of a city: its streets.

This graffiti encapsulates what we witnessed throughout our trip. The walls throughout Chile and Argentina offer a never-ending stream of politics, culture, and spray-painted wisdom. Another favorite message of mine comes from a wall in Mendoza, Argentina: La prensa es de ellos, las paredes son nuestras (the press belongs to them, the walls to us).

Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina

El Cementerio General de Santiago

While a large portion of the cemetery features ornate mausoleums, one side is a gaping field. This is Patio 29, site of over 100 clandestine burials that occurred during the first few weeks of the Pinochet dictatorship.

Patio 29 is the only place in the cemetery where one finds the political graffiti and street art coating the rest of Santiago. There are official signposts for the most notable victims, but the obituaries printed on office paper tell a more personal tale. Words of inspiration, memory, and revolution are written in marker and paint on all nearby surfaces. Some were left as recently as the week before my visit.

One could call Patio 29 a grave, a historic site, or a memorial, but none of these words evokes how actively memory is at play, to the point where the Patio almost feels alive even in the mid-afternoon silence.

Santiago, Chile
The dogs of Chile are as much natives of their cities as the people themselves. They lounge in parks, walk along avenues, and have learned to cross busy streets with the “walk” signal. They’re mostly friendly, and although their cleanliness is dubious (even after a swim in a public fountain), the people don’t seem to mind their presence. On several occasions, I witnessed locals using drinking fountains to fill up water bowls, and the city government taking care of the leavings.

The dogs are a staple of the atmosphere even in a place as stately and neat as La Moneda, the Chilean president’s palace and site of the ‘73 coup. At least a dozen dogs were sprawled on the lawn or in the shade of the palace. In this image, a mutt stands in front of one of La Moneda’s massive gates. Inconspicuously, in the decorative iron arch at the top, sits the national motto: “Por La Razón O La Fuerza” (By Reason or Force). Although this motto is laden with nearly two centuries of history, I can’t help but wonder if it is time for a new one.

Santiago, Chile

La Prensa es de Ellos, Las Paredes son Nuestras
(The Press is Theirs, The Walls are Ours)

In a country where the walls talk, this one boldly states, “The press is theirs, the walls are ours,” magnifying the sentiment that Argentines refuse to be silenced despite their government’s agenda. Across Argentina, graffiti artists, taggers, and muralists take to the streets to voice their anger with their government’s systematic silencing of the people. Artists utilize every inch of public (and often private) space as their canvases, saturating the city with images and phrases about the economic and political instability.

Seen on a walking tour in Mendoza, Argentina, with Professor Mark Healey from the University of Connecticut
tenemos memoria, tenemos futuro
(we have memory, we have future)

Argentines voice their frustration and express their opposition to the government’s attempt at silencing civilians through bold artistic statements such as this on every street corner. This art form arose following an oppressive dictatorship that suppressed any form of political expression and then systematically kidnapped, disappeared, and murdered thousands of people who spoke out or who were merely affiliated with these activists.

Seen on a graffiti walking tour in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Luchar por la dignidad, es un bálsamo que cura las heridas de la injusticia
(Fighting for dignity is a balm that heals the wounds of injustice)

This profound mural, likely painted by children, is located in La Juanita, a horizontal, community-led organization run by unemployed workers and volunteers. It is an independent cooperative built up in four years from nothing and consists of a kindergarten, bakery, printing press, adult classrooms, and print shop. The organization assists in providing the community with free education and medical care for children, and computer and literacy lessons for adults through funds raised via their alternative businesses.

Seen in Barrio La Juanita, La Matanza, approximately a 45-minute drive from Buenos Aires, Argentina
**El Nestornauta**

On the three-month anniversary of the death of former President Nestor Kirchner, a stencil of “El Nestornauta” appeared all over the city. It features the body of El Eternauta, an iconic Argentine cartoon figure who traveled through time and space. With Kirchner’s face imposed on the image, the stencil offers a tribute to the dead president and his advancement of Argentine human rights.

*Seen on a graffiti walking tour in Buenos Aires, Argentina*

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**Museo a Cielo Abierto**

A project that began in March 2009, the Museo a Cielo Abierto en San Miguel is an open-air museum of 36 street murals created by 60 local and international artists. It is located in a residential neighborhood at the cross streets of a major transportation hub. Murals explore Chilean literature, human rights issues, and Latin American culture, amongst other topics. Bold color palettes and elements of nature and poetry cohesively unite the murals, illuminating the interconnectedness of the artists despite their various nationalities. Ofer Leonardo, a Peruvian artist, painted this mural, “Lucha por los derechos elementales,” to call into acute focus education as an innate human right.

*Seen in the municipality of San Miguel, Santiago, Chile*
The Pragmatic and the Political
In Post-Crisis Argentina

Lauren Wilfong

One of the first things you notice when talking with an Argentine in el campo popular (the popular sector) is that everything is defined as post-crash and pre-crash. The 2001 banking crisis, which left a quarter of the population unemployed and resulted in the popular ousting of several presidents in a matter of weeks, remains vibrant in the minds of Argentine organizers, marking a break from an old set of ideas and assumptions about citizenship and statehood. With the absence of state and market power during that time, people turned to each other to organize. This manifested predominately in two types of organizations, unemployed workers’ movements (MTDs) and recuperated workplaces. These, in turn, produced two chief legacies: horizontalism and autonomy. While discourse around autonomy and critiques of hierarchy have existed in Argentina since its founding, the language of horizontalism and autonomy became central to the movements that arose post 2001.

In the months leading up to and following the 2001 banking crisis, there had become an increasingly common problem: owners abandoned their businesses, usually after accumulating great debt and owing months of pay to their workers. Workers began to resist by occupying their workplaces, often with the short-term goal of receiving their back pay. With time, this transitioned into a longer-term vision of returning to work on their own terms. Workers began to produce again, breaking down the deep-set assumption that they needed a boss in order to work. An overwhelming number of these recuperated workplaces organized themselves horizontally as a direct democracy, with no bosses or hierarchy.

MTDs are in some way the flipside of recuperated businesses: they were started by the unemployed, who in 2001 made up 18.3% of the population.1 While recuperated workplaces were largely an urban phenomenon, MTDs tended to arise in more rural or peripheral neighborhoods where service delivery and the job market were poor to nonexistent. With no jobs or service provisions, communities began to self-organize, creating mutual aid networks for daily necessities such as food and medicine. The MTDs that survived were those that created productive alternatives. For example, to solve longer-term unemployment and to sustain themselves organizationally, many MTDs began to build collectives such as the Critical Mass bakery in La Matanza, which raises money for the community by baking sweet bread, and La Toma in Avellaneda, which recycles electronics.2 Like the recuperated workplaces, MTDs tended to develop horizontal organizational mechanisms, though a politics of autonomy from the state manifested more in the MTDs.

Many foreigners, especially academics, have lauded these movements as a new, prefigurative revolution that has broken with the past to build a new future based on fundamental shifts in social relations.3 While this is a seductive way of thinking, and while it was my original motivation and inclination for visiting Argentina, I now understand that it is an attempt to narrate the past by inserting intentionality and ideology where there was none. The narrative of revolution within academia is in part based on personal assumptions, backgrounds, and desires and is in part perpetuated by movements themselves, which often preach revolutionary, political rhetoric. This rhetoric, however, is often not shared or even understood by many of the participants. The overrepresentation of politics might be the result of the same one or two members always speaking to the press and to other “outsiders.”
In fact, it seems to me that those within the movements who see them as a vehicle to anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, insert-your-favorite-lefty-ideology-here revolution are often outsiders who joined the movement retroactively with the intent of molding the masses. By giving their personal rhetoric using the inclusive “we” and by supplying analyses emphasizing horizontalism and lack of leaders, these individuals create the impression that their testimonies are representative and typical when they are often in fact exceptional.

What has been labeled as subversive and even radical was for many Argentines a rational and logical response to imminent material problems. Before the businesses went bankrupt, workers got by without pay for months, burning through any savings they had supporting their families while waiting for a payday that would never materialize. As such, taking over the businesses and going back to work was not a political choice or even a choice at all for many; it was survival. Over time, some have developed a political awareness and capitalist critique, often via discussion with the more political compañeros, or via popular education models such as the bachillerato popular (popular high school), which several recuperated workplaces now offer to their workers as well as to the community at large. Still, differences in educational background, political awareness, and experience colors interactions within these movements and often leads to hierarchies within supposedly horizontal organizations. This manifests in apparent ways, such as in determining who speaks the most at meetings, who talks to the press or important political figures, and who gets elected to positions of leadership. It can also manifest in more subtle and difficult-to-articulate ways, such as in deciding whose voice carries more weight, and whose opinions are solicited informally before a vote. Without awareness or a conscious effort to recognize and subvert such actions, horizontalism might become, as one worker told me, “the worst form of dictatorship.”

Despite such shortcomings, in many ways these organizations can be called a success in regards to political aims. Around 300 recuperated workplaces are still in business today, and cooperatives produced by many of the MTDs are sustaining and fostering subjectivity and protagonism in impoverished communities. However, these organizations are also in some ways stunted, at least when assessed for their ability to be revolutionary. Workers at the two recuperated businesses
we visited, Hotel Bauen and IMPA (Argentina metallurgical and plastic industries), explained to us that the National Movement of Recuperated Workplaces (MNER), a once-vital national movement aimed at organizing recuperated businesses, has lost much of its membership and is minimally active. I believe this is because workers in most recuperated workplaces do not prioritize collaboration or see the value in larger organizing or struggle beyond their businesses’ walls. While the actions that have taken place within these organizations might be prefigurative and even revolutionary, they do not extend beyond these groups.

These movements also exist very much within a state and market structure. Though workers minimally challenged the state by occupying their businesses and resisting police efforts to expel them, the state adjusted slightly to incorporate this new form of business creation into its folds by legalizing a certain process of recuperation. By offering a standardized path to integration, the state can maintain its relevancy and authority while simultaneously tempering and fragmenting the more radical voices of these movements by favoring some and repressing others. By operating within the state and market instead of challenging them, MTDs and recuperated workplaces merely supplement the system, in some ways allowing its perpetuation by keeping the worst of its effects—unemployment and poverty—at bay.

The tendency to cry victory both within these movements and within foreign academic circles does a disservice to the complexity of labor politics, considering that horizontalism and autonomy are dynamic forces to be worked towards, not static symbols that can be acquired. Yet, I do not want to diminish the experiences or impact of these movements within Argentine history; to the contrary, I find them to be some of the most exciting and hopeful developments in the region. As one compañera from La Matanza’s MTD told me; “The state should be thanking us. We’re doing their job for them”—referring to the amount of money they saved the state by organizing on their own and not using state services. In constructing subjectivity and protagonism within communities, these organizations are developing the capacity to truly challenge systems on a large scale. If their discourse of autonomy and horizontalism can be translated to a larger theatre, they have the potential to be truly revolutionary, but there is a matter of will. Without a larger critique of the hidden internal hierarchies as well as capitalist and state hierarchy and oppression, these movements will never be “revolutionary.” As another compañero told me: “Everyone likes to say that we work sin patrón [without a boss] but this is a lie. We have the state. The police. The market. There are bosses all around.”
The Modern-Day Immigrant Experience in Argentina

Chloe Gbai

Under the Mercosur Free Movement and Residence Agreement, residents of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil have open borders with each other and have relatively easy currency exchange. Additionally, citizens of these countries are granted automatic work and residency visas in any of the Mercosur nations. There has been a huge influx of Uruguayan, Paraguayan, and Brazilian workers into Buenos Aires. Yet, when I asked any member of the service industry there—housemaids, cab drivers, waitresses—where they were from, all indicated Paraguay. I found it strange that the working class would be filled with immigrants so predominantly from the same area.

Ana Franco—Ani for short—is a 20-year-old Paraguayan currently living with her family in Buenos Aires and going to school at one of the national universities. When asked about her situation as an immigrant in Argentina, she showed no signs of distress: “It’s normal. I have a lot of friends from Argentina, friends from Paraguay, Chile. We all live here in the city. It’s not hard at all.” Ani splits her time between Paraguay and Argentina, often going back to her native country for many weeks at a time. “I consider myself Paraguayan,” she said. “I grew up in Argentina and I live here and go to school here, but I am not Argentine. I’m Paraguayan.” Ani sees her nationality as matter of fact but not necessarily as a disadvantage.

Ade, a Paraguayan woman who works as a live-in housemaid and nanny for porteños (people from Buenos Aires) living in Recoleta, had the same attitude: “I’ve always wanted to work. I came to Argentina when I was sixteen and now I am 20. I have always had a job. I can cook and clean, and as long as I am working, I am happy.” Ade is the eldest of six children. She sends half of her income home to her family and lives in the Constitución neighborhood with her boyfriend, who works in construction.

More poignant about Buenos Aires is the language that’s being used in relation to the city: optimistic immigrant workers believe that Argentina is a land of opportunity and that if you work hard you can pull yourself up the ladder of success. It seems to me, though, that there’s nowhere for these people to climb. Paraguayans in Argentina, for example, seem to be relegated to doing farm labor, waiting tables, and cleaning people’s houses. In all of my interviews and experiences, Argentines referred to Paraguayans in a patronizing tone, as if they are simply in the country to serve.

When I examined the immigrant culture in Buenos Aires, I couldn’t help but reflect on the melting pot that is New York. It’s very similar, especially in regards to the immigrant working class. When examining a culture, though, it’s so essential to examine your personal lens and recognize your own biases in order to not unfairly judge it. I study race and immigration in the United States and am the child of an immigrant, so I’m sensitive to the experiences of immigrants. I am also a born-and-raised New Yorker who has seen my city shaped and molded by the cultures that have come to its shores. Bred in me are the ideas of the American dream and the right to opportunity. So maybe my discomfort around Paraguayan labor in Argentina was the result of my personal perceptions and biases. I had to constantly remind myself that the US and Argentina are on opposite ends of the world and that the expectations I had are not and will not be the same as those of someone from the Argentine culture.

Regardless of the lens I looked through when examining Argentine culture, however, I believe there is still something fundamentally questionable—but not necessarily wrong—about a country whose working class is primarily composed of immigrants. Regardless of the expectations and satisfaction from either side, it raises a multitude of questions surrounding the racial, political, and economic relationship between Argentines and working immigrants in Argentina.
In January 2015, I was walking through the San Telmo neighborhood of Buenos Aires with the Americas Scholars group. Our tour guide, Gabriel, mentioned that he is a Turkish-Syrian Jew. I had interviewed Jewish people in New York, asking them about race, assimilation, and identity, so in between stops on our tour, I asked Gabriel to share his perspectives on these topics.

English is not Gabriel’s first language, but I have quoted him verbatim in this edited transcript. This interview was carried out in conjunction with Judith Sloan’s course, Oral History, Cultural Identity, and the Arts.

If you ask me how is the community where I grew up, I have to talk about my grandparents. Two of them came from the city of Aleppo in Syria, the other two came from Izmir in Turkey. The ones that came from Syria spoke in Arabic and my Turkish grandparents spoke in Ladino. My grandparents were religious and they made the holidays in Hebrew. They came at the late 1930s, looking for a better economic situation for them and for their kids. They were living in Once neighborhood, where it is called an “open ghetto.” It is a place where the Jewish are living; they’ve got their schools and kosher restaurants. Once neighborhood is very populated, lots of noises.

Education in Argentina was completely free and universal. They could take their kids to schools, but they were going to receive Argentinean history, Spanish as language, and everything as according to the national culture that the government wanted to install. The kids of those who came from Middle East, at least in the Sephardic community, became professionals—the first generation of Argentineans. So my father got assimilated in the community and away from their religious heritage—Middle Eastern heritage. My parents didn’t have any trouble to be assimilated, because the city of Buenos Aires is based on immigration. In those days, the Arabs and Jewish community were completely assimilated. In fact, the Jewish were one of the biggest minorities that were here. There is not any kind of persecution or anti-Semitism, not even any kind of feeling against the Jewish community. So it is not something you have to hide. I could say that the Jewish community, generally, is recognized for being open-minded and sharing neighborhoods—being in close connection with other groups of immigrants. So the Arabs that are in Buenos Aires and practice Islam live together with the Jewish in a very peaceful way. In fact, after the attacks in 1992 and 1994 against the embassy of Israel and the AMIA building, one of the first ethnic groups that stands up for the Jewish and asks for justice were the Muslim community. Here, I would say, you cannot see, you cannot feel, you won’t find any kind of demonstration of the Jewish against the Arabs or Muslims. I went to public primary school, high school, and university, so I am a completely, let’s say, freethinker. My Jewish roots do not give me any specific sense of thinking. But I do recognize myself as a Jewish person. It is difficult to say how I feel myself as Jewish without practicing everyday or without going to the synagogue. I don’t know. I made my Bar Mitzvah. I am circum—how do you say that word in English? Circumcised. On high holidays I get together with my family to eat. We keep on eating the traditional food that my grandmother used to make—the Middle Eastern kind. I think that those things stick you to a culture. I do not believe in God; it’s not that I have a connection with the religious part. But I do believe that the Jewish are divided in people and religion, so I belong to the people. But then, the religion, I just don’t care much about it.

I am 33 years old; I am not that old. My grandparents were alive when I was 20 and they spoke in Hebrew, so I do know where I am coming from. My grandparents were alive, so the traditions were alive—wanted or not. You know the Sephardic way from the city of Aleppo is different, for example, from the Sephardic way in the city of Damascus, in Syria. So the way I practice Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur is different from the way another Sephardic friend could do it. Today, you could say, we do try to keep those things alive. But
“In Buenos Aires you have got everything.”

from my point of view, it is completely part of me. It is who I am.

In Buenos Aires you have got everything. Among the secular community, you have got Jewish people that are in the right wing and do not believe in distribution of richness and do not believe in the social care that the poor people have to receive in the country. Being as assimilated as I told you, none of my political decision has to do with my religious heritage. It would have to do with my parents’ heritage and how they influenced me, and how the university influenced me in a political way of thinking.

So nowadays, I’m completely assimilated, 100% Argentinian. I have nothing to do with Syria or Turkey, where my grandparents came. It’s not part of my specific interest to go back to one of these countries. I don’t feel that I have to go back anywhere. I am here; this is my place. I would go to these countries to visit them as a tourist, but not searching for my heritage. I don’t believe I have problems with my identity. But my kids, I don’t know if they will have the same connection that I have. I do have it, because I was raised like that. My girlfriend has got Italian, Spaniard, and French heritage. She was raised Catholic, even when she is atheist, as I am.

[To the group] Well, we are in the heart of the neighborhood of San Telmo, listening to a tango song…

The first soccer jersey I saw in Argentina was an Ángel Di María Manchester United shirt. It wasn’t surprising, since he’s incredibly skilled and considered one of the best players in the world, but I would have expected to see the smiling face of soccer player Lionel Messi, current patron saint of the nation, first. Messi and the iconic sky blue-and-white-striped shirt (“La Albiceleste”) of the national team seem to be the only two things Argentina can agree on as Argentinean. Di María, on the other hand, has a name that you wouldn’t peg as particularly South American, holds an Italian passport, and has spent nine of his eleven professional seasons playing in Europe. Yet, Di María—who is Argentine by birth and plays for Argentina’s national team—is fairly representative of current Argentinean soccer.
And, I would argue, national identity.

Historically, there hasn’t been much of a definition of what it really means to be Argentine. Soccer “nationality” is complex and controversial: a player can represent the country where he was born, where his parents are from, or where anyone has offered him token citizenship (I have a vivid memory of the Polish prime minister giving a Brazilian midfielder a passport when a World Cup was rapidly approaching). Yet, it’s nothing next to Argentine nationalism. Argentina is a South American country with European influence. There are French mansard roofs in Buenos Aires, and gauchos in the Pampas. Argentines love their pasta and speak a dialect of Spanish resembling Neapolitan Italian, due to Italian immigration—more an accident than anything else.¹

To this day, it’s hard to speak of nationalism in any sense of the word in Argentina without recalling the terrible past.² Former president Juan Perón co-opted nationalism to bolster his authority, declaring that his platform was the only authentic expression of the nation. Years later, the military junta used nationalist rhetoric to purge any potential dissidents that the government could round up. Argentina’s recent dark history is still uneasily acknowledged, and residents live in sharply divided neighborhoods.

Argentina’s top soccer league, Primera División, reflects the country’s complex and patchwork past. Primera División is descended from the Association Argentine Football League, which itself was founded at a British school in Buenos Aires. Fifteen of its thirty clubs hail from the Greater Buenos Aires region. The rest stretch from the border with Brazil in the northeast, to the western frontiers of Mendoza. Each of the clubs has a complicated identity and other issues. The Boca Juniors, for example, are named after the neighborhood from which they hail but are known to others as Xeneizes (“the Genoese”), stemming from early Italian immigration to their neighborhood. The name of their main rival, River Plate, comes from shipping containers that bore the English name for the Río de la Plata. The stadiums these two clubs play in are just over 10 miles apart from one another, but their respective residents are alien to each other.

This division was echoed during a cab ride through Buenos Aires. The driver, Huberto, after learning I studied Spanish in high school and have a grandma who is technically a porteña, a moniker that Buenos Aires natives wear with pride, insisted on helping me practice the local dialect. My default question during opportunities like this was, “Which football club do you like?” He said that his father supports Boca Juniors and his son supports San Lorenzo, the favorite club of the beloved Argentine pope, Pope Francis. Huberto said he does not care for soccer, however. “It’s too complicated,” he explained, “Too crazy.”

Argentines support starkly different soccer clubs, each of which reflects a different identity. However, the iconic “Albiceleste” of the Argentine national soccer team trumps all. In the 1980s, national soccer team player Diego Maradona became a folk hero. Born in a shantytown on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, he rose through the ranks, thanks to incredible skill. Despite standing 5’5” and being somewhat round, he managed to lead Argentina to victory during the 1986 World Cup. And despite his infamously uncalled handball and eventual drug problems, his talent and humble beginnings made him something special, an example of what even the most humble Argentine can become. Today, Messi wears Maradonna’s number: 10. He has comparable skill and a similar legendary status (though critics are quick to point out that he is yet to capture a World Cup title). Despite the similarities, Messi doesn’t have Maradona’s roguish personality and doesn’t exhibit his off-field drama. He’s soft-spoken, donates money to a children’s hospital in his hometown of Rosario, and is generally likable.

On the day I arrived to Argentina, I finally saw the smiling face of Messi on a billboard advertising cell phones, outside the airport. Of course, he was wearing “La Albiceleste.” The quiet talent of Messi—the beloved face of Argentine soccer—brings together a scarred country, even if only for a match. When these two are together, things are less complicated.
I must admit that when I first learned I was going to Argentina, I knew very little about the country. I was excited to be able to practice my Spanish and to spend part of January in summer weather. The more I learned, however, the more I found compelling about Argentina’s unique history and culture, from the birth of the tango to the many transitions of power.

One of the most fascinating aspects of recent Argentine history, to me, is the prominence of protest in the country, beginning in the dictatorship but continuing today. Coming from the United States, where many believe that popular protest has no real effect, I was intrigued by how well respected many protestors are, particularly the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo. This group began during Argentina’s Dirty War, when mothers gathered in the Plaza de Mayo to demand that their children, who had been disappeared by military officials, be returned to them. They were told they had to move, and so they did: they began to walk around the square. Thus began a journey that would continue every Thursday until the present day.

Witnessing Las Madres turned out to be one of the most memorable experiences of the entire trip to Argentina, though I did not realize it immediately. We saw them at the end of a very hot tour and a quick lunch. Everyone was a little distracted, but the whole plaza came to attention when the women, along with a few men, entered the space. They greeted one another, and some set up a table of souvenirs while others set up a banner. One smaller group arrived on its own without fanfare and began to
circle the plaza holding pictures, presumably of those they had lost. The larger group with the souvenirs and the banner began walking soon after and attracted more attention. Several people followed along and took photos. Almost everyone else in the area watched from the side, though many also took photos. Despite the ruckus of tourists surrounding the women, the event was moving, especially with the knowledge that that this had been going on for more than three decades.

We tourists came away with a lot of questions. Why were there two groups? What does it mean that this event is now clearly a tourist attraction? Is the event the same as it once was, or has time irrevocably changed it?

As I began investigating Las Madres on my own after returning from Argentina, I realized how dangerous these acts of defiance were, and how courageous these women were and still are. A BBC article written for the 35th anniversary of the first walk detailed how three of the founding members were detained, tortured, then thrown—likely alive—from a plane into the ocean. Their bodies were found washed up on shore a few days later. Though many mothers did not return to the plaza after that incident, the leaders rallied the group and continued their presence there.

The mothers have since continued to advocate for human rights in many ways. Within Argentina, they opposed La Ley de Punto Final, or the Final Stop Law, which prevented those who had carried out the disappearances from being charged with any crime. In more recent years, the group has expressed solidarity with the 43 students abducted by police in Ayotzinapa, Mexico, last year, and continues to promote human rights in any way possible. Las Madres have even begun their own university with the hope of teaching young people to question the information they are given. Even as the government has overturned the Final Stop Law and has begun prosecuting those responsible for the disappearances, the organization continues to be very active. As the world and the organization grow and change, however, what is the impact of the weekly walk around the square? What impact do tourists have on it?

From interviews done with some of the mothers, it has been discovered that it is still absolutely essential to each of the remaining mothers to continue remembering their children and all the children who were disappeared during the Dirty War. They also continue to fight for more information about the disappearances of their children. The children were never officially declared dead; their status is still simply “disappeared.” Still, some of the mothers refuse to acknowledge that in all likelihood, the disappeared are no longer living, even as anthropologists work to dig up unmarked graves and identify the bodies within.

Still, the walks around the plaza certainly are not necessary for that goal. When they began, it was the only way the mothers had to communicate with the government and other citizens. Now, Las Madres have a working relationship with the government, which holds them in high esteem. The weekly walk is symbolic at this point: the unresolved past has locked the mothers into an eternal state of mourning, and the ritual of the walk allows them the ability to keep vigil for the children that left them too soon.

As an observer, I felt uncomfortable with the people taking pictures of the mothers. It felt as though a group of overzealous photographers had stumbled upon a stranger’s funeral or memorial service. And yet, Las Madres continue to enact the same ritual in the same public space they have come to for over 35 years. Perhaps they hope that the onlookers will be moved to join the fight for human rights. Or perhaps the tourists are entirely unimportant to them.
I double- and triple-check the address on my phone. Certainly this has to be it! I wander into the sushi restaurant confused, asking for tango. A series of pointed fingers direct me to the restaurant’s back room. There, a handful of men are gathered for Rainbow Tango, one of the only queer tango spaces in New York. My interest in this kind of duality is what has brought me to this restaurant to observe men dancing with each other.

The only other tango space I had ever been to was a beginner’s dance class that was marketed for tourists in Buenos Aires. Following the lesson, we observed tango performances that were stylized stories of domestic violence, sexual assault, and forced prostitution. I wondered how Argentina—the first country in Latin America to both elect a woman president and legalize same-sex marriage—could simultaneously be so steeped in a performative history of masculine violence.

Outside Argentina, tango has taken on new forms. It entered a transitional period where foreigners could have some influence in writing the ongoing history of the tango. For example, queer tango—or any tango that moves beyond exploring traditional heteropatriarchal gender roles—began not in Argentina but in Hamburg, Germany, in 2001. Those performing tango in this context attempt to divorce the dance from its rigid heterosexist history.

At the same time, the popularization of tango throughout Europe in the early 2000s allowed tango to become an exoticized “commodity” or “fetish that [could] be consumed in globalization unhinged from its socio-cultural moorings.” One scholar, Beate Littig, who is a female leader in tango, argues that the symbol for tango as it becomes globalized and therefore capitalized and commoditized is the high-heeled shoe. Littig points out that even in queer tango spaces, the heel is only worn by women-identifying people. When two men dance together, they still wear men’s dance shoes. That day at Rainbow Tango in New York, the only other woman besides me arrived in sneakers but changed immediately into heeled dance shoes.

The global market for women’s tango
shoes has exploded in the last decade. At milongas (tango venues), one’s heel height is seen as an indicator of one’s proficiency as a dancer; yet, the higher the heel, the more the dancer—even an expert—will have to lean on her partner. Thus, the heel is a symbol of the feminine ideal of “sexiness and female weakness, which needs male strength to get along [in life].”\(^3\)

This double standard is especially pronounced when considering that traditionalist tango performers sometimes decide that tango with male partners is superior because it is the most harmonious, stylistic representation of traditional tango. This argument is informed by history: the original tangos were danced between men during colonial times. Latin American gender and sexuality studies scholar Sirena Pellarolo presents this phenomenon as an unveiling of “homosociality” of an “unnameable existence of hidden gender-ambiguity in this society,”\(^4\) but it might be generous to claim that these performances truly challenged heterosexism. Women simply weren’t around to be wooed, and the men imagined dancing with the ideal woman, so the activity was still steeped in heterosexuality. It’s not dancing with a woman but loving a woman that forms ideal masculinity.\(^5\)

But the tango is patriarchal in more ways than one. It has been pointed out that even “male-male tangos are tangos because the tango is a macho form.”\(^6\) And the narratives of the dances themselves “tell and perform the story from the male’s perspective.”\(^7\) Most tango lyrics lament the loss of a woman to another man while the saddened dancer remembers happiness lost to an unchaste woman.\(^8\) Yet tangos are almost always danced between men and women. It’s almost as if the men are dancing with women who aren’t really there at all. In tango, there is only one kind of woman: the weak, easily corruptible, and at the same time, easily corrupting sexual object.

Argentine anthropologist Eduardo Archetti draws connections between tango lyrics and contemporary Argentine football chants, linking Argentina’s two primary culture-defining activities: in both displays of the masculine ideal, the “worst” image of a real man seems to be that of being a child, boy, and homosexual.\(^9\) Power, control, and physical violence are necessary in both displays.

None of this is on my mind, however, as I get lost watching men’s feet circle counterclockwise on a tile floor. It is simply a joy to see—not because they are exceptional dancers but because they are doing it and they want to be there. I see that just because a person is walking backwards, it doesn’t necessarily mean he or she is following. And, to be completely honest, I can never really tell who’s leading and who’s following, anyway!
País de Plata

Rayn Epremian

En este País,
time is round.
archangels
tragen roman sandals y sombreros.
cats crouch in the corners of
Gemälde und mausoleums.
und falsche candles supporting
lampshades drip
plastic wax wie sangre
from the temples of saints.

The Christ of this country
hat blauen Roben und eichen skin,
encontrado somehow in traducción.

Esqueletos sport enormous multicoloured hats and
carry the living about on sticks like
balloon animals.

Toy soldados son de silver
y their triangle-Gesichte
sind grinning a pesar de que los
edificios are all French oder
reconstrucciones del colonialismo y

los tigres in the zoo sind betäubt so
you can pet them like the
graveyard gatos, die schlafen, in the shade
of the reich und buried.

And Armenians here have tombs that
they never would have got at home but still
los gatos importados sind silenced,
perhaps porque maúllan la muerte de los who never got a seat
in the clubhouse of the dead elite.

There is a severe lack of graves,
in this country.

Madres march mit weißen
Taschentücker tied around
their cabezas como ghosts
hecho de lollipops,
and candy-floss, someone is selling
zum Publikum,
jenen Tag um half-past four.

Sie haben vierzig Jahren circulando
como a Biblical wilderness en el centro de la ciudad,
aber die Erzengeln in their platform-sandals like the ’90s or an ancient Krieg don’t have their niños,
sogar on Sundays,
 wenn ihren Büro is closed
for Family Day,
y incluso blue-robed Cristo
has very little to say.

People talk, verdad, but so too do they
 schweigen,
y a menudo sobre los irrigen Dingen.
Can we purse our lips lang genug
um zu el silencio zuhören
und put our money where
our Mund is when
we fill it nochmal?

But then inflation is going up,
and I’ve barely got enough
for a Quilmes antes de I
close my eyes
und still bin, like a dragonfly
captured in einem Glas
at a Frühstück mesa vacia.
Wenn ich wache auf will I see the world
the way I’m supposed to,
through
blue-green orbs
like healthy fresh planets,
joven y wachsend,
und willend, la Verdad zu sagen?

Tip the glass and
I spill out und fliege weg still
alive
y la agua rennt
durch diesem País
dreaming it is
hecho de plata pero
las estrellas in the schwarz, schwarz sky
sind nicht el mismo color
und der Sturm, we can ignore
only so long before
die Nadeln pierce our skin like
so many mouse-armies we would
darüber lesen als Kinder
in traducción, we are
children in
translation
corriendo
a través de diesem Land and
the stars in the
Abgrund are
not the same, not the same als uns
but we look at them immerhin
während we run through the river soñando
it is made of silver
y las agujas
gemacht aus plata, they
haben keine Träume
y die sind
in our skin
und we will
never be
the same
doch sind wir etwas,
y escogemos a name and
es Silber, aber
a dream.

Complex Trauma and Healing: Memorials and Argentina’s Dirty War

Liz Yates

Victims of trauma each present an intricate and individual case for treatment. The challenge of healing is further complicated when the victim has been exposed to not just one traumatic experience but prolonged and repeated events while isolated from society. The survivors of chronic trauma heal through supportive interactions with others and with their environment. The final step in rehabilitation is community acknowledgement and reflection on the traumatic event. Without this, the survivor will remain trapped in the process of reflection and suffering.

Sites of public mourning, such as memorials, offer survivors an opportunity to reflect on their experiences within the context of their environment.

The Dirty War in Argentina produced an estimated 30,000 victims of kidnapping, torture, and extermination and countless other witnesses to violence and loss. Those who were “disappeared” were subjected to endless torture, and few of the 30,000 survived. The rest of Argentine society was left hurt and troubled. When the military coup ended in 1983, the newly elected democratic government began to prosecute the top generals of the military junta governments. Human rights groups courageously began to advocate for recognition of the disappeared. However, with political pressure for “national reconciliation” in the 1990s, the judicial acknowledgement of the past crimes stopped and was reversed in some cases. Victims seeking acknowledgement and support were denied. Their personal healing as well as the healing of Argentine society halted. Trials for the disappeared were not realized until the late 1990s—over 15 years after the new government had taken over in 1983.

Today, several powerful memorials to those lost during the Dirty War exist in Argentina.

La Parque de la Memoria

La Parque de la Memoria/Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado is centered around the Argentine identity and people. Great care went into the layout of the
park so that it would foster deeper contemplation of the period and stand as a tribute to those who were lost. The park stands next to the Rio de la Plata in Buenos Aires, close to the airport where the disappeared were taken on “death flights,” during which often still-conscious victims were thrown out of planes into the river to drown.6

The park’s central feature is a memorial wall that lists the names of the disappeared. This memorial was approved for construction in 1998, 16 years after democracy was restored.7 Although the dictatorship ended several decades ago, work is still being done to recover the names of victims, so the list of names on the wall is considered incomplete.8 The wall is designed to cut through the park and look like a giant wound in the lawn. The park’s design team describes the architecture as an “intervention on the landscape and the tracing,” evoking “the effort that is necessary to build a more just society,” and “the wound caused by violence perpetrated by the State.”9

In addition to the wall, the park features artwork that is meant to provide a critical yet sensitive space of reflection. The intention of the entire memorial is to engage visitors in a meaningful dialogue about the country’s past and future.

ESMA

La Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) is another space for reflection and for acknowledgement of state-sponsored violence in Buenos Aires. ESMA was a naval school that was used as an extermination center during the dictatorship years.10 While there were over 300 detention centers, ESMA was one of the largest and best known and was in the center of Buenos Aires.11

During the time of military government, human rights groups advocated for ESMA to be released from military control and memorialized as a museum. In 2004, these efforts culminated in a joint decision by Argentina’s Federal Government and the city of Buenos Aires to turn ESMA into the “Remembrance and Human Rights Centre.”12 The Navy was evicted and the space was converted into a public site with the purpose of facilitating comprehension of Argentina’s past and reflection on its current needs. Much of the original detention center had been renovated by the Navy or destroyed when they were evicted; therefore, ESMA was restored based on survivor testimony. Of the estimated thousands detained at ESMA, only 150 survived.13

Visitors to ESMA witness a space of chilling and disturbing occurrences and reflect on human nature; ultimately, the space aims to promote healing through reflection and understanding. Visitors can also pay tribute to the victims of the military regime and reflect on the value of human rights.

Neither the missions of La Parque de la Memoria nor ESMA assert that the intent of these sites is to cure wounds or to replace judicial action. While they are not intended to heal, their creation—albeit late—has had an impact on the trauma Argentines experienced. Both locations offer education and programming for Argentines to further engage with a turbulent period in their past. Educational programming for younger generations objectively teaches and provides reflection on a period of history that many in the decades following wanted to forget. Although the memorials might not have come to fruition quickly enough for victims to heal, they can offer societal healing and can ensure that the events will not be forgotten or repeated.
With over 100 others, I waited for the Madres de Plaza de Mayo to arrive for their weekly protest. The Madres first organized in 1977 to protest the disappearance of their children—which was orchestrated by the government from 1976 to 1983—and they have been demonstrating in the Plaza de Mayo every Thursday ever since. Tourists were preparing to take photos, and a popup tent was selling Madres “swag.” When the Madres arrived, the plaza bloomed to life. Five elderly women who wore the Madres’ iconic handkerchief tied around their heads led the rest of the Madres and two other organizations of the disappeared: Las Abuelas (grandmothers) and HIJOS (children). As they circled the plaza, chanting, the group of tourists gathering around them seemed to swallow up the protest.

According to performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, “the live can never be contained in the archive; the archive endures beyond the limits of the live.” Immediately, I imagined the Instagram photos, Facebook updates, and other digital memories being archived in the wake of each turn about the square. I also wondered if this form of protest has influenced other mothers around the
world, considering, as Taylor informs us, that the Madres have “introduce[ed] a model of trauma-driven performance protest” into international rights discourse.\(^2\)

I have since learned that their work inspired mothers in Sri Lanka. In 1999, Sri Lanka had the second highest number of disappearances in the world; the Mother’s Front organized against such abuses orchestrated by the United National Party government, and those that occurred during a lasting civil war.\(^3\) Neloufer de Mel, a gender studies scholar from Sri Lanka, has documented that the Madres engaged directly with the founders of the Sri Lankan group, the Mother’s Front, at sessions of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, where they attended meetings regarding the disappeared. I wonder about the future of the protest and cause for the Madres and the Mother’s Front, considering that the disappeared in Argentina and Sri Lanka have not been fully acknowledged.

De Mel argues that the Mother’s Front, following the example of the Madres, “recognize[ed] the potential of politicizing motherhood in a situation of anarchy.”\(^4\) Likewise, in her book, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives*, Cynthia Enloe explains that the Madres “self-consciously wielded the concept of mother to contest [the] state elite’s own uses of mothering to further militaristic ends.”\(^5\) However, while “maternal consciousness” could be key in the Madres’ transnational influence, Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink offer another idea: “issues involving bodily harm to populations perceived as vulnerable or innocent are more likely to lead to effective transitional campaigns.”\(^6\)

Regardless if politicized motherhood or perceived vulnerability has more impact on influencing others transnationally, as I looked at the young women chanting behind the Madres that day, I wondered what political activism amongst women might look like in the future if women aren’t confined to the role of mother.
Rumors that China’s capital is inundated with smog aren’t baseless, nor are they exaggerated. It is said that in Beijing, the sun rises and sets in a haze. On clear days, the sky is coated in what looks like a fine, granulated mist, and on high-alert days, it’s difficult to see far in front of you.

But when I arrived in Beijing, I didn’t notice the smog. I was too busy staring out of our tour bus window at the lit-up hyper-modern buildings. Driving into the city felt like total immersion into a video game, and I don’t mean in a stereotyped “Asian city” kind of way. I’m referencing Beijing’s infinite boundaries: new construction project after new construction project rose to meet us as we encountered ring road after ring road. Neon signage blurred together as the sky darkened. It was evening, and everything I saw was in bright, living color.

In the morning, smog surfaced as I walked through one of the many doorways in the Forbidden City. I could make out the shape of a palace’s curving roof through the haze but not its color, and I was inspired to take a photograph of it for that reason. My photos of the Forbidden City were of two things: smog cloaking distant rooftops, making their distinct architectural markings all the more defined, and the color red.

Define “red.” Happiness and good fortune. Luck. The color most frequently associated with China. It stains the national flag. It coats some of the country’s most symbolic edifices. It cloaks marquis and the lanterns that cling to them, awaiting the New Year.

At the Forbidden City, the group of us stood around our tour guide, Tony, a Beijing native, listening to him explain the various symbolic elements of design to be found throughout. The dragon carvings lining rooftops represent the emperor. The birdlike ones—representing the phoenix and the empress—are equally austere but have more curvature, softened somewhat by a careful hand. Tony gestured toward a room that the emperor once delegated from and commented offhandedly that in imperial China, he was the only person allowed to wear the color yellow.

Define “yellow.” An earthly color, the center of everything—according to Chinese tradition. The color worn only by the emperor in the centuries that the Ming dynasty ruled China. It now adorns the upper left-hand corner of the country’s flag. It appears on political signage, on restaurant marquis, in the neon lights that line central boulevards.

It was confounding to imagine that long ago, somewhere outside of the city, far from the capital, there were perhaps people who had never seen the color yellow outside of nature. While Tony continued to pontificate on the symbolism of the color yellow, I glanced to my left and noticed a Chinese woman standing amidst a sea of other visitors. She wore a bright yellow parka.
Time seemed to collapse in on itself. In 1912, when China’s dynastic system came to an end, yellow would belong to everyone. It’s been little over one hundred years since that moment. China’s perplexingly rapid industrialization and radical advancement suddenly seemed less baffling, considering that we saw other women in chartreuse parkas, and babies in quilted cadmium pants.

A visit to Sinopec, China’s largest and most profitable petrochemical corporation, revealed a similar rebranding of color through different means. Sinopec’s rows and rows of dormitories, towering warehouses, docks with shipping containers, and office buildings are far removed from the shadow of smoke stacks, but it was so smoggy that it was difficult to see three blocks ahead. As an employee led us to the final photo collection in the company’s museum, he gestured to a photo that initially seemed insignificant. It was not an image of innovative machinery or the manmade lake that families visit on their days off. Instead, it was of the garden in front of one of the company’s many buildings.

Our guide highlighted the inclusion of small bursts of color from red and yellow flowers, emphasizing that amidst the impressive effort to mechanize the country’s future, the company makes a pointed effort to preserve these flowers.

There we stood, a group of North American college students who had traipsed through a UNESCO World Heritage Site and now a petrochemical corporation, attempting to come to some kind of academic agreement over what “modern China” means, what it looks like, and how we as foreigners should define it. We would struggle with these questions over the two weeks of our trip, never coming to one steadfast agreement or to a crystallized understanding through language.

In Beijing, where buildings reflect every shade of grey, it’s easy to forget time and space and surrender to a new vision of the future, but China’s colorful tradition remains. It’s just found subtly accenting new spaces, as told in a photograph of that woman in her rubber-ducky-yellow parka, standing amidst a red city built in the 15th century.
In January 2015, I flew from New York City to Beijing, from Beijing to Shanghai, and then from Shanghai back to the US. The most fascinating observation on my journey was the flow between tradition and modernity in each of the places, which have their own unique blend of these aspects.

Upon my return, I sorted through all the random objects I’d collected throughout the two weeks we spent travelling. I noticed that I had an oddly large amount of paper—just paper, printed with all kinds of things that denoted where I’d been, what I’d seen, and what I’d done. Some were from the galleries we visited in both Beijing and Shanghai. Some were from the factories we visited. Others had been picked up during our afternoon and evening free-time excursions.

And then there were my three airline tickets. These tangible objects—physical reminders of the journey I had the incredible opportunity to make—helped me reflect on the abstract concepts of the traditional and the modern.

Beijing to Shanghai

This ticket is the most striking of the three. It is the only ticket with color. A landscape lit orange and yellow is printed on the front. This coloring particularly catches the viewer’s eye; it’s soft and welcoming and could represent either a rising sun for those who are beginning a journey, or a setting sun for those who are returning home. The paper feels reassuringly sturdy. The writing is almost entirely in Mandarin, with English lettering only present on the back to indicate where one needs to be at what time. The dove on the left symbolizes longevity and loyalty to one’s family. The central image is of the Great Wall, a monument of pride and a great accomplishment. The entire ticket reflects that which seems to be important to the Chinese.

These two tickets for my flights originating in New York and Shanghai are much more similar to one another than to the Beijing ticket. It is important to note that they are both for United Airlines flights, but they still have perceivable differences. The Shanghai has a stamp mark on the side, and fewer pen scribbles than the New York ticket. More importantly, the ticket is made of a much thicker material and is sturdy. The New York ticket is thinner than printer paper, making it much more susceptible to damage. Following my trip, it was significantly more worn than the other two tickets.

I can’t say for sure if these choices in ticket design are due to money, but my assumption is that it is cheaper to print a ticket on thinner paper, using less ink. If this assumption is correct, the New York ticket gives off the air of having the cheapest printing job. US airlines aim to cut costs in an effort to save money, and if this extends to tickets, it is a fair and intelligent business model. The Beijing ticket, on the other hand, would have cost the most money to design and print, but it displays pride and culture from the moment a traveler sees it. I saw a similar dichotomy when travelling to and from each city.
When I was in the third grade, my father’s right lung collapsed due to work conditions in the US Navy, where he had given years of service. The doctors told him his diaphragm could not support respiration in his right lung, and since then, my dad has lived with this condition. I became fascinated with air as a result. I always viewed it as a basic right—something everyone deserved but also something I thought everyone had, unless they were like my dad. I never questioned it until I visited China.

When we arrived at the hotel in Beijing, I remember being mystified by the dense fog that filled the air. How beautiful, I thought. It seemed to me no different from the fog I’d known in America, the sort that lies low over empty baseball fields as the sun rises, filling the open air, sparkling off the dew in the early hours of a spring morning. I thought it was the fog my mom warned me about when I started driving when I was fifteen.

It wasn’t until late on my first night in Beijing that I realized the “fog” was actually smog—the result of pollutants from nearby factories filling the air. I felt violated, offended, thinking that someone had made a decision to put particles in the air and that I had no choice but to breathe these particles, whether or not I wanted to. After several days, I could feel them lining my lungs. I woke up feeling congested. I felt like I had a hole in the back of my throat.

I initially blamed this on corporations thousands of miles away. It’s a well known narrative, after all, that the cost of US labor drove US companies to outsource their factories abroad. I thought that they had no right to dictate the air quality of millions of people in cities like Beijing and Shanghai. After further research, I found the situation to be much more complicated.

China has not sat idly by and merely let this happen. The Chinese government itself initiated these investments many years ago. Beginning in 1978, Chinese Communist Party leader Deng Xiaoping opened up China to foreign investment after years of isolationist economic practice. Since then, maintaining economic growth has been a Chinese priority, no matter the cost, it seems. Recently, however, Chinese legislators passed a law allowing authorities to detain company bosses if they refuse to complete environmental assessments. This regulatory authority paves the way for China to begin limiting releasing pollutants into the air beginning in 2025, per a November 2014 agreement between the US and China. Although experts say this agreement has little substance, it is the first time China has formally committed to minimizing emissions. It seems the Chinese government is beginning to realize the extent of its pollution problem, and is paving the way for the uphill battle ahead.

As I was considering the air in China, I recall thinking that this type of environmental situation would never exist in the US. Our government seems to be constantly aware of environmental concerns. However, after doing more research, I discovered that a remarkably similar situation exists in New York today: the fight to clean up the Hudson River. The pollution of the Hudson, and New York’s 68-year-long failure to clean it up, proves that even at home, financial interests often take priority over environmental interests.

With Greenpeace East Asia announcing that out of 360 Chinese cities, 90% “failed to meet national air quality standards in the first three months of this year,” China’s environmental crisis is clearly ongoing. But so is ours. While our situations are different, we have the same basic issues: a constant ongoing fight to balance financial interests and environmental protection.
daily tables

Libby Goss

what don’t we ask.
the silk flapping in the wind
baring the chest wide,
on the line the scarves wave
their crumpled faces to the sky
flying dime on tassel
reaching from the water below.

what time will we come;
pebbles turn murky
like everything that has no name
it is a calling
unlike any wild ever known,
and in the kitchen
the soup is poured and spread.

sometimes the river reaches miles,
inches and fades into gray
no telling where the banks come next
no telling what don’t we ask
what don’t we ask
sunshadow

wall on wall
the cloak that smogs
forfeits the veins
yellow red, turn ashen
dashing the sun, heat
and this cold winter air—
nine thousand
nine thousand nine hundred
ninety-nine and so it goes
step and step to roll
across the land as if
it could die as if
its arching face could fade,
the primordial death.

what hands and feet.
the dragon flicks his tongue,
distance and a phoenix,
black and burial winged
the chamber shuts its curtains
like a lonesome gate
and wraps itself
for the hot, sunless sleep.

all is forgotten.
the book and bridge
snap the lips over
the bleeding teeth.
in the shadows the throne
sits biding its clotting
tongue like a clock.
As a visual artist, I love travelling to new cities and finding small moments that catch my eye. China is a complex and ever-changing nation, but what repeatedly struck me in each city was the visible split between new and old, and how seamlessly the parts fit together into modern China. China is—forgive the title-drop—a mosaic of attitudes, cultures, aspirations, and politics that pieces together in a fascinating way. The following images are digital paintings I made after returning to the US, based on photographs, memories, and impressions of our time in Beijing, Shanghai, and the surrounding areas.

As the waxing winter
in the night, come down to the frozen lake. the duck nuzzles into a plate of ice, rubber white, cold against his beak. across the hills, the bridges, the road that licks the distant mountains, the smokestack is still. in the morning it will puff its breath and the light will arrive, yellow and green.

step by step the pipes turn, water and wheel and the worker come for the frosty breaths and the hum of his lips over the mechanical arm and stair. and down in the pond, the duck raises his beak and the water at his feet leaks away. one day, he will be clean.

fifty years and it is still yet the growing time. the worker stretches as if he could reach for north, his feet standing south—what valleys will meet his well made soles—and into the long afternoon he sits on his stool, watching the pipes arm and leg, now his blood, now the yellow and green.

Featured here are a lemon smoothie, candied hawberries, blueberry Oreos, a roasted bird that could be a pigeon, buns, and dumplings. Our group purchased all of these foods in one single small neighborhood of Shanghai. Though it might seem easy to segregate the “Chinese food” from the “foreign/American food” in this image, the reality is more complex. The hawberries are a classic Chinese treat called bīngtānghúlu that originates in the far north of China, an area ethnically and culturally different from Shanghai. The Oreos, on the other hand, are definitely Chinese: Nabisco had great difficulty entering the market until it ditched the original white cream in favor of flavors that cater to the Chinese palate, such as green tea, blueberry, and strawberry.
As in the United States, smart phones and social media have become staples in the Chinese market and society. In this image, a young shop worker checks her phone. The store behind her is filled with goods for the upcoming Lunar New Year: mass-produced lanterns, money envelopes, and stuffed rams (as it is the year of the ram, according to the Chinese zodiac). Although some aspects of Chinese culture are changing in the face of new technologies and increasing consumerism, others remain: temples that are hundreds of years old are still actively used for prayer, certain dates or numbers are considered particularly lucky or unlucky, and everything turns vibrantly red and gold for the new year.

Beijing and Shanghai are full of clusters of skyscrapers that put even midtown Manhattan to shame. Still, neighborhoods of one- to three-story houses remain in the heart of the city. Real estate is on the rise, so these small buildings are gradually being demolished. For the time being, the different sectors create a fascinating patchwork where you can step in and out of a major international city at will.
Entertainment and Censorship in China: A Reflection

Kristen Iglesias

Like many first-time visitors, I had myriad preconceived notions about China before I embarked on a two-week journey with my fellow scholars. My area of study being entertainment and law, I was especially interested in seeing how my understanding of China’s creative censorship climate matched up with the reality. Our schedule was packed with meetings with musicians, directors, artists, and many others who encounter censorship every day because of their professions. With China’s President Xi Jinping increasing censorship through actions like the stricter internet regulations, I expected to find resistance and annoyance within the creative industry. Instead, I found a climate of acceptance. What follows is not meant to be some sort of exposé but instead a reflection on the approaches to censorship we encountered in China and the questions that must be asked in light of these responses.

Even a fairly thorough Google search of the censorship processes for different forms of entertainment in China leads to frustratingly sparse results. Luckily, people like prominent Chinese film director Eva Jin, photographer Wang Qingsong, and members of the Chinese band, Second Hand Rose, were open to answering our questions about the processes they have encountered.

Films require a long process for clearance, Jin explained. First, a synopsis must be sent for approval, and if it is approved, a script can be written. Once the script is finished, it must also be sent for approval. Any changes that are made to the script by the government must be incorporated, and then the script can be filmed. Accordingly, the finished film must be sent for approval, and any cuts that are requested must be made. Finally, if cleared after the cuts, a film can be released. Directors should not even attempt to clear films on some topics; ghost stories, supernatural stories (but you can do “fantasy!”), and crime stories are generally not allowed. Crime stories could potentially pass censors, but crime stories set in China have a much harder path to approval. Conversely, there are ways of making films without going through this process. For example, there has been an emergence of amateur directors putting their films online. Their work goes through a limited and more lenient censorship process, but it would never be released widely or through the regular venues.

Musicians face a similar process as filmmakers do for getting songs and CDs approved, but it is far less stringent. Censorship in music does make a large difference, however, in regards to festivals and concerts. Set lists must be approved, and songs can be banned at the discretion of the government. Many times, as members of Second Hand Rose told us, these cuts can seem incredibly arbitrary, with the offending songs having nothing “bad” in them. A permit is also required in order to sell large numbers of tickets, which can make it difficult for controversial bands to play large shows at all.

Literature, like film and music, is approved in steps. Manuscripts need to be turned in for approval before they are published, and changes might have to be made. While we did not talk to a writer directly, this area is rather well documented, thanks to writers doing what they do best. Art, unlike the other forms of entertainment discussed here, cannot necessarily be censored in the same ways since it is distributed differently. However, through our meeting with Qingsong, it became clear that art has not escaped censorship altogether. He, along with other artists whose works we encountered in the vicinity, instead self-censor to a small extent. Qingsong admitted that pushing against the government’s restrictions is not necessarily a smart idea, so instead he finds ways to come close to sensitive topics.

More interesting than the hoops entertainers need to jump through are the reactions we encountered from those doing the jumping: while they didn’t say that censorship is good, they have decided to live with it. Jin talked about making the types of films you can make, instead of trying to find ways to make the films you want to make. She
suggested making a fantasy film instead of a ghost or supernatural story; it is similar in theme to the others but unlike them, can get past censors. Pushing the censors is not a part of her plan, and she is okay with that. When asked if she would prefer to make films in the States, where her films would not be censored at all, Jin said no. She likes the film climate in China, and while open to American co-productions, she prefers the Chinese film industry.

The two members of Second Hand Rose we talked to had a similar attitude towards the censorship they encounter. In fact, they said many bands don’t mind the cuts to their content or set lists because they are just happy to be playing live at all, which used to be much harder. Yet, once the novelty of just being able to play wears off, will bands still feel the same way? Interestingly, Second Hand Rose has admitted that while they are sometimes given cuts to their set lists, they don’t always make

them, and they have yet to face any consequences. The rules might be in place, but at least in music, enforcement does not seem to be of great concern unless the songs are too extreme.

It is important to note, however, that while these are the attitudes that we encountered during our travels, these are not necessarily the only views. In fact, the news is rife with Chinese artists decrying the censors they face. Xie Fei, an award-winning Chinese director, has called out the rules as “killing artistic exploration” in a letter he wrote to Chinese authorities. And he is not alone. Feng Xiaogang, a Chinese director who won Director of the Year from the Chinese Director’s Guild, criticized censorship during his speech in 2013, calling it a “great torment,” despite the fact that he is usually credited with being very pro-government. These are just two of the more high-profile cases that can be found even with a very rudimentary search.

The most important question I can think to ask after returning to the States is almost impossible to answer without myriad more interviews and encounters: why did I not encounter more attitudes like these two? If anything, censorship has gone up, not down, since Fei and Xiaogang spoke out. If I had to pick a hypothesis it would be this: industries like film and music are new or in the process of developing their full potential, so priorities are elsewhere. Film only truly opened up and started booming in 2008, and TV is still only beginning to gain momentum. Similarly, as the Second Hand Rose members mentioned, many bands are only recently able to perform on a large scale.

For now, censorship does not seem to be crushing creative industries; it is instead treated (at least by the artists that we met) as a hurdle in the journey to creative release. When or if censorship will become more than just a hurdle depends on the path entertainment will take in China in the coming years, and depends on how much artists will be willing to push against established norms.
As an avid weightlifter, it is only natural that even while abroad I would look for people who likewise are in love with pumping iron and crafting impressive physiques. During my time in China, I searched for people who looked “fit” (runners, bikers, etc.), gyms, health clubs, and even nutrition shops. Much to my surprise, I very rarely, if at all, found these things. Across the massive, sprawling cities that are Beijing and Shanghai, populated with 20 and 24 million people respectively, I only saw one gym. It was located in an area of Shanghai I likened to NYC’s SoHo, which likely caters to expats. Gyms seemed to be nonexistent, otherwise.

What I did see were various different forms of physical activity and fitness in public spaces. People—primarily senior citizens—were gathered in public squares and parks to do t’ai chi, an ancient practice focusing on the relationship between mind and body. Young people were playing badminton. Many people were playing Chinese hacky sack (jiānzi) and flying kites (fēngzheng). The more time I spent in China, the more I realized how active the Chinese community is—much more than Americans. It seemed that every public space I went to was filled with active and fit people. This differs from our fitness culture in the West, where health clubs are all the rage.

This discovery led me to wonder why there is such a massive difference in fitness culture between China and the US. The obvious answer is that Eastern and Western cultures are different, but I wanted a more complex answer, something tangible that showed the historical development of each country’s fitness ideology. Since I found the largest distinction to be the lack of gyms and health clubs in China, I conducted research on the history of these spaces.

The popularization of gyms and health clubs across the West, I discovered, has roots during the late 1800s and early 1900s, in the notion of the muscular man. Up until that time, people thought of muscle building as intimidating and thought it would lead to a condition in which weight lifters would become so muscular that they could not move. Two men, Eugen Sandow and Charles Atlas, changed this perception by showing the world what it was like to be muscular. They toured Europe and America, showing off their muscular physiques while selling the lifestyle of a strong, masculine man. In conjunction with these tours, they began opening gyms across the globe, drawing in herds of people who were looking to become muscular.

The rise in popularity can be contributed to a “more or less chronic crises in masculinity” brought about by the world wars as well as the changing roles played by fathers and sons in American society. Men felt a new desire to look masculine by getting muscular. There was a dip in popularity during the 1960s, but Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Golden Era of Bodybuilding breathed life into fitness culture and made everyone want to get muscular again. This led to the success of the Gold’s Gym franchise during the ’80s and the birth of the fitness industry as we know it.

Jesper Andreasson, a professor of social psychology and author of *The Fitness Revolution*, notes that fitness “has turned into a folk movement, but not one comparable to the old 20th-century movements, often connected to national sentiments, but instead a highly individualized and personal task.” It makes sense, then, that the West, an individualistic society, would focus on the image of self, allowing fitness to become an industry as commercialized and as accessible as it is today. For China, the opposite has been the case. Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party from 1949 until his death in 1976, introduced a number of reforms, laws, and movements that always pushed the idea of a collective culture: the union of old and young citizens laboring together for the greater good of China. Members of Chinese society were not seen as individuals but rather as parts of a whole working towards a common aim. Chairman Mao’s political agenda did not allow any time for individuals to focus on individual luxuries such as health clubs. China did not even have the infrastructure to produce a fitness industry; however, they had ways of getting fit, and this continues. Only recently has China been capable of and even interested in having gyms and health clubs, but the industry is still in its infancy.

Tracing this history has given me a better perspective on China’s fitness culture, showing me not only that different cultures have different priorities but that there is more to health and physical fitness than pumping iron.

**Fitness Culture: West vs. East**

Austin Basallo

As an avid weightlifter, it is only natural that even while abroad I would look for people who likewise are in love with pumping iron and crafting impressive physiques. During my time in China, I searched for people who looked “fit” (runners, bikers, etc.), gyms, health clubs, and even nutrition shops. Much to my surprise, I very rarely, if at all, found these things. Across the massive, sprawling cities that are Beijing and Shanghai, populated with 20 and 24 million people respectively, I only saw one gym. It was located in an area of Shanghai I likened to NYC’s SoHo, which likely caters to expats. Gyms seemed to be nonexistent, otherwise.

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I.

When I was younger, I worked in a small American boutique shop for a few years and learned many tips about retail and being a salesperson. I learned about how to treat customers well and put on a mask of store hospitality in order to get someone to buy your products. It’s all about the sale; regardless of how much hackneyed jargon you say to the customer, you should always treat them as if they’re your best friend while at the same time encouraging the customer to purchase.

II.

The market world in China was incredible and exactly like how I’d imagined it: packed to the brim with plastic toys, red plush rams, lanterns, socks, and selfie sticks. The experience was exactly the same as at local Chinatown in America. The boxes of merchandise spilled into the street, along with the storeowners who spoke first in Chinese and—realizing I didn’t understand the language—spoke again in broken English: “Please come, we have good price.”

Appearing Asian in China was a strange concept. I never really considered it before going because I’ve lived in Hawaii around people who are of a similar ethnicity as me. It became a sort of block when I was unable to speak Chinese in China. Thinking I understood their language, the store owners would animatedly speak to me in Mandarin, complete with hand motions and gesturing to come into their business. However, once I shook my head and said in English, “Sorry, I don’t speak Chinese,” all the hand motions and gesturing were gone. It was as if a wall was put up. Some of them spoke English, but there was a lack of a connection where before they seemed to think there was one. The interaction became like any other interaction they would have had with an American tourist in China. Suddenly I was an Other.

III.

We went to the famous Pearl Market, where we practiced bargaining. Bargaining in China was about the furthest from anything I had ever done. In general, I try to avoid all types of confrontation, which includes fighting about money. I also felt very uncomfortable because of my past experience in retail. In my mind, shopping is not an occasion where you can ask for a lesser price; it feels almost taboo to even ask, because it implies that you don’t have enough money to spend on items that might be considered luxury.

There is an entire power dynamic lying beneath material spending. In America, the more you pay for an object, the higher value it has. In China, however, the dynamic is different; it’s how little you spend on material goods and how good of a bargain you can get the shop owner to agree to that determines a successful purchase. At the Pearl Market, it was expected that customers would bargain. That almost made it more “humane,” if you will. American retail is entirely interactionless. The price is exactly what is on the tag, and it’s never anything less unless the item is on sale. With the bargaining system, human interaction with the salesperson is the key aspect.

What I thought was really interesting was the change in the salespeople’s attitude as soon as money was exchanged. Up until the exchange, a salesperson acted angry as I tried to bargain lower. She punched a higher number into a calculator, and I shook my head and named a lower price. This repeated until we came to a mutual understanding. Then, as soon as the money was given, her attitude shifted to cheerfulness and friendliness. I thought she would hold a grudge for paying her less than what she originally wanted.

I realized there’s something so honest about the bartering system. You know everyone’s in it for themselves, but this way, the motives of both parties are put on the table.

IV.

I walked around the Zhujiajiao water town and came across a small snack shop where the saleslady tried to
speak to me in Chinese. I didn't understand her, of course. The shop was cramped; boxes on top of boxes overflowed with unidentifiable packaged snacks. I decided to buy a few. The lady continued to try to speak to me in Chinese, and I tried to mime conversation, to no avail. I discovered some incredible peanut-flavored snacks and asked for more.

The lady continued to try to talk to me in Chinese as I paid for the piles of snacks. In the end, she showed me her Bible and motioned to it, and waved to me as I was leaving. Out of all my experience feeling uncomfortable and feeling like the Other shopping in China, this act that transcended verbal communication was one thing I did understand: despite my limited vocabulary in Mandarin and her minimal understanding of English, she conveyed a resonating and heartwarming farewell.
At the beginning of the 19th century, British Ambassador Lord Elgin traveled to Athens to try and preserve the crumbling sculptures on the facade of the towering Parthenon temple. At the time, the Acropolis was in ruins as a result of centuries of war and misuse of the temples. Elgin’s acquisition of the frieze sculptures and their removal from Greece to England seemed appropriate, as it was for the cause of preservation. The sculptures have been on permanent public display in the British Museum since 1817 and have most recently been housed in a palatial gallery dedicated to both the presentation of the sculptures as well as the museum’s lengthy explanation as to why its ownership of them is necessary. These texts line the walls, creating a propagandistic program that museum visitors cannot avoid. The following is from the British Museum website’s page on the Parthenon sculptures:

The British Museum tells the story of cultural achievement throughout the world, from the dawn of human history over two million years ago until the present day. The Parthenon Sculptures are a significant part of that story. The Museum is a unique resource for the world: the breadth and depth of its collection allows a world-wide public to re-examine cultural identities and explore the complex network of interconnected human cultures. The Trustees lend extensively all over the world and over two million objects from the collection are available to study online.

"The Parthenon Sculptures are a vital element in this interconnected world collection. They are a part of the world’s shared heritage and transcend political boundaries."
Since the early 1980s, Greece has fought for its rights to the Parthenon sculptures. Citing advancement in both general museum practice and conservation capabilities, the Acropolis Museum was shown to have the capacity to maintain the relief sculptures that were taken away from Athens. During my time in London, one of my priorities was to see these highly debated sculptures. They have been central to my museum studies, and I thought them to be the most scandalous acquisition in museum history.

When I entered the Parthenon galleries, I was incredibly underwhelmed. While the galleries are impressive and address the issues surrounding the frieze acquisition, it was difficult to separate my unrealistic expectations from the reality of the space. For instance, because I saw the works as incredibly debated objects, I guess I expected visitors to be actively debating them. What I saw was exactly the opposite. Visitors have become so accustomed to survey museums that they don't think twice about the representation of different cultures in the galleries or about how these objects have entered into the space.

These mixed feelings led me to consider the role of the visitor in museum debates. How can the visitor get involved in debates about ownership? Is one acting unethically when visiting the galleries, thereby actively contributing to the museum's program? Can individual visitors have a grand sweeping impact on the maintenance of museums or influence the return of artifacts? Should visitors be engaged in the dialogue about the ethics of artifact appropriation in museums worldwide? The uneasiness one might feel upon realizing the Parthenon sculptures' history with Lord Elgin, for example, can be felt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Louvre, and hundreds of other museums big and small. The question of ownership opens a can of worms that can break down the entire concept of survey museums and the role they play in bringing different cultures to the general public. If we argue that the Athens friezes should be returned, does that mean that every Greek sculpture, every Chinese scroll, and every Nigerian mask must be returned to its location of origin?

As the museum world continues to grapple with this debate, visitors can do one thing: acknowledge the dialogue between cultures and develop an understanding of the differences between the museum setting and an object’s original context. And since survey museums are not closing their doors anytime soon, museum administrators—with increasing self-reflection—can find ways to reconcile the injustices carried out by their predecessors with the expectations of modern visitors to see and experience all the world’s cultures under one roof.
.MUSEUM

Victoria Loke

Artist Statement

Building upon Fred Previc’s neuropsychological model of four realms of perceptual-motor action in the 3D spatial world, .Museum is a visual experiment of the idea that space is what we cognitively create. It also poses the possibility of developing a recuperative architecture for the study of cross-cultural representation and global archiving by integrating research from cognitive neuroscience and decolonial philosophy (aesthesis) in a radicalization of Michael Calvin McGee’s rhetoric fragmentation thesis (based on an essay by Darrel Allan Wanzer).

As a reflection on the comparison of curatorial practices at the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London with those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, .Museum seeks to be a reparative critique of the Anglo-/Euro-centricism and lingering attitudes of exploitative colonialism that remain calcified in such institutions. This issue becomes particularly evident in light of the stream of controversy surrounding the ownership of artifacts housed in these institutions.
ON THE ORIGIN OF
A CREATIVE SPECIES
Dominique Raboin

As a student of evolutionary biology and ecology, I often felt isolated in the perceivably art-focused Gallatin community. The tangible barrier I saw between the arts and sciences affected my course options, my class discussions, and my ability to relate to my peers. Nonetheless, while my fellow Dean’s Honor Society scholars and I were planning how to spend our free time during our spring trip to London, the Natural History Museum was mentioned on more students’ wish-lists than I would have imagined. My initial surprise at my creative-minded companions’ interest in science was intensified by my excitement over the opportunity to visit the museum and see the number of artifacts on display related to Charles Darwin. As a Darwin-phile, nothing could be more exciting to me than the chance to feast my eyes upon a first-edition copy of *On the Origin of Species*, the collection of dead pigeons that Darwin raised and bred for research, and the actual specimens he collected during his historic voyage on the HMS *Beagle*.

Darwin is owed some credit outside of the scientific community for leaving us his legacy. He first began to question creationism while traveling around the world as a young man—the recollections of which can be read in his travel journal, *Voyage of the Beagle*. Throughout every new continent and island he visited, Darwin noticed a great amount of variation. Assuming all living organisms were created by the same god, he had expected to see some uniformity between species in similar environments. Instead, he found giant tortoises in the Galapagos Archipelago, marsupials in Australia, and ring-tailed lemurs in Madagascar. This unexplainable variation between species inspired his initial thoughts on evolution.

Darwin’s theory of natural selection irreversibly altered the future course of science, philosophy, education, and politics, among a number of other subjects and fields. More importantly, the theory irreversibly altered the way we see ourselves as humans. Darwin gave us the means to question our existence to a greater extent than was ever before possible. Even the most basic understanding of natural selection in regards to humans (in response to selective pressures, we are products of adaptive variation, which slowly took place over the course of millions of years) gave way to an immense amount of mystery and stirring reflection surrounding our existence.

Arm-in-arm with my new scholar friends, I entered the vast and awe-inspiring Central Hall of the Natural History Museum. Originally designed to imitate a cathedral, the hall carries a spiritual ambiance ceremoniously punctuated by a goliath stone statue of Darwin. I was immediately engrossed by the fossils I had read about in textbooks, the preserved organisms that were older than the Louisiana Purchase, and artifact after artifact whose significance could only have been discovered due to Darwin and his research.

Yet, something else fascinated me as well. Looking around the Central Hall, I could see evidence of the variation Darwin noticed during his circumnavigation of the globe: children of different sizes and colors running to get a glimpse of
enormous dinosaurs; groups of people speaking a number of languages, gazing incredulously at gemstones whose geologic origins surpass Homo sapiens in age; and strangers—young and old—acknowledging and bonding over the strikingly orange color of the orangutan’s fur. All of these people and objects are products of unexpected, prolonged, and extraordinary means.

And there we were, the human race, connecting in a museum dedicated to the inspirations for and consequences of Darwin’s immeasurably powerful theory, which not only sought to explain the conundrum of existence but simultaneously opened the door to new exploration. As one of thousands of patrons giddy with excitement in the Natural History Museum, I realized this other outcome of Darwin’s theory: an immensely diverse group of individuals open to curiosity and discovery. The infectious delight that spread through the halls of the museum was contagious.

That same enthusiasm can be felt when a breathtaking photo of the cosmos is passed around on Facebook, or when a video of playful dolphins goes viral, or simply when daffodils begin to bloom in the spring. Whether people realize it or not, they love the beauty of science.

The artistic value of daffodils in the spring ought to be more widely valued within the scientific community as well. Art and science both seek to ask, to investigate, and to answer life’s biggest questions. In doing so, both art and science enthuse, unite, and impress us as a species, and therefore are conclusively linked. The same heart-racing, restless, overwhelming jolt that a Basquiat drawing inspires or that a Degas painting illumines can be simulated by the collective arousal that was felt within the Natural History Museum.

My visit to the museum showed me that the barrier I had once perceived between art and science was a false perception. With my shift in perspective—inspired by the passionate response of strangers, my friends, and myself to the museum—the barrier was revealed to be a bridge, formed by Darwin’s beautiful explanation of the origin of species.

Sunflowers: A Moment with VanGogh&Post-Impressionism

I saved Room 45 for the end of my trip to London’s National Gallery. As I walked into the room, I instantly knew where Vincent van Gogh’s Sunflowers was located. People surrounded the painting, and I could only see the upper left-hand corner. In spite of the crowd, I moved closer to the painting.

The onlookers formed an odd half-oval, and at first I thought that there was an extra barrier between the painting and them, to emphasize the importance and beauty of my favorite work of art. Instead, there sat a small group of elementary school children with blank pieces of paper, pencils, and crayons. They sat relaxed, as if a crowd of adults weren’t stretching over them for a better view of Sunflowers, while they sketched the painting in front of them.

I smiled as a little girl asked, “How much time do we have left? I have the stem and an outline of the flowers done.” One of the teachers told her she could move on to the next room if she was ready, and the girl quickly left. Like most of the other students there, she must have thought the painting was pretty but wanted to see more and do more.

I was the same way when I visited museums as a kid, but now I like to prolong my experience by looking at the paintings. The adults around me and I took our time with Sunflowers, especially after all the students left. What did we see that kept our eyes glued to the yellow flowers? What draws a person’s eye or distracts them when looking at a Post-Impressionist painting like Sunflowers? As I gazed at the mixture of thick brushstrokes and colors, I thought of the innovation that had made this painting possible.

In the 19th century, a reluctance to embrace urbanization sparked a new appreciation of leisure and a greater awareness of the unsettling state of society. The art world, claimed British poet and critic Arthur Symons in “The Decadent Movement in Literature,” initiated “a revolt from ready-made impressions and conclusions, a revolt from the ready-made of language, from the bondage of traditional form, of a form become rigid.” Artists, poets, and novelists wanted something fresh that separated itself from art movements in the past. Post-Impressionism is one thing that achieved this goal. Artists such as Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), Georges Seurat (1859–1891), and Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) created the Post-Impressionist movement organically and unconsciously. It went unnamed until art critic Roger Fry’s 1910 London exhibition, Manet and the
Post-Impressionists. Each artist valued their subjective emotional response to surrounding world and contributed to Impressionism the need to focus on more than just senses, filling their artwork with meaning and symbolism. Two of Van Gogh's greatest innovations was his use of color. Yellow, the most prominent color in *Sunflowers*, held many meanings in the 19th century. Yellow represented decadence in France and England and degeneration to moralists, who feared the destruction of a proper English society. According to London’s National Gallery, yellow in Dutch literature symbolized loyalty. But for Van Gogh, yellow meant happiness. He apparently painted *Sunflowers* during an emotionally stable and content time in his life. The yellow color encompasses the entire painting, making it seem as if it is placed in a sunny, well-lit room.

Van Gogh’s imagination awed critics of his era just as it awes critics today. Reviewers contemporary to him understood his genius and talent. Poet and art critic Julien Leclercq, who wrote about Van Gogh’s influence after his death in 1890, claims that in Van Gogh’s paintings, “[…] Nature appears as it does in dreams, or, better still, in nightmares. Level-headed, since line and color unite in a harmonious strangeness. He glimpses objects within nature, but only really sees them in himself.” The details of Van Gogh’s paintings show a focused purpose to transform nature from reality to a dreamscape where the subconscious edits a person’s perception. Journalist and critic Octave Mirbeau’s 1891 essay, “Echo de Paris,” also commented on the emotions that Van Gogh’s flowers bring to light:

*Oh, how he has understood the exquisite soul of flowers!* How his hand, which raises the terrible torches in the black heavens, becomes delicate to gather the perfumed and oh-so-frail shoots! And what caresses he finds to express their unutterable freshness and infinite grace!

*And how he has also understood what is sad, unknown and divine in eyes of poor madmen and fellow sick people!*

Van Gogh’s paintings give definition to emotions that words can’t properly describe. He is the voice of the unstable artist who strived to create his truth and share it with the world. His paintings also have the ability to give each individual a unique experience, and I wish I had taken the opportunity to ask those children what they thought of my favorite painting. Van Gogh died with only one painting sold, but his work has touched the hearts and minds of thousands, if not millions, of people. And although his paintings are not living entities, their colors and context have given them immortality. Printed on mugs, shirts, and necklaces like the one I wear daily, they have a global reach. And if a person becomes curious about the night sky on their shirt or the sunflowers on their grandmother’s tea cozy, they will learn about Vincent van Gogh and his legacy.
POSTCARDS FROM LONDON

Nadège Giraudet and Anna Waterman

Artist Statement

“Postcards from London” explores the experience of visiting places as an outsider or tourist. When going to see landmarks and museums in a new city, we must reconcile the physical space with how we always imagined it. We construct this imagined space from what we have seen in movies, from descriptions found in guidebooks, and from stories told to us by tour guides and other travelers. Buildings and alleys become symbols of national identity and memory. As with the front of a postcard, we are given “official images” that differ from the phenomenological experience of navigating a place.

The photographs are snapshots taken during our discovery of the physical space of two London museums: the Tate Modern and the Science Museum. Like the experiences people write about on the back of a postcard, they are about our impression of and interaction with the physical environment.

The artists would like to thank Nina Katchadourian for her help during the development of this project.

Note: The full version of this piece contained found sounds from an online database, freesounds.org. These audio clips were identified by site members as being “typical” of the sounds at these particular locations, along with recordings of tour guides who use specific language and performances to give meaning to a place.
How are political protests experienced by tourists and other temporary visitors to major global cities such as London, and what are their obligations to respond? While the Dean’s Honor Society was in London this spring, we visited the Houses of Parliament on March 18, 2015. On that day, a political demonstration was taking place in Parliament Square: a protest against the detainment of Saudi citizen and former London resident Shaker Aamer at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. Human rights activists have criticized the UK government for not intervening to secure Aamer’s release. He has not received a trial or even been officially charged, and several investigative reports have found that he has been tortured and subjected to inhumane conditions while imprisoned.

The Shaker Aamer case has international consequences and therefore impacts a US citizen living in New York just as much as it does a UK citizen residing in London. What are the capabilities and obligations of a tourist, however, to react to forms of political protest taking place in locations where they are only a temporary visitor? How does this thought process undermine the notion of passive tourism? Protests take place on a regular basis in cities like London. Parliament Square is a prime spot for these demonstrations, attracting protesters for the same reasons that the New York headquarters of the United Nations, the White House, and Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, do: it has symbolic significance and the promise of a high level of exposure. Additionally, just like in New York, London residents do not react to every protest that they come across, every flyer thrust at them, or every poster tacked to the walls of a Tube platform. Londoners are adept at ignoring political activism as they go about their regular business.

But the Shaker Aamer case is interesting and unusual for a key reason: the Londoners who stood across from the Houses of Parliament on that Wednesday afternoon were protesting the imprisonment of a man who is being held, and reportedly tortured, in an American institution. What, then, is the obligation of 20 or so American college students lining up outside the Houses of Parliament, eagerly awaiting their private meeting with former MP Lord Michael Wills, to react to the protest? Would the stakes be different—perhaps lower and less personal—if the protest were about a domestic UK issue, say the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment in association with the far right-wing UK Independence Party? If the protest had been about a domestic issue like that, perhaps we would have been entitled to simply observe, remark, process, and move on with our day. We could have merely noted the similarities between
the national conversation in the UK and debates about immigration in the US, and continued on. But when the protest is so intricately intertwined with American foreign policy, do we not have a responsibility to react in some way?

A question worth asking might be: What would the ethical obligation to have some sort of reaction look like? Since we were following a tight itinerary, there wasn't time to interview the protesters or time for those familiar with and interested in the issue to consider joining the protest. There was time to at most snap a few pictures, as I did, and rush to rejoin the NYU delegation headed in to meet Lord Wills. Even though a more extensive form of interaction with a protest is often not possible while on organized tours, the lack of a reaction to an issue so intimately connected to the acts of one's own country should not be acceptable, regardless of whether one is, in that moment, in the role of tourist, resident, or citizen. This essay is my reaction and is intended to fill the void created by the lack of conversation on the trip about the troubling Shaker Aamer case.

While in London, the Dean's Honor Society also attended the “Conflict, Time, Photography” exhibit at the Tate Modern. This stunning exhibit included horrific photos of a range of international wars and catastrophes, including the US bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We saw brutal images of survivors with extensive burns and keloid scarring following the bombings, a clock stopped at the exact time the first bomb dropped, and a soldier's helmet with a piece of bone fused to it; images of a destroyed France after WWI; photos of US bombings of Afghanistan circa 2001; Holocaust survivors from Ukraine; and more. The first gallery displayed photographs taken mere minutes, days, and weeks after tragedy. The final gallery included photos taken up to 99 years after the initial conflict.

Throughout the exhibit, a refrain from American writer Kurt Vonnegut's famed novel, Slaughterhouse Five, was displayed: “Everything was beautiful, and nothing hurt.” Vonnegut, himself a survivor of war, envisioned a world without violence, victimization, or marginalization. He envisioned a world where images of victims with radiation burns in Nagasaki would not be possible, and a world where a prison like the one at Guantanamo Bay would not exist as a place for torture to be carried out, with no repercussions for the government sanctioning it.

In reality, we do not yet live in a world like the one Vonnegut imagined, a world where “everything is beautiful and nothing hurts.” For this reason, we must always react, interact, and respond. The images in the “Conflict, Time, Photography” exhibit depict the dangers of a world that does not react, a world that stands by as the innocent are victimized and oppressed. Whether an event occurred 70 years ago in Ukraine, 12 years ago in Iraq, or less than a year ago in the Gaza Strip, we have an obligation to react to, question, and challenge oppression and injustice when we see it unfold and when we see others protesting it. A reaction can start with a simple conversation, a question asked, or a photo snapped. This reaction must then be followed by thoughtful engagement and awareness of why a protest is taking place. We have a duty to investigate the roots of the injustice triggering a protest. Neither tourists nor residents of any city are exempt.
Artist Statement

In this piece I am responding to a lecture from Lord Michael Wills, a former top advisor to Tony Blair, who described the problem of the UK’s fragmenting identity—a problem that he was never able to address while in government. I decided I would give it a go through a marketing campaign similar to previous efforts such as “Cool Britannia” and that for the recent Olympics. Using the methods of advertising, I researched and wrote a creative brief on how the UK should rebrand itself in light of its current identity crisis. I then translated this creative brief into a poster influenced by British propaganda from WWI, WWII, and the Cold War, which I observed at the Imperial War Museum in London. By contrasting the creative brief and the posters, I explore the process of modern nation-building through corporate branding.

Creative Brief

Client/Client Contact Information: Ministry of Patriotism, United Kingdom
Project Name and Description: Create a new national identity for the United Kingdom

Background/Overview

The United Kingdom is currently facing an identity crisis. Since the dismantling of the British Empire in the mid-20th century, the incentive to remain a United Kingdom has declined. Scotland nearly seceded by referendum in 2014, and around 60% of citizens refer to themselves as English, Scottish, or Welsh instead of British. Parliament has devolved more and more power to regional governments to appease local populations. Fortunately, however, as ethnic distinctions no longer apply due to intermarriage, youth and immigrant demographics in urban centers are more and more referring to themselves as British.

Objective

The #remixUK campaign will solidify a British identity by appealing to British youth through music and their mixed backgrounds. Living in a postmodern global world, people have become increasingly skeptical of national narratives that are often too exclusive and contested. This campaign offers the UK an opportunity to remix their many identities into something that sounds much better than the original. Through an integrated marketing campaign, the citizens of the UK will be encouraged to remix what being from the UK means to them. British artists, musicians, and DJs will be invited to remix the sound and look of Britain by synthesizing influences like English, Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Indian, Jamaican, and French. On social media, anyone can share their idea of Britain using #remixUK to organize a national conversation.

Reason to Believe

Instead of telling people what it means to be British from the top down, this campaign invites the British people to share both the good and the bad of being British. This mix of voices both online and off will allow Britain to envision itself as the diverse global nation it has become.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

Villa Grimaldi by Maomaо Hu
Reference:

Repainting the Facade by Patrick Martinsen
Reference:

The Pragmatic and the Political in Post-Crisis Argentina by Lauren Wilfong
Notes:

Soy Argentino; Es un Sentimiento No Puedo Parar by Joe Kozlowski
Notes:
The title of this essay is a line from a popular song sung by supporters of the Argentine national soccer team. It translates to “I am Argentine; it is a feeling I cannot stop!”

Las Madres y Los Turistas by Alex Hansen
Notes:

Queer Tango by Lindsey Victoria Thompson
Notes:
3. Ibid., 462.
7. Ibid., 139.
9. Ibid., 211.

Complex Trauma and Healing: Memorials and Argentina’s Dirty War by Liz Yates
Notes:
2. Ibid., 70.
12. “Remembrance and Human Rights Centre.”

Maternal Politics? by Bailey Teado
Notes:
Three Tickets by Susan Rattigan
Notes:

SMOG by Christian Hodges
Notes:

Entertainment and Censorship in China by Kristen Iglesias
Notes:
2. Eva Jin pointed out that one interesting consequence of many "male"-oriented genres being censored or banned is that female directors tend to do especially well in China compared to most other film markets.
3. For example, see Evan Osnos of The New York Times describing his experiences with censorship: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/03/opinion/sunday/chinas-censored-world.html?_r=1.

Sunflowers by Dani Tompson
Notes:

References:

Museum Audiences and Artifact Appropriation by Emma Waterman
Notes:
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Fitness Culture by Austin Basallo
Notes:
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