

Conversations Over a Brew

Strong Women: Marina Bortoluzzi and Susan Hansen

Transcript

Recorded online on Tuesday 23rd July 2024

N - Nat

M - Marina

S - Susan

01:02:57

[INTRO MUSIC]

N: Conversations Over a Brew is a series of intimate, recorded conversations exploring the stories and ideas of the people we make art with. This podcast is about the power of listening and conversation, and how making art can bring us together and create change. In this series of Conversations Over a Brew, we get behind the scenes of the Strong Woman project, a mural project highlighting the untold stories of local women. It has been created by mosaic artist Carrie Reichardt in collaboration with communities in St Helens and Knowsley. In this episode, we meet up with Marina Bortoluzzi and Susan Hansen. Marina is a curator and researcher with a specialist interest in raising the profiles of women, trans and non-binary artists. She is the founder and CEO of Women on Walls, an international online platform that connects and promotes women artists with a particular focus on street art. Susan is the chair of the Visual and Creative Methods Research Group at Middlesex University in London, and is Europe's most cited street art scholar. She is the editor of Nuart Journal and co-editor of Visual Studies, and vice president of the International Visual Sociology Association. In the following conversation, we speak about the current landscape of street art and where the Strong Women project fits into this.

[THE SOUND OF A KETTLE BOILING FADES IN, THE CLICK OF THE SWITCH INDICATING IT IS BOILED, WATER BEING POURED AND THE CLINK OF A TEASPOON STIRRING TEA IN A CUP]

S: First of all, thank you very much for the invitation to have this conversation. I'm really looking forward to it. My name is Susan Hansen. I work at Middlesex University in London, where I'm the chair of the visual and arts based methods group. I also am editor of a couple of journals, so Nuart Journal and co-editor of Visual Studies Journal, and I'm the current president of the International Visual Sociology Association. I'm particularly interested in studying conversations on walls over time as a form of democratic dialogue. And of course, everybody is part of this conversation. So this is intended as a counter to the ways in which we might approach walls as finished works of art, akin to works in museums or galleries. Rather, I'm interested in all the marks made on walls, whether it's by, you know, an eight year old girl or a 40 year old white male artist, yeah, because we do as hopefully we'll get into it in a moment, have kind of an androcentric assumption in our reading of work on the walls and that we, we assume a certain author of the work, and that author is often assumed to be cis male and not "some girl", in quotation marks. Right. That'll do me for now.

M: Hello everyone, and thank you also for having me here on the podcast, on the show. My name is Marina Bortoluzzi. I am Brazilian, so I'm sorry for my English. I'm an art curator based in Sao Paulo. I'm also a master's student in art history, and my research focuses on the intersection between women and spirituality. I have worked with urban art for 13 years now, and I co-founded a company called Instagrafite, which produces murals in Brazil and around the world and has an online media platform focussed in public art. And I'm also the founder of Women on Walls, a platform for women, cis and trans and non-binary people in the visual arts. So, like Susan, I am also into that subject, you know, not only about public

art and murals, but especially about women and their recognition and in the visual arts field. And to talk about Women on Walls. We say WoW. It's a platform. We can find us in Instagram, but also online. We have a digital platform that provides a connection space for the recognition and professional inclusion for of women and non-binary people with the aim of mapping the talents you know, the professionals women and non-binary from art through a directory with the profiles of those who work in the field, not only artists, but also curators, producers, photographers, and so on with their different realities, objectives and experiences. So it's not a platform just for Brazil. It's online and it's for everyone, all the women and all the non-binary people that work in this field around the world. And that's it. So we can start.

N: Thank you. So I guess we'll just dive right in and excuse the obvious question. But why have you both chosen to focus on women and non-binary people as actors in street art?

M: When I first entered this market 13 years ago, I found myself in a completely sexist environment. First of all, as a business woman, because, you know, an owner of a Start-Up usually is just, you know, it's not usually it's more men than than women in this position. Also, as a creator of digital digital content and also as a creator in this field of public art, I often found myself as the only woman in the room in a meeting, you know, and we know that the history of art was told by men. You know, we know that for many years we had this male perspective as a narrative. And we are talking about 2024 now. Right? So I think I think that I realise, you know, my, my position to be a like, like Susan said, you know, to be a female in a, in a, in a place that I was the only one, you know, I just realised that it was powerful and I had to do something about it, you know, I had to bring more women with me. So I think that in 2018, I just realised what I can do about it. You know, I am a female art curator. You know, I have this position to choose artists. I can select people for my project, you know. I can select the production team. I can, you know. So I found myself in this position of decision and I realised that I could do something about it. And, and, and I think that many, plenty of projects of female artists that I know started in 2018, I think 2018 was a great year for this powerful insight. This egregore, you know, of insight around the world. And I feel like plenty of projects started by that year. But my project started in 2020 during pandemic time. I just realised that I need to do something. I need to bring more women with me. I can use my resources. I can use my tools. I can help them, you know, with my networking. So that's what I did. I found myself in a position that I was doing curation, and I was choosing a lot of males in my curation as well. And I realised that I was replicating the history, the past history, you know, and I said, no, no, I need to do something different because I am a woman, a woman, you know, I can do something different. So that's what I did. I realised my own, my own decisions and I, I created a project to, to show people that you need to see that there is more fish in the sea, you know, because most of the time people say, "Oh, I didn't hire a female artist because there is no female artist doing this style or I don't know any female artist in my city." You know, usually there is this speech going on still. And so I said to myself, no, I'm creating a platform with a lot of different categories and a lot of different styles, so people cannot answer that. So that's what I did with myself. You know, I realised that in my study when I

needed to be fast in a creation in a project to, to to hire someone, I always hired a male because it was easier to us. There's more there, you know. And then I said to myself, "No, no, I need to study. I need to find more, you know, and I need to show other people that is very possible. And there is a lot of amazing, talented female professionals in our field." So that's what I did with myself.

S: Such a cool project. Such a cool project. I have so many questions about your project, Marina. But. So yeah, I mean, I guess I guess what she said kind of I mean, I'm, I'm primarily an academic, so I guess I'm coming at it from a slightly different angle. And I've long been a queer feminist academic with a sense of social justice. So that obviously informs all of my work. I mean, graffiti and street art isn't everything that I do. So I also do work around sexual violence and domestic violence. So I'm particularly interested in art that picks up on these forms of gendered injustice, I guess, as well. So I'm not purely interested in this as a decorative or as vandalism, but also as a way that we can voice injustice and have conversations about that. Yeah, I mean, there are, I guess, very few professors who are not male in this field, although that is changing over time. So graffiti and street art studies is still quite a young field. But as kind of younger scholars develop, we are seeing more women and non-binary folk achieving positions of power, which is what we also want to see, obviously in parallel with artists and writers, because there have always been women and non-binary artists and graffiti writers. But as Marina points out, we don't always know so much about them. So if you look at early interviews with Lady Pink, for example, who I know Marina has worked with, so, you know, the best known woman graffiti writer from the early 80s in New York City. She's the only one really most of us can think of if we're asked to think about graffiti writers from that really important historic time. This is like the kind of the origin story of graffiti that's revered around the world. Only one woman is allowed to have any representation. But she says at her school there were loads of girls into graffiti writing. She was not alone. But we don't know the names of any of those girls. All we have is Lady Pink. You know, that seems to be sufficient. I mean, perhaps people just assumed that these other girls' work was the work of men or boys. Because with our androcentric assumptions about authorship and risk and our rights to public space, we see public space, particularly public urban space, particularly public urban space at night, which might involve breaking into a train yard, is something that only a boy or a man could do. Yeah. So we kind of erase women from history through the very ways that we look at urban space. Yeah. I'll leave it there for now. Plenty of things that Marina said that I'd love to pick up on, especially about representation of women at festivals. But maybe that's a slightly different topic.

M: No, I'm just complementing what Susan is talking about. You know, usually when I start a lecture by asking which men people remember from urban arts and which women, you know artists people remember or even like, which artists do you remember from public art, you know, or urban art? And of course, the majority answers the males, you know, the the male artists, you know, of course, Keith Haring, Basquiat, Shepard Fairey, JR, Banksy, OSGEMEOS here in Brazil, you know, that are of, of, of course, globally well known. But like Susan said, when we think about women, you know, especially the pioneers. It's

always like Lady Pink, you know? So of course, there's plenty of more. And then we have, of course, Maya Hayuk, Swoon, faith47, Miss Van. But then in the second answer, when we ask that, when we ask that, especially in urban art, and it's not only in arts, you know, because when I ask also about contemporary art, we also answer Kandinsky, Salvador Dali, you know, we all always answered that male artists, that we always were taught in school or we, we saw in museums when we were little kids, you know, always it's a male name before a female name, you know. And we need to ask ourselves why. You know, why?

S: Why? Why?

M: Why, why, why, why, why? We are programmed. You know why do we still repeat that. You know. And that's our main, main question here, you know.

N: And that also affects how we access space as well, just going back to what Susan was saying, when the urban environment is seen as the preserve for the male and then those who may want to do some graffiti writing or feel compelled to might hold themselves back as well. And so it becomes a self-fulfilling thing. Yeah. Maybe that's something we can return to. But before that, I'm going to return to something you said in your introduction Susan, about street art being a democratic form of conversation. And I was wondering how and I think this is something you can both speak to, how this changes when it's publicly commissioned. And how then also not just for the artists, but how people interact with that as well. And perhaps this is something we can then also talk about in the context of Carrie's work as well. But before we touch upon that, just to go back to, yes, how does the public commission change the nature of the artwork and how people interact with it?

S: Well, it depends what kind of work or what kind of artist you're commissioning and what model of commissioning you're employing. I think that Heart of Glass is doing something that's a little bit different in those terms, by way of trying to include more members of the community in actively shaping the work. So I mean, I think that's quite different, perhaps from a case where you might have somebody flown into town to paint a mural that really doesn't connect with residents at all, or their histories or identities or stories in any sense. So I think you may not have as much respect for the latter case of the imposed commissioned mural, whereas I know Carrie's work in particular does draw quotes from residents. And also, I think some of her little tiles are co-produced. So there is an element of co-production there that is already leaning towards the democratic, I guess. But I also remember when you took me on a tour of some of the amazing works that you have somebody had tagged along the bottom of Nomad Clan's mural and you were all stood there wondering what to do about it. I was like, wow, that's really interesting because they were tagging it as like a frame. Like not in the central part of the mural, but in a way that was not interfering with the work itself. It was kind of in conversation with it. So my instinct would be probably not to buff that. But I think an ordinary instinct. And I had a conversation with artist at Nuart Festival last month about this, about whether they would prefer that their their work were cleaned and restored, or whether they would prefer that people were

permitted to kind of engage with the work themselves and to, you know, to kind of risk it getting "defaced", in scare quotes. I'm using my fingers here. And a lot of the artists were of the opinion that if the work is in public space, then people should be able to make marks around and over it, so long as it's not hateful or, you know, completely destructive. Did that answer the question? I think I may have rambled a little.

N: No, no, it really did. And I, I didn't want to ask a rambling question, so I hoped that you would touch upon that moment that you just did. About, yeah, how people interact with street art. In that way, it might be publicly commissioned. But then it becomes something else and becomes part of a conversation. And so it did answer and perhaps you might have something to say on that, Marina, particularly as you're running a platform and you have a commissioning agency, right?

M: Yeah. I think, like Susan said, it depends on the artist and it depends on the location. You know, there's locations that are open to receive any type of artists, and there's artists that are more complicated, you know, because of their, their pieces, you know, their art. So it depends on each project. I feel that especially Brazil is more open to different subjectives, different people. And that's amazing. You know, I feel that Brazil is very - it's running fast in this conversation about different that we need to include different types of people and genders and everything, you know, in our art, not only in the streets but also in museums and galleries. And that's amazing, you know? So I don't feel that the commission it's the, the, the different, the difficult part, you know, that's not a problem even if it's legal or not here. You know, I feel it's more about the artist and more about the project that we are doing. And of course artists face gender biases and to obtain difficult commissions, you know opportunities. Of course, especially here in the past, more male artists were invited to projects, you know, and I feel that it's coming. It's getting there. You know, we are creating more space for LGBTQ+ people and also more female artists, trans and cis. So I feel like we are more open here to opportunities, to everyone. And when we talk about commission, we talk about someone that is hiring, hiring the artist. Right. So we're talking about a brand or institution that is asking the person to do that, the project. So I feel that we are not talking more just about the community and the artist that is doing the project, but also someone that is hiring. Right. And that's what I'm talking about. I feel that the person, the brand, the institution that is hiring, it's more open and knows that they need to include more people because if not, they're going to be behind, you know, so that's good. And it's bad that it's in a way nowadays that we are hiring someone to say that, oh, I'm hiring everyone, you know, I'm open, I'm included. You know, it's bad in that sense that we're doing that. But at least it's a point to start, you know. So I don't know if I'm clear, but yeah.

N: You're you're talking about the performative aspect and, and the opportunities for brands to I guess, use women and non-binary people as a way to and also -

S: Festivals. Festivals are now expected to have, you know, some kind of parity.

M: Exactly.

S: Kind of visible counts. Like, you know, I know festival organisers who will do a count too.

M: Exactly.

S: It is a very bad look if it's not even.

M: Exactly. And it's bad that they hire -

S: Especially if you're on the side that's getting selected to make up or to make things look equal. And then you look at the walls that people are offered, and then you've got to check that everybody's offered the same kind of fee. So there's no point having, you know, sort of equal numbers represented if all the big walls go to cis men.

M: Exactly, exactly.

S: Or all the fees or all the publicity.

M: So I hope we're getting a point that it should be from the perspective of, oh, it's amazing to have different people together. You know, different people make different things, you know, should be like that, but not not yet. But we're getting there.

N: So would you say the mechanism of the commission is readdressing the balance? So originally I was thinking of say street art or graffiti being something that can, is a form of free expression. It happens outside commission. And going back to what Susan is saying, people either assume it's by a man, or maybe women feel dissuaded from actually doing it because it's seen as the preserve of a male. But a commission, aside from all its murky politics, may begin to readdress that.

S: Yes, potentially. I mean, this definitely applies to street art and muralism, more so than street art, as it was formerly kind of executed in graffiti writing. Don't see many graffiti commissions, so it may not be a corrective for that particular art form. But yeah, I mean, I think Marina is trailblazing in this respect and is providing a really useful resource for people to be able to have no excuses for saying, well, I don't know any artists like that. Here we go. Here's a lot. Have a look.

N: Returning to Carrie's work now, I was wondering, yes, if you could speak a little bit about that and where you saw that fitting in with the wider field or even indeed how this commission has been set up and produced by, in partnership with Carrie and Heart of Glass and how that's been produced. Is that something unique or is it a pattern or trend that is beginning to happen or... Yeah, could you speak a little bit about that?

S: It takes a lot more investment. Both kind of economically and also in terms of time and commitment from commissioners or organisers to to bring a project like that to a meaningful fruition. So that kind of project is, you know, for those reasons. I guess a lot of festivals and commissioning, at least to my knowledge, run on a much shorter window. That sometimes only pays lip service, if that, to kind of community engagement, just for reasons of budget. If you want 12 artists represented and you want, you know, six artists to be from different countries in the world and everybody to be of different genders, there's not necessarily always the money left over for these really wonderful in-depth projects such as the one that Carrie is engaged in. So yeah, in many ways it's unique, both because of your kind of belief in that model. Which is, I think, a really good example for how to accomplish this. But also because people are making pragmatic decisions that kind of cut out the possibility of that level of involvement of community. For those of you who don't know Carrie's work, you should check it out. She does engage with communities and their histories, and she engages directly with people in the co-production of her work, which is ceramic based and also involves archival materials and printing those in a form that really is kind of the antithesis of what we usually see with urban art in that it is kind of fired in a kiln, so it will outlast us all. So, you know, graffiti and street art are usually quite ephemeral. You know walls get painted over, they fade, they peel, somebody tags over them or stick posters over the top and in, you know, three to five to seven years, it'll have disappeared. The work on the wall. And that's part of the beauty of it, in my opinion. But Carrie's work will still be here after the apocalypse. Sorry. That's quite dark, isn't it? It's like when archaeologists come in, you know, a couple of hundred years, her work will have survived. And so it really -

N: Because you still get the mosaics in Pompeii. So thinking about the apocalypse.[Laughs].

M: Wow.

S: So it's a really refreshing thing to include. And it's in that sense, it's so worth the investment, the extra investment it takes to do that kind of work with communities, because it's not producing it just for two to three or four years. It's producing something that is quite monumental, but also quite approachable and accessible to people. So I think it's a really wonderful gift from the community to future communities. That sounds a bit. I do love Carrie's work. I am a bit biased in that respect.

M: That's very amazing what you said about her, because when you think about tile it's a tile, it's a material that we find in construction. Right? So we are rebuilding, right? And plenty of projects of women in the arts that we, they say rebuild, rebuild history. Right? So when we talk about a tile, it's a very iconic symbol of rebuilding, right? This history that we were not told about. Right. So I think the project in general is strong women. It contributes to the movement that we are talking here, you know, about around the world. About the recognition and to shine a light on women's history that deserves to be heard. Right. And I think that her material is very unique to do that.

S: And it really fits well, doesn't it?

M: It fits well.

S: It's strong material.

M: Very special. And like Susan said after the apocalypse is still big, it's going to continue there you know, the tile is there and also the I think the, the whole purpose behind that, you know, it's it's it's amazing. It's what we're talking here, you know, to show other other stories that we don't know about. And it's not, it's not a project that finishes there in the title, you know, it continues because you were changed by the project and when you were changed by a project. You know, when someone in a mural, for example, paints about a woman that we don't know about, we are changing the history, you know, and there is, I have plenty of books here with me because I'm doing a master's thesis right now. I cannot hold one that is there, but it's Leda Maria Martins, is a philosopher here from Brazil, and she talks about this peculiar spiral time. She talks about spiral time. It was also a subject in the last Biennale here in Sao Paulo. And when we change the present, we change the past. You know, it gives me when we talk here and in this conversation about female artists that we didn't know about. And someone is listening to us and discovering these artists. You know, we are changing the past. You know, when we find a history of a woman, it doesn't matter the field, you know, and we give her a space in the line of the history of arts or whatever of our lives. We change the past because we are including her in this line, in this history line, you know. So that's amazing. And I feel that we can do that. We have the power to change the past by recognising these women in the, in the present and in the future.

N: And yeah, and how we interact with the past and how we view ourselves through the lens of the past. As in women artists have always been there, trans artists have always been there, non-binary artists have always been there. But the narrative is that perhaps they haven't. But like you say, by changing the past also gives permission to people in the future and how we yeah, how we, how we interact with those themes. As researchers in the field, what are - yeah. Can I ask what you are, are you noticing - what trends are you noticing? Are you seeing more women and non-binary people become more visible? Are you seeing more festivals? I mean, myself, I know very little about this field. Are you seeing festivals platforming or just for women and non-binary people? And trans artists? How is the field changing or if at all? And how is it in different parts of the world, like you're over in Sao Paulo? And is that context very different to where Susan and I are? I'm sure it is. I really don't know.

M: I feel like I said to you guys, I feel that in Brazil we are very open to, you know, different objectives that I call, you know, different people with their different experiences. And that's amazing, especially in museums and in galleries here. They are very in a very good moment and in opening these new programs in the big museums here, you know, in Sao

Paulo that they are, you know, one of the biggest museums in Latin America. And having a moment for, for right now, for example, in MASP, that is a very big museum here. We have a very unique schedule of, of different from exhibitions of non-binary and trans artists right now. So it's a very good moment in contemporary art. Urban art, on the other hand, is still getting there. I feel like when we talk about commission projects, for example, we still hire these kinds of people in the, in commemoration in, on specific dates. You know, July is the LGBT month. Then we have November is the black month. Then we have March, of course, 8th March. It's Women's International Day. It's always the women's month. So we still have categorised these and we hire and not me, but the brands the institutions usually see these different communities by month still. You know, when I talk about my platform and I, I need to have sponsors, they always look at us next to March and I say the platform, it lives the whole year, you know, we need sponsors for the whole year, right? So that's the thing that I still think that is connected with what I said before, that it's we still have to deliver something to show that we are into this project, into this movement. You know, it's not about something that should be natural. You know, it's all still something connected to, related to a month or a cause that is a specific movement in that time of the year, you know, shouldn't be like that, you know? So I feel like we still need to work on that. And there are a lot of amazing trans artists here in Brazil. I can name, for example, Pati Rigon, who is a realist artist. She's amazing. And so there is plenty here in Brazil. And they are recognised they are the people and, you know, institutions, festivals call them for, for to participate in the projects is something that is common here. It's not something that we are against. I think Sao Paulo is like London, is like New York. You know, I think big cities are more open, you know, to that. I don't know, like maybe small villages or small cities are more difficult for this conversation. But I think that big cities are - it's normal to have, you know it's open to everyone, but it's still what we remember most during these specific dates, and that's not something that we should do. We need to open the conversation to the whole year.

S: Absolutely. Yeah. No, it really does marginalise doesn't it. Restricting kind of funding or representation to those token months or even a token day. I mean, it's March the 8th. It's not really the entire we don't get a whole month. We just get one one day. Yeah. No, I'm trying to get, Daniel Albanese has produced a feature length documentary called Out In The Streets, which features queer and non-binary street artists and graffiti writers from around the world. And I really want to get that screened in London. But getting that screened outside of Pride Month is quite difficult to convince mainstream persons to to back. I really would like to see it at a different time of the year. I think, you know, it would. It would be fabulous. It that he did. Yeah, he travelled around the world interviewing all sorts of people from all sorts of countries as well, you know, because that's that's the other thing that I'm so glad we've got Marina here. So we're not just kind of UK or Europe based, you know, like this is intersectional. It's it's not as simple as, as gender and gender identity alone. Yeah. I mean, I think, I don't know, you live in the UK too. So there there are challenges. And urban art does, as Marina says, I think, tend to lag behind somewhat contemporary art in terms of its willingness to take some steps forward in representation that are brave. I mean, just this last year, I've run a number of discussion panels with

women and non-binary artists. And, you know, the suggestion is that that I title these panels or focus these panels on the fact of being a woman or non-binary? And I kind of I resist that. I mean, these are categories that we all happen to share with everybody on stage, including me. I don't think that's the only thing we should be talking about. Although obviously, you know, the audience will always pick up on that at some point. So, so long as that's organically part of a discussion and not imposed as the only reason that you are here because people are sensitive to that. You know, I mean, we've been talking about programming decisions being made on the basis of creating equality. We don't want people to get the sense that they are only here because they happen to have these protected characteristics. You know, so I just... It irks me, and I, I, I know artists who have been offended by being asked to be on panels on account of being assigned female at birth or non-binary or whatever. It just, it's, can we move beyond it, please? Sorry, I'm getting grumpy. I need more coffee.

N: No, no, I yeah, I completely agree. And to be. Yeah. Rather than speaking as an artist about your own practice, you are speaking - either asked to be speaking on behalf of or from a position of being a woman, a trans, non-binary and it's exhausting.

Who asks a man to tell us what it's like to be a male artist. I mean, that just that's that little substitution that lets us see how ridiculous this should feel to us. Yeah. So what's it like being a male artist? What challenges have you encountered? Are you scared to go out at night? Like, do you experience sexual harassment when you're painting on the street? You know, do people ever assume you're a woman once they see your work because it's so strong. It's these. None of these questions make sense when you flip it. So I don't know. I just - I'm looking forward to the world where things are slightly different. I think we need to keep pushing.

N: We do. But I think it's going to be beyond our lifetimes, I think.

S: No, I can live a long time.

[A BRIEF RELAXING AND SOOTHING MUSICAL INTERLUDE PLAYS]

N: You got grumpy. Susan, would you like to clarify why you were grumpy?

S: Oh, I did get a little bit grumpy. I think I think I was having a little bit of a historical knee jerk of of my own that we need to be cautious of, of people feeling that some of our efforts are tokenistic and and not respecting them as artists in kind of curating groups of people together simply on the basis of them being a woman or non-binary or trans. Because historically, when people have done that uncritically. Yeah. In an effort to offset their under-representation, say in books about women street artists or women graffiti writers or in, you know, well-meaning projects that draw together women and non-binary folk as an exception to the rule. This is what scholars like Vittorio Parisi call a cabinet of curiosities approach that can be ultimately marginalising and alienating to those participating unless it

is accompanied by critical sociological, political, or historical analysis. But I think this is what the Strong Women Project and critical conversations like this are aiming to do. So if we have this critical intersectional approach then we are it's fine to be doing this, but if this is a cabinet of curiosities approach, like a sideshow, which it may feel like, although I'm not saying that's the intention of programmers, we just we just need to be continuing these these critical conversations, which also highlight this as a real anxiety, perhaps, of those participating that we need to assuage and offset.

N: Completely. I would say to add two things to that. The process with Carrie invited a whole community to, as you know Susan, to speak about their strong women. And so it wasn't just women being involved. It was everyone in the community to readdress the fact that we only broadly honour men. And then the other point I would say is it's when projects like these are conversation starters and which this project will be, and there's other wraparound things. So for example there was the oral history element to this and working with someone who's, who's an expert in gathering working class histories, Dr Greig Campbell and also working alongside a local historian, Sam Best. And again, just gathering female histories but from the whole community. And there's the difference. And then using this as a starting point to continue those conversations. So those conversations become embedded rather than this othering, this exercise of othering.

S: I wanted to make sure that I wasn't putting your project in with that category of problematic alienating.

N: No, no. But it's important.

S: It's important to clarify what it is, what it is that is different about the approach that you have taken, because I think there are some real lessons in that.

M: And to have those allies is very important, you know, to have allies in this, in this, not only in this project, but in every project. We talk about women. It's very, very, very important.

N: Are you seeing examples of this happening elsewhere? Or are there different kinds of community approaches to building urban art together in, in different countries, in different contexts? Maybe that's a question more for you. Marina.

M: Yeah, well, we in our Instagram. We often track that. That's our main subject in our content. So we track exhibitions, museums and projects that are doing something with, you know, recognising women around the world, but especially street art festivals, projects with murals and there is plenty I can remember one in, in, in Italy. And also there are a lot of projects and festivals created by, by women. So like Susan said, it's not specifically about talking about women's history, but there is a women that it's selecting the artists or selecting the subjects. And so there is not something that is very, how can I say allegorical, but it's a it's there is a woman perspective in the narrative, so it's very important. You know,

I can remember also from London there is Katy Hessel and that she has a book, *The Story Without Men*, and she also has a Instagram, *The Great Women Artist*, and also a podcast that is very good. And she also highlights women in, in the field doing different stuff and, and, you know, projects and festivals and artists related to our subject here.

N: I guess, I guess that was more than I thought I asked, but perhaps I didn't clarify. I was, are you seeing examples of durational projects or projects that really start conversations elsewhere?

M: One I, one I can remember, it's a project that I did here in Brazil in 2022. Between. Yeah, it was '22/'23. I did an exhibition here with a lot of female artists from the urban arts or also contemporary arts painting women from the independence of Brazil. Because when we talk about independence or a point in history in the point of a nation or a city. We talk about the, the men that went to the battlefield and that they oh, we are independent because of this, those men, you know, and we talk about the women that were part of our history here in Brazil that change our nation as it is, you know, so we mapped more than 100 women and I, I invited 40 artists to paint those portraits of women and they and talk about their history, you know, not only not only white female warriors, but also, you know, black women, indigenous and and we talk about their history, you know, and how they helped also in the, in these battles. And it's when we talk about war or, you know, something related to that in history we never thought of, we always think that women are there holding the children, you know, and we never think about them as, you know more in an active position

N: But even holding the children, I mean, that's an important part.

M: That's an important part as well.

N: Social reproduction, you know.

M: But they are not mentioned. They are exactly. You are right. But they are not mentioned as well, you know because when we read historical books, we read the parts of, you know, conqueror and, you know, something related to that. So we brought on the light, those women and we talk about their history. So it's something related to what you're doing. But in a more wider way here in Brazil, because we are talking about Brazil in general, not only just a city. Right. But I think what you are doing is very special. And we need to say here is that we don't need to do everything that we do. I always think big. I always do my projects in English so everyone can understand because of course, Portuguese, you know, not everyone speaks or reads so great. But it's very important for us to say that every project counts, you know, every different community talking about different women that were not you know, heard or different histories. You know, it's very important. You know, so I feel that perhaps we don't know because we are not in different communities here to give examples that I know the examples that I've, I've, I've, I was involved to you know, I was, I was related to but I feel that even that we don't know if there is some that someone is

listening to us and knows maybe can they can, you know, comment about because this is very important. You know, we need to understand that everything that we do in our city, in our space, in our community, in our neighbourhood is important to this movement to grow.

N: Yeah I agree. And maybe Susan, could you speak to that? Are you aware of any trends or, you know, as researchers you look at trends, right. And are there durational projects happening?

S: Not as commonly as would be optimal. I mean, you're still, I think, pretty much an outlier, I guess, for the reasons we discussed earlier, just the pure economics of funding and supporting a project like this. You know, people expect from, you know, a street art or mural festival that you'll have ten enormous murals at the end or 12 even. And that model relies on, you know, getting those artists in for a week or ten days and then out. You would have to reduce or increase the funding or reduce the number of artists in order to run more duration or residency based projects that involve really engaging with the community. But having said that, I have watched Carrie Reichardt successfully advocate for a more durational and meaningful engagement with communities at standard street art festivals in order for her to be able to do something more akin to the model of engagement that you have with the Strong Women project. I mean, nowhere near as durational, but still, you know, sort of going up, you know, two months in advance, you know, doing some kind of field visits, meeting with local archivists, talking to local people and kind of setting things up so that for that week of intense production, there's all that groundwork in place. So there are ways, I think, to incorporate that within standard festival models, but not that many projects that I am aware of. And please do correct me if I'm wrong to have this as their primary model.

M: I think one thing that I, that I remember, Susan, is that we just met me and Susan. We just met in Portugal, in a city called Covilhã. So a small city. And what I just realised, listening to you right now, is that every time we go to a street art festival, it's not like Susan was saying. It's not like what you guys are doing that are more in the long term, you know, and there is you know, like you said, some historical people, professionals, some helping in this, in this research and everything. But every time we go to a street art festival, especially when we are in small communities, we do some not in a deeper way that we wanted to do, but we do some. The artists do some research about the city and in some terms, not about specifically. They don't paint exactly about women women, but they they paint about the local traditions, the local symbols, etc., you know, so in some sense, the street art festivals that we go, we give some we give some space and some and we put some spotlight in the, in the qualities in the, in the, you know, the human traditions and ancestors and the history of the city, you know, so I feel in some sense we have that in the street art festivals. Right. But of course, we will be amazing if we have these, you know, these professionals helping to give more deeper knowledge about the history of each city.

S: It's more details to work with, isn't it? You know, I mean, the theme of the last Nuart Festival was intangible cultural heritage, which is, you know, all of those kinds of memories

and practices from the past that inform our present. And, you know, the artists all interpreted that theme differently with different varying levels of kind of engagement. But, you know, KMG, for example, responded to kind of mythological, strong warrior women figures from Scottish history, you know, and CBloxx went back to this kind of pagan history of landscape that involved gender. So, you know, depending on, yeah, the brief and the artists and the and the time given and the resources given, then then you can make an approximation, but it's the durational aspect. I think that that marks what you're doing, which is kind of distinct from a very compressed festival model, which is the dominant model of the city's commission.

N: I guess I guess that'll be something, or at least for me, interesting to monitor. There's, you know, if the models of production change over time as I'm thinking particularly in relation to ways of funding and how funding is starting to or wake up to the benefits of durational approaches and or at least in, in the language it uses, maybe not in practice. But that's another conversation. Let's. Yeah, I'll wrap it up. So if there's any final comments you would like to leave our listeners with in terms of well, anything you'd like to say? But speaking about what are your, what are your hopes for the future of the field?

M: I, I believe we are evolving, right? We are understanding that that's the new thing that we need to do. And of course, there are some people that are not pleased with that. But we, we, we know that it's necessary, you know, to hire and to exchange with artists and professionals of different objectives and experiences and to create a more inclusive, more diverse, more creative environment. And however I need to to address that. The challenge is that when we talk about changing history and bringing up new stories, right? Many do not not want that. Many people do not want that. You know, they are not. They are comfortable in their bubbles and their privileges. And this causes us to have people who get in the way, you know? So I feel that the rules, like we said, the canons, the critics, the basis of art history has always been guided by men. So breaking this does not happen overnight. Right? And there will always be someone to get in the way. And we want paths to be open for the new, for new projects, you know, for, for artists that are doing something different to bring different stories. Right? So I feel that joining this movement or doing projects related to the appreciation of women and non-binary people requires courage, resilience, love and a little bit of insanity as well. So my hope is to have more allies, you know, people that are listening to us. You know, like you said that to have more sponsors, to have more brands, you know, to have more people united to these different projects, you know, projects that are bringing new stories, stories that were not told before. And we need to unite, you know, we need to have we need to recognise ourselves, you know, like we are here in a, in a conversation with different women, you know, from different places. And that's very important, you know. So I feel that we need to unite ourselves in different, in different places and help with the tools that we have, And so I, I see hope in connection. I see hope in, in a little bit of tear right now. We need to see hope in connection, you know, because if not, we will not change history alone. So to do that, we need to find our peers, you know.

Wow. I cannot possibly follow up on that with anything more eloquent, Marina, other than my full support. For that statement. Yeah, I agree. We need to continue to disrupt androcentric assumptions of authorship. So at the end, it becomes unremarkable. And that that has to be, as you said, a collective effort that involves allies and involves, you know, parts of your project that you didn't get to talk about? Like Q32 mentorship? Yeah. So the models of support, of feminist mentorship, of ways to kind of move through this disruption together that don't burn us all out because that is always a risk. You know, you have loads of energy at the start, and it is a lot of work that may encounter quite a lot of resistance. So we do need to work together.

[OUTRO MUSIC PLAYS AS NAT SAYS THEIR FINAL THANK YOU]

N: Thanks for listening to this episode. Check out the show notes for more information about this project. We'll be back again soon with another Conversation Over a Brew.

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