

On the periphery of the body. Embodied graffiti and street art research design in a social movement context

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Abstract

Every 8th of March or 11th of November, feminist demonstrations are observed worldwide, usually accompanied by performative and artistic expressions. These expressions are articulated mainly through the body: people walking through the streets, dancing, performing, writing on public surfaces, or even painting statements on their faces, chest, or other naked body parts. In this way, the body plays a crucial role in the production and perception of graffiti and political street art within social movements. This implies that the artists and their creative process, as well as those who view and interpret the artwork, are all embodied practices.

Embodied methodology connects the experienced moments, senses, cognition, and mobility of both participants and researchers in urban spaces, providing multisensory research results (Fransberg, Myllylä, & Tolonen, 2021). Within this paper, I examine the construction of the context, along with the artists' and audiences' encounters and practices -such as felt sense, embodied experience, and aesthetic response-. Additionally, I explore the literature on embodied methodology. All elements are related to the context of Graffiti and Street Art Research (GSAR) in a social movement context.

Keywords

Social movement; Graffiti; Street Art; embodiment; methodology.

1. Introduction

Consider these two vignettes.

Between October 2019 and March 2021, there were significant social protests in Chile. Over 3.7 million people attended the marches (Cooperativa, 2019), resulting in 34 deaths and around 3,700 injuries. The Human Rights Institute report showed that as of February 19, 2020, there were 3,765 wounded, 445 eye injuries, and 951 complaints of torture (CNN, 2020). During this time, there was also an increase in artistic public expressions, including graffiti, murals, and stencils, among other street/public art techniques, covering walls, buses, metro stations, and buildings (Le Bert & Soto, 2021; Ribeiro C. & Barbosa de Oliveira, 2021). With the boiling of the constant revolts, the dubious bodies do not take long to show themselves in a collective uncovering, accompanying, and fighting hand in hand with the protesters. In this scenario, in October 2019, the visual artist and activist against fatphobia Rocio Hormazabal

intervenes the public space with her political statement: "Piñera me empelota", which might be translated into "Piñera gives me a hard time" a phrase she wrote on her naked body supporting the discontent of society (Cáceres, 2019). Two months later, on the red carpet of the 20th Latin Grammy Awards 2019, Chile's biggest pop export – according to the BBC (McGowan, 2021) -, Mon Laferte, uncovered her chest as a form of protest and in solidarity with the social movement. On her bare chest there was written "En Chile torturan violan y matan". The phrase translates to "In Chile, they torture, rape, and kill". After Mon Laferte's statement, there was a reproduction of the singer's image in the form of stickers or graffiti/Mural (see Figure 1) through Santiago City as an immediate resonance. The reproductions are not an exact copy of Mon Laferte's image.



Figure 1. Mon Laferte: En Chile torturan, violan y matan, by Rocio Mantis (2019). Afiches y arte durante las manifestaciones de Santiago de Chile, 2019

Egypt 2011: Aliaa Magda El Mahdy, an Egyptian internet activist and women's rights advocate, published a nude photo where she is dressed in nothing but black-speckled stockings and red ballerina pumps, and with a red flower in her loose hair she looks straight at the viewer. In her blog, under the heading "Nude Art", she refers to this picture and others as "echoing screams against a society of violence, racism, sexism, sexual harassment, and hypocrisy." Aliaa Elmahdy's blog pictures attracted millions of hits and wide-ranging comments, and her picture, together with other similar manifestations, were reproduced through many

other channels: in Western newspapers, worldwide solidarity campaigns, and Arab graffiti art. (Dornhof, 2015). After the exposure of her picture on media channels, this picture appeared on the street in the form of a stencil (see Figure 2), where the image of Mahdy is juxtaposed with an image of Samira Ibrahim. Instead of the naked body of Mahdy is written "20 years old, she stripped and exposed her body clearly by her own wanting. By the hurried manner of the public and the media [to learn about her] and around one million viewed her picture and not less than 50 articles about her and a lot of TV shows."

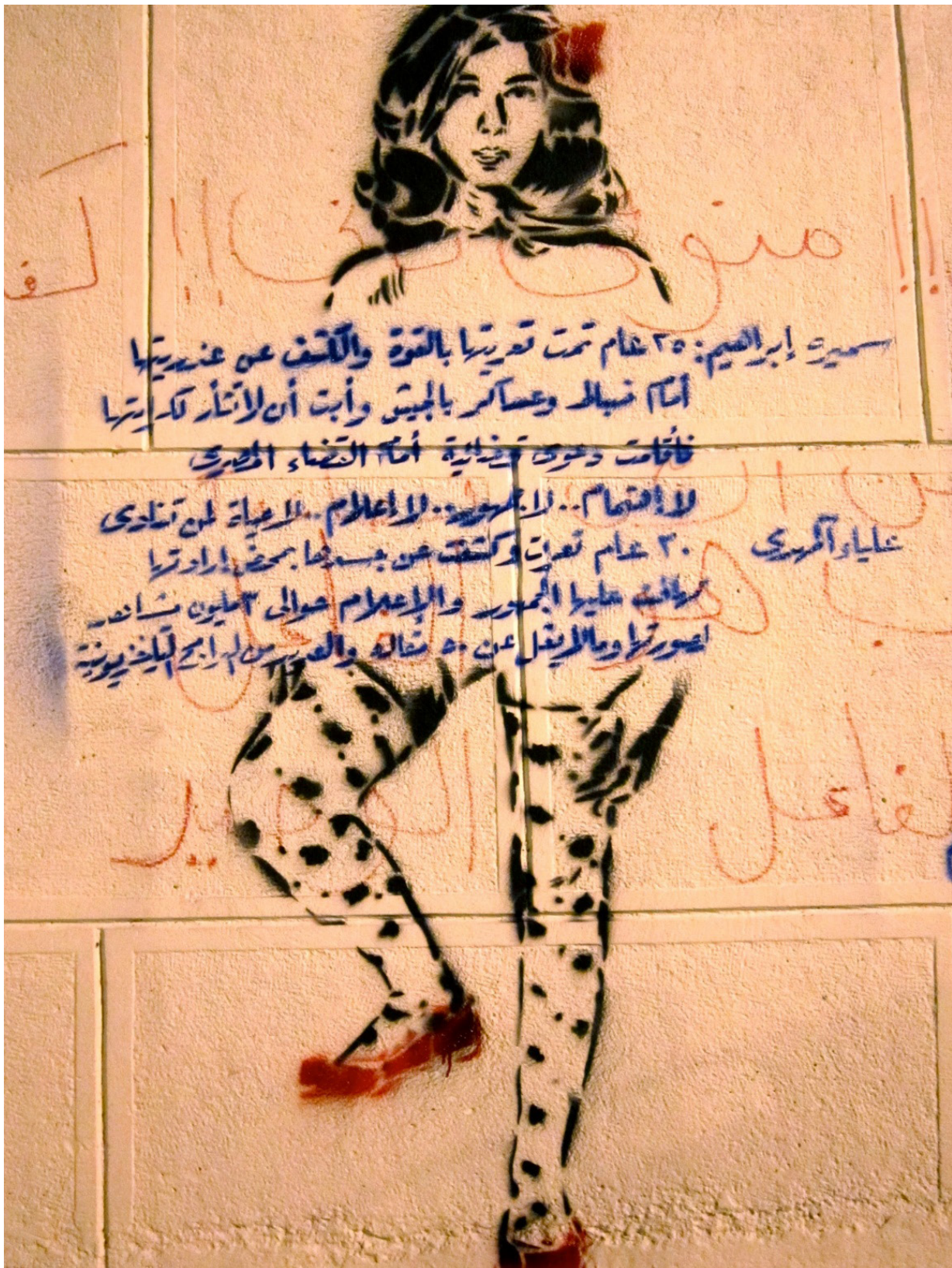


Figure 2. Flickr: Aliya Mehdi - يدهم ءايل ع - by Ibrahim (2011)

Topless or naked female demonstrations do not resemble a new phenomenon. Written bodies have been presented to the public around the world and resonated in different ways. These two vignettes depict a moment in recent social movements from two different countries. These episodes are testimony to the pervasive utility of the written/naked female body as a mode of protest working together with other forms of graffiti and street art. These expressions are specially seen every 8th of March and 11th of November, during the feminist demonstrations that take place worldwide, usually accompanied by other performative and artistic expressions. Those engage the body in various ways, for instance: walking through the streets, performing choreographies, writings on public surfaces or even painting statements on the participant's face, chest, or other body parts. In this way, the body forms a fundamental part of the social movement. Alongside, the graffiti and political street art production are to be named, as well, on at least two levels: First, from the artist level and their creative process, and second, from those who perceive it – the audience (Myllylä, 2018).

When activism and aesthetics come together, scholars should take a moment to reflect and ask: why is there a rise in street art and public nudity? How can we better understand the dynamics and interactions between the actors involved? What is special about the written naked body as a form of political and vindicative expression?

To find answers to these types of questions, we can look into two fields of study: social movement theory (SMT) and Political Contentious Studies (PCS), which analyze the causes and consequences of social mobilization and protest (Ryan, 2019, p. 101), and Graffiti and Street Art Research (GSAR), a newly developed interdisciplinary field that studies the context, intention, and impact of graffiti and street art (Velikonja, 2020). Despite of an ever-growing exploration of political life from an aesthetic perspective (Kompridis, 2014), still a long way lays ahead either for SMT to include GSAR or vice versa. Additionally, in methodological terms, both disciplines have explored little of the scope of the body and embodiment. Partly because of the lingering prevalence of methodological rationalism and structuralism that limit the scope of visual, aesthetic, and affective analysis in the case of SMT (Ryan, 2020), and GSAR as a multidisciplinary field, has mostly

used qualitative research methods, exploring urban space through methods that range from visual recordings to ethnography, emphasizing the researchers' reflexivity (Fransberg, Myllylä, & Tolonen, 2021). However, Fransberg et al. argue that embodied methodologies provide multisensory research results and conclude with three specific findings (1) They recommend that researchers should recognize the role of their embodied experience as a part of creating knowledge in GSAR as well as the embodied experience of the participants. (2) Graffiti and street art scholars tend to focus on cultural objects rather than on the bodily acts done in socially and culturally constructed settings. This resulted in a wider neglect or interpretation of embodied methodologies within graffiti and street art studies. Focusing on bodily acts may emphasize our understanding of diverse bodies and dismantle the corresponding dualism such as in the case of masculine–feminine bodies. (3) Elaborating and clarifying embodied methodologies in graffiti and street art, we are also contemplating the concept of embodied practices (2021, p. 13-14).

Taking these recommendations and findings as a starting point I seek to reflect on and explore the periphery of the body on three starting points of GSAR: context, artist's intention, and impact. Therefore, I start with a short conceptual framework about embodied research design and aesthetics, followed by an embodied construction of the context and a reflection within the body as an intended act and as a body of experience. The article concludes with two main findings. To illustrate the periphery of the body, I rely on the two episodes from Chile and Egypt referred to above as cases in point.

2. Embodiment, Aesthetics, and other definitions

Embodied research design considers the interaction between the mind, brain, and body, and how systems behave and interact. This approach shifts the focus from just the effect A has on B to the contexts and circumstances in which it occurs. By incorporating context into the research process, embodied research design develops more accurate theories of biological, social, and mental phenomena (Changaris, 2021). The embodiment has three core principles that can be used as guides for a method of embodied study construction and research design (Barsalou, 2008 in Changaris, 2021, p. 3):

“The first of these three principles is that embodiment is “situated,” i.e., there is a specific time, place, memory, working model, and history (Barsalou, 2008; Wilson, 2002). Rather than attempting to separate out history and location, embodiment recognizes that history and location are core aspects of understanding a process. The second core aspect of embodiment is that bodily/system states change outcomes. States often act like a filter on the behavior of the system e.g., stress changes memory test outcomes. The third aspect of embodiment is simulation. The brain is fundamentally developed for actions and predicting outcomes of actions, which requires a model (i.e., simulation) of the self, one’s ability, and the world. Embodied simulation creates working models of the environment and the available responses to the world (i.e., affordances) (Barsalou, 2008; Gallese, 2011; Wilson, 2002).”

To connect the concept of embodiment with the study of artistic expressions, I will turn to the model of embodied aesthetics (see Figure 3) by Koch (2017 in Langer et al., 2021). This model was developed for the study of Creative Art Therapies (CATs). It focuses on both art perception and active art-making. Considering that the study of graffiti and street art forms a dynamic of perception and active artmaking, it seems a suitable model for its study.

To define Graffiti and Street art I base on Blanché (2015, p. 33), Ryan (2020, p. 101), and Fransberg, et al., (2021, p. 1) work. In this paper, graffiti & street art are understood as public – and often unauthorized – creative art pieces in public/semi-public spaces that are produced by self-motivated individuals or collectives that intentionally seek communication with a larger circle of people. They are done in a performative and often site-specific, ephemeral, and participatory way, and are mostly viewed online. Graffiti and street art can be seen as a way of protesting by expressing political messages to the government and the public, since these messages challenge or engage with the current power structures in society.

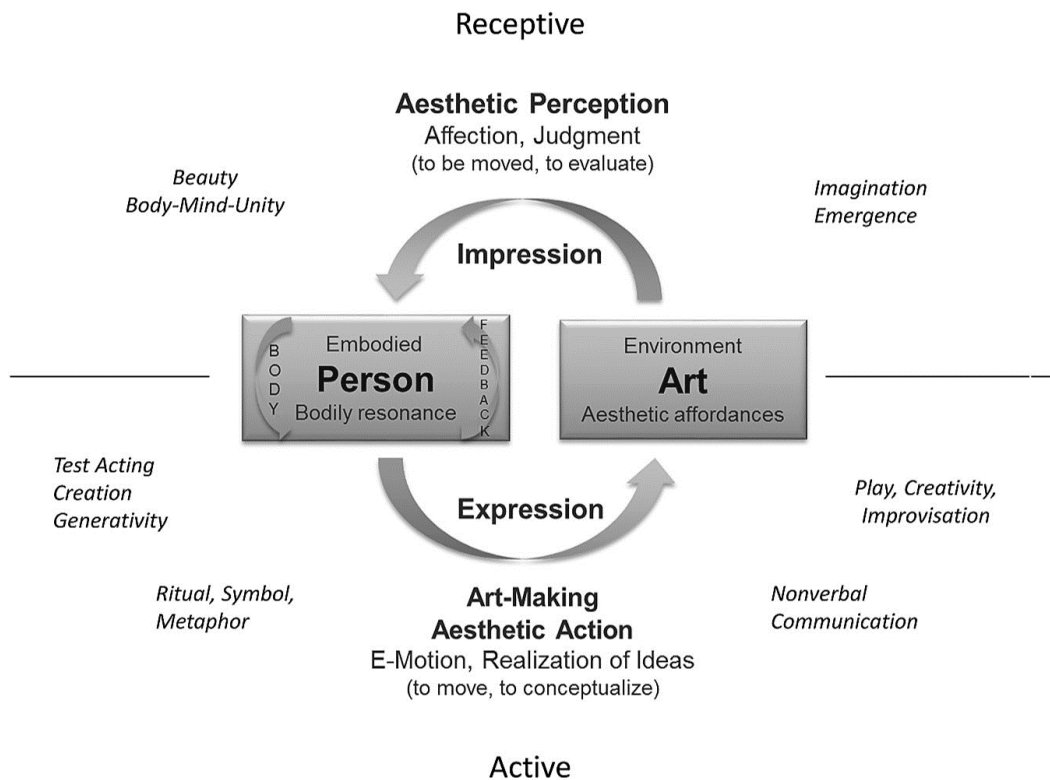


Figure 3. Model of embodied aesthetics (Koch, 2017 in Lange, et al, 2021, p. 215)

Finally, three more concepts -related to embodiment - are important for the development of this article: felt sense, embodied experience, and aesthetic response. “Felt sense” is a direct experience of the living body “being” its situations. If we define the body as a perceived object, “felt sense” makes no sense. “Felt sense” is a concept that is crucially tied to an interactional process view of the body embedded in mutually interactive situations with other living beings, the immediate environment, and the world. Experience is defined as a directly felt, here-and-now process (Weiser & McGavin, 2021). An aesthetic response is defined as ‘a distinct response, with a bodily origin, to an occurrence in the imagination, to an artistic act, or to the perception of an artwork (Lange, et al, 2021).

3. On the periphery of the body. The context as the (1) surface, the (2) place, and the (3) social space of the body.

Probably in all GSAR literature, it is mentioned that Context is essential. In Valikonja’s (2020) terms context is not only a possible starting point of GSAR but “contextualization is compulsory” for finding meaning. Moreover, the context where graffiti is placed can affect the emotional reactions of its perceiver (Gartus and Leder in Myllylä, 2018). Therefore, to understand graffiti and Street Art’s place in the world, researchers need to have a look into the world -where and when - it is placed and how this place conforms to an emotional setting. In GSAR there are at least three elements of context to consider: (1) Where and when? space and time and its active relationship with them. (2) What or which elements surround it? Graffiti’s message begins and ends with its environment: what matters is not only the graffiti but also what ever surrounds it since Graffiti without its wall (or wherever surface it is situated) is not graffiti. And (3) Who is (or are) behind it? Graffiti cannot be understood isolated from other graffiti by the same author, crew, or political group. From a semiotic point of view, graffiti is, like any other sign, always a part of a wider graffiti oeuvre and connected to others in the same system of meaning. One can understand it only by understanding its entire symbolic frame. (cf. Velikonja, 2020, p. 6-7).

In an embodied research design, and particularly through the idea of situated embodiment (Changaris, 2021), the elements of the context might suffer a few changes. Embodied

methodology emphasizes the importance of the physical and socio-temporal contexts and the interactions with all people who are involved in the study (Fransberg, Myllylä, & Tolonen, 2021). In *Situated Embodiment* this is framed into three core questions about the phenomenon: when, in what context, and what other factors need to be present for an outcome to occur (Anderson, 2003 in Changaris, 2021). These situated systemic factors have two core components – structures (defined parts of a system that interact) and dynamics (how the parts interact, create emergent properties, and system behaviors).

Then, this physical-socio-temporal context involves relational elements in the space in addition to the “when, where, and who” of graffiti and street process. For the interaction between all these elements or part of them, I propose to consider the concept of the social construction of space through its triad, that is the space that is conceived, perceived, and lived (Lefebvre, 1991). The perception of space is related to the perception through our bodies which are not only things but also ‘interspaces between things’ (Maurice Merleau-Ponty in Löw, 2006, p. 120-121). What this means is that in perceiving through our bodies, we form syntheses in our everyday activities – our lived space - as a means of linking together a great multiplicity of objects to form -or conceived - spaces. In so doing, the body leads to a noteworthy double existence. It is not only the medium of perception but is itself a placed object. As such it is staged, styled, genderized, and permeated by ethnic constructions, thus becoming a highly precarious ‘building-block’ of spaces (Löw, 2006, p. 120-121). As Lin (2019, p. 872) notes, the body creates space and becomes the space itself.

Taking this into consideration, I add two more elements: (4) Who is (or are) watching it? Graffiti and street art are made to be watched, which kind, type, or genre of people is the audience and how they lived, conceived, and perceived the space, in other words, built the context of the audience. And (5) how these four elements bodily interact with each other and what are the practices and techniques performed by the bodies in question.

To exemplify this “embodied contextualization” considering the vignettes mentioned above I divide these elements into

two categories: Place and Surface and Social Space of the body. Before starting, it is necessary to assume that the nude written body is considered an embodied practice and a street art expression. Mon Laferte and Rocio Hormazabal actions were performed in a semi-public and public space meanwhile the Aliaa Elmahdy expression was performed in a private space. The three of them are extremely ephemeral in terms of the place and time where the expression took action¹, but they are perpetuated in time through virtual spaces. They are meant to seek communication with a larger circle of people, are mostly viewed online, and are essentially political. Additionally, two of them had resonances on the streets through stencils, stickers, and graffiti which adds to the repetitive inherent characteristic of graffiti and street art expressions (Velikonja, 2020). I understand that I am transiting on the periphery of graffiti and street art conceptualization, but it works for arguing the importance of an embodied perspective of the field.

The first two elements fall into the category of place and surface. When, where, and on what graffiti was made in bodily terms? These elements can be expressed and described in journalistic terms. That is mainly the visual description of the events taking into account some important details: the exact time and location and a description of the shapes, colors, and other features of the picture. The broadest possible contextualization of the circumstances is also necessary. That means the factors that may play a role in an outcome to occur.

In the case of Chile, it may be the context of the social movements that occurred in 2019. In the case of Egypt, Aliaa Elmahdy posted on her blog on the context of the elections in Egypt² and the persistent street protests, as the demonstrators on Tahrir Square lost political influence, and the armed forces used violence to quell them³ (Dornhof, 2015). Additionally, the researchers can turn into the “on what” the graffiti is made of and explain the context of that body. In this case, the body is the surface (skin) and the place where the graffiti is written, and “the body” is the fictional character of the concept, as an abstraction from different, unique social histories and realities of the body (Federici, 2020, p. 19). Both are equally important and count in meaning as one.

The body as a surface and a place means that the body is part of the message itself. Without nudity, it is not the same content in symbolic and meaning-making terms. That is also a characteristic that it is possible to see on the street art on the wall as a resonance of these exposures. Both cases resonate into a sticker, stencils, and/or graffiti on the streets of their respective political places (Chile and Egypt). These street art expressions not only replicated the written message but also the whole image of the naked body including the clothes, makeup, colors, etc.

“The body”, instead, is related to the embodiment and system/bodily state, that is the conditions and context of the body. The state of mind, health, culture, and gender, among other factors that can affect perception, is part of the context. In this way, the inside and outside contexts are equally important.

1 - Rocio Hormazabal and Mon Laferte uncovered themselves only enough time to take the picture which took less than a min. And the time that took to write over their own surface is unknown.

2 - Elmahdy's blog appeared a few weeks before the first round of elections when the Islamists (in particular the Muslim Brotherhood, or rather their Freedom and Justice Party, and the Salafist party al-Nur) were to gain a clear parliamentary majority. In March 2011, as a direct result of the revolution, the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces announced fresh elections, dissolving the Egyptian People's Assembly that had emerged from the undemocratic elections of 2010 and appointing a new Cabinet (Sharaf), which resigned before the elections in protest at the violent tactics used against demonstrators by the armed forces. The elections took place between November 28, 2011, and January 28, 2012, and brought Islamist parties to power with 70% of the seats: the Muslim Brothers' Freedom and Justice Party obtained about half the votes (37.5% and 45.7% of seats), the Salafist party al-Nur took 24.6%. All in all, 15 Islamist parties stood as candidates. 2% of the deputies (10) are women, most of them Islamists (Dornhof, 2015, p. 275).

3 - From November 2011 the army repeatedly used violent methods to control demonstrations, and the military courts convicted many protestors (without a fair trial) (Dornhof, 2015, p. 275).

Elements three to five fall into the category of social space. Who are the artists, who are the audience and what are the situated systemic factors? The last means, what are the parts of the system that interact and how do they interact? Then researchers on GSAR can identify the researcher, the art, and the audience as part of the system factor as a starting point. Researchers can approach authors through existing interviews with the artists, in newspapers, magazines, online media, and their own websites or blogs. Here the artists are not hidden and make public who they are and what their opinions are. In the case of graffiti artists, they might be harder to approach, but they may have other ways of promoting their work and a face-to-face interview might be possible. The audience, on the other hand, is more problematic. But it is possible to speak of the in-situ audience and the audience through the resonance. The focus will depend on the research question but, generally speaking, it is important to consider the context of its audience. Some categories that might be important at this stage are gender, age, race, class, sexuality, or disability since they influence knowledge production but taking care not to essentializing the bodies into fixed categories - it is necessary to be open to each option (Tantia, 2021). Finally, the interaction between these elements that involved the interaction between the bodies could be observed through the perception, conception, and practical experience in any of these elements or in between these elements. For example, the interaction between the surface and the artist might be understood through the conception that the artists have of her own body, and how she uses and lived it.

At this point it is also possible to identify whether there are space boundaries, and which are according to the role played in the event. Space boundaries can be defined as a general rule or articulated moral code and the mode of behavior exposed according to it. Löw (2006) used the term to explain the boundaries between the interaction between topless women on the beach and the gaze. This boundary was that on the beach naked breasts may only be presented in a state of motionlessness, and a woman's firm, more or less immobile breasts are considered acceptable, and they are allowed to cross the narrow confines of space boundaries and to be gazed at more or less persistently even in motion.

In an in-situ moment of social protest, researchers may also find space boundaries. This can be different from one social movement to another. For example, the case of Rocio Hormazabal. She decided to show herself naked for a few seconds and immobile, she was not naked the whole protest time. The marches in October were notable for having no defined leadership or banner of struggle (Paúl, 2019), so the participants were men, women, and non-binary people of all ages. Another is the case of the march of November 18th, 2019. This was the feminist march that occurred in the same place and, more or less, the same general context in Chile. There, Women were walking naked or topless, with written or painted bodies, for a longer period of time, moving and shouting during the protest. It needed to be considered that feminist social movements in Chile congregate mainly women (Llanos, 2021). The gaze on both protests was different and the way of experiencing nudity as well. This may be caused by boundaries in the social space.

4. Within the periphery of the body and beyond. The body as an intendent act and as a reception inside out.

Together with the context as a starting point of GSAR, Vellikonja (cf, 2020) describes two additional starting points: (1) the intentionality of the graffiti writer as well as his will and/or political ambition and (2) the impact/effects that such intention and art production cause in society. According to Myllylä (2018, p. 33) both those who produce the impact and those who receive it, are engaging in an embodied practice. She argues that writing graffiti -and street art- is a physical activity where bodily movements illustrate the writers' agency, as the writers are materializing their mental manifestations into graffiti works.

In turn, perceiving graffiti and being able to read its content requires not only knowledge and interest but also active engagement in its interpretation at a corporeal level. This interaction between the writer and the graffiti image allows an embodied experience in the perceiver of graffiti.

This forms an idea of a dual but linear relationship between giving and receiving instead of an ongoing process. "The core of the Model of Embodied Aesthetics [figure 3] is the ongoing process of impression (being affected, sensing) and expression (the moving out from the body and expressing). As the

only object in the world, the body can be perceived from the inside and from the outside [...] Thus, those creating art are expressing some meaning related to their thinking and feeling, and this expression is feeding back into their thinking and feeling. There is a circularity in the process of artmaking with a constant interchange of expression and impression” (Lange, et al, 2021, p. 215).

4.1. The body as an actor. Taking action.

When studying embodied graffiti and street art protests, one can either focus on the collective dimension of protests or protests initiated by individuals. Following the idea of individual protest, Lin (2019, p. 874) uses the term *micro bodily opportunity structure*, which she defines as a surface where meanings are inscribed and contested beyond its control, to refer to the solo activism of Ye Haiyan. This situation is reminiscent of the one described in the vignettes, where the body triggers an unpredictable resonance that is beyond its control.

The body as a body that “takes action” in protests receipts the name of body agency, body protest, weapon, and extended body, among others. The extended body means that the body that protests are a subject with the capacity for agency in social life; this capacity is exercised through its collective expression (Gonzalez, 2017, p. 114). Therefore, the body goes beyond its surface, place, and space and becomes an action.

The second vignette and other similar cases that are described in Dornhof’s (2015) chapter, notes that these expressions through the naked body are not simply a symbol of their liberation; the artists are using their bodies as a protest to place the role of gender and sexuality on the agenda in a period of transformations. There is an intention and an action. Vignette two has similar intentions but responds to a different situation. In this and similar scenarios, through the intentional use of the body, some artists have expressed to feel: the awareness of one’s voice, the re-appropriation of the body, self-determination, or control over oneself (Dornhof, 2015; Sinclair, 2019; Federici, 2020; Orellana Águila & Chamorro Ríos, 2021).

In summary, when considering the body as an actor, there are three stages or processes to keep in mind: intention, action, and self-reflection on the experience. However, it is important to note that certain factors, such as the context and audience, have not been taken into account and could impact the situation.

Allow me to outline a hypothetical step-by-step procedure regarding the situation of Rocio Hormazabal:

A woman who sees herself as an activist against fatphobia decides to make a political statement by writing a message about her naked body and participating in a social demonstration. She tells at least one friend ahead of time, who will take a photo to post on social media. At the march, the woman chooses a specific time and place to remove her clothes (possibly in consultation with her friend), while others pass by and some take notice. This is an emotionally intense experience for her. After undressing, her friend takes the photo and they confirm that it is saved before she puts her clothes back on and walks with her friend, discussing what just happened.

This narrative effectively shows the three stages mentioned above. However, other events may have impacted the moment.

Picture a situation where somebody shouts her words of support. Then, she feels observed and proud. As she gets dressed and continues walking with her friend, the conversation is more cheerful and enjoyable. Alternatively, what if the others had responded with criticism instead? Then she might still feel proud, as she believes strongly in what she does, but feelings of grief, anguish, or anger might overwhelm her and change her memory and perception of what happened. I do not know what happened at that precise moment, but one thing is certain, all the people involved had impressions and expressions at the same time. In 1962, Merleau-Ponty referred to the body as “the ambiguity of the body” (p. 189), meaning it can be both subject and object simultaneously, as well as active and passive.

The point I want to make is that one cannot consider the study of graffiti or artistic expression without considering the role of the audience. All the elements are connected,

interact with each other, and affect each other. There is no completely linear construction between the artist who executes a work and the audience that is impacted. Even less so in situ expressions. That is to say, the body acts but also receives and can give and receive at the same time, it is a felt sense experience with an aesthetic response.

4.2. The body of experience. Embodied aesthetic Inside out
In this title, I aim to showcase two instances of physical aesthetic experiences - felt sense and aesthetic response. To better understand these concepts, it is important to delve into their details.

Weiser & McGavin (2021, p. 32) in their chapter on the book "The Art and Science of embodied research design" list three key characteristics of experiencing:

"(1) Experiencing is felt, rather than thought, known, or verbalized. (2) Experiencing occurs in the immediate present. It is not a generalized attribute of a person such as traits, complexes, or dispositions. Rather, experiencing is what a person feels here and now, in this moment. Experiencing is a changing flow of feeling which makes it possible for every individual to feel something at any given moment. [...] (3) Experiencing can be directly referred to by an individual as a felt datum in his own phenomenal field. (Gendlin 1961, pp. 234–235)."

According to the authors, this idea of experiencing helps Gendlin to elaborate his idea of felt sense (Gendlin, 1992, p. 343 in Weiser & McGavin, 2021):

"A felt sense is an embodied experience of a whole situation (or other attended-to "object" such as a work of art, a theory, or a relationship) that exists before words or other symbols. [...] From the "felt sense" of a life event, new understandings can emerge that can lead to a changed relationship to what happened in that event. [...] Felt senses are not the same as emotions or thoughts, and they are not mindless, autonomic, physical sensations. Felt senses are inherently meaningful. A felt sense is a fresh, immediate, here-and-now experience that is actual-

ly the organism forming its next step in a person's lived situation. A felt sense is experiencing forming itself, and it can be sensed."

To exemplify felt sense through the cases in the vignettes I have to fall back on my imagination since it is an in-situ experience. For instance, *Mon Laferte was viewing the news of Chile from her house in Mexico. She was suffering the impact of the terrible news. At the same time, she feels the urge to do something about it, to use her voice. At some point, she may have a felt sense of what must come next*— "an embodied, wordless, vague "knowing," out of which actions can emerge, and which can guide and correct those actions" (Weiser & McGavin, 2021, p. 30). As an artist who both paints and sings, Mon Laferte likely experiences similar moments of contemplation before writing a song or viewing an unfinished mural. However, this is not a unique experience solely for the artist. Anyone may have a moment of felt sense like this at any point in their life, and certainly when observing art.

As indicated in the definition of felt sense, this experience goes beyond emotion and thoughts. But emotions, thoughts, perception, and reflection are also important to approach. Here I turn to the model of embodied aesthetics (figure 3) and the concept of aesthetic response.

As mentioned before, an Aesthetic response is a distinct and bodily response, to an occurrence in the imagination, to an artistic act, or the perception of an artwork. This term has been developed and extended into the concept of aesthetic answering that can be used as a research method, to generate knowledge around an epistemological question (Weiser & McGavin, 2021). According to Weiser & McGavin (2021), creating and perceiving art can offer insights that cannot be fully expressed in words. This nonverbal material provides valuable knowledge and meaning that cannot be captured by traditional research methods, both qualitative and quantitative.

Therefore, by paying attention to the aesthetic responses of either the artist or the audience, it is possible to identify both the internal and external (inside and outside the body) process of interaction, through their active or receptive behavior is possible to identify impressions and expressions.

To obtain this data in GSAR, a variety of methods can be used, ranging from observation, interview, embodied narrative, photography, video, and others (Fransberg, Myllylä, & Tolonen, 2021; Bresler, 2006; Hannula, and others, 2022). The possibility of laboratories, spaces prepared to investigate performing arts, has also been argued (Scialom, 2021). This will depend on the focus that researchers want to give to their research.

5. Conclusion

The task of this article has been to reflect on the periphery of the body in GSAR in a social movement context. For this, elements of embodied research design were key factors.

In this transit through the periphery of the body, two specific findings are worth emphasizing. The first is the possibility of extending the understanding of the context for GSAR by incorporating two important elements. The context of the audience and the spaces of interaction between the different bodies belonging to the studio. This allows for more extensive, complete, and at the same time more specific information on the elements that impact and interact.

The second finding relates to the introduction of the model of embodied aesthetics and aesthetic response/answer to the study of the interaction between art and artist/audience in two levels: Felt sense and impression/expression.

Conflict of Interests

“The authors declare no conflict of interests”.

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