

## **Painting for Peace: Art Workshops in Salvador, Brazil**

Cormac McCrimmon (USA), Andres Madrigal (USA), Manuel Uribe (USA), all attend Colorado College  
Colorado College

### **Mission Statement**

Our project will highlight the importance of creativity and artistic expression among young people in Salvador, Brazil and promote peace by engaging with contemporary and historical questions regarding racism, education, and Bahian identity.

### **Project Background**

Salvador da Bahia, Brazil is home to a thriving community of graffiti artists. This grassroots movement is collaborative in spirit and has unfolded organically with no official leaders. Graffiti art in Salvador is one of the many forms of cultural expression that include the Candomblé religion and dances like samba, forró, and capoeira. Artists from Salvador incorporate elements of Bahian culture with themes from the Black Power Movement.

Salvador is a hub of African culture in Brazil. It was the first colonial capital established by the Portuguese and was a major port of entry during the transatlantic slave trade. As such, it has a long legacy of Black resistance and cultural influence that remains strong to this day. Graffiti art in Salvador originated in *comunidades* — low-income neighborhoods where most residents are of African descent. Artists from *comunidades* use their work to strengthen a sense of community and showcase their creativity in the most public of places.

Oftentimes, artists who cannot afford expensive art supplies use unconventional materials, like white-out, shoeshine, and handmade spray paint. Despite barriers, artists find ways to voice outrage, critique injustice and propose solutions. As a result, both locals and outsiders have recognized Salvador's wealth of public art and murals. In 2011, the country decriminalized street art, further legitimizing an already flourishing form of artistic expression.

### **Project Objectives**

- Connect students with local artists through a series of in-depth art workshops
- Empower public school students from diverse backgrounds
- Highlight the power of art to create social change, establish peace and resolve conflict
- Increase access to art materials
- Document the impact of street art and local artists' creative process

### **Experience and Partnership**

We will create a series of 12 art workshops for young people in Salvador by partnering with local artists and a public school located in the Ondina neighborhood. While in Brazil, we will spend our time planning workshops, gathering art supplies and co-teaching workshops with local artists at our partner school, Colégio Estadual Evaristo da Veiga, which serves 630 students, ages 13-18. The school predominantly serves Black, low-income students. In conversations with Fred Bomsucesso, a geography teacher at the school, he described a lack of financial and administrative support from the federal government. Although Colégio Estadual offers some art classes, Bomsucesso acknowledged that a lack of resources and teachers hinders students. Public schools located in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods do not face the same hardships. Bomsucesso is excited to collaborate with us since he sees the value in teaching students to express themselves and giving students tangible tools to improve their communities.

We will work with artists Eder Muniz and Ani Ganzala to lead these workshops. Muniz is a world-renowned artist, based in Salvador, who uses his paintings and murals to empower *comunidades* with beauty and to highlight the connections between people and nature. Muniz's work critiques the destruction of nature and awakens the wild within the city. Ganzala is a street artist and watercolorist whose work focuses on Black Queer and lesbian love. Our workshops will provide an opportunity for young people from low-income neighborhoods to learn from talented, local artists and improve their craft. We hope to work with upwards of 50 young people and plan to offer workshops twice per week for six weeks. Although street art is common, and even legal, in Salvador, the costs associated with materials can be prohibitively expensive.

Workshops will provide an opportunity for aspiring artists to hone their craft, learn about the power of art and paint their story. Workshop topics will include self-portraiture, recycled materials

## **Painting for Peace: Art Workshops in Salvador, Brazil**

Cormac McCrimmon (USA), Andres Madrigal (USA), Manuel Uribe (USA), all attend Colorado College  
Colorado College

mosaics, spray paint, watercolors, collage, and plein-air painting. We will plan and organize classes, then collaboratively teach topics with Ganzala and Muniz. Rather than relying on formal conflict resolution discussions, we have integrated this aspect into each class. For example, during our class on self-portraits, we will encourage students to reflect on their identity and community. To facilitate conflict resolution and reflection, we plan to work closely with Bomsucesso, our partner and teacher at Colégio Estadual, who is familiar with the challenges individual students face. At the end of each session, we will open the floor for students to share outcomes from their reflections and find common ground.

We will offer two workshops per week for six weeks. Workshops will take place during the school's art classes. Each week we will introduce a new topic. On non-workshop days, we will participate in classroom activities to build trust with the students at Colégio Estadual. Non-workshop days may include walking field trips in the neighborhood for students to learn about and reflect on the public art in the area. Students will create their own maps, art pieces and writing assignments in response to the art they observe in public. Over the course of the project, we will develop a curriculum that centers Bahian art and incorporates wisdom from local artists that teachers can use for future art classes.

### **Peace and Sustainability**

Art is an incredibly powerful tool to promote peace and critique injustice. In the words of the radical, Black feminist writer and activist, Toni Cade Bambara, "the role of the artist is to make revolution irresistible." Revolutionary art demands that we question systems and structures. It calls on individuals to think about the world around them politically and dares the observer to imagine a fairer world. Art is not only a medium, but an important tool for meaningful critique, reform, and re-imagination. Muniz and Ganzala's work envision a future that centers justice, dignity and humanity. We hope to convey to other young people that artistic expression can be a powerful vehicle for self-expression, movement, and change. More tangibly, Muniz and Ganzala's work has helped to revitalize neighborhoods and make certain spaces safer. While art workshops may not immediately relieve underlying problems such as poverty or inequality, these classes will provide an outlet for individual expression and communal collaboration.

It is important to us that our project continues to have positive effects after we leave. We have dedicated a portion of our budget to building a bank of art supplies students will have access to. While in Brazil, we will work to expand this bank by developing a long-term funding source and management plan. We plan to work with Clara Ramos, director of the Instituto Clara Ramos (ICR), who leads study abroad programs for international students in Salvador. International students benefit from street art in Salvador by enjoying tours and murals with artists. With Ramos' help we will work to create a donation or small program fee increase so that students studying abroad in Salvador can buy into the future of Bahian art and sustain our materials fund.

### **Our Team**

Manuel is fluent in Portuguese. Andres and Cormac have taken intensive Portuguese language classes in Salvador. Collectively we have spent seven months in Salvador and have many friends and contacts there, including each of our project partners. This project emerged out of our collective love for art. We are comfortable teaching a variety of artistic techniques. Experience leading after-school tutoring programs, substitute teaching, and working at summer camps equips us with the skills to engage students. This project will provide a healthy challenge, but we are confident that our experience prepares us well.

### **Conclusion**

Salvador is alive with color and street art adorns most walls in the city. Art allows local people to take ownership of their neighborhoods and makes the city safer and more livable. This project is a unique opportunity to connect young people from across Salvador with world-renown local artists. Our workshops will provide an opportunity for learning, storytelling and connection. By giving students the tools and skills to paint their story, we hope to inspire hope and reflection on Bahian history, identity, and current challenges. Art has long been one of the most powerful engines of social change and peace. We hope to honor this idea by putting theory into practice.