

“Preguntamos Caminando”: Walking We Ask

In response to the increasing crisis of neoliberalism and privatization, the social majorities are finding alternatives to rethink and reclaim the “wisdom of thinking small.” Art that is defined as a collective cultural production has the potential to support and collaborate with rebellion and resistance movements that have embraced and taken seriously the facilitation of encounter and the tactic of narrating local communal memory. In perceiving art as a convivial tool to facilitate the emergence of alternative social relations that challenge capitalism's constant pressure to commodify ourselves and our relations to others, The Art as Resistance Collective intends to question the social dynamics and institutions involved in capitalist motivations through cooperative visual art.

Born out of questioning art for art's sake, art's current role of decoration, and commodity, the Art as Resistance Collective brainstorms ways through production and presentation to salvage the role of art in struggles of rebellion and dignity. Thus, the collective confronts institutionalized bureaucratic methods of art galleries and museums. In resisting the boutique discourse of the museum and galleries, the collective conceives art not as an exhibit, not as an object, but as a space of encounter, where the piece(s) meaning(s) are constantly being re-produced by the audience, regenerating and revealing histories/herstories, sharing struggles, and proposing questions to think differently about how we relate to ourselves and our community

The collective's current mural, *Walking We Ask*, demonstrates how the group opposes the idea of individualist's temptations of being the next artist superstar. Unlike the Renaissance¹ art workshop method of creating art, the collective does not have a single artist dictating the composition, meaning, intention, and purpose of the work. Rather in part to the collective process, the collective challenges the isolation and alienation brought on by the notion of artist as genius and master innovator.

Being inspired by previous mural movements, grassroots organizations, and communities in struggle, the collective is influenced by such methodologies and tactics that engage art as a tool to regenerate culture, reclaim commons, and inspire intercultural/intergenerational dialogue. Out of skill sharing mark making techniques and group painting sessions, the collective critiques their intentions, while simultaneously building arguments with a paintbrush and spray paint cans. With constant revision, multiple sketches, decisions agreed upon by group consensus, the collective's process opposes competitive mentalities brought on by the perpetuation of individualism.

¹ The Renaissance Art period dates from 1400-1600. This period of art is often referred to as the high point in “western” civilization, which includes the rise of capitalism. Art created during this time period were commissioned by rich patrons and wealthy religious groups. Artists who were commissioned worked in workshops. The workshops consisted of one master artist, such as Raphael, where he would create the outline of the work and his workshop (consisting of groups of other male artists) would execute the actual creation of the work.

In exploring anti-capitalist art production, this collective challenges the elitist requirements necessary to be part of contemporary mainstream art movements. Most 20th century mainstream movements inherently marginalize the cultural and political capital of art by transforming and prioritizing its economic value through the embedded relations and discourses of the Art World: Collector, buyer, agent, critic, Museum/Gallery, and “Professional” artist.

Through the collective creation of art, its location/presentation, and the histories and narratives that are voiced through and from the work, the collective sees art's potential to walk with communities in struggle. Claiming that art has the potential to celebrate and walk with communities who are exploring new ways of rebellion and resistance, the collective explores ways in which art can facilitate encounter between and within differing communities. This participation continues with the showing of *Walking We Ask* at a recent community gathering that was convened to dialogue, celebrate resistance, and share struggles, histories, and narratives between communities in our local area. Although the work physically took center stage it was not central in focus. Unlike traditional art openings, the mural takes part in communal celebrations of resistance and rebellion in its participation within the gathering and the subject matter that is presented. By appearing within the context of labor documentaries, a home cooked meal, guest speakers from the Black Panther movement and Zapatista inspired groups, community members, faculty, and students sharing their word of rebellion with one another; the mural contributes to the production of knowledge and analysis of our current situation, and helps to convene an space that challenges us to regenerate anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-sexist social relations.

The Art as Resistance Collective aspires to embody the act of sharing. By exploring the potential for alternatives, the collective demonstrates how art can play a role outside of a capitalist system. The collective does not claim to be a model for change, or claim to reverse the effects of neoliberalism and privatization. Instead, in the collective's inspiration from the Zapatista's struggle for their dignity, the collective sees art as a tool that can be a medium to disseminate analysis, and re-member the process of dreaming and hope for a different world, a world where many worlds fit.