

## QUITO GRAFFITI, Part I

Below you will find a selection of graffiti from Quito, the capitol of Ecuador. These graffiti were originally written in Spanish on various Quito walls (walls of houses, stores, etc.).

Some background notes:

- None of these are signed with names. However, about half have a small symbol (triangle, an eye, a clock), which stands for that particular group of writers. See interviews with groups on next pages.
- The graffiti are all written in legible script, with black spray paint on white walls.

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I believe in you as if you existed

Ruin your life before they ruin it for you

Life starts when the children leave and the dog dies  
Life starts when they rob your bicycle

Don't kill ideals They're in danger of extinction

Graffiti is the opiate of the masses

I've been violated by your silence

Mr. Homeowner: Nothing personal, but your wall has a certain something special...

Graffiti is like chili: hot, but tasty

Wall without name, we baptize you: Maria. Now you just need First Communion.

To study is to doubt the intelligence of your friends

And... You simply appear And that's why I love you

11:21pm, the guard is sleeping, the city makes insomniacs, and I THINK of you...

Let me walk along the edges of your mind

What a relief that the birds keep crapping on the statues

Help the police: torture yourself!

Dear Country: We received your message in a bottle

An ocean of commercial products, a ship of men lost at sea

Forget what you dreamed of Your dreams have been sold off

More than force, they dominate us through deception

Disconnect your antennas! The nightmare has ended Breathe!

Reporters: Half the time you talk about what you don't know The other half you silence what you do know

Lo que no puede ser, no puede ser  
y además es imposible △

Ojos que no ven, frutillas con fanesca  
Cambio moto chocada por silla de ruedas

"Amanecí con el eggo frito" ⊙

Antes yo era así ~~~~~●

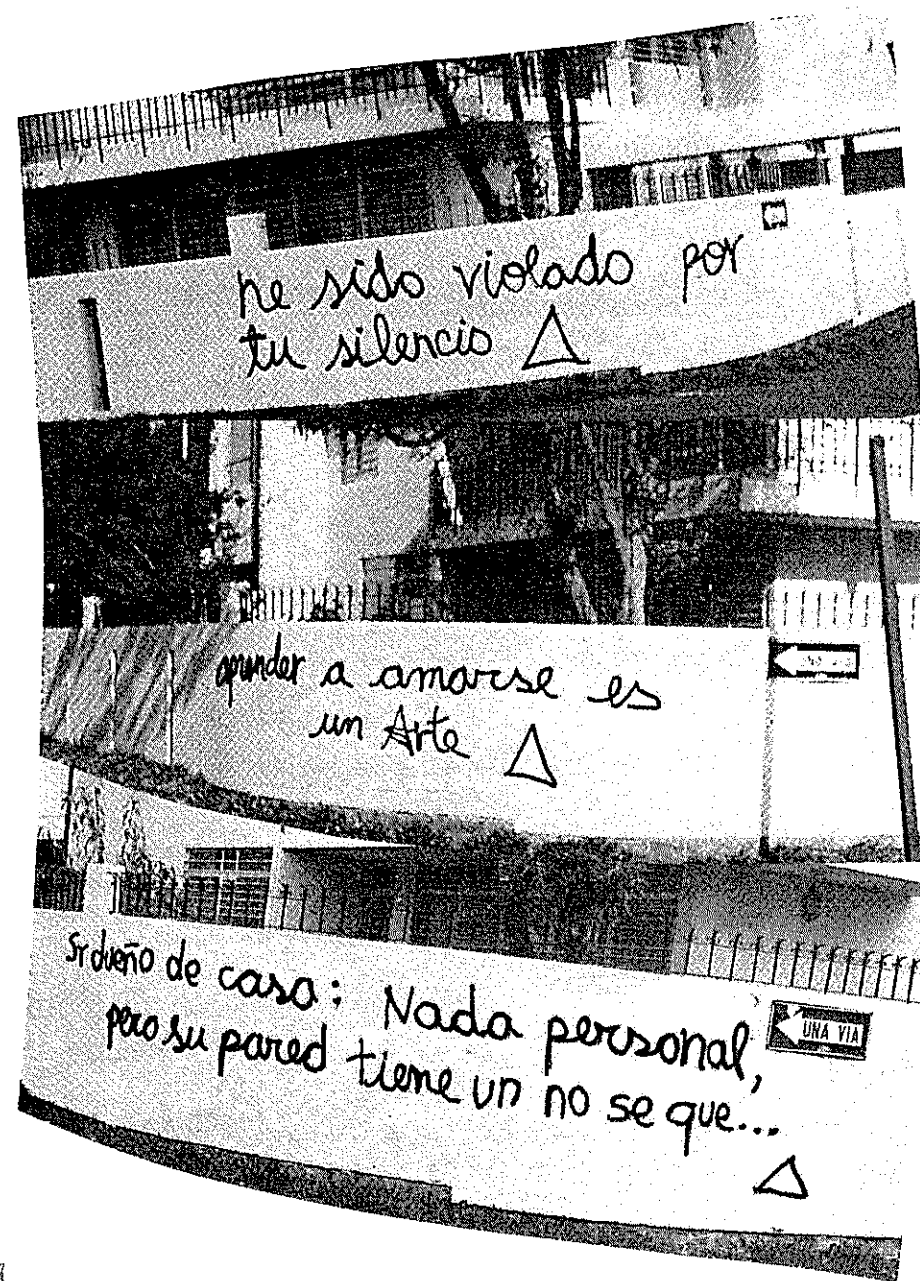
Dios debe haber sido una mujer de costumbres ligeras,  
las demás son unas mojigatas

El grafiti  
es el opio del pueblo

Cristo viene, compre su entrada

Cristo viene, auspicia Coca Cola

from Mex  
from, Quit: Una  
Ciudad de grafitis



The following are interviews with members of various groups of Quito graffiti writers, each of which has its own symbol/signature (clock, tearful eye, etc.). *(Translated from Spanish.)*

INTERVIEW WITH A WRITER FROM THE "CLOCK" GROUP

Q: Some personal facts?

A: I'm a petty bourgeoisie who is 23 years old. I study Social Communication, and I like poetry.

Q: What motivates you to paint?

A: When you have something to say, you make a magazine and nobody buys it. You make a radio program and nobody calls to say they're listening. It seemed to me better to paint graffiti, because you can say what you think and you aren't disappointed thinking that nobody saw it.

Q: How many of you paint together?

A: About 4 or 5.

Q: What is the intention of your message?

A: Galileo said something right: "you write for friends who are far away." And I write for my friends. If they now read others' graffiti, that's not my fault.

Q: So your graffiti is for your friends?

A: Yes, but the idea is to open you up, so that everyone is your friend. For example, you see a (female) house owner, and you paint a graffiti [on her house]--that's a beautiful way to open up a friendship.

Q: What type of messages do you paint?

A: Messages of hope, and of color. There's a song that says "long live those who fight against the wind," and that's what you have to do. You can still do something, even if you're alone. You can't let yourself be defeated by what the older folks say, as the little prince would say.

Q: How do you see the situation of our country?

A: "The color of an ant." The only hope is that the goblins keep on singing on the street corners. You just have to know how to listen. Nobody is telling them to sing, but they keep singing, living hidden, jumping from leaf to leaf. Society says they don't exist, that we already killed them, but they keep singing.

INTERVIEW WITH THE WRITERS OF THE "TEARFUL EYE" GROUP

The group is composed of 4 boys, ages 16 to 19, from the upper middle class and the same high school. They have various artistic ambitions: theatre, music, painting, and poetry.

Q: What is graffiti for you?

A: It's a medium of communication and an art. We believe that it's a tie that you can put around other people. We seek a way to not be isolated islands in the world; that way is our graffiti.

Q: Do you think people understand your graffiti?

A: We don't know, but the important thing is that you say what you think, and if just one person understands your message, it was worth creating it.

Q: Why do you use a tearful eye as the mark of your group?

A: Because when you cry you unload yourself; when you make graffiti you scream at the people what you feel, and that frees you. When there's a profound feeling of happiness and sadness, you cry; it's a nectar of sensitivity. In the course of human life there are transcendental changes where you break with the past to be something new; sometimes you have to let go of things to be reborn. En Latin America we're still lacking an opening, a moment of hyper sensitivity in which we abandon social practices that are totally destructive.

Q: Could it be a tear of happiness?

A: Of course.

### INTERVIEW WITH A WRITER FROM the "SEA GULL GROUP"

Q: Some personal facts?

A: I'm 22 yrs old, a member of an upper middle-class family. My father is a technocrat, and my mother is a very good Latin mother. I studied in a small bourgeois high school in which--a rare thing--there were some militant leftists, and I was one of them. Now I'm a university student in Social Communication.

Q: What are some of the artistic activities that most motivate you, that you most like?

A: I like photography, because it allows you to give to reality a form very much your own. I also like the movies, reading, and music. I prefer dancing to Salsa and listening to Silvio.

Q: Do you consider graffiti an art?

A: There are many graffiti artists, but I think they fulfill more a communicative function than an artistic one. Graffiti is a form of expression that questions people about their everyday life.

Q: Why did you start to paint?

A: We got together one afternoon, in which some of us felt depressed, others in love, and others misunderstood. We took out a piece of paper, started to write, and later decided to go out and paint the walls what we had written.

Q: With what theme?

A: There are some graffiti that criticize society, the system, and others that are concerned about the environment.

Q: Do you have an ecological proposal?

A: Actually, yes. Like passive beings, we see lots of daily destruction of nature; people talk lots about the environment; even the ones who call themselves ecologists don't do anything about it.

Q: Why do you use the sea gull?

A: Because it suggests liberty.

Q: Why identify graffiti with a signature?

A: Perhaps it's not necessary, but if it's our creation and we feel identified with a phrase, why not sign it? ...Even if it's only to know that it was us, and pass by, see it, and say, remember that night when they almost shot us?

Q: When was that?

A: One night we were painting in the Mariscal district, in a very white wall of a restaurant, and a guard came out with a pistol in his hands, ready to shoot us. A friend started up the car, and we flew out of there.

Q: What do you feel when you paint?

A: Graffiti, as Hugo Idrovo says, is a discharge of adrenalin, because you're nervous and you have to do it well and you don't have much time. It definitely goes beyond the adrenalin when your message dissuades and makes people better understand their reality.

Q: What do you think is the reach of the graffiti?

A: In comparison with the reach of the mass media, it's limited. It's precisely against the bombardment of these [mass media], and alienation, and routine that graffiti offers a respite.

Q: What would you do if the government selected a huge wall for graffiti? Would you paint there?

A: No, then there wouldn't be any joke, the graffiti would lose its appeal.

Q: Graffiti is a type of alternative communication?

A: I don't think so, because alternative communication has a goal, a strategy, whereas graffiti is much more spontaneous. Graffiti will grow in influence when the level of social conscience grows. Our graffiti in this sense are not very ambitious; we're just trying to make people sensible, because, as Monseñor Proaño said, sensitization is a step towards conscious raising.

