



# Visual Poetry for public spaces, urban space subject-object

## Analysis of two street art works that use verbal signs.

### Cadós Sanchez Bandeira

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*"...the melodic landscape is no longer a melody associated with a landscape; the melody itself is a sonorous landscape in counterpoint to a virtual landscape. That is how we get beyond the placard stage: although each expressive quality, each matter of expression considered in itself, is a placard or poster, the analysis of them is nevertheless abstract. Expressive qualities entertain variable or constant relations with one another (that is what matters of expression do); they no longer constitute placards that mark a territory, but motifs and counterpoints that express the relation of the territory to interior impulses or exterior circumstances, whether or not they are given. No longer signatures, but a style."*

*Gilles Deleuze, Mille Plateaux vol. 4*

## Introduction

The works present in the analysis were chosen by the following criteria: Use of verbal signs; Photos taken by the author of this analysis, taken at the place where the work was made for a more detailed analysis taking into account all the surrounding context; and a relationship of dialogue between the work and the location of its exposure that would allow an analysis of urban space as a subject-object of this poetic insertion in the reality of the city.

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## Analysis

### Analysis #1



Fig. 1: Relax Escorts. Photo: Cadós Sanches Bandeira.

The photo above depicts an artwork which was done in a bus stop at Rua Augusta which is close to the city center of São Paulo. The technique of this work is called "lambe-lambe" [*literally translated as licks-licks, translator's comment*] and is usually a set of prints of a variety of shapes in bond paper, also of varying size, and bonded in public spaces with a glue made from flour, vinegar and water. In short, an expressive technique quite economical. This technique is widely used in advertising concerts and nightclubs.

In this lambe-lambe work we see the printing of a newspaper page designed to so called classified ads under the title "Relax Escorts". Classified ads on this page are several ads with names of girls who offer their services, which awaken and promise making various sexual desires and fantasies of their prospective customers. It is worth noting that the reception of those ads by the society, and even by the men to whom they are intended, is not so pleasant because it provokes the libido and this may sound or awakening old taboos. Many of those who see these ads, especially women, classify anonymous advertisers as prostitutes, and even those who accept such notice do it in a discreet, restrained way.

At first it seems just another one of those ads already commonplace on the streets of Sao Paulo and considered by many as banal and vulgar. But among these ads we found some advertisements widely known by the public which look unusual in the context of this collage.

Just below the title "Relax Escorts", we found a logo and the name "Companhia Vale do Rio Doce", one of the largest companies in Brazil. In this context, we can also understand it as an escort [*companhia*] and her name, "Vale do Rio Doce" [*Sweet River Valley*] which can refer, metaphorically, to erogenous zones of the human body with geographical dimensions.

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Above, we have a picture of a naked woman covering her breasts and vagina with her hands and, beside, her name and a number. Accompanying this photo we find the words indicating "To councilor" followed by an imperative slogan "Vote for good", indicating that this woman is a candidate for any elective political position. Within these references of advertisements with erotic appeals, this political advertising suggests an ironic reading relating prostitution and policy.

Below is the announcement of a famous coffee shop called "Frans Café", but instead of "coffee" we read "Pimp" [*cafetão, in portuguese, translator's comment*] which is a term usually attributed to men who manage call girls, and this professional attribute is assigned to a likely man called Frans. The slogan accompanying this announcement is "style and art of serving," which also brings us to the work of both a coffee shop and a pimp.

Beside, we have the advertisement from the US-origin snack McDonald's, with the slogan "Love a lot all of this", which seems to us, amid all these fetish ads, to refer to this chaos of messages as a loving statement. In its logo, the letter "M" has rounded tips, associated with buttocks or breasts. Among these tips, we find a phallic symbol.

Finishing the interference of well known and quite popular advertisements found in this page, we have the Bradesco Bank advertising in which there is a play on words involving the name of a service offered by the bank, called "Prime". In this announcement, it is replaced by the word "Primas" [*"cousins" in portuguese, translator's comment*] which is also used to refer to escort girls, perhaps hinting at a new service offered by the bank.

On another side of the bus stop, displaying newspaper pages for both the street and onto the sidewalk, we find four interventions. The first one, next to the journal header, is the expression "Zerohum Draft Project - Pimp for Political and Companies." This is the likely name of the artist or group that developed the "lambe-lambe"[*licks-licks, translator's comment*], followed by a slogan that shows the intention of the work author in satirizing big business and politicians in Brazil and the world, comparing them to pimps, prostitutes and, more than that, relating them the way as is done in ad erotic and sexual desires, so common in the consumer market. Placing side by side the two types of commercial exploitation of desires, the author makes us think about what actually is banal and vulgar in our society and how consumption is explored in an appealing way by large companies.

In the page toward the sidewalk, one sees the announcement of the jewelry brand "Vivara" written in a way that, when read, may suggest to the reader the view of a stick (Vi vara, *I saw a stick, ndr!*). The expression "vara" (*stick, ndr!*) refers us to a phallic object because it is an epithet of the male sexual organ.

Below, in a large band occupying almost the entire center of the page, one can see a political ad as above, from the same candidate for councilor, but now linking the image of the almost naked girl to a Senate candidate, notoriously considered conservative so averse to this kind of appeal.

Finally, a Petrobras ad that reads, under its name, "Pietro Bras - strongly" and, below, the slogan: "The challenge is our energy," indicating in these phrases signs referring to the energy expended in sexual act.

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This "lambe-lambe" reveals a shock and a subversion among advertising pieces . Ads legally and socially accepted and even appreciated (McDonald's, Vivara, Banco Bradesco, political candidates, Frans Café) arise, in this "lambe-lambe" as sellers or encouragers of practices legally and socially reprehensible. On the other hand, anonymous women ads because they are so intense, end up being natural and acceptable. They are anonymous who do good and consecrated persons who do evil, and it reveals a great irony to the values established in our society.

The location of these "lambe-lambe" is also very suggestive and suggests irony as final conclusion. Currently, the nightlife of Augusta Street is very famous for houses of striptease, saunas and clubs and also for its sidewalks where transit many escort girls, transvestites and several other sex workers. At the same time, the street is home to great shopping and a diverse type of trade, and come across several very famous streets by their trade in high financial level, as the Paulista Avenue and Oscar Freire Street, in the "noble" Jardins neighborhood. Thus, the artist re-figures sociocultural conflict of the spot between institutionalized, sacralized trade by the "nobility" and the one desecrated and proletarian by sex workers. All of this reveals the socio-cultural conflict by an optics that subverts the signs that already inhabit the imagination of the local public space.

## Analysis 2



Fig. 2: Sell B B LA LA LA. Photo: Cadós Sanches Bandeira.

We have here again the technique of "lambe-lambe", this time presented in several traffic lights between the two lanes of the Avenida Paulista. The "lambe-lambe" on this photo was located near the TV Gazeta building and the junction with Brigadeiro Luis Antonio Avenue.

In the foreground, right side of the reader, the "lambe-lambe" stands out for having white background, dressed on a wide black pole used as support for the lights and other traffic signs of the avenue. In the work, we have letters that appear to have been written in a personal computer, with no visual or technical finesse. The larger letters are in upper case, which highlights even more its words: "SELL B B LA LA LA ... B".

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The word "vendo" [*sell, translator's comment*] draws our attention to a possible commercial message. However, its continuation "B LA" has the letters "B" distributed on page forming a diagonal into four lines, bringing the letters to the left corner of the paper making room for the word "B LA", repeated in the "lambe-lambe". At first, it seems that an erroneous space has been placed (an error called crow, in typing) between the letter "B" and the syllable "LA", forming the phrase "SELL BLA BLA BLA ...". This could indicate the sale of "bla bla bla", which commonly means "small talk" or a conversation which the message recipient is not interested in participating in.

Another meaning can be understood if we look at the word which is indicated by a frame handmade diagonally. From the first "B", we have "BAL", which may be a hint of the second missing letter in the word "B LA", forming through this possible charade the phrase "SELL BULLET" [*in portuguese, BALA, translator's comment*]. This sign reminds us of a multi significance because it opens up for reading either bullet [*in the brazilian sense of candy*] or bullet [*projectile*].

The last sentence of "lambe-lambe" is "At the traffic light, I am ... the glass-proof man." The passage that says "At the traffic light, I am ..." uses smaller letters both in lower case as in upper case. "The Man" is in smaller letters than the previous ones perhaps indicating a possible devaluation of the man in this situation, and "glass-proof" in upper case has greater emphasis than the other words.

We realized then that this last sentence has a relationship with the two understandings of the enigma presented initially. It builds a pun on the expression "glass bulletproof" giving a new meaning to the relationship between drivers and sellers of candies at the traffic lights. These vendors are very common on Paulista Avenue, and some of them were present when the photo in question was taken.

The relationship between drivers, commonly frightened in their vehicles, with these vendors, who come from the poor outskirts of São Paulo, is not the friendliest. Often they are greeted with the windows closed in their faces or with indifference to offer candy. The author seems then seek to subvert the threat caused by people who sell at the traffic lights to the occupants of the cars, saying that this seller is "glasses proof."

## Conclusion

The two works analyzed are located in public urban spaces. We realize the concern of using the verbal code with visual dialogue developed in this space, relating them physically, socially and culturally, encompassing a range of elements of the work. She carries poetics suggested by the environment itself and, through questioning interventions, subverts the relationship between public and private, institutional and non-institutional, good and evil of the consumer society with which the work dialogue.

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Fig. 3: No entry. Photo: Cadós Sanches Bandeira.