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Hamilton College

Queer Movement and Community in Colombia:
The Influence and Importance of Social Media as Used by Museo Q

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Levitt Summer Research

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Introduction

Social media, defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content,” (Social Media) have had a tremendous impact on the development of social movements around the world. The connectivity and accessibility offered by platforms such as Facebook and Twitter make them valuable tools that facilitate the efforts of activists and organizations engaged in the quest for social justice and equity, particularly, when the resources and support available to them are limited or when their goals go against the accepted social values and structure (Obaid).

From the *2011 Revolution* in Egypt to the *Black Lives Matter* movement in the United States, social media has contributed mainly by spreading the goals of social movements to a global audience, and by helping activists and organizations in the arrangement of multitudinous mobilizations that would have been almost impossible in the past (Mundt et al.). In the case of *Ni Una Menos*, a feminist movement created in Argentina in the year 2015, for instance, the overwhelming political influence of the massive protests known as *Mareas Verdes* (partly organized through social media by activists and organizations belonging to this movement) in conjunction with many other efforts, made possible the legalization of abortion at the beginning of the year 2021 (Perruc 9).

Additionally, the impact of social media can also be of a more specific, community-oriented nature. Wolfson and Funke suggest that “In addition to the fact that social media is a tool for disseminating information and coordinating activities, it also represents an emotive platform for the construction of identities, sharing of emotions and building collective feelings” (qtd. in Obeid). In other words, social media serves not only as a tool to capture the attention of

an extensive audience or arrange large social demonstrations, but also as a platform through which activists and organizations can build a sense of community, share and preserve personal experiences, and establish the meaningful narratives and identities that inspire social movements and provoke change.

One such organization, that uses social media as a tool to both reach large audiences and build a collective identity to inspire positive social change is Museo Q, in Bogotá, Colombia. This museum, described by its administrators as a “voluntary, non-profit, civil society museum initiative with the mission of recovering, communicating, and making visible the stories and memories of the LGBTIQ people as part of the [Colombian] national narrative,” was created between 2012 and 2014, and has, since then, been an active supporter of the LGBTIQA+ movement and community in Colombia, mainly by promoting the work of artists that engage in the practice of artistic activism (¿Quiénes Somos?)

This said, the goals of this research will be to: (1) Explore the potential influence and present importance of Museo Q’s usage of social media in relation to the Colombian LGBTIQA+ movement and community, (2) Study the sociohistorical context surrounding the work of Museo Q, (3) Explore the work of Museo Q, including some of the artworks that it promotes, their cultural significance, and the museum’s achievements. Also, more generally, (4) Comprehend how digital art gives visibility to queer communities, individuals, and perspectives in Colombia.

To address these topics, the following driving questions will be considered: (1) What is the legal framework concerning the LGBTIQA+ Community in Colombia? (2) How and why does Museo Q use social media to address controversial topics such as Religion? And (3) How can art, particularly digital art, contribute to the recognition of the rights and liberties of marginalized communities and individuals?

Moreover, recognizing the importance of action and believing that we all have a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the most vulnerable social groups, this research will also reflect on the question (4) How can we, as members of a reputable educational institution, contribute to the work done by an organization such as Museo Q?

Brief Historical and Social Context: LGBTIQ+ Movement and Community in Colombia

Concerning the historical and social context surrounding the topics related to the LGBTIQ+ Movement and community in Colombia, it is worth mentioning, as a general indicator of the dominating stance usually taken by the Colombian society, that, according to the *2021 Survey of Political Culture* by the Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics, around 78.2% of Colombian adults identify themselves as Catholics. With this statistic in mind (even greater in previous decades), it does not come as a surprise that the country has characterized itself as being fairly conservative, especially in the years before the ratification of the 1991 Constitution, which emphasized, among other fundamental rights, the importance of every citizen's freedom of expression (Sánchez).

Fortunately, despite this conservative stance, Colombia has made great progress when it comes to legally protecting its LGBTIQ+ Community. Nevertheless, the great majority of advancements have not been achieved by means (or initiative) of the Legislative Branch of the Colombian government (responsible for representing the Colombian people), but, instead, most of them have been the result of landmark rulings made by the Colombian Supreme and Constitutional Courts, in response to numerous injustices committed against members of the LGBTIQ+ Community (Sánchez).

This fact is yet another indicator of the conservative tendencies prevalent in some of Colombia's most fundamental institutions. It suggests that, historically, most constituents have not elected representatives whose interests align with those of the queer community, and that, without the interventions of the Supreme and Constitutional Courts, the many legal advances so far obtained would be unlikely to exist. Moreover, this partial effort to guarantee basic rights and privileges evidences a lack of cooperation between the branches of the Colombian government when it comes to addressing the inequality experienced by queer people. Such lack of cooperation results in a poor implementation of the existing protective legislation. (Sánchez)

The bar-graph below shows the judicial instances where relevant rulings concerning the LGBTIQA+ Community have been made. In order, from top to bottom: Council of State-First Section (1 Ruling), Council of State-Second Section (7 Rulings), Council of State-Third Section (5 Rulings), Constitutional Court (185 Rulings), Supreme Court-Civil Cassation Chamber (20 Rulings), Supreme Court-Penal Cassation Chamber (1 Ruling), Supreme Court-Labor Cassation Chamber (10 Rulings), Special Jurisdiction for Peace (1 Ruling), no data (10 judicial decisions) (Avances).



Figure 1. Judicial Instances (Avances).

In addition to this, although these rulings are most certainly an improvement for the Colombian LGBTIQ+ Community, the struggle towards a more equitable society, accepting of this community, is far from finished. The many instances of violence and discrimination that still besiege the members of this community, as evidenced in a research report made by the Williams Institute from the University of California, are proof of the underlying prejudice that exists against it. The report concludes that:

Colombia is a country of contradictions when it comes to LGBT lives. On the one hand, there are impressive gains in civil rights protections for LGBT people, such as recognition of same-sex marriage, eligibility for retirement pensions, and legal protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. On the other hand, there continues to be serious violence and discrimination against LGBT people, particularly gay/bisexual men, and transgender people. There is also a continued risk of reversal of achieved rights as the conservative movement strongly opposes those rights. (Choi et al.)

These claims are supported in the report, primarily, by the responses of 4,856 members of the LGBT Community to questions concerning their well-being and their everyday experiences within the Colombian society. The following bar-graph, containing some of these responses, verifies the “serious violence and discrimination” described in the report and provides an idea of how difficult it can be to comfortably express non-heterosexual tendencies while being part of the Colombian society.

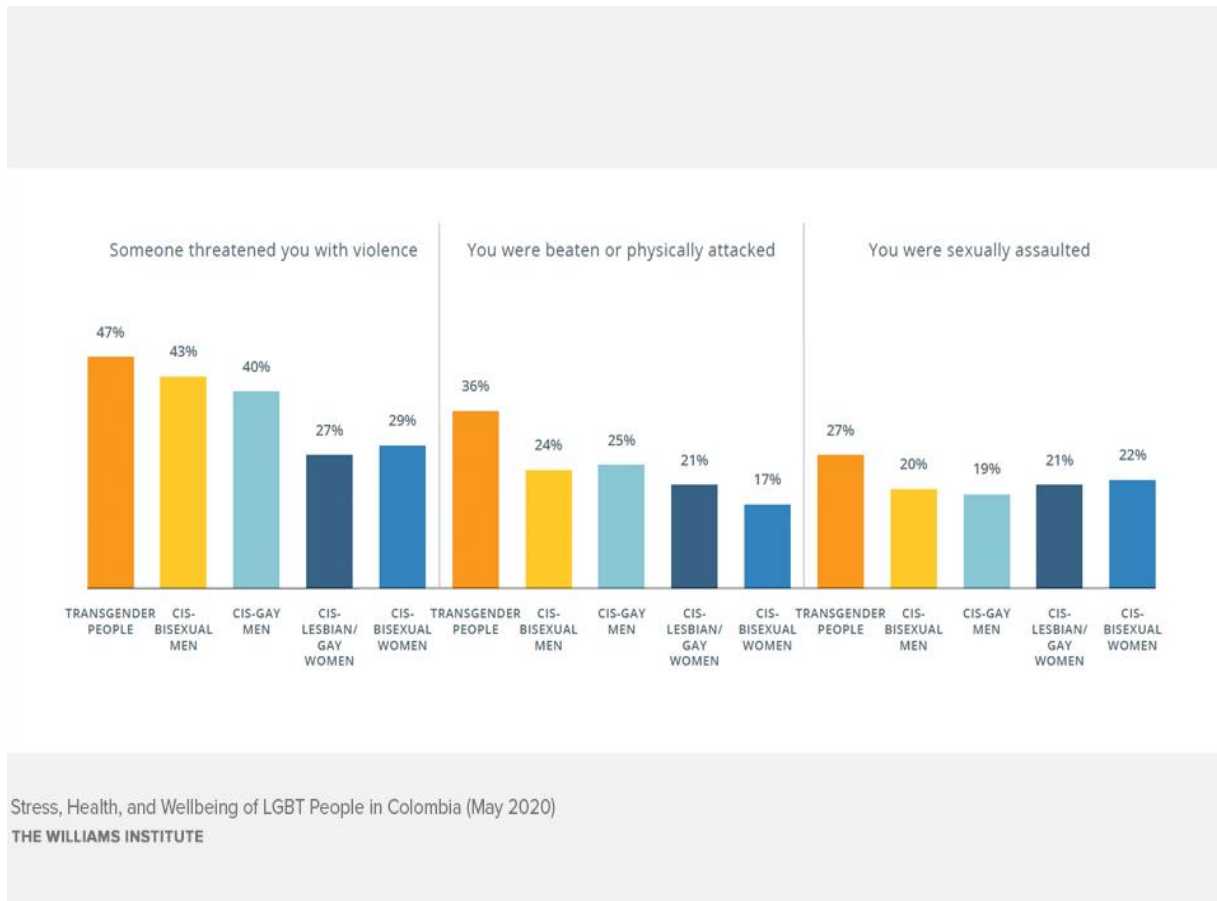


Figure 2. Survey Responses (Choi et al.)

As for the specific rulings and historical events relevant to the queer movement and community in Colombia, due to the extensiveness of the history behind such community and its activist endeavors, they are included as a timeline at the end of this document.

Museo Q

Within the social and historical context previously described (and later detailed in the timeline), an unconventional initiative, Museo Q, was born as an attempt to share and preserve, by means of artistic expression, the countless experiences, testimonies, and perspectives of the LGBTIQ+ community in Colombia. To accomplish these valuable goals, the museum has promoted the work of various artists from this and other communities, and has arranged, with the

help of several other museums and contributors, numerous exhibitions and other projects that seek to highlight topics of interest and importance concerning the place of queer people in the Colombian society and history. The museum was created between the years 2012 and 2014 as a “voluntary, non-profit, civil society museum initiative” (¿Quiénes Somos?) that operates under the belief that both art and the places where it is shared and preserved can have a tremendous impact on the advancement of social causes and on the preservation of the history and communities behind such causes. As said on Museo Q’s website:

We deeply believe that museums [with or without walls] have the potential to subvert canons, transform stereotypes and promote progress in human rights. They are ideal places to directly, purposefully, and inclusively face lives that have historically been marginalized and in some cases deliberately silenced. Museo Q does not have a permanent headquarters; however, it activates [physical and virtual] spaces and associates with other institutions to create projects and processes from alternative narratives as acts of resistance and resilience (¿Quiénes Somos?)

This quote is of particular importance because it reveals the very essence of Museo Q and its relationship with “virtual spaces,” such as social media and websites. These spaces, as previously quoted, serve as platforms for the “processes and projects” that preserve the narratives of the LGBTIQ+ Community and the fundamental attitudes of resistance and resilience that have long inspired its social movement.

Also, the quote introduces a quality of the museum that makes it different from most museums and that strengthens its already significant connection to digital platforms. This quality, denominated Minor Architecture, refers to the fact that, instead of having a permanent headquarters, Museo Q temporarily occupies existing structures and spaces, which in turn results

in the museum relying greatly on digital platforms, such as social media, to share its work with the community and to preserve an (always) accessible archive of its many projects that is independent from a physical location (Forero).

When discussing this topic, in response to the question of why Museo Q operates under the concept of Minor Architecture, architect and museologist Andrés Forero, one of the individuals responsible for Museo Q, suggested in an interview that this is meant to metaphorically convey the museum's existence within traditional and conventional (major) societal structures, from where they build safe and accepting (minor) queer spaces. In addition to this, he clarified that this concept is an extension of the ideas presented by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari in the book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, where they explore the work of Franz Kafka, a Czech writer who used to write in German while residing in the Czech Republic (a *minority* language, viewed negatively by Kafka's *majoritarian* Czech contemporaries) (Babaei).

Regarding, specifically, the topic of social media, in response to the questions of how social media has impacted Museo Q and how does the museum make use of such (and other) digital platforms, Andrés Forero stated that the museum has used social media "in a very intuitive way," that they make use of Facebook, Twitter, and (mainly) Instagram, and that, because of the voluntary nature of Museo Q, no one is specifically appointed to manage its social media. Instead, this task is a shared effort between the members of the group. More importantly, he stated that Museo Q's website and social media are used because they serve to preserve the museum's work and to keep it accessible for the community.

Among the many topics that have been addressed by this unconventional museum, the following stand out (listed along with the name of their corresponding exhibition, the date, and

place where they were presented): coming out (*Lo Que Se Ve No Se Pregunta*, 2016-2018, IDARTES and UniAndes), same sex marriage (*Lluvia de Sobres*, 2017, ARTBO), forced displacement (*Mudanza*, 2017, Centro de Memoria Paz y Reconciliación), and erotic body (*Libido*, 2018, Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá) (Museo Q, Re: Proyecto Investigativo).

The museum has also led teaching initiatives such as: *Leer las Flores: Breve Historia (Queer) de las Plantas* (English: *To Read Flowers: Brief (Queer) History of Plants*), *Estéticas de Genero: Collages del Ser* (English: *Queer Aesthetics: Collages of Being*), and *Arte, Genero, y Espacios Expositivos* (English: *Art, Gender, and Exhibitive Spaces*); as well as workshops concerning *Cuidado, Cuerpos, y Masculinidades* (English: *Care, Bodies, and Masculinities*). Additionally, Museo Q has arranged commemorative events, participated in the Pride Parade in Bogotá, and developed the first editorial project concerning the culture and heritage of the Queer Community in Colombia (*Devenir Queer: al límite del patrimonio* [English: *Queer Becoming: to the limit of heritage*]), which was awarded the *Premio Julio Gonzales Gómez* (English: *Julio Gonzales Gómez Award*) by the Mayor's Office of Bogotá.

Furthermore, because of Museo Q's extensive involvement in the broad range of initiatives previously highlighted, many organizations and academic institutions have rewarded the museum's efforts to promote queer heritage and culture and have invited its representatives to serve as speakers in a multitude of events. Specifically, Museo Q has participated in academic events hosted by the following institutions (listed along with the date and name of the event): Universidad de los Andes (*II Encuentro Internacional de Estudios Críticos de las Transiciones Políticas*, 2014), Casa-Museo Quinta de Bolívar (*Coloquio: Afecto y Emoción en el Museo*, 2015), Universidad de Puerto Rico (*Sites Queer*, 2019), Universidad Austral de Chile (*Foro sobre Museología Contemporánea*, 2020), Indiana University Bloomington - Kinsey

Institute (*Exhibitionism: Sexuality at the Museum*, 2021), Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (*XV Seminario Histórico LGTTTTI Mexicano*, 2022), Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano (*Clase de Arte en Colombia*, 2018), Universidad Externado de Colombia (*Especialización en Sostenibilidad de Museos e Instituciones Culturales*, 2018), Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (*Clase de Museología*, 2019, 2021 y 2022), Ministerio de Cultura de Perú (*Reimaginar el concepto de museo*, 2021), and Universidad del Museo Social Argentino (*Diplomado Arte y Géneros*, 2021), among others (Museo Q, Re: Proyecto Investigativo).

Respecting more specific recognitions, Museo Q has been awarded the *Premio a la Innovación de Organizaciones Culturales de Idartes* (2019) (English: *Idartes Cultural Organizations Innovation Award*) and the *Coronación de El Museo Reimaginado* (2017) (English: *Crowning of the Reimagined Museum*) in an event organized by the American Alliance of Museums and the TyPA foundation. Additionally, Museo Q has been featured in *La Boletina* (2016) by Espacialidades Feministas, *Cultural Magazine El Alto* (2019) by the British Council, *Museum International* (2020) by the International Council of Museums, *Queer Baseline* (2021) edited by the Stedelijk Museum, and *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories* (2022) by RIBA Books (a particularly popular publication).

All things considered; it is safe to say that Museo Q's work as an active supporter of the LGBTIQ+ community and movement in Colombia has obtained a well-deserved level of recognition. Such recognition, although sometimes overlooked when it comes to its potential to benefit organizations such as Museo Q, may actually be a very helpful contribution to their purpose. In response to the question of how Hamilton College students, interested in the cause of the queer movement in Colombia, can contribute to the work done by Museo Q, Andres Forero suggested that any effort to share the work of the museum, be it academic or not, results

beneficial to the organization. Not surprisingly, anything that inspires conversation on topics that tend to be avoided in conservative societies, such as queer rights, can serve to normalize these topics and to, coincidentally, bring them out of the oppressive *closet* where they are usually kept by such societies.

The following artwork, titled *Y Eva Tambien*, by artist Alejandra Chaparro, was part of the aforementioned *Lo Que Se Ve No Se Pregunta* exhibition concerning the topic of coming out. The outstanding level of complexity present in this artistic composition, and the broad range of symbolic images existing in it, make it a good reminder of the convoluted nature of the discussion of such a controversial topic in a conservative society. The sensual contents of this piece, including a variety of feminine and masculine bodies, evoke concepts such as sexuality and gender expression. The presence of animals, such as a bull and a leopard, tells us about human's wild nature (particularly, it would seem, that of men). And the use of religious icons, such as a laughing devil or a Buddha, clearly alludes to the topic of religion. It is a good example of the variety of themes addressed by Museo Q in its exhibitions.



Figure 3. *Y Eva Tambien* (Alejandra Chaparro)

Museo Q and Instagram – The Case of Religion

When it comes to Museo Q's presence in social media, one that has been specially utilized by the museum is Instagram. This platform, self-defined as a "free photo and video sharing app available on iPhone and Android" (where people can upload photos or videos and share them with their followers or friends, as well as comment, view, and like posts shared by those friends) (About Instagram), has allowed the museum to build an interactive audiovisual archive containing a comprehensive compendium of artistic expressions. This archive, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to which people can get access by simply looking up online from any corner of the world, also serves as a sort of gallery for the many projects in which the museum has been involved and for the many artists that have collaborated with it.

Such a gallery, commonly known as an *Instagram Feed*, contains around 680 posts. The profile itself, which can be found by looking up *@museoq* on Instagram, has more than 7,300 followers and follows 3,423 other accounts (as of August of 2023). A majority of the posts present in this feed are part of what the museum calls *residencias*, a series of "artistic residencies meant to broadcast LGBTIQ artists and/or cultural productions from all over Latin America" (Museo Q, Re: Proyecto Investigativo). This format, started by the museum in the year 2020, has been, as evidenced by the many positive comments accompanying most posts, warmly welcomed by the Instagram community. It includes a diverse set of photographs, videos, paintings, drawings, poems, and other artistic expressions, developed by collectives and/or singular artists, who post for an entire week (the duration of a *residencia*) some of their artworks along with a short reflection or comment.

In accordance with Museo Q's intentions to prevail in the face of traditional social structures, most *residencias* deal with topics that are considered taboo in the Colombian society. A majority of the posts that make up these *residencias* are statements that seem to defy basic constructs, such as politics or religion, and/or introduce a queer perspective into their discussion. From nakedness and blunt criticisms to testimonies or heartwarming stories, these posts either graphically and unapologetically disturb the conservative narratives that have historically marginalized queer communities across South America, or creatively preserve the meaningful experiences and stories that belong to these communities. This said, although Religion is not necessarily a topic present in all exhibitions or *residencias* that have been promoted by Museo Q, it serves as a good example of how the museum approaches most topics and will therefore be used in this analysis to understand that approach.

In the case of Religion, the main idea is that, by enabling artists, activists, and collectives to use its virtual spaces (social media, website, etc.) to question, criticize, and expose negative religious dogmas and perspectives, the museum seeks to reshape those dogmas (and perspectives) in a way that makes them more inclusive of queer lives. Through *residencias*, meetings, and exhibitions, in an allusion to the concept of Minor Architecture, Museo Q creates safe (minor) spaces that exist within a (major) traditional and conservative society, greatly influenced by religious beliefs, and opens these spaces to the voices of the queer community so that its members can express their views, share their experiences, and celebrate their identities.

One such *residencia*, remarkably forthright because of the use it makes of religious icons present at the heart of the Colombian society, is the one made by artist Juli Zapata (Santa Putricia) in May 2020. Museo Q introduced this artist's residency in the following post:



Figures 4-5. *First Introductory Post (Museo Q)*

This introductory post, starting from the word “Maestra,” translates to the following:

Master of Plastic Arts from the National University of Colombia, Medellín. Assistant Curator at the Museum of Antioquia and Teacher at the Metropolitan Technological Institute of Medellín, ITM. Transvestite and Nonbinary Trans Marica. Her research interests revolve around gender studies and non-hetero/homo normative identities, from where she builds her different proposals and actions. Questions about gender, the construction of corporalities, and how hegemonic institutions have exercised power and violence over those non-normative identities and bodies throughout history. To Reside I will share different proposals created over several years, in which it is always clear that we will not be silenced nor made invisible. (Museo Q, First Introductory Post)

A day after the publication of this introductory post, Santa Putricia posted her first artwork. This collage, titled *Yo Reinaré* (English: *I Will Reign*), depicts *El Nino Jesús* (a religious icon that is very popular among Colombian Catholics and which is believed to represent a younger version

of Jesus Christ) wearing a pink dress and white boots. Along with the artwork, the artist includes the following (translated) comment:

At the beginning of 2019, Brazil's Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights, Damara Alves, expressed, just after completing the ceremony where she assumed that role: 'Attention, attention. A new era begins. Boys wear blue, and girls wear pink.' These statements generated controversy online, and this image (that I had made a year before) spread online, being shared as a way of reacting to such declarations that still maintain the idea that colors, smells, clothes have gender. (Museo Q, *Yo Reinaré*)

This comment shows a clear rejection of Gender Binary; that is, "a system that classifies sex and gender into a pair of opposites, often imposed by culture, religion, or other societal pressures," where "all of the human population fits into one of two genders: man or woman" (Kendall).

Furthermore, by altering the appearance of a cherished religious icon in a way that defies traditional gender standards, the artist points to the innocuous nature of acts of gender expression, such as Drag performances. The revered and innocent character of *El Nino Jesús*, combined with the often-criticized practice of Cross-Dressing ("the wearing of clothes designed for the opposite sex") (Cross Dressing), lead Santa Putricia's audience to question their views on this and other practices of gender expression. It creates a character which, although difficult to assimilate for someone with conservative religious beliefs, still ignites in them the positive feelings associated with the unaltered version of that same character, therefore confronting their views on these practices, and appealing to their reflective thought.

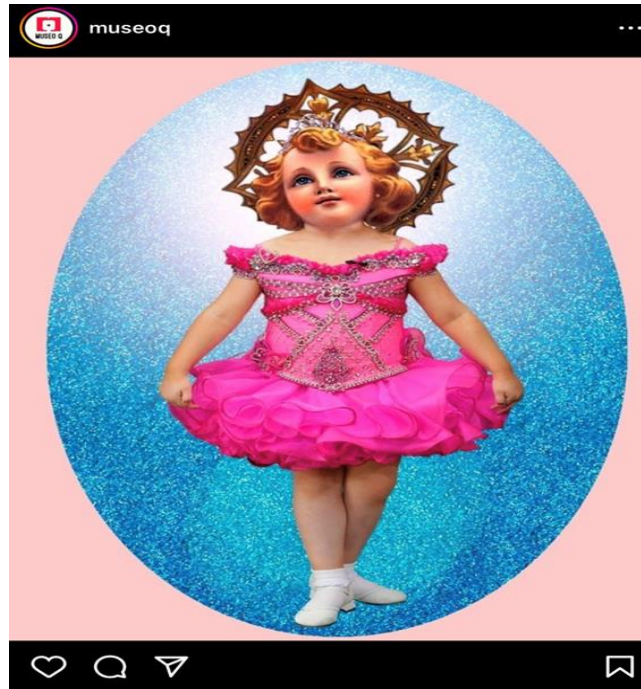
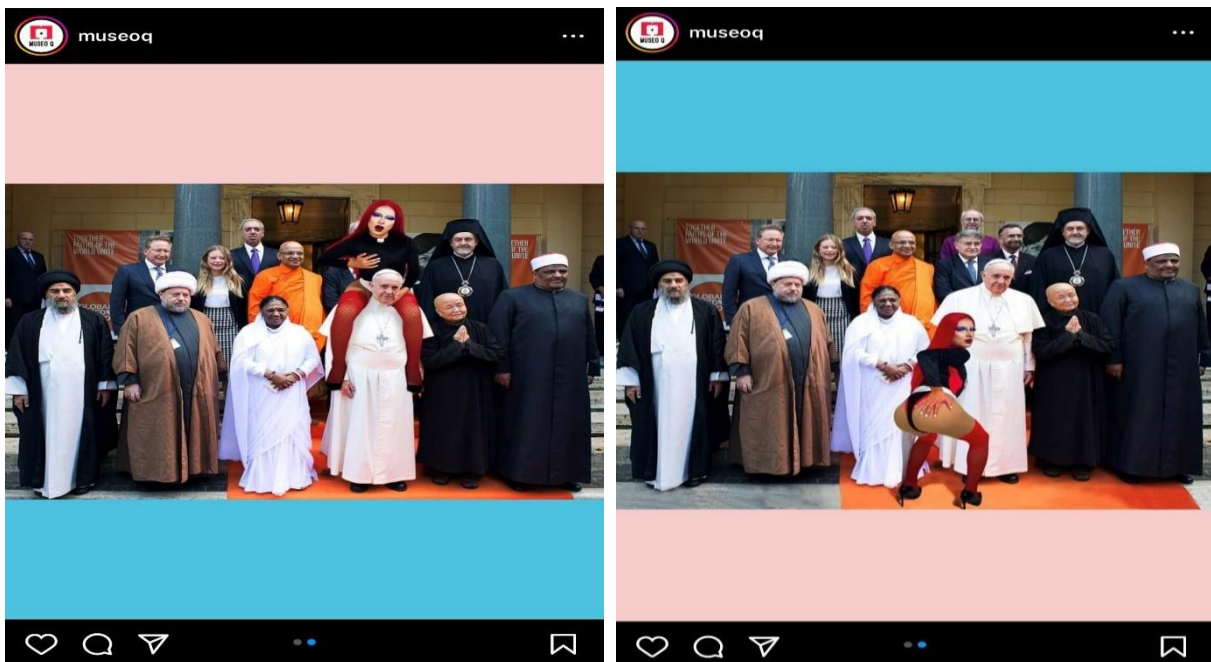


Figure 6. *Yo Reinaré* (Museo Q, Santa Putricia)

Similarly, another post from Santa Putricia’s *residencia*, titled *Santa Putricia Entre Lideres Religiosos* (English: *Santa Putricia Among Religious Leaders*), also includes, as its name suggests, a clear reference to religion. This post, a photomontage, depicts Santa Putricia in front (and on top) of some of the world’s most influential religious leaders, as they gather in a joint declaration that occurred in 2014. Along with these images, the post contains the following (translated) comment: “They tried to get me out of the official photo, but obviously, I wasn’t going to make it that easy. In a meeting with leaders of various world religions, I proposed that they hand over their wealth and facilities to address the humanitarian crisis that is currently being experienced in many parts of the world. They didn’t like the proposal too much...” (Museo Q, *Santa Putricia Entre Lideres Religiosos*). With this comment (and its corresponding artworks), Santa Putricia not only criticizes global religions (specially Catholicism, because of how she places herself on top of Pope Francis), but also claims the right to be accepted by them.

Her sentence: “They tried to get me out of the official photo, but obviously, I wasn't going to make it that easy,” reflects an attitude of resistance to the rejection that is often experienced by queer individuals in highly religious environments. It is an accentuation of the proposal made at the beginning of her *residencia*, when she stated that “we will not be silenced nor made invisible,” and it tells her audience that she, as a member of the queer community, deserves to be included in this and other conversations, and is not willing to let go of her rights without (stoutly) having tried to defend them first.



Figures 7-8. *Santa Putricia Entre Lideres Religiosos* (Museo Q, Santa Putricia)

Another *residencia*, whose content, in contrast to that of Santa Putricia's, provides a more personal approach to how Religion influences queer people in Colombia, is the one made in September 2020 by artist Sara Agustina (@saraagustina). This artist's *residencia* was introduced by Museo Q in the following post:



Figures 9-10. Second Introductory Post (Museo Q)

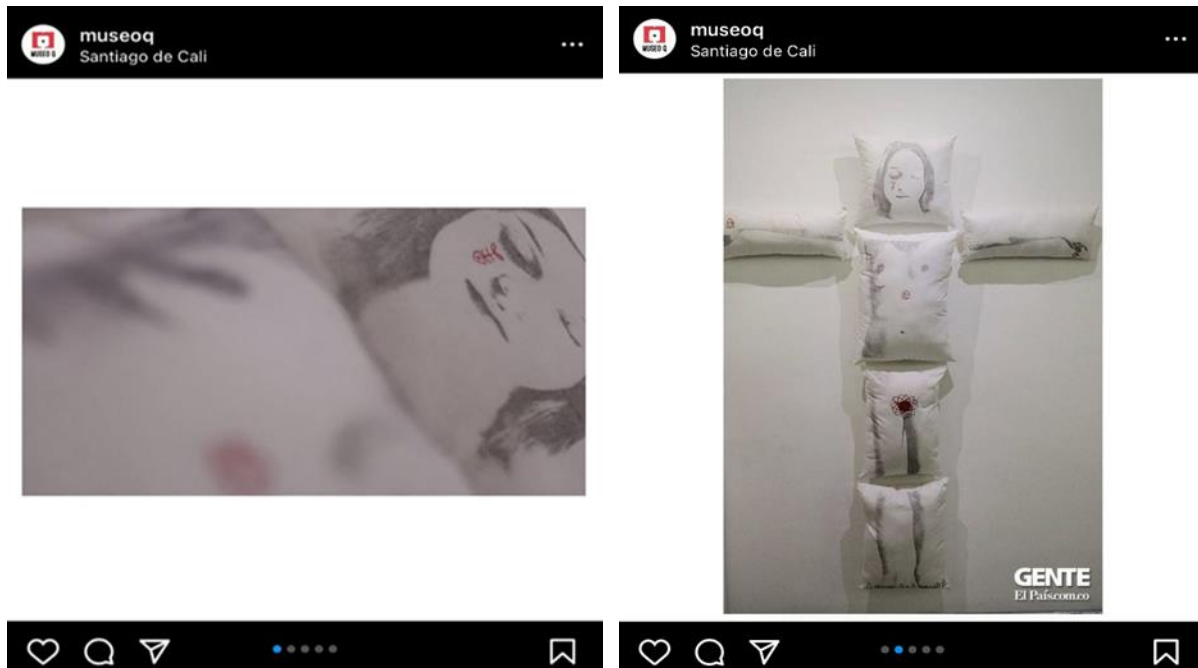
This introductory post, starting from the word “Artista,” translates to:

Visual artist, feminist, and queer person from the city of Cali, currently focused specifically on painting, editorial illustration, poster illustration, and handpoke tattooing. Agustina has worked as an illustrator in national media and is cofounder of the Trescruces collective. Sara promotes culture in the city of Cali through events such as workshops, graphic fairs, movie forums, toques, and parties, and has a graphic studio with an emphasis on branding, illustration, and letters. In the *residencia* she will share her work, an exploration from the perspective between non-binary and feminine, a dreamlike universe full of symbols that can be interpreted from many perspectives, questioning gender, and talking about feminism from intersectionality and decoloniality. Organic, cosmic, and even religious elements sprout from the unconscious, sometimes reflecting desires or violent sensations that oppose the delicate detail of the drawing, and a palette always between saturated, earthy, and pastel. (Museo Q, Second Introductory Post)

To approach the variety of themes described in this introduction, the artist decides to share with her audience an equally diverse set of artworks. She begins her *residencia* by posting *Mi Crucifixión* (English: *My Crucifixion*). This artwork, depicting what seems to be a woman's silhouette (presumably the artist's) on a cross-shaped set of pillows, gives her audience a glimpse into her own private life. Both the artwork and the comment attached to it evoke the affliction and isolation that is often experienced by queer people growing up in highly conservative, Catholic households, where they must often hide their true nature and attempt to understand it without anyone's help. On this, she says:

I studied at a women's school in Cali, where my first feminist demonstration was interrupted and where I was denied a prize for being lesbian. Now, I do not consider myself lesbian, now I consider myself pansexual. Since I have use of reason, I like women. When I was 5, I fell in love with a classmate, but no one could explain to me why I wanted to cry when she didn't want to be my friend, and it broke my heart when she left the school that same year. It's been 21 years since I first cried out of a heartbreak, and nobody knew it was because of that.... (Museo Q, *Mi Crucifixión*)

Among the symbols discernible in this artwork, the dead fish, dribbling just below the figure's eye, in the form of a tear, seems to be particularly striking. Bearing in mind the fact that a fish is often used as a symbol that represents an affiliation to a form of Christianity, a dead fish points to the separation that now exists between the artist and the Catholic beliefs that were instilled in her during her childhood. The fact that it is dribbling, in the form of a tear, conveys the sadness felt by someone whose initial beliefs contradicted her nature, and whose environment opposed even the slightest manifestation of that nature.



Figures 11-12. *Mi Crucifixión* (Museo Q, Sara Agustina)

Further along in her *residencia*, Sara Agustina provides an even deeper look into her own experience. On September 10, 2020, she posts *Mujer Tejiéndose un Liguero* (English: *Woman Knitting Herself a Garter Belt*). This colorful painting, an acrylic on canvas, is accompanied by the following (translated) comment:

I realize that I talk a lot about my experience in a women's school, where Catholicism was instilled in me, and about my family, that, despite having accepted the change over the years, still holds strong beliefs and is very conservative. This is because everything I reject starts from there. When I was in high school, I got kicked out of church for showing lesbian behaviors during mass; in my defense, I was just laughing at a friend who was crying over a song the choir was singing. This led me to think, years later, about the homophobia that they were constantly imposing to me and that I never got to fully develop beyond my self-homophobia.... And obviously, the micro phobias that we have

normalized with jokes and comments, that we must filter out of our lives. I feel that I express much of what it was to grow up in that context through what I do, even if it's not completely obvious. (Museo Q, *Mujer Tejiéndose Un Liguero*)

Both this artwork and the words attached to it shed light on the inspiration behind Sara Agustina's decision to address the topic of Religion in her art. In the same way that the angel in the painting provides the woman with the material needed to knit her garter belt, the experiences that Sara Agustina lived, because of her religious childhood, fuel her artistic mind with the inspiration needed to share with her audience the challenges and feelings that came with those experiences.

The garter belt itself is also a meaningful and revealing symbol. Considering that this item is sometimes thought of as a sexy symbol of femininity (Garter Belt), it is counterintuitive to see an angel contributing to its making. This contradicting dynamic, consistent with the artist's tendency to elicit "desires or violent sensations that oppose the delicate detail of the drawing" (Museo Q, Second Introductory Post), highlights the dual and influential role played by Religion in the development of her sexuality and identity. It shows how, despite all the rejection and discrimination that came from her religious environment, Sara Agustina managed to overcome these challenges and now uses them to strengthen her acceptance, not of the church, but of herself.

Lastly, Sara Agustina's comment emphasizes the danger of what she calls "micro-phobias," referring to discriminatory behaviors or views that become normalized through seemingly inoffensive remarks and jokes. This reflection, although not necessarily addressed in *Mujer Tejiéndose Un Liguero*, is cleverly coupled with this artwork in an attempt to give it the

attention it deserves. This gesture shows how Sara Agustina uses her art. Not only to share with the world the negative and influential impact that a conservative, religious upbringing may have on queer people, but also, just as importantly, to call out other harmful instances of homophobia that remain hidden in the underlying levels of the Colombian society.



Figures 13. *Mujer Tejiéndose Un Liguero* (Museo Q, Sara Agustina)

As for the similarities and differences between Sara Agustina's residencia and that of Santa Putricia's, whereas the latter approaches the topic of religion in a direct and critical manner, such as by altering religious icons and perching on top of Pope Francis, the former decides to do the same in a rather subtler way, such as by sharing artworks inspired by her religious upbringing. Although both artists are advocating for fair treatment for queer people and trying to expose the way in which religious dogmas exclude these people in Colombia, their unique methodologies when it comes to achieving these goals exemplify the variety of ways in which artistic activism is performed through Museo Q.

Conclusion

In contrast to how social media has been generally used in the context of social movements to urge the well-being of a certain community by facilitating multitudinous mobilizations, Museo Q has managed to use these platforms to capture the unique perspectives of some of the individuals behind these and other social demonstrations, as they relate to the queer communities present in South America (particularly Colombia). These individuals, whose talent allows them to express their views in the form of art, expose the struggle experienced by queer people as a result of the discrimination that stems from social structures, such as Religion, and take advantage of Museo Q's virtual spaces to argue for an unprejudiced, more equitable version of these structures and of Society as a whole.

Specifically, even in the face of the conservative political and ideological tendencies still present in the Colombian society, Museo Q's uniquely marked relationship with social media, due to its Minor Architecture, results in a variety of virtual spaces capable of sharing and preserving the history and perspectives belonging to the queer community. These spaces, hugely accessible in comparison to physical locations, have been widely and creatively used by queer artists, such as Sara Agustina and Santa Putricia, to further, through diverse expressions of artistic activism, the recognition of LGBTIQ+ people as part of the Colombian sociohistorical narrative.

The powerful impact of this approach as a way to reshape the Colombian society derives from the accessible nature of digital spaces and media, and from their capacity to widen the range of audiences that are usually reached by institutions such as Museo Q. In addition to this, the repurposed version of these virtual spaces makes them influential platforms for social

activism and fundamental components of the museum's own activist efforts, being this especially obvious when it comes to this museum's use of Instagram to promote its *residencias*.

Considering the relevance of this approach and Andres Forero's encouragement to share the work of Museo Q, further attempts to better understand Museo Q's particular relationship with social media could greatly contribute to the museum's mission and to the general understanding of how these platforms can be used to prompt social change. The specific recommendation, on the part of this author, would be to explore how the museum approaches the topic of Armed Conflict as it relates to the queer community in Colombia. Based on the research efforts done to complete this work, it seems that the literature focused on that topic is regrettably scarce, whereas the discriminative acts against queer people, as a result of armed conflict in Colombia, are just as regrettably recurrent.

Appendix

Below is a compendium, in the form of a timeline, containing some of the most relevant rulings made by the Supreme and Constitutional Courts concerning the legal protection and recognition of the rights and liberties of the LGBTIQ+ Community in Colombia. Additionally, for the purposes of this research, this timeline includes some of the most meaningful events concerning the history and activist endeavors of this community:

- **1940's:** *Los Felipitos*, a group of upper-class homosexual men, arrange underground meetings to socialize with other men.
- **1969:** Stonewall Uprising in the United States (said to have inspired queer people all over the world).

- **1971:** Octavio Giraldo Neira, a psychologist and sexologist from Manizales, writes innovative texts about homosexuality and masculinity in Colombia.
- **1972:** Establishments such as *El Farol* and *Yango*, often frequented by gay men, open in Bogotá; they become some of the first places of reunion for the homosexual community.
- **1976:** Activists León Zuleta and Manuel Velandia found the *Movimiento de Liberación Homosexual* (English: *Homosexual Liberation Movement*), pioneer in the protection of the LGBT Community and considered to be one of the first expressions of the queer movement.
- **1977:** León Zuleta creates *El Otro*, one of the first magazines dedicated to the LGBT Community – Members of the LGBT Community in Bogotá arrange weekly meetings at the Emmanuel Mounier Library, thus creating the *Grupo de Encuentro Para la Liberación de los Güeys* (English: *Güeys' Liberation Meeting Group*).
- **1978:** Gilbert Baker creates the iconic rainbow flag adopted by LGBTIQ+ communities across the world – The *Grupo de Estudio de la Cuestión Homosexual* (English: *Study Group on the Homosexual Topic*) or GRECO is founded. They were the first to include women and feminist collectives in their activities.
- **1979:** Artist Miguel Angel Rojas makes *Faenza*, a photographic series considered an icon of homosexuality in Colombian art.
- **1980:** The practice of homosexuality becomes legal in Colombia.
- **1982:** The first Pride Parade is celebrated in Colombia. Around 30 people attended this activist demonstration in Bogotá arranged by activists León Zuleta and Manuel Velandia.

- **1990:** Homosexuality stops being considered a mental disorder by the World Health Organization.
- **1991:** Colombia's new Political Constitution is ratified. It recognizes every human's right to liberty and to equalitarian treatment. Also, it emphasizes the importance of every citizen's freedom of expression.
- **1992:** Writer Fernando Molano publishes *Un Beso de Dick* (English: *A Kiss from Dick*), an innovative novel of LGBT literature.
- **1993:** Activist León Zuleta is murdered in his apartment – Colombia's Constitutional Court recognizes a transexual person's right to change their name as part of their transition of identity (Ruling T-594/93).
- **1994:** *El Discípulo Amado* (English: *The Loved Disciple*), the first Catholic group aimed to reflect on the LGBT Community, is founded in Bogotá.
- **1996:** Lesbian collective *Triángulo Negro* (English: *Black Triangle*) is created.
- **1997:** Gustavo Álvarez Gardeazábal, openly gay, is elected as governor of El Valle (one of Colombia's 32 departments/provinces).
- **1998:** Colombia's Constitutional Court determines that students cannot be discriminated on the basis of their sexuality, particularly addressing the case of a homosexual student, and stressing his right to education (Ruling T-101/98). In the same year, the court also determined that "homosexuality" cannot be considered as "bad conduct" by an educational institution (Ruling C-481).
- **1999:** The first assistance and support group for trans people, Transer, is created based on the therapeutic work of psychologist Marina Talero.

- **2000:** The first Pride Parade is celebrated in Cali. Around 20 people attended this activist demonstration (some of them with their faces covered), arranged by a group of activists including Junio Unicidad.
- **2001:** Colombia's Constitutional Court guarantees access to Social Security for same-sex couples (Ruling SU.623/01).
- **2003:** Colombia's Constitutional Court determines that lesbian couples must be allowed to intimate inmate visits in Colombian prisons (Ruling T-499/03).
- **2004:** Colombia Diversa, an organization dedicated to the protection of the LGBT Community, is created. It becomes one of the most relevant institutions involved in the protection of the queer community.
- **2005:** For the first time in Colombian history, one of the most important media outlets in the country aired a telenovela with a trans woman as a secondary character.
- **2006:** The first LGBT Community Center in Latin America is created in Bogotá.
- **2007:** The Colombian Constitutional Court recognizes additional rights for same-sex couples, such as a type of formal union (Ruling C-075/07) – A legislative document, concerning the protection of rights for members of the LGBT Community, is adopted in Bogotá.
- **2008:** A lesbian woman, Blanca Inés Durán, is elected as mayor of one of Bogotá's districts.
- **2009:** The Colombian Constitutional Court recognizes the civil, political, criminal, and social rights of same-sex couples (Ruling C-029/09).
- **2011:** The Colombian Constitutional Court recognizes that same-sex couples constitute a family (Ruling T-716/11).

- **2012:** The Colombian Constitutional Court states that a person's sexual orientation is not a risk selection criterion for infectious diseases when donating blood (Ruling T-248/12).
In the same year, the court determines that a person's sexual orientation is not a valid reason to deny them the possibility of adopting a child (Ruling T-276/12).
- **2013:** Colombia's Constitutional Court approves surgical procedures for body modifications of trans and queer people (Ruling T-771/13). In the same year, the court prevents educational institutions from limiting a student's right to self-expression (Ruling T-565/13).
- **2014:** For the first time in Colombian history, two lesbian women are elected to Congress (one of them would later become the first lesbian woman to be elected Mayor of Colombia's capital) – Colombia's Constitutional Court determines that Trans women are no longer required to possess a military document (required for men) to get a job (Ruling T-476/14) – The LGBTI population is formally recognized with the status of “victim of armed groups”.
- **2015:** Colombia's Constitutional Court makes possible the adoption of kids by same-sex couples (Rulings C-071 and C-683). In the same year, after the suicide of Sergio Urrego, a gay student who suffered homophobia, the Court mandates educational institutions to modify any coexistence manual containing discriminative material (Ruling T-478/15).
- **2016:** After intense activism, Colombia's Constitutional Court legalizes same-sex marriage (Ruling SU-214/16). In the same year, the court determined that two fathers/mothers can be included in a child's birth certificate (Ruling T-196/16) – Colombia's Peace Treaty includes members of the LGBTI Community as victims of armed conflict.

- **2017:** For the first time in Colombian history, the government publicly apologizes to a lesbian woman, Marta Alvarez, who was denied the right to private visitation by her female partner while in prison.
- **2018:** For the first time in Colombian history, the murder of a trans woman is recognized as femicide – A piece of public policy concerning the rights of the LGBTI Community is adopted nationally (Ordinance 768).
- **2019:** For the first time in history, the crime of persecution of LGBT victims during an armed conflict reaches a transitional court of justice (JEP).
- **2021:** Colombia’s Constitutional Court determines that trans women have a right to access work pension at the same age as cisgender women (Ruling SU-440/21).
- **2022:** Colombia’s Constitutional Court determines that individuals can change their name more than once and have “non-binary” as their sexuality in legal documents (Ruling T-033/22).

This timeline was made thanks to the information available on the website belonging to Colombia Diversa (one of Colombia’s most relevant organizations engaged in the protection of the LGBTIQA+ Community) and the article *The LGBT (I) Movement in Colombia: The Voice of Gender Diversity, Achievements and Challenges* by Esther Lucia Sánchez Barrera. It is accurate as of 2022.

To learn more please visit: www.colombiadiversa.org

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