

Aleyna Jones | Writer // Artist // Model

| Discover art through language |

Bringing Nature into the Concrete: Brazilian Street Artist Eder Muniz on Art, Life, and Culture

Posted on [May 28, 2013](#) by [Aleyna Jones](#)



Eder Muniz // Brazilian street artist & cultural revolutionary

Blurring the lines between street art and [fine art](#), Brazilian graffiti artist [Eder Muniz](#)'s talent has reached extraordinary proportions – and he's just getting started. 30-year-old Muniz, known on the streets as “Calangos de Rua,” has already become a cornerstone of Afro-Brazilian expression. Based in [Salvador da Bahia](#), Brazil, Eder's artistic renderings have graced the walls of ancient streets, acclaimed museums, and everything in between. Since the age of 9, Eder had already begun dabbling in art, and progressed to tagging by age 16. By 2001, he branched out to doing graffiti with his friends, and since then, he hasn't stopped.

I had the pleasure of meeting Eder in 2011, with my [University of California Education Abroad Program](#) in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. I was introduced to his work by [ACBEU](#), the language [school](#) that I was studying at, which also included an art gallery and a theater. After witnessing his live art, as well as attending his art exhibition, I was enamored with Eder's captivatingly unique style. As I began to travel throughout Brazil, I saw more of Eder's pieces everywhere I went, decorating the dilapidated walls of tropical beach colonies and rural communities and adorning exotic festivals and reggae clubs.

Fortunately, Eder agreed to a special meeting with me via Skype to share his story, in his own words. In this interview, we dig deep into Eder's creative spirit, from his upbringing, and inspirations, to where he sees his work in the future.

///



AJ: How did you first get involved in street art?

EM: They kicked me out of school because I was tagging graffiti around age 15 or 16. By 2001, it wasn't a job for me. I did it for fun, but soon, I started to really think about something that I wanted to do for me. I started to work at a gallery, my friend worked there, and I started to think that I didn't want to be in an office. So, I got invited to be part of a project called Salvador Graffiti in 2006. My work really grew up at that time because I had a lot of materials and I had many places in the city. Two things were coming together, and it was a really good time.

Afterwards, I lived 3 years in New York. The first time that I was in New York to speak about a project, I stayed for 3 months, and I met somebody. We fell in love, so I decided to move to the U.S. We spent 3 years in New York, and then we moved back to Brazil to do a book about Salvador graffiti...and we broke up. I've been in Brazil since 2010, doing shows, and now I've got some strong work. I have a goal and people are really starting to know my work and to recognize it more for its design and colors, and the teams too.

I always bring human nature and nature together, where they walk together and they go together phenomenally. When I was leaving New York, I was like, "I think better about the environment. I've got to go

back to Brazil.” And there was all this destruction in Paralela. They destroyed the whole forest to build new buildings for rich people, [close](#) to the beach. I got really mad at that because I came from a concrete jungle like New York and I want to be in my city and have more nature in Bahia and then I see this big destruction. It’s so funny because they covered everything up in the city...



Muniz's 2013 showing at Galeria ACBEU // Salvador da Bahia, Brasil

“If you can’t love the things that make you happy, like nature, how are you going to love the people next to you?”

AJ: So, that experience inspired you to turn to nature?

EM: I always had a connection to nature. I would spend holidays in the countryside. My grandma had a piece of land, so I was always over there, playing in the river with the birds, snakes, and plants. They were my friends. In 2001, I wanted to talk about social issues like eco-rights, poverty, etc. New York said, “Poor human beings.” If you can’t love the things that make you happy, like nature, how are you going to love the people next to you?

So, my work grew that way. Not a religion but, where you recognize there’s not just one God, or one religion. When you’re in nature, you should feel comfortable, safe, the way it should be, not be scared like how people feel in nature. They freak out, man. And they shoot you. The first thing they do is shoot to kill. So, when you start to see animals as friends, equals; you’re not the leader. It’s another view for life. It’s new for you. You grow up in society hearing this. Educate yourself.

People keep asking me, “Do you see your work when you’re doing it?” I say, “No, I don’t see my work when I’m doing it.” I’m busy thinking of how I can finish and get done. It’s a big task for me. I have to be present, be there, take the bus, spend money, take photos, talk to people. It’s a lot of work for me. I see the work going by on the bus or walking by. I forgot that I had that over there. I forgot it was my work. Each one is seen in a different way. I didn’t sign my work. Most people don’t know who does it so I’m free to talk to anybody about my work because they don’t know that it’s my work.

AJ: I’ve seen your work at the gallery of ACBEU, as well as a mural on the outside wall of the school. How did you



get involved with ACBEU?

EM: The piece that you saw outside was not mine. It was a girl from Chicago called Shanell. She came to ACBEU because of a program grant, and she was in 3 cities in Brazil. The idea was to work with kids. But it was kind of crazy because she had only had 2 days to do a big wall on the side of the school, and like, 15 kids, so ACBEU called me. And she didn't use spray paint. It's harder with a brush, so I came and helped her do a workshop with the kids. I feel weird because for the first big wall in Salvador, it's not some 'baiano' from the city. They had a chance to hire someone from the city to paint a '[samba de roda](#).' She came from outside to do the piece. It was kind of weird. We did the job and I don't think she liked it. People didn't like it. People from the city were really critical but I think she didn't to have time to finish the piece.

About the inside mural, when you do an opening in ACBEU, you can do a piece for the opening. I negotiated with them to do a mural inside. We chose a piece and we thought it was a good one, like bringing nature into concrete.



Muniz's 2011 showing at Galeria ACBEU // Salvador da Bahia, Brasil

AJ: How did the ACBEU showing go?

EM: Even coming from inside of the country, I didn't have a name. But I made it with connections. I really like the show I did. It was my first gallery show in my city. I did a new one this year, with an American guy from Philly, and people said "Naw." I really like the job I did before. We had conflict between me and the guy; we couldn't connect well. There's something weird with people who don't do graffiti. They work by themselves. When you do graffiti, you collaborate. We couldn't connect so well. But I liked it.

"You have to hear. If you think that you're too much and ignore, you have to lose."

AJ: You never take criticism too personally, do you?

EM: It depends, because I like to talk with my friends, and they know my own process. And they say, "You're repeating a lot in your pieces." I say, "Okay, you're right. I'll see what I'm doing." You have to hear. If you think that you're too much and ignore, you have to lose.



"I think you have to be open and thankful everywhere you go. If you start to compare, you always want more and more. I try to stay present."

AJ: You've tagged extensively throughout Brazil, including Arembepe, Chapada Diamantina, Cachoiera, Rio Vermelho, and all over Bahia. What has been one of your

favorite places to tag?

EM: I don't have a favorite place, you know. I have good moments, because each place gives you a moment, and that's the only thing you can take. It's really special because the environment makes me feel at home. But I also had a good time, too, because the beach was there, and I was going to the City of Coral Reef all day. In Cachoiera, I have the river and in the whole city, the spirit is strong there. I think you have to be open and thankful everywhere you go. If you start to compare, you always want more and more. I try to stay present.



Muniz's showing at the 2º Bienal Graffiti Fine Art SP 2013

AJ: Will I be seeing your work in California anytime soon?

EM: I have friends over there, I just met a guy from California. We had a Graffiti Bienal International at the beginning of year. There were more than 50 graffiti artists from all over the place. I have invitations to Italy, Peru... I would love to go but I have a little baby. So I plan to move back to U.S. in July because now she's living in New York. So I have things planned. I go where my work takes me. The first time I left my country was with my work. I'm searching for venues in many places and would like to connect in California.



“If you believe in yourself and believe in your way, even though it’s hard, keep it going.”

AJ: What words of advice do you have for other emerging artists?

EM: I think that the first thing you have, is like faith. Like in yourself. Believe in yourself because it’s not going to be easy if you’re not coming from a rich family. If you believe in yourself and believe in your way, even though it’s hard, keep it going. And, to do graffiti, you have to be strong because it’s not like doing it inside of a studio. You have to do it in the street, and the streets ask you to be strong. Faith and belief, for me today, I’m here because I believe that there’s something else working for me.