

Beal, Sophia. *The Art of Brasília: 2000-2019*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 252 pp.

“While descending into the Brasília International Airport on my first trip to the city, I watched the electric shimmer of the Plano Piloto from my window seat, admiring the landing strip-esque brutality of the Eixo Monumental and the conglomerations forming the wings that I knew must be superquadras. From above, Brasília was the Plano Piloto, just as I had learned in Portuguese classes. Federal government buildings, embassies, and a significant number of cars along the motor-driven city were all that I expected to see during my short visit to the Brazilian capital.”

Sophia Beal, Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies at the University of Minnesota, decries such a restrictive, totalizing, and outdated view of Brasília in *The Art of Brasília: 2000-2019*. In her second book with Palgrave Macmillan and her second entry in Palgrave Macmillan’s New Directions in Latino American Cultures series, following *Brazil under Construction: Fiction and Public Works* in 2013, Beal successfully demonstrates how twenty-first century artists “are recasting Brasília as a vibrant city of the arts in which cultural production affirms a creative right to the city” (3). Taking cues from Henri Lefebvre’s theorizations on the right to the city, Beal skillfully explains how the creative production flourishing within the Distrito Federal engages with diverse public spaces and diverse publics as citizen-artists attempt to “represent their city publicly via the arts,” affirming their “creative right to the city” (17). Beal situates her concept of the creative right to the city within local and national political realms and local and national histories, examining the twentieth-century creative roots of twenty-first century art in Brasília, from the city’s construction to its expansion and redefinition.

The book's first two chapters posit these theoretical and historical foundations for the analyses of the artistic works to follow. Beal's description of her scholarly methodology and positionality is particularly welcome due to its explicit attempt to destabilize norms in academic production. The discussion of the many names that refer to Brasília and its administrative regions—particularly the explanation of how Brasília is synonymous with the Distrito Federal (DF)—coupled with the description of the emotional significance of the administrative regions that constitute the DF for artists underscores Beal's commitment to clarity for readers familiar and unfamiliar alike with Brasília. The second chapter provides an apt and comprehensive historical introduction to various artistic genres in Brasília alongside the city's (and the nation's) societal transformations, emphasizing the continuities in twenty-first century artistic and cultural production.

Beal's corpus comprises printed books, a film, poetry slams and verse competitions, a cultural magazine, and street art, all made in the last two decades. Six chapters closely read these works of art made by artists based in the DF and how they involve and engage with a creative right to their city. Chapter 3 discusses the fifth novel in João Almino's Brasília quintet, *Cidade Livre* (2010), analyzing the inequities facing public presentation and representation of Brasília in writing, and Beal's deft dissection of the narrative at hand shines through its weaving of theoretical, rhetorical, and practical concerns. In Chapter 4, Beal discusses Nicolas Behr's "genre-bending" text *Brasília-Z: cidade-palavra* (2014) and focuses on creative communion, "affirmative exchanges in which residents come together to share or make art" in dialogue with the concept of the creative right to the city and with the humanization of Brasília that underscores Beal's arguments (89). Chapter 5 examines Adirley Queirós's 2014 film *Branco Sai, Preto Fica*, which recalls the 1986 police raid and shooting at the Quarentão nightclub in Ceilândia, one of Brasília's administrative regions. Chapter 6 highlights poetry slams and verse competitions in Brasília, and Chapter 7 analyzes the works of six Black DF poets: Kika Sena, Marcos Fabrício Lopes da Silva, Nanda Fer Pimenta, Katiana Souto, Meimei Bastos, and tatiana nascimento. Having traversed much of the DF with the artists throughout her book, Beal's final chapter centers us on the street, the public space where the cultural magazine *Traços* (2015-present) is sold

and whose occupation by artists and other citizens forms the crux of Brasília's twenty-first century "cultural renaissance" (189).

Chapters 5 and 7 are two of the most compelling chapters. In Chapter 5, Beal's well-structured analysis emphasizes the intersection of citizenship and belonging with cultural production and expression in Ceilândia, harkening back to her opening arguments about the emotional significance that the DF's administrative regions carry for citizen-artists. The coupling of the historical concerns regarding the Quarentão police raid and shooting and the theoretical concerns of geographer Neil Smith's term "jumping scales" underscores the political power of Ceilândia's counter-hegemonic art together with the film's narrative political power on local (Ceilândia and the DF), national, and international scales. Moreover, Beal's focus on the human body in Queirós's film segues well into the following chapter on performance in poetry slams and verse competitions.

Chapter 7 examines how contemporary Black poets confront various systems of physical and psychological domination in their poems, which Beal argues involve "the non-hegemonic body as a place," recalling her discussion of counter-hegemonic art made in Ceilândia in Chapter 5 (184). The author provides background on each poet, as many readers may find themselves unfamiliar with the contemporary Black poetry scene in Brasília, and her gripping readings center the artists' experiences in Brasília, particularly those in transit throughout the DF. In fact, Beal leaves the reader wanting more of her close readings of the poets' work. Nonetheless, while intersectionality is briefly mentioned and discussed in this chapter, a more extensive theoretical framework of intersectionality would enhance Beal's arguments, particularly alongside her concept of "insurgent books" in dialogue with James Holston's concept of insurgent citizenship (168).

With *The Art of Brasília*, Beal lays the groundwork for future research on artistic and cultural production in the Brazilian capital and continues to contribute attentively to studies of transformations of Brazil's cities, past and present. She paints Brasília, its artists, and its artistic publics as vibrant, insurgent, and engaged, providing the reader with visual images of interpretations and realities of Brasília unrestricted to the brutality of the Plano Piloto (although perhaps influenced or affected by it). The manifestations of artists' own experiences underscore the publicly political proportions of their work and performances

that represent and celebrate the artists themselves, affirming their human rights more broadly. In analyzing this diverse group of contemporary DF artists together, Sophia Beal makes clear that not only has Brasília always been more than just the imposing image of the Plano Piloto but also that twenty-first century DF artists actively seek out new ways of asserting their creative right to their city.

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