

ARGENTINA

May 20, 2004
Dear Diary,

We've made it to Argentina! I am very excited about getting to work with the women of Argentina and of course to be in Buenos Aires. My only disappointment has been the cloudy and rainy weather we've encountered upon our arrival. But that has been cleared up by the charm and warmth of the Argentine people. Besides the outstanding food and beauty of the city, our hosts have been gracious and generous. I have gotten quite a few lingering stares so far. I'm not sure if it was shock or amore that sent heads a spinning. Apparently, the Argentine people aren't used to seeing a walking, talking Guerrilla. They seem to be few and far between here. We were greeted at the airport by Gloria from the Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas. Then, we were escorted to our beautiful lodgings at the Centro Cultural de Recoleta. Each room was decorated with paintings by local artists, a few of them even women! Recoleta is an amazing burro of the city. Our front yard is lined with sidewalk cafes, and the Iglesia de Nuestra Senor de Pilar which stands next door to the cemetery where Evita herself is laid to rest. Will rest up from the flight now with a light siesta as I am looking forward to a late meal (10:30pm being the usual dinner time here) and one of the infamous Buenos Aires noches!

Buenos Tardes,
Alice

May 21, 2004
Dear Diary,

Today has been an amazing and full day in this Latin American town. We dawned the mask for more than 7 continuous hours today. A small price to pay to change the world, but a teensy bit uncomfortable nonetheless. The great discussion and information shared in the first sets of interviews were well worth it. We spoke with women (and communicated quite well despite the slight language barriers) from three different publications.

Afterwards we went almost straight into our From Attitude to Activism poster workshop with thirty, strong and energetic women. Many of the women were already very active in their communities fighting a multitude of institutionalism within the city. We began with our signature brand of exercises and focus games to get our minds flowing and bonding as a group. Fannie's version of Boppity-BopBopBop (I guess you'd have to visit a workshop to see what I'm talking about) is a sure winner for bringing up the energy level of any group. My favorite "exercise" though and like one I had never witnessed before was Coco and Aphra's impromptu square dance which ended the warm up phase on a high.

After we caught our breaths with a quick break, we strapped on our thinking caps and the discussion began. We started letting the women's voices be heard about the problems in their community and how they wanted to address them. Our interpreter Jane, was really invaluable in translating not only the words themselves, but also the grievances behind them. Speaking of words, one of the more interesting topics for me was the attempt to change the masculine/feminine genders of Spanish words themselves. A topic that only made one poster in passing, but was notably intriguing to me.

At the close of the workshop four groups had come up with four excellent and very different posters in topic, strategy and creativity. All were eye catching and addressed very pressing topics. The subject of reproductive rights still remains a little taboo for poster making this night (abortion is still illegal in Argentina) even though it is a very important topic to those we spoke with. Perhaps by the end of our visit the women of Argentina will feel that no topic regarding women's right can remain unexamined.

Chao for now,
Alice

May 22, 2004
Dearest Diary,

Today we started out very early in the morning for the city of Rosario. A three hour drive through coastal plains, farmland, frontier (we actually saw roadside hunters) and past some of

the poorest shanty villages where it was an obvious struggle for some families to survive. Rosario is or once was a port town. Very small and laid back but with eye amusing architecture. It reminded me more of Poland than any place. An interesting tidbit about the town that we learned over lunch with our hosts was that it used to be filled with bordellos and the mafia that ran them. This was a former weekend town where fellers could leave their wives behind in Buenos Aires and hang loose with the local women. A perfect town for our Gig! I was glad we could come, spread the word and change this sexist town.

As I mentioned before upon our arrival in Rosario, we checked into our hotel and then had lunch with our hosts. Susana and our interpreter, who has taken the name Emilia Bertole, gave us a slew of information about the town, its plights and its history. Many artists from Argentina took up residence in this town. It is also the place where revolutionary Che Guevera hails from. After an informative lunch (which included an amazing dulce de leche ice cream and rice pudding for dessert), we rested up for the performance that night.

We arrived at the Theatre of the Central Cultural de Parque Espana, which was right on the waterfront, just in time to avoid being rained on. Enjoying the stares from on looking passersby and skateboarders, we took pictures of and near the graffiti art that adorned some of the nearby walls. Libertad! was scrawled across a cement wall. There was also a great tier of red brick steps that seemed to go on forever beside the theatre.

Our technical rehearsal went slowly due to communication difficulties. But we pumped ourselves up in time to give a thought provoking performance. So thought provoking, in fact, that several people felt they had to leave about twenty minutes into it to go out and fight racism, sexism and discrimination! At least, I hope that's what they were doing. Maybe they were reacting to our pro-choice poster. Alas! Or perhaps some of the people of Rosario couldn't stomach the material or just really had to use the bathroom? Anywho, most of our audience stuck with us and we had quite a lengthy discussion period after.

They were many gentleman in the audience who had several questions. One was concerned with (and actually took up quite a bit of time discussing) the word feminist -- which to him meant the exact opposite of machismo, a term quite popular among Argentine men. He was concerned that with using the word feminist we meant to oppress all opposition and dominate the world. Then there was discussion of the meaning of the word power, which for many Argentines is a sign of oppression to the general public, as opposed to our interpretation for personal strength and attitude. Many questions were asked, many things discussed. At the end of it all, we had many supporters, men and women, come up and thank us for coming to a place that needed our presence. It felt great! Performances like these, in foreign countries where you don't know how people will respond, re-emphasize the importance of our work.

Later, we dined at a very busy restaurant filled with curiosity stricken patrons. They couldn't keep their eyes off the Americans! We waited quite a bit for our meal -- something our hosts assured was quite the norm. At the end we passed out a couple of Argentine/American flag pins to our servers and decided we should give one to the cooks as well. You should've seen us all piled into the tiny kitchen singing America the Beautiful to the cooks as they in turn sang the Argentine national anthem to us. It was a riot and a moment I'll not soon forget.

May 23, 2004
Dear, dear Diary,

We had quite an interesting day at the Museo Municipal de Bellas Artes Juan B Castagiano. There was to be an exhibition of our posters here with a Q and A discussion in the afternoon. The existing exhibition was a collection of art from the local artists of Rosario. These works happily included the work of several female artists such as Emilia Bertole, Graciela Sacco and Claudio del Rio (the woman who initiated our tour to Argentina).

Unfortunately, our posters were not picked up by the Museo and there was nothing but blank walls around us during our Q and A. At any rate, we went forth with another enlightening discussion as most of those in attendance had actually been present at the performance the night before. Those who hadn't certainly wish they had been by the end of the Q and A. Afterwards, I had an interesting discussion with one of the museum's security guards about women in the military. He thoroughly enjoyed having us there, despite the raucous we were causing with the piano, running through the halls and flash photography. I won't go into further detail about those instances.

All in all our visit to Rosario was incredible. I believe we have provoked an ongoing dialogue for the people of Rosario and the meaning of feminism in the theatre, art and other worlds abroad.

May 24, 2004

Tango, tango, tango!!! I shouldn't really need to say more, except that our last night in Buenos Aires was amazing! We treated ourselves to a wonderful dinner and show at El Querandi in San Telmo. We dolled ourselves up and enjoyed a delicious three course dinner in an intimate and historical setting. Some of the waiters became dancers as they twirled onto the stage accompanied by an enthralling live band to stomp out the history of the Tango in Buenos Aires. The costumes were elaborate, the dancing heated and the vocalizations of several singers breathtaking. It's hard to describe the rapturous experience one has when watching the dance. On my way from the restroom during a break, one of our favorite dancers shook my hand. I vowed never to wash it again!

Thank you Argentina for a trip this masked avenger will never forget!

Con todos mi corazon

Alice

Here is a letter we received after we returned home:

Dear Guerrilla Girls On Tour,

Hi! I've just finished reading about you in a Buenos Aires newspaper. I think that discrimination is in the English language.

If you write the world FEMALE is an appendix from MALE. My opinion is that we should make a change of the word.

Is very difficult for me express the idea exactly but I hope you understand me. If you let men join, I would like to be a member.

God bless your struggle, and more kisses.

Alejandro