



## Off the wall and onto the screen

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Originating in New York City in the 1960s, graffiti art has now spread around the globe. Examples can be seen on the walls of most of the world's major cities, East or West, developed or deprived. And the artists, writers of whatever you want to call them have a lot in common: they are passionate people who care about what they do and about the communities in which they do it. This comes through very strongly in Pablo Aravena's film *Next, A Primer On Urban Painting*, which took him five years to make.

The Montreal-based producer and director has long been interested in exploring the multiple dimensions of urban culture. And *Next* is a documentary on one of its most dynamic manifestations. Explains Aravena: "To me, graffiti is like an international language that people are using to express themselves and communicate with others regardless of language, culture, ethnicity, religion, etc. In a sense, these people are communicating with style and content."

With effective use of music to underline his themes, Aravena has profiled street art in a variety of cities, which come across almost as characters in themselves. "We worked with particular details in terms of sound and image to personalise each city," he says. "The city is the stage upon which all this culture grows and happens." For the film's music, he worked with such renowned producers as Sixto, Moonstar, Quantic, Scott G and DJ Nuts to create an original soundtrack that reflects the individual vibe of each city featured.

The film-maker went to nine countries to profile the global impact of this explosive contemporary art form - the US, Canada, France, Holland, Germany, England, Spain, Japan and

Brazil. Each one has its own, very distinctive graffiti style. He explains: "The differences in graffiti in each city are about style, materials, history, local culture and influences which include punk, skateboarding, rock and hip-hop."

According to Aravena, Spanish "writers" like to do graffiti with wild brushstrokes and passionate colours. In Holland and Germany, the graffiti is more design-like. In Brazil, writing on the walls is influenced by the local "placas". And the Japanese prefer to work with Kanji, katakana and Hiragana scripts rather than the Roman alphabet.

Tight budgets are always an issue for film-makers and certainly a problem for Aravena with *Next*. Lacking funds to hire the necessary personnel, he acted as a one man researcher, translator (except in Japan, Germany and Holland) production manager and transportation manager. For a man with many hats he was forced to wear, the finished product is extremely professional. And in the end, the money problem was solved when a sponsor came forward. "Towards the end of the project, agnès b jumped on board as co-producer that helped us to finish the film and do the post-production," he reveals.

Aravena is now working on the DVD of *Next*, which will come with a host of extras - and additional films and artwork. He is presently doing the rounds of film festivals, preparing to ground for distribution of the DVD and online. If you're a fan of this cool graffiti movie, check out the trailer and visit [www.nextthemovie.com](http://www.nextthemovie.com)

tion and pixel art, this technological revolution has helped feed the apparently insatiable demand for visual salesmanship - the ability to button-hole already beleaguered consumers with yet another appeal to their pocketbooks.

of what might well become a beyond their grasp. Many's the