

# One rising urban soul

FOR THE LAST 16 YEARS, LAURA ÁVILA HAS BEEN A DANCER. IN ADDITION TO BEING THE DIRECTOR OF TWO DIFFERENT DANCE COMPANIES, SHE IS FAMILIAR WITH THE OUTSET OF THE URBAN DANCING IN COLOMBIA.

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## What is urban dance?

It's all movements. In each country it appeared differently, we can't say every country has the same history. Urban dance, unlike other dancing styles, inspires itself from what is happening in society. We say it a lot: is like a call to liberty, a shout of the soul of what is going on.

Nowadays, most of our dancing styles, like the locking, pocking, waking, breaking and others, originated in the US, but if we go back in time to the era when every style was coming up, we realize social concerns sculpted every move.

Colombia hasn't experienced the same social changes than the US or France did, we all have diverse history.

Plenty of those styles emerged from the streets, clubs, between friends, neighborhoods. Opposite to ballet or contemporary dance, urban dance is strongly influenced by what really happens in the streets.

## How urban dance arrived to Colombia?

I can't talk generally about Colombia, because, as I was saying, inside a city there are lot of mini-worlds. However, about urban dance, breaking is always gonna be stronger; wherever it is, there is a bigger lead, but thanks to that style and popularization of videoclips, the dance began to form.

The DJ's that could travel brought cassettes or vinyls about movies that were trending, like Breakin', which

Fotos cortesía Laura Ávila



motivated B-boys to perform those movements. So far, there was still doubts about what was it, they knew about break dance because it was how commercially was called.

When styles were defined, in Bogotá, videos were crucial. You can see Michael Jackson's pocking movements or even Madonna's moves became and inspiration, it was just copy and paste.

In 2007, Idartes invited "Fulkonometry", a San Francisco group, to a dance festival. When they came to

Bogotá, we realized they combined movements. They gave us a talk and taught us the real concepts. Since that moment, urban dance took a total turn in the city.

We started to research a lot. The best way to find information was abroad, looking for information was really tough because web pages were incredibly inaccurate.

Every person here started to dance in the streets, in *salones comunales* or parks, but not in academies. Soacha used to have better spaces, they borrowed them gyms, which made everything more organized.

In Bogotá, the first academy was Proyecto Urban Dance, which formalized it, and made people want to pay to receive a class.

#### How did you start?

I'm about to be 16 years into dance. I saw it in aerobics. I was surprised because the teacher used Britney and NSYNC's songs, in the same class.

I found out he had a group I later joined, we used to copy choreographies we searched. It was a beautiful phase that gave me the strength to say: "I'm a dancer".

Later, I met Andrés Vargas and Anvar, a group where I could reinforce dance study and its history. As I was growing and learning, I changed groups, traveled, carried back information, met new people, and realized I could make a living from this.

#### Nowadays, which social role academies play?

I feel academies formalized dance, easily I can just dance in my house and create movements, but they reinforce your mind, put you on a schedule, teach you values, to give the best you can and to respect your teachers and classmates.

By studying professionally, I may receive opportunities like teaching or performing, because, nowadays, academies are almost an agency,

## URBAN DANCE DOCKS IN COLOMBIA

Hip hop and urban dance is a culture that appeared in US in the 60's; however, it wasn't until the 80's that it arrived to Colombia.  
Here's how it happened.



Hip hop culture arrived through the docks, where US citizens brought vinyls or cassettes, moreover Colombians that used to travel to US and came back deeply in love with it. They showed to the locals how to live it.



The movie *Breakin'* was released. Because of it, teens love it and they started to imitate its urban dance. So, this way was the official debut of the break dance in the country.



In Bogotá, "Gotas de rap" debuted. This was the first and one of the most recognized hip hop groups in Colombia in the early 90's. They introduced to mainstream the urban dance as we know it.



being the connection with famous artists, shows, and giving us a status to be taken seriously.

#### **How does architecture affect your movements while dancing on the streets?**

I'm part of a freestyle group. We used to dance in 7th Avenue. Now, at Movistar Arena, you can see a lot of groups dancing.

The air is amazing, you go to make cardio and resistance, the intensity of physic activity is exhausting. It's like working out.

The pavement is really hard, a lot of B-boys used a special rug or a "Conker", as they call it, where they can do acrobats or movements, because if we dance without it, our joints get damaged. The friction between our feet and concrete is something very harsh for our body, it's not a dance floor but that wasn't what mattered to me. Even though the real deal was people judging me and staring curiously, relationship with audience was very important for exposure this culture.

A lot of young people are in touch with urban dance because of the internet, but it's not quite accurate.

The pavement isn't a space to dance frequently, but people give you energy just judging or asking, it educates you scenically.

I'm dancing alone, maybe, without a choreography, showing what I've learned, fighting against the sun, stones, bumps. I know my body is my work tool, so, why damaging it dancing again and again in the streets?

#### **What do you feel while dancing?**

Once I watched Soul, the Disney movie, I found the perfect explanation to the feeling of connecting to music. For me, music also remains in quietness. For me, silence doesn't exist.

Thanks to the film, I could get that sounds go through my ears and take over me. When you can connect it to your body, soul rises and goes away to enjoy, while you're replicating that feeling.

Then, my soul lands, and when I feel it, I know nothing can bother me, there's no words to be interpreted, be-

cause, to me, movements are words. It's like having a conversation, I may pause but every word I'm saying have a connection with others, so are the movements, they have coherence so the audience can understand it.

When my soul can't rise, I dig into my subconscious trying to reconnect to the times I felt uplifted, but I'm not fulfilled. When the crowd is rough, the energy is pretty heavy... at the end, it's just me dancing with the memories of a past self. ◀

### **EDIFICANDO SOBRE LOS PIES**

La arquitectura crea espacio y la danza urbana busca el movimiento. Muy poca gente percibe la relación de esta danza con la arquitectura, como esta se construye a través un cuerpo moldeable. Visualiza a fondo esta historia a través de un videocast.

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