

Week 1

First Day:

Well I'm in Buenos Aires and it's not the most groundbreaking thing. I thought it would hit me that I'm in a different continent or different part of the world but it hasn't that much. I think it's because of the language. I feel like I am able to grasp on certain concepts that are exclusive to Latin America fairly easily and quickly due to my familiarization of the topics. For instance one thing that has been greatly helpful is my experience with cities. I'm used to the idea that the city has good and bad parts to it and basic city courtesy. Additionally knowing the language is greatly helpful too because I'm able to read or speak with the locals with a bit of hesitation. But this feat makes the experience of immersion so much smoother.



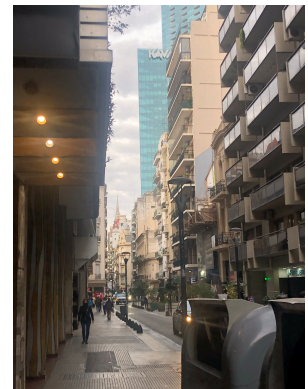
There are very small differences though which are very apparent as I walked around with my host mom. For instance the way we approach stores felt quite different. Small things such as waiting on line to get in (not like a traditional line coming out of the store, it is parallel to the opening front), going out of your way to speak to storeowners, having a different relationship to money given Argentina's declining currency. It was the small things that reminded me that I am in a foreign country and a distant part of the world. I felt like overall there were so many binding elements that I brought over through my preexisting knowledge, yet some aren't sticking.

May 24

Today was the first day out the world. My host mom helped me find a SUBE card which is a prepaid public transportation card. Today I took the metro and the bus in order to both get to class and to come back home.

I found myself finding a lot of comfort knowing there was a subway. Given that I grew up in the NYC greater area, the subway (or SUBTE) is my preferred method of travel, it is familiar and easy for me to wrap my head around.

I was able to walk a bit and get to know the city and I'm already enamored by the architecture which surrounds me, all of which is interestingly European. The buildings are reminiscent of French, German, and Italian styles with the neighboring neighborhood (Recoletta) being



considered the Paris of South America.

May 25, Wednesday

I found myself having a bit of a difficult time adjusting to life here. I realized I have a lot of self doubt regarding my language speaking abilities. To elaborate, I speak Spanish well-enough and can hold myself in a conversation and able to get the point across, plus my listening comprehension is quite fluent. I think I've been feeling really insecure about the way I speak and noticed that today in the way it manifested. Today was a free day due to a national holiday but I didn't step out until the evening. I felt insecure about roaming the city alone and felt like I couldn't and wouldn't be able to figure it out. This was a very interesting realization that hit a culmination point once I left for a café meetup. The café was a means away and I realized that I felt super unsure about taking the bus and didn't wish to take the chance. For context the bus system here requires articulating the stop you would like to get off on. I noticed that I didn't really feel ready to interact with any locals and I would have rather walked. In a way, I felt shame about being a tourist, this was my first time in another country alone after all...

This feels like a deep insecurity that I haven't really acknowledged until now, but the dualities of being a Dual American causes me to feel fear uncertainty in my belonging when it comes to being in other Latin American countries. I feel embarrassed whenever I hear that my Spanish isn't good enough, or that I'm not Latino enough in a way. But I am, and I feel like this will be my journey during this trip. I am latino, and I am also Estado Unidense. I am here as both a tourist and to immerse myself in all that is Argentina, and in order to do that uncertainty, uncomfortably, and insecurity naturally comes up. Of course it does, I'm in a culture that I am not 100% familiar with. But that is okay, I'll make it work.



May 26, Thursday

Today was great and was the second day of classes. I was aware of the political tensions within Argentina and told that I will see protests. I was surprised that already on my fourth day I saw protests right outside the classroom. Most of the protesters were schoolchildren who just got out of class. Our professor was entirely unphased.



I am still unsure of what the protests were specifically about but I did understand that those within the protests were against Macri... in due time I'll understand the politics a bit better.

But overall today a lot better in terms of comfortability, especially knowing how those around me also were feeling similar feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. Plus today we all finally had phone service and the local currency, something which was lacking the past few days, which in retrospect exasperated uncomfortableness.

After this, we confidently were able to expand and explore our surroundings. Discovering Plaza de Mayo y Avenida Florida, both places with an exceptional amount of movement urgency, very comforting to see.

May 27, Friday

Today was a rather lax day where it was mainly spent unwinding in a nearby Plaza. The plazas are spread out very frequently around the city of Buenos Aires and they're the perfect place to unwind. Interestingly enough we were the only ones found to be relaxing on the patch of grass, these plazas are mainly used as circulatory spaces and almost as a break from the urban fabric.



I'll also take this time to discuss the vernacular architecture of Buenos Aires which is comprised of very tall and narrow buildings. Not necessarily skyscrapers but more so akin to Italian tower houses, which would make sense since nearly two-thirds of the Argentine population are descendants of Italian immigrants. In fact, a lot of the culture I have observed so far is pseudo-European, where the culture does not have an identity separate from its ancestry. I have noticed this especially in the food. For instance, today I ate empanadas, a Spanish food staple found within most of Latin America, though I was surprised to how popular this food was here in Argentina. The same can be said about other food staples I have noticed thus far: pizza, pasta, dulce de leche, steak, sausage, etc. The culinary history is not quite developed and all the foods listed previously are not natively Argentine, though from my impression they are very very embraced and celebrated. (You cannot go a block without it having a café, pizzeria, or empanaderia.

May 28, Saturday

Today I unfortunately have not been able to do anything since I have contracted COVID-19, as well as half of the other study abroad students in my program. For the time being we will all be in isolation within our rooms at our host families. Hopefully this doesn't last this long. For now I'll just rest as I've been symptomatic all day.

May 29, Sunday

I've been feeling better today, though I will have to stay in isolation until Friday, the same is for my peers. I figured it will be fruitful to document the food that is prepared from my host mom, given it is currently my stream of cultural information.

For lunch I ate gnocchis with tomato sauce and flan with Dulce de leche. And for dinner I had maize empanadas with an apple. The custom (for my host my at least) is to always have a sweet accompanied with the main meal, throughout this past week for dessert I've eaten: fruit, fruit paste with cheese, flan, sweet bread. And it was very common for my host mom to serve tea, coffee, or wine after eating dinner at around 9 PM. Typically dinner in Argentina is between 9PM-1 AM.



Week 2

May 30, Monday

A quick commentary about breakfast: it is a custom here to have a very small breakfast that is usually toast, yogurt, coffee, or crackers. The first week it was quite hard for me to get used to this change since I have been used to having a quite large breakfast to start my day. But everyday without fail I have had the same breakfast: banana smoothie, and crackers with ham and cheese.

Overall the portions of food are most the hugest, but it is a cultural necessity to also include the merienda, which is between lunch and dinner around 6 in the evening. Usually this time is for coffee and a quick snack with friends or family. And usually is reserved for socializing.

Today for lunch I had a spinach and egg tart with cheese and fruit paste as dessert.

For dinner I had *Pastel de Papa*, and steak with an orange.



May 31, Tuesday

For lunch today I ate milanesa de pollo con papa majada. *Milanesa* is very very popular here and is essentially a cut of meat (either beef or chicken) and breaded with seasonings. This was my second time having it within Argentina and I found it very interesting that it is considered such a staple that it is common to simply buy the Milanesa prepared where all the person had to do was cook it. My host mother told me it is usually bought at a deli.

For dinner I had Arroz con Átun. Which is simply a Spanish rice with tuna. I'm still trying to get used to the late dinner which promotes my body to sleeping later than usual, not an issue for the Argentine though since dinner at night is basically the start of a long night of bars and boliches (clubs).



Jun 1, Wednesday

This week the theme of class was understanding the environmental issues which pertain to Argentina and contextualizing these concepts in Spanish.

Within Argentina there are a lot of environmental issues pertaining overgrazing, deforestation, pollution, and fracking. A lot of the environmental issues found within the country are related to how densely populated their people are living. To elaborate 90% of the Argentine people are living in urban areas across the country, leaving nearby rivers to be highly susceptible to industrial contamination.

Additionally, due to the country's high-demand of agricultural and livestock exports, the land has been put under a tremendous amount of stress, catalyzing the rather severe issue of desertification. Around 22% of the Country's landmass is affected by some degree of erosion and desertification from unsustainable farming practices and overgrazing. These issues don't seem to be slowing down as the demand for their exports keep increasing as does reliance on these national industries.

Contaminación de ríos



Contaminación en la desembocadura del río Riachuelo, Buenos Aires, Argentina

En Argentina solo el 65% de las aguas residuales son recolectadas y únicamente se le aplica algún tipo de tratamiento al 12%. Esto, unido al grave problema de la disposición de los desechos sólidos, ha provocado graves problemas de contaminación del agua, especialmente en los ríos.

El caso más grave es el del río Matanza-Riachuelo, el cual transcurre 65 Km desde la provincia de Buenos Aires hasta el Río de la Plata. Este curso de agua es señalado como uno de los ríos más contaminados de Latinoamérica y uno de los 10 más contaminados del mundo.

Esto debido a que recibe desechos industriales con altos contenidos de metales pesados, especialmente plomo, así como aguas servidas urbanas no tratadas.

Otro caso especialmente relevante es el río Uruguay, compartido entre Argentina y Uruguay. Según la Comisión Administradora del Río Uruguay en este curso de agua hay un exceso de metales pesados, aceites, plaguicidas y excrementos.



Humo negro saliendo de la central térmica, Costanera Sur, Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires, Argentina

La Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) ha informado que en Argentina fallecen cerca de 15.000 personas por año por causas relacionadas con la contaminación atmosférica. Además, la OMS indica que en este país las partículas materiales en suspensión superan en 30% los niveles permitidos.

En Buenos Aires la media anual representa un 40% más de lo aceptado. Sin embargo, el Banco Mundial citaba fuentes de la OMS que señalaban niveles 2,5 veces superior a lo permitido.

En tanto que en la ciudad de Córdoba los niveles superaban 3 veces lo establecido por la OMS y en Mendoza eran el doble.

Jun 2, Thursday

Today is the final day of quarantine! I was able to eat with my host mom since I no longer feel since or show symptoms. My final quarantine dinner was Milanese de Pollo con ensalada Rusa.



Jun 3, Friday

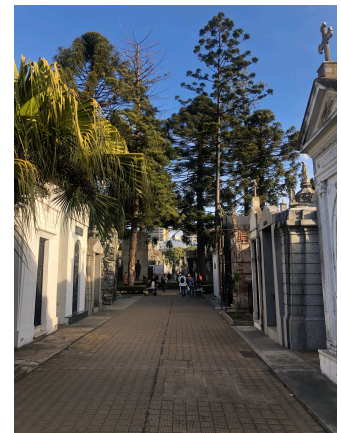
Today I was able to visit *El Cementerio Recoleta* which was a beautiful Cemetery in the center of Buenos Aires. We received a tour to learn about its history and of notable mausoleums.

Firstly, the cemetery was BEAUTIFUL and I was in awe with the style and expression of the mausoleums. I felt like I was in a new city since the mausoleums really engulf the experience.

Most of the mausoleums are from the 19th or 20th century. Unsurprisingly, those who were commissioned were those of significant prominence such as important government figures or high class individuals. Such as: Luis Angel Fipel (World Famous Boxer), Eva Peron (Important Cultural Figure), Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Seventh President of Argentina)

A lot of the stories were quite interesting as the tour focused mainly on points of interests within the Cemetery. For instance, the grave of Evita Peron and the story of how she arrived at Recoleta was quite interesting since her body was relocated multiple times post-death. Evita was the iconic First Lady of Argentina who was best known for being a political supporter of the poor.

She was widely adored as 2 million people attended her funeral. So adored in fact that the “permanent embalment” of her corpse was demanded. Her body was preserved and presented to the public until the military coup whom exiled Evita’s husband (Juan Peron) stole her body. For 3 years her body was dislocated and kept in vans, radio studio cabinets, and other random locations. This was until the government sent her body to be buried in Italy, unbeknownst to the public, buried under a different identity in an Italian cemetery.



This was until the Montoneros (a Peronist guerilla group) murdered the then President, Pedro Aramburu due to his involvement in dislocating her body. To ease political tensions, the government announced that Evita's body would be sent to her widower, whom is exiled in Spain.

Around 1974, Juan Peron and his wife were brought back to Argentina and Juan was elected as President, bringing back the body of Evita to Argentina. He died shortly before her arrival and her body was brought to Recoleta.

Jun 4, Saturday

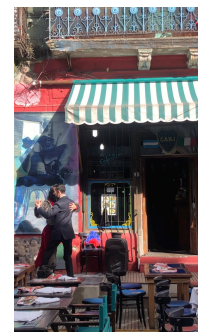
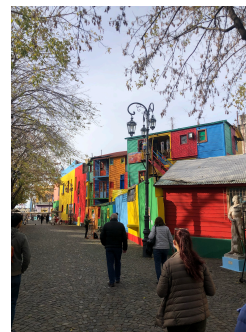
Today, we went out on a group Excursion to La Boca, an important and notable barrio of Buenos Aires. A specific area near the port *La Calle* is famously recognized for its vibrant colors and unique building facades.

This neighborhood historically was where most Italian immigrants arrived and therefore had a huge Italian influence. Although, being this was an immigrant neighborhood, the people of La Boca are poor and face a lot of financial inequality as compared to other neighborhoods.

This is notable in its facades and buildings, where most of the buildings were constructed by locals with wood, and spare metal from the nearby port. This created a unique type which can be best described as hodge-podge, given its locals used whichever materials it could. Due to this, the local buildings have been very susceptible to tear down, fires, and abandonments. All of which is ignored by the government as most resources and money are allocated to the tourist serving pier, where La Boca receives most of its income.

La Boca is also the birthplace of many artisans and is booming with creative talent. This was where tango was born and where

Madonna was raised for instance. Among many other notable figures, La Boca is a hugely important neighborhood of Argentina where the economic disparities of Buenos Aires are revealed and the dualities of its people whom remain optimistic, creative, and surviving.



Jun 5, Sunday

Today was a lovely visit to San Telmo Festival which occurs every weekend. Within Buenos Aires there are a lot of fairs and festivals every weekend so it was the perfect day to explore one!

There were hundreds of stands that stretched for around a mile or so, each stand sold merchandise that was usually made by the locals. I was beyond impressed by the level of care and artistic ability that the people of Argentina have. Even within their subway system, you'll always find a wonderful musician sharing their talent.

I bought a bunch of gifts for friends and family while in the fair, from jewelry to leather products and artwork there was so much to see.

Also nearby San Telmo I was surprised to see a Mexican and Ecuadorian festival where different cultures from Latino America were being celebrated every week. It was so lovely to see and dance to Ecuadorian music with a bunch of locals. And of course the street food is always welcomed!

During the evening I went to my first *Parillada* (Grill) which is quite famous in Argentina. I ate *Bife y costillas* and an appetizer of *Morcilla* which is a delicious blood sausage. This was also the perfect change to try the wine with all the meat I was eating and it definitely did not disappoint.

For context, the parillada is a tradition within the culinary world of Argentina. It is often a way to celebrate with family and friend's and usually starts around 11PM till 2 AM. It is a beautiful way to share food with loved ones and chat for hours on end. Normally the most authentic Parillada experience is one within a backyard, though it is winter here so it is less common.



Week 3

Jun 6, Monday

Today was a nice day. I explored Buenos Aires on a foggy day and felt it were to be a perfect occasion to discover *Los Bosques de Palermo* and the *Jardin Japonés*. It was a beautiful day and the fog was such a nice enhancement.

I was surprised to see that there was a Japanese Garden in Buenos Aires and while there I was able to gain some insight on it's inauguration.

The Garden is symbolic of the political allyship between Japan and Argentina. Argentina, during the 1960s had an influx of Japanese immigrants due to the economic and booming agricultural opportunities found within Argentina. Within Japan, the country's emigration heightened due to the onset of WWII, where poverty was rampant. Many of their people fled for better opportunities.

In 1967, the then emperor of Japan, Akihito, set history as being the first emperor from Japan to set foot in Argentina. To Mark this special occasion, and to give thanks to the country for opening their arms, the Japanese Garden was created which was originally funded by the Japanese government until its switch to the Japanese embassy in Argentina. It largely runs on the funds of Entrance and merchandise sales.



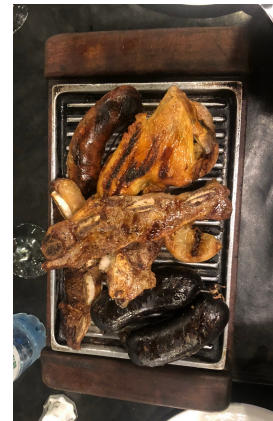
Jun 7, Tuesday

Third week!! Spanish class today was fun, this week's topic is on LGBTQ+ communities and feminism within Argentina and it was helpful to learn vocabulary regarding gender diverse theory.

I also got to experience a bar within Palermo (BA's most touristy region), to celebrate a friend's birthday. We were sat at a table where another group was also celebrating someone's birthday. They invited us to celebrate together and we danced with them as well! They were teaching us local Argentine dances and just treated us all to a wonderful time.

Argentine people are beyond friendly it will always keep surprising me. A stranger I met during the bar invited me and everyone else to his birthday bash! So welcoming and sweet.

Before this night out, I also experienced my second Parillada, tried kidneys for the first time not much of a fan, and celebrated at a family style Italian place. I also tried an Argentine alfajor for the first time (a cookie sandwich with Dulce de Leche in the center while covered in chocolate) delicious.

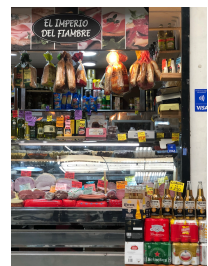


Jun 8, Wednesday

Today for class we took a trip to a local marketplace to get lunch and learn relevant vocabulary (as well as order our food in Spanish).

This market had a bunch of kiosks, delis, seafood, Brazilian food, pizzerias, and sandwicharias. It seems that this place is known for their variety of food and these markets are scattered throughout the city.

I ate possibly the best sandwich ever which was simply steak, veggies, and chimichurri. Chimichurri is a famous steak compliment that originated from Argentina and it is the most delicious thing ever. The best way I could describe it would be as something akin to pesto but a lot more pungent and delicious.



Jun 9, Thursday

Explored Recoleta with a friend I made in BA! I felt like I was getting a private tour of the region and of the artwork at *Bella-Artes Museo*, a fine arts museum where notable Argentine artists' work lays. The work was absolutely beautiful and I found myself admiring the sheer level of detail within the pieces, this experience further cemented my understanding of the importance and pride the Argentine people have in their art. There's a rich artistic history here that is ever-growing now.

Besides the museum I got to know the *Facultad de Derecho* which is the lovely colossal building with Doric columns to the right. I have seen multiple Facultads in BA but I had no idea what it represented. My friend explained to me that facultads are colleges of the University of Buenos Aires and this specific college is of law and humanities.

I got a bit of insight from the educational system in Argentina from my friend, he told me how most students were enrolled in the University of Buenos Aires which is the largest public institution in the city. The public institutions are highly subsidized by the government, therefore, education here is free. As for him, he was in a private institution in Recoleta which is not common at all here.

From my other conversations with locals, I understood that the area that I primarily am in (Recoleta, Palermo, Retiro) resides the wealthiest people in the region and these areas were also where you would find all the private schools to be in. I met an English teacher who worked at a private education facility and gave me the insight on the displacement of opportunities within the country. He told me that most who were engaged within private education in BA come from wealthier families who wish to maintain their status. Therefore, private education is a method of ensuring residents' children could have access to the most opportunities.

An example of this would be the teacher's school, which offers English. Most public schools, (besides universities) don't offer English as the programs are largely underfunded. This would give young students an advantage that many don't have, either due to economic status, location, or race/ethnicity. This is further exasperated by the dislocation of people within the metropolitan area or the *conurbano* whom rely on the wealthy center for work and opportunities, so much so that is



very common for commute times into the city's center to reach 2 hours.

Jun 10, Friday

I wanted to take this time to talk about feminism and gender politics within Argentina as this was the topic of discussion this past week in class.

For instance, within Argentina there is a growing movement called “Ni una menos” which translates to “Not one (woman) less” basically a response to an attitude of complacency when it comes to gender based crimes.



Every 36 hours a woman dies from gender based abuse within Argentina. This is a growing concern not just in Argentina but in Latin America as a whole where gender based crimes are quite frequent and quite violent. It is also important to note that an alarming majority of these deaths comes from domestic abuse from spouses or fathers.

As far as cultural gender views within Argentina, it is often to be the case that women are considered the property of men. The gender roles of woman feed into stereotypes of weakness, submission, and servitude. So much so that sexual and gender based discrimination results in a majority of women engaging in informal work or no work at all, and even those who do work result in a wage difference of 25% when compared to men. This in many ways displaces women's access to equal financial resources, for example, 98% of land owners in Argentina are men, resulting in only 2% of women who are landowners. Women are not at all equal within Argentina and even worse so for trans women or *travestis* (colloquial term).

Jun 11, Saturday

Explored Retiro and more of Recoleta! This part of Buenos Aires is the oldest therefore the architecture dates back to the 18th century and was where Buenos Aires' earliest developments spread out from the mouth of the river Matanza. Due to the influx of Europeans immigrants from Italy, France, and Spain this area is the most europeanesque part of Argentina.



From there I walked all the way to Cafe Tortoni where I had merienda with friends. I tried medialunas for the first time (a pastry similar to croissants) with red fruit tea. The medialunas were absolutely delicious and the interior space was very very beautiful. This cafe is famous for its rich history as being not only one of the oldest but the chosen cafe of many important historical artists to do their creative work in. Everyone was very happy and definitely the best pastries you can find in BA.



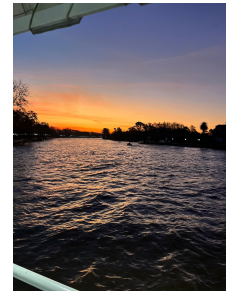
Jun 12, Sunday

Visited El Tigre today. Tigre is a town north of Buenos Aires within the conurbano area. We visited this town before we were told it was very pretty and very relaxing to exploring.

We took the train which was fairly easy to do so and costed the same as the metro system in BA. This surprised me since I've been fairly used to the price being at around 10x more than any metro system cost, but it was nice to know that those who live in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires still has an equal access to the cities' center for work, healthcare, and just daily commute.

It took around 40 minutes to get from Retiro to Tigre and once we arrived we were very happy with how pretty everything was to the eye. Since it was Sunday, we were greeted with a fair and decided to embark on a ferry tour while we were there.

The ferry took us along a route three connecting rivers where we were able to see lots of pretty greenery. We ended the day with some good pastries and a nice dinner.



Jun 13, Monday

Today we had a visit to *Teatro Colon* which is a beautiful theater which houses ballet performances, opera, and theatrics. The tour was of the building itself and showcasing the architecture and style and it is absolutely so so beautiful.

The main concert hall has the best acoustics in the world, and this was noticeable as the tour guide's voice was greatly amplified by the time we entered.

Within the afternoon I went once again to Tigre with a different group since there was still more I have yet to explore. We visited the commercial district piers since the day before I saw so much activity there. Though this visit I saw a completely different side of Tigre, one which was barren with no tourists or locals to populate the spaces. I quickly realized how the region relies on tourism for its local economy as the areas outside of the town's center were in a drastically different condition. Also, since it was a work day, all of the inhabitants of Tigre were gone, most likely in BA. The feel was akin to an abandoned town with not one person around us.



Jun 14, Tuesday

Today was kind of like last minute roaming around and making sure I hit everything on my list. We visited the *Bibliotheca Nacional* and tried to get in but couldn't since we didn't have our passports. But I admired the sheer monstrosity of the brutalist library which stood out greatly from the surrounding region sometimes called "Paris of the South"

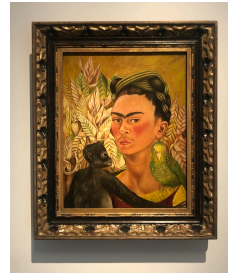
I also was finally able to see the famed El Ateneo which is a beautiful concert hall turned bookstore. There were sooo many books and I enjoyed walking around trying to find some books. I bought two more books today, *Las Malas* (which was recommended to me) and *Una Adventura Extraña y Pasajera*. I have three books from Argentina now, which I am excited to read since I realized that my reading level was



not to the same level as my speaking capabilities. This was thanks to the Spanish course where we did a lot of reading and writing.

Jun 15, Wednesday

I was finally able to visit MALBA (Museo de Arte Latinoamericano en Buenos Aires). I usually am not a fan of contemporary art museums but I very much enjoyed the work I saw today, especially of Antonio Berni, an Argentine artist. I think I saw probably my favorite piece ever, "Juanito Dormiendo," which shows a boy sleeping behind a ditch. What is captivating about the piece is how real it feels, since he uses a combination of paint and found objects. Berni uses this piece to represent the poor children in Argentina, who often don't have a home or anything to eat.



This piece especially spoke to me given the multiple experiences I have had on the metro where children as young as 6 would be going around trying to sell whatever merchandise their guardian required of them. It always pained me to see this because most of the times the children really didn't want to be there, but I know it was also just a form of survival.

Another experience on the metro is one that I will never forget, where a group of boys from ages 8-13 would perform rap songs on the subway to be able to get money. The boys rapped about the struggle, facing hunger, and the neglect from their government and families. And what always will stay with me, was everyone's willingness to help out, regardless of their own financial barriers, something which I never see nearby in New York, where people in need are stepped over and treated as inhuman. Berni's portfolio captures these themes, and captures them striking real.

Jun 16, Thursday

I felt pure bliss while exploring Puerto Madero today. Puerto Madero is the most urban development within BA that I have seen as seems to be completely isolated from the rest of Buenos Aires. We noticed how the waterfront had a very trendy New England feel and it was apparent that the urban developments here catered to foreign tourists, business officials, and professionals.



The nearby complexes were very high-end and attracts a lot of international affairs. The clash

between the waterfront and the rest of BA was even more apparent as it is juxtaposed by an ecological reserve, creating an isolated feel. Puerto Madero apparently also had multiple proposals for a highway to connect the north and south of BA, but remains largely controversial as the highway would further divide the waterfront from Buenos Aires.

Jun 17, Friday

I had my final dinner within Argentina and my final night out. It was so amazing. It was a multiple course meal and everything from the bone marrow to the steak was so good. I had a wonderful night, though quite bittersweet as I knew the experience was ending.

I enjoyed this past month so much and have had such an amazing experience. I feel like I have learned and gained so much from this experience and wish to take this experience with me as I move forward. Part of me wishes I didn't have to leave.

The rest of my day was largely spent packing, saying goodbyes, and just admiring my time here. I had a final lunch with my host mom and thanked her for being so welcoming, accommodating, and for the great conversations we had each dinner.

Farewell Argentina !!!

