



Beautiful Minds:

Celina Nogueras Cuevas
Huáscar Robles

Celina Nogueras Cuevas lives, breathes —and listens—to urban art. Hip hop beats seep out of her office, where graffiti of a lanky woman in bright colors by artist Sofía Maldonado adorns the side wall. It's presumably a portrait of Nogueras; the girl in the graffiti wears cat eye glasses not unlike some of Nogueras' many specs.

Nogueras' passion is for all types of art and cultural expression. Since completing a master's degree in arts and aesthetics at Essex University in England, the curator and professor returned to Puerto Rico and has worked constantly to develop the local cultural industry—and make it profitable.

“In first-world countries and in some developing countries, culture is perceived as having market value,” she says with a smile from crimson lips.

“It's hard to explain to the government and the private sector the financial value of culture as a brand.”

One of Nogueras Cuevas' projects is Circa, an international art fair done along with businessman Roberto Nieves. The fair brings local galleries, artists and their international

counterparts to exhibit at the Puerto Rico Convention Center. It has been successful as a venue, attracting worldwide curators and collectors.

In August of last year, she also conceptualized and directed Graphopoli, a graphic art biennial that showcased landmark structures at strategic points in San Juan , Caguas and Mayagüez, which were decorated with graffiti and other types of urban art.

Nogueras, who has worked as a communications advisor for Puerto Rico's Public Art Project, sees Graphopoli as an extension of public art on the island. "What I like about public art projects is that they influence the urban character and people's daily lives," she adds.

Part of her future objectives is to export Graphopoli to cities around the world. And she is betting on cultural exchanges between Puerto Rico and Berlin, Buenos Aires and Chicago as viable tourism tools. She also plans to create a design foundation as well as to continue directing Entorno, the magazine of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architects of Puerto Rico.

"In Puerto Rico, there is a great deal of production by artists, and we have to stimulate it," she says.