

CHEZ NOUS (AT HOME)



My daughter Carmen is a renowned artist in France. She recently exhibited her latest piece of art, entitled "Chez nous", the most accurate translation of which would be "in our house". Its inauguration came coincidentally when the world is going through a crisis derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. Precautionary measures include working remotely, using greater caution in our daily lives, and maintaining social distancing; in short, "staying in our houses".

Cari, as we know her, came up with this idea when she paid close attention to the phenomenon of locks being put on the Pont des Arts in Paris. Thousands of couples came every year to put a padlock on the fence of the bridge, as a symbol of their desire for eternal love, as if it were possible to enclose such a profound feeling in a small container; as if this action represented a positive omen for the relationship.

Two years ago, the city of Paris decided to remove the locks due to the damage caused to the bridge. Many tourists would no longer have the opportunity to be a part of this tradition. Cari wondered what the government would do with the locks and the wishes placed in those locks by the couples. As a result, Cari had the idea to turn that romantic gesture into a sculpture that captured the complexity of conceiving love as something worth enclosing.



Foto: vogue.fr

Why choose a lock to symbolize love? Besides stability, this item may allude to possession. Cari questioned the paradox that people would choose a lock as a symbol of love. The sculpture shows a house with no windows and no other issue than a locked door. The idea is to represent the safety of locking yourself in a home with no exit and, at the same time the risks derived from trying to possess a loved person. The artistic interpretation ties two recent phenomena affecting our country.

On the one hand, on March 8, hundreds of thousands of women and men marched on the streets of their respective cities to protest against violence against women. There are approximately 10 femicides in Mexico, per day. It should be noted that a high percentage of them (approximately 60%) come from domestic violence. Thus, the meaning behind chaining love raises a question about the perception of a person being a possession. If we want to encourage women's empowerment and ensure their human rights, we must modify this notion of depositing love in objects that symbolize confinement, the key to which is thrown into the river.

On the other hand, the date of the inauguration of the work coincided with the collective lockdown going on in dozens of countries. Social isolation calls for reflection. In a matter of weeks, the entire world has been affected by a disease that has left thousands of deaths and, above all, raised awareness amongst governments to the possibility of overhauling the public health systems. This pandemic echoes the message of Cari's sculpture: nothing that we have is truly ours. Essential aspects of our lives such as family or health are fragile. Therefore, it is better to express love and live each day knowing that the present is the only thing that belongs to us. Life is full of dualities, so we must constantly question ourselves to decide on which pole we want to be. Let us remember that both confinement and love are expressions of art and life. Let's choose the more liberating one.