

“EL ORDEN DE LAS COSAS”

BY: MARTA P.V

The brothers César and José Estaban Alenda wrote, directed and produced the Spanish short drama film “El Orden de las Cosas”. Mainly starred by Manuela Vellés and Biel Duran, Javier Gutierrez and Mariano Venacio. Its soundtrack is composed by Sergio de la Puente which helped to create the overall atmosphere. This short film received numerous awards and was nominated for a Goya award for best fiction short film a great many narrative symbols in this artistic work.

Through the story a situation of gender violence is presented to us by means of verbal and non-verbal cues without explicitly showing the abuse she is subjected to. The Alenda brothers, dedicated this short film "The Order of Things" to their mother; who was also a victim of domestic abuse.

The story unfolds in the bathroom of a married couple, Julia and Marcos. The film begins with a drop of water falling from a faucet and a voiceover of a man asking his partner where his belt is and if she is still mad at him. The main character, Julia, is submerged in a bath full of water. She seems to be naked and she isn't wearing her marriage ring. When he sees this, he gives his word to Julia; “I will always take care of you”. Their conversation is about the belt that Marcos lost. He explains that it is very important to him because it inherited from a long family lineage and apparently, he thinks Julia knows where the belt is. Time passes by and their baby grows up, he is a kid now, and he plays with a red plane while his father is still searches for the belt and Marcos asks his son to help him to find it. Marquitos, the marriage's kid, finds the belt in the bathtub where his mother's in, realizing that she is physically hurt and understands why her mum hides the belt from his dad. To cover up the fact that he found the belt he breaks his toy plane and his dad promises to fix it. Eventually Marquitos grows up and he is still helping his dad find the belt at the same time Julia's number of physical marks have increased and are larger. This triggers a father-son argument, Marquitos doesn't want to keep looking for the belt, he hates the belt and he doesn't want it as an inheritance and proposes his mother to leave the house together, although he finally leaves alone. Years go by and Marcos is still searching for his belt, will he ever find it? Will Julia finally leave the bathtub or reveal where the belt is? “El orden de las cosas” has a huge number of hidden symbols, both in objects and in actions and characters during the 20 minutes of film. The bathroom door stands for lack of privacy and overcontrol, Julia isn't able to have an own life, being always open and at the aggressor's sight. The bathtub represents a type of prison, a place where she is being held on and isolated. Water symbolizes purity or a type of escape from the reality where the victim finds comfort when she is submerged in it. The water levels correspond to Julia's frame of mind and the drops falling from the faucet is the time passing while she is stuck. The blue walls designate the open sea and the sky that surround the claustrophobic bubble of the bathtub. When Marcos pulls the bathtub plug, Julia is left unprotected and naked, representing a decrease in her value and weakness. The toy plane Marquitos plays with reflects a broken promise from someone you love, his father never fixed the toy even though he promised to fix it, but it could also mean the way he lost his innocence when he discovered the abuse his mum was suffering, and he will never have that back.

The ring portrays promises that have not yet been fulfilled, the fact that in the begging, Julia, is not wearing the ring could express the way she was losing hope of this promises being accomplished. The family characterizes that violence is taught and it can go from progenitors to descendants and their tolerance of violence and influence of the family members to make others ``respect them´´. The fact that she can´t speak shows that she cannot shout for help, she cannot tell anyone what she is going through, fear of speaking, fear of reporting the abuse she is suffering, this happens to a lot of women that are silenced and can´t ask for help. The fact that she doesn´t grow old means that she has the opportunity to see how her life will be being married to an abuser, in the end we could also see that Marcos didn´t grow old states that time didn´t pass by, it is a possible future to escape from. Last but not least, the belt, which represents what Julia fears, the order of things, the subjugation of women to men. Julia hides the belt as a metaphor that she does not accept the order of things. Marcos insists on finding his belt because it shows the fear of not having total dominance that makes him feel superior. In addition, the ocean symbolizes freedom and the bathtub in the sand being left behind represents that she left behind a life where she was stuck and was suffering abuse.

This 20-minute film is captivating, you get hooked to the story because there are a lot of things happening even though they aren´t shown in a direct way. It isn´t a stereotypical short film about domestic abuse, it is full of metaphors and symbolism, which makes it quite unique. It felt perturbing to not see violence itself but nevertheless, knowing it exists, her never leaving the bathtub was shocking and the door always being open was really disturbing, which gave the film a breath-taking message of control over somebody. The performances and the script are moving and make the audience get concerned about what is happening. The makeup is really realistic and the especial effects such as the drowning scene at the end are poignant. Moreover, the music created an atmosphere of tension the whole film unlike the ending where a feeling of liberty and calm is created. Above all, the short film itself is poetic and intense.

From my point of view ``El orden de las cosas´´ is highly recommended to highschoolers to teach the importance of not tolerating any type of violence specifically the domestic one. The film made me feel different sensations, goosebumps most of it and in the end a sigh of relieve. It also makes the audience feel anger and disgust and clearly shows how hard is to leave domestic abuse or even get help when you are stuck in that situation. Me personally, I felt uncomfortable in many parts of the film for example at the fact that the door was always open or that many people knew about this abuse. This short film shows the reality of a society that is silent, blames and justifies the abuse that we can´t directly see but we know it exists and how this can poison generation after generation. On a scale of one to ten I would give this short film a solid ten.

