



The frontier of the well-meaning.

artist: Fabian Chairez.

[@fabian_chairez](https://www.instagram.com/fabian_chairez)

by: Gustavo Maldonado

" usually impose a border until appeasing the sensibility of the viewer."



At the age of eight, a day before my First Communion, I had to make my first confession with the priest. I did not fully know the meaning of "the confession" beyond relating it to the primary school principal's room where one had to cry and admit the punishment for the fault. By that time, back in 1998, it was rumoured among voices that our parents in their educational years received punishments by bumps with measuring rulers, slaps, slap on the wrist or as it was seen in the cartoons, the teacher sat in the corner the fool of the classroom, backwards, with donkey ears set to listen to the class in a state of utter shame. That did not happen in my primary, in the Ovalle Monday. This private institution gloated on the pedagogical advances, the avant-garde theories and methods brought from the best schools in the United States and Europe.

Speaking of confessions, I must say I didn't take full advantage of what the Teachers and the syllabus offered. I was never the kid who got 10 in Spanish, or the one who was very good, or the one who had a lot of friends. I wasn't the average kid anyone could say, "He's a good kid," either. I suppose that from an early age I fled from classifications; but with the time I realized that if I was not the good boy, the student who gets tens, the one of outstanding behavior, I had to be, in the eyes of the authority, someone relevant or otherwise, did not exist. To my parents' misfortune and to the satisfaction of the Ovalle Monday correction application, I became one of many cases in which to apply pedagogical corrections within the classroom.



Already at that age, I was a precocious boy, in love with any girl who gave me a little of her gratitude and friendship, which inevitably had an overactive effect on my whole being (one of my most recurring thoughts, which brought me into a dreamy state, was to be with the girl I liked, sitting on a bench, very close to each other at recess, holding hands with nothing to say). In the long run, those loving dreams that did not become reality were transformed into frustration, sadness and anger that I expressed inside the classroom.

In the eyes of the school principal: *Erick, a second-year-old student of eight years of age, is a disorderly, naughty child (with good intentions!), but who must learn to behave, to adhere to the subjects of his Spanish and English teacher. What to do with him? We tried almost everything! Every week he has at least two errands in his notebook; but the other day he went too far: he put a tack on one of his classmates in his chair. Fortunately, the assaulted child noticed before it was too late.*

I still do not know the reasons or the theoretical background of a practice systematically exercised throughout primary school to dominate and control a hyperactive child: to the misbehaved boy (I say it in masculine, because almost every time "boys" were exercised such imposition) that did not pay attention, that constantly talked to the other classmates when there was something to hear from the teacher, who ran to at recess in the food area, plus another set of rules within the school: they would sit him at the front, not in the first row where the outstanding students were, but it was beyond, away from the group border, beyond the limits that the mass reached to encompass. This division seems to me to have been seen elsewhere; little by little it has become subtly permeated, not only in the educational framework, it has spread everywhere: borders between countries (whether by building a wall or symbolically), borders within cities, borders between social groups, ideological borders. In the endogamous sub-world of art in Mexico, this type of symbolic borders is also manifested through well-defined discourses, disguised with an air of intellectuality and in which the classification of a work or an artist is common practice.

Regarding the work of Fabian Chairez, which recently gained strength due to the exhibition in Bellas Artes of one of his paintings: *La Revolución*, there was not even a moment of breath when some press media added to the mass dissemination on social networks classified it, the painting as: "Gay Zapata".

El Universal, in one of its headlines: "They sell the gay zapata to a Spanish collector who buys censored art"; the BBC News: "Mexico, the painting of a "gay" Emiliano Zapata that causes controversy"; El Financiero: "This is what we know about the controversial gay painting of Zapata at Bellas Artes"; the list does not stop there: the designation "Gay Zapata" to the work of the artist in the Google search engine is shown on several pages, but in this case, you might think that has a connotation "positive", contrary to the fact that in other contexts the word Gay has as pejorative and violent... "What difference does it make?", this inner voice that arises from my conscience tells me that if the "Gay Zapata" has motives to claim human rights, to promote a more provocative art and to question the patriarchal figures of the nation, it is an advance...



The problem lies in the fact that these types of classifications do not cease to be positive, idealized prejudices, as it unfolds in two of her articles-in this case from a critique of linguistic diversity- Yásnaya Elena Anaya Gil. The Test: Do you have prejudices against indigenous languages? Article divided into two parts, addresses the most common prejudices that are pointed out to indigenous languages, giving them a negative value, and also a positive value. For example, one of the prejudices mentioned by Yasnaya is:

Indigenous languages are already poetic". This is the classic positive prejudice against indigenous languages. Well intended in principle, it is often repeated to speak of the intrinsic poetic value (...) the truth is that indigenous languages are not poetic by nature, just as all the languages of the world can be prosaic, rude, common or sublime.

It is likely that within the field of art, moreover, when it comes to how to look at a work of art, there are good intentions from museums, critics, curators, bloggers for bringing the public closer to "the fine arts". Sometimes they are comments loaded with positive prejudices, or aesthetic judgments based on how a work should be looked at and thought from a specific context.

That is why when saying, in the headlines of the press or, failing that, in the social networks: "the Gay Zapata", usually impose a border until appeasing the sensibility of the viewer, which prevents another way *his way* of observing and approaching the work of art. This kind of commentary, what the other thinks -as a critic or blogger- of a specific artistic object is astonishingly overwhelming when it comes to everyday life.

I still remember when I hated avocado without ever tasting it; or when I didn't want to enter the Six Flags House of Terror, because I had heard that a child had fainted; or when a sixth-semester professor of psychology told me I had to study literature instead of psychoanalysis in order to write fiction. I wish it was so easy to listen to one's own voice and let ourselves be carried away by our senses, instead of being carried away by the opinion of the other. At least for me, it's not. The essential thing at first is to identify when we circumvent our own criteria from experience and prefer to embrace the opinion of the one who "knows"; at least wonder why and what for we choose, somehow, we know that there is another way to look at something. For many years I thought that I was the misbehaved one of the classroom, the relegated one, the one that does not belong to the groups unless I behave properly and respected the "establishment" of a context. The choice of our senses implies an immensely greater effort.

I suppose this is my confession on the subject of borders and the work of Fabian Chairez, against the idea of approaching the work taking into account in advance that there are internal borders and imposed in the social framework regulated by a handful of people who "know a little more about art". As Donald Trump once said to college graduates: "Never, ever give up. Don't give up. Don't allow it to happen. If there's a concrete wall in front of you, go through it, go over it, go around it. But get to the other side of that wall." Jumping over borders and discovering what's on the other side is a personal aesthetic experience.

There will be time to talk about when a person is unable to have an aesthetic experience and will rely on books, theories, classifications, institutional discourses and artistic propaganda to write articles on art and culture, especially in the newspaper *El Milenio*.





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también checa

SASINUN KLADPETCH
invasión
versión mexicana



SASINUN KLADPETCH
invasion
non-mexican version



Arte y Cotidianidad
Lines
non-mexican version



Arte y Cotidianidad
Líneas
versión mexicana