

Soaring above the Struggle  
10 December 2016

Esther Badiata  
Professor Stewart  
GLHLTH 302 Global Narratives of HIV  
712 Words  
MLA Format

“All language art begins with words as shapes, groups of words shaped into a visual form.” This is the description of Chris McCabe in his review of Tom Phillips’ *The Humument*. It is with this legacy of artistic creativity that artist Esther Badiata’s inspired work captures the battle for women to gain their rights and the triumphal ascent in gaining them through recognizable, yet transformed symbols mixed with the Spanish language. Translating to ‘The story of moments of hope and women equality. It is women who materialize the right,’ the text creates a narrative of optimism and hope, and the symbols that accompany it demonstrate the power in reframing of ideas for a new purpose.

The original document from the Maria de Bruyn collection in box 13 focused on the ways in which women in Nicaragua have increased political rights in the nation. This serves as a basis of Badiata’s artwork. Although the whole document is colored, the original text is still visible beneath the oil pastel shades, as not to hide the original meaning from the audience. She selects some of the positive language to create a piece that focuses on the universal woman. The piece transcends a geographical location through the powerful symbols, while simultaneously appealing to Spanish speaking audiences. Each symbol is globally recognized: the feminist sign, a keyhole, and a dove. But at the same time, each symbol has text, color, or altered shape that extend the meaning beyond Nicaragua. Badiata’s repurposing of the document sheds light on how the movement for women equality is constantly changing, yet the goal remains the same.

The symbols are striking to the audience in their universal identities. The feminism symbol is distinct, glowing in golden tint. The encircled word “la lucha” sits below the fist. Meaning ‘the fight’ or ‘the struggle’ this word highlights the tone of the narrative language in the work and pairs with the visual of the pumped fist. The feminist symbol is modified to the shape of a key. Badiata illustrates the fight as a literal key for women. It embodies the pivotal role women play in counteracting barriers to their health, happiness, and well-being, and transforms the original discussion of political rights to a broader discussion of human rights and gender equality. Below the feminist key, a keyhole encircles the text ‘las mujeres materializan el derecho.’ The bold statement encompasses Badiata’s point that women are powerful actors for change. The word ‘materializan’ is quite significant for the mood it evokes. Materialization invokes the sense that an idea is taking on corporal form. Women are making equality more than just an idealistic goal, but a physical achievement in the process of being attained. The imagery Badiata chose to surround the text is understood to mean that fighting for one’s rights is the key to success. Success is defined as every woman treated as equal to men.

Throughout the narrative text, there is a duality that tries to balance opposing ideas. This duality can be seen in the juxtaposition of the combative visual to the bird that appears like a dove, a symbol of peace. The dove flies above the words female equality, almost as if it carries the idea on its back. In addition, although it is a white bird, its feathers and wings are adorned with vibrant colors. This slight difference is in the fashion denotes the differences in cultures. Similarly, duality is found in the comparison of hope, a feeling of expectation, next to materialization, a definitive action. Yet, these ideas complement one another. Thus, Badiata emphasizes the competing nature of seeking effective change for women. From this competition, women are

triumphant.

In closing, Badiata creates an intersection of symbolic politics with simple and poetic words 'La lucha' rolls off the tongue and the other sentences are individually powerful. Badiata doesn't minimize the struggle experienced by women in their quest for equality and rights. Instead, she highlights women as their own best advocates and focuses on the inspirational ways women are overcoming, despite historical gender based obstacles. These feminist symbols of hope and unity as fuel for mobilizing global action for the empowerment of women. In this way, women can soar above the struggle.

