

Chagall and the metaphor of love

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I am interested in beauty above all in painting, and then in the fact that it is innovative, conveying a message, that it may be somehow different and is not a repeated, boring entity. But art often leaves me with questions related to the motivations, the context, the inner world of the artist.

The work of Marc Chagall (1887-1985) always caught my attention for his unique way of combining colors with the somewhat crazy shapes of his flexible characters, for recreating idyllic, fanciful scenes, as if from a dream, from a universe where everything is possible.

First I was dazzled by the use of vivid tones in his paintings, like this one I use on the cover (The lovers on a yellow background), which stands out with that intensity. I saw that the use of color was a common denominator in his work, and he managed to mix warm and cold nuances very well, with obvious contrast that captivates me. However, I found that a recurring theme in his portfolio is that of couples.

I searched and discovered a great number of allegorical works. Flying couples, couples sitting looking at the landscape, couples embracing all the time in many scenarios: dancing in the middle of the living room, under the moon, on the roofs, in the garden, in the kitchen. I was struck by the doubt of why, what was that leitmotiv that drove him on repeated occasions to recreate postcards like this?

We are talking about a great number of paintings in which the central axis is obviously loving couples. And so that there is no doubt, many titles contemplate this. **The Lovers, The Artist and His Bride, The Wedding, The Newlyweds on the Eiffel Tower**, are just some of the canvases that Chagall conceived during almost the century he lived.

I start from the fact that art not only needs incentive - which can be variable - it needs ardor, an internal emotional fervor. And it turns out that Chagall was a passionate artist, and he did not hesitate to express it. He believed in love as the only force that moves us, and he painted it that way. Some of his phrases that I like the most are the following:

“Despite all the problems of our world, in my heart I never abandoned the love in which I was raised or the hope of man in love. In life, just as in the artist's palette, there is only one color that gives meaning to life and art, the color of love.”

“Isn't it true that painting and color are inspired by love? In art, as in life, everything is possible when it is conceived in love.”

“The only color that exists is the color of love.”

“For years, her love illuminated everything I did.”

“How lovingly I would be seduced by the harmony of her hair, her skin, how quickly I would immerse myself in them, intoxicating the canvases with the exhalation of my thousand-year-old colors!”

“Where is my love?

Where is my dream?

Where is the joy

of all my years until the end?”

The story goes beyond a simple thematic preference. There is a more specific reason than that general one. His effusion always had a name and surname, and it has to do with his love story when in his youth he was captivated by writer Bella Rosenfeld, who after a few years became his wife and eternal muse of his art.

Chagall painted Bella since before the marriage, when he was not accepted by her family due to the social-economic gap between them and decided to try his luck in Paris with his talent to return after about five years and materialize their union.

He was a poet of the brush, crazy and in love with Bella. And he was right, what more can you ask of a lover if he sees everything through the delirious veil of love? That enchantment made Chagall create many works, even from nostalgia and mourning followed by the hard blow of the pain of the loss of his muse, because Bella only lasted 29 years of marriage.

However, after a period of alienation and Creative abstinence because her death left him deeply afflicted, Chagall continued painting her, recreating on his canvases that space where they were still together. He was quite sentimental, in love with love.

In those Chagall paintings that I am obsessed with, we commonly see the couple levitating, suspended in nothingness, floating. Isn't that what it sparks in us? It is ecstasy, a state of incomparable happiness that is drawn on our faces and we do not stop smiling, radiating that love, that shine in our eyes, that energy in everything we do. Because it has always been the same, the same in the Renaissance as in the middle of 2024, that is why we leave a trace of good fortune wherever we go, and in his case, it was with canvases and oils the best tribute.

Chagall plays with dimensions. With his expressive art, flooded with color, sometimes unclassifiable and symbolic, he tells us the story of his life, his affections and devotions as well as his misfortunes.

The Belarusian of Jewish origin left behind an art collection worthy of admiration, as well as an abundant one. His paintings are full of susceptibility and optimism, and we can see his constant search for his own style in them while he instinctively moved through the avant-garde movements that allowed him to experiment.

If we study his paintings, we find that he was fed by the different currents what suited him best. That is why we perceive details that suggest surrealism, expressionism, futurism, fauvism, orphism and cubism, perhaps all at the same time.

Chagall lived love intensely, and it was his inspiration. Until the last of his days his work was tinged with melancholy. And although many of his themes were recreated, in the sector he is recognized as an artist in love. His concept was explosive through unique atmospheres with that gift for joy that embraces us all when we look at his paintings.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
