

Repeat their names: women made visible

A work by Jimena Maldonado

"Lulú was 13 years old and lived in Zumpango. On January 30, she was deprived of her freedom, sexually assaulted and murdered by Luis, the son of a policeman, who in spite of evidence of these crimes being found on his mobile phone, was released by the authorities"¹ (Colectiva, Las brujas del mar). Lulú is not the only victim of femicide in Mexico. During the year 2021, the country recorded an average of ten homicides of women and girls per day. Between January and November 2021, over 3,462 Mexican women were murdered. These numbers are alarming, however they are insignificant by themselves compared to the magnitude of the human, moral and social catastrophe that they represent. Behind these figures there are devastated and erased human lives such as the ones of:

Lesly Hernández

Emilia López

Pauline Camargo

Areliz Karima

Nataly Vázquez

Leidy García

Ana Méndez

Alma Rosa Torres

Verónica Morales

Lucia Moya

Alejandra García

Fernanda Sabalza

Vanessa Montoya

Violeta Fernández

Blanca Helia

Renata Martinely

Maria de la Paz

Verónica Ruiz

... And the thousands of women whose names were sometimes reported but often forgotten by the authorities responsible for carrying out an investigation. Forgotten because Mexico has one of the highest rates of impunity in the world, where 98% of the crimes committed go completely unpunished. To compensate this injustice, this indifference, this irresponsibility of the State towards the victims, art is an extraordinary way to give the victims a voice and to build a collective memory.

¹ Collective Brujas del Mar, source: Facebook: <https://es-la.facebook.com/brujasdelmar/>. Post from 8 February 2021.

The project *Repeat their names*, by the composer Jimena Maldonado, is a tribute to the thousands of Mexican women whose deaths or disappearances have simply been made invisible by the authorities. Beyond the homage, the project *Repeat their names* aims to make public the existence of these women who are victims of patriarchal and structural violence in Mexico. To this end, the work is divided into three movements: a first movement based on the names of disappeared women, a second movement using the names of murdered women, and a final movement dedicated to the women who resist, struggle and express their solidarity with each other in order to live and survive in a country where being a woman is a factor of great vulnerability. These three categories of victims are divided into three musical movements created by the composer Jimena Maldonado, and performed by the percussionist Natalia Álvarez-Arenas and the singer Fernanda Cabral K.

Violence against women knows no borders and can be observed in all parts of the world, in all social classes and in all age groups. The *Repeat their names* project therefore appeals to the audience's sensibility through two lenses: that of violence against women as a global and borderless issue and that of the humanistic nature of art through which *Repeat their names* communicates with the audience.

While violence against women is a reality that can be observed in every corner of the world, Mexico is distinguished by the nature of the violence and the widespread impunity in which it occurs. The artist Jimena Maldonado conceptualized this project based on an action carried out in Mexico City by women's rights groups for the International Women's Day on 8 March 2021. During this action, activists wrote the names of thousands of women and girls murdered or disappeared in the country. This action was visually and symbolically important because it took place in the heart of the capital, in front of the National Palace where the presidential authorities reside. Symbolically, this was important because the barricades on which the three thousand names of the victims were written had been put up to protect the buildings of the National Palace from possible violent attacks by the activists during the protest. This clearly offensive protective wall was adopted and used by the women as a space of collective memory. In this way, the activists chose a crucial space to make known the list of all those women who were victims of violence in Mexico and who are invisible, even non-existent in the social and political life of the country.

Jimena Maldonado's art is confronted with this invisibilisation, providing a space of sonic and visual visibility for these thousands of women. The project is a contemporary testimony of a collective experience carried out a year ago. It is also and above all a continuation of the intention to create a memorial for these women whose deaths seem to be non-existent to Mexican society.



Link to the photography:

https://elpais.com/elpais/2021/03/08/album/1615161781_186189.html#foto_gal_2, consulted on 14 February 2022. Author of the image: Seila Montes.



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What seems particularly important to highlight is that this action carried out by feminist activists in 2021 consisted of an authentic memorial for all those women who

were victims of violence and femicide. One year later, Jimena Maldonado's work appropriates this experience to continue the effort to create a collective memory of female victims. While the media tend to reproduce the institutional discourse on femicides and to make the victims anonymous, *Repeat their names* aims to give an identity to the victims by naming them one by one for thirty-three minutes. During these thirty-three minutes, the artists invite us to consider femicide from a different perspective than the institutional discourses. They appeal to our sensitivity to bring us feel closer to the catastrophe of these victims from our empathy. In this way, a form of recognition is established between the victims and the audience through the artist's interpretation of the victims' suffering. Jimena Maldonado thus contributes to what Rancière (2008) calls "an emancipated community" consisting of a community of narrators and translators. Through her art, Jimena Maldonado provokes situations and life experiences in which the public's sensibility is mobilized in order to guide it towards a collective emancipation in which each individual can be turned, through empathy, into a narrator and translator. And it is perhaps there, in this moment of artistic encounter, where recognition and justice for these thousands of women victims resides.

By Pascale Naveau