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**4° año**

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## **WHAT THE PANDEMIC PAINTS**

### **ABSTRACT**

COVID 19 is affecting all people. Artists are an example of the group who have been most affected by the disease because their businesses were closed at the beginning of the pandemic. Theatres, cinemas, galleries, etcetera were closed because in those places a lot of people gathered and that could be a means of spreading. Some artists lost their works because they did not have an option. That caused artists today to become depressed. Another point that we have to analyze are the consequences of the closure. An example of those consequences are mental diseases like anxiety or depression. One of the activities that they used to relax or to feel good was painting. It is proven that making art can be a type of therapy. Of course, there are advantages. Art is adapting well. All these things that were mentioned, are not taken seriously, even if this is the reality.

*Keywords: COVID 19, art, affected.*

## WHAT THE PANDEMIC PAINTS

### INTRODUCTION

Today a lot of people suffer from COVID 19, but they are not just the affected ones. Or their families are not just the ones that are affected. It is a global crisis that happens at all levels. Artists, teachers, engineers, chefs, vendors, entrepreneurs, and many more people every day are fighting to have a better life. People look at the businesses that are closing, they wonder when they are going to open. But, have they wondered what an artist is suffering? Someone could say that it does not matter. There are people thinking that they have a lot of money and they can support their lives very well. But, just because a lot of people think that it does not mean it is true.

In this essay, we will analyze the situations that are happening in the lives of the artists. What are the artists going through? Not only professional artists are affected because they do not have as much work as they used to, also the people that live from art are affected. Those artists cannot have a digital interview with a TV, those artists cannot have safe buyers with whom to sell their artworks, or digital concerts where they are sure to be paid. The artists that are really affected are those that we see on the streets playing a song, the man disguised as a clown who tries to bring out a smile with his jokes, the little band that is playing a cover in the subway to earn a few coins. These are the people who every day struggle to survive in this horrible pandemic.

### WILL WE NEVER GET BACK TO NORMAL?

Before all, we have to understand what coronavirus is. It originated in Wuhan, China. This virus was first reported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention on January 7, 2020. Many people wonder if it is *SARS-CoV-2* or if it is *COVID-19*. Viruses are named by the ICTV (International Committee on Virus Taxonomy). ICTV named the new virus on February 11, 2020 as “*severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)*”. By the way, The World Health Organization (WHO) is responsible for naming diseases, this one is who named the disease on February 11, 2020 as “*Coronavirus disease 19 (COVID 19)*”. COVID 19 is a disease that mainly affects your airways. You can spread it by drops of saliva. For example, if you have COVID 19 and you are coughing, then a drop of your saliva touches your sister’s hand and after that your sister wants to eat some cereal but she did not wash her hands, she might have the disease. Symptoms of COVID 19 include cough, fever, flu, sore throat or diarrhea. COVID 19 is described for many

people as a strange disease because each person is affected differently and that is also the reason why it is so dangerous. On March 11, 2020 our lives changed drastically, because the WHO declared a pandemic the COVID-19. From that day on our lives are so complicated. First of all, we have to use a mask every time we go out to get secure. Second, we do not have to touch anyone. This situation generates a social distancing consciously or unconsciously, that is our reality. But, what really caused the economic crisis in the world? Caused by the closed businesses. The confinement of the people was terrible. Point number one, the panic caused over-shopping at first of the pandemic, I mean, people did not come out of their homes, and that affected a lot of the vendors and the public drivers. There were crowds of people on the streets at the beginning of the pandemic. Then, low income-people were really affected by the confinement of the pandemic. One of the first orders to prevent the spread was the closure of street stalls, which was very bad for the vendors because those jobs were the support of those people to survive. They did not have any other work, so the confinement was horrible for them.

On the other hand, some people became more ignorant because the most important problem for them (almost always the people that do not have COVID or problems about COVID) are the closed shops. But they do not care about those people who run out of work, they are worried about where are they going to buy some shoes now, or where are they going to buy some ice cream. At the beginning of the pandemic, the dimises were seen as simple figures of a statistic, now those figures begin to be more important because of the closeness of these cases (family, friends, acquaintances, artists, etcetera). Also, to this day there are some people that think COVID is not real.

### **WAS ART AFFECTED?**

Art is very important to our lives, but some people do not care. Artists are essential to transmit that art. But, what does art mean? According to the Royal Spanish Academy the definition of *art* is the "Manifestation of human activity by which the real is interpreted or the imagined is reflected with plastic, linguistic or sound resources" (*arte*, n. d). I mean, art could be painting, a drawing, a song, a play, and also a dance. When the COVID 19 arrived in Mexico and the WHO declared it as a pandemic, all theatres, cinemas, concerts, galleries, Palace of Fine Arts, etcetera closed. Those places were the first to close. The reason why they closed is because in those places people had big meetings, therefore, there were places where a lot of people could be infected. On the one hand, it is good to close them because there could be a lot of people that could get the disease. Nevertheless,

the dancer, the painter, the singer or however he is not going to have a job anymore, just because of the pandemic. Do the artists have another job? No, most artists are just engaged in art. They cannot get another job because most of the businesses or shops are closing, so they look for a way to survive.

If art survives, so do artists? This issue is really serious, because many artists today suffer from mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety. They feel so bad that they cannot do what they love. Most of the artists make art because for them it is a type of therapy. That is why many mental hospitals use the painting with their patients like a form to express themselves. However, it is proven that making art is therapy for people. Those situations are serious because being locked in their houses is disappointing and disappearing. Will it be necessary to rethink and reinvent their work? Also, there are many artists who died from the disease. Like Oscar Chávez, who died on April 30, 2020. He was a singer, actor and composer.

### **DID COVID 19 ONLY BRING BAD NEWS?**

The pandemic has also pressured art to discover new ways of expression. Artist's canvas is now digital, but they are not alone. There were several organizations where they showed solidarity and empathy with all the people who are suffering in this pandemic. Two of them were UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency) and UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). UNHCR organized a competition among the young people of the world in which they drew and made animations to show solidarity and empathy with people in confinement and those who go through the sadness and despair of it. On the other hand, UNESCO formed a campaign called *#ComparteCultura* and *#ComparteNuestroPatrimonio*. Those campaigns promote culture and art. These two organizations promote these sites virtually to access the world heritage.

*“The population is seeking support using Culture. However, Culture is also affected by the Covid 19 epidemic” (UNESCO, n. d)*

That phrase is real. However, culture and art remain very important for people. That is why during the pandemic, an art account was opened in the social network *Instagram*, this is the first virtual museum inspired by the coronavirus. This museum is called *“The Covid Art Museum (CAM)”*. In this account they publish works of art made by anonymous artists but in a different way. These works are edited so they can be seen from a different perspective, from COVID 19. That is the

point, we have to see how we transform our despair and sadness of being at home into something good. What are we doing to deal with the problems of confinement? Some people turn to art so they can express the desperation of being home all day; For example, some people paint. Also, there are artists teaching how to make drawings or helping the people that want to learn how to draw, or just to express themselves with their work art. The artists have supported each other, they have helped people who need support, such as Carlos Amorales who organized a project of the weekly production of 3,500 masks, which would then distribute them to workers in public spaces. On May 12, 2020, nine galleries (Arroniz Contemporary Art and the galleries of Mexican Art, Enrique Guerrero, Hilario Galguera, Karen Huber, Le Laboratoire, Patricia Conde, Licensed and Parallel Project) made a virtual platform where they put 10 works of art for sale. The project was called "Plataforma 2020".

In conclusion, needs evolve on a par with society, so it is clear that the way art is expressed has changed. Like the theory of evolution that Darwin once established: "Adapt or die". And there is no doubt that art underwent a transformation and must "adapt" to this new reality. Nevertheless, art in this pandemic is a form of therapy. There are people (including me) that express their feelings on a sheet of paper or on digital platforms. We express our desperation to be on four walls and not be able to leave, we express our sadness at seeing loved ones suffering from the disease. There, on the piece of paper where we vent all our stress over what we went through. Art helps us process everything that's going on in our lives. It is considered "a means of escape". There are many problems in this world, but we have to be empathic with each other. In my case, my family and I are infected by COVID 19. This situation is so horrible and we did not take it seriously until it happened to us. My mom has a safe job because she works for the government. But, what do people who do not have those kinds of jobs do? The woman who is singing with her brother on the subway has another job? Do mariachis who work in Garibaldi Square have another job? Those are the people that are affected in this pandemic. Those people are admirable for the way they struggle to have food at their table day by day, to feed their family. Because they are the ones who paint their own lives. How could we as a society help this sector of the population that creates art?

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