

## Tourniquet

by Érika Goyarrola Olano



Reflecting intimacy in works of art has been a constant amongst contemporary artists since the 60s. From a Feminist perspective, private life becomes a topic of public vindication, and the photographic camera serves as the perfect means to make this visible. Parallel to the development of this theme, critical voices emerge which question art's ability to convey these kinds of experiences.

Helena Goñi's exhibition *Tourniquet* offers a new approach to spaces of intimacy. Modern-day society has developed the urge to create an unnaturally personal image with the pretence of portraying everyday life. In an age when online relationships prevail over physical ones, the artist questions the dominant models surrounding this issue.

On the one hand, she reverses women's passive role by portraying the male figure within the framework of her own day-to-day life. The lightbox that shows a screenshot of a Skype conversation confronts us with the duality between the closeness of an intimate setting (her partner lying in bed) and the distance inherent to that tool for communication.

On the other hand, in contrast to this distance, Goñi aims to show the need for physical contact. For this reason, she chooses the hand as a symbol to represent the sensory experience necessary for any intimate relationship. With a minimal gesture, she breaks away from and challenges the previous feeling of distance. By doing so, she expresses the fragility and instability of contemporary relationships, marked as they are by violent speed. All this can be seen in the videos, the texts displayed in the screenprints -"BABE, BABE, BABE..... Baby I'm gonna leave you" and "NEVER, NEVER, NEVER..... Never Gonna Leave You Baby"- and the pictures of vulnerable bodies and of vehicles needing patches to remain whole and to last, which evoke precisely the constant possibility of rupture which, although present in all stages of life, is most evident in youth.

*Tourniquet* reflects the etymological meaning of the word 'intimacy', related to intimidation and, through this, to fear. What appears to be familiar and safe, alongside the need to create bonds with others, can generate unrequited expectations and cause unease and a certain fragmentation of the subject. This idea is reinforced by the artist tearing apart one of the images, physically splitting up a couple.

By means of this multi-disciplinary work, Goñi shows the dichotomy between proximity and remoteness in relationships. The exhibition, which sets out to rethink the art of stirring up feelings through photography, reflects what is intimate and its necessary link with

affections. The artist, without establishing a biographical connection, successfully delves into in self-experience, translating this to a more universal scenario which is closer to the viewer.