

Lovers Padlocks on the Brooklyn Bridge

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How a Roman tradition may be taking over New York. i-Italy walked on the Brooklyn Bridge documenting a new love ritual...

For centuries love and passion have been cornerstones of Italian culture and sources of inspiration not only for countless works of art, but even for social trends.

One of the latest is the so called "[lovers padlocks](#) [2]". This modern tradition stems from [Federico Moccia](#) [3]'s novel [Ho Voglia di Te](#) [4], published in 1992. The book is about the sentimental tribulations of Roman teenagers. One of the most famous passages describes a couple who ties a padlock to the handrail of a bridge and then throws the key in the Tiber River, to symbolize their everlasting bond. Since then, many Italian lovers followed their example and attached thousands of



“love padlocks” to the very same bridge: [Ponte Milvio](#). [5] @font-face {

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}p.MsoNormal, li.MsoNormal, div.MsoNormal { margin: 0cm 0cm 0.0001pt; font-size: 12pt; font-family: "Times New Roman"; }div.Section1 { page: Section1; } There were so many padlocks that a political debate arose. Some underlined the necessity of removing them to preserve the structural integrity of the bridge, while others insisted to let the Roman teenagers express their love. When one of the lampposts collapsed under the weight of the metal, the locks were removed and the city administration installed a banister specifically to allow this tradition to go on without damaging the structure.

It may well be that this new love ritual has hit New York as well. We have heard rumors of lovers padlocks on the Brooklyn Bridge. Intrigued, we decided to go on site in order to find out if what we heard is true and how much people know about the story behind it.

Outside of the Brooklyn Bridge subway station, an early November sun warmly greeted us shining on the park where street artists were exposing their works. We moved toward the bridge, and not ten minutes had gone by that we noticed a glimmer on the banister maybe twenty meters ahead of us. We hurried our pace, eager to see if it really would be that easy. And indeed it was: a padlock -unmistakably a love padlock, as it wasn't securing anything - was hanging boldly from the railing. Amazed, we looked around hoping to see if there were more locks, and seeking clues that could shed some light on when it all began. We kept strolling on the crowded bridge and eventually reached the colossal concrete pillar. The love locks were there as well. It was a sight not even remotely close to the metallic entwinement of chains and locks that can be found on Ponte Milvio, however a dozen or so locks of different shapes, sizes and colors, some of them engraved with marks and symbols, were hanging from steel rings hooked to the pillar.

We noticed a cart in the middle of the crowd. Behind it, a friendly looking guy with a big grin on his face was selling water and sodas. His name was Louis but he insisted to be called Smile (“an apt nickname!” was our immediate thought). Smile was perfectly aware of the meaning of the padlocks, he proudly informed us. According to him the first of them appeared a couple of years ago. We thanked him and moved on, looking for someone else who knew about the locks, maybe even someone who actually tied one to the bridge.

A couple enjoying the stunning view was sitting on the left corner of the pillar. It turned out they were visiting from Mexico. Even though they knew nothing about the “lovers locks” they were very interested in the story. We kept chatting with people, wondering if it really could be that Smile is the only one on the bridge aware of the locks and their meaning.

We kept walking among the crowd and suddenly heard someone speaking in Spanish. They were two tourists, very friendly, and as soon as we mentioned the love locks they smiled happily; they had actually been to Ponte Milvio and knew perfectly where and how it all started. We walked away glad to have found more people who knew about this tradition.

Our following encounter was with a German couple. They knew about the lovers padlocks, however their story had a twist. They had visited Prague and, as it turns out, apparently a bridge in the center of that city is the setting for the very same ritual. They deemed “padlocking” one’s love to be very romantic and charming, and would be more than happy to attach a lock to the Brooklyn Bridge if only they had one. Alas we could not help them with their wish so we walked away satisfied to know that the matter raises people’s attention.

In the end most of the crowd did not know much about the lovelocks. Even if love has been the subject of countless traditions, works of art and rituals, people still find many different ways to



celebrate it.

During the past years the media has definitely influenced the way lovers around the globe experience this emotion. The lovers padlocks show, for example, how a new tradition can go from local to global in a few years. We did not manage to find somebody who actually tied a lock to the bridge but we witnessed what we like to think is the dawn of a new tradition which will hopefully soon be as heartfelt here as it is in Rome.

Source URL: <http://iitaly.org/magazine/focus/life-people/article/lovers-padlocks-brooklyn-bridge>

Links

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/lucchetti11.jpg>

[2] <http://www.sleepingrome.com/blog/2008/01/19/roma-romantica-ponte-milvio-ed-i-lucchetti-dellamoreromantic-rome-ponte-milvio-and-the-locks-of-love/>

[3] <http://www.federicomocchia.it/>

[4] [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ho_voglia_di_te_\(romanzo\)](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ho_voglia_di_te_(romanzo))

[5] <http://www.lifeinitaly.com/tourism/lazio/milvian-bridge.asp>