

WHERE

DO YOU

FIND

FREEDOM?

## Public lighting and moonlight

Here we are, -Martin Infini and me- in front of the abandoned *Polly Esthers*, a three-storey, 20<sup>th</sup> century retro disco-club with an 80's room hosting the Rubik's Cube Bar. The space has seen better days and the building has been empty for years. It seems that its only function now is to play host to garbage and posters and allow stateless people to come around to let life pass at different speeds. There, on the entrance platform they can wait, yearn and scatter their monologues about life in this world, in the present and past tense, with advertisements for upcoming concerts in the city as the backdrop to their stage.

We are placing a poster on the wooden panels that cancel all the entrances to the building. Martin is gluing the poster with a mix of condensed milk and water, spraying it on the back of the paper and on the panel with a 21st century pump. Our ad only reads and publicises 'égalité'. Strange profession we have, making things visible is often a discrete job and we usually enjoy feeling ourselves somehow invisible and yet omnipresent. We vanish and then reappear in another given context to carry out the next enterprise. The only thing we dislike about the way we operate is that it ends up being a pretty lonely job. We are now together just for a day, the daytime hours in fact. Destiny made the appointment. We look like citizens so we involuntarily camouflage ourselves while working in the city, but this time our activity attracts the attention of passers-by... maybe the poster is too big or it could be that our message is not small. A man approaches us, stands there for a while watching what we are doing and introduces himself by asking me:

- Where do you find freedom?

Provocative question, but I am baffled and unable to answer. A stream of thoughts and uncertainties overwhelm me and I just got expectant, he replies to himself:

- Under the 'F'... in a dictionary.

He says that many years ago the place used to be an excellent venue. He used to hang out there, the area was nicely alive and drugs were tolerated, but now the whole neighborhood is changing, new shops, cafés and bars are materializing, and it is getting difficult for him to be

around. He has to meet friends and drugs somewhere else.

Making things visible is a never-ending job. But one of our posters stayed in place for months, an unpredictable success as our activity was not allowed; as always, we relied on the pure freedom to act as human beings. We discovered this bus shelter swallowed up by a construction site, a bus-stop useless for waiting for the bus, but a smooth surface with very good visibility for drivers and commuters to read our message. Our work ended up framed by scaffolding and cranes, the symbols of the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the so-called developed countries... and in others as well. Martin says that eventually we'll spot construction sites on the surface of the moon and that cranes and artificial lighting will make it impossible to observe from the earth like we do now and as Galileo Galilei used to do.

Making things visible is not Martin's full-time job. Most of the time he is a musician who also knows about things happening far from the earth's surface. Sidereal messenger Galileo Galilei and comrade cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin happen to be his heroes, one for being the first man to report lunar mountains and craters, concluding that the moon was rough and uneven (and not a perfect sphere as Aristotle had claimed) but mainly because his discord with the Catholic Church can be taken as an early example of the contemporary conflict amidst authority and freedom of thought. Gagarin ranks second not only for being the first acknowledged human to orbit the earth but also for the report by non-Soviet media that put the comment 'I do not see any god up here' in his mouth (M.I. likes *the fact*, despite there being no such words in the full verbatim record of Gagarin's conversations during the spaceflight). Martin refers to both of them while we work; he tells me about the exact location of a crater on the far side of the moon named after Yuri and believes that if everyone could see the earth from outer space, life here would be much better. I think he was inspired by Gagarin's words to mankind: '*Circling the Earth in the orbital spaceship, I marvelled at the beauty of our planet. People of the world! Let us safeguard and enhance this beauty - not destroy it!*'.

The poster on the filthy façade of *Polly Esthers* is up. We are done in this city. Martin Infini says goodbye. I walk down the street under the first flares of fluorescent public lighting and moonlight.

UNDER THE

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IN A

GETTING AWAY ( )