

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Humour, art and civility

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, August 28th, 2019

“At night, noise is a nuisance.”

That, in plain English, is what in French becomes an opportunity for a phonetically humorous turn of phrase: *La nuit, le bruit nuit !*

That is what the feature image shows, written with the half-moon in place of the U of “nuit” providing graphic interest, and posted in the university district close to where I reside.

Given the posting is located at a street intersection bearing a coffee house and three taverns, adjoining apartment buildings, I always took it to be a gentle reminder of civil behavior aimed at the late-night drinking crowd.

Wordlessly



Shhh say says the tree

In my corner of the street, the next-door building manager, probably inspired by a recent event of late night feasting in the neighborhood, installed a *wordless version of the official posted message shown in the feature image*.

The main difference lies not only in the nature of the installation itself but also on the use of a tree as its support, making it appear as if it were sign-talking to the viewer from a respectable distance and height.

Here, compared to the humour introduced in the language of the official message, we have a wordless work of art using the imposing yet friendly presence of a tree to make its point, because a point was indeed intended as I found out by discussing the matter with its creator.

End words

I wish to share, with its author’s permission, the following appreciation of my photograph of the wordless installation.

*“Your ... photographic subject ... expresses a **civilized admonition** to tone it down (and listen), and appropriately, the use of a living tree as a silent watchful natural presence communicates an even more profound dimension to this statement.”*

My point here is that if humour and art can both promote urban civility, the *humorous official sign wording* in the feature image implies an “*external*” *enforcing authority*, while in the image showing the tree-installed human face signing “shhhh” I read a call to *one’s* “*profound*” *moral authority to act in civil manner*.

Credit all photos to Maurice Amiel

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