

I've been postponing this for quite some time now : happy failure. The terminology comes to mind multiple times during the day and I immediately try to distance myself from it. It's as if creating a physical distance from failure itself would instantly protect me from it. I have to say that this word had disappeared from my vocabulary for several years now, hidden in a dark corner of my brain where I was convinced it would stay locked and could never mock me in the face. In the professional environment, failure is banished the minute we open the door of a new job on a monday morning at 9am. We prefer efficiency, profit and success instead. However, it would be an illusion to think that culture would be spared this evolution of semantics. This tiny word "failure" has no place on stage, in the administration offices, at the foyer and especially in front of the coffee machine.

Happy failure, happy...failure..., happy, happy, happy, "what is happiness", oh my god, here we go again with this first year of philosophy subject that has been haunting me for years. So, happy.

If the occurrence is happy, it's because there isn't really a failure.

Well, at least I'd like to think so.

So, the latest incident to date.

Ah yes, a job interview at a National Theater.

Pants, shirt, black leather shoes, sequin jacket (so 2019) and a portfolio composed with different projects of places where I had worked in the past.

Questions - answers and zero problems between me and the director of public relations. We weren't really from the same generation but we spoke the same language. Kind of. The anglicisms sounded like morse code coming from her ; sometimes pronounced very fast, as if she breathed the word to make it disappear and sometimes slower to ensure their proper pronunciation.

Up until then, we're working with the same tools, for the same goals, everything's going well.

Then, Madame General Secretary comes in. Words used specifically for new startups, we're not talking about artistic projects anymore but about "a project that will give us a sold out show", "an audience that must be quantifiable, easy to label and figure out" ; the spectator's view becomes a camembert, 40% entertainment, 30% renowned artists, 10% sensibility to huge scenography...

I get overwhelmed by a feeling of huge disappointment. Art. I want to work for the Art with an A ; the art that attracts us, that carries us away, that teaches us, that creates links between the artists, the administrative team and the audience ; and not the art that is easily replaced by a number. I leave the building and the cold air from Marseille's port revives me. Anyhow, our differing opinions speak for themselves. It was an email found in my inbox that informed me that "Unfortunately, their team did not select me for further consideration". From my part, one thing is sure ; I did not move back to France to work in a hostile environment.

However, a week later, I received an unexpected call saying I got the job. "You start in a week".

Taken by surprise, I stuttered and then finally answered positively.

I hung up.

I wanted to say no. No to their public relations' policy, no to the dehumanization of the Art, no to the daily pop-up newsletters.

And what came out of my mouth instead, a "yes".

Out of the blue, failure comes out of its cerebral nebula.

The failure of being incapable to express my opinion and to hold a firm no. The failure of letting the fear of getting "roasted", as they say. In the domain of culture the jobs are precious, the number of candidates is increasing in comparison to the number of the positions. And gossip travels fast. We simply cannot decline a job offer or even worse question an institutional project.

Thankfully, in this case, it's a matter of having a happy failure.

A week later, I dared to say no.

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