



Deadly Addiction

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When I finally reach one of Barcelona's drug-consumption centres, I run into a massive line of impatient consumers waiting at the doors, all hoping to



participate in the collection of used syringes in the vicinity. This afternoon, the privileged few who win the toss to be included in the operation will be rewarded with something between 6 and 12 euros, depending on available funds. Besides providing ordinary citizens with sanitised images of drug consumption and keeping the public space clear of used materials, putting this handful of drug users to work also aims to raise their awareness of the effects of leaving the tools of their addiction on the streets.

Once the selection has been made and places assigned, everyone gets ready to 'go to work', together with one or two professionals from the centre. One by one, each participant grasps a pair of shell-hard, stinking gloves, and picks up collecting tongs and the yellow, puncture-proof containers where the used syringes are stored.

Usually, it's like going on a guided tour but today the two professionals keep asking - 'Buddies! Where are we heading next?' Clearly they are relying on first hand indications provided by users who are fully aware of the hottest spots in the neighbourhood. 'Let's go into this park; they have been hitting it hard lately!' Once the group arrives at the spot, everybody busily gets down to work, scrutinizing corners of the buildings, searching behind bushes, removing the piles of flattened cardboard boxes and trash lying on the ground.

'Trashcan!' Holding in the air the syringe he has just grasped with his tongs, José calls the can holder over so he can deposit his find, half-filled with blood and hidden among a pile of empty beer cans. Out of breath, Miguel arrives with the container, running from one spot to the next, cautiously gathering up the syringes en route to avoid an accidental encounter that would expose him to severe infection. After making sure the area is totally clear, Jose looks around for another likely nook to excavate. Meanwhile, one of the professionals keeps a record on his note block of the harvest being gathered: 'Well, we've got ten syringes, eight pots and...how many did you get yourselves today?'



Look at Rafael's earlier [AVMoFA post DRUG INJECTION PARAPHERNALIA \("WORKS"\) IN SHOOTING GALLERIES! #BODY](#)