

**Remarks on the occasion of the Official Opening of the  
Alsop Design Limited Toronto Studio  
October 6, 2005**

I first met Will Alsop at a dinner with Mayor Miller and other prominent architects. Will was the highlight, having just unveiled his splendid OCAD building. The town was buzzing with his ingenuity. As Poet Laureate of Toronto, I was more fascinated by the poetry of appreciation over his invention, by the fact that citizens were enthused about what makes them fall in love with their town. And Will's OCAD building had gone a long way to furthering that. I don't want to add to what's already been said about that building, except to say that it is a gesture of love by imagination, like so many others of Will's civic bouquets.

But what impressed me was the way Will spoke that night; he spoke common sense, with a feel for the grass roots motive in the urban, and a respect for the aspirations of the town. What I heard was the real love of citizenry that inspires his designs. The gift of design starts with a sense that it was made for the citizen, as an act of love intended for the citizen. Will's designs are a romance. And that what's needed in the urban -- an engagement with romance, the physical place embracing the body, inciting it with novelty, fantasy and delight.

The global city needs delight. It's the only antidote to the "sameness" of the global. Will's designs say "it doesn't cost a whole lot more to be imaginative". Vision is the engine behind economic engines, for those who understand the soul of a city. Good architecture advertises a city, not just to visitors, but to those who live in it. And good architecture seduces us into citizenship.

Most cities are renegade with statements of individuation that ignore what's around them. Will's designs go a step further. They defy confraternity with the mediocrity of surroundings. In the hands of a lesser artist, they might look like boasting. But Will's designs become an invitation to yield to the marvelous. It's a style of architecture that dares the imagination to come home to itself, and build the rest of the city accordingly. That's why Toronto is grateful to Will Alsop.

People are authors of the poem of their city. Good architecture helps them write that poem. When you build a city you're restoring a literacy of grace. For the way people act with each other starts with places they move through.

So that the inauguration of "Influence/Confluence" spells good news for Toronto; not just for aesthetic, but also for a city ethic. Thank you, Will, for some leadership in the area of visual poetry. I have a hunch that the legacy of your studio will, for a long time, inhabit the hearts of those who inhabit your architecture.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco  
City of Toronto Poet Laureate