

**Opening Remarks for The Risk-Revolution and The Creative City**  
**The Artscape Conference**  
**Toronto, October 2005**

The project of the "risk-revolution" is not an option. Nor are we talking about sustainability, or livability, but a resurrection from a world view that has brought us to confusion, ill-conceived cities and a resentment that plagues citizens as they negotiate their dignity in a market economy.

Creativity is not the rare gift of the artist, or the poet,-- it is what calls a human being to author his or her life by the creation of cities, families, communities. It is that identifier in each person that cries for room, expression and authentication. It is that dormant genius waiting in everyone which, if suppressed, finds its release in bombings, mental unhealth and crime rates. This is the reality that global strategy must understand, independent of creativity as a lever to economy, or the vanity of the sovereign.

A vision is being alchemized, based on the insights of people such as we have heard in this conference; thinkers like Charles Landry, benefactors in governance such as Colin Jackson and Rita Davies, planners like Joe Berridge and Meric Gertler, too many to mention, in so many cities, people who have intuited the call of the future.

Creativity must be rescued from its death grip with industry and capitalism. But let us be wise, and know that creativity begins in the rehabilitation of trust in the inter-civic; for until people believe in each other, in a climate of civic faith, they won't be creative. For creativity is not about levers, or strategies, but about what awakens the eros of delight in people. It is about mutuality; the joy of discovery in the forum of shared wonder.

Creativity is irrepressible: it needs only our allowance, and an enthusiasm uncorrupted by agendas. It restores itself again and again, if we permit it and don't render it vulgar as a project. A strategist is one who helps people relax into their skills. The strategist is an artist.

The dynamics of invention and innovation are dependent on a climate that permits them, where the citizen feels free to create, or not create-- and this radical option is a gift that the passionate will responds to. People will not be ordered into creativity, legislated into it, branded into it. Creativity is the thing they have safe-kept from the madnesses of the contemporary. People guard creativity the way they protect families, legacy and the sacred. If creativity is made to look like another trend in the inventory of the useable and the marketable, they will not rally to it. In fact, people can no longer be rallied, unless an idea is beautiful, and appeals to their life instinct.

The life instinct is creative. People are already creative. The trick is to have them realize it. And that is the fundamental strategy of the creative city.

The risk-revolution takes place in a global arena dedicated to contradicting risk. Security is the global zeitgeist. The global intelligence would like to harvest creativity, without understanding that it draws from a mystery, an unfathomable resource that will either yield its graces or give us as little as we ask in the name of economy.

Economy will prosper, if only we dedicate ourselves to what sustains it -- the spirit. We must read the spirit of the people, to understand the psychology of invention.

Our creative project is to awaken in people the sense of wonder that creativity brings. If we do that, we will achieve more than sustainability. We will have restored hope. And the visions will come of themselves.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco  
City of Toronto Poet Laureate