

Creativity as Project

The unexpected is the wellspring of the creative. Today's call to be "creative" is ceaseless. But people will resist conscription above and beyond the tasks of consciousness-raising and the agendas of awareness homilized by civic industry. Prescribed aspiration has reached critical mass. Only impassioned beliefs will persuade. Cynicism is too widespread for just another good idea. The best notions are added to the list of suspect agendas. People are happy to pay lip service to a trend; but creativity is what they keep to themselves away from the jaws of market hunger. Citizens guard their creativity jealously. They know it has very much to do with their "soul". They'll surrender long hours and application to the economic engines that sustain them, but they won't casually yield the play, spontaneity and trust that companion creativity. They detect the market motive behind the trend. If the "creative city" looks like a trend – as just another item in the inventory of the harvested, it won't get the pledge of imagination. You cannot fool people into surrendering their most precious of personal resources– creativity.

Creativity knows no clocks, timetables or flowcharts. It is that celebration where people re-invent the world, in the time that is stolen from the world, where they can be themselves and think imaginatively. Cultural strategy has to take into account that people want to "relax" into their skills, and not be herded into the building of cultural pyramids. For creative skills are not commodities and currencies of exchange. They are the thumbprints of personal identity and the styles of individuation. To respect this is to respect the people of the creative city. To respect this is to persuade people to creativity.

There is no strategy to rallying the collective heart; people want to be accepted and acknowledged in their creative skills as citizens. What they are is already creative. The project is to have them recognize it.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco
City of Toronto Poet Laureate