

Toronto is Self-Conscious

And if Toronto is self-conscious, (and one can argue that the modern city is increasingly self-conscious) and by that I mean sensitive to its physical and exterior demeanor in a way that is inhibitory to response-- it cannot maximize creativity. If 'appearance" and concern about the outcome of the gesturals of interaction come before spontaneity and the unfettered risk-taking, we are doomed in our constructions of planning and services in the area of creativity.

Attention must be paid to the "ethos" of a city; what are the programs, prescripts and notions that intimidate the body, and the expression of it as a medium for healthy citizenship in it? This is not a case of "liberation" from the over-contextualized, or of a vacation from social norms, or of inducement to greater self-expression, or such other cliché. This is about restoring to the urban citizen the body that is reflexive to passion-- the freedom to explore a park, a public space designed for the practice of the body, without contradicting that impulse with needless protocol. This is about the fine line between necessary "policing" and "over-policing". This is about a civic ethic that establishes norms contrary to the public spaces and zones that invite exploration. City space in theory invites exploration, and then regulates it, limits it, and even discourages it.

Some rules are necessary, but where there is a rule-consciousness, the citizen is saddled and inhibited, no matter how playful and experimental city design and project is.

This rule-consciousness must be detected and medicated. It keeps our city from being creative; it keeps the passion of a city at arms-length, always.

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