

**Remarks of the Poet Laureate on the occasion of the launch
of the City of Toronto's Year of Creativity
The Sharp Center of Design, Ontario College of Art,
June 13, 2005**

“The Year of Creativity”; what a marvellous notion!

As if every year weren't a year of creativity in a town as alive and vibrant as Toronto. Sound like an over-statement? Walk the streets at night, check out the calendars of events, note the number of inventions in the history books and the strides made in industries, from design to the bio-chemical; check out the explosive skyline, and the blue prints for marvels to come, like the “Humanitas” project, the Waterfront Revitalization Project; look at the lines of Ontario place, the Tower, the National Trade Centre, the building we're in, the varieties of style and ethnic festivals, the avalanche of world-known literature and design ideas and film ideas that come out of Toronto.

The year of creativity? What a gracious formalization the idea is. It's an opportunity to remind Torontonians and the country to not let the obvious escape them -- that the only gap between Toronto and creativity is the understatement of self-appreciation that Toronto has. Call it humility, call it smugness, call it taking in stride the doing of the most excellent things; the happy assumption that it is the least that we can do – to look great, inspire multitudes seeking a home-coming here, and still look for cutting edge ways of mixing people and amicability, industry with landscape, technology with urban design, in ways that are imperfect, but pretty well offer themselves as a model to city theorists throughout the world. Does that surprise us? It might be typical of Toronto. And we'll remember that city thinkers like Richard Florida and Jane Jacobs, Charles Landry and others have spelled their affection of the promise of the urban future as Toronto spells it, and that spelling is not done without creativity.

The events and openings and festivals and buildings that will be showcased in “the year of creativity” are really more like dusting off the crown jewels of what this city has in abundance -- a restless initiative, a ideation unfettered by prescripts of history and politics, colonies of young people bursting with the opportunities they make for themselves, established professionals who feel that Toronto is the fit ambience and repose of their various creative lives, perhaps because Toronto inspires creativity in a quiet way, the quietness of which is about to be shattered by a self-recognition. And that self-recognition, that formal statement of work well done and continued in the area of creativity is about to inherit more world fans for Toronto, and make fans of the citizens who have conspired to make a world-class city. Not fans, really; for the citizens of Toronto are about to enjoy the glamour of their imagination, in a way that will make Toronto stand up as a myth, worth loving.

This self-appreciation, done with grace, will translate into “welcome and response”, the hallmarks of creativity. It bids a fond farewell to “boundary and protocol”-- the ethic of Toronto that is archaic. It defines a new Toronto, or rather *catches up* with Toronto; “The Year of Creativity” is a clock that for one year will commemorate the city as it is living itself, as it is writing itself, as a poem that will require the literacy of admiration, from both its people and the country.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco
Poet Laureate of Toronto