

Extract from Artscape/Citycore conference proceedings

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Keynote Address by Tom Hendry

Tom Hendry has worked as a writer/producer for film, radio and television. He has been instrumental in developing many cultural initiatives for theatre in various Canadian centres, including Winnipeg, Banff, Toronto and Stratford. He has been Policy Director for the Toronto Arts Council since 1983. In 1986 he served as Chairman of the Federal Task Force on the National Arts Centre, and co-founded "Arts and the Cities/Les arts et la ville" in Toronto in 1987. He has received recognition for his contribution to the development of Canadian theatre, including the Toronto Drama Bench Award (1982), Barker Fairley Distinguished Visitor in Canadian Culture, University of Toronto (1986), and was granted honorary membership in the Association for Canadian Theatre History in 1986.

Introduction

This conference has been convened to talk about:

1. The Status of the Artist;
2. The Economic and Cultural Impact of the Arts;
3. Revitalizing Downtown - what do the arts need, and what's been done before.

I will first give you a summary of my views on these issues, and the rest of talk will be a commentary on them.

1. The status of the artist in our society is such that the artist has almost no status. We have nowhere to go but up, and it's time to get going.
2. The economic and cultural impacts of the arts are hard to measure and intangible, but completely obvious to anyone with half a brain.
3. In revitalizing any downtown area you have to order your affairs so that:
lots of people live downtown;
lots of artists and arts organizations live downtown.

To bring this about you have to arrange things so that in any downtown:
there are lots of spaces in which people can live;
there are lots of spaces in which artists and arts organizations can live.

There are plenty of examples all over North America and Europe, where people and the arts live downtown in great numbers. Ask how they did it and you'll know how you can do it. There are no new ideas, there is only applied research.

This is the end of my speech. The rest is commentary.

Context - The Role of Cities

A city is like a house. A house has areas for work, sleeping, recreation, eating, etc. This division works well, because everything is close together and the various functions tend to overlap. People eat in the TV room, snooze in the living room, and do their income tax on the dining room table. It's handy that way. Likewise, a city works best when each of its parts is a mix of business, housing, recreation, shopping, arts, etc. However, the city ceases to be a useful, pleasant, and safe place to live when it divides itself up into a series of ghettos, and we get the downtown work ghetto, the sleep ghetto in the suburbs, and so on.

Unfortunately, most of our North American cities were designed with the automobile in mind, and the automobile was supposed to make it as easy to go from area to area as walking from room to room in a house. Alas, it hasn't worked out that way and now many city planners are changing their views, thanks to the ideas of Jane Jacobs and others, who feel that cities should be made up of districts and neighbourhoods in which people can live, work, shop, sleep and eat, be entertained, etc., without making desperate journeys of miles and miles. This concept of mixed uses of city districts and of individual buildings is now thought to be a useful idea.

In discussing the material to be presented at the conference over the next few days, I think we should bear in mind a particular context: all over the world, the day of the city is coming again. Historically, as you know, there were once great cities which were the centres of their cultures. Later on, nations developed, and with them, the need for self-defense against other states; in order to finance themselves, the nations

began to take possession of the wealth that cities were producing, and so the power of the cities declined.

However, last year when I was in Europe, I saw that “provincial” and “national” territorial concepts were beginning to disintegrate. They are being replaced by new units of human groupings: productive heartlands dominated by great cities, which are providing leadership in economics, education, and culture. It is possible that this can happen in Canada, but before it can be accomplished, our cities must become more human, more livable, and more satisfying for residents and visitors.

What are some of the barriers preventing Canadian cities from achieving this leadership role; what are some possible solutions to these constraints; and what other steps should cities be taking in this area?

1. The dependent nature of cities - they have relatively little political power because they are seen as delivery systems of wealth for provincial and federal agendas. There is an inequitable split of tax revenues: cities get property taxes, and the federal and provincial governments get sales and income taxes. This results in cities having a weak image in the face of other branches of government, when in fact, the provinces and the federal government couldn't exist without the wealth generated by cities. In addition, because of these tax-based constraints, cities tend to avoid large scale thinking with respect to exploiting opportunities and solving problems.

Therefore, cities must develop a new vision about their role and implement the means to carry it out. They must see themselves as significant engines of economy and wealth, and gain control of appropriate slices of the taxes generated by the wealth they produce.

2. Cities are weak in strategic policy development. They tend to look in the rearview mirror for inspiration, e.g., “What did we do last year?” It's kind of like reverse Alzheimer's - they can't stop remembering the past. In a similar way, they're like generals who keep planning for the last war - they tend to meet past needs instead of trying to meet future needs. And they often avoid involving artists in the conceptual and planning processes. This is tragic, because artists are in the imagination business - they can see into the future. Incidentally, that's why I'm very pleased to see that this conference has been organized by the artists themselves, on the basis of their concerns about their community.

The solution to this rearview problem is that cities have to develop futurist outlooks. They must use the past only as experience to inform their vision of future policy. They can be daring - cities can come up with creative solutions to problems, and in doing this they must significantly involve their artists in planning, so that as much imagination as possible goes into the process of preparing for the future.

Other Steps That Cities Should be Taking

1. Cities must learn that humanity does not live by bread alone, by infrastructure alone, by lawns and picket fences alone. A satisfying neighbourhood life involves a complex mix of answers to material and spiritual needs. Cities have to understand that a district without a resident arts presence is culturally dead at its centre. We must have producers - not just consumers.
2. Cities must begin thinking in terms of how much they should spend to solve problems and exploit opportunities in the arts - not how little they can get away with.
3. There have to be more partnerships between cities, other levels of government, and the private sector, in order to bring about a more vibrant arts community. And it is important to involve more of the smaller private companies instead of constantly going to the same few giant corporations.
4. Cities must learn that the preservation of old buildings is as necessary as the care we give to the well-being of old people. Without these buildings, we lose the possibility of knowing who we are and where we came from. They are vital to a city's sense of self and self-respect.

The Status of the Artist in the City

The city should be working hard to keep its resident artists here, and make an effort to attract new artists, just as it does to attract large corporations.

The responsibilities of the city with respect to the status of the artist are:

1. Space for the Arts - the provision of affordable living and work space for resident artists and arts organizations.

2. Funding - in order to support and strengthen the status of the artist, cities must develop funding programs for their resident artists, who are at the very centre of the creation of culture, as well as for the arts organizations which employ artists and disseminate works of art.
1. Space for the Arts - a responsible city policy:
 - a. Insists that arts spaces - studios, theatres, concert halls, etc. - which are lost to development and gentrification must be replaced by those who destroy them.
 - b. Stipulates that the city's stock of arts spaces must be consistently added to as the population grows.
 - c. Acknowledges that just as city planning takes into account the need for an appropriate presence of schools, parks, and libraries, so also must planners bring forward a vision incorporating an appropriate arts presence into the new and revived districts they conceive. In this process the arts recycling of older buildings is particularly vital to heritage considerations and the living arts. Unused and disused old buildings can be integrated for artists and arts facilities.
 - d. Planners must embed the arts in our neighbourhoods by providing spaces - either freestanding or incorporated into neighbourhood community centres - in which local and visiting artists can present plays, readings, dance works, music, and visual art. Such neighbourhood centres should have space for the teaching of art, so that talent and interest can be discovered and nurtured, and so that citizens can have an ongoing experience of art at the neighbourhood level.

In this context it is worth remembering that:

Jane Jacobs said that arts facilities should be like the cherries all through the Christmas cake - arts spaces should be found throughout the city and not concentrated in one area.

New York City, through its housing policies, such as rent subsidies etc., took steps many years ago to attract artists. These policies were significant in making New York both a visual arts capital and the most energetic arts critical mass in the world.

2. Funding for the Arts - cities must develop artists' funding plans:
 - a. To provide some measure of security for arts organizations.
 - b. To attract individual artists and enable them to devote more working time to their art.
 - c. To create a pool of practitioner-consultants available to the educational and neighbourhood community centre systems. This allows professional artists to work with non-professionals in order to extend their horizons and expertise in the arts.
 - d. That are based on the principle of peer panel review in deciding who gets what in the way of financial support.

Downtown Revitalization and the Arts

1. In planning downtown revitalization schemes and programs, cities must:
 - a. Conduct arts impact studies, just as they conduct noise studies, traffic studies, shadowing studies, and so forth, e.g., if old studios have to go down, new ones should go up. Artists should be invited to contribute to planning and interpreting the results of these studies.
 - b. Recognize the need to plan for and make possible a vibrant, accessible, resident arts presence in all parts of the city.
 - c. Recognize that one of the primary goals of revitalization has to be the enlargement of the city's resident arts community.
2. Cities are in the business of enhancing the quality of life within their boundaries. They must develop expertise in:
 - a. Envisioning desirable but not-yet-attained norms of activity in the arts.
 - b. Developing policies to help the resident arts community attain and surpass these norms of artistic activity, and then carrying out the policies in the knowledge that they will be building a precious asset which is absolutely vital to the development of a full and satisfying quality of life.
 - c. Determining how much will be necessary to get the job going, and settling for not one penny less. Artists should be a part of this decision process.
3. In return for taking a responsible, proactive role in the building of an appropriate resident arts community, cities get a lot of benefits:
 - a. They take control of an important aspect of their destiny which was previously controlled by others or by chance.
 - b. They become more prepared for life in the twenty-first century - a time when cities will emerge all over the world as great centres of power, influence, and sources of both tangible and intangible wealth.
 - c. They gain a vital arts community dedicated to the task of celebrating and immortalizing their city and its people.

- d. They create the conditions for immeasurable enhancement of the quality of life within the city.
- e. They create, through the arts, healthy channels of communication among the diverse cultural communities that make up the city's population.
- f. Their support of the arts industry contributes mightily to the economy of the city and to tourism.

Impact of the Arts

1. In terms of the capital costs involved, continuing arts employment is one-third to one-sixth as expensive as service industry jobs.
2. The arts stimulate spending in other areas, and can produce a national economic impact as high as four times the amount expended on them, and a local impact of up to three times that amount.
3. The arts are capable of bringing resources from other levels of government into the economy. Studies through UNESCO-Canada have shown \$1 in municipal arts funding can generate up to \$20 in new funding from other sources.
4. Mark Schuster's studies at M.I.T. have demonstrated that the quantity of resources brought into a community by its arts organizations and artists depends most importantly on their number in the community.
5. Cities are all different, of course, but some figures may be useful. The citizens of the City of Toronto, with a population of 580,000, will spend in 1991 over \$12 million in cash subsidies to the arts. Although this is only 40% of what Toronto should be spending, it will get in return:
 - a. about 250 active arts organizations;
 - b. a national economic impact of close to \$1 billion;
 - c. resources from other governments and the private sector of close to \$140 million, plus earned revenues of over \$75 million;
 - d. at least twenty-four million hours of arts participation by audiences composed of residents and visitors.

But economic arithmetic tells only part of the story. The essential thing is the arts' contribution to our spiritual environment, and this cannot be quantified. It can only be experienced, and the closer the artists are to their fellow citizens, the more compelling and important this contribution will be.

Cities have found ways to bring schools, parks, libraries, and sports arenas to the people. Now we must get on with the task of bringing together the arts and the people. The arts are a crucial and neglected area of municipal service delivery, mainly because, like other newcomers such as daycare, their indispensable contribution has been slow to be recognized.

In closing, I'd like to stress once again how significant it is that the artists themselves conceived of this conference, and have made it happen.