

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

A People's Festival of Books

Chiwan Choi · Thursday, February 28th, 2013

This week it is nothing but getting ready for the first [Grand Park Downtown BookFest](#). And because it is always the case anytime there's an event for us, stress levels are high. Judeth was yelling at me tonight because she couldn't see how any human would comprehend my organizational skills. I yelled back at her because – well I don't have much organizational skills. Then she went and finished the *fantastic* design above for our T-shirt! It will be available at the festival (assuming we get it to the shirt printing guy on time).

Anyway...

The Grand Park Downtown BookFest is technically, this is not *our* event, not a Writ Large Press initiated or funded thing, not our book release. We are a partner among various partners and we are responsible for curating and running the pop-up bookshop in the center of the park. Already, even with a couple of bumps, like me and my lack of an Excel sheet, we see a great future for the festival. I'll even go as far as saying it is exactly what the literary community of Los Angeles, and book lovers in general, have wanted in our city.

The thing that has struck me the most throughout this whole process has been the collaborative spirit that all who have agreed to participate have shown. Some have offered to lead different types of workshops, from bookmaking to haiku writing. Others have expressed their taking part in planning and creating a day of books at the park come next year. And still others have offered to just be there at the park all day, interacting with each other and the crowd. You know, just having fun. There hasn't been any of the usual prima donna act or people demanding more minutes or table space. Without any prompt, the collective attitude has been *What can we do, what can we give?* and not *What do I get, what's in it for me?*

Luckily, the events team at Grand Park, led by Julia Diamond, have been incredibly supportive and fully share our vision. With their help, we are somewhat achieving this crazy absence of hierarchy for the day. All presses, all writers, as equals. All books, all genres, equal. All readers, all park-goers, as equals.

How beautiful is that?



Look. I'm not calling for some hippie love in here just for the sake of being lovey-dovey. The fact is, this is good business. People want to find ways to spend money on people and products they believe in. Sort of like the way we go to our neighborhood bar to spend our money and drink with people we know and like, even if it means we pay a little more for a Bushmills neat than we would at that other bar a few blocks away. We know we are getting something greater, something beyond

the product we just gave money for. We are sharing time with our tribe, with our family.

I hope all of this is making some sense. In my head it all seems clear. But I've caught a cold and am kind of loopy.

So before I really start getting nonsensical, I want to urge everyone to come out and claim this event. Let's have fun Saturday at the park together, and next year we'll make it more spectacular, more interactive, a celebratory book festival unlike any other, one that shuns the best-selling ghostwritten book from some celebrity TV chef, and instead celebrates the heart of every writer and every small press and every reader in Los Angeles, our messed up and beautiful city.

Llibertat!

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