

ABOVE BOARD

International Haiku Contest in Italian

To preserve one's anonymity? Not in this case.

Cascina Macondo is one of the fewest realities, maybe the only, to announce an International Contest that does not ask for the author's name to be secret. Accustomed to send compositions to literary competitions (many times asking for an entrance/reading fee) in an anonymous way, our modality could seem “*strange*”, “*not so serious*”, “*suspect*”. The Jury could privilege a friend, or could be influenced. The argument is based on the wrong formulation of a syllogism:

- a) *Every contest in which the author's name is secret is serious and reliable*
- b) *Cascina Macondo announces a contest in which the author's name is secret, hence it is reliable*
- c) *Cascina Macondo announces a contest in which **the author's name is not secret**, hence it is **not** reliable.*

First of all, it should be necessary to be **certain** that **all** the contests in which the author's name is secret are serious and reliable. We are not certain of it, so we do not start from this preliminary remark to formulate a syllogism. By the way, we note that it could be sufficient, in a contest in which the author's name is secret, for a friend to phone to a compliant jury member and to reveal the titles of his/her compositions. Therefore secrecy is only apparent and formal. Everybody can read the Haikus sent to our Contest and everybody can vote for them. The vote is not binding, but can become a useful reference parameter to settle cases in which compositions obtain the same votes from the jury. Besides, everybody can judge the choices made by the jury. It is a way to show to people what hides behind the scenes.

If we left everything anonymous, giving visibility only to Haikus given a prize or noteworthy, the public would only have a vision of nice things. On the contrary, we want the public to have the possibility to see and read all the Haikus received. Exactly as the jury does. The public will thus be able to realize that writing Haikus is more difficult than what it seems. Many times we saw a pitying look in someone's eyes telling “*What a silly thing! What does it need to write three lines!*” People not knowing Haikus have such expressions.

Cascina Macondo wants to diffuse Haikus in Italy, it is a part of our purpose.

The opportunity to read wonderful Haikus and others so so, transforms the haijin that is still a novice in a master. Through his/her errors, he/she who approaches Haiku can make a comparison and better understand the path to follow. It is a choice of cultural policy. Organizing the contest above board the jury's responsibility increases. A responsibility that we accept and take upon ourselves. This responsibility should be perceived as a warranty of seriousness from the ones taking part in the contest, because everybody can see our choices. It can happen that 1000 wonderful Haikus arrive at the Editorial Staff, but, being necessary to choose only 57 Haikus in the section “adults” and 57 Haikus in the section “schools” and “Handicap”, many have to be left out. When a Haiku enters the category “nice” it has no sense the distinction “nicer”. Simply, we see each other next year. We want to discuss in terms of haijin community. If someone participates only to *win*, he/she does not feel, or does not want to feel, part of a community fond of Haikus. Our prizes are raku bowls. Hand-manufactured. The Contest, and also the day in which the prizes are awarded, are opportunities, chances, occasions, appointments, allowing the community of haijins spread all over the world to meet, to grow, to compare, to communicate. According with the simplicity and the spirit of the Haiku art of poetry. That's why above board.

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