

Postcard home from English Bay by Alex Leslie

Nostalgia is a territory. Chainsmoking seagulls do yoga on the horizon at dawn. English Bay organized into lanes with flaming buoys for swimmers to do their drive-by banking. The bridge shut down for candidates who launch down the inlet on robotic wings, competing for votes. People tread water below to witness, swallow the new Pacific vaccine. The famous building with the tree growing out of its roof drinks rainwater, spits mercury into the teacups of developers. Acid rain rainbows the parade tie-dye, the marchers photograph their chemical shadows and post in Renaissance filter, reflections in oil paints. Pride bellyflops into a harbor of profit. The portrait artist hired by the Mayor works until sunset, then lies down in the surf and dissolves, skin floating off clear as a jellyfish, black formal tails trailing ink. It is so beautiful here. This child will draw your caricature for free by throwing a glass of coins in your face and raising his fingers to catch the bent light that arcs off your cheekbones. Blink and you'll miss the moon inspecting its own bruises, reading Captain Vancouver's letters home by the lights of a thousand rigs, miniatures available in bottles for collectors and investors. Visit soon.

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From *Vancouver for Beginners* (Book*hug Press, 2019)

*A quote about this poem by Alex Leslie:

"I was inspired to write this poem by the glut of development language in Vancouver — language so extreme in claims that this is a paradise that it borders on parodic. I wanted to create a full tableau, including many characters who occupy a vision of oceanfront busy Vancouver, from the seagulls to the politicians to the street artists.... It's a twisted advertisement, or a dark stream-of-consciousness account someone on a drug trip might write on a postcard. It is intended to be hyperbolic and for me it captures something of the overblown paradise vibes Vancouver is pinned with. Those of us who grew up here or have lived here for a long time know that the image of Vancouver co-exists with poverty, racism, homelessness, the overdose crisis and overdevelopment."

From: "Can You Map A City Through Verse?" by Fiona Tinwei Lam, *The Tyee*, March 16, 2022 <https://thetyee.ca/Culture/2022/03/16/Can-You-Map-Vancouver-City-Through-Verse>