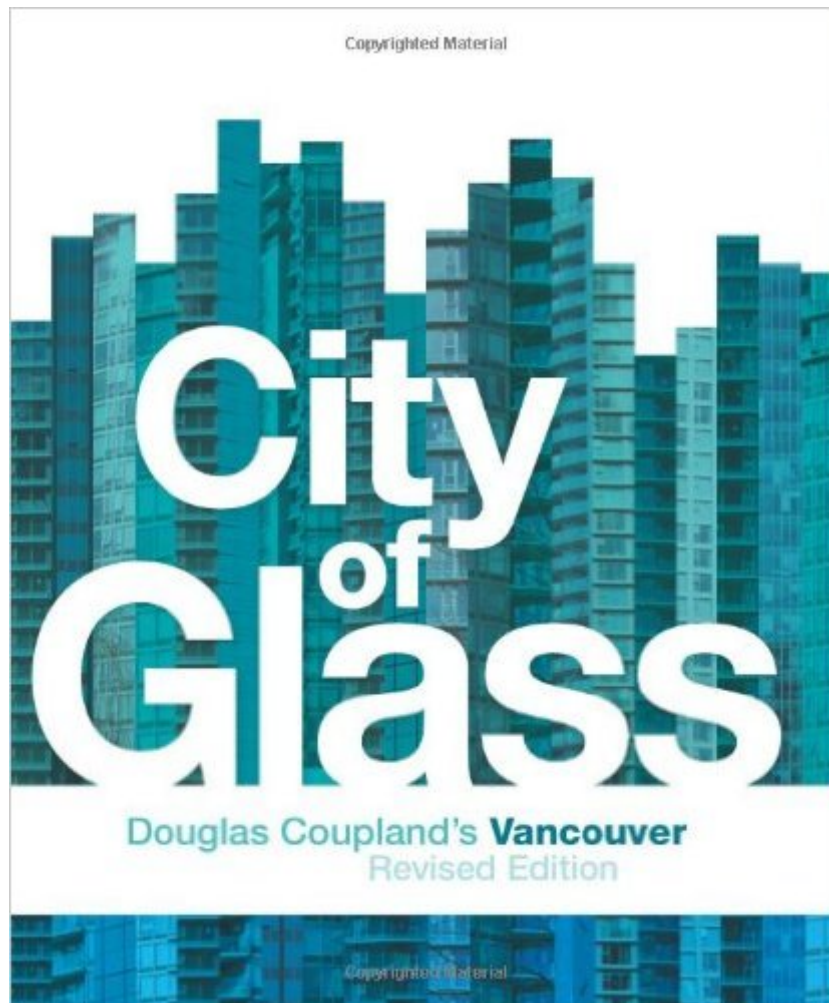


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City Of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver



Synopsis

This irresistible little book offers a very different take on Vancouver, one of the world's most beautiful cities. Douglas Coupland applies his unique sensibility to everything from the Grouse Grind to glass towers, First Nations to feng shui, Kitsilano to Cantonese. Cleverly designed to mimic an underground Japanese magazine, this edition is fully updated and revised with riffs on Vancouver as a neon city, a land of treehuggers, and more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book will leave you aching for Vancouver, whether you've been there before or not. I have, but never lived it the way Coupland has. This is more than a travel book; it'll take you into the underside, and the overside, and every side Vancouver has. Vancouver is lushly fertile and starkly commercial, historical and modern; Vancouver is Every City, with an emergent personality all its own. Until you can get there to see it yourself, buy this book, keep it on your coffee table, and dive with Coupland into his own bizarre Vancouver dreams.

Sure, it's only one person's view of Vancouver. But at least it's Douglas Coupland's view. In "City of Glass," the author of "All Families Are Psychotic" and "Generation X" strays from fiction to write about his home city. The result is a subdued love ode to Vancouver, peppered with photographs. Coupland describes Vancouver with many page-long vignettes, sort of like a patchwork quilt: he describes feng shui in Vancouver, Japanese teenagers, a harbour full of sulfur piles, American couples on "love boats," monstrous houses, and the quiet detachment that

Vancouver feels from the Rest of Canada. (Which has its own entry -- really!) Coupland's fiction is generally distinguishable for its contemplative, cynically witty tones. But he drops all that for "City of Glass." Okay, there is a chunk of "Life After God" in the middle, blurry text and pics. And occasionally the transcripts of Coupland's memories remind one of his fiction, seeming sadder and darker. Most of the time, he sounds fond and reminiscent, as if reliving the memories that come with salmon and fleece. Not to mention funny, such as when describing the confusing disagreements about feng shui ("this space should flowwwwww" or "flow is to be avoided at all costs"). And the photographs are quite good as well, with Coupland taking pictures of the prosaic subjects of his book -- a sleepy-looking Japanese teen, a fleece vest, a boat floating out on a light-filled harbor, a skier in mid-twist on a sunlit hillside. "City of Glass" isn't exactly going to make you race to Vancouver, but it will make you appreciate the little hidden facets of the city -- and perhaps make you notice the ones in your own.

This is my homesick book, my security blanket, my Postcards from Home. For Vancouverites, it's a source of boosterist pride, a good chuckle at some in-jokes, and perhaps enlightenment on why things are as they are. For people who have moved away, it's a book of memories, recollections of a city of glass and the people who make it. For people who have never been there, it's the tourist guide that talks about things the Lonely Planet won't. It's like having Mr Coupland sitting next to you as you make your way through our city. It's probably as close to an autobiography as he's ever written. The mark of Vancouver is on him as it's on me, and on everyone else who was raised there. Yeah, I love my hometown.

This book presents a charming, personal view of the city of Vancouver, BC, by an author both at home in and in love with his city. It is organized as an alphabet book, but this is just an excuse. Vancouver is a major city on the edge of one of the last great frontiers. It joins the Canadian wilderness and the Pacific Rim. It is a peculiar city of what we in the USA call the "Northwest", both cosmopolitan and local. I've read the book several times, both in Vancouver and at home, and I've enjoyed sharing with the author each time.

City of Glass reminds Vancouverites why we live here, and tells guests why they should visit. It is the book you leave in the guest bedroom to inspire and delight out-of-towners. It's brochure like quality starts with the book's physical form. City of Glass is bright and colorful--reminiscent of a sunny day in the city. Its cover is even colored in the omnipresent green and blue of Vancouver's

branding. The title of the book comes from Vancouver's large number of skyscrapers with glass or mirror fronts. Like the glass of its title, Coupland's book reflects his personal memories of the city he loves. Inspired by Japan's underground 'zines', the book is an illustrated collection of vignettes and reflections on Vancouver. It takes readers on an alphabetical tour, from BC Ferries to YVR. Along the way, Coupland drops a lot of personal observations, historic trivia and often overlooked facts. The book also includes a report of Coupland's essay, "My Hotel Year," previously published in *Life After God*. The essay is a nice intermission from the vignettes. It provides readers with a glimpse beyond the glass and into a gritty reality that is also part of Vancouver. Interspersed throughout the book are some photographs of Vancouver at its best and pictures of Vancouver, ephemera such as Campbell's soup cans with trilingual Cantonese/English/French labels and a salmon 'color fan.'

This is not a story by D. Coupland but rather short anecdotes about his hometown Vancouver. I found this book very "Canadian": he describes a city and its culture that has changed a lot with the past decades. A must read if you are like me an aficionado of Douglas.

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