

City of Douglas Coupland

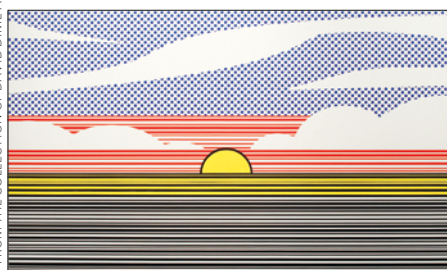
The local author, artist and visionary is taking over Vancouver, and there's no sense fighting assimilation when it's this much fun

BY SHERI RADFORD

(Clockwise from top L) Coupland at the VAG. His first novel, *Generation X*. T-shirt from his collection with *Roots*. (Opposite, clockwise from top L) His memorial to Terry Fox. "Digital Orca." "Gumhead." "Thomson Campfire," at the VAG. "Luggage Tag Sunset No. 3," also at the VAG

Most folks know Douglas Coupland as an author. His first novel, 1991's international bestseller *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, popularized the now-ubiquitous term "Generation X." Since then he has published 13 more novels along with an eclectic assortment of non-fiction works, including *City of Glass*, a collection of essays about Vancouver; *Souvenir of Canada*, which covers experiences and objects unique to the True North Strong and Free, from Baffin Island to poutine to zed; and *Terry*, a pictorial biography of Terry Fox.

But Coupland's formal training was actually in visual art. In 1984 he graduated from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (now University) here in Vancouver. The city now displays several of his quirky sculptures. Outside the Vancouver Convention Centre sits "Digital Orca," which resembles a whale made out of LEGO blocks. On SW Marine Drive at Ontario Street, "Infinite Tire" stretches 18 m (59 ft) in the air; this cheeky riff on Brancusi's "Infinite Tower" is constructed out of progressively smaller fibre-glass tires. Terry Fox's family chose



PHOTOS: DOUGLAS COUPLAND, "DIGITAL ORCA"; AND "GUMHEAD" BY SHERI RADFORD, MEMORIAL TO TERRY FOX BY KY LAW, "THOMSON CAMPEIRE" COURTESY TREVOR MILLS AND VAN COUVER ART GALLERY, "LUGGAGE TAGS" SET NO. 3 FROM THE COLLECTION OF DAVID DIME AND ELISA NUYTEN



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Coupland to design a memorial dedicated to the cancer-research activist, which was unveiled in 2012 outside BC Place Stadium. Coupland's newest piece, "Gumhead," is a self-portrait that the artist invites the public to deface with chewing gum; commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery, it coincides with the VAG's *Douglas Coupland: everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything* (to Sep. 1; page 44). Featuring more than 100 works, this major exhibition includes everything from painting and photography to prints and quilts, all highlighting Coupland's most-loved topics: technology, cultural identity and contemporary life. Favourite pieces from the exhibition are printed on a clothing collection from Roots (page 34)—Coupland's second collaboration with the iconic Canadian company. Also on his varied resume: a whimsical furniture

collection for SwitzerCultCreative, an Order of Canada (this country's highest civilian honour), and the concept technology for V-Pole, an ingenious telephone-pole-sized device that combines cellphone towers, parking meters, electronic maps, wireless Internet terminals, streetlights and recharging stations for electric vehicles.

What's next for the multi-talented Coupland? He's currently working on a sculpture titled "Golden Tree," based on Stanley Park's famous Hollow Tree, to be installed in Vancouver in 2015. On Aug. 15 he'll launch a comprehensive catalogue to go with his exhibition at the VAG. And he's eager to see how the public will transform "Gumhead" over the summer.

"Will there be snot?" he asks. "Will there be horns? Let's find out in this social experiment." **W**