

and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. . . . And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her. . . .”

“Amen,” I moaned, putting myself in David’s sandals, metaphorically speaking. Praised be the foresight of the Gideons who provide!

The next morning, still sore from my first run-in with the locals, I set out to visit Seattle’s sites. From the quaint Chinatown (Manhattan’s Mott Street in microminiature) where fierce-fisted grimacing Bruce Lee look-alikes glowered from tattered posters and chop suey joint menus flickered with a neon insistence, I rambled over to Pike Place Market, where—amid wriggling mounds of Pacific sea life: Alaskan king crab and monstrous mollusks called geoducks, clams the size of elephant hooves with their schlong-like siphons obscenely groping about—a wiry old Native American in a ten-gallon hat, who claimed to have performed as a boy with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show, stepped lithely in and out of his swirling lasso for tourist snapshots and tips. I pushed on to Skid Row, the original, where a faded rainbow brotherhood of bums clung to the battered raft of existence for one last round. Boarding the monorail, I hurtled to the future and back, or what once passed for the future at the Seattle World’s Fair of ’62, then the site of the seedy Fun Forest Amusement Park.

I wrapped up the day’s sightseeing with a visit to the world-famous Ye Olde Curiosity Shop at 1001 Alaskan Way, notable for, among countless other curios, the leathery remains of Sylvester, the desert mummy; the purported skeleton of a bona fide mermaid; and the black-and-white photograph enlarged to life-size of the wrinkled Princess Angeline, daughter of Chief Seattle, billed as “the Oldest Living Indian” at the time the picture was taken, proudly claiming more than a century of residence on this earth, with whom I imagined conducting the following interview:

“Were they happy years, Princess?”

“Bah,” she replied, “I had my moments.”

“What were your most vivid memories?”

She paused to shoo away a persistent fly. “Well,” she said, “I really can’t remember.”

“Surely your Highness must have had ample opportunity to witness the hand of progress boldly forge ahead!”

“Would the pale face please repeat the question?”

Which he did.

Whereupon Princess Angeline scratched her white locks and flexed her jawbone (studded with the artificial ivories generously provided, as the faded caption recounted, by President Franklin Pierce, compliments of the American people, along with a nebulous promise of territorial sovereignty—the teeth, at least, being hers to keep). Her two favorite white man’s inventions, she averred, were the rocking chair and the window seat of a speeding iron horse. “I like motion,” the centenary Native American princess nodded, smiling almost.

On the back of a postcard print of which I put it poetically for the folks back home:

Sailboats, dark profiles like fish fins in the setting sun in a shimmering triangle of light, dissolve as dusk falls over Seattle. Drunk without whiskey from the kiss of the Pacific. Miss you.

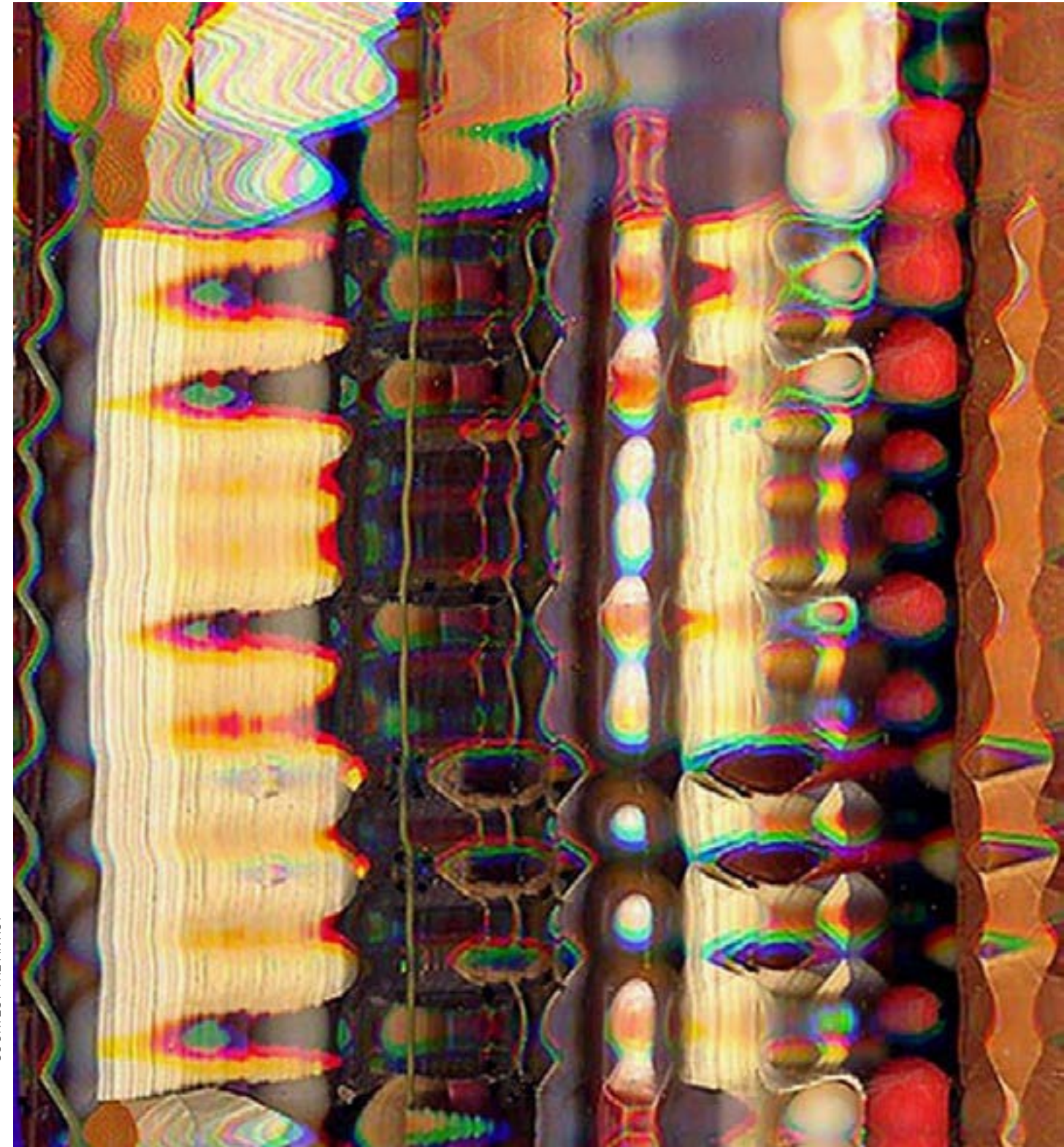
Love,
Peter

Peter Wortsman’s recent books include: a novel, *Cold Earth Wanderers* (Pelekinesis, 2014); a travel memoir, *Ghost Dance in Berlin* (Travelers Tales, 2013)—for which he won an Independent Publishers Book Award (IPPY); an anthology which he selected, translated and edited, *Tales of the German Imagination* (Penguin Classics, 2013); a book of short fiction, *Footprints in Wet Cement* (Pelekinesis, 2017), and a translation, *Konundrum, Selected Prose of Franz Kafka* (Archipelago Books, 2016). His translation is forthcoming of *Intimate Ties* by Robert Musil (Archipelago Books, 2018). He was a Holtzbrinck Fellow in 2010 at the American Academy in Berlin.

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Howl, 2017

Digital image from organic collage, 36 x 24 in



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