



Aislin's 50 Years

Terry Mosher

Trudeau to Trudeau: Aislin 50 Years of Cartooning.
Montreal, Aislin, 2017.

Review by James Baxter

It's hard to imagine one's life summed up in a compendium of cartoons, but for many of us, that is exactly what Terry Mosher does with his new retrospective, *Trudeau to Trudeau: Aislin 50 Years of Cartooning*.



The morning after the 1976 election of the PQ. Perhaps the most famous Canadian political cartoon of the last 50 years.

The book, and the corresponding exhibit at Montreal's McCord Museum, offers Canadians a chance to see the past half-century through the eyes and pen of one of the most gifted, whimsical and often cutting contemporary artists. From the FLQ crisis, Trudeau-Lévesque, the Montreal

Olympics and the glory days of the Montreal Canadiens to now (not the glory days), this latest collection of Aislin cartoons serves as a diary of all that is and has been right and wrong with Montreal, our country and our world over the past half-century.



On the road again. A shirtless Justin Trudeau in his father's Mercedes convertible.

This book is designed to prompt "I-remember-this" moments, told through the artwork and Mosher's wry storytelling. That alone is reason enough to have the book on your bedside table, but it is the little surprise sketches and the personal stories behind the cartoons that make this book special. Indeed, one should read it at least twice, once for the hilarious cartoons and again for the brilliant stories that make up the life of one of Canada's best-known artists.

From a high school dropout who forged his own diploma in the 1960s, to the 1970s making mischief with the irrepressible Nick Auf der Maur, to his quieter life these days, Mosher—as seen through his Aislin works—has more than just seen Canadian life, he has lived it and loved it. He took the fight over Bill 101 and two referenda to the Parti Québécois, championing the plight of the linguistic minorities through mockery and satire.

When Brian Mulroney got a little too cozy with Ronald Reagan and opened Canada to free trade, Mosher's cartoons gave voice to the nation's angst. And he saved some of his most devastating work for Stephen Harper, who was about as popular in Montreal as a canker sore.



1984—an enduring image of the Tory piglet slaying the Liberal hog.

The book has some old standards. One of the most famous Aislin cartoons ever remains the Mulroney piglet atop the mortally wounded and bloated Liberal hog demanding to know "Where's the trough?" That 1984 cartoon remains poignant and outrageously funny to this day. It also includes one of the favourites of recent years: Justin Trudeau taking a selfie with Queen Elizabeth.

It is evident in meandering through the 50 years of Aislin that it's his social conscience that elevates Mosher above the simple title of newspaper cartoonist. He is atop that heap for sure, but also a brilliant comedian with a scorching wit.

As historian Desmond Morton said: "Mosher has been tweaking noses for underdogs across Canada ... since 1967."

In his foreword, Bob Rae, himself the "victim" of an occasional Aislin burn, said "(Mosher's) work is an invitation to laughter and, to be serious for a moment, speaks to a deeper humanity in his approach to drawing and to life." Rae adds of Mosher's targets: "He mocks them, but for the most part doesn't despise them and some he actually admires."

It is perhaps for this reason, coupled with his Maurice Richard-like consistency for hitting the target, that Mosher's Aislin cartoons are as much a part of the Canadian fabric as poutine, beer and maple-flavoured anything. **P**

James Baxter is Editor and Publisher of *iPolitics*. jamesbaxter@ipolitics.ca