

Self-Portrait with Washington, DC

In myth I used to be a swamp. I can't handle myself in April. I'm river and stone, dark alleyways, and crowded monuments to former ideals. I will cut you off en route to the post office and trap you on the sidewalk unable to move forward or back. Just when you want to knife yourself from winter's gray, I will bloom in pink for you. I am prone to acting out in mysterious ways when the full moon hangs in the sky. I cycle, I streak. I talk to myself. I sleep in doorways, nest in awnings. You wouldn't recognize me in 1990. I'm serious about cleaning up my act. I'm only sort of charming and a little bit efficient. I was born of compromise and arson and mutiny and papers. I'm getting better at speedy self-repair. I riot and rage, I'm subtropical and compact. I was modeled in the Baroque style. I'm boulevards stretching out from rectangles. I swell, I sweat. I'm mainly illiterate but culturally saturated. I read about myself in the news every day. I'm perpetually congested and statistically I have HIV. I'm 20% green space. I firework and hurricane. I'm too serious. Did I mention I talk to myself? I leave you stranded in a blizzard with no taxi in sight. I remember your coffee order. There are ghettos inside me, whole zip codes I wouldn't dare to walk alone at night. They say we come to resemble the shape of our cities. I am trying to purify my water.

ILSE BENDORF

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