

BOUGHT WATER GLASS



HEATHER MALLICK

I bought four of these Italian glasses at Nitty Gritty Reproductions in Toronto, the milk-paint-furniture people who made me a dining-room table in the precise blue I hungered for.

The glasses cost \$25 for four. They are silly but clever. Their design declares that they are water glasses, but what they show is not

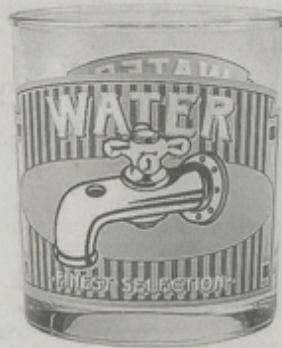
Niagara Falls or even a bottle of Badoit, just a humble spigot.

You should be able to drink water from the tap with confidence, but ever since a Conservative government in Ontario decided that water testing was a frippery, I haven't poured regular water down my gullet without thinking of dissolved pharmaceuticals and other impurities that might not be filtered out. Why I have greater confidence in the water bottled by Loblaw's is a mystery. But water is a mystery now, just like the new influenza viruses and undercooked chicken and all the other things we never worried about too much before.

"Water: Finest Selection," the

glass reads on its front. At first, I was reluctant to buy the glasses because they looked like American-designed kitsch that would inevitably be made in China for slave wages. But the back displays the words "Water, Acqua, Eau, Wasser, Agua." This is the kicker. Whimsical American design, and there is a lot of it about, simply does not cover four foreign languages. It's not done. It wouldn't sell in the domestic market.

I know a glass is a glass, but it does look really odd to drink orange juice out of it, or even milk. The colours clash. Milk is a Swiss white. Orange is a hot tropical colour. Water is associated with blueness. I picture not blue skies or



KIVIN VAN PAASSEN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

even a blue ocean, but the blue of icebergs.

I have never written to Loblaw's to ask why they stopped selling their Iceberg Water, which was delicious. Perhaps they agonized over chipping away at the polar ice cap. I don't understand anything about Loblaw's, really. I love them, but they torment me by inventing great foodstuffs and then snatching them away. Like rosti potatoes and cr me Anglaise and a lonely iceberg off Greenland that was making its way to Canadian throats and special Italian glasses, their Iceberg Water is no more.

It was bloody good too, and it didn't cost 10 bucks like that stupid Voss stuff either.