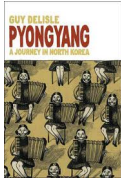


Shenzhen : a travelogue from China

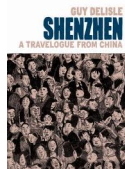
Graphic Novels from Guy Delisle



People often read travel books of places of either exotic places they want to visit, or of a beloved travel destination. I would think that a travel book of a destination that most people don't ever want to visit wouldn't exactly be very engaging. Guy Delisle proves me wrong.

Delisle is a French Canadian whose work in animation has taken him to some interesting and not so interesting places. Two of these locations have become novel length graphic novels. Delisle has a knack for taking the ridiculous and mundane and making them funny and smart. Pyongyang chronicles Delisle's stay in North Korea that extends over several months for his job. The charcoal drawings reflect the drab and sterile city. Delisle tries to get to know the residents, but is often thwarted by his guide, translator and driver, with whom Delisle isn't to be without. He is taken to some creepy (and sometimes funny) monuments to the Eternal President. The insights and details are surprising and delightful. Even if you aren't the least curious about North Korea, I would still recommend this title.

Following Pyongyang, Delisle also wrote and drew Shenzhen where he also travels to for work.



Shenzhen is a city surrounded by an armed fence, has no cafes or universities and seems focused on brand name commerce. Delisle is lonely and bored. Usually a graphic novel about a bored Canadian in a foreign city wouldn't be at the top of my recommendation list, but Delisle even mentions that "taken out of context, even boredom can probably sublimate itself and seem entertaining...it's a bit like memory". These poignant and funny insights combined with some very touching connections he makes with the locals make for an easy recommendation.

Posted by sbowman on November 30, 2011

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