

Hiver à Sokcho [Elisa Shua Ousapin]

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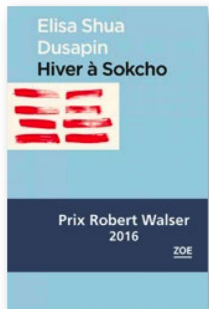
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Winter in South Korea



ELISA SHUA DUSAPIN:
"Hiver à Sokcho",
Édition Zoé 2016,
144 pages; CHF 22

"He arrived lost in a woollen coat. Dropping his suitcase at my feet, he took off his hat. A Western face. Dark eyes." These are the first lines of Elisa Dusapin's novel "Hiver à Sokcho", which immediately carries the reader off to distant lands. Who is this man who strays into a South Korean seaside resort in the middle of winter?

The novel is set in the harbour town of Sokcho near to the border with North Korea. The young first-person narrator has returned to her place of birth after studying at university and is working in a small hotel there.

Kerrand, a French comic illustrator, is staying there, looking for inspiration for a new story. They get to know each other – albeit for different reasons – and go on joint trips together to the border between South and North Korea, or walk through the wintry city, where everything seems to stand still, waiting.

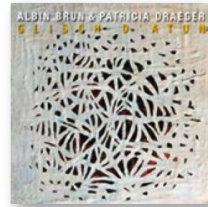
The story keeps the reader on tenterhooks until the very last page. Questions spring up. Does the protagonist see in Kerrand, a man almost twice her age, the French father she never knew or a new lover? How can she loosen the ties to her mother, a fishmonger with a rare licence to prepare the potentially highly poisonous fugu fish? The narrator would like to travel to France, be independent and find herself. Can Kerrand's drawings help her?

The author outlines the tedious life in the seaside town in just a few words. She sketches her figures in the same way that the comic illustrator paints his figures with flowing brushstrokes. She skilfully weaves in current topics, such as the Korean conflict and the cosmetic surgery that many young Koreans undergo in order to look more Western. The language is clear and almost note-like, with short sentences. Her rich, carefully selected vocabulary is stunning. A small masterpiece – told in a wonderfully gentle manner.

Elisa Shua Dusapin, born in 1992 to a South Korean mother and a French father, grew up in Paris and Porrentruy in the Swiss canton of Jura and graduated from the Swiss Literature Institute in Biel in 2014. In 2016, she was awarded the Robert Walser Prize, which is presented to a first novel every year alternately in German or French. "Hiver à Sokcho" is her first novel. It has already been translated into Korean and will soon appear in Spanish. A German edition is not in the pipeline as yet.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Near and far – with home somewhere in-between



ALBIN BRUN &
PATRICIA DRAEGER:
"Glisch d'Atun" ("Ship of
Fools")

Longing and levity meld into folk music that transcends borders on the album entitled "Glisch d'Atun": it is the work of Albin Brun and Patricia Draeger, who have brought out their first duo album after working together for many years. The music has its essence in the swinging harmony and melodious depth of the *schwyzlerörglerli* (Swiss diatonic folk accordion) and accordion. The sound lends a homely feel while also evoking distance and openness. Nevertheless, a term such as "new folk music" fails to do justice to this album that is as deep as it is playful. Albin Brun: "We are trying to create our very own folk music.

It is not restricted to a specific area, but is somewhere between near and far."

Albin Brun (*schwyzlerörglerli*, soprano saxophone, duduk) and Patricia Draeger (accordion) have always been inspired by the most varied of repertoires ranging from world music and jazz to folk. They packed their musical rucksacks and went on tour to countries such as Russia, Egypt, Qatar, Namibia, South Korea, Italy and Austria, where they honed their skills, gained experience and exchanged with different cultures. They now play in several bands, one example of which is the Kazalpin project with three singers from Belarus. But both of them also play and compose music for theatrical projects, documentaries and radio plays. They played in a quartet with Theater Stockdunkel at Expo.02 as well. Draeger is a former member of Heiri Käznig's Tien Shan Express and has worked with Mongolian and Egyptian musicians.

You can feel how the music conjures up a multi-faceted world that is artfully magnified and expanded by the duo's origin and experience. The ten pieces featured on "Glisch d'Atun" comprise wonderful melodies, song-like themes and masterful performances. The influences of folk music go far beyond alpine idioms. One major improvisation is that the pieces transcend the usual norms, in some phrases buoying the emotional side of folk music with an injection of jazz.

Albin Brun and Patricia Draeger have a blindly intuitive trust in each other when it comes to music. Together they achieve a special emotional quality permeated by longing or melancholy that touches so many people.

PIRMIN BOSSART