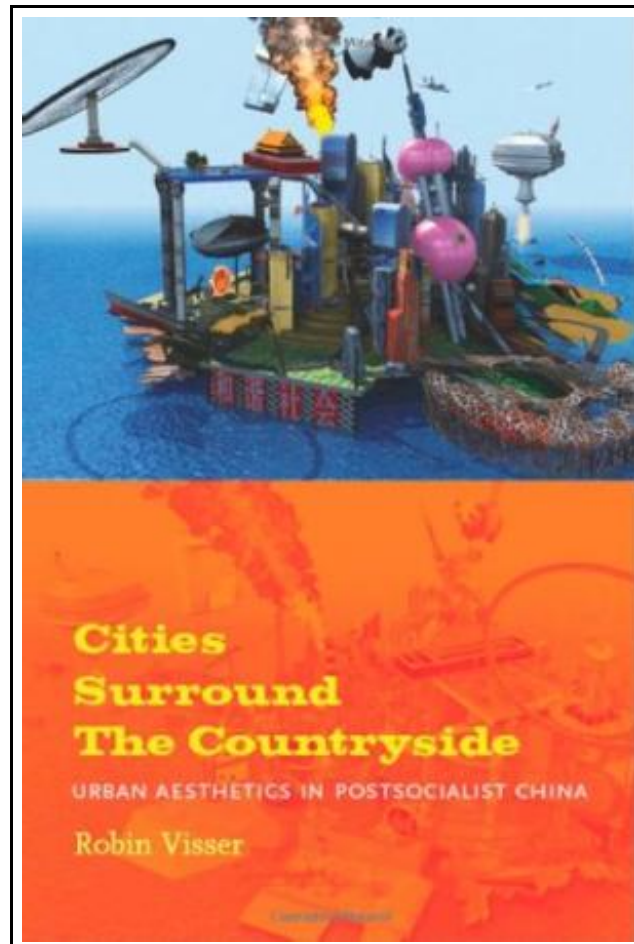


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CITIES SURROUND THE COUNTRYSIDE: URBAN AESTHETICS IN POST-SOCIALIST CHINA



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Duke University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, **Cities Surround the Countryside: Urban Aesthetics in Post-Socialist China**, Robin Visser, Denounced as parasitical under Chairman Mao and devalued by the norms of traditional Chinese ethics, the city now functions as a site of individual and collective identity in China. Cities increasingly envelope the countryside, not only geographically and demographically, but also in terms of cultural influence. Robin Visser examines how the radical growth of China's cities during the past three decades has informed the cultural imagination. Interpreting fiction, cinema, visual art, architecture, and urban design, she considers how the aesthetics of the urban environment have shaped the emotions and behaviour of individuals and cultures, and how individual and collective images of and practices in the city have produced urban aesthetics. By analyzing the dynamics between the built environment and culture, Visser situates postsocialist Chinese urban aesthetics in relation to local and global economic and intellectual trends. In the 1980s, writers, filmmakers, and artists began to probe the contradictions in China's urbanization and modernization rhetoric. Powerful neorealist paintings, photographs, performances, documentaries, and installation pieces contrasted forms of glitzy urban renewal with the government's inattention to a liveable urban infrastructure. In addition to examining such art, Visser explores the development of cultural studies in the Chinese academy, the major transformations in urban planning under global neoliberalism, and the ways that specific cities, particularly Beijing and Shanghai, figure in the cultural imagination. She also analyzes narratives and images depicting the melancholy urban subject and looks at representations of the ethical quandaries raised by urban life. While recognizing that neoliberal urban development in China has wreaked havoc on the environment and cultural heritage, Visser suggests that creative solutions to urbanism, new intellectual strategies for social engagement, and nascent forms of civic governance have begun...

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