At present, our overseas propaganda is not efficient. Radical improvement must be made in this work… our publications for overseas propaganda lack variety and their quality is low. These publications are to be circulated in foreign countries, so they should be printed on good paper and the books well bound.

- Kim Jong-il

2012 marks the centennial anniversary of the birth of the late Kim Il-sung, or Kim Song-juh as he was born, the founder of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). The year will mark a defining moment within the history of the DPRK with the official governmental website enlisting that in “2012 the Korean people will surely open the gates of a thriving nation.” Yet such promise for the future follows on from some of the most turbulent years within the complicated and volatile history of the divided Korean Peninsula. The 2010 sinking of the South Korean Cheonan battle ship near the disputed maritime border in the Yellow Sea has further intensified the relationship between DPRK and South Korea, deteriorating any of the preliminary steps towards reconciliation processes as fore grounded in the ‘Sunshine Policy’ initiated by then South Korean president Kim Dae-jung in 2000.

In recent years there has been mounting speculation surrounding the perceptibly failing health of Kim Jong-il leading to wider considerations of what will happen in the event of his death. Since 2010, his son Kim Jong-un has been widely interpreted as the heir presumptive of Kim Jong-il. As Kim Jong-un has emerged as the favored of Kim Jong-il’s prospective successors and is his third known son, mothered by Ko Young-hee, described as his favorite consort. The positioning of Kim Jong-un as the likely successor within the uniquely heretic socialist system of the DPRK has been undertaken with an urgency that suggests a dynastic succession is being incrementally planned. This transition process does nothing to allay concerns regarding the leadership of the state and, crucially, its relationship with the rest of the world. Indeed, very little is known of Kim Jong-un and that is likely to remain the case as his biographical history and personal attributes are massaged through the same processes of revisionism that redefined both his grandfather and father before him.

The DPRK exists as a kind of mirage of the socialist dream, a parallel universe that is almost incomprehensible to those outside of it, which is furthered by the absolute control of information and media disseminated by the highly secretive state. It is indeed through the very lack of images of the DPRK that our imagination of the country is created, as an abstract idea rather than a concrete vision. As Christian Kracht suggests, “Kim Jong-il’s People’s Republic is a gigantic installation, a maniacal theatrical play that—with all its hermetic meticulousness and its perfect Potemkinization—simulates an entire country.”

Our imagination of the state is entirely fractured, existing upon the parameters of two vastly opposing positions: the totally censored and controlled representation of a thriving socialist nation and a belligerent rogue state situated within what former United States President George W. Bush termed in his State of the Union Address in 2002 as ‘the axis of evil’. It would seem that within the consideration of the DPRK there is no middle ground and scarce objective truth.

A Postcard from Afar: North Korea from a Distance brings together the work of eight artists in an attempt to develop a picture of what the DPRK might be, in the absence of reliable, unbiased information. Greeting audiences as they approach apexart are two portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il as a gesture to the compulsory display of their images within all houses and buildings within the DPRK. These portraits have been commissioned through regime, having recently been named vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Workers’ Party. Kim Jong-un has emerged as the favored of Kim Jong-il’s prospective successors and is his third known son, mothered by Ko Young-hee, described as his favorite consort. The positioning of Kim Jong-un as the likely successor within the uniquely heretic socialist system of the DPRK has been undertaken with an urgency that suggests a dynastic succession is being incrementally planned. This transition process does nothing to allay concerns regarding the leadership of the state and, crucially, its relationship with the rest of the world. Indeed, very little is known of Kim Jong-un and that is likely to remain the case as his biographical history and personal attributes are massaged through the same processes of revisionism that redefined both his grandfather and father before him.

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inflaming tensions across the volatile border. Declercq’s areas is strictly prohibited and vigilantly enforced in fear of reconnaissance mission which was given further substance Korea was alerted to their existence in 1974 following a DPRK forces, as a means to enable the rapid deployment of Third Infiltration Tunnel, one of a series of tunnels built by fortified parameters of the divided Korea, focusing on the of eyes, barely visible, yet working in a system that presents a camouflage, is a part of the Korean Demilitarized Zone, its name at the border becomes a subterfuge of an operation for potential and future engagements. Lurking within within the repetitive in pursuit of reliable environments some is always watching.

Garifalakis’s work Leader of the Pack (2011) takes its cue from the insignia and patching of cut-off denim jackets favored by motorcycle gangs the world over. It has been suggested that Kim Jong-il was a long-time motorcycle enthusiast, as North Korean and his young assistant Dr. Andrei Lankov writes, “In the 1960s Kim Jong-il was dashing, even attractive. He loved motorcycles (yes, the Dear Leader was probably the favorite by motorcycle gangs the world over. It has been only the leader of a gang but the embodiment of its op-posing side of the parameter. Within this deeply suspicious environment someone is always watching.

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