

# apexart

2011-12 Unsolicited Program Project Proposal by  
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## *A Postcard from Afar: North Korea from a Distance*

'Work with artists should be carried out in line with political principles. It is important to solve every problem by stimulating people to think. Everything is decided by a person's thought and if he is ideologically motivated, there is nothing he cannot do.' Kim Jong Il

A Postcard from Afar: North Korea from a Distance is an attempt to envisage a state and culture that is shrouded in secrecy and the producer and victim of oppositional propaganda mechanisms. It is an attempt to develop a picture of what North Korea might be, in the absence of reliable, unbiased information of a nation that operates in exile from the international community.

This project does not present a steadfast and moralistic political position, but rather, explores how one might construct an image of an almost imaginary state. In the world outside of North Korea we are subjected to systemic propaganda about the state – how it positions itself ideologically and in relation to other countries – that is more politically charged than the rhetoric about any other nation. This project is an attempt to disentangle the complex political stance against North Korea, explore how artists develop an image and an understanding of a country they may know little about.

The project is an attempt to develop an understanding of that which we do not fully comprehend. It is concerned with cumulatively building a picture of an ideological position with which we might not agree, to image difference. A Postcard from Afar: North Korea from a Distance as the state is approaching a significant shift in governance, with Kim Jong Il's deteriorating health and the all but assured appointment of his son as his successor. The recent political situation on the Korean Peninsula has been the worst since the armistice was agreed in 1955. The shifts that will begin to emerge in the next years will see either tensions rise between it and the international community, or the dissolution of this hardline communist state. The picture that this project seeks to paint is this particular juncture in time, to analyse one of the most secretive nations at this pivotal moment preceding radical political change.

## Exhibition

Through a combination of filmic, video, sculpture, installation, painting and sculpture this project creates a sort of survey of projections of North Korea. The exhibition begins with two banks of monitors showing films and documentaries produced in North Korea, culminating in the ubiquitous portraits of Kim Il Song and Kim Jong Il. After this sanctioned representation, the exhibition explores alternative perspectives that seek to delve beneath the surface. It is an assemblage of information leaked out of the country, or propagated by other governments, existing somewhere between cold war fictions, fantasy and conspiracy. Magnus Bårtås presents *Madame & Little Boy*, a short film that explores the bizarre kidnapping of a South Korean actress to help strengthen the North Korean cinema industry, with the film industry further explored through the filmic works of Adrià Julià and Jim Finn. Declassified political and military documents are researched and reconfigured by Tony Garifalakis and Soni Kum. Among the wider selection of artists the project will also feature works by North Korean propaganda artist Sun Mu who has defected to South Korea and now lives and works in secrecy.

Magnus Bårtås (Sweden) | Alain de Clercq (France) | Jim Finn (USA) | Tony Garifalakis (Australia) | Yang-Hae Chang Heavy Industries (South Korea) | Adrià Julià (Spain/USA) | Soni Kum (Japan) | Yung Lee (South Korea) | Sun Mu (North Korea/South Korea) | Shen Shaomin (China)