

Data sheet of the exhibition

**UNPERSON.
PORTRAITS OF NORTH
KOREAN DEFECTORS**
TIM FRANCO



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PORTRAITS OF NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS**

TIM FRANCO

Produced by

Associazione culturale ONTHEMOVE
in occasione del Festival Internazionale
di Visual Narrative Cortona On The Move 2020

Curated by

Arianna Rinaldo

**C O R T
O N A
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M O V E**

Canon

**CENTER
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Title	Unperson. Portraits of North Korean Defectors
Artist	Tim Franco
Curated by*	Arianna Rinaldo
Prints and mounting	8 framed prints 38 x 48 cm 7 blueback prints 87 x 70 cm (to be produced)* 2 blow ups (to be produced)*
Linear development	10 mt linear meters (spaces and blow ups not included)
Notes	Text materials are to be printed at the expense of the host organization. Intro texts, biography and captions in Italian and English will be provided by us.

*to be produced at the expense of the host organization.

*any changes to the selection or arrangement of the exhibition should be consulted with the curator

INSTALLATION VIEWS



UNPERSON. PORTRAITS OF NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS

TIM FRANCO

In George Orwell's "1984", an 'unperson' is someone who has been vaporized, whose record has been erased. The people I chose to portray made the decision to disappear from their own Orwellian world, North Korea. Sometimes for ideological reasons and often in despair, they left behind a life that would disappear forever. The road to South Korea is dangerous and can take years. Some of them won't make it, while the travels of the ones that do are filled with the fear of being arrested and sent back to labour camps. Having arrived in South Korea, they often struggle to find a new identity: lost between their North Korean past and South Korean future.

To reflect in images this incredible transition, I chose to portray these defectors on an analog material that is not supposed to exist. Just as their situation, the negative of a Polaroid is not supposed to be usable. It is only obtained through a series of chemical purifications of the back paper that contains the original Polaroid image. The result is often uncertain, dirty and imperfect.

Each defector that I have met has experienced an extraordinary 'crusade' to be able to reach South Korea. Having listened to these incredible stories made me want to retrace their steps and explore the trails of their adventures. From crossing the ice rivers separating North Korea and China across the many different and dangerous borders with Mongolia, Laos and Thailand, through the highly controlled the People's Republic of China and along the demilitarized zone with South Korea, I tried to capture the diversity of landscape that is the background of North Korean defection.

In a world struggling with immigration issues, building walls and defining new borders, Korea has put in place within its own Country one of the most impenetrable borders in the world, separating people with the same identity, culture and sometimes family for almost seventy years. This project aims to document the incredible cast of people lost between two worlds, diametrically opposed while somewhat sharing the same roots and the stories that led them from one world to the other.

To support North Korean defectors, please visit www.libertyinnorthkorea.org

BIOGRAPHY

TIM FRANCO

Tim Franco (Paris, France, 1982) is a French-Polish photographer. In 2005 he moved to China where he started documenting the country's incredible urbanization and its social impact while collaborating with newspapers such as Le Monde, The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times.

In 2015 he published his first monograph – “Metamorphosis” – the summa of five years of work on the rural migrations in the fastest urbanizing city in the world: Chongqing, in Southern-West of China.

During this time, Franco developed his style of working mostly with analog cameras and bringing a minimalist aesthetic to documentary photography. While working with this method, Franco started to focus his work on portraiture. Experimenting with different photographic processes, he wanted to give a voice to underrepresented communities. In 2016 Tim Franco moved to South Korea where he started working on a long term project about North Korean defectors.

IMAGE

CAPTION

TIPOLOGY



"In North Korea, my uniforms gave me privileges; in the South it became a brand for my business". Jeong Min-woo is a North Korean defector.

framed print



"In 1997, I took part in the North Korean Army Military Parade in Pyongyang. Until this day, I still feel the pain that those training inflicted on my body". Lee So-yeon is a North Korean defector.

framed print



"I ran across landmines and frozen rivers at night to reach the South". Noh Cheol-min is a North Korean soldier who escaped to South Korea by crossing the Demilitarized Zone.

framed print



"During my first month in South Korea I was thinking of how I could get back to the North". Kang Nara is a North Korean defector.

framed print



"I crossed the River to China out of desperation and hunger". Lee Ga-yeon is a North Korean defector.

framed print



"In the North I was painting propaganda for the party, then in the South, I am doing it for Art". Song Byeok is a North Korean defector.

framed print

IMAGE

CAPTION

TIPOLOGY



"I escaped human traffickers in China and ran across the Gobi Desert before getting to South Korea". Kim Eusun is a North Korean defector."

framed print



"I escaped North Korea to be free to play any music". Kim Cheol-woong is a North Korean defector."

framed print



Panmunjeom Joint Security Area demarcation line between North and South Korea viewed from the North (40 km to Seoul).

blueback print



Namyang, North Korea viewed from China across the Tumen River (640 km to Seoul).

blueback print



Barbed wire on the seaside near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in South Korea (160 km to Seoul)

blueback print



Mekong River bordering Laos and Thailand (3,200 km to Seoul).

blueback print



Sinŭiju, North Korea viewed from Dandong, China (360 km to Seoul).

blueback print

IMAGE

CAPTION

TIPOLOGY



Gobi Desert bordering China and Mongolia (1,430 km to Seoul).

blueback
print



Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (2,000 km to Seoul).

blueback
print



Pyongyang, North Korea (190 km to Seoul).

blow up



Downtown Seoul, South Korea.

blow up