

Hiding on the 38th Parallel North

07.09.19 — 26.10.19

Opening on Saturday 7 September 2019

Gallery Paris-Beijing is pleased to welcome Liu Bolin for his fifth solo exhibition « Hiding on the 38th Parallel North » which marks the artist's return to more politically engaged statements.

In June 2018, Liu Bolin went to North Korea for the first time, in order to carry out a series of 7 performances on the theme of individual liberties.



© Liu Bolin, North Korea, Four plays, 2018. Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing

The last overtly totalitarian regime in history, North Korea is a world unto itself. Liu Bolin has witnessed the abnegation of a people who live immersed in the cult of the figures of the Kim dynasty, enclosed within a centralized economy founded upon the ideology of *juche*: military, economic and political self-sufficiency. The North Koreans benefit from only minimal international humanitarian aid, and the few rare foreign products are imported from China, its main commercial partner.

For Liu Bolin, a son of the Cultural Revolution who has personal experience with censorship, this journey brings him back to the genesis of his first works. The new photographs from Hiding in Pyongyang echo his famous performances from the early 2000s, in which the artist disappears in front of communist propaganda posters and slogans. The language may be different, but the message is the same: The Workers' Party praises the army, a blossoming working class and devotion to the state.

In North Korea, he once again experiences the disappearance of the individual resulting from the ambition of collective thinking.

By hiding in front of the North Korean regime's omnipresent images of indoctrination, within a hyper-structured system that leaves no room for the unexpected, Liu Bolin once again puts his silent protest into action.

Accompanied by his guide, he visits schools and factories and watches parades: the population gives the impression of leading a calm and happy life. Liu Bolin plays the game of the propaganda department, while at the same time denouncing this absurd and artificial theatre created from scratch for the rest of the world.

The performance in front of the shelves of a fictitious supermarket filled with food products and toys is a perfect example of these paradoxes. The state displays a store "set" intended for foreign visitors as a symbol of the country's opulence. Let us recall that in Pyongyang, the only photographs authorised by the regime are those which cast North Korea in a positive light.



© Liu Bolin, Supermarket Pyongyang, 2018. Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing



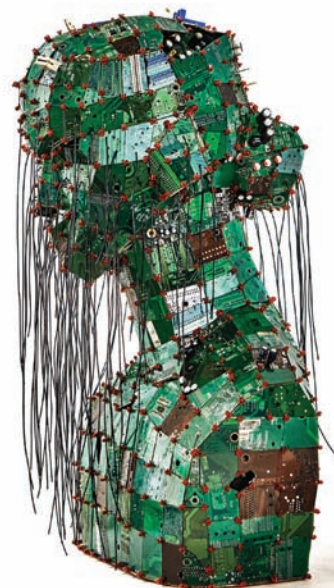
© Liu Bolin, *North Korea, Theatre*, 2018. Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing

« 38th Parallel », a video-reportage of his experience, will also be presented within the exhibition. The title makes reference to the 38th parallel of the northern hemisphere, the demarcation imposed at the end of the war with Japan in 1945, which would become the point of origin for the Korean dyad. Today, it is around this border, both physical and symbolic, that the hope for change resides.



© Liu Bolin, *38th Parallel*, video screenshots, 2018. Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing

The exhibition will also be an opportunity to discover Liu Bolin's latest drawing and sculpture works, and to take part in a live performance during the opening.



© Liu Bolin, *Untitled*, 2018. Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing



© Liu Bolin, *Drawing Milano 14.04.2019*. Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing

Liu Bolin was born in 1973 in the province of Shandong in China. He studied at the Shandong Academy of Fine Arts before graduating from Beijing Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2001. He lives and works in Beijing.