

feature shoot



BEST OF FINE ART PORTRAITS DOCUMENTARY STILL LIFE OTHER

THESE 'STATE-APPROVED' PHOTOS FROM NORTH KOREA REVEAL A COMPLEX TRUTH

September 26, 2017 by [The New Republic](#)



In a diorama at the Sinchon Museum of American War Atrocities, U.S. soldiers are depicted driving a nail into a Korean woman's head. The regime uses the museum's gory displays to foster an unsubstantiated narrative that American-led forces massacred 35,000 civilians in Sinchon in 1950.

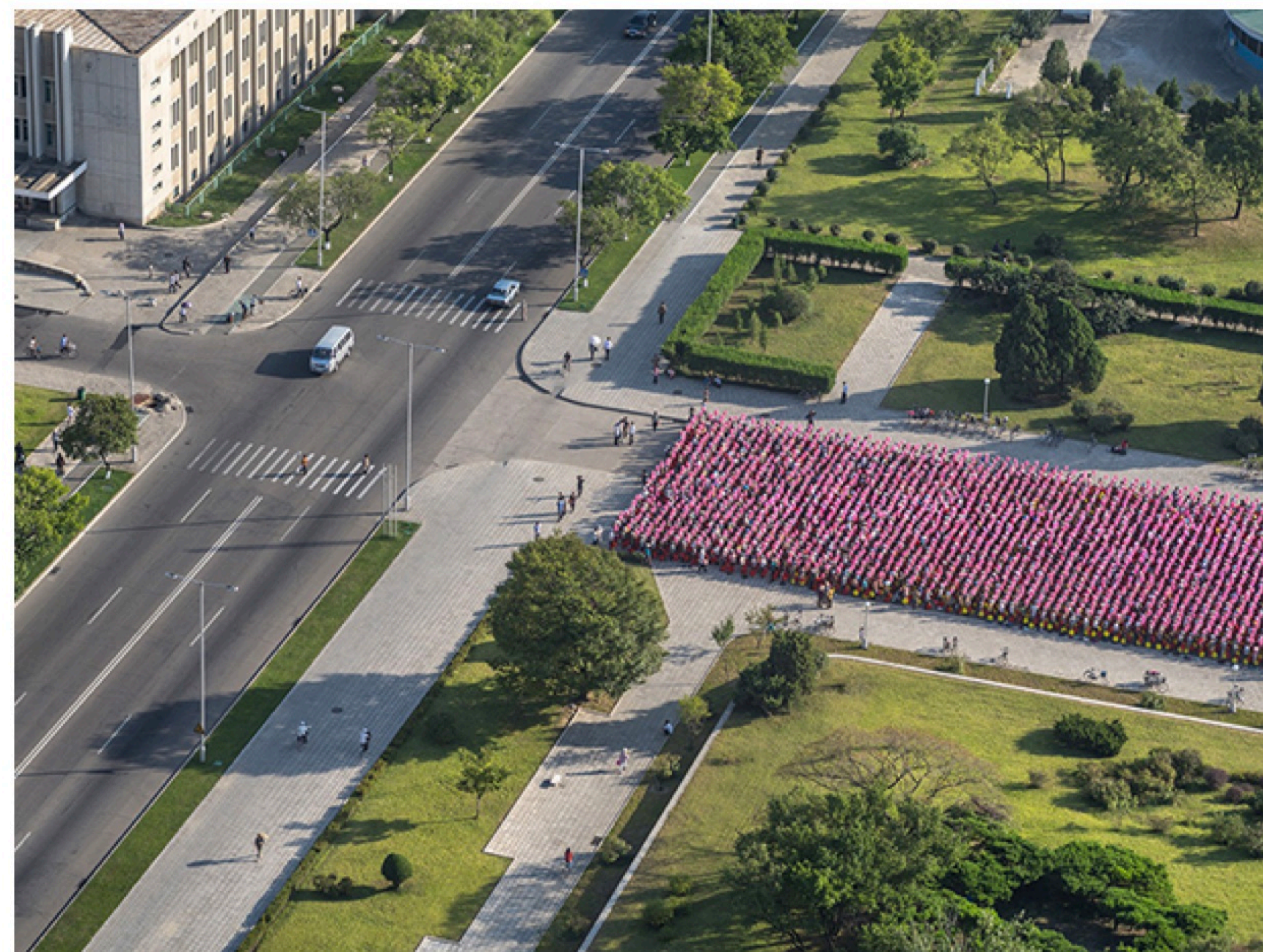
Meticulously choreographed military parades. Strident news announcements on state television. Missile tests presided over by a grinning Kim Jong Un. Propaganda from North Korea comes to us fully formed and almost alluring in its opacity: a finished product that has been carefully constructed to convey an idealized image of strength and unity.

Carl De Keyzer, a photographer based in Belgium, offers a different and more intimate view: a glimpse of the process of indoctrination within North Korea. From their first day in kindergarten, children are spoon-fed propaganda—from lectures about the legendary feats of Kim Il Sung to field trips to a museum that depicts, in gruesome detail, Americans massacring Koreans. What makes the images all the more remarkable is that De Keyzer was subject to the same restrictions imposed on foreign tourists who visit North Korea. During his four trips to the country over the past two years, he was attended at all times by official minders, and had to submit his photos for state approval.

Yet through his keen eye and careful framing, De Keyzer helps us see beyond the official picture. The images do not show us what is kept out of the frame. But within their narrow confines, they reveal much of what is meant to remain unseen.

As the first American journalist granted permission to join the local press corps in Pyongyang, I know firsthand how important it is to see North Korea in all its complexity. The effect of De Keyzer's work is not to sanitize the regime, but to underscore just how deeply its militarized worldview is woven into the fabric of everyday life.

Read the rest of Jean H. Lee's article on Carl De Keyzer's photographs at [The New Republic](#).



Koreans rehearse a mass rally beneath the Juche Tower in Pyongyang—a display carefully framed for foreign journalists. Rallies celebrating ballistic missile advancements are a hallmark of the regime, with citizens clutching placards bearing slogans like: "Let's Become Bullets and Bombs Devotedly Defending Respected Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un!"



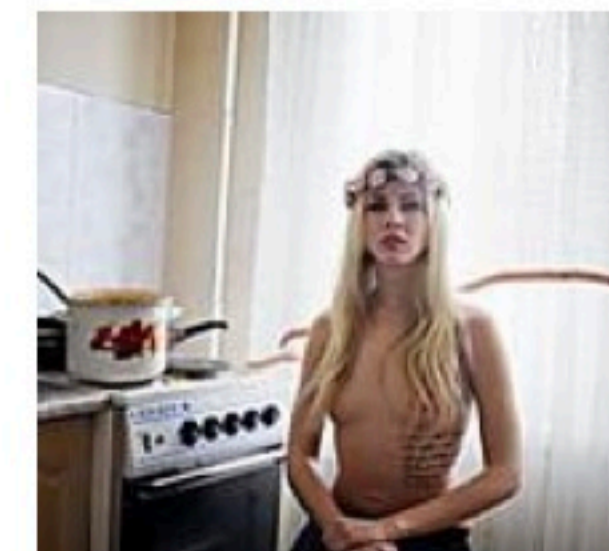
Swimming lessons in Pyongyang's Changgwang-won Health Complex. Mass synchronized swimming displays are popular in North Korea. They're performed regularly during gala events and anniversaries of supreme leader Kim Jong Il's birth.



A mural of children firing rifles and playing with fighter jets hovers over a display of toys in the Three-Revolution Exhibition House. North Korea has the fourth-largest active military in the world; the Red Youth Guard has an estimated one million members between the ages of 14 and 16.

All images © Carl De Keyzer/Magnum. Text © Jean H. Lee for The New Republic.

You might also like



Portraits of Beautiful, Topless and Highly Controversial Femen Activists (NSFW)



17 Astonishing World War II Photos That You Won't Find In Your Textbooks (Starluff)



A Poetic Reminder of What Korea Used to Be Like



Ecstatic Youth Photographed at a Rolling Stones Concert in 1978

Recommended by

Like 36 Tweet Submit Pin it

FOLLOW US:

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? [SEARCH](#)

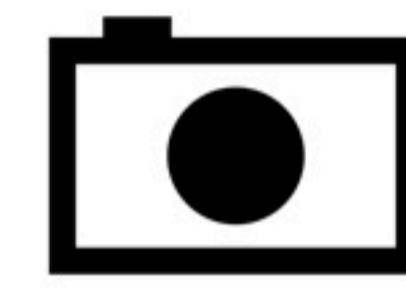
SPONSORED BY



In collaboration with the website-building platform, Squarespace, the great John Malkovich has brought a childhood fantasy to life in the form of a beautiful clothing brand. [Read more here!](#)

GET OUR NEWSLETTER

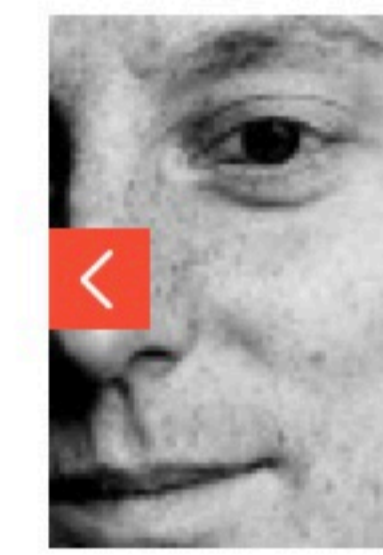
ENTER YOUR EMAIL HERE [SUBMIT](#)



the print swap

APPLY TODAY

SOME OF OUR FAVORITES



POWERFUL PORTRAITS OF INDIVIDUALS BEFORE AND DIRECTLY AFTER THEIR DEATH