

g e o r g k l e i n

# The Sound before Silence



## The Sound before Silence Souvenirs from North Korea

**Pentagonal chamber with objects,  
2-channel video, 6-channel audio**

Gayageum: You Jin Sung (South Korea)  
Stimme: N.N. (North Korea)

Loop: 16 min.  
German/Korean, english subtitle

**Meinblau Berlin  
Nov 9 - Dec 3 2018**

**Funded by inm Berlin and Bezirksamt Pankow  
Supported by non Berlin and  
South Korean Cultural Institute**

Isolated from the world community and isolating itself from the world, North Korea is under the maximum threat of "total destruction", like the US president Donald Trump did in front of the assembled global community of the United Nations. Against that the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un celebrates "the *exciting sound* of the explosion of our first hydrogen bomb" (original quote).

This North Korean rocket cult can be found all over the country, as Georg Klein noted on his trip through North Korea in September 2017 with his fellow artist Bernhard Draz, and looks like a dance on the volcano, just at that time when Trump's speech at the UN was given. The propagandistic staging of one's own strength and discipline, however, contrasts with the peculiar, almost melancholic silence that characterizes the atmosphere in this country. A strange calm that is both disturbing and fascinating.

With his installation, Klein provides a personal travelogue of audio, photo and blog-like video footage, diary entries and brought objects from North Korea, staged in a pentagonal, insulated chamber. The extreme tension that lay above this journey is not only incorporated in the "souvenirs" presented in a light, sound and image dramaturgy in the space, but also in a composition for the Korean national instrument Gayageum, forming a subterranean soundtrack.

The focus is on a song that Klein was fortunate enough to pick up in the "flower exhibition" in Pyongyang: during the guided tour through the exhibition of two flowers - hundreds of copies of "Kimilsungia" (orchid) and "Kimjongilia" (Begonia) - he discovered a sheet music: a song on the Kimilsungia and thus on the North Korean founder of the state. Klein asked the guide - a traditional North Korean girl - to sing the song for a recording. Back in Berlin, Klein deconstructed the song in collaboration with a South Korean Gayageum player, who for the first time entered into a musical discourse with a "sister" from North Korea.

