

FACING NORTH KOREA Empathic Propaganda

Conceptual Figurative Painting
Bernhard Draz

8–23 August 2026

Opening on Friday, 7 August 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Pavillon am Milchhof, Schwedter Str. 232, 10435 Berlin

The pavilion is fully visible from the outside and can be visited at any time of day or night.

Personal guided tours by appointment at info@facing-north-korea.de

Press Teaser

In FACING NORTH KOREA, Bernhard Draz presents conceptual painting that examines the visual language of North Korean propaganda as a system of ideology, affective attachment and the overpowering force of images. At the centre of the exhibition is EMPATHIC PROPAGANDA, a series of large-format appropriations of the original propaganda aesthetic, in which Draz replaces heroic figures with his own self-portrait and overwrites martial slogans with quotations that expose the logic of the regime.

Press Text

In Western discourse, North Korea still appears as a hermetically sealed projection surface and totalitarian counterimage, fed by media fragments, speculation and fears arising from nuclear armament and unholy military alliances. In its ideological closure and ritualised image politics, it often seems like the realisation of an Orwellian dystopia. At the same time, precisely because of its isolationism, it remains largely misunderstood.

Bernhard Draz's artistic and curatorial engagement with North Korea and Korea dates back to 2016. It includes collaborations with Korean artists, a research trip to North Korea in 2017 and numerous projects in East Asia. From this perspective, North Korea appears less as a monolithic enemy image than as a culturally complex formation, an amalgam of Confucian-influenced models of hierarchy, nationalist as well as communist Chuch'e ideology and sacralised forms of leader cult.

The exhibition brings together existing and new works that address North Korean identity, cultural symbolism and, in particular, the mechanisms of state propaganda. At its centre is the attempt to unsettle Western narratives and to make visible the psychopolitical efficacy of the dictatorship's visual language, not only by analytically deconstructing it, but by revealing it as a system of affective attachment, collective disciplining and aesthetic force.

The series EMPATHIC PROPAGANDA forms the core of the exhibition. In the spirit of Appropriation Art, Bernhard Draz transfers original North Korean propaganda posters into large-format paintings, replaces individual heroised protagonists with his own self-portrait in stylistic continuity with the source material, and exchanges the martial slogans for quotations translated into Korean that lay bare the regime's self-understanding. Between satirical exposure and strategic empathy, a calculated aesthetic risk emerges. It is the attempt to criticise ideology not only from the outside, but to make its inner logic visible.

Contact: Bernhard Draz, +49 173 6045646, bd@bdraz.de

Press Images: <https://meinblau.de/presse/>

Further Information: www.facing-north-korea.de, milchhofpavillon.de



pavillon am
milchhof

*If we are not respected as a friend internationally,
let us at least be condemned as an enemy on equal terms.*

Wenn wir schon international nicht als Freund geachtet sind,
wollen wir wenigstens auf Augenhöhe als Feind geachtet werden.

Empathic Propaganda III, Bernhard Draz, 2020
270 × 180 cm | acrylic on canvas

© 2020, Bernhard Draz

