

Press release

Tim FRANCO *UNPERSON*

Exhibition from June 2nd to July 29th 2023

Opening with the artist on Thursday June 1st, 6pm to 9pm

Book signing and talk with Tim Franco on Saturday June 3rd, 4pm to 6pm

The Sit Down Gallery is pleased to present *Unperson*, a first solo show by the Franco-Polish photographer Tim Franco, born in 1982.

This series, begun in 2017, is two-fold : portraits of North Korean defectors, both men and women, shot in South Korea, and landscapes of the homeland they fled.

A sensitive observer, Tim Franco takes his time, sometimes several years, to carry out his projects. He is interested in social issues involving oppressed minorities or under-represented communities. Here he explores the journeys of refugees, their contrasting stories, while also opening our eyes to the enigmatic country of North Korea.



Series *Unperson*, Noh Cheol-Min, 2019. Pigment print on Fine Art paper
© Tim Franco, courtesy galerie Sit Down

UNPERSON

Tim Franco has been living and working in Seoul since 2016. A sensitive observer, he takes his time, sometimes several years, to complete his projects. His images, shot with traditional (non-digital) cameras, highlight little-known contemporary subjects. He plays with the codes of documentary photography.

From 2017 to 2020, he met North Korean defectors who fled the regime. These men and women became refugees in South Korea.

Unperson, the title for both this series and his book, published by Thames & Hudson, refers to George Orwell's unpersons. In Orwell's *1984*, unpersons are people who have vanished into thin air, and whose records have been erased.

In his studio located in the center of Seoul, Tim Franco takes portraits of these North Koreans with a Polaroid camera, a process that allows time for getting to know them. He harvests their stories. Contrary to common practice, he keeps the polaroid negative and then chemically treats it to develop it again. The final result is an image within a green ring, sometimes battered, marked in any case, reflecting the trying journeys of these individuals who fled for their lives. The enhancing of the negative mirrors the uplifting of the refugees as they recover their freedom and their history. It is also a way for the photographer to extract himself from a purely documentary approach. The photographic gesture is emboldened through technical and aesthetic experimentation. Each portrait is a journey, a different kind of flight, an opportunity to put faces and names to a little-known phenomenon of migration.

In order to better understand what these men and women fled, Tim Franco, went to North Korea. He wanted to get behind the scenes, far from the authorized images of orderly crowds during celebrations of the regime. Touched by the beauty of North Korean landscapes, his photographs stand out in a remarkable harmony of colors and highly graphic lines. The bright colors of the painted propaganda panels contrast with the softer tones of the photographed spaces. Some urban landscapes, immaculate and untouched by time, are disconcerting for the Western eye. An underlying anxiety hums, the fear of a *faux pas* that might offend North Korea. The regime's presence is ubiquitous, portrayed in monumental sculptures and propaganda posters.

Tim Franco's images are highly structured yet not staged. He combines a documentary approach with a minimalist aesthetic, letting the subject speak for itself. Portraits have long been central to his work. The ones in this series are remarkably sensitive and deep.

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PRESS MATERIAL



Series *Unperson*. Munsu Water Park in Pyongyang, 2019

Pigment print on Fine Art paper

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Series *Unperson*. Kang Nara, 2019
Pigment print on Fine Art paper
© Tim Franco, courtesy galerie Sit Down

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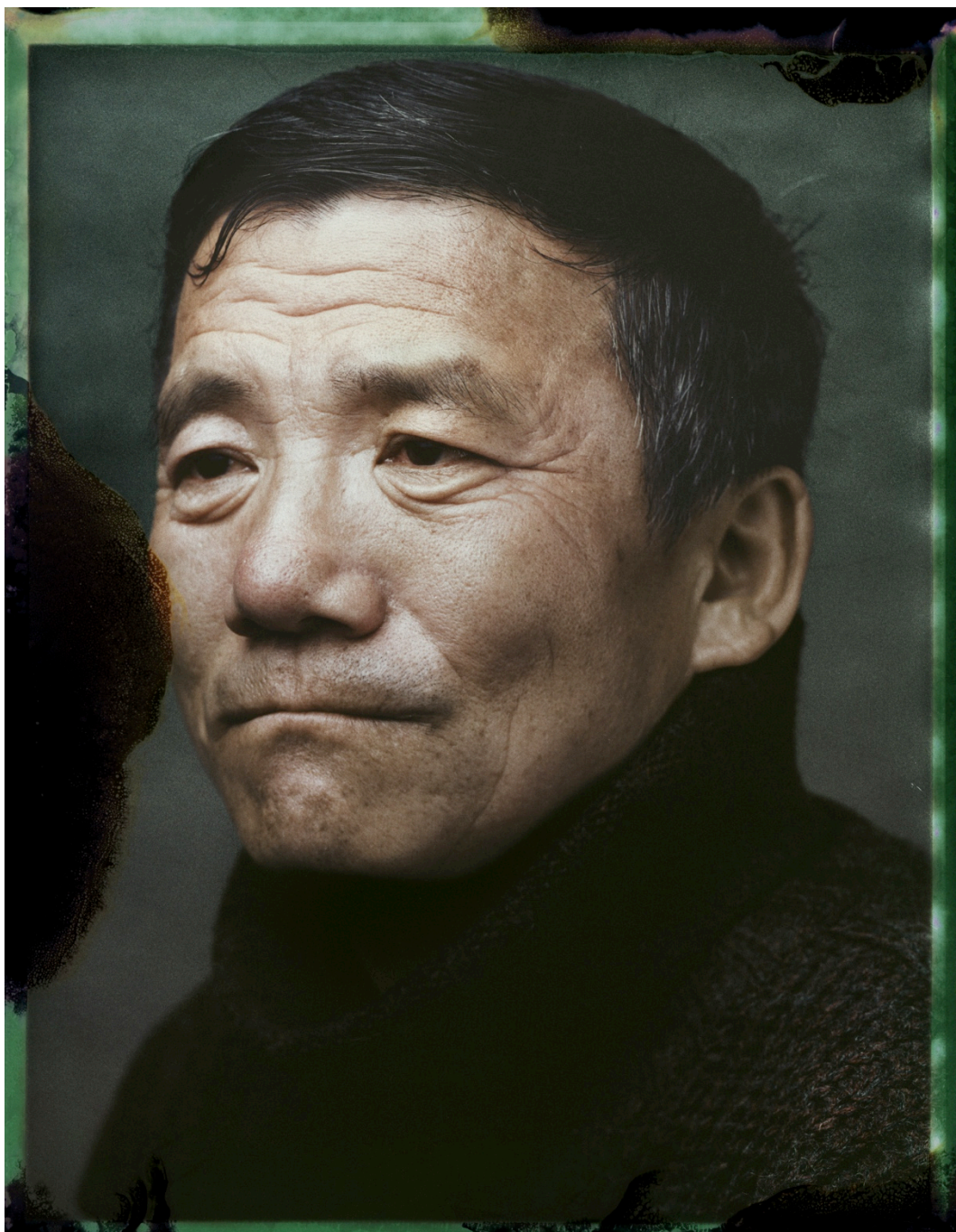


Series *Unperson*. Hamhung Chemical Factory, 2019

Pigment print on Fine Art paper

© Tim Franco, courtesy galerie Sit Down

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Series *Unperson*. Park Myeong-Ho, 2018
Pigment print on Fine Art paper
© Tim Franco, courtesy galerie Sit Down

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Series *Unperson*. Sariwon Collective Farm, 2019

Pigment print on Fine Art paper

© Tim Franco, courtesy galerie Sit Down

BIOGRAPHY

Tim Franco is a French-Polish photographer born in Paris in 1982.

In 2005, he moved to China where he began 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 conclusion of five years of work on rural migration in the world's most rapidly urbanizing city: Chongqing.

It was at this time that Tim developed his style, using mainly film photography with a minimalist aesthetic. While applying these principles, he also focuses on portraits. Experimenting with different analogue processes, he aims to give a voice to underrepresented communities.

In 2016, Tim Franco moved to South Korea where he began his long-term project on North Korean defectors.

EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 International Photography Exhibition 163, Museum of Gloucester, as the IPE 163 award laureate, *Unperson*
- 2022 BBA Gallery, Prize Exhibition, Berlin, *Unperson*
Singapore International Photography Festival, *Unperson*
The Reference Gallery, Duo Show, Seoul, *Unperson*
Laureate exhibitions of the Prix des Rencontres photographiques des Amis du musée départemental Albert-Kahn, Boulogne-Billancourt, France - *Unperson*
Dinard, France – *Metamorphosis*
Festival Images singulières, Gare de Sète, France – *Unperson*
Royal society of photography, Bristol, United Kingdom- *Unperson*
- 2021 Cortona on the move, International photography festival, Cortone, Italy - *Unperson*
POPF, PyeonChang International Peace Film Festival, PyeonChang, South Korea - *Unperson, Reclaiming the negative*
FORMAT, International Photography Festival, Virtual group show, Derby, United Kingdom – *Unperson*
Finalists exhibition of Taylor Wessing Prize, National Portrait Gallery, Cromwell Place, London, United Kingdom
- 2020 Finalists exhibition of Hellerau photography award, Museum of Science and Technology, Dresden, Germany – *Illicit Ink*
- 2019 Finalists exhibition of Kuala Lumpur Portrait Awards, ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia– *Illicit Ink*
Goethe Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia – *Unperson*

EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 Maison de la photographie de Lille, France – *Metamorphosis*
Mobile/Immobile, group show, Archives nationales, Paris, France – *Metamorphosis*
- 2018 Finalists exhibition, Warsaw Photo Days, Warsaw, Poland – *Unperson*
Finalists exhibition Prix Kuala Lumpur Portrait Awards, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – *Unperson*
Chongqing Museum of Art
Saison photographique, Abbaye de L'Epau, Yvré-l'Évêque, France – *Metamorphosis*
- 2017 Solo show, Médiathèque de Pau, France - *Crude Gentrification*
Solo show, Passage Sainte Croix, Nantes, France – *Metamorphosis*
Solo show, Maison de la Chine, Paris, France – *Metamorphosis*
PVF Festival, Photography museum, Helsinki, Finland – *Metamorphosis*
Festival Circulation(s), Gare de l'Est, Paris, France – *Metamorphosis*
- 2016 Solo show, P46 gallery, Camogli, Italy – *Metamorphosis*
Group show CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, Arc en rêve Centre d'architecture, Bordeaux, France – *Metamorphosis*
Group show, Galerie Gare Saint Sauveur, Lille, France – *Metamorphosis*
Duo Show Tim Franco, Patrick Wack, Galerie Duo, Paris, France – *Metamorphosis*

AWARDS & GRANTS

- 2022 Laureate of Prix des Rencontres photographiques des Amis du musée départemental Albert-Kahn
- 2021 IPE Award, Royal Photographic Society for *Unperson*
2nd Portrait Prize - Hellerau Photography Award for *Unperson*
- 2020 New Vision Award for *Unperson*
Finalist of Taylor Wessing Prize for *Unperson*
Finalist of Meitar Prize for *Unperson*
Finalist of Lens Culture Prize for *Unperson*
- 2019 2nd Independant Photographer Prize for *Illicit ink*
Photograph of the year Dohdo for *Illicit ink*
Photograph of the year and 1st place for Minimalist Photography Prize in Portrait category for *Illicit ink*
- 2018 2nd Kuala Lumpur Prize in category « Photo Story » for *Unperson*
Jury selection, Boutographies for *Unperson*
- 2016 Official selection Book Award Rencontres d'Arles for *Metamorphosis*
Finalist of Lens Culture Prize in portrait category
Finalist AFD Best documentary photograph 2015
- 2013 Magenta Festival Flash Forward Prize

PUBLICATIONS

- 2021 *Unperson : Portraits of North Korean defectors*, Editions Thames & Hudson, Magenta Foundation. Texts by Tim Franco et Sébastien Falletti.
- 2015 *Metamorphosis*, Pendant ce temps Editions. Texts by Tim Franco, Richard Macauley, Frédéric Edelmann.

PRESS (selection)

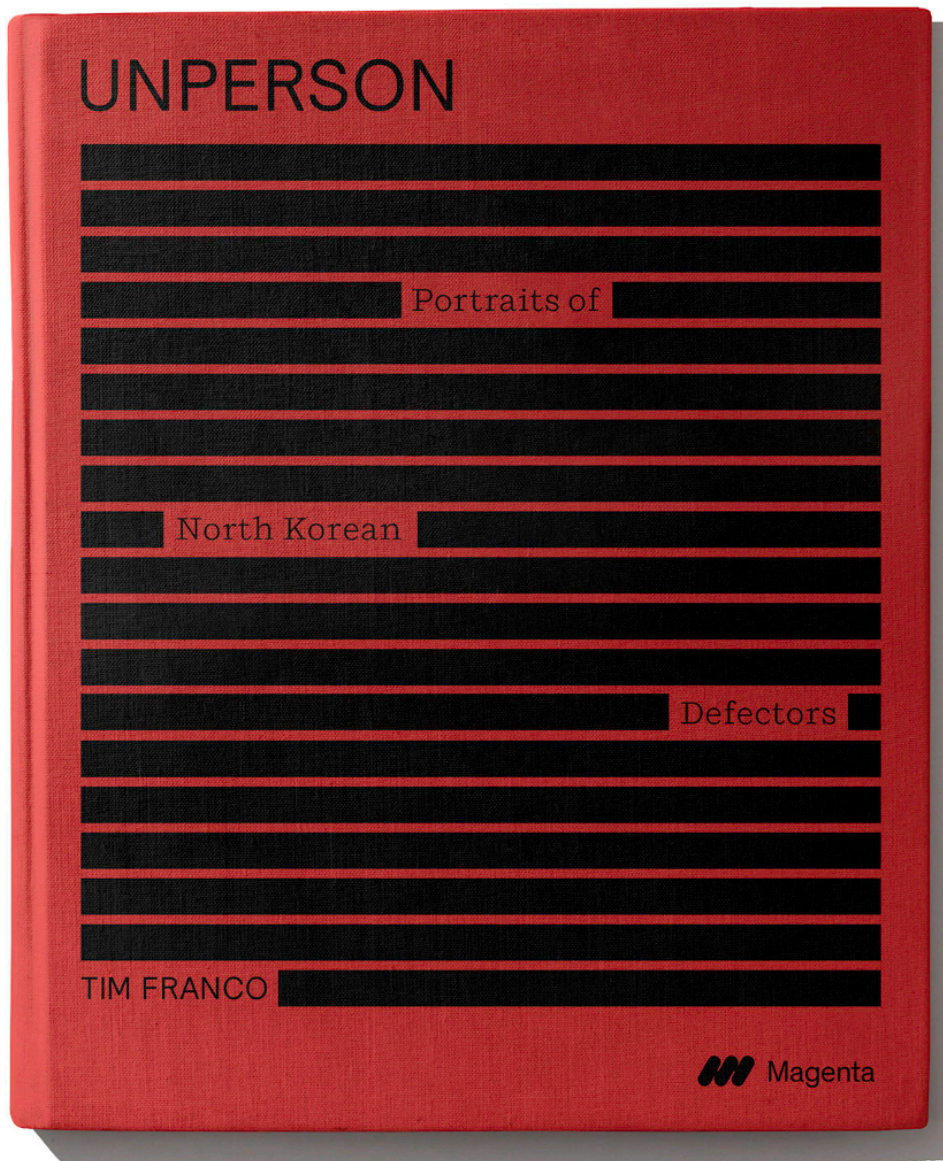
- Pablo Patarin, "Focus #24 : Tim Franco sur les rouges de l'exil coréen", *Fisheye*, October 2022
- Tim Franco *Arctic Fishing*, *Revue Epic*, volume #1, January-March 2021
- Alex Kahl, "Photographic portraits of 15 of North Korean who fled to Seoul", *WePresent*, 3 March 2021
- Nicolas Rocca, "Entretien. Photographie : "Unperson" ou le départ de la Corée du Nord", *RFI*, 18 April 2021
- "Portraits of North Korean Defectors", *Artdoc Magazine*, n°3, 2021
- Lou Tsatsas, "*Unperson* par Tim Franco – Portraits de défecteurs fuyant la Corée du Nord", *Fisheye*, 2020
- Cyrielle Gendron, "*Unperson*, le nouveau livre de Tim Franco se lance sur Ulule", *PHOTO*, 11 November 2020
- "Unperson by Tim Franco", *All about Photo*, December 2020
- "Photographing the "Unpersons" from North Korea", *NK-News*, Podcast, Ep. 160, December 2020
- Alexandra Genova, "Telling the Stories of Defectors From North Korea", *The New York Times*, 2 April 2018
- Brent Crane, "Photographer Documents the Rapid Development of Chongqing, a 21st Century Megacity", *Feature shoot*, 10 April 2015
- Pauline Eiferman, "Metamorphosis : Q&A with Tim Franco", *Roads & Kingdoms*, 6 April 2015
- Thierry R., "L'incroyable métamorphose de Chongqing : quand la nature laisse place aux buildings", *Lense*, 2015
- François Bougon, "Chongqing, capitale de l'ouest chinois", *Le Monde*, 28 September 2012

COLLECTIONS

Musée français de la photographie, Bièvres, France

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PUBLICATION



Tim Franco, *Unperson – Portraits of North Korean Defectors*, Texts by Tim Franco and Sébastien Falletti, Thames & Hudson Editions, Magenta Foundation, 2020

galerie **SIT DOWN**

LA GALERIE

Située dans Le Marais à Paris, la galerie Sit Down a été fondée par Françoise Bornstein en 2005. Depuis 2013, la galerie est essentiellement consacrée à la photographie contemporaine de la scène française et internationale, avec une attention particulière à la photographie documentaire. La galerie Sit Down présente des artistes émergents comme renommés et s'intéresse également aux artistes qui font dialoguer la photographie avec d'autres médiums ou questionnent les limites de son usage mimétique.

En parallèle des expositions personnelles, Françoise Bornstein invite des commissaires lors de projet d'expositions hors les murs, lors de festivals comme les Rencontres d'Arles. La galerie participe à des foires internationales telles que PARIS PHOTO, ART PARIS Art Fair, PHOTO LONDON, PHOTO LA à Los Angeles, *THE PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW presented by AIPAD* à New York, *HAUTE PHOTOGRAPHIE* à Amsterdam...

La galerie est membre du Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art (CPGA) et de l'Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD).

ARTISTS

Jean-Michel ANDRÉ (FR, 1976)
Aurore BAGARRY (FR, 1982)
Stéphane BELZÈRE (FR, 1963)
Celine CROZE (FR, 1982)
Tim FRANCO (FR, 1982)
Virginie ISBELL (FR-USA, 1959)
Antoine LECHARNY (FR, 1995)
Marco LANZA (IT, 1957)
Jean-Gabriel LOPEZ (FR, 1962)
Marie MAUREL DE MAILLÉ (FR, 1978)
Robert McCABE (USA, 1934)

THE GALLERY

Established in Le Marais area in Paris, the Sit Down gallery was founded by Françoise Bornstein in 2005. Since 2013, the gallery has been entirely devoted to photography and its programming consists primarily of documentary and fine-art photography. The gallery aims to showcase young emerging photographers and support renowned international photographers. Sit Down is also interested in artists who bring photography into dialogue with other mediums or question the limits of its mimetic use.

In addition to organizing personal exhibitions, Françoise Bornstein invites curators to participate in exhibition projects during special events such as LES RENCONTRES DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE in Arles. The gallery takes part in international art fairs like PARIS PHOTO, ART PARIS, PHOTO LA in Los Angeles, *THE PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW presented by AIPAD* in New York, *UNSEEN* and *HAUTE PHOTOGRAPHIE* in Amsterdam...

Sit Down gallery is a member of the French "Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art" and of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD).

Frédérique PETIT (FR, 1949)
Salvatore PUGLIA (IT, 1953)
Florian RUIZ (FR, 1972)
Jean-Charles REMICOURT-MARIE (FR, 1990)
Martine SCHILDGE (FR, 1951)
Silvi SIMON (FR, 1970)
Chantal STOMAN (FR, 1967)
Laure VASCONI (FR, 1965)
Matt WILSON (UK, 1969)
Tom WOOD (IR, 1951)
Charles XELOT (FR, 1985)

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