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North Korea – a photographic journey in a country full of contrasts

In September 2018, North Korea celebrated the seventieth anniversary of its founding. A country, of which we know little more than what is reported to us in the press, presented itself proudly and surprisingly peacefully. For the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is considered one of the most inaccessible countries in the world. It is said that the key to a country is its people. But since a direct, uncontrolled exchange with locals is practically impossible, the photographer Ulrike Crespo approached the people through her camera, thus providing us with intimate and rare insight into everyday life in North Korea. Her conclusion: *»Keep your eyes open, look carefully, and do not immediately judge everything. It is impossible to depict reality.«*

From the introduction by Andreas Bender:

»What do photographs from North Korea show and what do they conceal, what is reality and what is orchestrated? It is in the nature of photography that it not rarely generates a lack of context. In the case of North Korea one could almost generalize this, because for all the Communist monotony, the country is so multifaceted in the upheaval it is currently undergoing and we know so little about it, hardly more than what we can learn from the media. Ulrike Crespo has managed to capture moments when faces tell their own story. Such openness is new. Kim Jong-un has ordained it, wants to save his government and his state doctrine, but also take the step that took China along the path from a Communist command economy toward a market economy.«

After completing high school in Darmstadt **Ulrike Crespo** (born in 1950 in Fulda, Germany) studied French, Art History and Archaeology in Lausanne and Geneva, Switzerland. After returning to Germany in the 1980s, she studied Psychology in Frankfurt/Main and gained a licence to practice as a psychotherapist. Since the 1990s she has closely concerned herself with photography. Ulrike Crespo lives and works in Frankfurt/Main, Germany, in Vienna, Austria, and in West Cork, Ireland. Earlier books by Ulrike Crespo are *Danakil* (2018), *Iceland* (2017), *Rainflowers* (2015), *Under Water's Skin* (2014), *Nachtblüten* (2013), *Cold Landscape* (2013), *Ephemere* (2012), and *Twilight* (2011). www.ulrike-crespo-photography.com

Andreas Bender (born in 1957 in Bad Godesberg, Germany) is one of the few contemporaries who incessantly follow the arduous paths of the different peoples on Earth, who have viewed countless landscapes and countries with their own eyes. On over 1,000 expeditions he has covered them all, from North Korea, the Antarctic, Congo and East Timor to the Marquesas Islands and Mongolia.

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