



# NEW YORK— PYONGYANG IMPACTS

This catalog is published on the occasion of the exhibition  
Commodity & Ideology Part II, New York – Pyongyang Impacts  
organized by Korea Art Forum  
curated by Heng-Gil Han

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Catalog designed by Rahul Alexander

Photographs courtesy Rahul Alexander, Heng-Gil Han, & Doug Hostetter

COMMODITY  
& IDEOLOGY  
PART II

China

Shen Yang

North Korea

Song-Gwang Hong

Myong-Un Kim

Ryong Kim

South Korea / US

Zaun Lee

# NEW YORK – PYONGYANG IMPACTS

October 12 – 31, 2017

Church Center for the United Nations





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# New York – Pyongyang Impacts: Using Art to Build Understanding

Doug Hostetter

For the past year the MCC UN Office has been working with Korea Art Forum, with the support of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, to bring 3 artists and a curator from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) to New York for the month of August. While in New York, they would visit New York museums and galleries, and work with New York artists to do urban landscape paintings in New York City. We knew that this would be a challenging project in light of the increasing hostilities between the US and North Korean Governments, but MCC has a strong commitment to promoting dialogue and people to people relations, even in most difficult situations.

The initial response from the Obama State Department was guarded, but encouraging, “as long as the “artists” were really artists.” The North Korean government was also initially skeptical, but they eventually agreed to the project, selected

three of the most prominent North Korean artists and provided them with passports and permission to travel to China where they would apply for US visas at the American Embassy in Beijing. The Trump State Department was more hostile to the project than the previous administration, but eventually agreed to accept the visa application for the three artists and curator from North Korea.

Heng-Gil Han, the Korean-American director of Korea Art Forum flew to Beijing to assist in the visa interview in late July. When the four North Koreans and Heng-Gil Han showed up at the US Embassy at the appointed time, they were turned away, not even allowed to enter the Embassy building. After intensive calls to the State Department in Washington, the visa interview was rescheduled for August 9th. We then had to convince the artists, to remain in Beijing for another two weeks, so that they could go for their rescheduled visa interviews at the US Embassy. Since



they had time in Beijing, Heng-Gil Han took the artists to visit museums, galleries, markets and historic sites in Beijing, and encouraged them to photograph the urban landscape in Beijing.

Current events however complicated our efforts at peacebuilding. On July 28th North Korea launched the first intercontinental ballistic missile which experts estimated could reach US cities on the West Coast and Midwest, and on August 5, the US introduced, and the Security Council passed, resolution 2371 which imposed strict economic, political and travel restrictions on North Korea, and the following day the Trump Administration posted a ban for American travel to North Korea, without a Special Validation Passport. After those negative signals, the North Korea government requested that the three artists and

curator return to North Korea on the next available flight, August 8th, one day before the scheduled interview.

Heng-Gil Han asked the artists if they would give us the photos which they had taken in Beijing for us to take back and exhibit in New York. They readily agreed, giving us thousands of photographs that they had taken during their 12 days in Beijing. We then also contacted one South Korean and one Chinese artist and asked them to go to museums, galleries, markets and historic sites in the cities where they were, so that we could put together an exhibit which would show the photographs taken in similar places but different countries of all five artists, three from North Korea, one from China and one from South Korea. With the support from the United Methodist Women, the exhibit at the Church Center for the UN opened on October 12 and ran through October 31.



Heng-Gil Han (facing the camera)  
identifying the photographers

and explaining the focus of each  
photographer.

We saw the exhibit as an opportunity to understand the world view of the “other”, as expressed through the photographs of North Korean, South Korean, and Chinese artists. We also saw the exhibit as an opportunity to bring people together. We invited staff from the UN, diplomats from North Korea, South Korea and the US to the opening and closing receptions. We also invited students, artists, friends from the religious, arts, peace and Korean-American communities as well as the general public. We may not yet have brought peace to the Korean peninsula, but we did bring diplomats from North Korea, South Korea, UN Staff, New York religious leaders and scores of Korean-Americans together in the Church Center for the UN to view photographs and trying to understand the differing perspectives of the artists,

and perhaps some insight into our common humanity and the dialogue necessary for peace. Some of that vision is captured in Jonathan Wolfe's Column, in the Metro Section of the New York Times, October 19, 2017

## The New York Times

### New York Today: From North Korea to New York

By JONATHAN WOLFE OCT. 19, 2017

New Yorkers can see the work of North Korean artists this week.

The exhibition, "Commodity and Ideology, Part II," recently opened at the Church Center for the United Nations in Midtown Manhattan and features photographs from North Korean, South Korean and Chinese artists.

The project began this summer when the Korea Art Forum invited three North Korean artists — Song-Gwang Hong, Myong-Un Kim and Ryong Kim — to the United States.

The U.S. visas for the artists, who were staying in Beijing at the time, never arrived, said Doug Hostetter, the director of the Mennonite Central Committee's United Nations Office, which co-sponsored the event as a way to support peace-building through the arts.

So the forum made the best of the situation and asked the three North Koreans to take photographs of cityscapes and museums in Beijing. They also asked a South Korean artist, Zaun Lee, to shoot similar spaces in London and Athens and a Chinese artist, Shen Yang, to snap the same in New York.

"The North Koreans were very interested in children, monuments, and statues of powerful people," Mr. Hostetter said.



Song Gwang Hong. A photograph of a photograph of a child drawing a child at the National Museum of China, Beijing, 2017.

The Chinese and South Korean artists expressed broader interests, Mr. Hostetter added. "They were more interested in architecture and ordinary people in the street."

For last Thursday's opening, diplomats from North Korea, South Korea and the United States were invited to attend.

To Mr. Hostetter's surprise, representatives from both North and South Korea made appearances.

"But they declined our offer to introduce them to each other," he said.

Still, Mr. Hostetter said, he has hope that the two sides will eventually meet.

"We'll be trying again at the closing."

# On global contemporary art and peace-building in Korea

Heng-Gil Han

# PROCESS

- Invited three North Korean artists and one curator/writer at the end of 2016
- Song Gwang Hong, Myong Un Kim, Ryong Kim, and Pyong Thaek Kim were chosen by North Korea in February 2017.
- They received a passport at the end of April (in about eight weeks). We tried to apply for their visa in May but encountered some difficulties.
- In June, after some back and forth, we finally scheduled their visa interview for July 28.
- I went to Beijing on July 26 to assist them in their efforts to obtain US visas.
- On July 27, they arrived in Beijing for their US visa interview on July 28.
- The visa interview was cancelled by the US embassy in Beijing at the gate.
- After a few phone calls and emails, I rescheduled the interview and we received the new date of August 9.
- July 28, about 12 hours after the visa interviews were cancelled, North Korea tested an intercontinental ballistic missile.
- July 29, I met the Chinese artist Shen Yang, who had been invited to the project and was headed to New York as planned.
- In Beijing, we were supposed to visit museums, market places, and landmark locations such as old palaces, producing location art (drawings and sketches) while the artists waited for their visas. We carried this out as planned and took photographs documenting our stay in China.
- Saturday, August 5, the United Nations imposed new sanctions against North Korea.
- Sunday, August 6, North Korea ordered the artists to come back home on the next plane (on August 8).
- I requested that the North Korean government give us one more day for the interviews. North Korea declined my request.
- On Tuesday, August 8, the artists and curator returned home.
- Each North Korean artist produced more than 1,000 photographs from July 29 through August 7.
- I received copies of their digital files, produced prints out of their photographs, and exhibited them at the Church Center for the UN from October 12 through October 31.
- The New York Times mentioned the show on October 20.

# New York – Pyongyang Impacts

*A pilot artist-in-residence program organized by the Korea Art Forum (KAF) and implemented in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee Office at the UN*

- Questions the framework of the widespread form-based perception of contemporary art
- Provides opportunities for meaningful person-to-person interaction between North Korean artists and the New York public, contributing to collective endeavors of peacemaking between North Korea and the US.



# PROBLEMS

- Tensions with North Korea escalate.
- US policies toward North Korea seem to be solely focused on security and defense issues. Real progress towards peace, can only occur through dialogue and mutual understanding.
- We do not seem to understand North Korea and they don't seem to understand us.

Art reflects the society in which it is made.

- Art is a mirror of the society in which it is made.
- Without seeing North Korean art, we are missing a crucial channel for understanding North Korea.
- Artist and art exchange programs seem necessary.

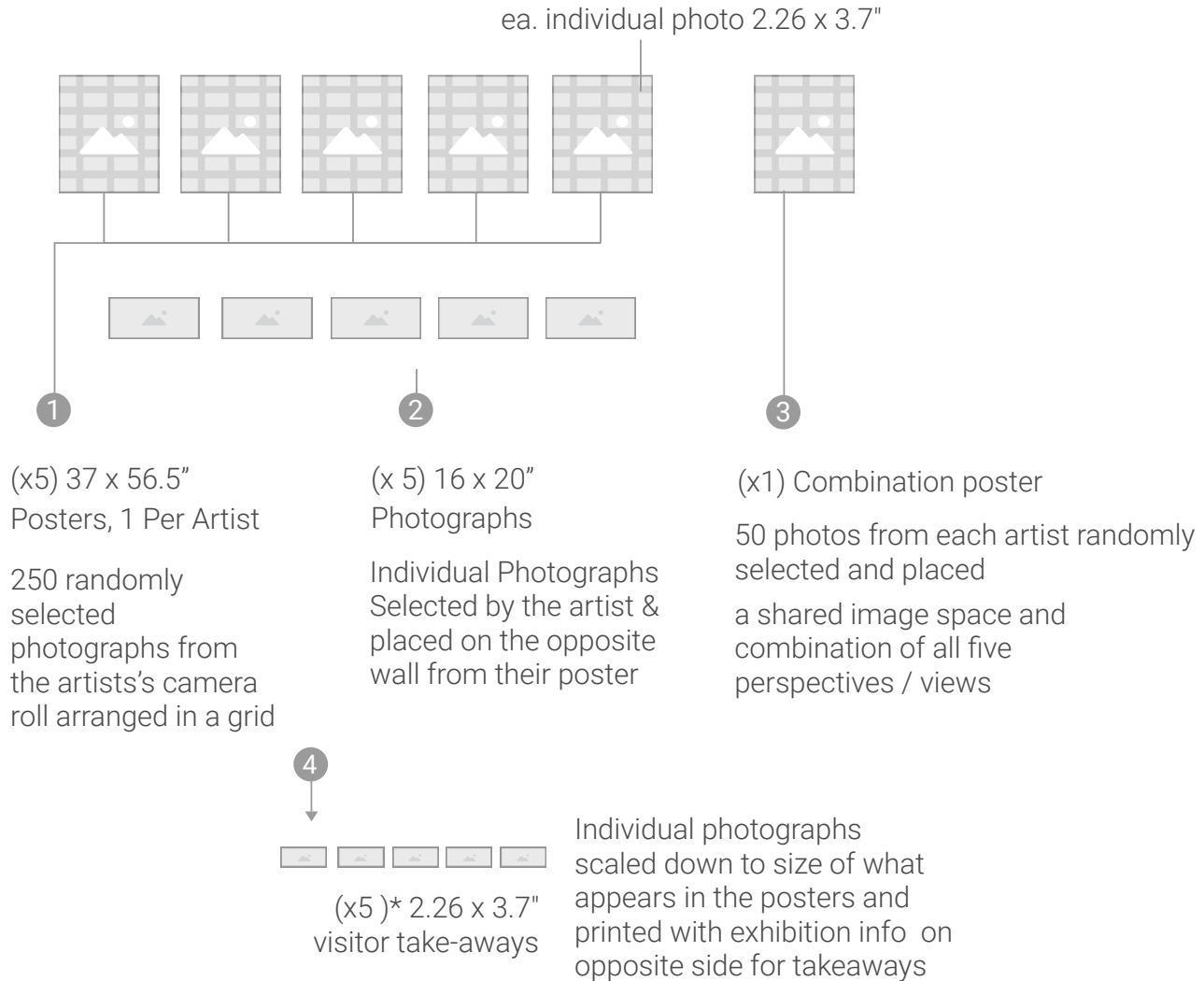
Over the last few years, Korea Art Forum (KAF) has presented exhibitions of North and South Korean arts along with arts from other countries, including the US and China.

[ An effort to embrace North Korean art into contemporary art, arguing against the misguided notion of contemporary art as a form that can only be produced within the Western hemisphere or Western liberal democratic and capitalist ideologies. ]

Through the *New York – Pyongyang Impacts* program, KAF attempted to invite North Korean artists to New York, in order to collaborate with them and have them meet South Korean, Chinese and American artists.

[ A series of actions engaging North Korean artists ]

A collected set of over 5000 images taken by these artists would then be the basis for realizing an exhibition of these photographs.





*Output of the project exhibited  
at the Church Center for the UN*



Installation view at the Church Center for the UN, North Wall





Installation view at the Church Center for the UN, South Wall



Shen Yang. *Central Park*, 2017

# Shen Yang

➔ New York, United States

China



Beijing, CHN, 1973

Tongzhou District, Beijing

B. F. A. Central Academy of Fine Art, 1996.

Exhibitions and Honors:

- The World Without Feeling Of Pain. 2008, Beijing (solo)
- Scarcity & Supply, The 3rd Nanjing International Art Festival, 2016, Nanjing (group)
- Green, 2009, Beijing (group)
- Maimao, 2006, Italy & France (group)
- John Moor painting prize China, 2012, Shanghai

Artistic Quality:

Yang Shen's works sharply show characteristics of the time and personal marks of the artist in China. His paintings are full of imagination and passion. Both landscape and figure in his paintings evoke weird and strange sense of feeling. He uses traditional oil painting techniques in combination with stylized cartoon techniques. His work implies the real world, and is a record of social life in his memories and dreams.



Song-Gwang Hong. *A Photograph of a Photograph of a Child Drawing a Child* (at the National Museum of China), 2017

# Hong Song Gwang

➔ Beijing, China

North Korea



Pyongyang, DPRK, 1960

Pyongchon District, Pyongyang City

B. F. A. Pyongyang University of Fine Art, 1993.

Korean ink painting artist since 1993

Member Artist, The Central Committee of Union of the DPRK Fine Artists

Exhibitions and Honors:

- Merit Artist since 2009
- Seven Gold Medals, Annual National Exhibitions of Fine Arts
- Seventeen works in the National Collection
- Two Gold Prizes and one Artistic Excellences Prize, International Art Fairs, Beijing, China
- The Korean Reunification Exhibition, Japan
- The Korean Reunification Exhibition, Seoul, South Korea

Artistic Quality:

Hong Song Gwang is an acclaimed artist in the field of Korean ink painting. His brush work is renowned for rendering the Korean national identity in clarity and vividity. His work is said to represent the zeitgeist by innovative compositions and truthful figuration. Many of his works are highly admired for their magnitude.



Myong Un Kim, 2017

# Kim Myong Un

➔ Beijing, China

North Korea



Kangwon Province, DPRK, 1959

Pyongchon District, Pyongyang City

B. F. A. Pyongyang University of Fine Art, 1981.

Oil Painter since 1981

Member Artist and Head of Oil Painting Production Unit,  
The Central Committee of Union of the DPRK Fine Artists

Exhibitions and Honors:

- People's Artist since 2010 ("People's Artist" is the highest honor available in DPRK.)
- Kim Jong Il Prize laureate
- Participated in a number of the Annual National Exhibitions of Fine Art
- Participated in a number of International Exhibitions in Australia, China, Germany, and Russia.
- Twenty works in the National Collection
- Received Eight Gold Medals and Seven Bronze Medals, Annual National Exhibitions of Fine Arts

Artistic Quality:

During his artistic career that spans more than thirty-five years, Kim has produced a number of portraits and landscape paintings. Kim's eagle-like eyes of sharp observation captures grand landscapes in an open and broad perspective. His paintings adopt vigorous brushwork, impasto technique, and warm color schemes. His use of gray-scale tonality unifies the pictorial plane of his painting and richly represents the aerial atmosphere. His painting constructs a form that is full of vivid energy and strength without losing the solid sense of gravity and spatial depth.





Ryong Kim. *A painting of revolutionaries*, 2017



# Kim Ryong

North Korea

➔ Beijing, China



Pyongyang, DPRK, 1967

Pyongchon District, Pyongyang City

B. F. A. Pyongyang University of Fine Art, 1998

Korean ink painting artist since 1998

Member Artist, The Central Committee of Union of the DPRK Fine Artists

Exhibitions and Honors:

- Selection Prizes, Annual National Exhibitions of Fine Art
- Several works in the National Collection
- Participated in a number of International Exhibitions in China and other Countries

Artistic Quality:

A Korean ink painter, Kim Ryong is renowned for combining the Korean traditional techniques with modern sensibility. His work consistently presents genuinely emotional images composed of deeply saturated color palettes.



Zaun Lee. *In Athens*, 2017

# Zaun Lee

➔ Athens, Greece ➔ London, United Kingdom

United States / South Korea



Seoul, South Korea, 1978

New York, New York, U.S.A.

Visual Communication Design, Seoul National University, ROK

Philosophy, Alfred University, New York, U.S.A.

## Exhibitions and Honors:

- Solo exhibition, Under Construction, Soomdo Art Space, Seoul, ROK
- Solo exhibition, My No-Man's Land, Ice House Gallery, Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey
- Solo exhibition, Borders: Zaun Lee, Art Mora, Manhattan, New York
- Finalist for the proposal for an exhibition by No Longer Empty entitled "About Face," for its participation in the New Museum's "Festival of Ideas of A New City," New York
- Featured in the Viewing Program, The Drawing Center, Manhattan, New York
- AHL foundation Visual Arts Award & Grant, AHL Foundation, Manhattan, New York

## Artistic Quality:

My work visually explores the duality of humankind logic, which serves as a practical tool, yet which is inevitably flawed. The basic building block of my visual approach is the grid, which I consider to be a visualization of logic. I challenge the normal view of a grid — ordered, structured, balanced — seeing it rather as a fluid organism. I create systematic rules in constructing my drawings, paintings, and installations, and I incorporate layering to emphasize the inherent logic and illogic behind the process of following the rules. I convey the fragility of logical systems and urban systematic constructions.



pictures taken by and alongside  
North Korean artists while in Beijing

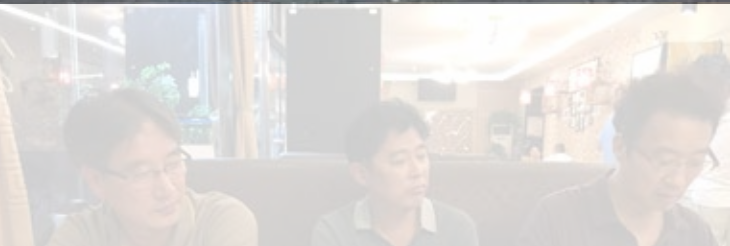


randomly sorted image scroll of photographs taken by  
all five participating artists while in New York, Beijing, London, and Athens















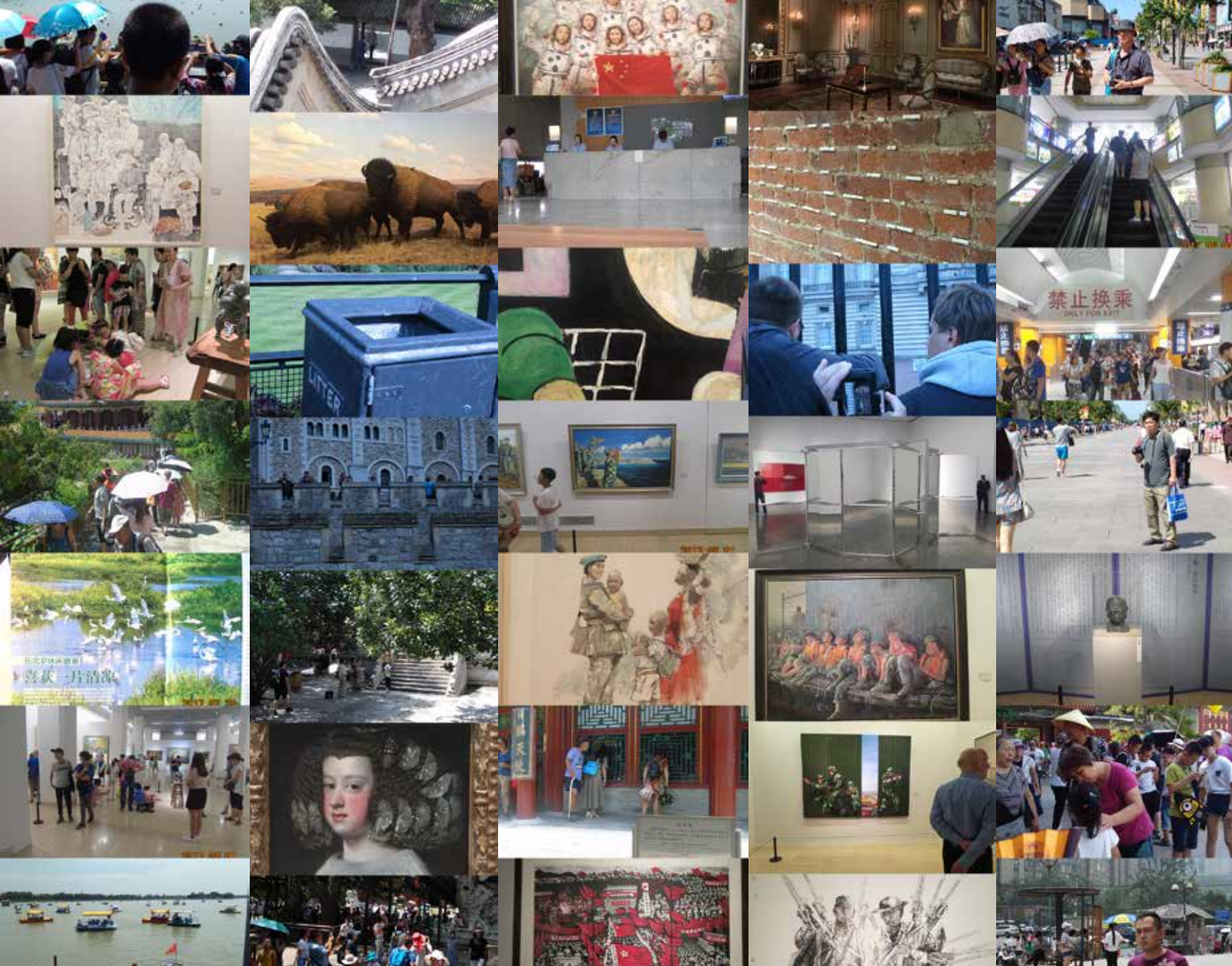
Off to Beijing on July 26, 2017

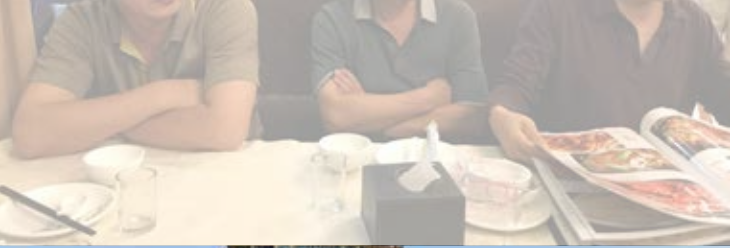


In a restaurant in Beijing  
on July 28, 2017





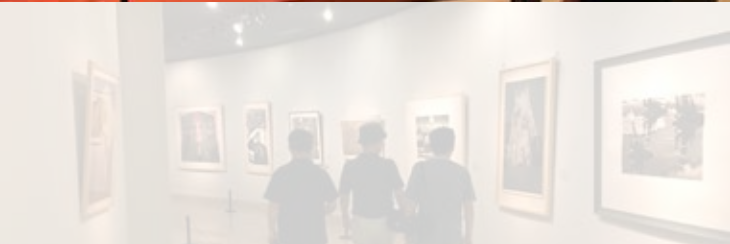




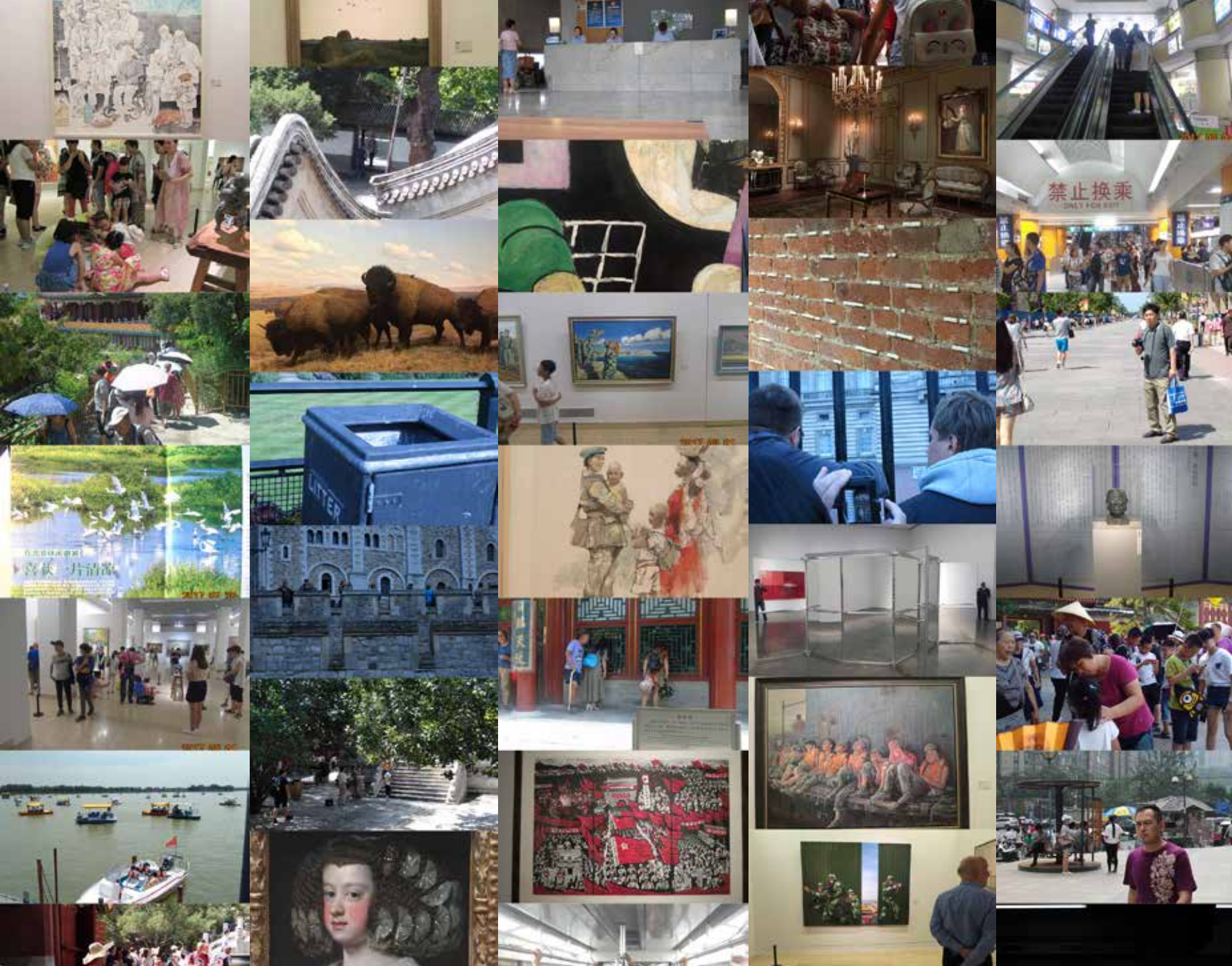
At the National Museum of China in Beijing around July 30



Looking at art in the museum





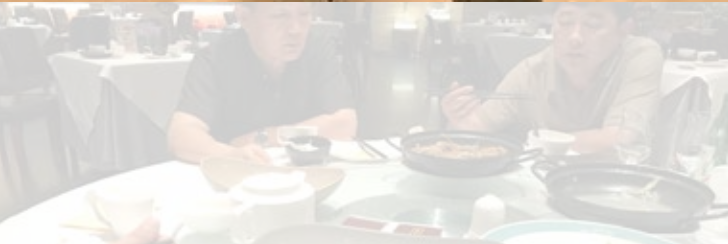




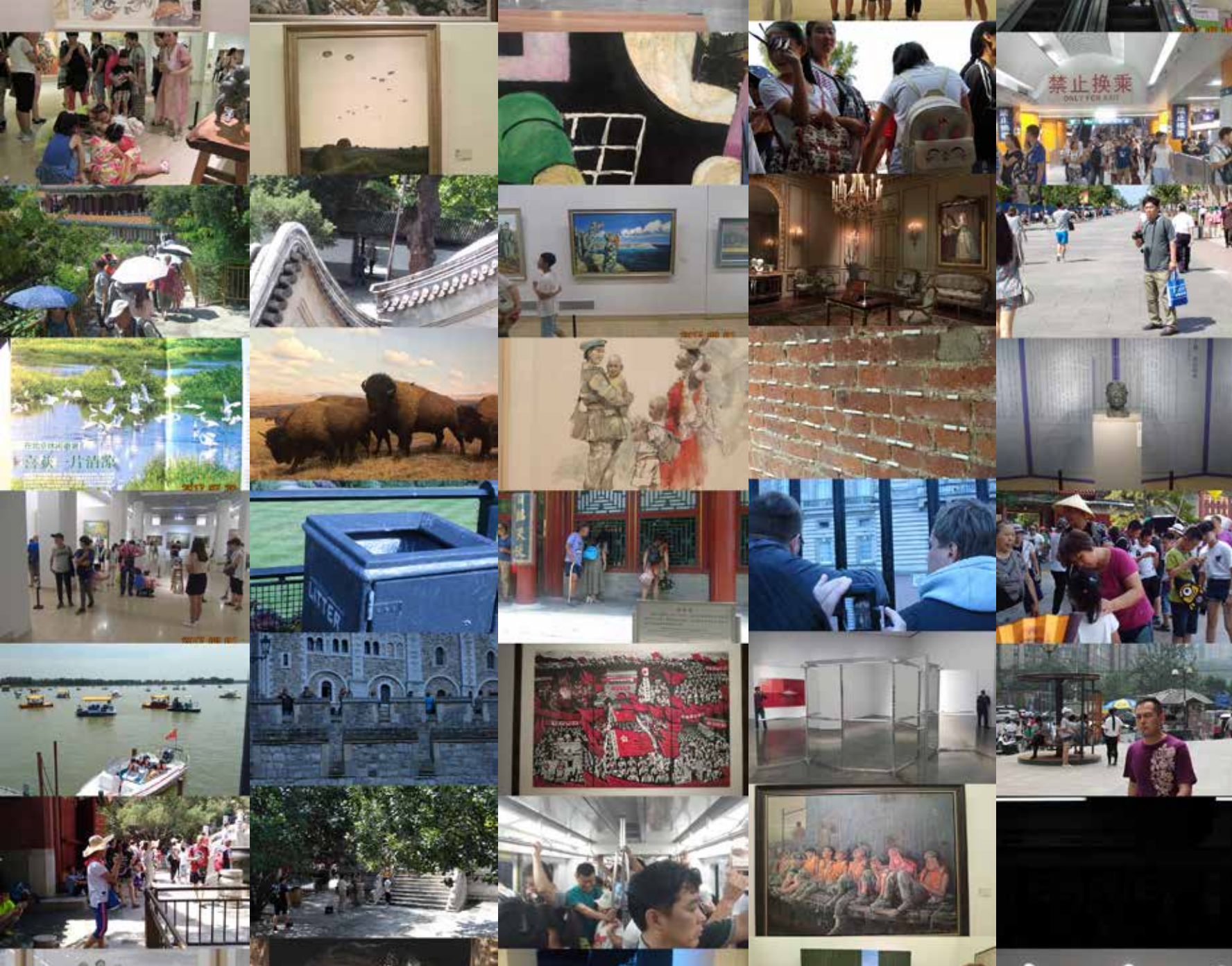
Looking at art in the museum.  
Collectivity



Taking pictures of art in the  
museum. Collectivity



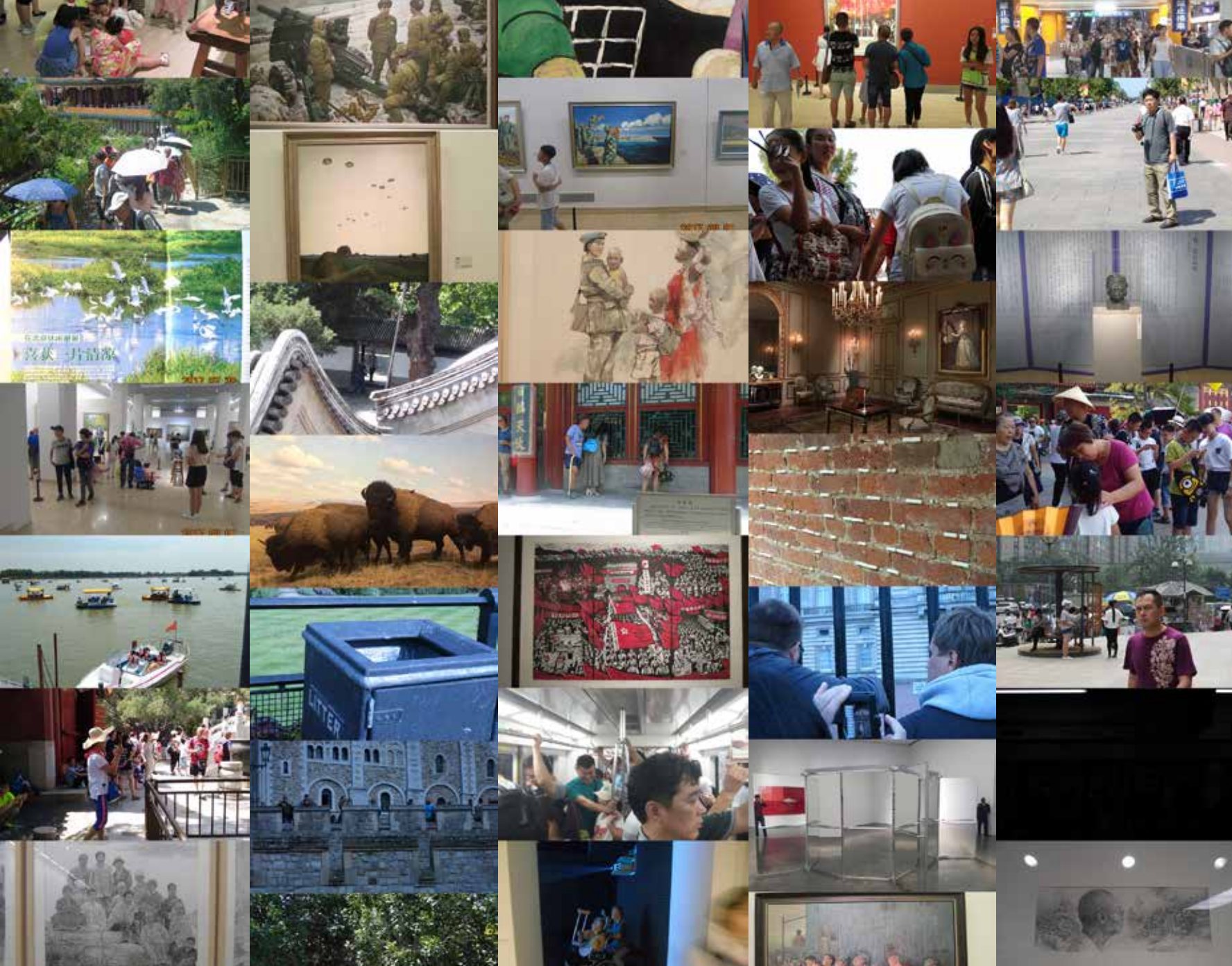








Hong was interested in people and environments.



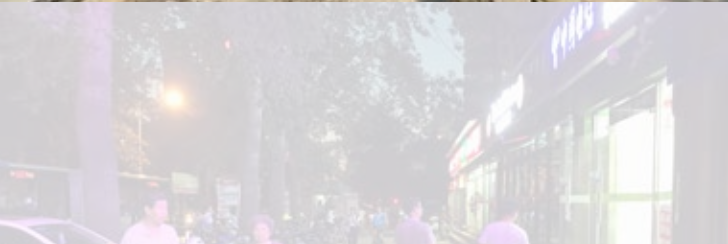




You take a picture of that scene,  
I do it too.  
Collectivity and solidarity.



We went to a gallery that  
specializes in North Korean arts.









We were walking for hours looking for something interesting.

In downtown Beijing, August 3.







At a ramen house in downtown Beijing, August 3.



I led them to the subway Beijing, August 3.









We were arguing about where to get off.

In a subway train, Beijing, August 3.







We went to the Summer Palace.



So many people.











Hong: What am I looking at?

Let's take pictures of each other.



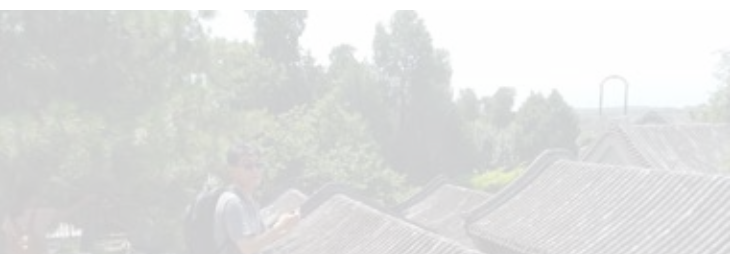




On August 8, [before] check-in



On August 8, check-in









Kim Myong Un, trying to understand me.

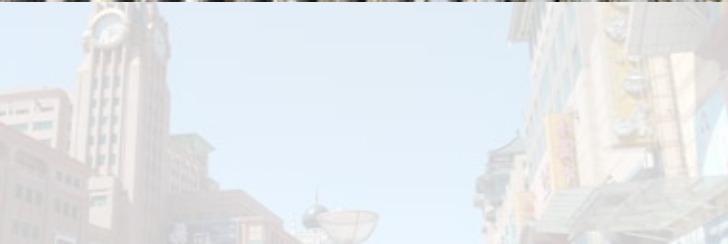


Instead of telling him, I asked him to take a picture of what I would have photographed.









Once Kim took his picture, Hong joined us and took his picture of this particular corridor.

I was taking this minimalist picture.







## Kim Myong Un. Marketplace

What are we looking at?

What is Kim trying to capture?

Kim, Myong Un. Marketplace







Hong, Song Gwang.



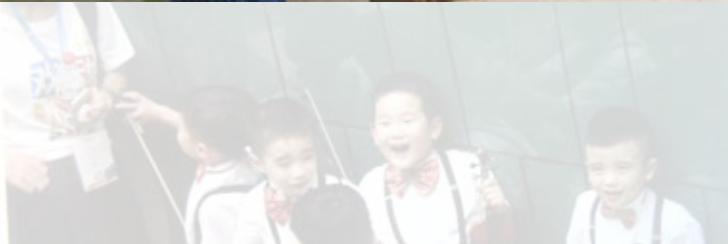
What I was drawn to,  
but they were not.











Kim, Myong Un, the leader of the group took me to this work that combined images of a dove and two combat planes. The message of “peace through strength” was clear.

They were very interested in children.

Photo by Kim, Myong Un.



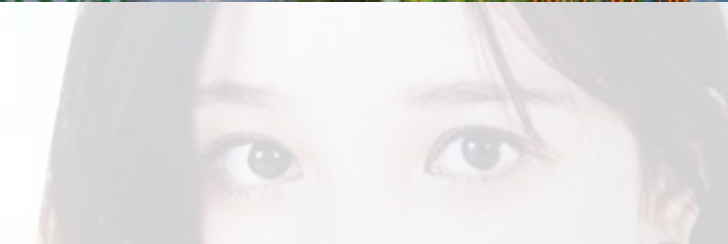




They were very interested in children. Photo by Hong, Song Gwang of a magazine page.



I found it curious that they were taking pictures of pictures in magazines.









Photos by Hong, Song Gwang of a magazine page.



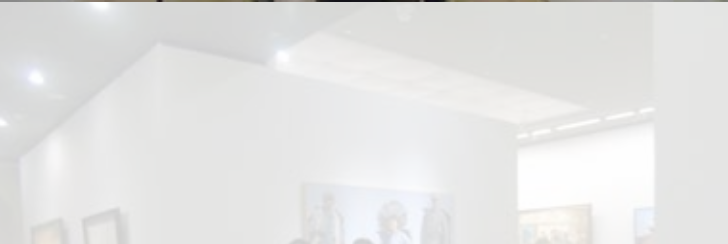
Another picture that Hong took from a magazine.









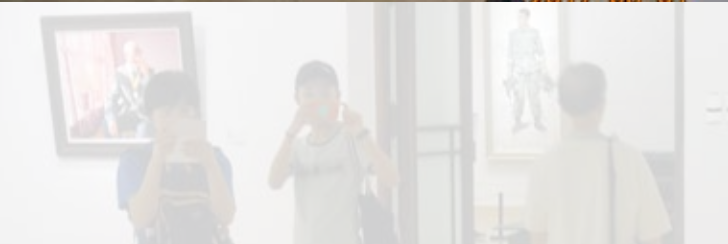


Hong was more interested in people than the artworks in the museum. As result, his photos are overall darker and greyish than the photos by Kim Ryong, who was focused on well-lit artworks.

Another picture that shows Hong's interest in the people who look at art.







He also paid attention to families and children.

Another picture that shows Hong's interest in families and children.







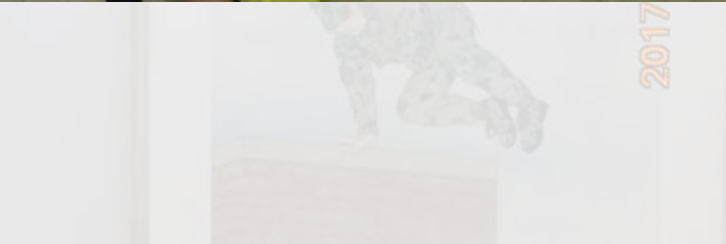
Hong's interest in reflective cycle. A picture of people who are taking a picture.

Again Hong's interest in family.





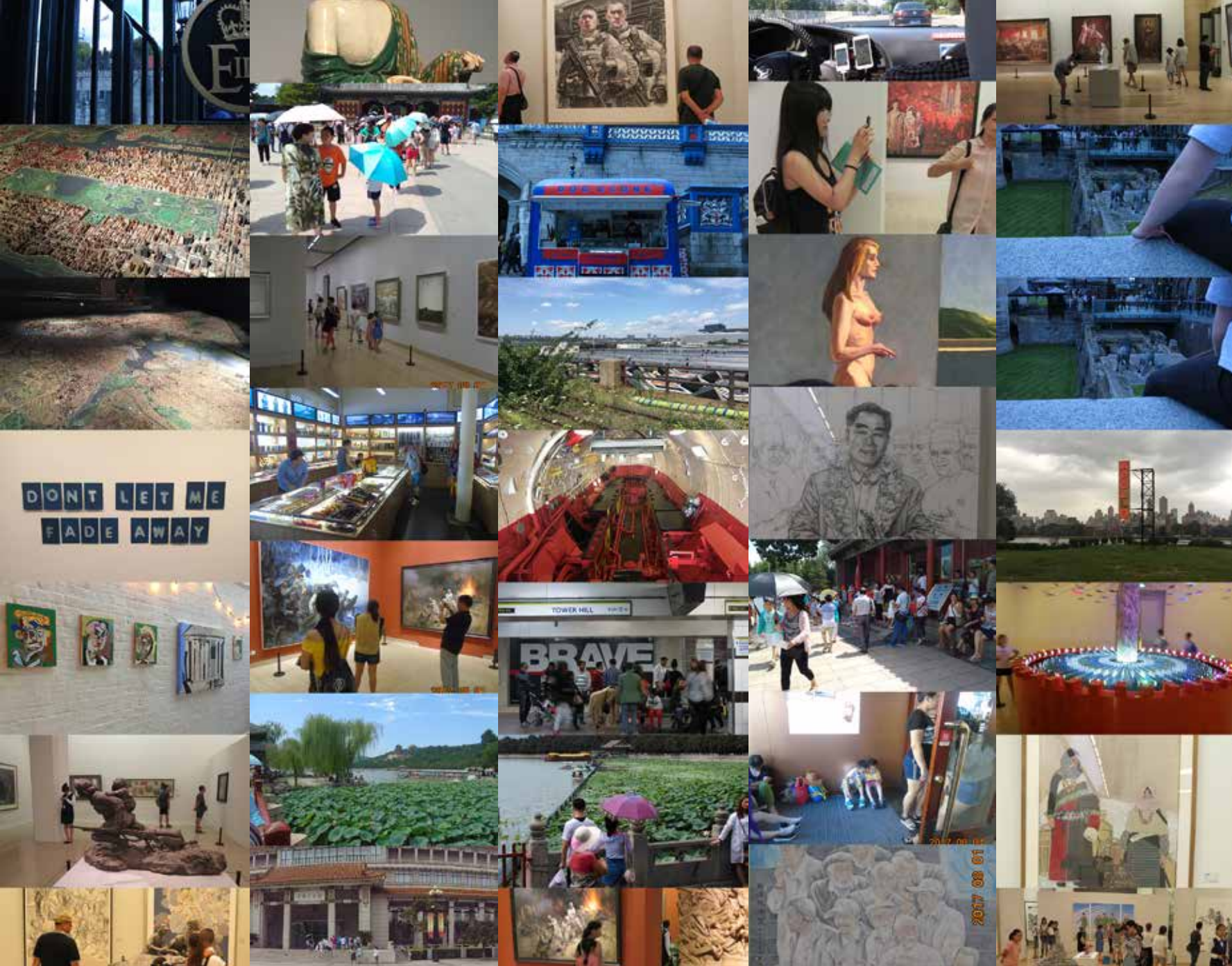




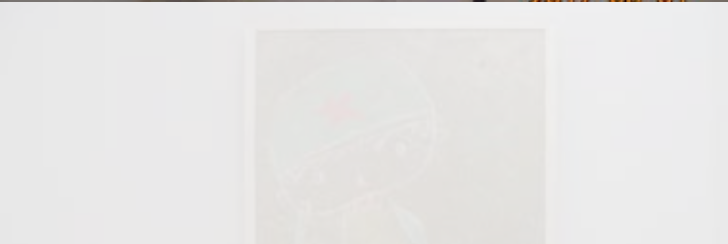
We can clearly see different focus points between these two photographers

<- Kim Myong Un.

<- Hong Song Gwang.







Both were taken by Hong.  
He is good at capturing a  
reflective moment.



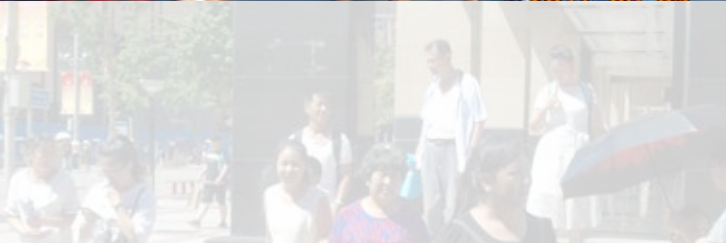




Finally, Hong gets this photograph of a photograph of a child drawing a child.



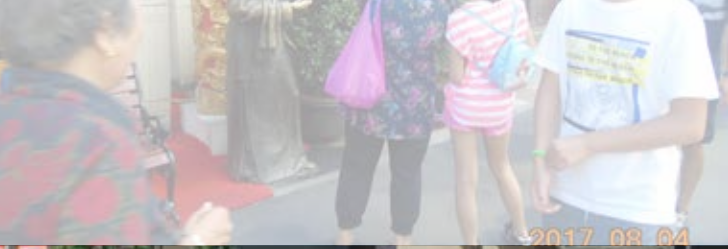
Hong continues taking pictures of people taking pictures.











Hong's interest in people is clear in this picture. A child with mother (or grandmother).

Hong. Children.







I was trying to get a symmetric picture.

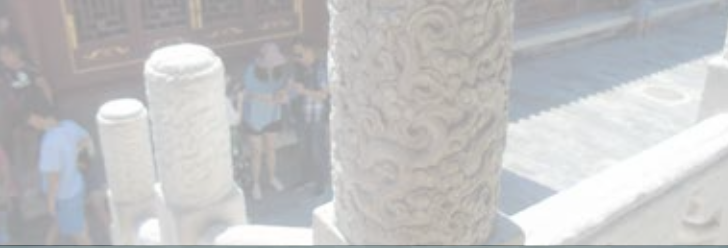


Hong seems to learn the mode of adornment on the pole.









Hong, Song Gwang.  
The Summer Palace Lake





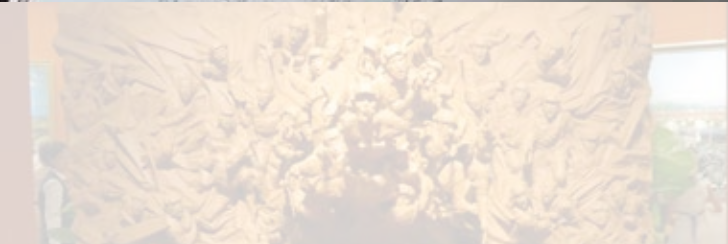




Hong takes a picture of a family, and the parents take a picture of their children.



Kim, Ryong. A picture of a magazine page.









Kim, Ryong. A sculpture in the entrance gallery of the National Museum of China.





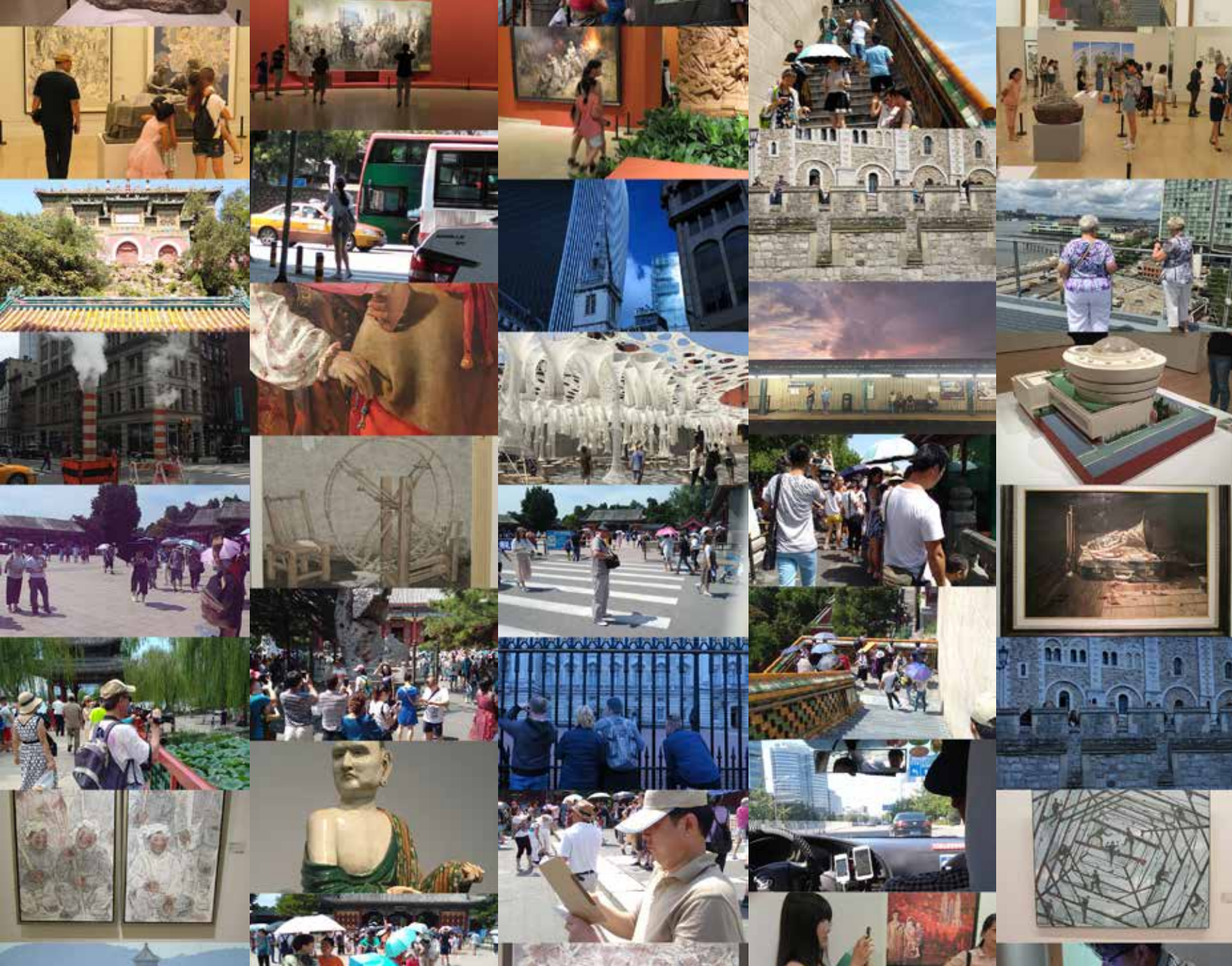




Kim, Ryong.



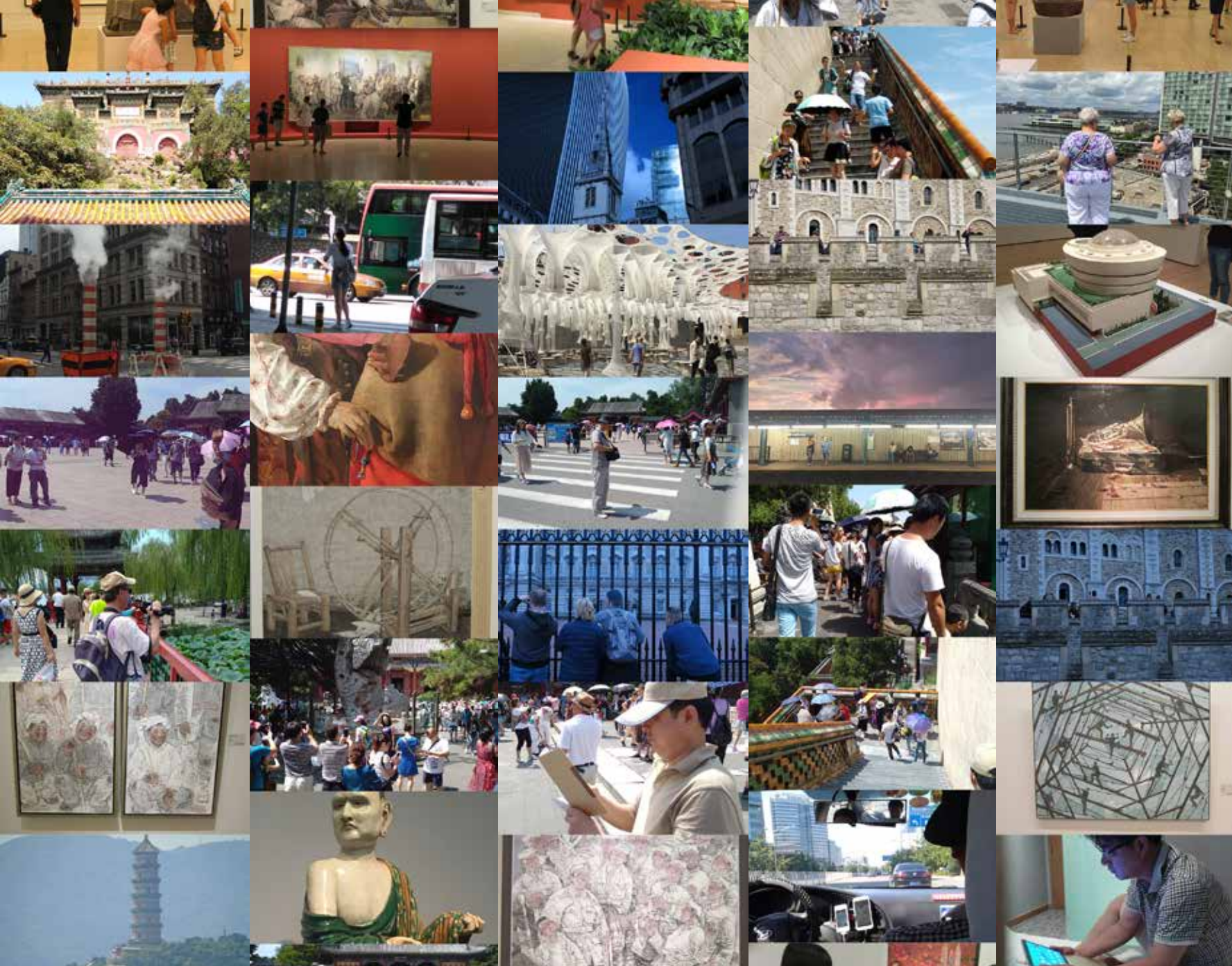








Kim, Ryong.







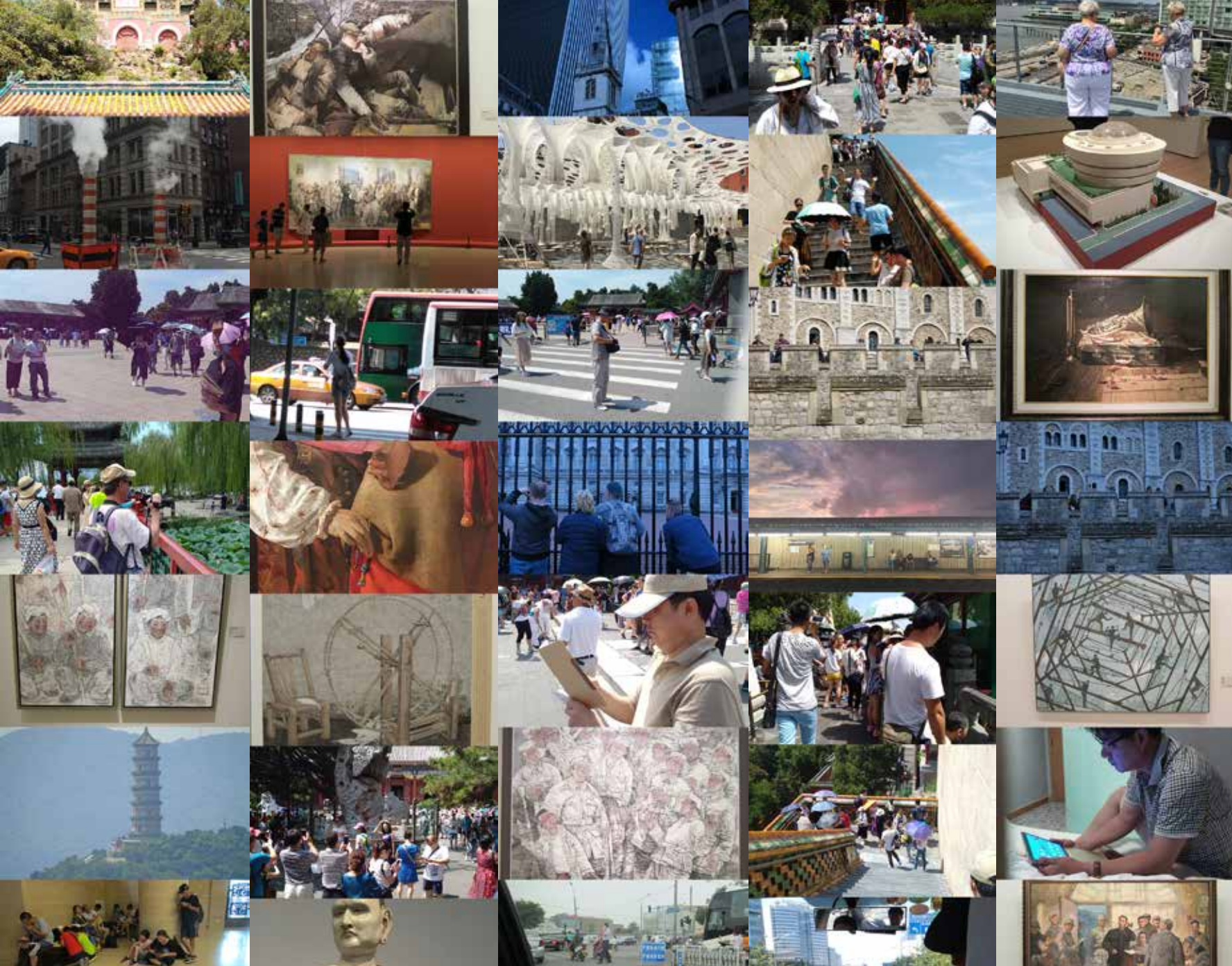
Kim, Ryong. Children



Kim, Ryong. Summer Palace



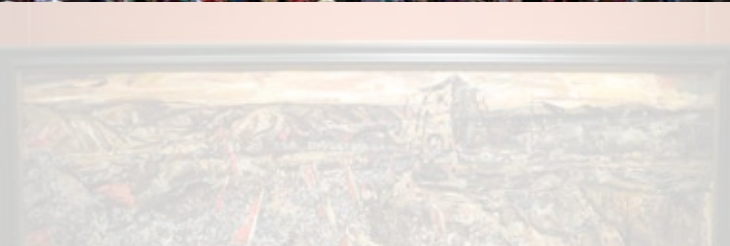








Kim, Ryong. Summer Palace



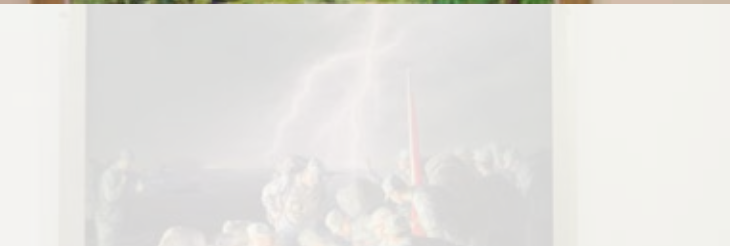








Kim, Ryong.









Kim, Ryong.



Kim, Myong Un. Marketplace









Kim, Myong Un. Marketplace









Kim, Myong Un. Marketplace



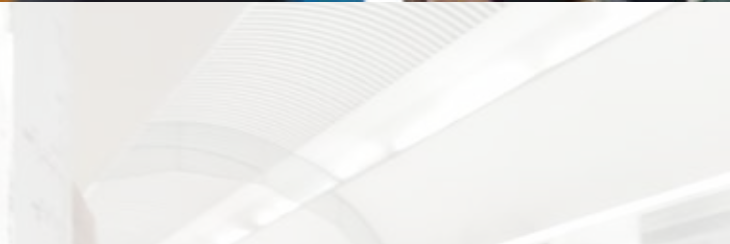


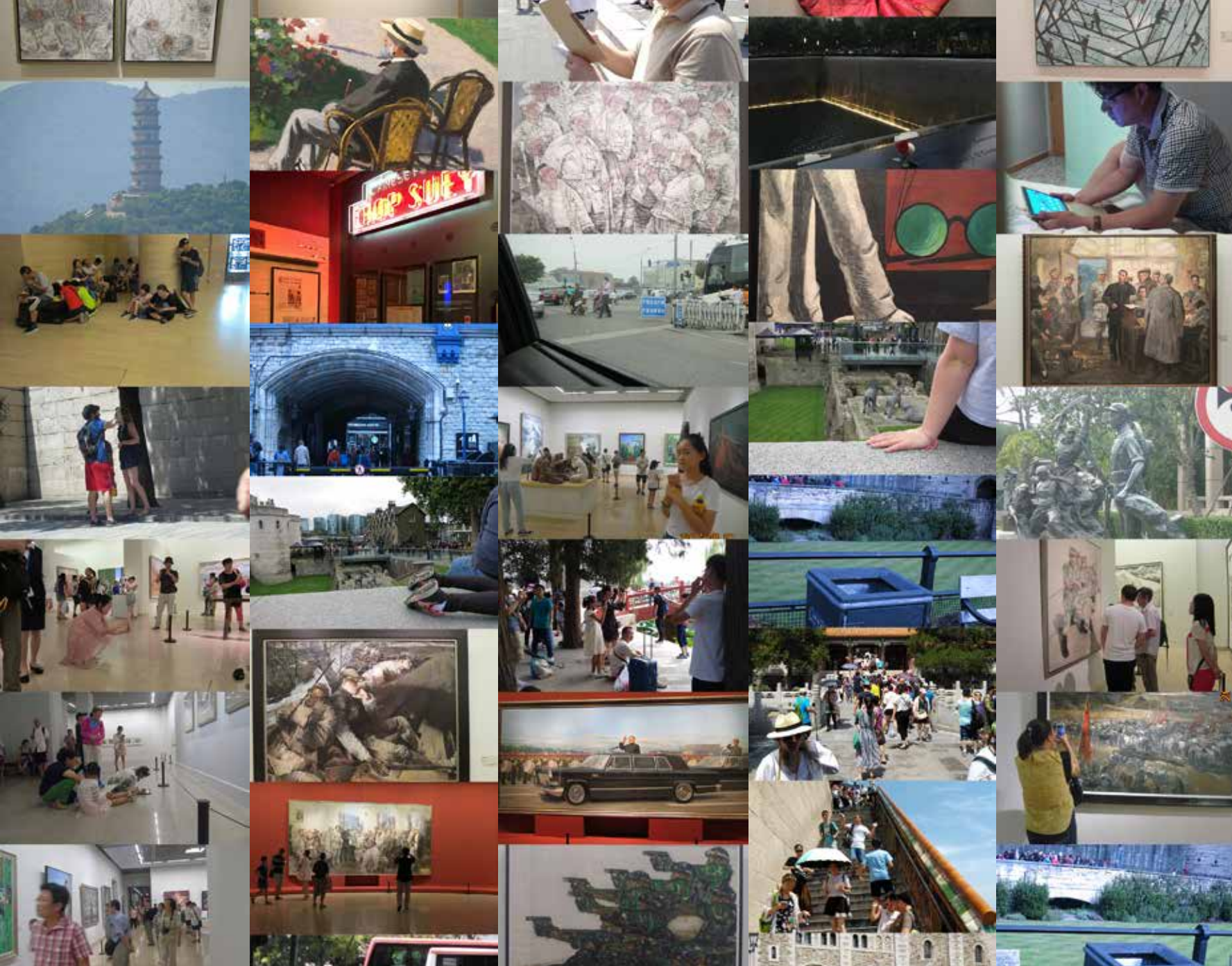


Kim, Myong Un. Children



Kim, Myong Un. Subway

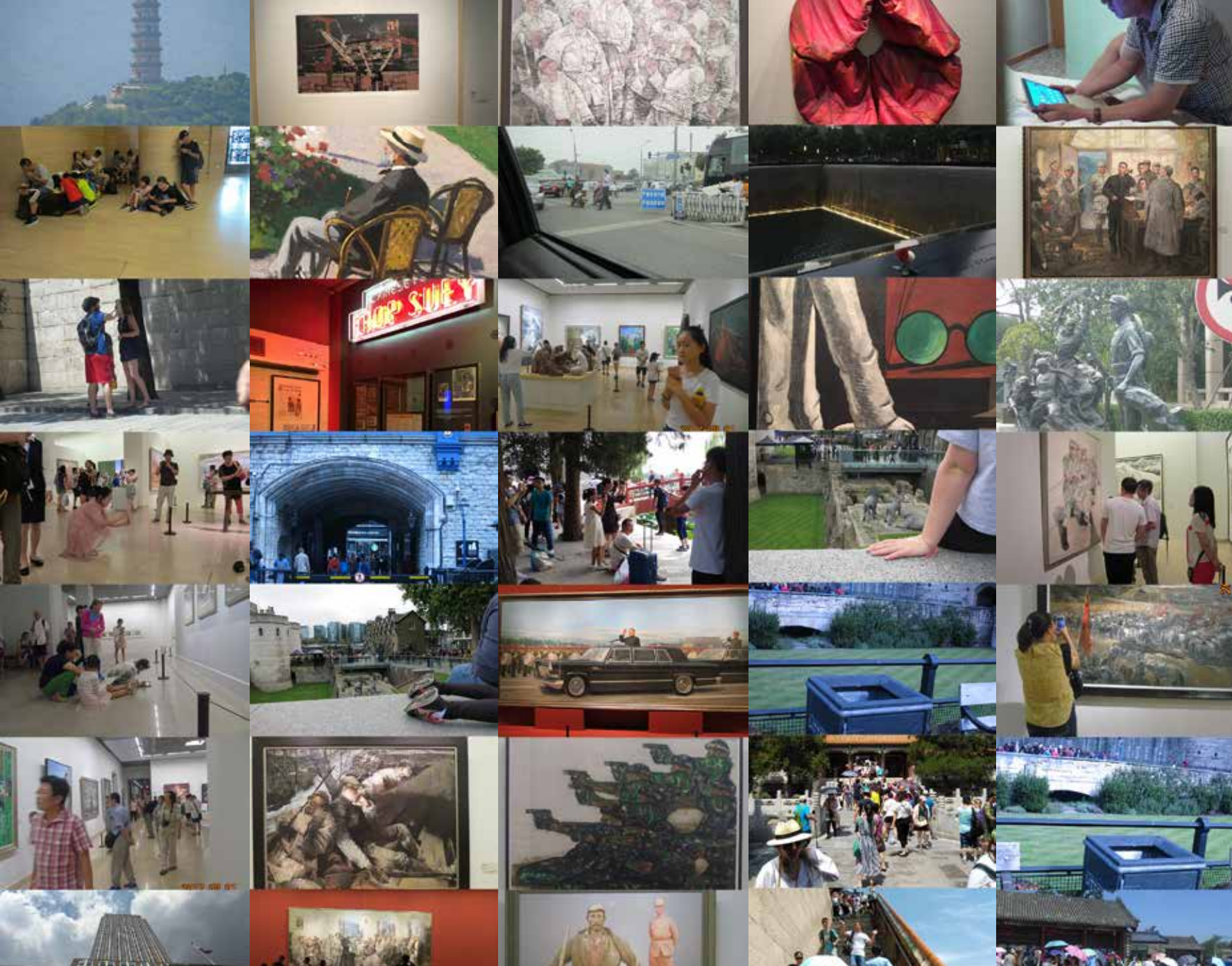




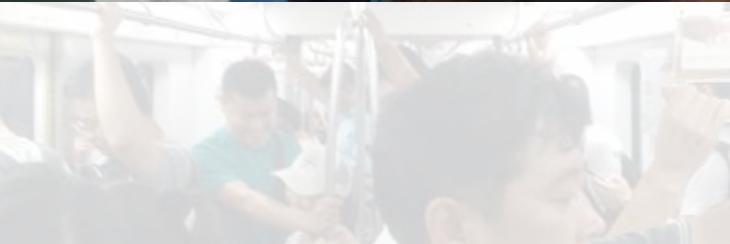




Kim, Myong Un. Subway







Kim, Myong Un. Subway







Kim, Myong Un. Subway



Kim, Myong Un. Street









Kim, Myong Un. People



Kim Myong Un.  
Families and Children









Kim Myong Un. Souvenir Shop



Kim, Myong Un. Summer Palace





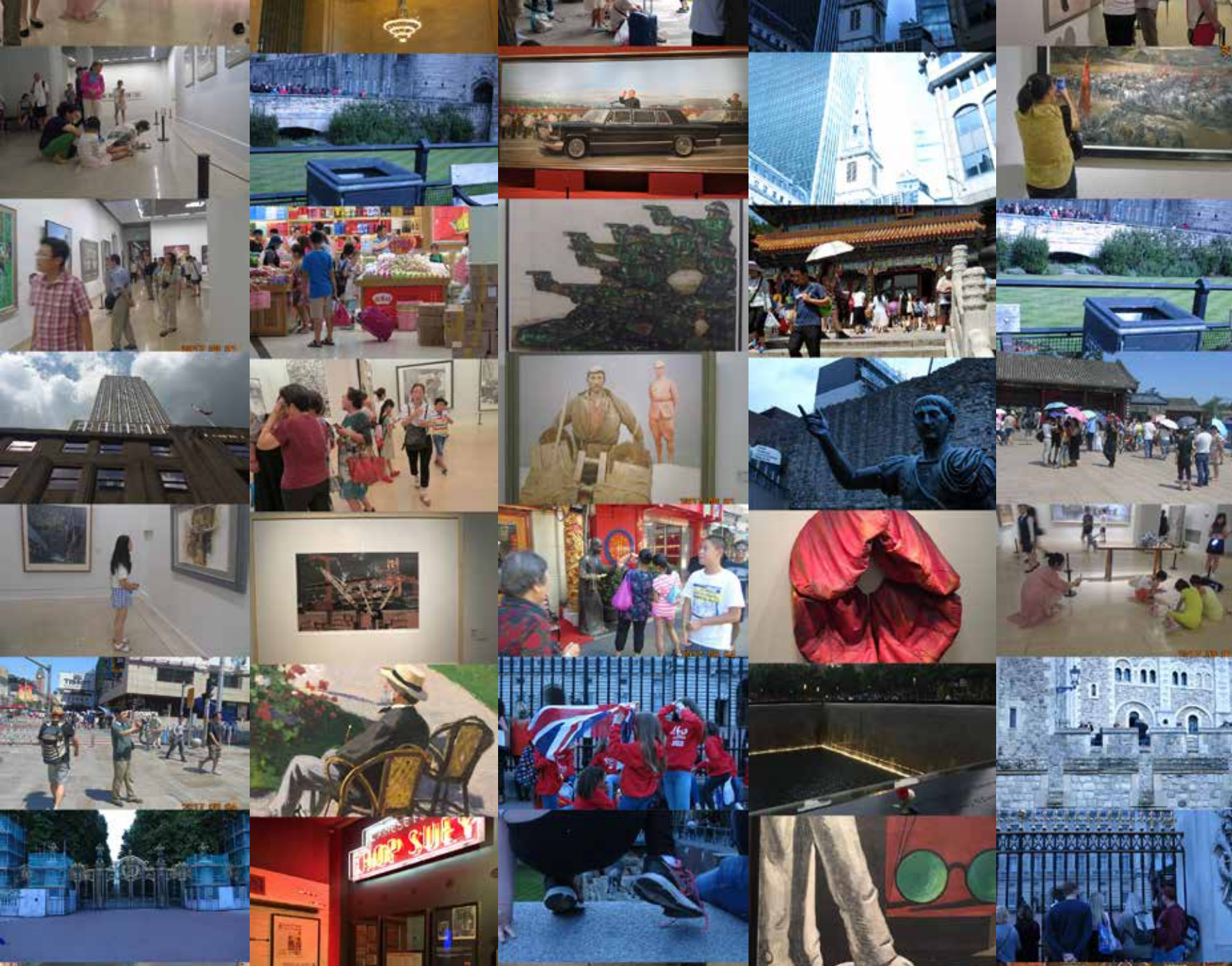






Kim, Myong Un. Summer Palace







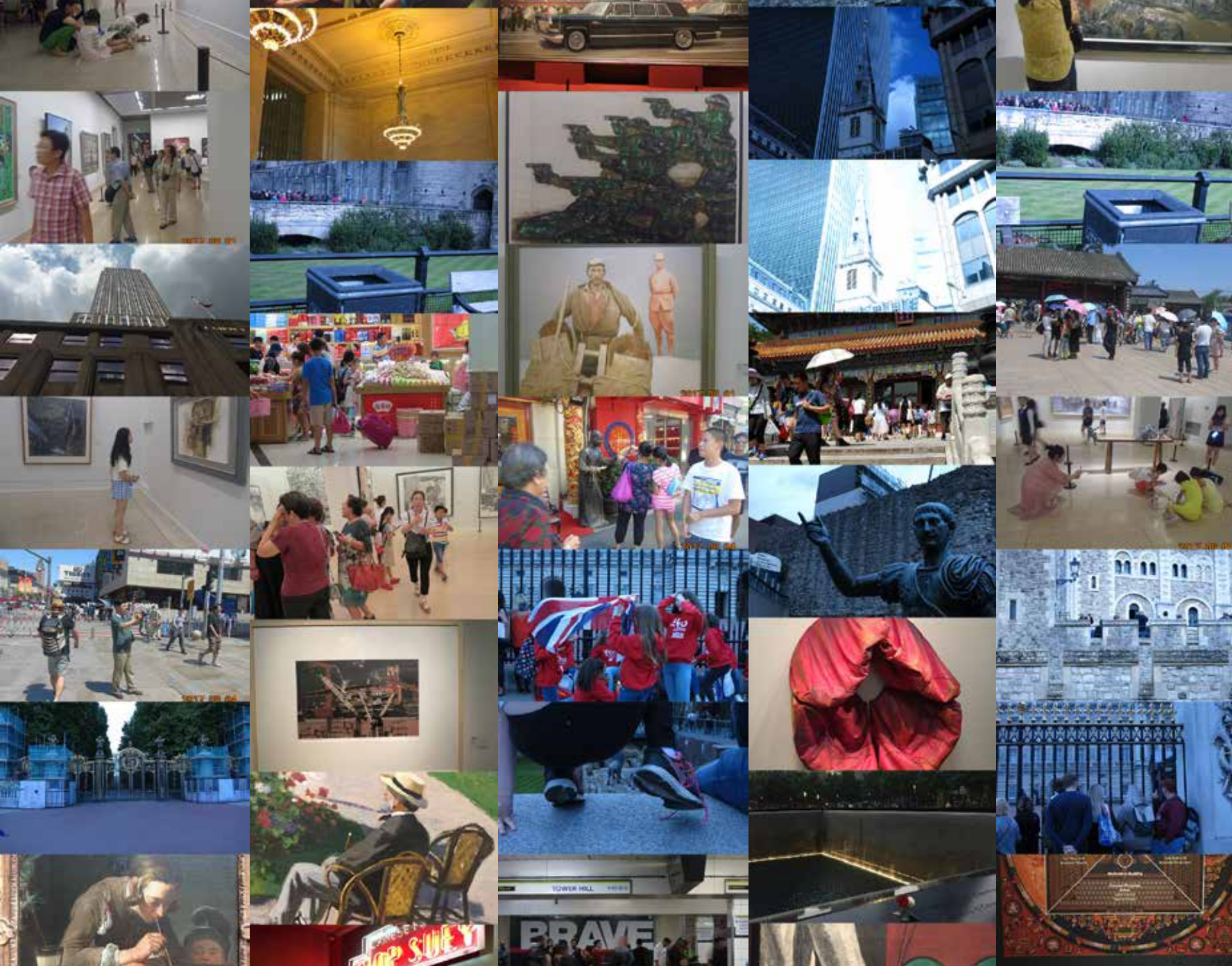


Kim, Myong Un. Summer Palace



Kim, Myong Un.  
Summer Palace, Children









Kim, Myong Un.  
Summer Palace, Children



Kim, Myong Un. Summer Palace





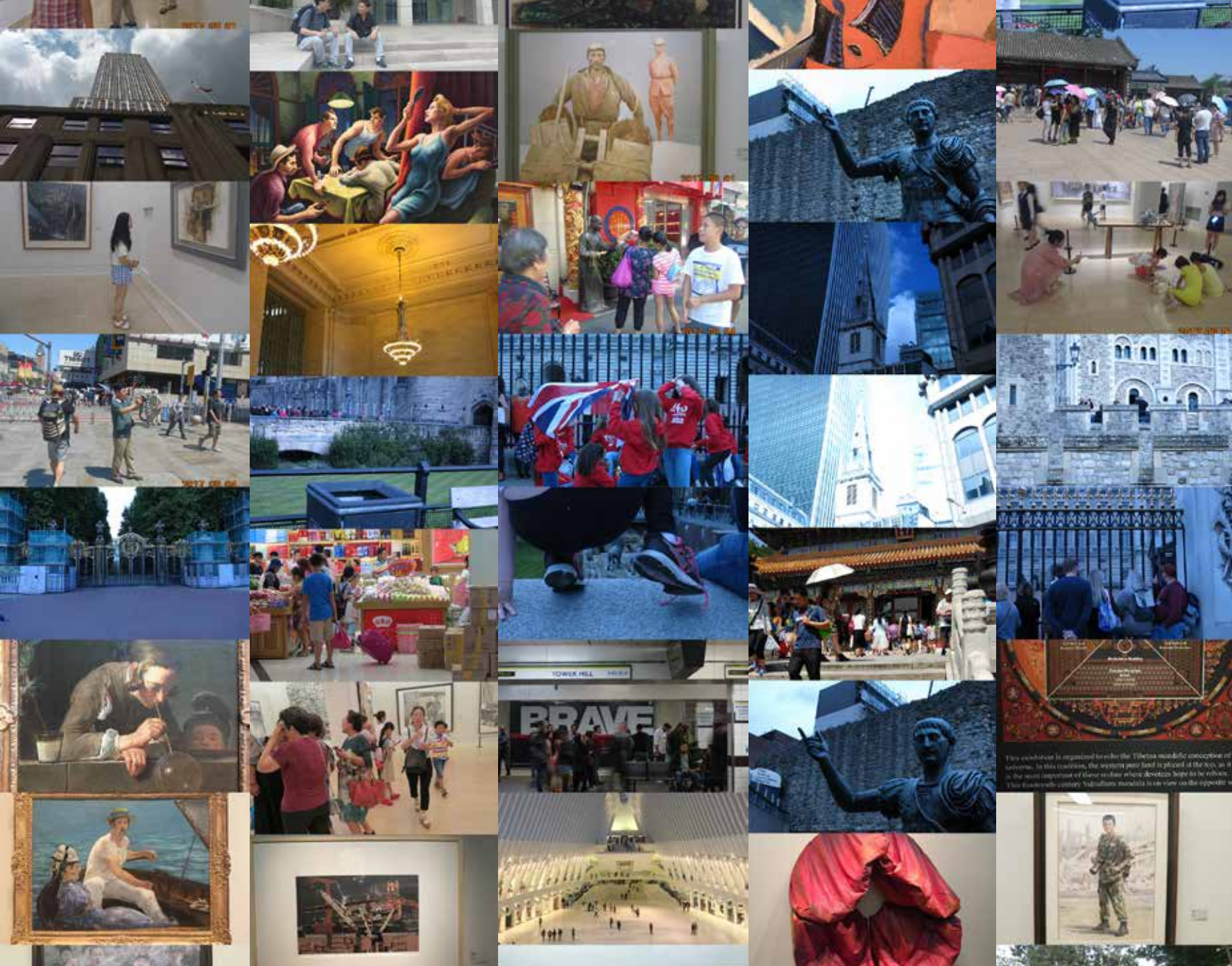






Kim, Myong Un.  
Summer Palace, People



















# Exhibition Checklist



1

Shen Yang  
(China)



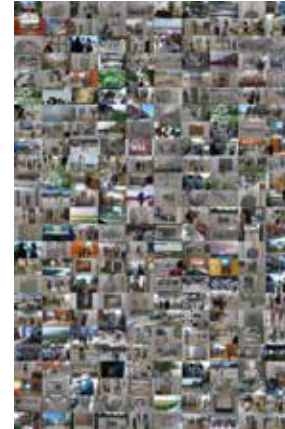
2

Ryong Kim  
(N Korea)



3

Myong Un Kim  
( N Korea)



4

Song-Gwang Hong  
(N Korea)



5

Zaun Lee  
(S. Korea /New York)



7



8



9



10



11

## COMMODITY & IDEOLOGY, PART II

The Church Center for the United Nations

777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017

October 12 – October 31, 2017



6

### Posters on South Wall

250 randomly chosen photographs per artist

Archival Ink on Paper, 37 x 56.5 inches each

1. Shen Yang  
(lives and works in China)  
Photos taken in New York
2. Ryong Kim  
(lives and works in North Korea)  
Photos taken in Beijing
3. Myong Un Kim  
(lives and works in North Korea)  
Photos taken in Beijing
4. Song-Gwang Hong  
(lives and works in North Korea)  
Photos taken in Beijing
5. Zaun Lee  
(lives and works in South Korea / New York)  
Photos taken in Athens & London
6. Random mix of photos by all five artists

### North Wall

7. Central Park  
16 x 20 in  
Shen Yang, 2017
8. Marketplace  
16 x 20 in  
Myong Un Kim, 2017
9. A Photograph of a Photograph of a Child  
Drawing a Child (at the National Museum  
of China)  
16 x 20 in  
Song-Gwang Hong, 2017
10. A painting of revolutionaries  
16 x 20 in  
Ryong Kim, 2017
11. In Athens  
20 x 16 in  
Zaun Lee, 2017





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**Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts**



**Mennonite  
Central  
Committee**