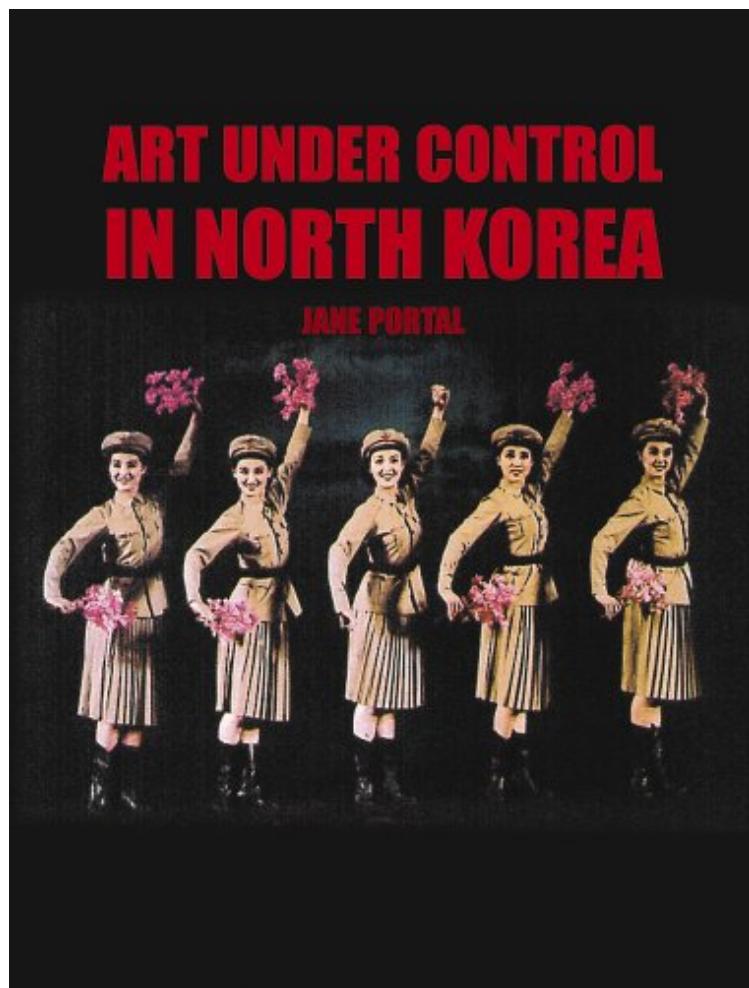


[Free] Art Under Control in North Korea (2005)

## Art Under Control in North Korea (2005)

*Jane Portal*

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**Jane Portal : Art Under Control in North Korea (2005)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Art Under Control in North Korea (2005):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. a fascinating book with important information on north koreaBy Merrily BairdIt is quite a delight these days to read a book on North Korea that manages to be politically relevant and insightful without focusing on the country's drive to acquire nuclear weapons, its appalling human rights record, or the self-absorbed behavior of its current leader, Kim Chong-il. This refreshingly different approach is what Jane Portal offers in her 2005 publication, "Art Under Control in North Korea." Portal, an assistant curator of Asian Art at the British Museum and author of a previous book on the history of Korean art, has worked hard to provide a political context for the arts in North Korea, and, overall, has proven herself a reliable scholar on this front. That a study of the arts in North Korea should be so important is due to two circumstances: in nearly all cases, the visual, performing, and written arts are controlled by the state and the official micromanaging them since the early 1970s at least is none other

than Kim Chong-il. The fact that art exists to serve the state is tackled in an introduction that puts the North Korean arts scene into historical context by offering valuable comparative background on the USSR, China, and Nazi Germany, and there then follow two more chapters that review North Korea's history. From Chapter 4 forward, Portal takes a close look at how art has been used to promote the cult of the two Kims--Kim Chong-il and his late father Kim Il-song. The changing themes and styles in art, the institutions set up to create the art, and timelines for the dedication of particularly important public works of art are all dealt with in a neutral, businesslike manner. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *Government Art...By Michael Valdivielso*  
*Art Under Control In North Korea*, by Jane Portal, is a wonderful book on the development of propaganda in North Korea under the Communists. The first chapter deals with art made for governments, with heavy focus on the USSR and China which both influenced Kim Il-kwang and North Korea's system of government. The second chapter deals with the history of Korea and its art. The third focuses on North Korean politics and society starting in 1953 and, of course, how that shaped the art world within the nation. The fourth chapter deals with the Cult that built up around Kim and the fifth chapter, one I found very interesting, was the changing and shaping of Korea's history by the Northern government. The last chapter, which I also found interesting, dealt with the history of the art schools and major artists of North Korea. I would suggest reading *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* after finishing this book for a more first hand account of North Korea and its society.

Nuclear bombs and geopolitical controversy are often the first things associated with the isolated Democratic Peoplesrsquo; Republic of Korea and its volatile leader Kim Jong-il. Yet behind the secretive curtain also lies a little known and slowly expanding world of art. This is the first book to be published in the West which explores the role of art in North Korea, a role that has been based on pronouncements made by the Great Leader, Kim Il-sung and his son the Dear Leader, Kim Jong-il, about what the State expected of its artists. Jane Portal makes comparisons with those of other, similar, regimes in the past, and finds a clear connection between North Korean art and the socialist realism of the Soviet Union and China. She places North Korean art in its historical, political and social context, and discusses the system of producing, employing, promoting and honouring artists. Painting, calligraphy, poster art, monumental sculpture, architecture and applied arts are included, together with a review of the way in which archaeology has been used and even created for political ends, to justify the present regime and legitimize its lineage. Jane Portal thus reveals much about art made under totalitarian rule, as well as how art subverts the regime. *Art Under Control in North Korea* accompanies an exhibition of North Korean art at the British Museum.

"Timely . . .nbsp;If only all political histories were accompanied by such engaging visual material."