## PORTFOLIO

February 2019 - Recent

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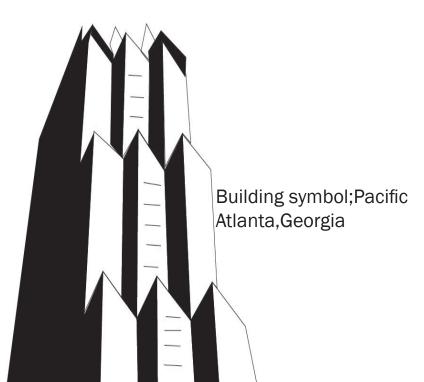


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"Art is an evolutionary act. The shape of art and its role in society is constantly changing. At no point is art static. There are no rules."

Feigned; there might be a collective nervous breakdown if it was suddenly announced that the Great Leader had been a verbose and arrogant fraud. Picture, if you will, the abrupt deprogramming of more than 20 million Moonies or Jonestowners, who are suddenly informed that it was all a cruel joke and there's no longer anybody to tell them what to do. There wouldn't be enough Kool-Aid to go round. I often wondered how my guides kept straight faces. The streetlights are turned out all over Pyongyangwhich is the most favored city in the country-every night. And the most prominent building on the skyline, in a town committed to hysterical architectural excess, is the Ryugyong Hotel. It's 105 floors high, and from a distance looks like a grotesquely enlarged version of the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco (or like a vast and cumbersome missile on a launchpad). The crane at its summit hasn't moved in years; it's a grandiose and incomplete ruin in the making. 'Under construction,' say the guides without a trace of irony. I suppose they just keep two sets of mental books and live with the contradiction for now.

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## Newswee

#### A Tarnished Icon

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# **A TARNISHED**

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Magazine editorial Magazine cover

Waleca at a colldartty ngress in Gdansk August, 30, 2006

> y 1984, Lech Walesa was an icon. A Polish shipyard electrician with modest farming roots, he had come from nowhere to inspire a workers' revolt that brought He had been awarded the Nobel Peace communism to its knees. He was dis- nical attempt by the regime to co-opt cussed by statesmen in Washington, Moscow, and Beijing. He had demonstrated the power of religious faith, and had privately met with Pope John Paul II. The way he cut his mustache had become fashionable. The blood-soaked logo of his Solidarity trade union sold Tshirts in Paris, Tokyo, and Los Angeles. Western publications had named him

"Man of the Year." The rock band U2 had dedicated a song to him. He had played himself in a movie made by Poland's greatest director, Andrzej Wajda. him into their dictatorship. Instead, he had returned to his children and to his wife, to his church and to his humble day job. He was an everyman and yet he was a superman.

with a visitor many people today will find surprising. It was none other than the openly bisexual pop star and gayr of his comments about gay people

is also going through spectacular social change, whoch appears to have left Walesa in the 20-th century.

to have left Walesa in the 20th century. Openly gay celebrities appear on television every day, gay nightclubs are a feature of every big city, and in 2010 Poland was the first country in eastern Europe to host the Europride demonstration (for days after, gay couples walked hand in hand through central Warsaw). In 2011, Poles elected their first openly gay M.P., Robert Biedrón, who was previously a gay-rights campaigner. In the same election, Poland became the first coun-

Though Poland is steeped in Catholic try in European history to elect a transtradition, it is also going through spec- sexual M.P., Anna Grodzka (previously tacular social change, which appears known as Krzysztof Begowski). Walesa's remarks were made in the context of a failed civil partnerships billwwww They might have gone unnoticed if they had been said in the more conservative Poland of the 1990s. But this month, condemnation from Polish public figures has been immediate and fierce. Walesa "disgraced the Nobel prize," said Monika Olejnik, one of Poland's most prominent journalists. A pressure group filed a complaint with prosecutors in Walesa's hometown of Gdansk, alleging "propa-

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