

BEDFORD + BOWERY

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BY DANIEL MAURER

NEWS
Here's Who Got Kim Jong-Un Haircuts at Bushwick Open Studios



L to R: Katie Grace McGowan and her subject. (Photo: Goran Butorac)

If you saw the poster advertising “free Kim Jong-Un haircuts” at [Bushwick Open Studios](#) this past weekend, you probably thought: is this for real? and would anyone actually get their hair trimmed “in accordance with the socialist lifestyle”? The answer is yes and yes.



(Photo: Goran Butorac)

[Katie Grace McGowan](#) – the “invisible theater” artist who offered the haircuts on Saturday at [ArtHelix](#) – says seven people actually let her take

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the clippers to them, even though she's a self-described "naturally ungifted" hairdresser with pretty much zero experience. (Until recently, she was curator of education and public engagement at [MoCA Detroit](#)) And still more opted to get their existing hair styled a la North Korean dictator.

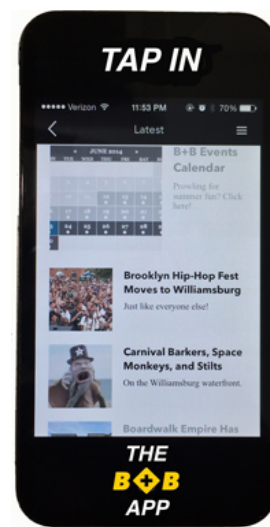


(Photo: Goran Butorac)

As the child of "pinko" parents and a onetime resident of what used to be Yugoslavia (where Tito was President for Life), McGowan has long been interested in "the relationship between socialism and communism and the line between a fascist dictatorship and a functioning communist society." She got the idea – a play on the hermit kingdom's [state-sanctioned haircuts](#) – from a [barbershop in London](#) that offered a similar deal.

McGowan isn't much of a barber ("my sweetheart's hair is now shaved nearly bald because I did such a bad job," she confesses of one of her less successful attempts), but she gave herself the supreme leader cut and then proceeded to do the same to a surprisingly diverse array of willing proles. "It really ran the gamut from bros who thought it was funny or wild to get their hair cut," she said, "to a Korean woman who really took it seriously and said she appreciated the whimsy of American artists and she thought this was a smart, fun way to poke fun at North Korea and this mentality."

In the end, the chair talk was "way more intellectual and deep than I would've expected," McGowan says.



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