



Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

NOH Sonntag

State of Emergency
March 1 – May 18, 2008

Press conference: Friday, February 29, 2007, 11 am



An exhibition by
Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart
Curated by
Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler
in collaboration with
Nathalie Boseul SHIN

Introduction

From March 1 to May 18, 2008, Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart is presenting the first comprehensive solo exhibition of the South Korean photo artist NOH Suntag in Europe. The show will feature about 200 photographs. NOH, born in Seoul in 1971, ranks among the most advanced photo artists in South Korea, his works having attracted great attention there in recent years. Among other shows, he took part in the *Gwangju Biennale* in 2006. The exhibition showcases works from between 2000 and 2007.

His series, which he usually develops over the course of several years and that consist of black-and-white as well as colour photos, observe conflict situations in contemporary Korean society. These conflicts go back to the division and war between North and South Korea, to the dictatorships in both parts of the country (in the South until 1987), and – in South Korea – to rampant turbo-capitalism since the 1990s. The picture that NOH draws of Korea is that of a constant state of emergency.

NOH, who creates his photographs in North and South Korea, is interested in the ambivalences and breaks within and between the two societies: their mirror relationship, the military presence and ideological extremes on both sides, the relationship between the individual and the masses, or the situations – both subtle and openly violent – that pervade everyday life in the South and the North alike.

This ambivalence is reflected in NOH's very individual aesthetic, that combines the documentary with the fictitious, the snapshot with stringent composition. The harsh contrasts amplify the drama of the mostly conflict-laden situations that he depicts – a drama that is, at the same time, countermanded by the sobriety and detachment of his gaze. As a result of being integrated in series, the perfection of the single picture must be seen in perspective. Far removed from the aesthetics and strategies of staged photography, they nevertheless appear posed. They remind us of film scenes or apply aesthetics of fashion photography as well as traditions of pathos-laden landscape photography. It is precisely this unclassifiable, contradictory aspect that distinguishes NOH's photographs.

Works at the exhibition (selection)

State of Emergency, Photo series, 2000 - 2007

State of Emergency shows demonstrations and riots in South Korea, triggered mainly by the US military presence and its occupation of land. The Korean government enforces the resulting displacement of the impoverished rural population with massive police operations. The radical nature and often violent escalation of these confrontations often bring back memories of the Japanese occupation and various waves of expropriation after the Korean War (1950-1953).

Artistically, however, NOH is concerned with another phenomenon, too. The military education of the entire male population of South Korea, based on the fantasy of a constant threat from the North, is reflected in the uniform appearance of both sides: the armoured officers and the civilian groups.

Patriotic Road, Photo series, 2003 - 2004

The series of photos entitled *Patriotic Road* focuses on a line of conflict that also results from the history of Korea, particularly from the brutally waged Korean War, that caused the North – economically and militarily superior up to the 1960s – to appear as a lasting severe threat. The scenarios of this threat are used for ideological ends to this day. They lead to mass demonstrations of extreme nationalist groups who reject any rapprochement with North Korea. The vehemence with which this conflict is waged in public also reflects how deeply it divides society in the South – for example between pro-American and anti-American camps. The fact that the South Korean government has only recently begun to discuss abolishing a law prohibiting anyone from talking positively in any form about North Korea is further proof of this conflict.

Red House I – III, Photo series, 2003 - 2007

The *Red House I – III* series comprises black-and-white photos that deal with the way North and South Koreans see each other. Taken during an official press trip through North Korea, they show in various constellations how North Koreans look at South Koreans and vice versa. The camera always plays the role of mediator: as a filter and eye-catcher at once. In addition, the series consists of colour photos that NOH took during an official act of state at the Pyongyang stadium. They show the breathtaking tableaux vivants staged by crowds to pay tribute to the country's landscape, economies, leisure time, and military power. NOH's photographs focus on the tension between perfect choreography and its disintegration.

Forgetting Machine, Photo series, 2006 – 2007

The *Forgetting Machine* series deals with cultures of mourning work, focusing amongst other things portraits of deceased persons, which are displayed at a graveyard. The portraits represent the victims of demonstrations against the military government that took place in Gwangju (South Korea) in 1980, in the course of which hundreds of mostly young people were killed.

Black Hook Down, Photo series, 2006

The *Black Hook Down* series shows photos of the sky over South Korea: a sky dotted with US military helicopters.

Biography

NOH Suntag

<http://suntag.egloos.com>

Born 1971 in Seoul, lives in Seoul

Education

Konkuk University

Hongik Graduated School

Solo exhibitions (Choice)

2007 *Red House*, Gallery Lotus, Paju

2006 *The StrAnge Ball*, Shinhan Gallery, Seoul

2004 *Smells like the division of the Korean peninsula*, Kim-Young-Seob Gallery, Seoul

Double exhibitions (Choice)

2007 Noh Suntag + Sun-mu, Gallery Hogishim, Seoul

2007 Joo Myung-duck + Noh Suntag, Geonhi, Seoul

Group exhibitions (Choice)

2007 *Art toward the Society*, Bandaijima Art Museum, Japan

2007 *Gyeonggi, The national road No.1*, Gyeonggi-do Museum of Art

2007 *The Voyeurs*, Trunk Gallery, Seoul

2007 *Photography is a response*, Okgwa Art Museum, Gwangju

2007 *Counterpoint*, Coreana Museum of Art Space *C, Seoul und Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai

2007 *Move, from us to Earth*, Coex, Seoul

2007 *Surface of War*, Museum of Peace, Seoul

2007 *Landschaft (Entfernung)*, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart

2007 *Comical & Cynical*, Dawn Center, Osaka Japan

2007 *Political Design & Design of Politics*, ZeroOne Design center, Seoul

2006 *Asia Art Now*, SSamzie Space, Seoul und Arario, Beijing

2006 *10 neighborhood*, Hwangsaewool photo atelier und GwanHoon Gallery, Seoul 2006 *Gwangju Biennale*

2006 *Labor, Art, Exorcism*, Incheon Artcenter, Incheon

2006 *Spotlight Woman*, Papertainer Museum, Seoul

2006 *Yoga & Cofe*, ShinHan Gallery, Seoul

2006 *A scene so familiar that it seems strange*, Arko Museum, Seoul

2006 *Circuit Diagram*, Songwon Artcenter, Seoul

2006 *Spring should be spring for anyone*, Space Peace, Seoul

2006 *On Difference #2*, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart

2006 *Face of time*, time of face, Artspace Hue, Seoul

2006 *Shot the Trigger*, BB Space, Daejeon

2005 *Conjunction Points*, Jeollanamdo Provincial Building, Gwangju

2005 *Kim In-Kyu, a convicted teacher, and his inculpable friends*, Gallery KKot, Seoul

2005 *Migrants' Arirang "Living Together"*, Seoul City Hall Square

2005 *Conjunction Point*, Jeollanamdo Provincial Building, Gwangju

2004 *The Persisting Moment. Okinawa Archipelago and Korean Peninsula*, P.S.1, NewYork

2004 *Floating Island*, Jeollanamdo Shinan-Abpae-Anjua-Palgeum-Amtae-Jawoon Island Round display

2004 *For well-deserved freedom... "manifesto"*, Korea Democracy Foundation, Seoul

2004 *Flow AnyangRiver Project*, Gallery Stone & Water, AhnYang

2004 *The Realing 15 years*, Savina Museum, Seoul

2004 *Prohibited Imagination*, Korea Democracy Foundation, Seoul

2003 *ImageAct*, Ilju art center, Seoul

2003 *Welcome to SSewool*, Kwanghwamoon Gallery, Seoul

2003 *A Triangle of Records and Memories*, Okinawa - Osaka - Tokyo - Seoul Round display

Publications

2007 *Red House*, Chungaram Publishing Co, Korea

2005 *Smells like the division of the Korean peninsula*, Dangdae press, Korea

Public Collections

National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea (2007)

Daelim Contemporary Art Museum (2007)

Peace Museum, Korea (2007)

The May 18 Memorial Foundation (2006)

Art Bank Korea (2005)

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Press conference

Friday, February 29, 2008, 11 am

Opening

Friday, February 29, 2008, 7 pm

Artist's exhibition tour

Saturday, March 1, 2008, 1 pm

Hours

Tue, Thu – Sun: 11 am – 6 pm

Wed: 11 am – 8 pm

Entrance

5/3 Euro

Images and material for the press

www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/press

Contact press

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