

April 19, 2017

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**Art Sonje Center Holds Solo Exhibition by Artist NOH Suntag**

- The 4th Wall: The State of Emergency II, June 2-August 6, 2017
- Second version of The State of Emergency I exhibition, which toured Germany and Spain in 2008-2009
- How did we end up living in the tragicomedy of a permanent state of emergency?
  - The paradox of law existing outside the law

Art Sonje Center, an institution headed by director Sunjung Kim that has worked to spotlight the current state of experimental contemporary art, announced on April 19 that it will be holding *The 4th Wall: The State of Emergency II*, an exhibition of the work of artist NOH Suntag, from June 2 to August 6, 2017.

NOH Suntag's previous *The State of Emergency I* solo exhibition, held in 2008 at the Kunstverein in Stuttgart, used the language of photography to show the skewed environment of tension and conflict generated by the division between South and North Korea. He followed this with another solo exhibition the following year at the municipal art center in Virreina Palace, Barcelona, which adopted the same critical approach as *The State of Emergency I* in its new work spotlighting the darkness of additional incidents that had taken place in the past ten years.

Consisting of around 200 works of photography, *The 4th Wall: The State of Emergency II* will be shown on the second and third floors of Art Sonje Center. An exhibition catalog of the same title is to be published alongside the event, while a curator's talk, artist's talk, and other programs will offer opportunities to approach NOH's artistic vision in a multifaceted way.

The "state of emergency" concept referenced in the exhibition title is taken from the German constitutional law expert Carl Schmitt. Schmitt was the figure who established the judicial trappings for the Nazi administration in Germany, furnishing a crucial theoretical foundation for the Enabling Act, or the so-called "state of emergency law." His creation has had an influence on many intellectuals on both the left and right in their efforts to

understand and analyze the functioning of the modern state. NOH Suntag has viewed the "state of emergency" concept as key to understanding South Korean society, which has existed in a never-ending state of emergency through war and division since its liberation from colonial rule. Schmitt's famous argument that a sovereign "must be he who is capable of making decisions in exceptional circumstances, while he who seeks to protect constitutional government must be able to do so outside the Constitution" is, according to NOH, one that compels a re-examination of modern South Korean history and the black marks of its Yushin Constitution, Emergency Measures, and military coup d'état. What about the proposition that "the essence of politics lies in distinguishing enemies from comrades"? Does this not recall the politics of betrayal and the monopoly on constitutional government that have generated such heated passions in South Korean society over the past several years?

*The 4th Wall: The State of Emergency II*, which is being staged in South Korea, goes deeper than the European-staged *The State of Emergency I* in spotlighting the society's inner workings. The fact that the period in between the two exhibitions saw Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye governing as Presidents of South Korea has significant implications. New work in the *State of Emergency* series, which shows the landscape of police authority enlisted by the modern state to achieve its will to power, will be joined by such new series as *Namildang Design Olympic*, *Arrest*, *Vertigo*, *Drought*, *Deadpan of Cheonanham*, *Gangjeong Gangjeom*, *Wrong Island*, *A chignon mountain raised by lies*. The term "fourth wall" refers to the invisible wall separating actors from the audience, where the stage is conceived as being analogous to a room. Perhaps the boundary between South and North Korea is its own fourth wall, showing the extreme theater on either side. It is also a wall that points inward toward South Korea's own society. The reality of South Korea today, while undoubtedly real, is also so incredibly theatrical that it becomes surrealistic or unrealistic. Where do you stand on this unrealistic stage – inside or out?

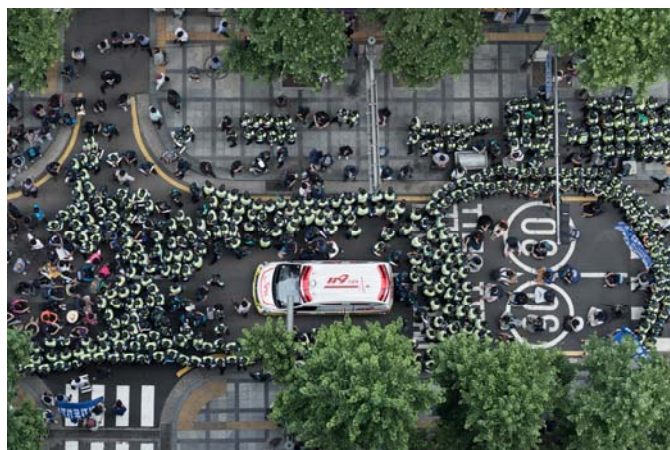
NOH Suntag has worked as a writer while using photographs to capture the landscapes of the functioning/malfunctioning contemporary South Korean society spawned by national division. He is a recipient of the Donggang Photography Award (2012), the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art's Artist of the Year Award (2014), and the Gu Bon-ju Art Prize (2016).

This exhibition was a cooperative effort by Sunjung Kim, director of Art Sonje Center; Hans

D. Christ, director of the Württembergische Kunstverein in Stuttgart; and Natalie Boseul Shin, a curator in chief at Total Museum of Contemporary Art. Christ, who as a curator planned NOH's touring exhibitions in Germany (2008) and Spain (2009), is also co-author of the Hatje Cantz publication *State of Emergency*.

Art Sonje Center endeavors to present the contemporary context and critical discourse through an open perspective, and is devoted to experimental and multidisciplinary practices with the exhibition as our central focus. Established in 1998 as a private museum, Art Sonje Center is located in the Jongno district of Seoul, in Sogyek-dong.

### Images of Work



NOH Sonntag, *State of Emergency#CGG0801*, 2016, Inkjet pigment print, Dimensional variable



NOH Suntag, *Vertigo* #I-CFJ1301, 2015,  
Inkjet pigment print, Dimensional variable

NOH Suntag, *Drought* #CFF0121, 2015,  
Inkjet pigment print, Dimensional variable