

NOKDU BOOKSTORE FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD Gwangju Biennale, 31 August - 6 November 2016

There are places that function as a knot, a knot where an infinite number of events, history flows, narrative lines, life stories, ideas, desires, sorrows, positions, memories, longings, collide; collide as in a knot. They all crystallize in a relatively small, unimportant place. Borges called this The Aleph. NOKDU bookstore, re-constructed and re-baptized for the GB 2016 as NOKDU bookstore for the living and the dead, was such a place. A modest bookstore where the Gwangju Uprising 5.18 (1980) was incubated and hatched, where Yoon Sang-won attended a 1976 speech given by poet Kim Nam-ju discussing the Paris Commune, where women got organized and self-managed to respond to violence and misinformation, where news were distributed, where corpses were shrouded and mourned, and where books were sold, discussed, and read. Every bookstore is a sort of Aleph, a condensed archive of men and women's lives. It is from this position where we set the NOKDU bookstores for the living and the dead in 2016, at the Gwangju Biennale, in collaboration with The Book Society.



NOKDU BOOKSTORE FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD opened the same day as the Gwangju Biennale 2016, The Eighth Climate (What does art do?) on August 31, and it was placed right at the main entrance of the Biennale halls, so that it was one of the first artworks that people encountered when entering the biennale, and given its volume and appearance, and the fact that it functioned as well as the bookstore of the biennale, it was one of the favorite places for visitors and artists to hang around, see some books, have a cup of tea, or participate in the very intense public program that during the opening week and all through the three months of the biennale, took place in NOKDU.



NOKDU bookstore had a high emotional impact among Gwangju citizens, since everything that relates strongly to the Gwangju uprising is still far from being resolved and its memory is very vivid. From the very beginning of the project, I could count on the complicity and help of the founders of the original NOKDU bookstore, Kim Sang-yoon and Jung Hyunae, and the 518 Archives, the local institution dealing with 518 legacies. I was so lucky as well to deserve the complicity and collaboration of everyone that had been involved in this first bookstore and the activities and the struggle that had taken place during those ten days. And also the warmth of many Gwangju citizens who brought fruits and flowers almost daily.

Next to that, it was specially rewarding the collaboration with Seoul bookstore The Book Society and Gwangju bookstore McGuffin. Thanks to them the bookstore was an active and real bookstore all through the Biennale, with meetings, books presentations, discussions, and visits. Nokdu, The Book Society and McGuffin cooperated together as well with an edition of postcards.

This was the program of events during the opening week:

Monday 29 August

15:00–17:30

Lectures by Dora García and Kim Sang-yoon on the Nokdu bookstore project and a conversation moderated by Professor Seo Ki Moon, as part of Infra-School at Chonnam University College of Art, 77 Yongbong-ro, Buk-gu, Gwangju

Tuesday 30 August

14:00–18:00

Photography and typeface, poster-making workshop I: Communication and diffusion of what is happening now, in our present, in our reality, following the protocols of the original Nokdu, with contributions by Kim Hyangdeuk (photographer) and Yoon Mansik at the Nokdu bookstore.

Wednesday 31 August (preview)

13:00–16:00

Photography and typeface, poster-making workshop II: Communication and diffusion of what is happening now, in our present, in our reality, following the protocols of the original Nokdu, with contributions by Song Heesung at the Nokdu bookstore.

16:00–18:00

Talk on the Nokdu bookstore, with contributions by Jung Hyunae and Kim Sang-yeon at the Nokdu bookstore.

Thursday 1 September (preview)

16:00–18:00

Discussion on the role of women in the tradition of revolt in Korea and Songbaekhwoi, with contributions by Lim Younghee, Jung Hyunae, and Lee Yunjung at the Nokdu bookstore

Friday 2 September

15:00–16:30

Talk on Wild Fire Night School (Deulbul Yahak), Yoon Sangwon, and the influence of La Commune with contributions by Jun Yongho and Na Myungkwan at the Nokdu bookstore.



NOKDU bookstore was very well reviewed. You can find below a selection of links with a special focus on NOKDU bookstore.

The Biennale has been visited by about 600.000 visitors, with a daily average of 9.000 visitors. Now, at the closure of the show, many elements will be donated to the 518 Archive and therefore, somehow, will stay in Gwangju forever.

Finally, NOKDU was awarded the Noon prize for the best work of the Biennale, shared with Anton Vidokle.



LINKS:

<http://observer.com/2016/09/south-korea-needs-political-art-and-the-11th-annual-gwangju-biennale-delivers-it/>

<http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/%E2%80%9Cthe-eighth-climate-what-does-art-do%E2%80%9D-11th-gwangju-biennale/>

<http://momus.ca/the-11th-gwangju-biennales-overreach-what-does-art-do/>

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2016/10/148_213411.html

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/gwangju-biennale-2016-review-630122>

<http://artradarjournal.com/2016/10/31/eighth-climate-6-highlights-at-gwangju-biennale-2016/>

<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/gwangju-biennale/>

<http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1506594/revolutionary-road-gwangju-looks-to-its-troubled-past>

<http://www.squarecylinder.com/2016/10/the-11th-gwangju-biennial/>

