



International Center of Photography

Contact: Communications Department
212-857-0045 info@icp.org

news release



Atta Kim: On-Air

On view from
June 9 through
August 27, 2006

Media Preview
June 8, 2006
9:30 - 11am

RSVP:
info@icp.org
212.857.0045

Atta Kim
ON-AIR Project, Sacheonwangsang, 8 Buddhas, 2003
© Atta Kim

From June 9 through August 27, 2006, the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) will present *Atta Kim: On-Air*, a selection of large-scale color works by the South Korean artist Atta Kim. The exhibition, organized by ICP curator Christopher Phillips, will be the first major U.S. solo show for Atta Kim, one of his country's most innovative contemporary artists. It will feature approximately twenty of his spectacular photographic works, some as large as 6 by 8 feet, taken almost exclusively from his recent "On-Air" project. In addition, installations of his work will be mounted in ICP's large exterior windows on the northwest corner of the Avenue of the Americas and 43rd Street.

Atta Kim first won wide attention in the U.S. in 2001, when he took part in *Translated Acts: Performance and Body Art from East Asia*, a traveling exhibition that appeared at the Queens Museum. Although Atta Kim's photographs have subsequently been seen in numerous international group shows, his work does not fit easily within the usual categories of contemporary art. Notable for their cinematic scale, dramatic composition, and technical perfection, his photographs are certainly among the most striking works to be seen today. But this visual seductiveness ultimately proves a kind of lure, which the artist cunningly employs to lead viewers into unfamiliar realms of thought.

In the "On-Air" project, Atta Kim uses extremely long exposures—sometimes lasting as long as twenty-four hours—to create images that explore fundamental questions of time and perception, presence and absence. Creating highly unusual images of such varied subjects as erotic coupling, the landscape along the Korean Demilitarized Zone, and the seemingly deserted midday precincts of Times Square, he suggests that it is possible for us to imagine duration in ways that are radically different from our everyday experience.

The “On-Air” project grew directly out of Atta Kim’s best-known body of work, “The Museum Project” (1995–2002). The photographs in “The Museum Project” present what the artist calls “contemporary treasures”: a variety of individuals and groups who are posed formally inside Plexiglas boxes as if in a museum display. These works represent the artist’s attempt to identify and isolate the main aspects of human experience—from the raw physical drive of sexuality to refined spiritual yearnings. “The Museum Project” ended in 2002, when Atta Kim realized that all of the beings whom he had “collected” in this private museum would eventually cease to exist. The subsequent “On-Air” project amounts to an extended meditation on the fact that every person and object now in existence will ultimately vanish.

In a way that recalls the American photographer Minor White, Atta Kim is an artist who is fascinated by esoteric thought, and he regards his photographs as the by-product of his effort to develop a personal philosophy of life. Among his chief influences are the Asian spiritual disciplines, especially Zen Buddhism; the writings of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger on the role of time in human existence; and the teachings of the Russian-Armenian mystic G. I. Gurdjieff. From these sources, Atta Kim has devised a set of “image training” techniques that he describes as crucial to the generation of his photographs.

Atta Kim was born in South Korea in 1956. He graduated from Changwon University with a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering and has been actively photographing since the mid-1980s. He has had solo shows at the Samsung Photo Gallery, Seoul; the Nikon Salon Gallery, Tokyo; and the Yechong Gallery, Seoul. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including shows at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago; The Odens Foto Triennale in Odens, Denmark; the Australian Centre for Photography; the 25th São Paulo Bienal; and FotoFest in Houston. His work has been collected by many institutions, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the L.A. County Museum of Art; the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; and the Samsung Museum of Modern Art, Seoul.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by ICP/Steidl. It will provide a comprehensive survey of Atta Kim’s work since the early 1990s, with a special emphasis on the “On-Air” project. The catalogue will contain a lengthy interview, conducted by ICP curator Christopher Phillips, in which the artist discusses each of his photographic projects and the thinking that lies behind them.

Atta Kim: On-Air, organized by the International Center of Photography, was made possible with support from the Korean Culture & Arts Foundation.