Saigon Case Study

Commissioned by the 12th Gwangju Biennale, Saigon Case Study is structured around two texts that tell the story of the planning, construction, and eventual abandonment of the US embassy in Saigon from opposing perspectives; The View from Hanoi and The View from Washington. Each text runs through four prints with identical layouts and illustrations, and each advances its own interpretation, including a distinct nomenclature, of events in the long Vietnam conflict of the 1960s and 70s. The delicate tissue between these two narratives is the skin of the US embassy building itself: a concrete lattice facade and a sculptural perimeter wall, both penetrated in the 1968 Mau Than General Offensive and Uprising (known as the Tet Offensive in the US). These concrete membranes are the models for the installation's two large-scale sculptures: a 1:1 recreation of a full section of the building's lattice wall in resin-coated EPS foam; and a module from the compound's perimeter wall, cast in solid concrete.

Documentation:
Installation views at the 12th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, Korea. Curator: Clara Kim. Graphics: Vincent Schneider

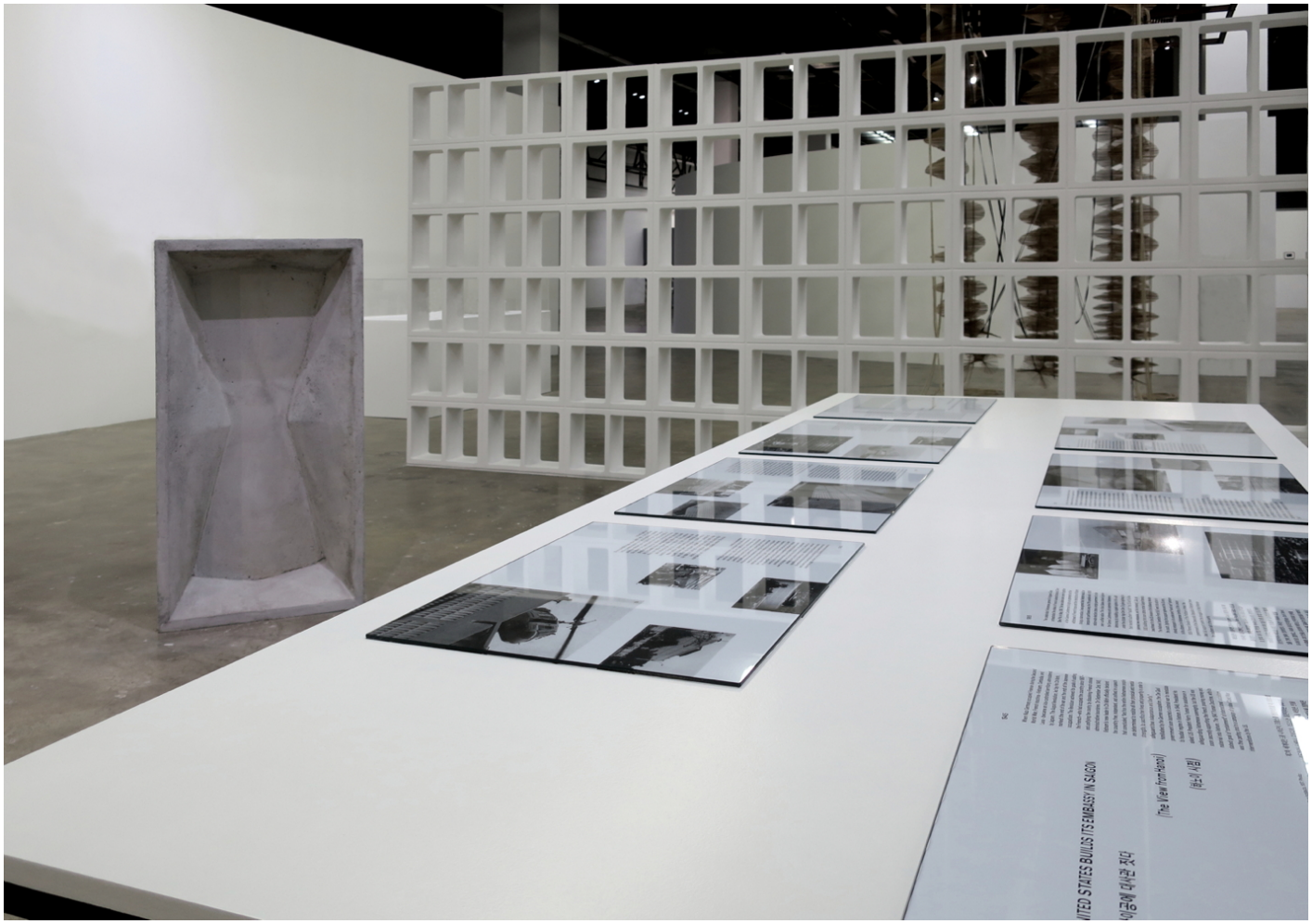
Saigon Case Study

Terence Gower, 2018

Table: 8 black and white plotter prints under glass, 120 x 320 x 92 cm

Sculpture 1: White enamel on resin-coated EPS foam, 266 x 682 x 25 cm

Sculpture 2: Solid, reinforced concrete, 150 x 72.5 x 37.5 cm


UNITED STATES BUILDS ITS EMBASSY IN SAIGON
[The View from Hanoi]
[베트남 시점]

1975
A peace accord signed in Paris in January 1973 stipulated
the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam that same year.
Before leaving, the US completed an intensive training
program – Vietnamization – of the army of the Republic
of Vietnam. The US trained troops of South Vietnam
to defend their country to the best of their abilities but were
overwhelmed by invading North Vietnamese communist
forces advancing southwards in violation of the January
1973 peace accord. The South Vietnamese army, aided by the Viet Cong, made it to
Saigon on April 30th, 1975. In a dramatic helicopter
evacuation, US citizens
and other foreigners were evacuated to
US Embassy grounds and roof. US citizens
and their families were evacuated to
the Defense Department building where Graham Martin was
joined by President
Gerald Ford and other US officials from
the Embassy roof. Later
that month, President Ford ordered the
US Marines to evacuate
Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and
Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam.
7
6
1955
1945

1967: THE UNITED STATES BUILDS ITS EMBASSY IN SAIGON

1967년: 미국, 사이공에 대사관 짓다

(The View from Hanoi)

(하노이 시점)

Photographs

1. Architects Nathaniel Curtis and Arthur Davis, 1955. Photo: Arthur Q. Davis / 2. Presentation Rendering, US Embassy Project, Saigon. Curtis and Davis Architects, 1957. Photo: General Records of the Department of State, Photo Collection, National Archives / 3. Plans, US Embassy Project, Saigon with Security Revisions by Adrian Wilson and Associates, 1966. Photo: General Records of the Department of State, Blueprints Collection, National Archives / 4. New US Embassy Building, Saigon, October 1967. Photo: Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University, Curtis and Davis Office Records / 5. B40 Rocket Damage to US Embassy Façade, Mau Than General Uprising–Tet Offensive, January 31, 1968. Photo: Ho Chi Minh City Museum / 6. Hole Blown in US Embassy Perimeter Wall by NLF Special Task Force, January 31, 1968. Photo: Ho Chi Minh City Museum / 7. Evacuation from US Embassy Compound, Saigon, April 30, 1975. Photo: Randy Smith / 8. Vietnamese Citizens Storming US Embassy Compound, Saigon, April 29, 1975. Photo: Randy Smith / 9. Former US Embassy Building, Ho Chi Minh City, May 1, 1975. Photo: Tiziano Terzani / 10. Helicopter Evacuation From Roof of US Embassy Building, Saigon, April 30, 1975. Photo: Peter Arnett

Sources

Del Carmen Ariet, María. *Vietnam.* Editorial de Ciencias Sociales del Instituto del Libro, Havana, 1969 / Duan, Le. *La revolucción vietnamita.* Editorial de Ciencias Sociales del Instituto del Libro, Havana, 1971 / D'Estéfano, Miguel A., and Moré Benítez, Juan B. *Viet Nam: Violaciones de acuerdos internacionales y crimines de Guerra.* Comité Cubano de solidaridad con Viet Nam del Sur, Insituto del Libro, Havana, 1968 / FitzGerald, Frances. *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam.* Little, Brown, and Company, New York, 1972 / Giap, Vo Nguyen. *Unforgettable Days.* The Gioi Publishers, Hanoi, 2015 / Giap, Vo Nguyen. *El pueblo del sur de Vietnam vencera.* Ediciones en lenguas extranjeras, Hanoi, 1965 / Goscha, Christopher. *History of Modern Vietnam.* Penguin Books, 2016 / Guan, Ang Cheng. *The Vietnam War from the Other Side: The Vietnamese Communists' Perspective.* Routledge Curzon, London, 2000 / Ho Chi Minh. *Diario de Prisión.* Institutio del Libro, Havana, 1970 / Luu, Le. *A Time Far Past.* University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 2013 / Luan, Mai, Xuan, Dac, and Tien, Tran Dan. *Ho Chi Minh: From Childhood to President of Vietnam.* The Gioi Publishers, Hanoi, 2015 / Ninh, Bao. *The Sorrow of War: A Novel of North Vietnam.* Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd, London, 1993 / Nguyen, Lien Hang. *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam,* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2012 / Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2016 / Terzani, Tiziano. *Saigon 1975: Three Days and Three Months.* Saint Martin's Press, New York, 1976 and White Lotus Ltd, Bangkok, 1997 / Russell, Bertrand. *War Crimes in Vietnam.* George Allen & Unwin, London, 1967 / Tram, Dang Thuy. *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace.* Rider Books, London, 2007 / Vien, Nguyen Khac. *Vietnam: A Long History.* Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi, 1987 / Woolf, Cecil and Bagguley, John. *Los intelectuales ante el Vietnam.* Alfaguara, Madrid, 1968 / *La République Socialiste du Viet Nam.* Editions en langues étrangeres, Hanoi,1980

1945

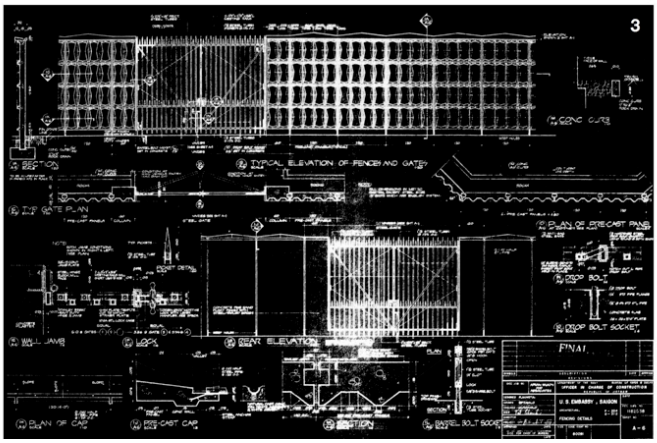
When Nazi Germany occupied France during the Second World War, French Indochina – Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos – became an Axis-controlled territory, administered by Japan. The August Revolution, led by Ho Chi Minh, marked the end of the war and the end of the Japanese occupation. The Revolution achieved its goals of ousting the French – who had occupied the country since 1887 – and unifying the country, by dissolving French colonial administrative boundaries. On September 2nd, 1945, Vietnam's new leader Ho Chi Minh officially declared the country free, independent, and unified in a speech that concluded, "And thus the entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty."
Humiliated by the German occupation, the De Gaul government soon launched a colonial war to reinstate its feudal regime in Vietnam. In 1946, President Ho asked US President Harry Truman for assistance in safeguarding Vietnamese sovereignty, but the US was soon secretly supporting the French, pouring money and materiel into Vietnam. The 1947 Truman Doctrine, with its stated goal of "containment" of international socialism, was the parting shot in a campaign of global Cold War interventions by the US.

제2차 세계대전 도중 나치군이 프랑스를 점령하였을 때, 프랑스령 인도차이나(베트남, 캄보디아, 라오스)는 일본이라는 추축국이 통제하는 영토가 되었다. 호찌민이 이끄는 8월 혁명은 전쟁을 끝내고, 일제 강점을 끝냈다. 1887년 이래로 베트남을 점령해온 프랑스를 몰아내는 데 성공했으며 프랑스의 식민행정적 경계들을 없애고 국가를 통일시켰다. 1945년 9월 2일, 베트남의 새로운 지도자 호찌민은 자유 독립국가로서의 통일된 베트남을 선포하고, "이로써 베트남의 전 국민은 독립과 자유를 지키기 위해서라면 온몸과 온 마음을 바치고 자신의 생명과 재산까지 희생할 각오가 되어 있다"는 말로 연설을 마무리하였다.
독일군 점령이라는 수치를 겪은 드골(De Gaul) 정부는 베트남에 봉건적 체제를 부활시키기 위한 식민 전쟁을 시작하였다. 1946년, 호찌민 대통령은 미국의 해리 트루먼 대통령에게 베트남 자주권 수호를 도와달라 요청했으나 미국은 곧 베트남에 돈과 물자를 쏟아부으며 비밀리에 프랑스를 돕기 시작했다. 사회주의 권역 확산 저지라는 공식 목표를 내세운 1947년 트루먼 독트린은 미국의 냉전 개입주의의 마지막 한 방이었다.

1955

The celebrated Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Giap orchestrated the defeat of French colonial forces at Dien Bien Phu in May, 1954. The two sides soon came together at the Geneva Conference to sign an agreement on the withdrawal of French forces and the interdiction of future foreign intervention. It was agreed that Vietnam would be temporarily partitioned along the 17th parallel until a 1956 nation-wide election chose a single government to rule over a unified nation. The United States chose to ignore the Geneva Conference and undermine Vietnamese democracy by installing a puppet regime in the south under the dictator Ngo Dinh Diem. To give legitimacy to their invented southern "republic", the US and its allies planned new embassies, and the "embassy", CIA, and USIS buildings that soon dotted central Saigon formed a beachhead for the US invasion of the following decade. The National Liberation Front (NLF) went into action in the south, fighting the puppet regime and the US army, already engaged in its undeclared "secret war" (unknown to its citizens) on Vietnamese territory. At the January 1959 Plenary Session of the Politburo in Hanoi, the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam threw their full support behind the struggle to finally liberate the southern half of the country.

베트남은 보 응우옌 잡(Vo Nguyen Giap) 장군의 지휘 하에 1954년 5월 디엔비엔푸(Dien Bien Phu)에서 프랑스 식민군을 물리쳤다. 양측은 머지않아 제네바에서 만나 프랑스군의 철수 및 향후 외세 개입 차단을 약속하는 합의서에 서명하였다. 1956년 전국적인 투표에 의해 통일국가를 통치할 단일 정부가 당선되기까지 베트남은 위도 17도를 따라 일시적으로 분할되어 있을 것에 양측이 합의하였다. 미국은 이 제네바 회담을 무시하기로 결정하고, 독재자 응오딘지엠(Ngo Dinh Diem)의 남측에 괴뢰 정권을 설치하여 베트남 민주주의의 권위를 약화시켰다. 자신들이 꾸며낸 남측 '공화국'에 정당성을 부여하기 위해 미국과 그 동맹국들은 새로운 대사관을 기획했는데, 사이공 중심부를 곧 수놓게 된 이 대사관과 CIA 및 USIS 건물들은 향후 10년간 미국 간섭의 교두보 역할을 했다. 베트남 민족해방전선은 남쪽에서 괴뢰정부와 미군에 맞서 싸우며 이미 (국민들에게는 알려지지 않은) '비밀 전쟁'을 치르고 있었다. 1959년 1월 하노이에서 열린 중앙위원회 총회에서야 비로소 베트남 민주공화국 정부는 남부 독립을 위한 노력에 전적인 지지를 보냈다.



1965

A majority of citizens continued to believe in Vietnamese independence and democracy and supported the NLF's efforts to liberate the south from foreign control. In 1963 US "diplomats" orchestrated the assassination of Diem, but their new puppet government also failed to defeat the NLF. In the face of this failure, US generals decided to invade Vietnam. With no declaration of war, the US sent its soldiers–200,000 by the end of 1965–into combat against the NLF, unprotected by the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The NLF stepped up its resistance with a series of military and guerrilla campaigns, including strategic attacks on US targets. On March 30th, 1965 the NLF bombed two buildings rented by the US government, which soon led to the construction of a heavily fortified "embassy" building on Thong Nhut Boulevard, fully clad in a mesh-like masonry armour and concrete perimeter wall. On January 30th, 1968, four months after its inauguration, the new compound was penetrated by the NLF's Saigon Special Task Force as part of the Uprising of Mau Than. Masterminded by General Secretary Le Duan and put into action at the December, 1967 Plenary Session in Hanoi, the Mau Than Uprising delivered a strong psychological blow to the US and its allies.

대다수의 시민들은 베트남 독립과 민주주의에 대한 믿음을 이어갔으며, 베트남 남부를 외세로부터 해방시키기 위한 민족해방전선의 노력을 지지했다. 1963년, 미국 '외교관'들은 응오딘지엠을 암살했지만 그들의 새로운 괴뢰정부 역시 민족해방전선을 이기지는 못했다. 이와 같은 실패에 직면한 미국의 장군들은 베트남을 침공하기로 결정했다. 선전포고도 없이 미국은 군사를 보냈다. 베트남 민족해방전선과 싸우기 위해 1965년까지 200,000명의 군인이 1949년 제네바 협약의 보호 범위 밖에서 출전했다. 민족해방전선은 일련의 군사 및 게릴라 작전을 통해 그 저항의 강도를 높여갔으며, 이에는 미국 표적에 대한 전략적 공격도 포함됐다. 1965년 3월 30일, 민족해방정선은 미국 정부가 임차한 건물 두 곳에 폭탄을 투하했다. 이에 대응하여 미국은 Thong Nhut 대로에 요새와 같은 '대사관' 건물을 지었는데, 그물망 같은 갑옷을 두르고 콘크리트 외벽으로 무장한 건축물이었다. 개관으로부터 4개월이 지난 1968년 1월 30일, 본 건물은 민족해방전선의 사이공 특수부대에 의해 침공당했다. 이는 테트 공격(Tet Offensive)의 일환이었다. 레 주안(Le Duan) 총서기가 기획하고 1967년 12월 하노이 총회에서 실행 단계에 돌입한 테트 공격은 미국과 그 동맹국들에 심각한 심리적 타격을 입혔다.

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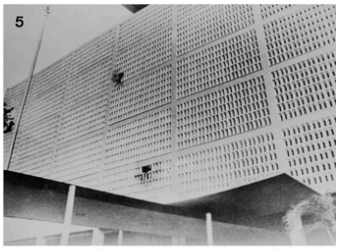
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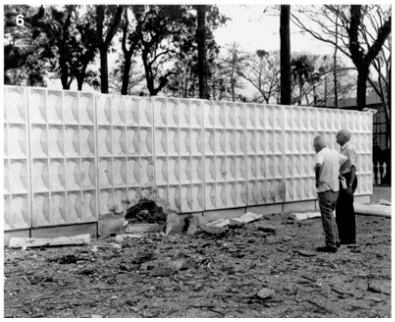
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1975

Nineteen years after the French defeat, the US signalled their own defeat with an accord signed in Paris in January, 1973, followed by the withdrawal of US occupying forces later that same year. The full liberation and unification of Vietnam was finally attainable. The puppet government left in place by the US was soon overthrown and Saigon was liberated on April 30th, 1975. With access to the airport blocked by the southern puppet army – angry to be abandoned – the US was forced to airlift its citizens and collaborators from the US "embassy" compound. The liberating forces arriving in Saigon gave safe passage to the stream of helicopters, happy to see the occupiers leave. Within hours, Saigon was liberated, the People's Revolutionary Government flag was raised over Reunification Palace and Vietnam was unified after thirty years of struggle against French and US occupiers. Foreign diplomats in the newly named Ho Chi Minh City were asked to leave the country and their governments invited to establish legitimate embassies in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi.

프랑스의 패배로부터 19년이 지난 시점에, 1973년 1월, 미국은 파리에서 합의서에 사인을 하며 자신의 패배를 인정했으며, 그해 말, 미군을 철수시켰다. 베트남의 온전한 독립 및 통일이 드디어 가능해진 것이었다. 미국이 남기고 간 괴뢰정권은 머지않아 무너졌고, 사이공은 1975년 4월 30일 독립했다. 버림받은 것에 화가 난 남부의 괴뢰군이 공항을 차단하자, 미국은 베트남 땅의 자국민 및 협업자들을 헬리콥터로 공수해 나와야 했다. 점령군이 떠나는 것에 신난 사이공의 독립 지지군은 헬리콥터 행렬을 기꺼이 안내했다. 몇 시간 내에 사이공은 독립했고, 인민혁명정부의 깃발이 통일궁 위로 올려졌다. 프랑스 및 미국 점령군과의 30년간의 싸움 끝에 베트남이 통일된 것이었다. 새로이 명명된 호찌민시 주재 외교관들은 베트남을 떠날 것을, 그리고 각 정부는 베트남의 수도인 하노이에 적법한 대사관을 설립할 것을 요구받았다.

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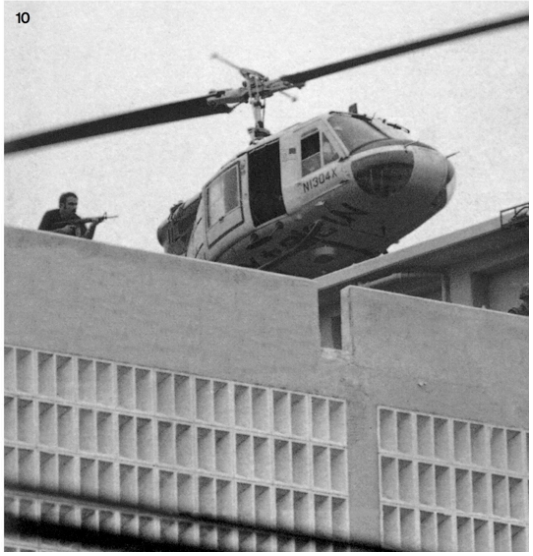
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