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For Immediate Release

Contact: Heather Green, NIU Art Museum, (815) 753-1936, email: hgreen2@niu.edu

As a part of the Northern Illinois University Art Museum’s upcoming Southeast Asian Exhibition Suite, *Current Views and Actions: Photography and Performance Documentation from Phnom Penh* showcases contemporary work from young Cambodian artists, Khvay Samnang and Lim Sokchanlina. This exhibition will be held in the NIU Art Museum’s Rotunda Gallery from August 28th – November 17th, with a public reception on September 13th from 4:30pm – 6:00pm.

Khvay Samnang and Lim Sokchanlina are two of the founding members of the artist collective, Stiev Selapak (Art Rebels) and are represented by SA SA BASSAC Gallery in Phnom Penh. Their photography and performance documentation poignantly showcase the societal challenges and unconventional beauty of contemporary Cambodia.

Khvay Samnang’s *Human Nature Series* provides an intimate window into the lives and dwellings of tenants of the Bassac Riverfront Municipal Apartments, or “The White Building” in Phnom Penh. In Samnang’s startling portraits, his subjects’ faces are obscured by masks, allowing the revealing nature of the portraits to unfold through the contents of the subjects’ living spaces.

In his *untitled* performance series, Samnang documented the repetitive action of pouring sand over his head in various natural and urbanized landscapes. The significance of his performance art lies in addressing the growing urban developments encroaching around Cambodia’s lake systems, and highlights the devastating changes to the natural and cultural landscape in some of Cambodia’s poorest communities. Often Samnang would wade into heavily polluted waters, risking his physical safety to complete this daring, socially-conscious performance series.

Lim Sokchanlina’s *Wrapped Future* series depicts evidence of the rapidly advancing urban development of Phnom Penh; his photographs document the seemingly endless expanses of construction walls cluttering the city streets. Many of the construction projects behind the barriers Sokchanlina photographs have laid waste to some of the city’s most revered architectural icons; others have displaced countless city residents. While Sokchanlina’s images are mysterious and starkly beautiful, his walls elicit feelings of loss and frustration associated with these artificial markers of cultural progress.

In Sokchanlina’s performance art piece entitled *The Rock*, the “White Building” makes another appearance in this metaphorical depiction of social struggle. In his piece, Sokchanlina is straining to hold a heavy slab of concrete above his head as he desperately tries to avoid collapsing under the weight and plummeting down a pipe leading into the building. This performance addresses the precarious position of the community as people attempt to shoulder the heavy burdens of rapid urban development, wide-spread eviction and poverty. This piece conveys Sokchanlina’s sober lament: “I think my city is growing up faster than my people”.

(MORE)
Current Views and Actions: Photography and Performance Documentation from Phnom Penh is offered in conjunction with the Cambodia Studies Conference, September 13-16 at Northern Illinois University. More information can be found on the conference website: http://www.cseas.niu.edu/cseas/conferences.

The NIU Art Museum is located on the first floor, west end of Altgeld Hall, on the campus of Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, 60115. Hours are Tuesday through Friday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Saturday from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. Group tours may be arranged by appointment. More information may be found on our website: www.niu.edu/artmuseum.

Funded in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; Friends of the NIU Art Museum; and the Dean’s Circle of the College of Visual and Performing Arts at NIU.

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Photo: Artist: Lim Sokchanlina “Wrapped Future Series, Samdech Hun Sen Street, South End” (2010) Digital C-print 70cm x 110cm Image courtesy of the artist and SA SA BASSAC

Photo: Artist: Khvay Samnang “Human Nature Series” (2011) Digital C-print 80cm x 120cm Image courtesy of the artist and SA SA BASSAC

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