



*The Last State (Possessed American Flag)*

Installation Views, Richard Koh Fine Arts, Bangkok, Thailand (2018)

2004-18. Creased and spray-painted cotton flag, audio loop of children reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance" with the words "under God" removed, 39 framed photographs, colored light bulbs

Dimensions variable; Flag dimensions: 152 x 81 cm



*The Last State*, detail of framed hands



***The Last State (Possessed American Flag)*** considers the legal cornerstone of religious tolerance and separation of church and state as originally imported to America via the Dutch settlement on Governors Island in 1624. An American flag with the words "help me" (a reference to the horror film "The Exorcist") hangs on the wall, surrounded by photographs of gesturing hands that hark back to both stiff fascism and the original

salutation for the "Pledge of Allegiance," as written and prescribed by Francis Bellamy in 1892. A soundtrack plays of children reciting Bellamy's original words, which did not include "under God" (added only in 1954). With the current wave of Islamic extremism, the Papal scandal, and Tea Party politics, it is fruitful to recall that indeed, it is not religion's responsibility to breed tolerance or protect an individual's liberties, but the law's duty. The altered flag, even in this "theologically possessed" and "desecrated" state, but fully reversible, challenges our respect for the history and laws that protect our civil liberties.