

SUH Yongsun

29 April – 30 July 2011
galerie son

From April 29th to July 30th 2011 galerie son will be showing one of the most renowned artists of present day Korea, **S U H Y o n g s u n** . The official opening will take place on April 30th at 7 PM, but the paintings can be seen already on the previous day, on occasion of the Gallery Weekend Berlin.

The work of Suh Yongsun, a painter born in 1951 in Seoul, has been seen on countless exhibitions, specially in Korea and Japan, as well as in France and the USA. On 2009 Suh was elected Artist of the Year by the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Korea. Between 1986 and 2008 he was a Lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts at the Seoul National University, where he had studied. In 1995 he spent the year abroad in Vermont in the USA and in Melbourne in Australia. He has a special relationship to Germany, where he was a guest lecturer in 2001 in Hamburg. His travels took him to New York and Berlin, two towns which particularly marked him in his painting.

One of his favorite themes is the city dweller in the tradition of German Expressionism. The latent dangerous atmosphere, the seemingly naive and primitive qualities of his painting are used by him to show lonesome people, caught in the web of a metropolis, in a meaningless plight. The artist particularly likes to depict scenes taking place in the subway, in which simple and fragile people, the underdogs of society, enter the steel arteries of a city to be carried in a velocity that surpasses their power of recognition. Often depicted while waiting, they seem at the same time to expect some other life.

The faces look bleak and anonymous as those found in the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* by Picasso or in the paintings of Kirchner and Schmidt-Rottluf. The mask-like faces of the portrayed usually don't show individual traits and a particular similitude, but that is perhaps the reason why they allow the paintings to convey the depth of their emotions which such a tremendous impact, which is comparable to that of Francis Bacons portraits. Also because the urban life depicted, composed of subway and bus stations, little bars and simple restaurants, is painted in a very raw and expressive manner, with a surface recalling the rough wood Suh uses in his sculptures. Only signs with a few words on them allow us to locate the scenes and assume they were inspired by such cities as New York and Berlin, amongst others.

Mankind as a victim of the lust for power, violence, the turmoil of politics and historical events is also the subject of an impressive series of paintings depicting the political intrigues and incidents in the life of king Danjon of the Joseon Dynasty, hinting at present events. The twelve year old king was brutally murdered by a rival, and a lot of legends surround this tragic figure of Korean history.

galerie son will also show paintings of Berlin, a town which moved the artist very much, as the separation between East and West was there so obviously to be seen and brought him the traumatic division of his home country more to light than even in Korea itself.

In his selfportraits, the artist's eyes are glowing in intense red, as his body sometimes also does. There Suh betrays himself as the ardent observer of mankind he is, believing in the power of Art to bring up hidden social and political issues, and revealing them in paintings that in subject matter, in technique and in size attain the highest visual incisiveness.

Verena Alves-Richter



Yong Sun SUH

the painter 1

96 x 62,5 cm

acrylic on korean paper

2010



Yong Sun SUH

the painter 2

96 x 62,5 cm

acrylic on korean paper

2010



Yong Sun SUH

waiting people at subway no 14

143,5x230,5cm

acrylic on canvas

2010



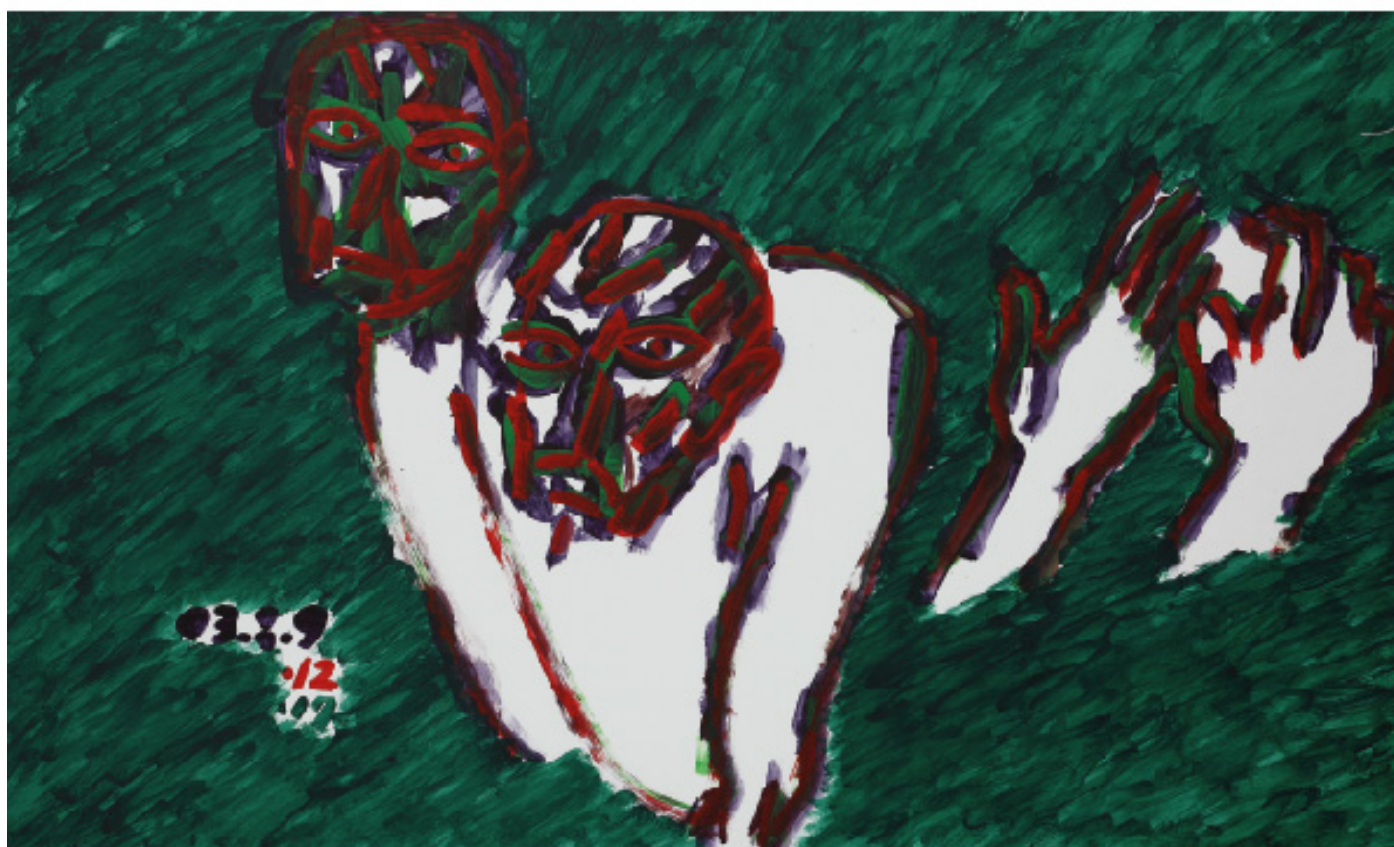
Yong Sun SUH

Berlin Haltestelle Leopoldplatz

245,5x114cm

acrylic on canvas

2006-07



Yong Sun SUH

two people
98 x163 cm
acrylic on paper
2003



Korea's National Museum of Contemporary Art initiated the 'Artist of the Year' competition in 1995 in order to expand Korean art by encouraging creativity and innovation among Korean artists.

Seo Young-Sun, is the National Museum of Contemporary Art's chosen 'Artist of the Year' for 2009. Seo Young-Sun explores various subjects including, portrait, scenery, history, war, myth and etc, but he most well known for his work expressing humanity in a metropolitan environment, as well as his historical series that depicts historical accidents. He made his debut in the early 1980s with his pine painting series. In the mid '80s his style evolved into what he is best known for now, historical and city artistic statements.

Seo Young-Sun, has approached the fundamental problem of clear plane space reconstituted with detailed subject matter, which has an extreme emphasis on the Korean symbol-system. He portrays the conflict of human existence in the historical rip-current. He is interested in the paradigm of space within the city, he tries to express the roaming citizen's irrational existence in the situations they face daily. He uses strong color and texture based in solidly structured compositions.

These works elicit reflection on the existential pain of individuals caught in history's maelstrom, and the anxious inner turmoil of contemporary man who lives surrounded by pressures in an expending city.

By combining the experiences that exist in separate portions and continuity of consciousness, the artist exposes the crash of unconsciousness, rejecting the inhumane city, and the preferential system that forces the order of history. Seo transformed the question of human existence into formative language via strong color in a densely formed plane of vision, as well as defiant rough textures.

In these remarkable works, various human desires intersect and conflict with each other. The artist expresses an enriched deep thought process towards life, that is the result of humanities mental awareness.

Through this exhibition, we will go on a journey to explore various human groups who have struggled to understand the meaning of existence by facing the environment and history. In the process of retracing the flow of human history, you will spot the agony and pain of intrinsic in our history. This exhibit uses a panoramic style on huge dominating screens to reflect the power of the struggle.

In the confused expression of modern painting, shallow amusement without deep emotion can be seen spreading throughout the work. Seo's artistic attitude evolved through the research and introspection of humanity. It has become a rare and valuable ideal and model for many other artists.

By choosing Seo Young-Sun as this year's 'Artist of the Year,' the National Museum of Contemporary Art rewards the artist the sincerity of artist who is continually concerned with innovation and independent thought, rather than following the mainstream flow. This exhibition's aim is to share and spread his art to the public, and reward an artist whose unabated practice and effort has helped him steadily evolve closer to becoming a maestro in his field.

Artist of the Year is an annual exhibition presented by the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea since 1995. It aims to provide viewers with an opportunity to observe the achievement of Korean art and the possibility towards new artistic trends by showing the artworks of an artist who has greatly contributed to the passages of contemporary Korean art and whose artistic accomplishment is worthy of close attention since it opens up a new prospect for Korean art.

Suh Yong-sun, a painter featured by National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea as the artist of the year 2009, is widely known both for his series works in which the people in cities are depicted and for his history paintings where historical incidents are visualized, although he has dealt with a variety of themes. It was in the early 1980s when Suh started to be known to the public for a series of paintings of pine trees, and in the mid 1980s he began to produce history paintings and the 'Urban People' series. In his works in which historical incidents were recomposed, Suh portrayed the raging waves of history and the struggles of the human beings who were swayed by them with his astute and dexterous artistic hands. His interest in the historical times developed into that of the urban space, and the irrational existence of wandering urbanites and the conditions they faced are conveyed dramatically through intense colors and textures on the basis of solidly structured compositions. By uniting the experiences which exist in the form of fragments by use of the continuity of memories and the conscious, Suh reveals his unconscious impulse to refuse the inhuman cities and the symbolic systems enforced for the order of history. In Suh' works, numerous different human desires collide with, intersect with and conflict with one another. Suh conveys his truthful insights to life by condensing his in-depth thinking processes in an artwork, which has established itself as the outcome of human intellectual activities accumulated from time immemorial.

Suh has built his artistic realm through prudent and in-depth study and inquiry on the basis of humanistic research and retrospection into his themes, and this artistic attitude of Suh is not easily found in the contemporary art scene and thus set an good example for many artists. National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea intends to introduce to the viewers the entire artistic realm of this devoted artist who is approaching step by step the threshold toward becoming a master artist through consistent and on-going training and efforts. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have kindly contributed to and lent support for the realization of this exhibition.

Soonhoon Bae
Director, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea

galerie son

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