

English

서요서:  
내 이름은  
빨강  
입니다

Suh Yongsun:  
My Name is Red

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## ***Suh Yongsun: My Name is Red***

Since the late 1970s, Suh Yongsun has been exploring Korea's modernity based on three axes—people, cities, and history. His interest has expanded into three more axes—materials, environment (nature), and mythology—through which he has reflected on the conditions and meanings of contemporary life from the perspective of world-historical universality. Creating works in genres such as portrait, history, and landscape painting, Suh has sought his own path within the formal genealogy of Expressionism and New Figuration. His 50-year artistic journey can be encapsulated as “a fundamental exploration of the medium of painting,” “a contemporary recognition of the history that shapes us” and “a reflection on the origin of the world as a time and place of coexistence.”

This exhibition is an attempt to re-examine Suh Yongsun's oeuvre and to let his artistic world come into view as a “pictorial space.” Rather than confining his painting world to a narrative and figurative frame, this exhibition seeks to reconstruct it as a figural and sensible world—a pictorial space—so as to shed new light on the radicality of his work.

*Suh Yongsun: My Name is Red* generates a new space for Suh's work upon the following coordinates: one axis consists of “cities, people, history (mythology), and nature,” and the other axis consists of “line, plane, shape, and color.” The former is the axis of the narrative (anecdotal) world, which reveals the narrative and figurative aspect of his works, while the latter is the axis of the pictorial (sensorial) world, which shows their visible and aesthetic quality. In a space created on these coordinates, his individual works are reassembled, freed from the confines of their respective production periods and stories. Ethics and politics, violence and destruction, freedom and emancipation, recovery and healing, and life and death are all important vectors on this coordinate plane. Through this process, the exhibition aims to re-illuminate the sensorial and political realm embedded in Suh's pictorial space.

The exhibition is composed of three parts. Part 1, “Gold,” revolves around cities, which have always been an important space in Suh's paintings. Part 2, “Black,” traverses Suh's painting world to explore the meaning of people, politics, history, and life. Part 3, “Butter-Fly,” reveals the artist's quest for the universal world, as well as his search for new possibilities in art and life.

The title of the exhibition, *My Name is Red*, is taken from *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (1998), a novel by Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk. Set in the Ottoman Empire in 1591, the novel revolves around paintings and painters, depicting the conflict between the traditional world and the West. The subtitles of each part of the exhibition are also connected to the main motifs of the novel. Parts 1 and 2 will be held from July 15 to October 22 in The Ground and Space 1, while Part 3 will be held from September 15 to October 22 in Space 2.

## Part 3

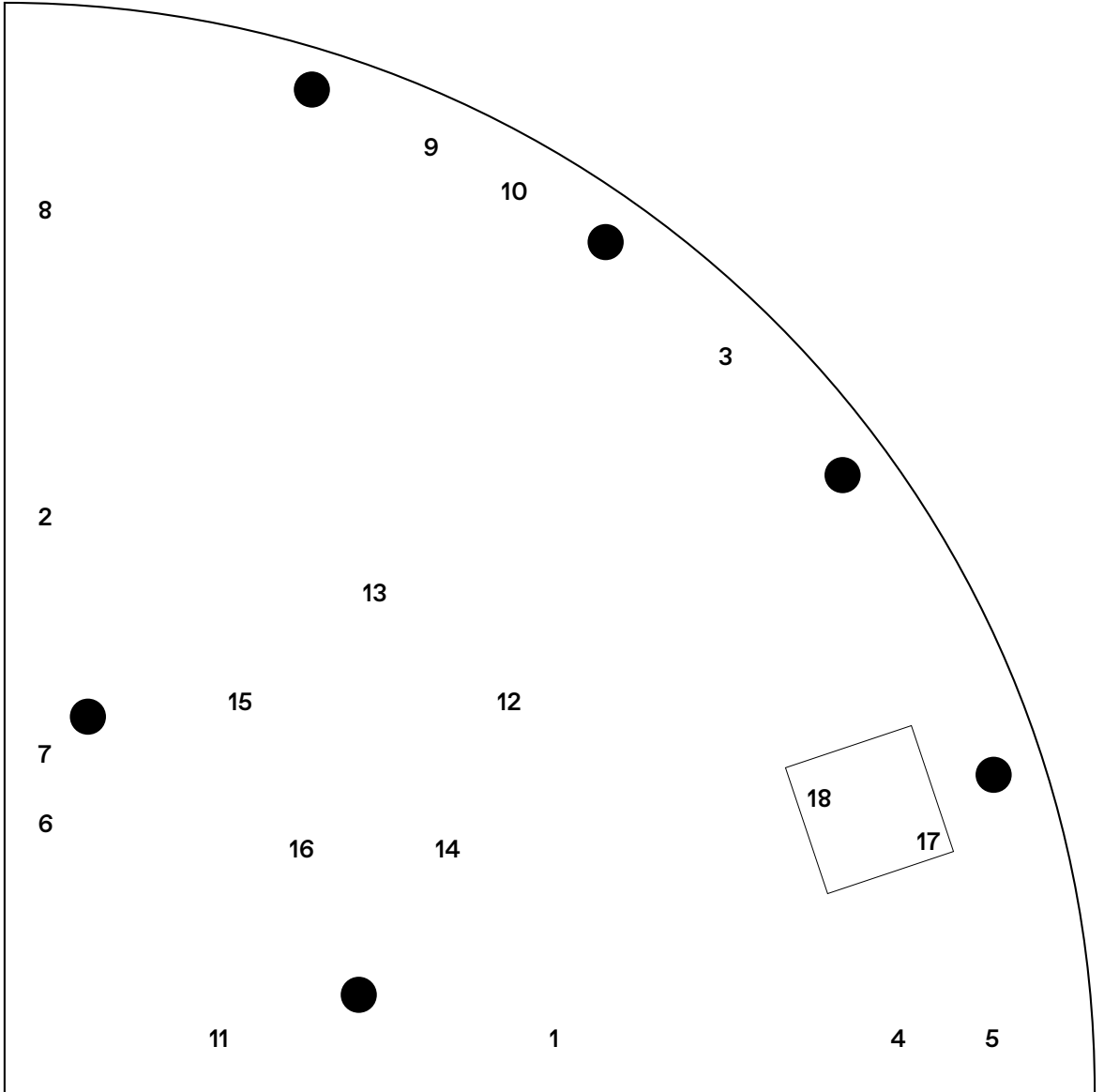
### BUTTER-FLY

September 15–  
October 22,  
2023

The artist prefers to use the word *gyeonggwon* (meaning “view”) rather than *punggyeong* (meaning “landscape”) because the former connotes the act of “seeing.” The environment that surrounds us does not exist as a given state, rather, its meaning is manifested through “our” gaze. For the artist, the landscape is not limited to mere scenery but encompasses the entire social and cultural sphere that surrounds us. His act of exploring the city, climbing the mountain, and looking at nature, is a process of encountering, exploring the world, and giving form to the world as an artist. When visiting a place, the artist focuses on discovering and reflecting the meaning of the place. He also recognizes nature as nature again.

Part 3 consists of three portraits and three view paintings. It also presents the disciples of Buddha, the artist himself, and another person. Two portraits represent contemporary men and women, and one portrait depicts the Mago tribe, which is considered to be the origin of the human species. There are also paintings of mountains that the artist once encountered. In the center of the exhibition space stand the great disciples, the artist, and another person. While the artist continues to respond to the problems of real life through his paintings, he seeks to unfold this story in a more universal world. The question of how to bring history and painting together—a critical issue for the artist—now expands to the question of how to summon history to the present without speaking about it directly.

MAP



- 1 *Moving-People of Mago*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 116.5×91cm.

The artist began researching and painting Korean mythology after he was asked to draw illustrations for a newspaper series on Eastern mythology in 2004. He drew based on a thorough research of Asian mythology such as *Shanhajjing* or *Budoji*, as well as Korean oral folk tales. The results of his research were presented in 2014 as part of the Commemorative Exhibition for receiving the Lee Jung Seop Art Award. For the artist, mythology is not so much a story about gods, but rather a space in which the present life is projected and its roots are examined. This work is connected to the myth of Mago. In Korean folklore, Mago is a giant goddess of the earth and creation. The universe was created in Mago's hands. Mago gave virgin birth to two daughters, each of whom gave birth to four daughters and sons. These eight men and women formed four couples, each named as Hwanggung, Baekso, Cheonggung, and Heukso. They bore and raised many offsprings and together created a paradise called Mago Fortress. There, the people of Mago drank the milk that flowed on the earth and lived in harmony with the universe. However, the milk began to dry up and they were forced to eat other fruits. After tasting five different flavors, their lives were no longer as fulfilling as before. The four tribes took responsibility for this fall and came down to earth. The Hwanggung tribe arrived in the Tianshan region of Northeast Asia, and later, Hwanung was born as its descendant. *Moving-People of Mago* is a work depicting the people of Mago who tasted the five flavors and left the Mago Fortress for a new world in search of their origin, filled with the will to purify their bodies and minds. They are the archetype of the human beings, of us.

- 2 *Man*, 1997, 1998, oil on canvas, 250×200cm.

A middle-aged man is standing alone. He is wearing sneakers, a shabby jacket, and baggy pants. This man, who could easily be seen on the street or in a park, is standing still, staring blankly out of the frame. His face is contorted and he is slouching. The artist has often painted these anonymous men in the city. Since the late 1990s, he has been painting his middle-aged friends. He is a middle-aged man himself. Through the shabby look of an aged man, he reaffirms himself as a man. A new recognition of men is awakened in the artist.

- 3 *Kim Jinhee 1*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 117×91cm.

Kim Jinhee is a designer whom the artist worked with for an exhibition. The artist painted several portraits of this young woman, who was determined to pursue her future and success. She would express her determination half-jokingly, "I will study English to raise my ransom." With this determination, she is walking straight into the world. The artist continues to paint this young woman's face. It's not an abstract woman, nor a woman who is tied to anyone, but Kim Jinhee standing firmly on her own name.

- 4 *Pine Tree*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 117×91cm.  
5 *Geumganggol*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 60.7×50cm.

For the artist, the pine tree is a thematic subject. Setting aside the myth of Solgeo—a painter from the Silla Kingdom who painted a pine tree so realistically that a bird flew into it—the question of "how to paint a pine tree" has been a critical issue for Suh. In his early years, he garnered attention for his hyper-realistic depiction of the pine tree and continued to paint pine trees and pine forests that he encountered in his daily environment or during his research trips. Gradually, the pine tree became less of an object to be depicted and more of a certain spirit for facing history, time, and the world.

- 6 *At Jirisan(Mt.) Cheonghak-dong 2*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 116×91cm. private collection.  
7 *At Jirisan(Mt.) Cheonghak-dong 1*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 116×91cm. private collection.  
8 *At Jirisan(Mt.) Odojae 1*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 91×116.5cm.  
9 *Seongsamjae 1*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 80×100cm.  
10 *Seongsamjae 2*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 91×116.5cm.

In connection with the historical events of King Danjong, the artist often painted the mountains and temples of Gangwon-do Province, such as Taebaeksan Mountain and Odaesan Mountain. These mountains were his new discoveries in the process of exploring history. Jirisan Mountain, however, is somehow different. The artist approaches Jirisan Mountain in and of itself. Of

course, it also has historical traces, such as the Mago myth, Kim Siseup's stay, the Donghak movement, and partisan activities. However, the artist takes this mountain for what it is.

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- 11 *Heulseunggolseong Fortress*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 218×291cm.

Heulseunggolseong was the first capital city of Goguryeo. In his exploration of history and the world of mythology, the artist became interested in Goguryeo and the mythologies of the northern region that tell the origin of the Korean people. So he visits the region. While exploring the ruins of Goguryeo and the Silk Road, he discovers the possibility of a primordial and elemental expression different from the perspective-based Western style. Here, his consciousness expands into a vast world. This work depicts the west wall of the Heulseunggolseong Fortress.

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- 12 *Disciple of the Buddha A1*, 2015, koya cedar, 213×46×16cm(L), 256×41×42cm(R).  
13 *Disciple of the Buddha A2*, 2015, koya cedar, 267×75.5×42cm(L), 267×49×34cm(R).  
14 *Disciple of the Buddha A3*, 2015, koya cedar, 268×40×57cm.  
15 *Disciple of the Buddha A4*, 2015, koya cedar, 253×47.5×53cm.  
16 *Disciple of the Buddha A5*, 2015, koya cedar, 266×55.5×46cm.

The artist was invited by Koyasan Kongobu-ji Temple in Japan to participate in an exhibition promoting Korea-Japan exchange. The temple is one of the sacred sites of Buddhism in Japan. The artist decided to create works based on his interest and research on early Buddhism. In addition to several drawings and paintings, he also created Buddha and his disciples from the local cedar tree. In this exhibition, only his disciples are on display. The word disciple can be problematic because it implies obedience, loyalty, and immaturity. At the same time, the fact that the disciple forms relationships through respect and learning, and in the process comes to know himself, teaches us a new wisdom of life.

- 17 *Person 01*, 2016, acrylic on wood, 49×35×81cm.

The artist began to create three-dimensional works in the late 1990s. Even in his paintings, he often adopted collage techniques, looking for ways to expand painting. Then he attempted to work with three-dimensional formats. For him, sculpture was more of an extension of painting rather than its traditional meaning in art. He engendered three-dimensionality through the combination of lines and planes. The content of his works was also a continuum of his previous works; themes such as city dwellers, nameless people who disappeared in history, and figures from mythologies were created this time with wood, metal, and glass. An interesting aspect of his three-dimensional work is the head. Using a chainsaw, he roughly cuts wood to create the head of a figure. The face hangs precariously on fragile support, creating the image of an incomplete human being. While staring in silence, this person holds out his hand and tries to hand us something.

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- 18 *A Man Painting*, 1999, 2000, acrylic on used wood, knife, 134×30×14cm.

A painter is standing with a paint knife in his hand. His torso is visibly smaller than his head and he has an angry face. At first glance, this sculpture seems to emit a murderous intent, as if the person is holding a knife. The artist has the ambition and passion to paint the world as a painter. However, this is not an easy task. As in *A Man Painting 1, 2* (2010), the painter is at times portrayed as trembling. But his self-portrait gradually transforms into a man who cheerfully enjoys the act of painting. This work candidly expresses the artist's strong will and determination as a painter.

Born 1951 in Seoul. Suh Yongsun graduated from the Department of Painting, College of Fine Arts, Seoul National University in 1979, and from the Department of Western Painting, Graduate School of Fine Arts, Seoul National University in 1982. He worked as a professor at the College of Fine Arts, Seoul National University from 1986 to 2008, and currently holds the position of emeritus professor since 2016.

His major solo exhibitions include *Suh Yongsun's Mago, Searching for Goddess Mago in Our Minds* (Seoul Herstory House Yeodamjae, Seoul, 2021), *Mancheopsanjoong* (萬疊山中), *Suh Yongsun Painting* (Yeosu Museum, Yeosu, Korea, 2021), *Pain: Symptoms· Signs, The Remaking of History in Suh Yongsun's Painting* (Art Center White Block, Paju, Korea, 2019), *Expanding Lines-Suh Yongsun Drawing* (Arko Art Center, Seoul, 2016), *Utopia's Delay- the Painter and the Metropolis* (Kumho Museum of Art / Hakgojae Gallery, Seoul, 2015), *Suh Yongsun* (DAAD, Bonn, Germany, 2014), *Memory, Representation - Suh Yongsun and 6.25* (Korea University Museum, Seoul, 2013), *Mt. Odaesan Landscape* (Dongsanbang Gallery / Lee C Gallery, Seoul, 2012), *Politics of Gaze* (Hakgojae Gallery, Seoul, 2011), *Landscapes by Suh Yongsun* (Lee C Gallery, Seoul, 2010), *Artist of the Year 2009* (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea, Gwacheon, Korea, 2009), *Suh Yongsun* (Cheoram Railroad Station Gallery, Taebaek, Korea, 2006), *The Memories of the Future* (Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul, 2004), *Suh Yongsun 1993-1999, The Diary of Nosangun (King Danjong)* (Yeongwol Culture Center, Yeongwol, Korea, 1999), *Suh Yongsun 1987-1993, The Diary of Nosangun (King Danjong)* (Shinsegae Gallery, Seoul, 1993), and *Suh Yongsun* (Arko Art Center, Seoul, 1989). He also took part in several group exhibitions, such as *Minimalism-Maximalism-Mechanism Act 1-Act 2* (Art Sonje Center, Seoul, 2022), *Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of Halartec Cheoram Grigi* (Taebaek Coal Museum, Taebaek / Mokpo Cultural Center, Mokpo, Korea, 2021), *2020 Busan Biennale, Words at an Exhibition\_an exhibition in ten chapters and five poems* (Museum of Contemporary art Busan, Busan, Korea, 2020), *Gongjae* (恭齋) and *Self-Portrait of Painters* (Haengchon Art Museum, Haenam, Korea, 2019), *From Vietnam to Berlin*

(Asia Culture Center, Gwangju, Korea, 2018), *Expression of Landscape* (Daegu Art Museum, Daegu, Korea, 2017), *How to Sit* (Indipress Gallery, Seoul, 2016), *What makes the Wind Sway* (Busan Art Museum, Busan, Korea, 2014), *The 3rd IRAP Sea of Peace, Baekryeungdo - interview '525,600 hours'* (Incheon Art Platform, Incheon, Korea, 2013), *Korean Painting Now* (National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan, 2012), *Korean Rhapsody- A Montage of History and Memory* (Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, 2011), *Beginning of New Era: Defense Security Command* (the present, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea, Seoul, 2009), *Berlin to DMZ* (Seoul Olympic Museum of Art, Seoul, 2005), *Gwangju International Biennale P\_A\_U\_S\_E, Project 3 - Stay of Execution* (5.18 Memorial Park, Gwangju, Korea, 2002), *The 1st Cheoram Grigi* (Taebaek Coal Museum, Taebaek, Korea, 2001), *Korean Art '97 - Humanism · Animalism · Mechanism* (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea, Gwacheon, Korea, 1997), *City and Art* (Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, 1996), *Korean Painting Now* (Volkenkunde Museum, Leiden, Netherlands, 1996), *Exploration The Seoul Culture* (Hanwon Gallery, Seoul, 1994), *6 New Figurative Artists* (Moran Museum of Art, Namyangju, Korea, 1990), *Present · Image - Transforming and Taking Aim* (Gallery Noksaek, Seoul, 1988), *Seoul In Seoul* (Osaka Contemporary Art Center, Osaka, Japan, 1986), *'82 Selected Artists Works* (by 12 Art Critics) (Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, 1983), and *The 1st Seoul '80 -Work with Photo-Group* (Space Gallery, Seoul, 1980).

## Special Lecture

Date: August 3 (Thu), 2023, 16:00–18:00

Venue: Art Hall, Art Sonje Center

Speaker: Chung Young Mok

(Emeritus Professor, Seoul National University)

Admission: Free (Entry to exhibitions not included)

## Artist Talk

Date: August 25 (Fri), 2023, 16:00–18:00

Venue: Art Hall, Art Sonje Center

Participants: Suh Yongsun, Chunghoon Shin,

Jung-Ah Woo, Jang Un Kim

Admission: Free (Entry to exhibitions not included)

## Docent Program

[www.artsonje.org](http://www.artsonje.org)

### Leaflet

Suh Yongsun: My Name is Red

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### Exhibition

Suh Yongsun: My Name is Red

2023. 7. 15. – 10. 22.

Venue: Art Sonje Center

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2023 ARKO Selection Visual Art  
2023 SFAC Selection Art  
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### Admission

Fee:

25–64 years: 10,000 KRW

19–24 years: 7,000 KRW

9–18 years: 5,000 KRW

Art Pass cardholders: 7,000 KRW

Free: 8 and under, over 65,

visitors with disabilities,

ICOM · CIMAM · SCM cardholders

Opening Hours:

12:00–19:00 (Closed Mondays)

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