

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