

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Artist: Suh Do-Ho (pronounced *Soo Doe – Hoe*)

Title: *Blue-green bridge*

Date: 2000

Medium: Acrylic figures, polycarbonate sheets, steel structure

Dimensions: 60 x 130 x 1140cm

In *Blue-green bridge* multiple cast resin figures are arranged on a steel bridge structure. The figures have their arms raised as though supporting something above them. All of the resin figures are from the same cast, but each has a slightly different colour. The overall effect of this 'colour difference' is that the bridge gradually changes from green to blue as it rises and falls, like the gentle slope of a walkway. From a distance the semi-transparent figures synthesise into a structure that supports and links, but on closer inspection the individuality of each figure is apparent. This negotiation between the individual and the collective is a central theme in Suh Do-Ho's art.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in South Korea in 1962, Suh Do-Ho is now a New York-based artist with a rapidly-growing international reputation. The idea of the 'global village' is of keen interest to him. His art examines the cultural implications surrounding the speed with which large numbers of people are able to move between cities and nations throughout the world. The relationship between the individual and the community is at the core of much of the artist's work. Using replication, he often develops large-scale works using vast numbers of duplicated components. This technique enables the artist to work with, and between, the 'unique' and the 'multiple'.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS

- What might be the significance of a 'mass' of people forming a bridge?
- From one angle the bridge looks totally green; from another it appears totally blue. Perhaps the artist is commenting here on 'points of view' and 'appearances'. Discuss.
- What do the works *Blue-green bridge* and *Who am we?* have in common?



Blue-green bridge is installed in the exhibition space so that it is integrated with another of the artist's works titled *Who am we?*. This latter artwork consists of wallpaper designed by Suh Do-Ho in which the pattern is created by an immense sea of faces (miniaturised portraits of 40 000 teenagers). From a distance the faces diminish to such an extent that they almost do not register at all, and instead appear as a blank wall. As one moves closer the dots gather density and become recognisable as photographs.

References:

Biennale of Sydney 2002: (the world may be) fantastic [exhibition catalogue]. Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, 2002.

Clifford, Katie. 'A soldier's story'. *Art News*, vol.101, no.1, January 2002, pp.102–5.

Kee, Joan. 'The singular pluralities of Do-Ho Suh'. *Art AsiaPacific*, no.34, 2002, pp.44–51.

Raffel, Suhanya. 'Suh Do-Ho: "Who am we?"'. In *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art 2002* [exhibition catalogue]. Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, 2002, pp.100–03.

Richard, Francis. 'Home in the world: the art of Do-Ho Suh'. *Artforum International*, vol.40, no.5, January 2002, pp.114–18.

Contemporary Korean art

Roe, Jae-ryung. *Contemporary Korean Art*. Craftsman House, North Ryde, NSW, 2001.

Roe, Jae-ryung. 'From Chosun Dynasty to Segehwa: a cultural mapping of contemporary Korea'. *Art AsiaPacific*, vol.3, no.3, 1996, pp.38–43.

Over and below: Suh Do-Ho South Korea/United States b.1962 *Blue-green bridge* (and detail) 2000 Acrylic figures, polycarbonate sheets, steel structure 60 x 130 x 1140cm Collection: Artsonje Museum, Kyungju Courtesy: The artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York

Below left: Suh Do-Ho South Korea/United States b.1962 *Who am we?* (detail) 1996–2000 25 sheets, Four-colour off-set wallpaper 61 x 91.4cm each Collection: The artist Courtesy: The artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York



Suh Do-Ho's artwork plays with ideas of the 'mass' and the individual. The works are comprised of many small individual images and yet together they become faceless, a block of colour or texture. In this way, the works explore the idea of crowds and mass while there still exists inner emptiness. Through these works, Suh Do-Ho explores ideas of the global community and its impact on the individual and the collective.

Suh Do-Ho is a Korean-born artist who has travelled widely and now lives in New York.

ACTIVITY

Discuss times when you feel a lack of identity in a crowd. How does society transform individuality to the mass? Think about school uniforms and queues at a football field as some examples. How are your feelings different when you are an individual and when you are part of a crowd. Think of both positive and negative aspects of the way this effects your identity.

In the Korean language there is no distinction between the singular and plural forms. Suh Do-Ho combines hundreds of small and virtually identical or minutely varied components, such as human faces, figurines and so on, to make a larger whole.

ACTIVITY

As a class group, gather a number of similar objects, such as stamps, coins, dolls or figurines. Explore different arrangements of these objects.

Record the process of moving from the singular to the multiple with digital photography. Manipulate the resulting images with a graphics program, such as Adobe Photoshop, and continue in this medium to play with multiple and singles, using cut and paste options and transformation tools.

In Suh's work *Who am we?*, he uses minute pictures from a high school year book to combine to form a wallpaper that appears to be almost blank. To make this work, Suh collected over 40,000 unique faces representing different genders and age groups. *Who am we?* blurs the boundaries between the individual and the collective. Suh scanned thousands of ID pictures and images of friends, relatives and more. When you look at this piece from a distance you see almost a monochromatic colour-field painting, but as you get closer to the work you see the faces. Suh finds it interesting to watch people viewing his work. He says that most of the audience miss the faces, while about a third of those people who look at the work will discover the faces and this will draw other people's attention.

ACTIVITY

Collect pictures of yourself and your family and friends at different stages of your life. Scan these to form the basis of a digital artwork exploring the theme of 'Who am we?' Record your ideas in your visual arts process diary or art journal and reflect on the identity you portray through your artwork.

Websites

<http://www.cooper.edu/art/techno/artists/suh2.html>

http://www.camh.org/cam_exhandprograms/cam_archive/subjectplural/suh.htm

<http://images.google.com/> (search for 'Suh Do-Ho')

Blue-green bridge is made up of an army of tiny figures. Suh Do-Ho originally sculpted the tiny figures and then he sent them to a company to be manufactured in plastic that was blue or green. The figures were stuck down, starting with blue, then gradually adding green. The merging of the figures symbolised the idea of migration from one culture to another. This 'bridge' was also symbolic of a transitional place, where you cross over to get to your final destination.

The *Blue-green bridge* was originally made as a site-specific piece for an art gallery in Korea where it was installed in a room with long walls. The piece both connected and separated the space.

ACTIVITY

Contemporary artists frequently blur the definition of visual culture. Images that are everyday can become icons and icons can become everyday images. Explore this idea through a series of artworks. Take an everyday object, such as a toothbrush, and through art transform it into something that is like an icon. Alternatively, look at the icons surrounding you, such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, MCG or Opera House, and transform it through art into something that appears commonplace and ordinary.

ACTIVITY

Think about this quote from Alison Carroll's forthcoming book *Asian Art 1900–2000*.

'A diaspora is a dispersion. Like a flower scattering its seeds to the winds, so it is with artists from all countries and cultures who have travelled 'abroad', taking their baggage with them. It makes for 'hybrid' cultures, that either join with the host, or take over and become dominant, or wither on stony ground. Some things flourish and some are lost – that's life.'

What 'baggage' has Suh Do-Ho taken with him and how has he 'scattered seeds' in the construction and presentation of his artworks? Think about other artists whose artworks have emerged as the result of the experiences of travelling and living in other cultures. Discuss the extent to which these artists acknowledged this influence and 'scattered seeds' throughout the art world as a result of their experiences.