DO HO SUH
SOUTH KOREA / USA / UNITED KINGDOM

Gate, 2003
Do Ho Suh (b. 1962, Seoul, South Korea) constructs site-specific installations and meticulously crafted sculptures that question boundaries of identity and conventional notions of scale and space in both their physical and metaphorical manifestations. He studied Oriental painting at Seoul National University in the 1980s, and in 1991 moved to the USA to study painting at the Rhode Island School of Design and sculpture at Yale University School of Art. He represented South Korea at the Venice Biennale in 2001, and has had numerous solo exhibitions including recent presentations at DAAD Galerie (Berlin, 2011), Singapore Tyler Print Institute (2011), Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (Seoul, 2012), 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art (Kanazawa, Japan, 2012-2013), National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Seoul, 2013), The Contemporary Austin (USA, 2014), and Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati, USA, 2016). Suh’s work has been prominently featured in major group exhibitions and biennials, and is in museum collections worldwide. He lives and works in London, Seoul and New York.

**THE IDEA**

Born in South Korea and working between countries and continents, Do Ho Suh’s art is a meditation on notions of home and belonging. His celebrated fabric installations are architectural compositions of once-inhabited spaces: homes, studios, rooms, apartments. *Gate* is a 1:1 replica of one of the many gates of the artist’s family home in South Korea, itself modelled on a traditional scholar’s house built in a palace complex in the 19th Century, and constructed using reclaimed wood from demolished palaces and other historical buildings. The artist was drawn to the idea of the gate not only as a passageway to a different space, but also as an architectural element that compels the body to react. In this particular design of a Korean gate, the entrance was made purposefully low.
DO HO SUH
Gate, 2003

THE ARTWORK
Silk and stainless steel tubes, Artist Proof
326.5 × 211.5 × 100 cm
Private collection

Image courtesy of the artist
1. View the artwork from different vantage points and share the different impressions of the work from these different viewing points with a classmate.
   - From the foot of the staircase
   - From the staircase landing
   - From the top of the staircase

2. The artist has used silk to cover the stainless steel tubes. Notice the detail of the embroidery on the fabric. Why do you think the artist has chosen this delicate material? How does the artist’s choice of material affect the overall mood and message of the work?

3. *Gate* is floating over the staircase. Does the environment have an impact on the work? Could *Gate* be put anywhere else? Where would you place it? How might that affect or change the experience of the artwork?

4. Imagine you could walk through the gate. Where do you think the artist has intended to lead us to? How did you arrive at that idea?

5. The artist left his home country, South Korea, in the early 1990s and has been on the move ever since. Being on the move continuously has gotten the artist thinking about what ‘home’ means. Use 5-10 words to sum up what ‘home’ means to you. Write a short poem about the meaning of home using these words.

A. Do Ho’s father’s concerns about the loss of Korean traditions made him build a traditional scholar’s house. Likewise, Do Ho’s work replicating his Korean family house addresses the fast-changing values of contemporary Korean society and its ideas of home. Make a trip down to Emerald Hill with your family or class, and look at the different shophouses there. Explore the neighbourhood consisting of modern condominium apartments and shopping malls. Do some research to find out more about this part of Singapore. Why is this called a conservation area? What is the importance of conservation areas like Emerald Hill for the local tradition and culture? Write a short article about your findings.

B. The artist says: “[Your] garment is the most personal form of architecture. Just like you pack your clothes into your suitcase and bring them to your destination, the idea was to bring my living surrounding with me.” Create a sculpture featuring your choice of subject, using fabrics to convey the sense of home and belonging.

C. The artwork is installed floating over the staircase. It hangs in the space like a ghost, calling to mind the past lives of buildings, including that of the Singapore Art Museum. Did you know this historic building was once a Catholic boys’ school? Imagine what life must have been like as a boy attending this school. Write a diary page of a day at school whilst bearing in mind what life might have been like a hundred years ago.
FIND OUT MORE

ARTWORK


INTERVIEW

AN ATLAS OF MIRRORS
AT ONCE, MANY WORLDS
FROM WHERE WE ARE, HOW DO WE PICTURE THE WORLD — AND OURSELVES?

Humankind has always devised ways of seeing beyond sight. Two such instruments are the map and the mirror, which make visible more than just physical terrains. While the atlas – a book of maps – locates where we are and charts where we want to go, the mirror shows us to ourselves, sometimes unreliably, and in curious ways.

Through an exploration of the literal and metaphorical characteristics of atlas and mirror, An Atlas of Mirrors reveals artistic perspectives that arise from our migratory, intertwining histories and cultures, particularly in Southeast, East and South Asia.
The main title of the Biennale is woven through nine ‘conceptual zones’, or subthemes, which locate each artwork in particular curatorial contexts. These zones shape the flow of the Biennale experience, like chapters in a book or sections in a poem. Like the title – ‘An Atlas of Mirrors’ – which is built on the relationship between a collective noun (“an atlas” as the collective noun) and what is being thought of ‘collectively’ (“mirrors”), these zones are conceptually themed along specific collective nouns and what they hold together for contemplation and experience. Artworks located within each zone resonate on many levels, and at the same time, all nine zones coincide, intertwine and reflect each other along the conceptual continuum of ‘An Atlas of Mirrors’ as a whole.

Each zone represents concepts, ideas and ways of seeing as explored in the 58 artworks and projects.

Haunted by the past and pregnant with the future, the present is preoccupied. As shoals of shivery metal fish materialise out of a Malay folktale, and a ghostly fabric ‘cast’ of a centuries-old Korean gate from a family home hovers, spectral gold-hooded figures row out of a gallery wall in charred Indonesian longboats, and the walls between worlds thin. Nothing is really lost: lest we forget, lest we be forgotten – we touch the past and the past touches us in return.

Retrospection reveals the present as a thoroughfare where all realms coincide and are mirrored – where the personal nudges collective memory; the seen implies the unseen; legacy evokes loss and forgetting.
FOR MORE INFORMATION

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