

2022

Hans Christian
Andersen Award

Nominee

Republic of Korea

ILLUSTRATOR

SUZY LEE



suzy lee 

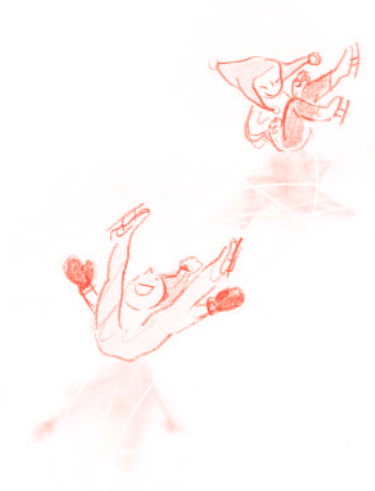


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1 | Biographical Information



Suzy Lee was born in Seoul in 1974. Her father, a carpenter who built birdhouses in the forest in his retirement years, and her mother, who would embroider scenes from Lee’s picture books to give as gifts to her young daughter, were both artists who never let go of their dreams. Lee grew up in a home where every nook and cranny was filled with books. As shown in *My Bright Atelier* (2008), she spent her youth meeting “real” painters at the small studio near her home, and grew up wanting to become a painter herself—someone who could draw paintings that would give “tingling sensations” to the people who see them. Around this time, she discovered *The Shrinking of Treehorn* (written by Florence Parry Heide, illustrated by Edward Gorey) in her mother’s bookcase. Thinking back to that experience, Lee reminisces how she was too young to truly understand the book but was immediately taken by the strange, almost otherworldly attraction about the work. “Probably, this book made me think that every book should have some quality of mysteriousness,” she says.

Later, Lee went to study painting at the College of Fine Arts, Seoul National University. Upon graduation, she began illustrating for children’s novels and in the process, was introduced to the world of artists’ books. Having wanted to find a passion she could devote her originality to, instead of pursuing a simple profession, Lee became mesmerized by the amazing artists’ books that flooded the market

around that time. These books were telling a story through their art and were presenting a unique artistic experience by fusing paintings with print and publication, which seemed to speak to Lee. She decided to study this medium further at the UAL Camberwell College of Art. While in London, she learned about the craft elements and cover art that go into making artists’ books, while in the process understanding books as a medium of self-expression. She explored the scalable potential of the physical properties of books that enable them to embrace more than flat, two-dimensional drawings. Works by John Burningham, Enzo Mari, and Bruno Munari showed her that picture books can tell a complete story just through illustrations, without the need for text. Later, she began challenging herself to create wordless picture books that tell a simple truth in the cleanest, most effortless way possible.

With the dummy book she created for her graduation piece from UAL, she participated in the Bologna Children’s Book Fair where she met and signed a contract with the Italian publisher Edizioni Corraini, which produced the picture book *Alice in Wonderland* (2002). *The Revenge of the Rabbits* (2003), which was selected by the Bologna Illustrators Exhibition in 2002, was published by the Editions La Joie de Lire and chosen as “The most beautiful Swiss book” of that year. This was quickly followed by the publication of *The Border Trilogy—Mirror* (2003), *Wave* (2008), and *Shadow* (2010)—as well as *Suzy Lee’s Picture Books: The Border Trilogy* (2011), which encapsulates her philosophy and the logic found in her picture books, and grabbed the attention of the international picture book community. Hailed as an artist who “explores the tensions and pleasures that exist between the real world and fantasy,” Lee’s efforts to create unique literary and aesthetic innovations earned her the position as shortlist for the 2016 Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Through the inspired marriage between the physical properties of paper books and the philosophical imagery of a “border,” Lee has managed to inform readers of the unique spatial characteristics of picture books. Furthermore, in exploring the temporal borders between the real world and fantasy, she has boldly broadened the horizons of wordless picture books. Her 2017 work *Lines* meanders across the inner and outer workings of its narrative and roams freely across the temporal realities of the artist, the protagonist, and even the reader. She has also collaborated with writers, including her illustrations for Bernard Waber’s posthumous book *Ask Me* (2015), her illustrations for the Hans Christian Andersen Award-winning Chinese author Cao Wenxuan’s *The Yulu Linen* (2020), and the illustrated book *Dream of Becoming Water* (2020), which features her drawings accompanying the songs of the

Korean singer-songwriter Lucid Fall. With the publication of *River* (2018), which tells the autobiographical experiences of her dog, Lee received the 60th Korea Book Award and a designation on the IBBY Honor List.

Recently, she founded her own independent publishing company Hintoki Press to publish her own experimental works inspired by old Korean folk motifs such as the stories of *Sim Cheong*, *The Boy Who Bought the Tree Shade*, and *Hills over Hills*. She also heads the project group Vacance, a collective of other Korean picture book artists who engage in publications, exhibitions, lectures, and talks. Together, they are attempting to work on picture books that are completely outside the box.



2 | Contribution to Literature for Young People

by Kim Ji-eun*

• Discovering the Meaning of Play

Suzy Lee sees picture books as “a joyful form of play, presented in the most refined style that tells the most serious of stories.” To her, adventure is a form of Dionysus-like play. The young characters in her books experience a slight confusion when they find themselves crossing over the boundaries between the real world and the fantasy world, but Lee declares that that state of chaos offers the best mindset to engage in true entertainment. In her works, children do not hesitate to enter into the unfamiliar, and seek to discover the truth and grow as individuals through the experience. The characters in *The Border Trilogy* may exist within the temporal and spatial limits determined by each volume of work, but they are free to leap across both the book’s physical boundaries and the boundaries of the real world to have as much fun as they please, before retiring from the books. Through play, they share an unforgettable friendship and learn to understand themselves as having matured in the process. Collectively, Lee’s works show that it is through play that children truly learn to grow. Through play, children exhibit the different sides of themselves, interact with other forms of life, plan and organize different events that celebrate who they are, and become an independent individual. In Lee’s world, there is no discrimination. Characters may get wet and they may break mirrors, but instead of growing fearful, they get back up on their feet. There is no objectification of “the other.” In Lee’s books, there is only play. She has examined these characteristics of play within the realm of her picture books. In hopes that her young readers can live on as more liberated individuals, she will continue to break down all borders and open up the world to them.

* Critic, professor of School of Creative Writing at Seoul Institute of the Arts



●● Expanding the Physical Properties of Picture Books

Suzy Lee has made singular achievements in the genre of wordless picture books. She believes the act of reading picture books begins with an unstated promise between reader and author. When a reader opens the book and witnesses the promise unfold, they are struck by the unexpected meaning and an unforeseen artistic form of the illustrations. Most of Lee's picture books do not feature any text, but the stories provided therein are fully and meticulously mapped out—enough to inspire countless conversations. The fact that there are no words lends her books a certain universality that allows for a wider and deeper reach with readers.

As she began working with book art, Lee has consistently rejected seeing books as one-dimensional objects. With *Alice in Wonderland*, she recreated the theater in book form, to an audience that was used to seeing literature recreated on the theater stage. By adding photographs with different focuses and layers, she attempted to give physical form to a surreal experience. With her *Border Trilogy*, she incorporated the binding of the books as an artistic mechanism, to break down the stereotypes that books, due to their physical form, are incapable of visual reproduction. In *Open This Little Book*, she used the device of infinite regress to visualize the book's physical layers. By placing progressively smaller books within a larger book, she has managed to create one book that is more than just a single book, for the story in this book is taken up and continued by the next narrator, and the next. Her new works such as *The Boy Who Bought the Tree Shade* and *Dream of Becoming Water* fold out like a musical accordion, which gives them a physical presence that evokes their folk origins. Lee is never afraid of cutting, pasting, connecting, and breaking books; rather, she continues on in her pursuit toward a forever shape, or a forever figure. These efforts have earned her such praise as being “an artist who insists on merging monochrome pictures, photos, and various sample art with text to create surrealist scenes,” “an author who explores the spatial possibilities of loneliness and imagination,” and “an artist who makes you think about the various locations of color, from the meticulous colors that go into filling up the different sections to the brilliant colors that seep across the page in their thrilling escapades.”

●●● Creating an Independent Creative Platform,

Widening the Community of Picture Book Culture

Through her independent publishing company Hintoki Press, Suzy Lee is creating a unique creative platform where she can experiment with challenging artistic ideas that are not typically seen in mainstream publishing. She also heads the project group Vacance, a collective of picture book illustrators who propose wildly artistic experiments in their work. In this capacity, she's working to spread this movement to the rest of the picture book community. The illustrators participating in Vacance do so on a freewheeling basis as if going on “vacation” from their real jobs, as the name of the group suggests. The members include 11 Korean illustrators with an international presence; currently they are working to create a picture book on the motif of traditional Korean folktales. Vacance is also working to plan new, creative programs that uses picture books as a medium to bring together artists and citizens at the Seoul International Book Fair, the Publishers' Table (a publishing fair), and the bookstore Booktalk. They have illustrated dimensional picture books with various meanings, codes, and images inspired by Korean folktales. In 2020, they held a dimensional exhibition based on Vacance picture books in an old abandoned courthouse in the small city of Wonju. Even in a post-COVID, virtual environment, they have experimented with new channels that can bring picture books to the public. As part of this exhibition, citizens who have been with the picture book community for a long time participated as docents. By scanning a QR code, any member of the audience could listen to the docents' explanations about the exhibition. In such ways and more, Suzy Lee has been active in collaborating with other illustrators in various artistic realms, as well as bringing more picture books to the public and to many generations. She has taken the initiative to transform the genre of picture books into a wider, more influential culture.

In the post-COVID world, many artists who have lost confidence in the future of paper books have turned to adapting their picture books for film or animation purposes. Suzy Lee has gone in the other direction, bringing other media into picture books and placing them in the world of paper. In that sense, Lee has staked her artistic career on picture books. To her, picture books are a rich base camp and the final destination where all kinds of aesthetic achievements come together. We can't wait to see her next work of creative transformation across yet another artistic sector.

3 | Essays on Suzy Lee's Work

Suzy Lee's Adventures in Picture Book Land

by Lee, Sung-yup

from *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 54-4, 2016.

Articles

Suzy Lee's Adventures in Picture Book Land

Sungyup Lee

After some hesitations to get very tired of sitting in her chair or the bed and of her walking in the sun or snow she had passed on the book for the very reason, that it had no pictures or illustrations in it.

—Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Alice, one of the most famous heroines in all of children's literature and a figure to whom the inventive Korean artist Suzy Lee has seemingly been attached, asked herself, "What is the use of a book without pictures?" Lee responded in her first picture book without verbal text: *Alice in Wonderland*. Furthermore, it seems that the British girl has inspired the Korean artist in her following works.

(...) It seems that her artistic talent can be fully manifested through the visual and material constituents of a picture book, as demonstrated by her wordless narrative picture books: *Alice in Wonderland* (2002), *Revenge of the Rabbits* (2003), *Mirror* (2003), *Wave* (2008), and *Shadow* (2010). When she is not collaborating with another author, Lee's works are particularly silent but suffer no lack of communicative power. The little British girl, Alice, would certainly have appreciated Lee's wordless but communicative books full of pictures. With the exception of a few works, the stories are conveyed simply through lines and forms expressed in her favorite medium,

SUZY LEE'S ADVENTURES IN PICTURE BOOK LAND



Lee's wordless but communicative books full of pictures. With the exception of a few works, the stories are conveyed simply through lines and forms expressed in her favorite medium, charcoal, delicate touches of color. Most of Lee's solo works do not speak, but show: they lead readers to feel, think, and tell their own story. Through her books, the reader becomes a sort of intersemiotic translator, interpreting the visual factors into a verbal language.

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- Researcher and translator

charcoal, alongside delicate touches of color. Most of Lee's solo works do not speak, but show: they lead readers to feel, think, and tell their own story. Through her books, the reader becomes a sort of intersemiotic translator, interpreting the visual factors into a verbal language.

If Lee's works do not rely on a written text, another factor—the book as a physical object— becomes enhanced. Her imaginative nonverbal worlds are magnificently embodied or incarnated in and via the book. The materiality of a book is a concern not only for picture books but also for any other published text: it is like a container of the contents. As for a picture book, the book as a physical object can acquire even more importance than other types of published text because it performs communicative, aesthetic, and even narrative functions. In other words, every single element of a book—such as its size, form, the type of paper, layout, cover, end paper, title page, gutter, and dust jacket (if there is one) —conveys a message and becomes part of the narrative world found within its pages. Each element of a book is the space for a creative playground in which Lee fashions her own imaginative world. It appears that, for her, the book as a physical object is a tangible medium of expression applied in order to tell a story, just like a verbal language or visual elements. Her famous *Border Trilogy*—*Mirror*, *Wave*, and *Shadow*—makes use of book formats and gutters with remarkably high effectiveness. Therefore, it is not surprising that she considers herself not a picture book author-illustrator but a "book artist."

A book is really a mysterious object because it establishes a link between a fictional world and readers in the real world. It is a physical border where illusion meets reality. Like the frame of a painting, it belongs to the real world and the fictive one at the same time to spark a connection between a work of fiction and its readers. Held in the hands, a book is a "real" physical object that compels its reader to recognize that what is contained inside is simply fiction. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to state that a book as a physical object is a meta-fictional medium. This ambivalent object has seduced the inventive Korean book artist Suzy Lee as she has taken pleasure in blurring the borders between reality and fantasy ever since her first picture book, *Alice in Wonderland*. This wordless picture book is ironically concluded with an allusive verbal expression, the epitaph of Lewis Carroll asking "Is all our life, then, but a dream?" Trapped in a cat-and-mouse game, Alice and her counter-partner, the White Rabbit, pass through a theater, a fireplace, and finally, a book. Within their chase, multiple layers of an illusory world are successively unveiled. Initially represented through photographic cutouts which provide a sense of reality, Alice transforms into a character depicted in pencil drawings while the reverse occurs to the White Rabbit. There is no longer an impermeable barrier between reality and illusion: the

two worlds are much closer to each other than was believed and finally intermingle. Besides, the mysterious relationship between reality and illusion is cleverly implied by six paintings revisited in this picture book. The tension between reality and fantasy is a recurring theme in Lee's other works as well: the ice cream-truck driver's confusion between dream and reality in *The Revenge of Rabbits*; a little girl's dreamlike visit to a zoo in *The Zoo*; a girl's chimerical trip with a bird in *The Black Bird*; the blurred barrier between the real world and the reflection in a mirror in *Mirror*; and the intriguing play occurring between a little girl and her mischievous shadow friends in *Shadow*. The fragile line of demarcation separating reality and illusion is symbolized by the book gutter, which is a precious material element to Lee. The gutter is necessary for bookbinding, which means that a portion of every sheet must be "lost" in the gutter of the binding. This ordinary and almost disappeared portion of a book has become an extraordinary, even essential, element in Lee's narrative world. It symbolizes a clouding of the boundary between reality and illusion, the theme on which some of her stories are based. The gutter already played this narrative role in Lee's first work, *Alice in Wonderland*: there is one double-spread with a parody of a Korean folk painting on which the left page is the reflection of the right (or vice versa). It appears that the gutter of the double-spread functions as a mirror, although it is unclear which page is the reflected image.

The concept of the gutter is artfully applied in *The Border Trilogy*: the border may physically mean the gutter and metaphorically a space where reality and imagination meet and interact to create something new. After discovering and exploring their imaginative world or alter egos, the small heroines of the three stories mature and their world becomes enriched. For example, in *Shadow*, the skirt of the playful girl turns yellow, the thematic color of her fantasy, when she finished playing with her illusory companions. It is like a reader whose interior world is stretched and expanded after reading a book: he or she becomes tinted with the shades of the imaginary world. Certainly, the reader will never be the same person as before. This correlation between colors and someone with the ability to see "beyond" the tangible world is recognizable in *The Zoo*. A young girl enjoys some time with animals after following a mysterious peacock which appears to play the role of a guide, as the white rabbit did for Alice. The scenes of her dreamlike visit are rendered in color, in contrast to the near monochrome of her frightened parents who believe that they have lost her.

In her illustrations for other texts, Lee seems much more generous with her use of color, as can be seen in *Open This Little Book* (text by Jesse Klausmeier) and *Ask Me* (text by Bernard Waber). Even though her visual interpretations are expressed

through a diversity of vivid colors, the physical elements of the book still play an important role in these two iconotexts. In *Open This Little Book*, Lee makes ideal use of various sizes of paper in order to embody physically the theme of the work. This technique represents a sort of "mise en abîme"—that is, a story within a story, or more concretely in this case, a book within a book. Therefore, it appears that Lee's collaboration with Klausmeier demonstrates once again her leitmotif of a circular relationship—like a Möbius strip—or a blurring of the lines separating reality and illusion. While illustrating Waber's touchingly poetic text, Lee brought into play another feature of books in order to cross a border between fiction and non-fiction. The visual narrative begins in the front endpaper, before the verbal narrator sets out to talk. The nature of the bookbinding process requires all hardcover books to have endpapers. This portion of a book constitutes a "space between" in which the reader is no longer outside nor yet inside the story (Sipe and McGuire). However, it can be used to add an aesthetic or narrative dimension to picture books. This "space between" provides a fictional arena for Lee's visual narrative: with the title page, the front endpaper shows a small girl and her father preparing themselves for a joyful walk and leaving their home. Therefore, the "peritextual" space blurs the boundary between an editorial convention—which belongs to reality—and a fictional world.

Lee would not have created a picture book simply to please Alice and support her complaints regarding a book without pictures, although she does adore this adventurous girl sandwiched between reality and fantasy. Unlike the British heroine, however, Lee in fact loves some texts to the point of illustrating them: her own text in *The Zoo* and her essay on *The Border Trilogy* are flawless. However, she knows that her book is able to convey the full depth of her intended story without resorting to a single word. Rimbaud asserts that the poet makes himself a voyant (seer) able to view something hidden behind the visible world and reveal what he or she has seen. The French symbolist might have even seen the color of each letter. In his sonnet "Voyelles" (vowels), he assigns a color to each vowel: "Black A, White E, Red I, Blue O and Green U." This poet must have been able to uniquely observe the world and the "beyond" world and use colors to express himself, although he did not himself paint or illustrate. Lee is also in possession of vision penetrating enough to capture meaningful moments within the real life surrounding her and can describe them in her unique nonverbal manner of expression. She sees, then she shows. Her narrative world, which is dreamlike but still rooted in her experiential life, can be visualized and materialized in a book, which has, fortunately for us, lead her into the field of picture books. Since her *Alice in Wonderland*, she has pursued artistic adventures back and forth between reality and fantasy.

In National Book Festival poster, Suzy Lee shows 'everything that you can do with books'

by Michael Cavanaugh

The Washington Post | Sep 13, 2013.

City Beatings Post
Suzy Lee

In National Book Festival poster, Suzy Lee shows 'everything that you can do with books'

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When Suzy Lee wanted a picture book as a child, often her only option was to try to picture the book. These simply weren't items her family came across every day in the Seoul of the '70s, years before South Korean publishing made rapid advances. So when a real, physical picture book did enter her household, it took hold. And if it was illustrated by the great Edward Gorey, it especially held her imagination.

"I remember that there was *The Shrinking of Treehorn*, by Florence Parry Heide, illustrated by Edward Gorey, on my mother's bookshelf," Lee said by e-mail from South Korea. "I don't think I understood the book properly at that time, but I was instantly drawn to some kind of strangeness that it carried. Probably, this book made me think that every book should have some quality of mysteriousness."

Growing up, Lee had "no idea of picture-book artist" as an occupation, but she is now one of the more gifted under-40 children's book illustrators. She's a thoughtful artist who imbues her work with clever qualities that beguile. Her most recent visual wonder is *Open This Little Book*, by Jesse Klausmeier (Chronicle). It's a playful creation that led to Lee's next big assignment: creating the official poster for this year's National Book Festival.

Jennifer Gavin, the Library of Congress's project manager for the festival, spotted Lee's bright, deft images at a national librarians' event in Seattle.

"Her work makes you smile," Gavin said. "There's something you see that adults as well as children might enjoy. . . . You want to give people something that can bridge those age gaps, and that's uplifting and colorful when you look at it."

Lee pursued that same spirit for her new assignment with the Library of Congress.

"I wanted to create a poster that can make you smile — the warm feeling that we all know when we have a wonderful book on our lap," said Lee, who studied painting at Seoul National University and book arts at Camberwell College of Arts in London. "All the words associated with the poster are fun: festival, joy of reading, children, tree of books, a forest library, lots of colors, lot of animals. . . . Then those words and images are all connected together and realized." libraries and book lovers," said Lee, who has also illustrated the acclaimed *Wave* and *Shadow*. "When the festival organizer asked me to do the poster, I thought my wish had come true."

The assignment came with a primary request: Use lots of color. From there, Lee went deeper.

"I studied the previous posters in the Library of Congress," said Lee, who did her line drawing in pencil before coloring in acrylic and tweaking the artwork digitally. "All the posters were unique and beautiful, but I thought I could try the lighter and more fun elements." Besides the creatures adopted directly from *Open This Little Book* — including the ladybug, frog, rabbit and bear — "there are lots of other animals reading various patterned books, and they're doing everything that you can do with books: reading books, chewing books, swallowing books and doing acrobatics with books. Everybody in the poster certainly enjoys the moment."

Lee might have grown up behind national borders with relatively few picture books, yet part of her joy as an artist is to do what Heide and Gorey did: Somehow communicate across those boundaries.

"It is such a pleasure to see we're connected by the picture books, and with no language or cultural barrier," Lee said. "Moreover, my greatest readers are children — there are no borders in their minds!"

Suzy Lee will speak in the Children's Pavilion on Sept. 22 at 2 p.m.

Michael Cavanaugh
Writes articles, covers, illustrations. Michael Cavanaugh is creator of the Comics 101 column and graphic-novel reviewer for The Washington Post's Book Week. Follow him.

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- Writer/artist for Comic Riffs

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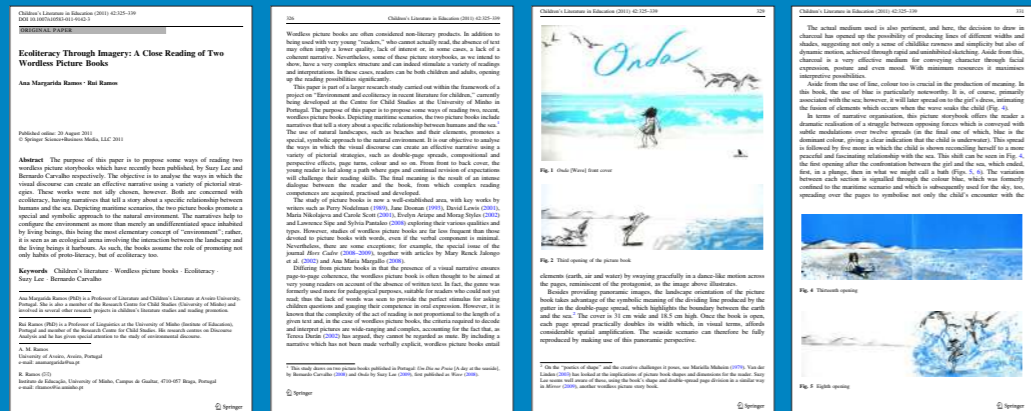
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Ecoliteracy Through Imagery: A Close Reading of Two Wordless Picture Books

by Ana Margarida Ramos¹, Rui Ramos²

from *Children's Literature in Education* (2011) 42:325–339



Abstract

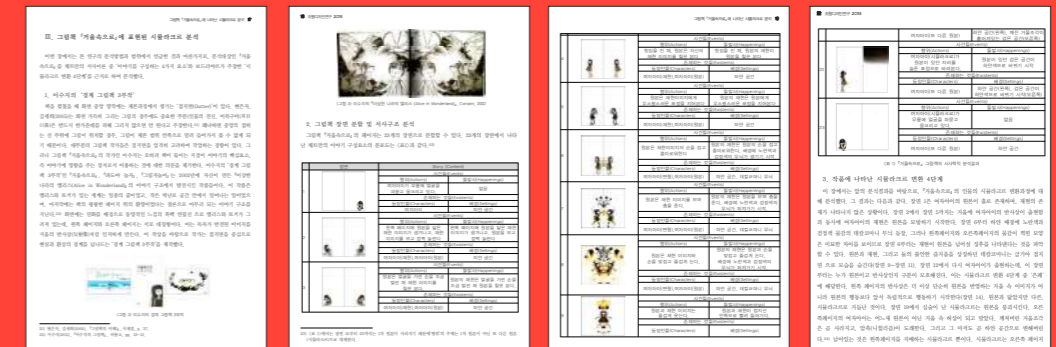
The purpose of this paper is to propose some ways of reading two wordless picture storybooks which have recently been published, by Suzy Lee and Bernardo Carvalho respectively. The objective is to analyse the ways in which the visual discourse can create an effective narrative using a variety of pictorial strategies. These works were not idly chosen, however. Both are concerned with ecoliteracy, having narratives that tell a story about a specific relationship between humans and the sea. Depicting maritime scenarios, the two picture books promote a special and symbolic approach to the natural environment. The narratives help to configure the environment as more than merely an undifferentiated space inhabited by living beings, this being the most elementary concept of “environment”; rather, it is seen as an ecological arena involving the interaction between the landscape and the living beings it harbours. As such, the books assume the role of promoting not only habits of proto-literacy, but of ecoliteracy too.

- Professor of Literature and Children's Literature at Aveiro University, Portugal.
- Professor of Linguistics at the University of Minho, Portugal.

An Analysis of the Simulacra in Picture book, “Mirror”

by Lee, Sa-rah¹, Park, Soon-bho²

from the Study of Art & Design, The Korea Association of Art & Design 18-2, 2015.



“Scene one introduces a girl without any alternative representation. Scenes two to five introduce the girl’s reflection in the mirror, and this reflection copies the original. From scene six, we see decalcomania patterns in vivid yellow and black across a white background, but with slight differences in the pattern on the left and right-hand pages. It is here that the reader senses that the mirror representation will start to take over the original. The decalcomania that symbolized a nervous pleasure between the two suddenly goes into hiding where the pages meet. We see the girl again in scene 12, but it is unclear whether we are seeing the real girl or her mirrored reflection.

This constitutes the fourth stage of simulacra, or pure simulacrum, where the reflection on the left-hand page is no longer a mirror copy of the original but an independent entity with its own sense of agency. It looks like the original but is completely different—a standalone simulacrum. In scene 19, the simulacrum becomes angry and destroys the original. The girl on the right-hand page has become an illusion in a mirror. The broken pieces of the mirror soon disappear, and darkness settles. This darkness also gives way to a white space. The only thing left is the simulacrum that dominates the left-hand page. The simulacrum is acting out the same actions of the original in the right-hand page. But this girl is no longer the same girl we saw in scene one.”

- Graphic Designer
- Professor of Institute of Convergent Art & Media-technology at Hongik University, Korea.

4 | Interview with Suzy Lee



“I prefer children who immerse themselves in play, over grown-ups who say ‘been there, done that.’”

Interviewer: Choi Hye-jin
from The Hankyoreh newspaper | Nov 7, 2020.

As a picture book artist, Suzy Lee has gained insight into the creative power that play can bring. *The Border Trilogy* that has brought her international recognition are word-less picture books that take up a single book, except they open in different directions. The three books all feature a child playing by herself, and the emotions she feels as she engages in play jump out from the page. Another of Lee’s wordless picture book, *Lines*, shows an ice-skating child who, despite numerous falls, keeps getting back on her feet as she clearly enjoys skating. The children in *This Beautiful Day* display a magical power in transforming a gray, rainy day into the best day of their lives. In Lee’s books, it is the norm to explore and question and find your own best way of playing. That must be why her books leave the reader with so much energy. Adult readers are reminded of our young selves playing till our cheeks turned red and ruddy, feeling an exhilarated relief as we returned home, ready and optimistic for what another day would bring.

Q. In a recent talk, you introduced yourself as “someone who plays together with the readers over a little bowl of stories that come alive through pictures.” It’s been so long since I met an adult who introduces herself as someone who loves to play and have fun.

• Writer and interviewer



Whenever I’m thinking of a new piece, I feel like I’m playing around. The urge to do what brings me joy is really the inspiration that drives me to keep working. I tend to work quickly, since I’m eager to place on paper all these inspirations in my head before they float away. I’m not very good at repetitive work or sitting on a piece for a long time, doing and redoing the work. I only draw what I need to. It’s obvious, when you look at classic picture books that are beloved by readers of all ages, across generations, that their authors had a great deal of fun when they wrote and illustrated those books. If I want my readers to feel that joy, I have to truly immerse myself in the work, and find the best way to translate that joy for my readers. Of course, not every single part of the process can be fun. When you’re working in publication, you sometimes have to do things you don’t want to, in order to produce a result on time. Sometimes, you face different challenges. But I like getting in the moment and really focusing to solve the problem. That’s why I keep doing what I do.

Q. *The Border Trilogy* also reads as a trilogy of play. And yet the books don’t feature any toys that children would be familiar with. Instead, everyday elements such as mirrors, shadows, and the tide are used in different forms of play.



The most important essence in playing is that it is voluntary and without purpose. Even the best game can be ruined when there is a slight bit of unsolicited intervention or recommendation. To become immersed in something, it’s best to play with a raw material rather than a finished product. In that sense, nature is truly the best toy there is. Anything is possible with nature. And a child is free to express his or her creativity by adding and mixing with nature to create something new. When children are playing and something doesn’t work according to their expectations, they are flexible in changing direction. Rather than working towards a grand vision or goal, they remain completely faithful to the moment, reacting to what they see then and there. As an author, I want to bring those childlike, creative moments of fun into my books.

Q. You obviously place great emphasis on the impulse or urge to do something fun. Over time, having had a lot of experiences usually dulls people to those impulses, and yet you say there is still so much that excites you. Coming from a veteran author, that’s fascinating to hear.



When I see children in class who say things like, “There’s nothing for me to draw,” or “I have nothing to write about,” I get so frustrated. (laughs) I can talk for

three hours about my smartphone charging cord. Look at this cord. What does it look like? What does it remind you of? How does it feel? Imagine how it twirls around and around. What does it look like now? I keep asking these questions and expand from there. To work my way up and out from the small cord, I have to take time and really look hard at the cord and continue to seek out more stories. That's the whole creative process! It's important to find an object worthy of your attention and affection. But this could be anything you see in your everyday life. You don't have to go far to find something fun and exciting. In fact, in many cases, it's been right under your nose the whole time. That's why it's important for both children and adults to hold on to that attitude, of being impressed by the world, of being in awe. Instead of saying, "I knew it. That's always been the case. Been there, done that," what we really need is to look at the world believing that you missed something. If you hold on to that feeling of constantly being amazed by everything, then the whole world is your playground.

Q. What advice would you give to readers who want to re-learn how to marvel at the world again?



When you find that nothing amuses you anymore, perhaps that's because your standards have been set too high. After all, if something brings you even a tiny bit of joy, that's still joy, pure and simple. When I read a colleague's picture book and I find something there that appeals to me, then I buy the book. I might not be a huge fan of all the images and maybe there might be holes in the narrative, but if I like one thing, then that's enough for me. If you commit to an open mind when you see the world, and are willing to wonder at the smallest thing, to learn something new, and to be awestruck by something that day, then you will find yourself being amazed every single moment. Try to keep an open mind, and ask yourself, "What kind of surprises are in store for me today?"

While concluding the interview, I was struck by how Lee emphasized that you must commit yourself to being surprised and amazed by the world. That when you do so, you'll find something new even in the most mundane of experiences. It's almost like becoming a traveler. A traveler isn't someone who has just arrive somewhere new; a true traveler is someone who is open and ready to discover new things and be amazed by them. A true traveler embraces the world with open arms, ready to enjoy all that it may present. The same tired landscape may seem beautiful and awe-inspiring in the eyes of the right beholder.



"If a person establishes herself as an artist, she will have access to an even bigger playground."

Interviewer: 黃筱茵
from OKAPI (Taiwanese Online Bookstore)
Apr 21, 2020.

Q. When examining your works, you are more an "artist" than an "author of children's books". Please share with us about how you see and define your identity in the artistic realm and the possibilities of your career?



Alice in Wonderland was the first book that I created from beginning to end by myself. I didn't think about any general rules of publishing or target readers of the Alice book and I only concentrated what I'd like to explore under the theme of Book Arts. I brought my simple dummy book of *Alice in Wonderland* to Bologna Children's Book Fair for fun. I happened to meet the Italian publisher Corraini and showed my dummy to them. They liked it and they published it a year after.

Corraini didn't ask anything to revise and published it just as it was. I found that very intriguing. Their attitude seemed to me like, "we respect the artist's decision" (that means if the work has flaws, it's solely the artist's responsibility, too.) I was young and novice in the field but I felt fairly encouraged. I realized I was a "picture book artist" and none other. Once you define yourself as an "artist", you have a wider playground that you can wander about. I'm always drawn by the subject matters of element of art, and in the center of my art, there are lively children.


Q. I realize that you change your media by the subject and needs of different books. Still, do you set different goals upon different stages of your creative projects?




One of the attractive points of the picture book is that you are free from the

concept of “consistency”- well, you might find that my works look all similar after all, but at least I feel every project I’ve done is different. I use charcoal for this project not because I love charcoal or I am good at using charcoal, but because I felt this project needs the lines of charcoal. As the shapes of the books are all different depends on the projects, I believe the art materials and style should be different too. The recent project I finished was about the song titled *Dream of Being Water* - the lyric is about the circulation of water and life. I use blue watercolor wash throughout the pages and the shape of the book is a long accordion fold; every image of water is connected to each other as one whole image as water flows.

Q. Your works are deeply loved by varied readers all over the world. Everyone can find different meanings in your pictures. It’s like you are creating for your inner child, since you are having conversation with a different you via different books.


 The girl in a sleeveless dress in *Alice in wonderland* is actually myself when I was about 6 years old. And she appeared in *Mirror*, *Wave* and *Shadow* too. They’re not necessarily the same person, but they share common characters--curiosity, bravery and endless energy of a child. I didn’t mean I was like that, but that’s the qualities that I’d like to keep. I love the genre of picture books because it is facing and talking to children.

Q. Do you cultivate your skills in painting in any specific ways? To train yourself to control your pencil or paintbrush, like the way a pianist practicing musical scales and Bach?


 A simple line drawing can tell you so many things. Every artist has her own favourite way of drawing, but I think I prefer the line drawing that can capture the dynamic movement and the moment of exploding energy of a child. In order to achieve the quality that I’d like to see, I repeat the same drawings many times to find the “one”. For *Lines*, I watched Yuna Kim, the famous Korean skater’s videos on youtube and drew her graceful dance on the ice over and over.

I love the minimal way of expression. When all the elements are minimalized, readers can see the meaning of each element. For example, in *Wave*, the girl’s dress was white (or blank) in the beginning when she came to the sea, but later it becomes blue. If the picture was described in full color, readers could not promptly notice the change of the color. The tint of blue means the change of her perspective as well as all the event she experienced in the sea was not just a fantasy.

Q. As a book artist, would you please share with us about whether there exist any bottlenecks or difficulties in the process you create the picture books? How did you work them out?

 Since I regarded myself as an visual artist rather than a writer, naturally my interest first lies in art itself, form, or medium. I am making a “picture book”- that means I am dealing with series of “pictures” and “books”. A book as an art medium itself has lots of interesting characters. If you’re dealing with books anyway, the elements of the book can be part of the story whether you intend or not. Why is book a quadrangle? Why the pages turning into a certain direction? What about the texture of paper? etc. All of the questions are interesting, but sometimes this kind of questions make readers perplexed. These three books share the same idea- that the gutter of the book can be the border of fantasy and reality. I start this book introducing my episode that one U.K. bookseller asked me a question. “Is it a printer’s error ?” he asked me about the double spread pages in *Wave* where the girl’s arm is missing in the gutter of the book. Also I once got an enquiring email from a Singaporean bookshop asking if the blank pages in *Mirror* is whether the artist’s intention or again, some printing error. I found these episodes very interesting. Maybe some readers have a big question mark on their head reading my books--challenging, but in a sense, that may be the most creative moment of us!

Q. The COVID-19 pandemic recently has forced the world to change. People are forced to isolate themselves temporarily. At such a critical moment, are there any thoughts or messages that you’d like to share with the children and other artists in this world?

 Actually, my other artist friends said that it’s not quite that different from the days we lived before. We, the artists, are always self-quarantined ourselves when we’re working. Well, social-distancing is not that unfamiliar term for the artists. And we used to play alone in our head (that sounds a bit miserable though.) But rather, I think we need to be aware that we’re facing a situation that we’ve never seen before. The grim future that we only saw in sci-fi films has been arrived without any notification. Besides, we cannot meet and cannot touch each other. People become aware of the harm from others, and also the harm that can be caused by ourselves. We are going to see many arts and stories about this new situation after this COVID-19 pandemic. It’s not just the situation that we avoid and just wait for passing by but the situation that we need to look into very carefully. Be sensitive, more than ever.

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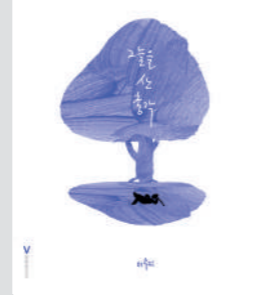
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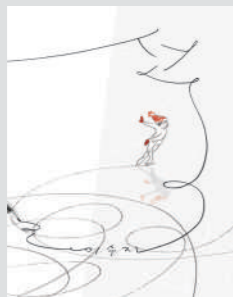
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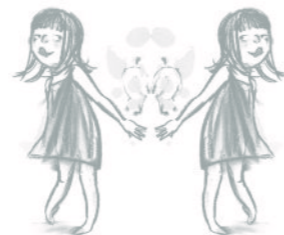
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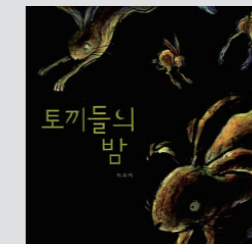
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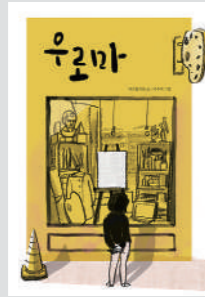


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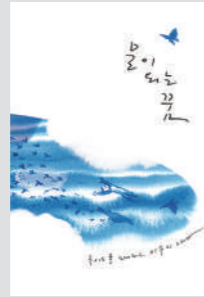


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● As an illustrator



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Children Publishing, Seoul, Korea, 2005



6 | Representative Books

The Border Trilogy

These three books make up *The Border Trilogy*, where the narratives play out across the pages of books that challenge the physical limitations that paper books can have.



Wave
Written & illustrated by Suzy Lee
Apr 2008 | Chronicle Books,
San Francisco, USA



Shadow
Written & illustrated by Suzy Lee
Aug 2010 | Chronicle Books,
San Francisco, USA



Mirror
Written & illustrated by Suzy Lee
Aug 2003 | Edizioni Corraini,
Mantova, Italy

• An Experiment Based on Re-thinking Borders as Limits

Mirror features two girls—one is a mirror reflection of the other—who meet along the folded edges of the book, and engage in symmetrical playing and dancing. *Wave* depicts a child confronting a wave as she journeys across the pages. In *Shadow*, the child in the top page is situated in reality, while the child in the bottom page is playing in a fantasy shadow world. These three books make up *The Border Trilogy*, where the narratives play out across the pages of books that challenge the physical limitations that paper books can have. The three books have the same dimensions although they open in different directions. In all three books, one girl is portrayed as the sole character. This girl finds herself crossing over the binding line in the middle of the book to experience the fantasy world on the other page. In the ensuing chaos of flitting across reality and fantasy, she enjoys herself immensely as she rediscovers herself in the other world before returning to reality. When she first crosses over to the other side, the girl feels a sense of confusion, but this confusion is the best space to play in. She realizes that she can throw herself into this unfamiliar world and explore the opportunity to expand herself. It was Suzy Lee's greatest aesthetic accomplishment to

transform the physical constructions of the paper book into an opportunity to expand readers' perspectives and therefore, expanding the realm of imagination.

• Review “Beach Sprite”

By Becca Zerkin

from The New York Times Children's Books | July 13, 2008

I am in love with a nameless little girl made of charcoal dust. She is the sparingly drawn heroine of *Wave*, Suzy Lee's wordless picture book about a day at the beach, and she bursts from the page with vitality.

Like *The Zoo*, one of Lee's earlier picture books (which does have a few words), *Wave* shows the world through a child's eyes. In *The Zoo*, the perspective, shown in brighter colors than the pages representing the adults' view, is a mix of reality and imagination—there a girl envisions herself sliding down a giraffe's neck, for example—that suggests closeness to nature. *Wave* emphasizes a similar connection but edges closer to reality; a flock of sea gulls becomes a young girl's entourage, mirroring her emotions as she plays with the water. They run together from the encroaching tide, the girl's dress and foot flicking out behind her, then become gradually braver as the wave recedes. Soon the gulls frolic overhead as the girl gains confidence, splashing about like Gene Kelly in a downpour.

Lee's design is restrained: double-page spreads show a white, flat beach on the left with a few hills in the background lightly shaded in charcoal; the churning water's edge painted in blue-turquoise and white acrylics on the right; and a pure white sky stretching across both. The girl and her sidekicks, also drawn in gray shades, gradually migrate from the safety of the left side of the page to the unpredictability on the right.

When a big wave finally crashes down on our friend even as she impishly sticks out her tongue, Lee paints a wild tumble of blue and white streaks, splatters and loops emanating from the spot where the girl stood. We see her on the next page propping herself up, with her dress falling down and her hair in her face. But now that she has faced her fear, the scene is suddenly brighter. The girl's dress and the sky have become the same bright blue-turquoise as the wave itself. A page later we see the girl's resilience as she and the sea gulls delight in the trove of shells revealed by the wave.

In a story of small events, Lee portrays a universal childhood experience of carefree adventure. She evokes the little girl's un-self-conscious joy and elicits tender amusement from the reader.

• paper engineer, educator, reviewer



Lines

This book features the artist's time, the young skater's time, and the reader's time in following the lines in the book.



Written & illustrated by Suzy Lee
Sep 2017 | Chronicle Books,
San Francisco, USA

• One Timeline, Multi-Dimensional Awareness

It's early in the morning when a young girl is seen tracing long lines with her skates across a bed of smooth ice. There is also a painter who uses her pencils to excitedly trace across the white page. The child demonstrates majestic leaps and twirls before suddenly falling on the ice. The artist, in a fit of frustration, crumples a piece of paper. As such, this book features the artist's time, the young skater's time, and the reader's time in following the lines in the book. As with the artist, the young skater falls numerous times before getting back on her feet and discovering friends just like her. Together, they enjoy their time on the ice. The little girl cheers on the other kids who have also fallen on the ice, while the artist cheers on the little girl. The reader finds herself cheering on the little girl, the girl's friends, and the artist's own artistic achievements in a multi-dimensional way. The Horn Book had this to say about *Lines*: "For a wordless book, *Lines* has a lot to say about the artistic process and the at times fine line between the joy of expression and lonely pursuit of craft." *Lines* cleverly demonstrates how Suzy Lee's creative endeavors with wordless picture books have reached a new dimension of artistic achievement.

• Review

Gorgeous Picture Books That Reveal the Power of the Pencil

By Grace Lin

from The New York Times Children's Books | Nov. 3, 2017

In the transcendent wordless picture book *Lines*, Suzy Lee uses her pencil to draw the reader into layers of her imagination. The book opens to a drawing of a blank page, with only a pencil and eraser. From there, we follow a lone, red-capped ice skater who glides on an expanse of white ice, her skates creating a trailing line behind her. She spins and twirls with exuberance, but when she attempts a spinning jump, her landing falters. It is only when the skater falls that we see that the ice has been the blank sheet of paper and the marks from her skates are pencil lines. The paper is temporarily crumpled up as we are reminded of the beginning image, and, with a thrill, we realize we are seeing through the eyes of the artist as well as feeling her frustration. Luckily, the unseen artist reconsiders and smooths out her paper and the skater reappears. From there new skaters begin to jubilantly join the drawing, the hundreds of "mistake" lines and eraser marks becoming their skate tracks. The closing endpapers feature a drawing of an ice pond, presumably the artist's finished piece, on a pile of sketches.

It's a magical, inventive journey through the artistic process. The mistakes, as well as the perseverance, needed to create are charmingly personified by the skater. Her motion and body language are captured with marvelous skill, each drawn mark alive with quiet energy —rendering words unnecessary. *Lines* truly underscores Lee's mastery of the wordless picture book form.



• Author and illustrator of many books for young readers



Sim Cheong

Witnessing the young girl's reverence in the face of death, the reader tries to come to terms with what happened and silently mourns her sacrifice.

Written & illustrated by Suzy Lee
Jun 2019 | Hintoki Press, Seoul, Korea



• Expanding the Field of Storytelling

Sim Cheong is the product of the Vacance Project, a collective of illustrator peers who are aggressively experimenting with forms that are not easily found in mainstream publishing. This independently published book was inspired by the motif of *Simcheongjeon*, a classic Korean story that has also been adapted for a traditional Pansori performance. In the original story, the protagonist Sim Cheong volunteers to be sacrificed to the seas by the village fishermen in order to save her blind father. The Dragon King, the tale's sea god, takes pity on her and returns her to the human world, whereupon she is reunited with her father who is given the gift of sight. The story emphasizes the Korean traditional sentiment of filial duty. The book *Sim Cheong* only features the scenes of Sim Cheong leaving her father on the ship and jumping into the seas as tribute. In doing so, it focuses on the tragedy of what must have gone through the mind of a 15-year-old girl who accepts death in the face of dark seas and turbulent waves. Witnessing the young girl's reverence in the face of death, the reader tries to come to terms with what happened and silently mourns her sacrifice. By delving into themes and new forms of expression that are not easily found in mainstream publishing, then publishing the results independently and organizing exhibitions and talks on the book, Suzy Lee constantly explores new ways of engaging her readers.

• Review

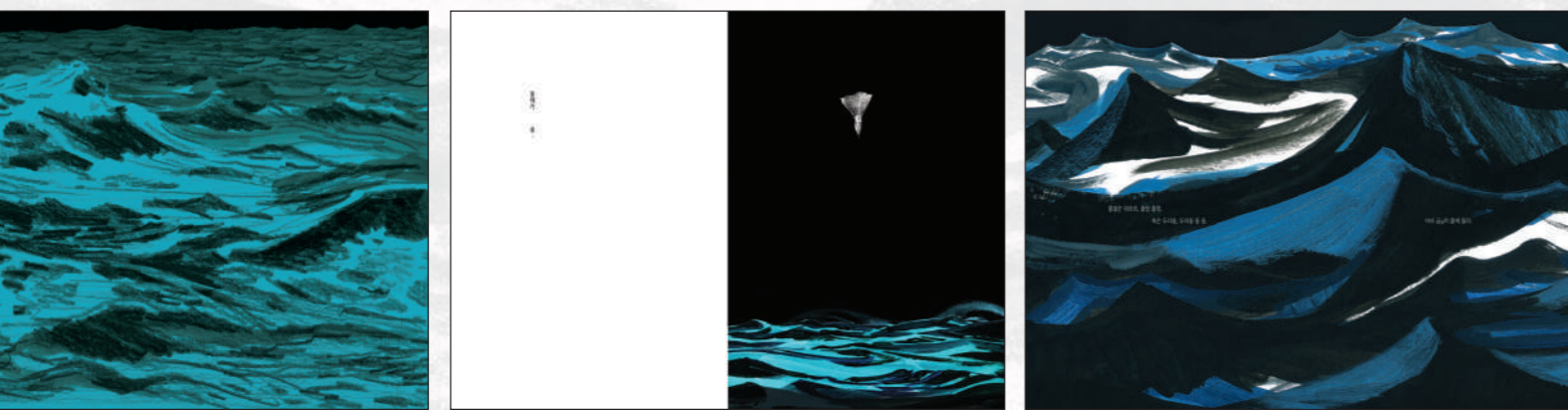
by Kim Ji-eun

from The Author Study Archives, KBBY(IBBY Korea) Vol. 3, 2020

With this picture book, the first thing the reader notices is the way the pages have been arranged. The book itself has been saddle stitched with no end papers or even a title page. The copyright page has been kept to a few necessary lines only and printed on the bottom left of the back cover. As the book has been stripped down to such a bare minimum, the reader is immediately thrown into the story upon opening the book, much like how Sim Cheong must have felt as she stood on the edge of the ship, about to jump to her doom. This is a book that has been written in the third person but with illustrations that are solely in the first-person point of view, the effect of which forces the reader to face nothing but the vast, empty expanse of the sea. The scenes first show images from the daytime which progressively gets darker, giving way to more scenes of the nighttime. With that, the reader senses that the end is near. The scene where Sim Cheong drops like dead weight into the ocean—which is the climax of the book—is indescribably tragic. Next to the pale white dot that is her head, we see four words that together read, “Splash, into the water.” These vertically written words with a single period at the end, along with the illustrations, create a parallel image that form the height of tragedy and the most memorable scene of this book.

Upon witnessing Sim Cheong's solemn death, the reader finds herself attempting to steady her nerves and silently mourning Sim Cheong's passing. For a while, we see no text in the book. The author waits as the deep blue of the seas swallows Sim Cheong's cries whole. Then we read one of the fishermen murmur regretfully, “Come next year, let's put an end to this business.” The book ends with a short text, “And so we leave,” along with the light blue of the sky. This theatrical production is only possible because illustrations were used to depict the passing of time, and not words. When a reader is faced with wordless scenes, they feel as if everything has been put on pause. By refraining from adding text to certain scenes, the author can extend the time of the reader's experience. The wordless silence that follows Sim Cheong's fall further dramatizes this delay effect.

• Critic, professor of School of Creative Writing at Seoul Institute of the Arts



The Zoo

The children in Suzy Lee's world demonstrate what it means to empathize with animals and respect all forms of life for people who otherwise distinguish themselves from others.

Written & illustrated by Suzy Lee
Aug 2004 | BIR Publishing, Seoul, Korea



• Review

by Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst
from School Library Journal

A pleasant family outing takes a surreal turn. A little girl begins, "I went to the zoo with my mom and dad," then lists the various animals they visit. The pictures, however, tell another story. Somber gray and dark-blue-toned illustrations depict humans looking into empty cages. The girl darts away, following a peacock into a colored landscape. As her frightened parents search for her, the child plays with an increasing assortment of vividly hued animals before she is found sleeping on a bench. She finishes, "I love the zoo. It's very exciting. Mom and Dad think so too." Lee's illustrations, a complex mix of pastels, pen and ink, and collage, are full of intriguing details. At the beginning, the child is grayish like the rest of the landscape. When she is with the animals, she is depicted in color. Even after she rejoins her parents, her cheeks, coat, and single boot are a bright pink. The cover and endpaper illustrations contain important elements that inform one's interpretation of the events. Before the story begins, readers see an empty monkey house and an ape leaving through a hole in the fence to join other beckoning animals. The back cover shows the animal back in the monkey house, admiring a small pink boot. This sophisticated picture book may be best appreciated by older readers who are willing to explore its complicated visual images.

• Librarian of St. Christopher's School, reviewer

• Friendship and Coexistence between Humans and Animals

In the midst of a depressingly drawn big city filled with grays, blues, and sepias, there is a zoo, which is itself filled with suffocating rows upon rows of cages. And yet, these cages are empty. We see but one peacock that is shining brilliantly. While the grown-ups continue to walk around the empty zoo as if by habit, a little girl sees the peacock, and together with the bird, heads to the lake of fantasy. At the lake, all the animals that have escaped from the zoo are celebrating in a vibrant, colorful festival. Instead of latticed fences, we see a dizzying array of atypical lines. In her works *The Zoo*, *The Revenge of Rabbits*, and *River*, Suzy Lee explores what has to come first in order for humans and animals to coexist. In a world where animals are used as tools only when they are necessary, it is children who become best friends with River, a stray dog, and it is children who become friends with the gorilla at the zoo. The children in Suzy Lee's world demonstrate what it means to empathize with animals and respect all forms of life for people who otherwise distinguish themselves from others.



The Black Bird

This book is ahead of the times, considering how diversity and feminism have been given center stage in international children's literature since the 2010s.

The main character's adventures, personal development, and return are depicted on a majestic scale against a minimalistic, black-and-white frame.

Written & illustrated by Suzy Lee
Jan 2007 | Gilbut Children Publishing, Seoul, Korea



● Review

by Dorothy Mentel

from Revista Babar (Spanish digital Children's book magazine), Sep 16, 2011

It is interesting to compare the cover of this new title of Suzy Lee to its original Korean and French edition (2007) that the bird is the absolute protagonist as the title *El pájaro negro* (*The Black Bird*) suggests. The Spanish edition of Barbara Fiore, however, seems more subtle. The black bird is in the shadow cast by a girl, and spreads its wings just as she spreads her arms in a pose of happiness, lightness and relief. We do not know if this illustration was part of the interior of the above issues (again occupies the flyleaf) because it has a finer line, perhaps having been reduced in size. The entire book, including cover and jacket uses only black and white.

The protagonist hears arguing parents from the hallway, and it is the trigger: "Nobody tells me anything," the girl complains. Her sadness is linked to their insecurity and ignorance. But a black bird (with all the earmarks of being a crow) that we could see in a normal size in the two previous illustrations, suddenly comes to an enormous size and ready to carry the girl in its beak crossing the sky, flying over mountains, fields, deserts and rough seas. A black bird is nothing but their identity and self-awareness. A person capable of observing reality draws conclusions understanding the world around her ("Mom and dad think I know nothing but I hear the things I see"). You develop the internal world and build a secret "I will not tell anyone". The secret is to grow and be able to think, and to feel sure of yourself.

The Black Bird is certainly an art book, with deep content and beautiful form. Personally, I'm still not convinced of the artistic publications. I was brought up with colorful small booklets full of characters from fairy tales. The first impression of this book left me alone in amazement: how schematics for what is for children and what is not for are deeply rooted in me. We never have a doubt that we know best what is good for children; we never ask children about it. We may deprive the opportunity from children who will certainly figure out *The Black Bird* with curiosity.

Despite some doubts, I think this book is extremely valuable and interesting - for lovers of beautiful books and looking at them as more than the pop-up monsters and idyllic story.

● Understanding Children and Minorities from a Multi-Dimensional Perspective

"I want to cry," says a young girl as she faces the reader straight on with a nervous look on her face. She is peering out a gap in the door at some adults fighting and screaming with each other. A dog draws near and rubs against her in an effort to calm her nerves. A black bird appears before the child as she heads quietly out the house. After quietly listening to her story, the bird allows the girl to hop on its back, then whisks her away into the skies. The girl soars through the sky, and as her house fades away in the background, she feels her self-esteem and her feelings coming back to her. The color black and the black bird symbolize the child's sadness and sense of frustration, but the color also reaches out and comforts the young girl. This black-and-white picture book is one of those rare exceptions of introducing a young Asian girl as the protagonist at the center of its grand narrative. As such, this book is ahead of the times, considering how diversity and feminism have been given center stage in international children's literature since the 2010s. The main character's adventures, personal development, and return are depicted on a majestic scale against a minimalistic, black-and-white frame.



7 | Other Works



Vacance Project

Hills over Hills, Hintoki Press, Korea, 2020
Fart Match, Hintoki Press, Korea, 2020
The Boy Who Bought the Tree Shade, Hintoki Press, Korea, 2019
The Magic Jar, Hintoki Press, Korea, 2019
Sim Cheong, Hintoki Press, Korea, 2019

Vacance is a project-based group of Korean picture book artists. Each artist freely participates and seeks to meet various readers through independent publications dealing with diverse topics and new expressions. “Korean Folk Tale Project” is Vacance’s current working project.

“Suzy Lee has been active in collaborating with other illustrators in various artistic realms, as well as expanding her creative attempts through the medium of picture books. Many artists who have lost confidence in the future of paper books have turned to adapting their picture books for film or animation purposes. Suzy Lee has gone in the other direction, bringing other media into picture books and placing them in the world of paper. In that sense, Lee has staked her artistic career on picture books. To her, picture books are a rich base camp and the final destination where all kinds of aesthetic achievements come together. We can’t wait to see her next work of creative transformation across yet another artistic sector.”

– from Author Study Archives

- Vacance Project
[homepage sites.google.com/view/vacanceproject](https://www.google.com/sites/view/vacanceproject)
[instagram @ vacanceproject2020](https://www.instagram.com/vacanceproject2020)
- Hintoki Press
www.suzyleebooks.com/books/press



River

BIR Publishing, Korea, 2018

Inspired by a true story experienced by the author and her children, this book tells the unforgettable encounter with a black dog in search of a home. River was saved and welcomed with love and became a companion in games and adventures, which come to life on paper through simple and immediate lines. The white of the pages leaves room for the reader’s imagination, who immediately finds themselves immersed in River’s story and his way of seeing the world: we dive with him in the snow (or in a pile of leaves), we become part of the family, and through his point of view we experience happiness and friendship, but also expectation and nostalgia.

“Suzy Lee’s picture books overflow with respect for all things that have been ignored and shunned by society. *River* is a concise yet powerful achievement that gives readers a truly artistic experience through the medium of picture books.”

– from the Judges’ Statement on the 60th Korea Book Award



Ask Me

(written by Bernard Waber) Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, USA, 2015

A father and daughter walk through their neighborhood, brimming with questions as they explore their world. With so many things to enjoy, and so many ways to ask—and talk—about them, it’s a snapshot of an ordinary day in a world that’s anything but. This story is a heartwarming and inviting picture book with a tenderly written story by Bernard Waber and glorious illustrations by Suzy Lee.



Dream of Becoming Water

(written & sung by Lucid Fall) Chung A Ram i, Korea, 2020

This is a picture book that features an ethereal color blue that is found in all of its pages spanning over five meters in length. The effect is exhilarating and freeing. Singer-songwriter Lucid Fall's song "Dream of Becoming Water" has been interpreted by Suzy Lee and her watercolors. In the first scene, we see a boy sitting at the edge of a pool, clad in safety gear. He jumps into the water and the currents take her to a wider world. Beautifully blue illustrations decorate the pages together with the song's lyrics. "I dream of becoming me, dream of becoming the wind / Again, the sea, dream of becoming the sea / Dream of becoming sand, dream of becoming water." The boy, with his entire body now as blue as the sea, is completely free. He heads to the river and to the seas before transforming into a bird and soaring off into the sky. Then he becomes the rain and washes over the ground and seeps into the soil. The illustrations continue on like panels in a folding screen. Lee has made use of the book's physical properties to draw upon the reader's imagination. While of course, the reader can feel free to explore the book traditionally, from page to page, the book also folds out to a watercolor painting that is 5.7 meters long—a truly gripping masterpiece.

- Review by Seon Myeong-su (journalist, Kyunghyang Shinmun)



This Beautiful Day

(written by Richard Jackson) Simon & Shuster, USA, 2017

Why spend a rainy day inside? As three children embrace a grey day, they seem to beckon the bright as they jump, splash, and dance outside, chasing the rain away. The day's palette shifts from greys to a hint of blue, then more blue. Then green! Then yellow! Until the day is a technicolor extravaganza that would make Mary Poppins proud. A joyous homage to the power of a positive attitude.



Suzy Lee's Picture Books: The Border Trilogy

BIR Publishing, Korea, 2011

This is an essay about Suzy Lee's three books: *Mirror*, *Wave* and *Shadow*, known as "The Border Trilogy". It contains smaller version of the three works and she explains the background and hidden meanings page by page. Suzy Lee deals with the subjects that she has been meaning to answer: the esthetics of a book form, the principle of a wordless picture book, an artist's practical/philosophical approach towards the picture book.



Open This Little Book

(written by Jesse Klausmeier) Chronicle Books, USA, 2013

What will you find when you open this little book? A fun story? Sweet characters? Enticing pictures? Yes! But much more. Open this book and you will find...another book...and another...and another. Debut author Jesse Klausmeier and master book creator Suzy Lee have combined their creative visions to craft a seemingly simple book about colors for the very youngest readers, an imaginative exploration of the art of book making for more sophisticated aficionados, and a charming story of friendship and the power of books for all.



My Baby My Love

(written by Moon Hye-jin) BIR Publishing, Korea, 2013

A collection of 24 beautiful love songs for babies with exquisite illustrations. The poems are filled with imitative words and mimetic words in baby's everyday life. Moon wrote poems for her own babies and Lee perfectly captured the every cherished moments of little ones.



The Yulu Linen(Uroma) (written by Cao Wenxuan)

Bear Books, Korea, 2019 | Jieli Publishing House, China, 2019

Uro's father believes that his genius daughter will achieve his unrealized dreams. To live up to her father's expectations, Uro draws a self-portrait on a canvas he bought for her. The work is completed, but the ink has run overnight, ruining the painting. It's as if the canvas that was originally intended to go to a famous painter, is refusing to accept the paintings of a young amateur like Uro. Uro tries again and again to the same dreadful results. But Uro doesn't give up. This book reminds readers of the joy one feels in becoming completely lost in what you love doing, free from the criticism or perspectives of others. This picture book is a marriage between one of China's most beloved writers, Cao Wenxuan, and Korea's leading illustrator, Suzy Lee, in a collaboration by Korean and Chinese publishing houses.



The Revenge of Rabbits

La Joie de Lire, Switzerland, 2003

Rabbits wreak jolly revenge upon a reckless ice-cream truck driver one mystical night. It is up to readers, who fill up this wordless story, whether these rabbits wanted to pay back the driver or simply to hunt for some ice cream.



Action Korean Alphabet

Gilbut Children Publishing, Korea, 2006

This book is a Korean alphabet book, which visualizes verbs and adjectives by using the unique forms of 14 Korean consonants. Done by woodcut and linoleum cut prints to emphasize the bold shapes and strong colors of the types.



My Bright Atelier

BIR Publishing, Korea, 2008

This book is about a girl who wants to be an artist. The girl believes that she is more talented than anybody else because her drawings are always picked up and got compliments in class. This pompous girl happens to meet an eccentric painter, and learns the world of art and how to truly appreciate it.



The Naked Painters

(written by Moon Seung-yeon) Gilbut Children Publishing, Korea, 2005

This picture book depicts a fantasy world that is open to children through the activity of play. A brother and sister who can go anywhere they want with a set of paints and a single paintbrush, are the main characters in this book. Clad only in their underwear, they paint anywhere they please—on their naked bodies and even on the floor. In doing so, they cross the seas and go on an adventure to a faraway jungle. The carefree ink lines bring to mind the impromptu paintings of young children. There are splashes and drops of paint everywhere, evoking a coarse yet liberating feeling. The light, translucent watercolors paint a beautiful fantasy world dreamed up by children.



Alice in Wonderland

Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2002

Floating between a mixture of flat drawings and black and white photographs, this book explores the realm of illusion and reality. A book about the dream-within-a-dream, the picture-within-a-picture, and the book-within-a-book, was inspired by Lewis Carroll's original.

8 | List of Awards and Other Distinctions

Shortlisted for 2016 The Hans Christian Andersen Award

Recommendations by book

Title	Awards and Distinctions	Country	Year
River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IBBY Honour List • The 60th Korea Book Award • Sejong Book List by KPIPA 	IBBY Korea Korea	2020 2019 2019
Lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IBBY Silent books/Lampedusa Project Honour List • NPR Best Books 	IBBY Italy USA	2019 2017
Ask Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book of Year by Yes24 Bookstore 	Korea	2015
Open This Little Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Books of the Year for Children and YA, Bank Street College of Education Book Committee • Os 30 melhores livros infantis de Crescer • Boston Globe–Horn Book Awards for Excellence in Children’s Literature (Picture Book Honour Winner) • Philadelphia Please Touch Museum Annual Book Award 	USA Brazil USA USA	2014 2014 2013 2013
Wave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openbook Awards(Best Books for Children and Young Adults category) • Prix Janusz Korczak de littérature jeunesse, La Sélection • IBBY Silent books/Lampedusa Project (Honour List) • Prêmio FNLIJ Luis Jardim- O Melhor Livro de Imagem, FNLIJ(Brazilian section of IBBY) • Premio Album ilustrado 2009, Gremio de Libros de Madrid • Selected for the Bookstart Korea List 	Taiwan France IBBY Italy Brazil Spain Korea	2020 2016 2013 2010 2009 2009

Wave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The New York Times Best Illustrated Children’s Books • The Best Children’s Books, Kirkus Review • The Best Children’s Books, School Library Journal • The Best Children’s Books, Publishers Weekly • Gold Medal for Original Art 2008, The Society of Illustrators 	USA USA USA USA USA	2008 2008 2008 2008 2008
Shadow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Os 30 melhores livros infantis de Crescer • The New York Times Best Illustrated Children’s Books • Included in the Korean textbook for elementary school 	Brazil USA Korea	2011 2010
My Baby My Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected for the Bookstart Korea List 	Korea	2008
The Zoo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notable Children’s Book in the Language Arts, NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) 	USA	2008
The Black Bird	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrators Exhibition (Fiction), Bologna Children’s Book Fair 	Italy	2005
The Revenge of Rabbits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Most Beautiful Swiss Books 2003, Swiss Federal Office of Culture • Illustrators Exhibition (Fiction), Bologna Children’s Book Fair 	Italy	2002



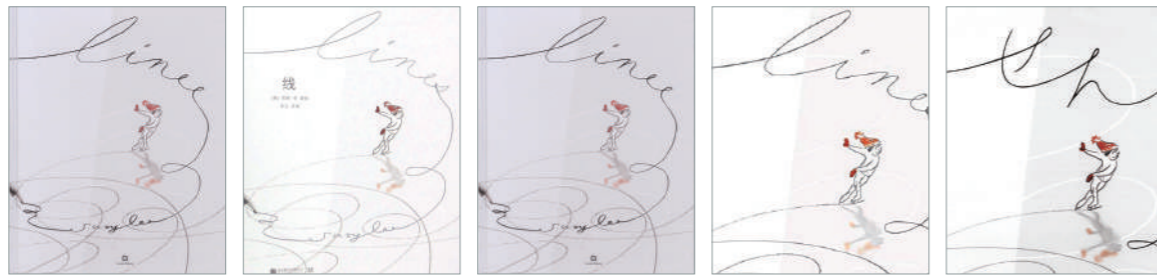
9 | List of Translated Editions

■ River

• 강이, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2018 • River: Il cane nero, Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2019 • (forthcoming), companhia das letrinhas, Brazil, 2021 • (forthcoming), Beijing United Publishing, China, 2021

■ Lines

• Lines, Chronicle Books, USA, 2017 • 선, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2017 • Linee, Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2017 • Lignes, Editions Des Grandes Personnes, France, 2017 • 線, Beijing United Publishing, China, 2019 • Líneas, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain, 2017 • せん, Iwanami Shoten, Japan, 2018



■ This Beautiful Day (written by Richard Jackson)

• This Beautiful Day, Atheneum, USA, 2017 • 이렇게 멋진 날, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2017 • Una splendida giornata, Terre de Mezzo, Italy, 2017 • 今天真好, 阿布拉, Taiwan, 2018 • 这美好的一天, Beijing Tianlue Books, China, 2019

■ Ask Me (written by Bernard Waber)

• Ask Me, HMH Books for Young Readers, USA, 2015 • 아빠, 나한테 물어봐, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2015 • Chiedimi cosa mi piace, Terre de Mezzo, Italy, 2016 • 來問我呀, 上誼文化公司, Taiwan, 2016 • Pregúntame, Océano Travesía, Mexico, 2017 • 问我吧, 京联合出版有限公司, 2017 • あたしのすきなもの、ななんだ?, 評論社, Japan, 2017

■ Open This Little Book (written by Jesse Klausmeier)

• Open This Little Book, Chronicle Books, USA, 2013 • 이 작은 책을 펼쳐봐, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2013 • Apri questo piccolo libro, Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2013 • Ouvrez ce petit livre, Editions Kaleidoscope, France, 2013 • 翻開這本小小的書, Grimm Press, Taiwan, 2012 • Abra Este Pequeno Livro, Cosac Naify, Brazil, 2013 • 翻开这本小小的书, 后浪出版公司, China, 2014 • このあかいえほんをひらいたら, Kodansha, Japan, 2012 • Doe dit boekje open, Book Island, Netherlands, 2015 • Aç Bu Küçük Kitabı, Meav Yayıncılık, Turkey, 2017

■ Suzy Lee's Picture Books: The Border Trilogy

• 이수지의 그림책: 현실과 환상의 경계 그림책 삼부작, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2011 • La trilogia del limite, Edizioni Corraini, Italy(Italian), 2011 • A Trilogia Da Margem-o livro-imagem segundo Suzy Lee, Cosac Naify, Brazil, 2012 • La trilogía del limite, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain, 2014 • Suzy Lee, The Border Trilogy, Edizioni Corraini, Italy(English), 2018 • (forthcoming), Meav Yayıncılık, Turkey, 2021

■ Shadow

• Shadow, Chronicle Books, USA, 2010 • 그림자놀이, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2010 • Ombra, Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2010 •かげ, Kodansha, Japan, 2010 • Ombres, Editions Kaleidoscope, France, 2010 • Sombras, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain, 2010 • Schatten, Baumhaus Verlag, Germany, 2011 • 影子, King-in Culture, China, 2012 • Sombra, Companhia das letrinhas, Brazil, 2018 • Gölge, Meav Yayıncılık, Turkey, 2018

■ Wave

• Wave, Chronicle Books, USA, 2008 • L'onda, Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2008 • La Ola, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain, 2008 • 파도야 놀자, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2009 • なみ, Kodansha, Japan, 2009 • Onda, Editora Gatafunho, Portugal, 2009 • La Vague, Editions Kaleidoscope, France, 2009 • Fala, Wydawnictwo Mam, Poland, 2011 • Val, Mladinska knjiga, Slovenia, 2011 • 海浪, King-in Culture, China, 2012 • Onda, Companhia das letrinhas, Brazil, 2017 • Dalga, Meav Yayıncılık, Turkey, 2017 • Welle, 360 Grad Verlag, Germany, 2018 • 海浪, Locus Publishing, Taiwan, 2020



■ My Bright Atelier

• 나의 명원 화실, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2008 • Mi Taller de Pintura, Babel Books, Colombia, 2017

■ ■ **The Black Bird** (written by Bernard Waber)

- 검은 새, Gilbut Children Publishing, Korea, 2007
- L'oiseau noir, Lirabelle, France, 2007
- Czarny ptak, Kwiaty Orientu, Poland, 2010
- El pájaro negro, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain, 2011

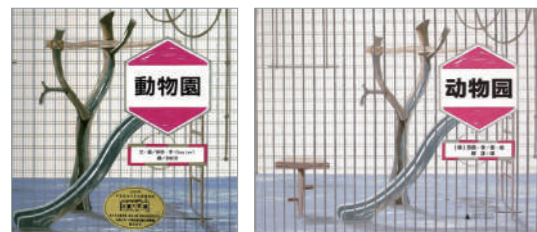
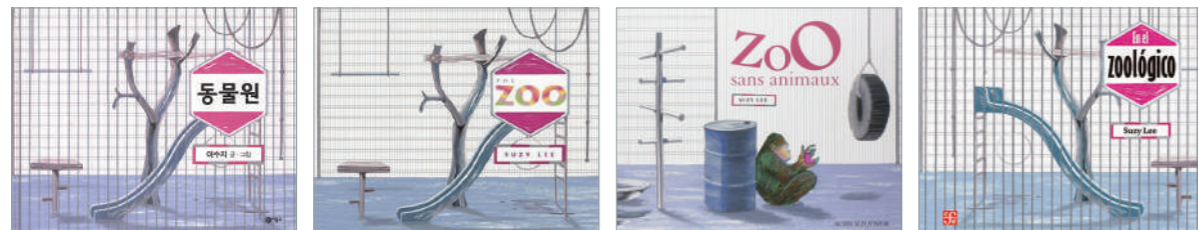


■ ■ **The Naked Painters** (written by Moon Seung-yeon)

- 우리는 벌거숭이 화가, Gilbut Children Publishing, Korea, 2005
- Les petits peintres nus, éditions Sarbacane, France, 2008
- Pintores, Libros del Zorro Rojo, Spain(Catalan, Spanish), 2011
- Kunterbunt von Kopf bis Fuß, Gerstenberg Verlag, Germany, 2012
- 畫畫嚕啦啦, Taiwan Mac, Taiwan, 2013
- 呼啦啦画画啦, Guangxi Normal University Press, China, 2015

■ ■ **The Zoo**

- 동물원, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2004
- THE ZOO, Kane/Miller, USA, 2007
- Zoo sans animaux, Editions Actes Sud, France, 2008
- En el Zoológico, FCE, Mexico, 2015
- 動物園, ABULA Press, Taiwan, 2015
- 动物园, Guangxi Normal University Press, China, 2015



■ ■ **Alice in Wonderland**

- Alice in Wonderland, Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2002
- 이상한 나라의 앨리스, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2015
- 愛麗絲幻遊奇境, Locus Publishing, Taiwan, 2019

■ ■ **The Revenge of the Rabbits**

- 토끼들의 밤, Bear Books, Korea, 2013
- La Revanche des Lapins, La Joie de Lire, Switzerland, 2003
- 当心, 兔子, 河南天星教育, China, 2017

■ ■ **Mirror**

- Mirror, Edizioni Corraini, Italy, 2003
- Espejo, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain, 2008
- Espelho, Editora Gatafunho, Portugal, 2009
- Miroir, Rouergue, France, 2009
- 거울속으로, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2009
- Mirror, Seven Footer Kids, USA, 2010
- Espelho, Cosac & Naify, Brazil, 2009
- Ayna, Meav Yayincılık, Turkey, 2020



■ ■ **Shadow is My Friend** (written by Park Jeong-Seon)

- 그림자는 내 친구, Gilbut Children Publishing, Korea, 2006
- 影子是我的好朋友, 浙江教育, China, 2011
- 影子是我的好朋友, 金蘋果圖書, Taiwan, 2017

■ ■ **The Yulu Linen** (written by Cao Wenxuan)

- 우로마, Bear Books, Korea, 2020
- 雨露麻, Jieli Publishing House, 2020
- (Forthcoming), Cai-Cai Books, Brazil, 2021
- (Forthcoming), Editorial Planeta Sostenible, Chile, 2021

■ ■ **Open the Door!** (written by Park Jeong-Seon)

- 열려라! 문, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2008
- 開門, 維京, Taiwan, 2019

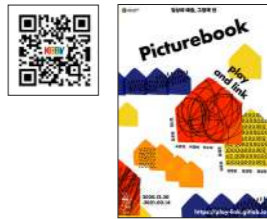
■ ■ **My Baby My Love** (written by Moon Hey-jin)

- 사랑해 사랑해 우리 아가, BIR Publishing, Korea, 2013
- (forthcoming), Guangxi Normal University Press, China, 2020

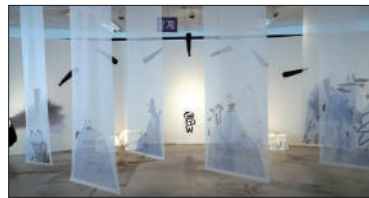
10 | Exhibitions, Lectures, Fairs, etc.

Exhibitions

Picturebook: play and link - interactive art (Online Exhibition), DDP(Dongdaemun Design Plaza), Seoul, Korea.(2020.12.20.-2021.2.14.)



Vacance Project exhibition, part of "Play Everyday", Moon-A-ri, Wonju, Korea.



Lectures, Fairs, Book Talks, etc.

2020 Korea-Russia Year of Cultural Exchanges, Korean Picture Books



2020 KBS DocuON, 'Korean Picture Books Are Running All over the World'



2020

2020 Sebasitalk, 1203th, 'The Reason I Want to Give a Book to Children'



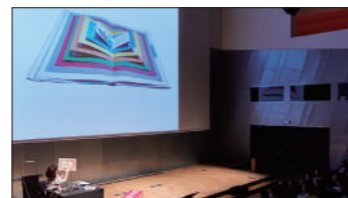
2019 Bokmässan, Göteborg book fair, Göteborg, Sweden

2019 SIBF (Seoul International Book Fair), Seoul, Korea

2019 Tokyo Women's University, Tokyo, Japan



2019 FLIC festival, Barcelona, Spain



2018 CCBF (China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair), China



2018 BCBF (Bologna Children's Book Fair), as a panel of the New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books Award Celebrating the 65th Anniversary Meeting, Italy



2017 Turin International Book Fair, Turin, Italy



2017 Invited Speaker at the 12th Biennial IBBY Regional Conference(CBC-USBY Co-sponsored Session)



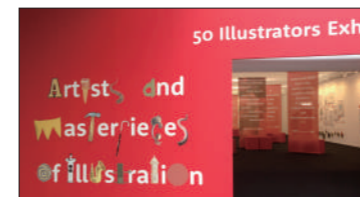
"Picture Book- Play, Read, Share", Chiak Arts Center, Wonju, Korea

2016 Arirang TV Art Avenue Interview



"Bologna Illustration 50th Anniversary Exhibition", Bologna, Italy

2016 Livre Paris, Paris, France



"Suzy Lee's Picture Books -Play, Play and Play Again", Lotte Gallery Jamsil, Seoul, Korea

2015 Korea Picture Book Association Forum, 'Picture Book as an Art for Me', Seoul, Korea

"Knock, Knock! Hello?", Lotte Gallery Cheongnyangni, Seoul, Korea

2015



"Suzy Lee's Pictures-Busan Children's Book Fair", Busan Democracy Park, Busan, Korea

2014

"Dibujando el mundo", Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City, Mexico

2014



"Picture Books- Colorful Playgrounds", Gwangju Museum of Art, Children's Gallery, Gwangju, Korea

2014



2013

Invited Speaker at FIL (Feria Internacional del Libros de Guadalajara), FILUSTRA, and workshop at FIL Niños, Guadalajara, Mexico



2013

Invited Speaker at CCBF (China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair), Shanghai, China



2013

Invited lecture and workshop at Shanghai University, Shanghai, China

2013

Invited Speaker at 2013 The National Book Festival, Washington D.C, USA



2013

'Grown-ups Read Picture Books', World Culture Open Seoul/ Open Culture Lab Seoul, Korea



"The Border Trilogy", MAMBO (Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna), Bologna, Italy

2012

Workshop at AFCC (Asian Festival of Children's Content) with Marjorie van Heerdan, Singapore

2012

Invited lecture as a keynote speaker at AFCC (Asian Festival of Children's Content), Singapore

"Um chá para Alice", Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, Portugal

2012

Workshop with children at Mambo (Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna), Italy

"Tea with Alice - a world of wonderland illustration", Story Museum, Oxford, UK

2012

Invited lecture at "The Border Trilogy Conference" at Mambo (Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna), Italy

"Eyes wide open-Reading Picture Book", Biblioteca Sala Borsa, Bologna, Italy

2012

Invited talk at "Author's Café", Bologna Children's Book Fair 2012, Bologna, Italy

2012

Invited lecture at International Seminar & Exhibition: Creating Content(ment) for Children at IDC, IIT Mumbai, India

2011

"Eye Pumping: Re-examination of Perspectives". Goodman Arts Centre, Singapore

Invited lecture/ workshop at Japan Women's University, Japan

2010

"Special Exhibition on Korean Picture Book", CJ Picture Book Festival, Seoul, Korea

Invited guest at FNLIJ, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



2009

"Hidden Between the Covers: Artists' Book Exhibition", The Arts Gallery, Collin College, Texas, USA

Invited author at International Literature Festival Berlin, Germany

2009

"Voyage to the World of Illustration", Hangaram Design Museum, Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, Korea

Invited author at Festaletteratura, Mantova, Italy



2009

Invited lecture at "Picture+Book+Concept" Seminar, SI Picture Book School, Seoul, Korea

2009

Invited lecture at "Artists' Books and Picture Books", HILLS, Seoul, Korea

2009

Invited lecture at "WAVE: About Wordless Books", Design Jungle/ BIR Publishing, Seoul, Korea



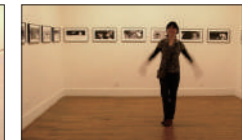
2007

"Seoul International Book Arts Fair" (Invited Artist), COEX, Seoul, Korea

Invited guest at FNLIJ, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

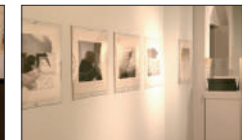
2007

"Picture/Book/Design", Zeroone Design Center, Seoul, Korea



2006

"Alice in Wonderland", Galveston Arts Center, Galveston, Texas, USA



2005

"The Black Bird", Museum of Printing History, Houston, Texas, USA



2005

"Alice in Wonderland", Houston Center for Photography, Houston, Texas, USA

2005

"Artistbookseoul", Frankfurt International Book Fair, Frankfurt, Germany

2002

"The Day of the Unread", Waterstone's Piccadilly, London, UK

2001

"Flash sur les Livres de Photographies pour enfants", Bibliotheque de la Joie par les Livres, Clamart, France

References

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