

**Noah Ryu**  
**Soft Self**

**09 September > 22 October 2016**

*Soft Self* presents a series of paintings by Noah Ryu (°1984, South Korea) that take an interest in the assimilation of anthropological and technological interfaces. In grappling with inter- and trans-human connections, and the concurring im/possibilities of desired access to an observed situation, Ryu infuses his paintings with imaginary adjustments. Staying close to a regime of (future) probability, the depicted scenes become scenes of modest science and social fiction. As such, the paintings convey a feeling of gentle outlandishness.

However obvious social reality may appear to be, any access to it is strewn with barriers preventing fully shared connection. In the end, the condition of human relations is one of uncrossable separation. Suffusing situations with fantastic envelopes may be soothing when you, like Ryu, are baffled by ordinary social obviousness. Moreover, such altered visions open up avenues to the prolific existence that can be discerned in life. What does not come across is wildly disclosed and is added to as many ways one can find to try to deal with the gaps.

When it comes to that other aspect of reality, namely the one we co-construct with visual technologies, issues of coupling and integration are no less present. Deeper changes are afoot when widespread use of high-performance cameras and photography editing tools immerses us in a visual culture of image manipulation. We are all growing accustomed to the wish of instantly applying filters to what we see.

From within his proper perspective, Ryu imagines and anticipates the advent of 'smart eyes' ; there where biological and technological interfaces coincide, as if the neural commands for visual satisfaction are applied directly to the scene encountered. As a highly skilled painterly probing of future sensory enhancement, Ryu uploads bare biological vision with editing operations of all kinds. He thereby renders landscapes of mixed realism.

Stylistically, every of his paintings is difficult to pin down. Hints of familiarity, both in the references touched upon and their respective representational idiom, meet something that's just a bit off. As regards content, the dystopic and angsty flavour of his previous series of paintings is continued, though diluted with more realism and toned down with a fascination for his own *dépaysement*. A faint perturbative sense remains, even in a pile of mossy rocks.

Not echoing the tendencies of cynical detachment we've gotten used to – let's say of the 'strong sort', Ryu's detachment is actually about a sincere inclination toward attachment. He works at this through a correlation between his particular posture and his preferred use of a medium : trying to connect, therefore inhabiting and being inhabited by a situation, dilating time and contracting space ; inhabiting and being inhabited by an interface, prying it open to look for whatever strikes or is desired.

*Noah Ryu (°1984, South Korea) studied in B.F.A Oriental Painting, Seoul National University. He is currently in residency at Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Previous exhibitions include those at Salon de H (solo exhibition), Seoul Arts Center and Ganainsa Art Center (group show) in Seoul. He lives and works in Amsterdam.*

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