

YEONSU JU
land on me softly

Curatorial text:

"We yearn for our lost continuity." — Georges Bataille

Some images arrive like memories we cannot be sure are ours.

In *land on me softly*, Yeonsu Ju builds paintings as sites of invocation; unstable grounds where memory, sensation, and longing pass endlessly between appearance and disappearance. Her figures do not resolve into portraits or fixed identities. They linger instead as presences caught in duration, suspended somewhere between recognition and erasure.

Ju was born in the southern countryside of Korea, and her practice carries the emotional residue of ritual, repetition, inherited gesture. Quiet references to Korean ancestral ceremonies thread through the work: circles traced in air, offerings placed before absence, gestures repeated until the invisible becomes briefly tangible. In certain memorial traditions, the dead are not remembered as distant figures but as undead presences—figures that persist beyond disappearance and are temporarily invited back among the living. Presence and absence cease to function as opposites; the boundary between them grows porous.

Ju's paintings inhabit this threshold.

She works primarily in oil on raw linen, priming only the reverse side of the canvas so that the rough absorbency and exposed weave remain visible on the surface. The material breathes. Pigment sinks unevenly into the fabric the way memory imprints itself on the body. There is no preliminary drawing, no fixed compositional scaffold. Images emerge directly through sensation; faces, gestures, chromatic tensions arrived at intuitively, as though summoned rather than constructed.

This process reflects a deeper relationship to duration and perception. Bergson wrote that the artist "creates possibility at the same time as reality." Ju's paintings exist precisely within this unstable state of becoming. They do not depict memory as something fixed or archival but as something continuously reshaped through the act of looking.

Her recent introduction of diagrammatic forms extends this inquiry. Circular structures, directional marks, fragmented spatial systems appear throughout the compositions like emotional cartographies—attempts to map longing, grief, intimacy, temporal collapse. These diagrams do not explain the paintings. They behave more like traces of psychic movement, recording the way memory loops, returns, dissolves, reforms.

The figures themselves resist stable narration. Echoing Deleuze's proposition that painting must "wrest the Figure from the figurative," Ju loosens the body from clear representation. Faces fragment. Expressions shift. Multiple emotional states coexist on the same surface. Her

paintings seem less concerned with depicting a singular subject than with revealing how images continue to inhabit us long after they disappear.

To encounter these works is not simply to observe them but to enter their duration.

The paintings reach outward—aggressive yet intimate—absorbing the viewer into their emotional atmosphere. *Colour moves instinctively across the surface in urgent strokes: saturated reds, bruised blues, luminous yellows, dense shadows colliding with moments of tenderness. The works resist distance. They insist on proximity.*

Within them, bodies become vessels for accumulated memory, gestures, fleeting encounters, unresolved longing, ancestral echoes, emotional afterimages suspended across time.

Nothing fully settles.

Perhaps this is where the generosity of Ju's paintings resides: in their understanding that images survive not through permanence but through circulation, through their ability to pass through us, alter us, and quietly remain after we have already left them behind.

land on me softly becomes both invitation and surrender: a space where painting holds what cannot fully be held, where memory returns in fragments, and where the invisible briefly takes form.