

Song, Myung-Jin Solo Exhibition, 2007. 7.4-14, Gallery Rho

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What makes Song's green paintings particularly notable lies in her use of color, shape and brush techniques, which have been simplified to the extreme, thus yielding the visual aspects of being monotonous as well as comfortable. Unlike the first impressions, however, the paintings are replete with the aesthetically intriguing paradoxes hidden when the green curtain is drawn down. The subtle discomfort perceived in Song's paintings spreads along with the recognition of the ironic conflict created between the simple imagery and the complicated references.

Green, as a prevailing color, definitely refers to the Mother Nature along with other landscape motifs. At the first glance, these associations are indicative of pleasing and soothing natural environments to the viewers, who are readily jumping over to the world of illusions to satisfy their sweet expectations toward the nature. Nevertheless, Song 's green betrays a normal expectation that the Mother Nature would give the best comfort and brings a certain kind of doubt despite of knowing that the paintings inherently consist of lumps of pigment as many other landscape paintings do.

What has been depicted is adjacent to a certain object shaped like grasses drenched with green paints rather than any living substances. The green color is not coming from chlorophyll as a nutritional source for life but as sterile ones disguised as lively objects, rather serving as an implement to conceal the barrenness associated with the greenish metal fences installed among greeneries. The revelation of the uncomfortable truth behind the apparently innocent pleasurable landscape warns that the observer should be mentally armed to face the suffusing green paints in order to revel in a certain kind of nature.

The latest works exhibited feature its narrative structure which has been reinforced to a higher level, as one notable change marked, when compared to the 2005 show in Kumho Museum of Art where Song had attempted her roundabout approach toward the introduction of narrative elements through rather plainer forms. The end result is an intricate texture and a complicated canvas that present symbolic characters called 'finger humans',

thus embodying human touches roughly expressed before as a few mere marks in the earlier works. Not only do these creatures imply the existence of an 'imitation' to a Creator but modern human beings, arrogant yet somehow pathetic, who place themselves into the role of being a Creator with their coarse pseudo-nature.

Green Shelter, as the starting point for this series, depicts a pair of creatures, one male and one female, standing in front of a type of artificial mountain structure made out of green carpets. The result appears like some hastily-finished patchwork. The scene appears as if they are welcoming the twilight of another dawn in the creation of their own miniature world. Although injecting dried up grass with a renewed vitality may be an impossible task, in *A Builder* and *Taking a Rest*, we bear witness to the feeble actions of a small creature who tries to make a compromise with God by covering a small area of turf with green, needlework-like threads. It can be a kind of reminder of our own pathetic self-portrait.

This exhibition includes work with complicated compositions and narratives, which is unusual for the artist. *Riverside* renders a view of the already over-populated number of finger humans who are seemingly trying to imitate and mimic patterns of human civilization. However, this attempt is far from being perfect, as seen in the only half-completed facade of a building and, in defense of the mountain behind, each blade of grass feels identically manufactured and somewhat unstable. In addition, a cell-like construction resembling the Penopticon of Foucault, a boat passing under a staircase that seems to be made out of paper, rows of wood columns, etc. all found on the canvas are full of a variety of symbolic icons which were unseen in the artist's previous work. *Making Paradise* also depicts a crudely rendered fortress of cultivation where various creatures are protected within the roughly put together, castle-like structure. Outside the walls, left over materials are strewn about here and there in a somewhat sad and lonely scene.

In this exhibition, Song definitely makes an attempt to turn over a new chapter in her work. The messages left hidden under the surface come to the foreground with the help of a few intentional artistic elements. The continued reinforced narrative serves to compel the viewer to communicate with the work by easily drawing out their emotional support. In addition, the artist's perceptual ability allowing her to create these enchanting forms leads each work to exude its own intriguing charm. Nevertheless, this reinforcement of narrative sometimes feels more like of a sort of easy answer that may lack some other necessary considerations. This is because the force of understated irony characteristic of Song's painting feels a bit diluted due to the restriction of the symbolic elements in her work. Was

it worth it to choose narrative at the cost of weakening the ironical force? Hopefully, she will learn something from her recent experience at a residency program in New York that can give her a new inspiration and ideas.