

# HUGO RUYANT

## *Air Conditioner Fantasies*

05.06 - 19.07.2025

Michel Rein is pleased to present *Air Conditioner Fantasies*, second solo show of Hugo Ruyant at the gallery.

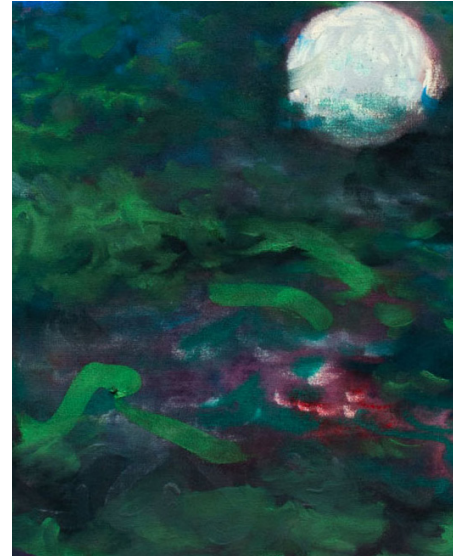
A Ghost, an Air Conditioner. Two protagonists, an infinite potential for storytelling. Three large paintings unfold like the sequences of a storyboard, extended in the background by a series of smaller formats. Freeze frames of set elements accompany the cinematic scenes in the large canvases—noodle meals in a basement, tea being poured into a cup, or an elevator door sliding open.

Between drawing and animated film, the exhibition *Air Conditioner Fantaisies* unveils a new chapter in Hugo Ruyant's painting practice, marked by his characteristic taste for the grotesque and archetypal figures—now on a grand scale.

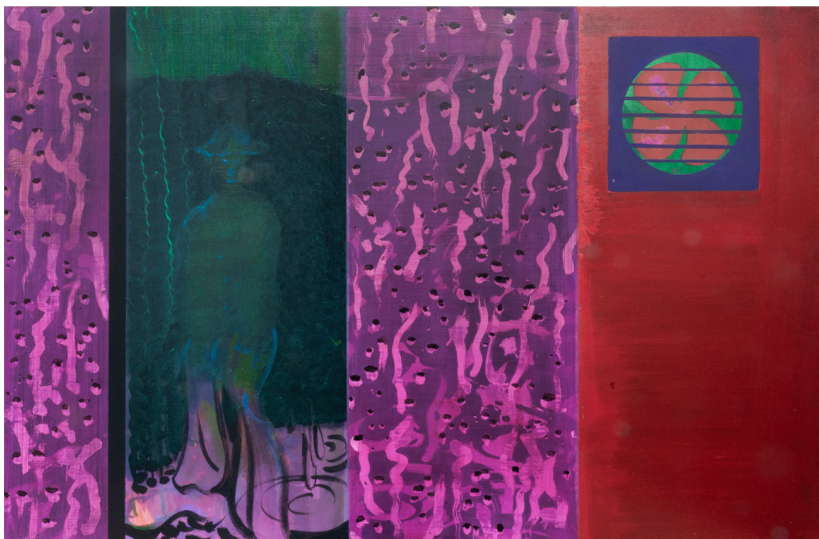
A hazy treatment of mists and glazes merges bodies, objects, and fluids into a stiflingly humid atmosphere. Dominated by shades of green, violet, and crimson, the color palette evokes a nocturnal, extra-European ambiance—exotic.

The artist narrates his journey to Gapyeong in South Korea, where he spent a month in residency. One night, a strong smell of sweat and a strange sensation led to the eerie feeling that someone—or something—had entered the house. By morning, the residents collectively agreed on a rational explanation: an air conditioner malfunctioning under heavy rain.

*The Phantom of Gapyeong* directly references this incident and serves as the starting point for other storylines pairing a ghost with an air conditioner—a duo functioning like a ready-made throughout the exhibition.



*Moonlight song (green)*, 2025  
acrylic and oil on cotton  
40,5 x 32,5 cm



*AC Melancholy*, 2025  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
60 x 92 cm

*Air Conditioner Fantaisies* can be taken literally as the fantasies an air conditioner might inspire—a drifting imagination in which the supernatural replaces the cool air.

The notion of the «*uncanny*», theorized by Sigmund Freud (*Das Unheimliche*), suggests that fear most often emerges in familiar or domestic settings. Are the ghosts that haunt us not the incarnations of departed loved ones?

This is especially true for *gwishin* in Korean mythology—spirits of those who failed to fulfill their destiny in life.

In line with the history of spectral representation, Hugo Ruyant's ghosts take on anthropomorphic forms. He materializes apparitions, gives flesh to the invisible, blurring the boundaries between the strange and the familiar. Depicted in ordinary actions, these figures evoke many scenes from Asian cinema where ghosts are ubiquitous—as in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, where a ghost monkey joins a family meal.

Beyond the reference to Asian folklore, it is no surprise that Hugo Ruyant chooses to paint such a universal symbol as the ghost. Moonlight reflections on water, raindrops on a window—these are images of familiar places.

A generic figure, identifiable by its exaggerated clothing, interferes with the objects it manipulates. This recurring character has featured in Ruyant's painting series for several years, allowing him to explore both social stereotypes and fictional archetypes. His Korean journey endures as an experimental tale where a true story merges with hallucination and its lingering memory.

Claire Contamine  
May 2025



*Air Conditioner Fantasies, 2025*  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
130 x 195 cm

Maria Thereza Alves, Jean-Pierre Bertrand, Sébastien Bonin, Mariana Bunimov, A.K. Burns, Michele Ciacciofera, Jordi Colomer, Abigail DeVille, Jimmie Durham, Didier Fiúza Faustino, Dora Garcia, Apóstolos Georgiou, Piero Gilardi, Mathew Hale, Christian Hidaka, Jean-Charles Hue, Armand Jalut, Ariane Loze, Didier Marcel, Stefan Nikolaev, Dan Perjovschi, Frank Perrin, Elisa Pône, Mark Raidpere, Enrique Ramírez, Michael Riedel, Hugo Ruyant, Edgar Sarin, Anne-Marie Schneider, Franck Scurti, Allan Sekula, Marinella Senatore, Agnès Thurnauer, Luca Vitone, Sophie Whettnall