



Press release

GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst



Mira M. Yang, mother may recall another, 2022, video still

Pierre Allain, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Claire Fontaine, Shadi Harouni, Mira M. Yang

if words are to be sounded

October 3 2026 – January 10 2027

Opening: Friday, October 2 2026, 7 p.m.

Press talk: Thursday, October 1 2026, 11 a.m.

GAK is delighted to announce *if words are to be sounded*, a joint exhibition project that explores language as a performative medium of the imaginary. The exhibition first opened this summer at CAP • Saint-Fons, and now the second installment opens on October 2, 2026 at GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen. The final installment will open at Le 19, Crac, Montbéliard in the spring of 2027.

The project emerges out of a close exchange between our three French and German institutions, initiated in 2024 and driven by our shared interest in the diverse forms and circulations of the concept of “value.” Our dialogue has unfolded against a backdrop of mounting pressure and divisions imposed upon language—forces that constantly challenge our relationship with words, whether of the past or in the present.

The starting point for the exhibition *if words are to be sounded* is our collective engagement with the poetic and eclectic body of work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982). Accordingly, we present a curated selection of video and audio works, image series, and text collages in which Cha navigates memory and loss through a constant intertwining of words, punctuation, languages, and sound; we view her works as both an invitation and a scenography for the contributions by Pierre Allain, Claire Fontaine, Shadi Harouni, and Mira M. Yang. Themes of memory, borders, resistance, vulnerability, and transmission permeate the gathered works, together they address the value of words and explore the possibility of redefining our relationships.

Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst

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With a keen awareness of social transformation characteristic of their practice, the artist collective Claire Fontaine presents part of the brickbat series alongside neon works that address values, the processes of value creation, and the increasing absence of a shared foundation of value. Pierre Allain's artistic practice centers on incommunicability as well as on perception and listening during states of vulnerable transformation or unconsciousness. The works of Shadi Harouni explore the political and poetic dimensions of language, with a particular focus on Kurdish. In a video and new textile works, she examines the connections between language, territory, and resistance. Mira M. Yang draws on Korean Pansori, a traditional form of musical storytelling that emerged in the seventeenth century. They weave ancestral narratives with memories of their own mother to investigate family lore, experiences of displacement, and the construction of memory in exile.

By bringing together diverse aspects of language, the exhibition creates a space of reflection for how words, images, and bodies can contribute to the emergence of new forms of attentiveness, coexistence, and at times resistance. Humans use language to interpret the world, establish rules, and communicate. It enables and regulates social life, conveys our values, and necessitates the constant process of translation. When language ceases to serve as a common ground and shared values are lost, yet we still believe that it can offer a concrete point of orientation, where might we find new forms of connection and meaning?

Curated by Annette Hans, Adeline Lépine, and Alessandra Prandin.

in Zusammenarbeit mit / in cooperation with



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