

# YUN HEO

## ME TIME

Opening: September 15, 2023, 7-10 PM  
On view: September 16-28, 2023

Ashley Berlin is proud to present the first solo exhibition by artist Yun Heo in Berlin. In her show *Me Time*, Heo recreates a fictionalised version of her former storage space, taking herself back to the painful experience of finding her work half-eaten and covered in mouse droppings. By restaging this experience, she brings to life a space where longing and exhaustion converge, at times materialising her memory as piercing reality, at others as distant fiction or as whimsical fantasy.

Four heavy-duty industrial shelves transform the exhibition space into a storage depot, dividing it into three long corridors, their claustrophobic quality accentuated by dim storage lights. Tinted film on windows suspends the time of day in a state that is close to but neither dusk nor dawn. Objects – large and small, round and rectangular, soft and hard – are placed in and around the shelves; objects the artist refers to as being ‘too good to be trashed but too trashy to be used’. To the unknowing observer they might appear as random things that have amassed over time. Yet someone familiar with Heo’s practice will recognise fragments of past works: You find one of her first sculptures ever made, a reproduction of grey tram stairs which served as a stage in her installation *On my Way (unterwegs)* in 2017. Towards the front of the room the remnants of a furry key guardian monster from *Getaway* (2019) sleeps tightly wrapped in strips of cloth. Next to it you see the head of a ‘key’ cheekily poking out – the key the monster is supposed to be guarding. Stashed away on one side of a shelf is something that looks like a stack of wooden logs. These are in fact supersized chewing toys for dogs, which Heo casted in thermoplastic for *Morning Person* (2021) as well as for her graduation piece *The Tiny Drop of Life* (2022). By re-assembling these past works, *Me Time* appears as accumulated time, all the time spent by the artist in her studio to produce works that are shown once or – if she’s lucky – twice, then stored away; the artist’s time becomes storage time and finally high time for mice.

A recurring motif in Heo’s practice is the anthropomorphosis of inanimate objects or non-human beings in domestic environments. The mice that cohabitated with her work and tracked down the chocolate Müsli, cocoa powder, spelt, buckwheat, flaxseed, rice, and grain used in their fabrication have clearly left their trace: tiny holes in the artworks bear witness to their nibbling and picking out of whatever material could be repurposed as a meal. Although they themselves and their poop have not travelled here, Heo has invited them as agents and interlocutors to interrogate contemporary cultures of affirmation. Often departing from memes and lifting references from pop culture, Heo’s work uses the aesthetics she is surrounded with to synthesise and interpret our contemporary condition. Like ‘Affirmation’ memes, *Me Time* is a post-ironic exposition of a culture in which motivational quotes and branded content capitalise on our need to make a living. Heo combines this observation with superstitious rituals she remembers from childhood of tying notes, either folded or simply fastened with ribbons, to wishing trees. Wishing trees exist around the world as ritual sites where people make offerings (by leaving coins, flowers, notes, fruits, or strips of cloth) to have a prayer heard or a wish granted. Instead of trees, she ties them to ‘boddari’, Korean bundles traditionally made by sewing together collected pieces of leftover fabric. They are placed on top of low-cut shelves, the kind that Heo grew up with. Every day, to make space in small bedrooms, the bed would be packed away and all bedding would be stored in bundles on a shelf. The technique to make these bundles is handed down from generation to generation – and in Heo’s case, matrilineally from her grandmother to her mother to her. Although mostly holding padding and filling material, the bundles in *Me Time* perform as stand-ins for emotional and personal baggage. The distinction between art and trash becomes blurred just as every artist struggles with the question: ‘What or who am I doing this for?’

*Ashley Berlin*  
Oranienstrasse 37  
10999 Berlin  
info@ashleyberlin.de  
www.ashleyberlin.de

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In capitalism, those who actually make a good living belong to the ownership and managerial class of the brands whose packaging is scanned and printed on the fabrics used to produce the bundles: Quaker Oats Life Cereal, Lava soap, eBay and SPAM. Each of these brands claim to be the best at what they do, the best cereal, the best in e-commerce, the best canned meat, the best soap to clean your dirty hands! Their slogans are not unlike the self-help guides flooding the internet on How to Live a Good Life<sup>1</sup>: Have a Better Pork-Life Balance. You Know It. You Love It. Buy it. Sell it. Love it. The wish notes in *Me Time* capture the spirit of these messages, but by repeating phrases such as 'good life', 'so good', 'oh life', 'very good' ad absurdum, Heo demonstrates how empty they are of meaning. Yet the mice knew all along, which is why they have decided to gnaw away at and shit all over them. At night they scuttle out of their hiding places. If you listen closely, you will hear a faint chorus:

*Where do all our hopes and dreams, bouts of exhaustion and spells of longing go in a world that is flooded with endless tips on How to Live a Good Life, but capitalism shatters any prospect to ever attain it?*

Perhaps, as the mice eat away at the veneer of self-care affirmations and positive pop psychology, we might restore a real sense of belonging — in a world beyond capitalism.

**Yun Heo** is an artist based in Frankfurt am Main. Her work explores the intersection of urban fantasy and the politics of pop culture. Mainly through sculptural installations and by playing with her generation's aesthetic of hope, she examines the often comical relationship between empathy and pop. Past exhibitions include *Mostly Sunny* at Fragile (Berlin, 2022), *Medium Rare* at Städelschule (Frankfurt, 2022), *Les Urbaines* (Lausanne, 2021), and *How to Touch an Airport Gently* at Frankfurt Airport (Frankfurt, 2018). She was a 2023 participant of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture artist residency.

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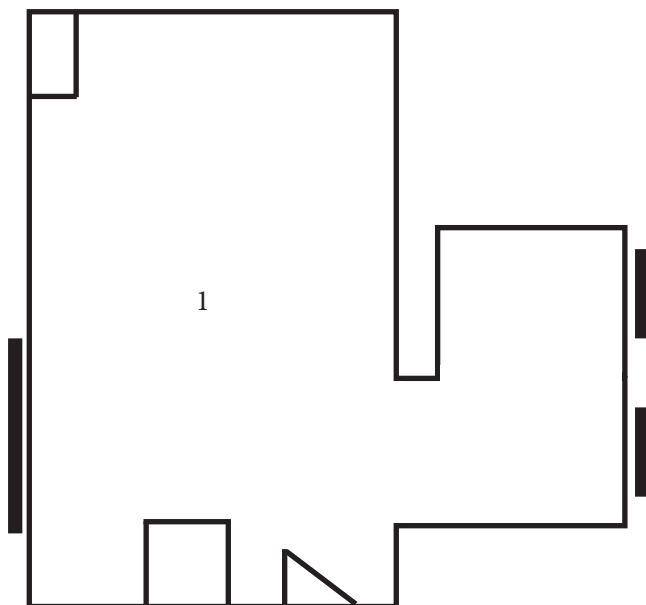
1      7 tips to live a happier life – Mayo Clinic Health System  
How to Live a Good Life (with Pictures) – wikiHow  
How to Live a Good Life By Making These 8 Conscious Choices  
How to Live a Good Life: Soulful Stories, Surprising Science, and...  
35 Little Ways to Live a Good Life | by Thomas Oppong – Medium  
Over nearly 80 years, Harvard study has been showing how to live a  
How to Live a Good Life  
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How to Live A Better Life – 33 Simple Things You Can Do

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1.

*Me Time*

2023

Heavy-duty shelving system from Polypal bars and airbrushed SSI Schäfer base feet, LAVA on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m<sup>2</sup>, eBay box from Amir on Bio Cotton Popeline, Key guardian from *Getaway* (2019), Aluminum Plate, Aluminum Wire, Rhinestones, Furry Arms from *Getaway* (2019), Fake Fur, Latex Leather, Carboard, Aluminum Casted Crumpled Papers, Cotton Ropes, Different Color and thickness of Packing Cord, Monkey Fist Balls, Wooden Table Leg, Newspaper, Wood Plates, Aluminium Plates, Euroboxes 40x60, Lids of Euroboxes 40x60, *The Logs(cookies)* from *The Tiny Drop of Life*(2022), Thermoplastic, Wood Dust, Choco Müsli, Cacao Powder, Spelt, Buckwheats, Flaxseed, Rice, *The Coffee Drops* from *The Tiny Drop of Life* (2022), Apoxie Sculpt, Apoxie Paste, Apoxie Super White, A4 Paper 350mg, Epoxy Resin, Glass Fibre, Shaking Qpet on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m<sup>2</sup>, Maren's USPS on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m<sup>2</sup>, Tram from *On my Way* (2017), Wood Panel, Steel Plate 0.7mm, Stair Edge Protector, Seat Belts, Ice Cubes, Water Tap, Spam on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m<sup>2</sup>, Bauhaus Carboard box, Bela's Büro Carboard, *Mini Logs(cookies)* from *Morning Person* (2022), Kratzbaumseil Carboard Box, My Samsonite Suitcase, Transparent Packing film, Different colors of Packing Tapes, Bubble Wrap, Packing Peanuts, Kamillenpapier on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m<sup>2</sup>, Life=(2023), Life on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m<sup>2</sup>, 6 clamp lamps, Car window Film; dimensions variable

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