

Yun Heo
No Shelf Life, 2025
Bio Gallery Seoul
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Seoul, Korea

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Blue Samsonite, My Mom's Umbrella, Arena Goggles, Casted Thermoplastic, Rice, Instant Coffee Powder, Cacao Powder, Metal Rust from Steal Mold, Synthetic Dye, Food Dye, Pattern Fabric, Suiting Fabric, Toiletpaper Ja! on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m2, Photo of Taunusstrasse 2022 on Polyester Satin 150g/ m2, Photo of My Eyes on Screen in Nyc, Luggage Rack, Cords, Packing Cords, Billy cup, Vitamin Well Recover, Nalgene, Americano, Vitamin Water, Wood Sheets, Toiletpaper Ja! on Polyester Satin 150g/ m2, Artist's Frames, Life Savers Pep O Mint on Polyester Satin 105g/m2, Powerade Scarlet Storm, Photo of Shinheungro on Polyester Satin 150g/m2, Photo of Ludwigstrasse on Polyester Satin 150g/ m2, Béla's Fabric, Life Savers Wint O Green on Polyester Satin 150g/m2, Sun Bleached Plastic Roof, Cords, Ropes, Gatorade, Béla's Sport Bottle, Recup, Aluminum Casted Crumpled Papers, Sam's Cap, 'Till Death Do Us Part' on Polyester Satin 150g/m2, Suiting Fabric, Wood Sheets, Scanned 'Too Much Coffee Man' on Polyester Satin 150g/m2, Scanned Moving Bag on Polyester Satin 150g/m2, My Mom's Pyjamas, Espresso Maker, Staatlich Fachingen, Evian, Oat Milk Cappuccino, Cords, Ropes, My Mom's Bojagi, Travel Bag, Walther König Bookshop Bag, Casted Thermoplastic, Wood Dust, Choco Müsli, Cacaopowder, Coffeepowder, Spelt, Buckwheats, Flaxseed, Rice, Cotton powder, Béla's Working Tee, Toiletpaper Regina on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/m2, Plastic Moving Box, Aluminum Casted Crumpled Papers, Suiting Fabric, Wood Sheets, Lava Heavy-Duty Hand Cleanser on Bio Cotton Popeline 130 g/ m2, Plastic Moving Bag filled with Leftover Studio Fabrics, Ebay on Polyester Satin 150g/m2, Life Savers Wint O Green on Polyester Satin 150g/m2, Soju, Powerade Zero Lime, Sparkle Water, Cords, Gypsum Boards, Sun Bleached Plastic Roof, Suiting Fabric, Wood Sheets

From antiquity onward, the ‘good life’ was imagined as a life with purpose. In the Greek eudaimonic tradition, the value is in telos; the worth of life is judged through fulfilment.

This premise that life must justify itself through striving persisted, only transformed. In the consumer society Baudrillard describes, the purpose is displaced in consumption: we consume experiences as if they were ends in themselves. For Byung-Chul Han, the imperative turns inward: infinite self-optimisation through positivity and achievement, fractured into infinite microtasks.

Yun Heo’s sculptural installations sit inside this tension. Working with the everyday debris of survival, they lie not solutions but symptoms themselves. Her works do not diagnose or prescribe. Instead, they witness. They register humour, exhaustion, and tenderness in equal measure: a nod to the absurd ways we improvise continuity when purpose collapses, when insufficiency becomes the condition of being alive. In these fragile assemblages, one sees not a life fulfilled, but a life taped and glued together. They suggest that incompleteness is not failure but a shared condition. Perhaps insufficiency is not an error but the shape of being alive. Perhaps the exhausted life, precisely in its refusal to justify itself, carries its own orientation — not toward achievement but toward continuing, not wealth but texture, not answers but presence.

Text by Ellen Yeon Kim (Ellen Yeon Kim works as an artist/writer and translator.)

Yun Heo constructs sculptural installations that witness how one handles societal conditions: examining how one copes, manages symptoms, and carries on.

Through both collecting and fabricating, she weaves elements such as branded imagery, personal effects, and humour into visual narratives, documenting these tender human responses to exhaustion without prescription. Heo lives and works in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She graduated as Meisterschülerin from Städelschule.

<This text has been written to accompany the exhibition and may not reflect the artist's point of view>

Why do I live? I cannot face the cursor winking after that sentence. I close the laptop. Then open it again.

Why do I live. I live because I was born. Because I haven't died yet. But what do I live for?

When the film *How Do You Live?*^[1] came out, the internet twisted the title into memes: How long will you keep living like that? Why do you live like this? What are you going to do with your life? Why were you even born? I lay in bed sick, snorting with laughter at the absurd fragments.

That year, sickness pinned me to bed for most of it. Pain crashed over me like waves, sweeping parts of me away. Pain or not, shouldn't I get up and do something? I'd occasionally get up, down coffee, stuff myself with painkillers, scrape my body into some task, then collapse again. Drowning in my own breath. If I couldn't produce, then consume. Even memes, snorting with laughter. How do I live?

People assume life has a purpose. A self-directed life of goals and accomplishments looks smooth and beautiful, like wood impeccably joined. Is anything lost in the joinery? Is there room for it to breathe?

The eudaimonic tradition: the good life has purpose, lived in pursuit of it. Only at the end, if the purpose is fulfilled, is a life judged worthwhile. But what if you never reach the end? I won't shed this illness. Does that make me nothing?

So what if I've become nothing? Defiance rises, but I am worn down by the chorus. 'Stay strong!' 'You can do it!' 'Don't let the illness change you!'

The demand to be positive, to look ahead, to live forward leaves me hollow. Since when is positivity this violent? Painkillers, focus pills, coffee like water — all of it just to keep checking boxes to no end. Is this living? How do I live? I collapse again.

Lying there, I remember a video: a woman on stage talking about her sister. How hard she worked for the future—saving coffee money, sacrificing sleep, living only for what came next.

Then she died suddenly in a car accident.

Her sister's life wasn't wrong. A life toward a goal is admirable. But should negating the present for the future count as virtue? Is life valuable only in striving? Who declares the incomplete insufficient? What if insufficiency is simply the shape of being alive?

The cheerfulness of 'you can do anything if you try' clings to me like dirty grease I can't scrub off. It feels like shouting encouragement at someone on their last breath.

Why do I live? Because I was born. Because I haven't died yet. I am someone who has become nothing, who has lived a messy and painful life. That gives me questions I wouldn't have otherwise. Some days, I still grind myself down. Other days, I can lie on my back, eating tangerines, unbothered. Then it starts again: shouldn't I be doing something?

Trudging through self-flaying, through the need for control, I see others too lead lives taped and glued. All I can give is a nod.

Why do I live? I don't know. Who cares.

[1] Miyazaki's 2023 film, titled after Yoshino's 1937 novel. English release: *The Boy and the Heron*.