

PROVENCE

Letter from the Editor

Saturday, July 27, 2024

Dear _____,

I will not be able to reach the level of poetry we had in last week's editorial, so I will just state the facts: Curator Kerstin Renereg reviewed Yoor Park's exhibition "*Trotting horse with head tilted to the left. Tail runs in a straight line against back left leg to the end of the leg. Mane is very clear and made up of straight lines. Reins on horse run from mouth to neck to back in a row of three. Hoofs are broken and missing.*" at **Galerie Khoshbakht** in Cologne for us. Find her text below.

Best,
PROVENCE

Reviews

Kerstin Renereg

Yoor Park at Galerie Khoshbakht



Installation view: Yoor Park, *Trotting horse with head tilted to the left. Tail runs in a straight line against back left leg to the end of the leg. Mane is very clear and made up of straight lines. Reins on horse run from mouth to neck to back in a row of three. Hoofs are broken and missing.* Galerie Khoshbakht, Cologne. Copyright Yoor Park, 2024. Courtesy Galerie Khoshbakht. Photo: Oskar Lee.

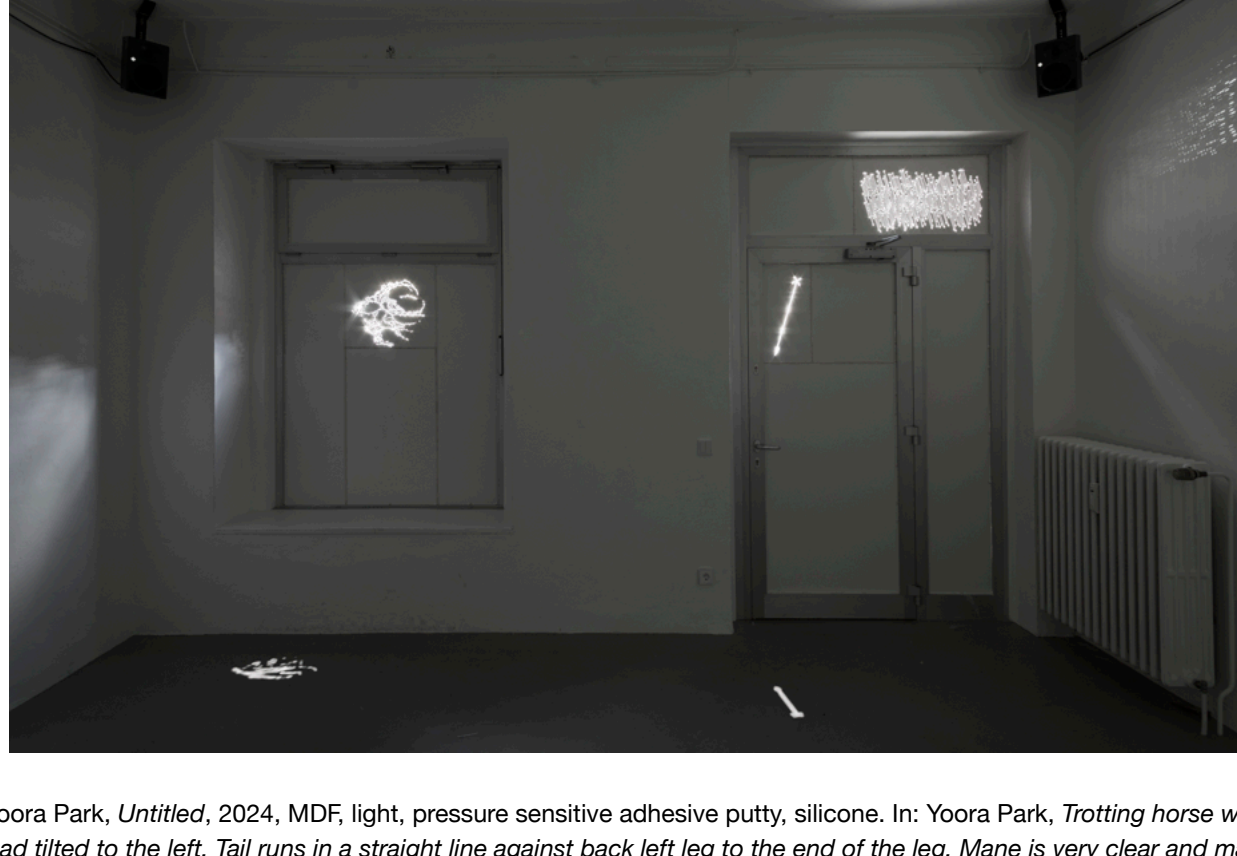
"Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't going away."

– Elvis Presley

White MDF panels on the front window obstruct the view into the interior of Gallery Khoshbakht in Cologne. Upon entering the exhibition by Yoor Park, the body takes a while to adjust to the darkness and to orient itself within the space. Clearer than from the outside, one can now discern a few openings that make the white MDF barrier appear porous. The artist cut two shapes into the wood: a grouping of descending arrows, which she transferred as a kind of memory from a previous work into the new installation. The second shape, which appears microscopic, is modeled after a photograph of algae, as depicted by botanist and photographer Anna Atkins (1799-1871) in her book *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (1843-1853); this is not only the first photographic work ever produced by a woman but also the first book illustrated using photography. Atkins used the classical process of cyanotype, or sun printing, where the object appears white against the deep blue background through the effect of light.

The changing daylight penetrates the interior through the openings in the wood panel. It is almost impossible to put into words the many different shapes the exhibition takes on as a result. As amorphous shadows repeatedly sweep across the walls, the light forms appear on the floor and walls, sometimes faint, sometimes bright, flickering and dancing. At times, they pulsate and seem to shyly hide away, while at other times, they move clockwise through the room like a luminous carousel meant to soothe children's fear of the dark as they fall asleep.

Sound is a companion to this scene. A buzzing, flickering sound loop emanates from four speakers, permeating every interstice of the room like a perfume mist that significantly defines the perception of the space, making it either an inviting or repelling place only in the blink of an eye. The continuous repetition of the sound loop penetrates the ear, triggering the nervous system like a defective record or like the act of scratching on a chalkboard. The artist created six of these repetitive sound pieces, for which she recorded various words and then electronically distorted them. The interplay of sound and light creates a situation that has something uncomfortable, perhaps even oppressive. In the windowless and secluded room, one feels overwhelmed by the senses, deprived of one's orientation skills, and abandoned by one's instinct.

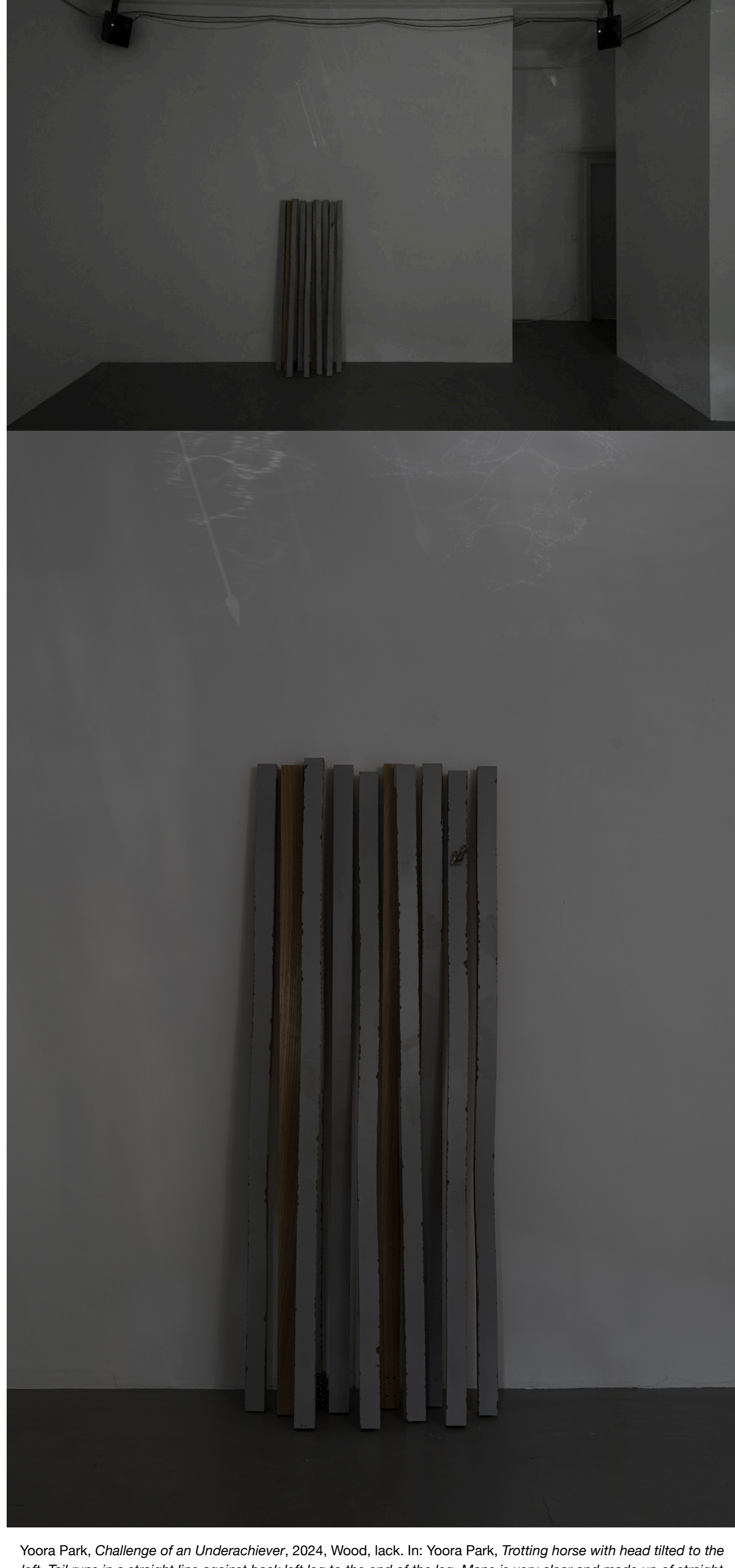


Yoor Park, *Untitled*, 2024, MDF, light, pressure sensitive adhesive putty, silicone. In: Yoor Park, *Trotting horse with head tilted to the left. Tail runs in a straight line against back left leg to the end of the leg. Mane is very clear and made up of straight lines. Reins on horse run from mouth to neck to back in a row of three. Hoofs are broken and missing.* Galerie Khoshbakht, Cologne. Copyright Yoor Park, 2024. Courtesy Galerie Khoshbakht. Photo: Oskar Lee.

Yoor Park's composition, almost the soundtrack to this feeling, is based on a phenomenon that psychology professor Diana Deutsch examines in her book *Illusions and Phantom Words: How Music and Speech Unlock Mysteries of the Brain* (2019) as so-called 'phantom words': acoustic illusions where random noises or repeated syllables are automatically interpreted by the brain as meaningful words or sentences. Park's distortion is so finely balanced that one is constantly tempted to grasp and understand expressions, while actually not being able to pin them down.

This way of working with sound, understanding it as an essential element of the installation, is characteristic of the artist's approach. As a child, she played the violin and almost attended a music conservatory in order to obtain classical musical training. Ultimately, however, she chose the visual arts, began studies in Münster, and graduated from the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 2020. Since then, music has formed the basic vocabulary of her works and is often the starting point and foundation. Not only through sound or, more precisely, through her compositions themselves - which she weaves into her installations in the form of melodic, dissonant background noise, everyday bodily sounds, fine, barely audible chord sequences, or extremely distorted classics of music history - but also through objects like speakers, bells, or sound-dampening egg cartons.

There is something dissecting about how the artist deals with and processes sound. She poses questions that understand the medium not as something incidental but rather as a powerful actor - in what manner do notions like noise, image, sound, form, silence, music, social and everyday life blend? What effects does sound have on its surrounding environment and architecture? What is the inaudible, and how does sound influence areas beyond the visible? Sound has become a sculpture that relates to the space and to the listeners and demands to be related to as well.



Yoor Park, *Challenge of an Underachiever*, 2024, Wood, lac, In: Yoor Park, *Trotting horse with head tilted to the left. Tail runs in a straight line against back left leg to the end of the leg. Mane is very clear and made up of straight lines. Reins on horse run from mouth to neck to back in a row of three. Hoofs are broken and missing.* Galerie Khoshbakht, Cologne. Copyright Yoor Park, 2024. Courtesy Galerie Khoshbakht. Photo: Oskar Lee.

In the first and second rooms, the artist placed three small-format sculptures that only reveal themselves upon the second or third glance. Resting casually, even sluggishly on walls, the objects are a torn sail, a leaf, and a horse, not easily recognizable as such. These are cut-outs the artist made from a traditional Korean gong, used in shamanic rituals to signal the beginning of a ceremony and to accompany it acoustically. In the context of their origin, the hand-sized sculptures seem to become performative objects that mark a threshold moment, even though the "either-or" of this moment remains undefined.

The leaf-like sculpture rests quietly on wooden slats arranged as a group in a manner reminiscent of Minimal Art, leaning against one of the gallery walls. The slats were once part of a door; an object whose symbolic meaning is hard to ignore—not only can it represent the inside and outside, notions of transition and transfer, but also the ones of access codes. The artist leaves it open where the door once led to and which paths are now blocked.

Only in the last room does one find the titular object—the trotting horse—that Park also made from the Korean gong. The artist discovered the image and description in the FBI's National Stolen Art File database, which lists stolen art objects in the hopes of returning them to their rightful owners. The entry was made on December 31, 1969, the day before the new year. While the image of the horse on the homepage is extremely blurry and pixelated, its verbal description couldn't be more detailed. The image disappears behind the text's precision. It's as if the description is a kind of Braille along which the object becomes graspable. The visual standing alone eludes any clarity. Since the dimensions of the missing horse curiously did not match the specified size of 11 x 7 cm, Park simply stretched her reproduction and mounted it on the wall like a puzzle.



Yoor Park, *Sculpture of a Trotting Horse III*, 2024, Brass. In: Yoor Park, *Trotting horse with head tilted to the left. Tail runs in a straight line against back left leg to the end of the leg. Mane is very clear and made up of straight lines. Reins on horse run from mouth to neck to back in a row of three. Hoofs are broken and missing.* Galerie Khoshbakht, Cologne. Copyright Yoor Park, 2024. Courtesy Galerie Khoshbakht. Photo: Oskar Lee.

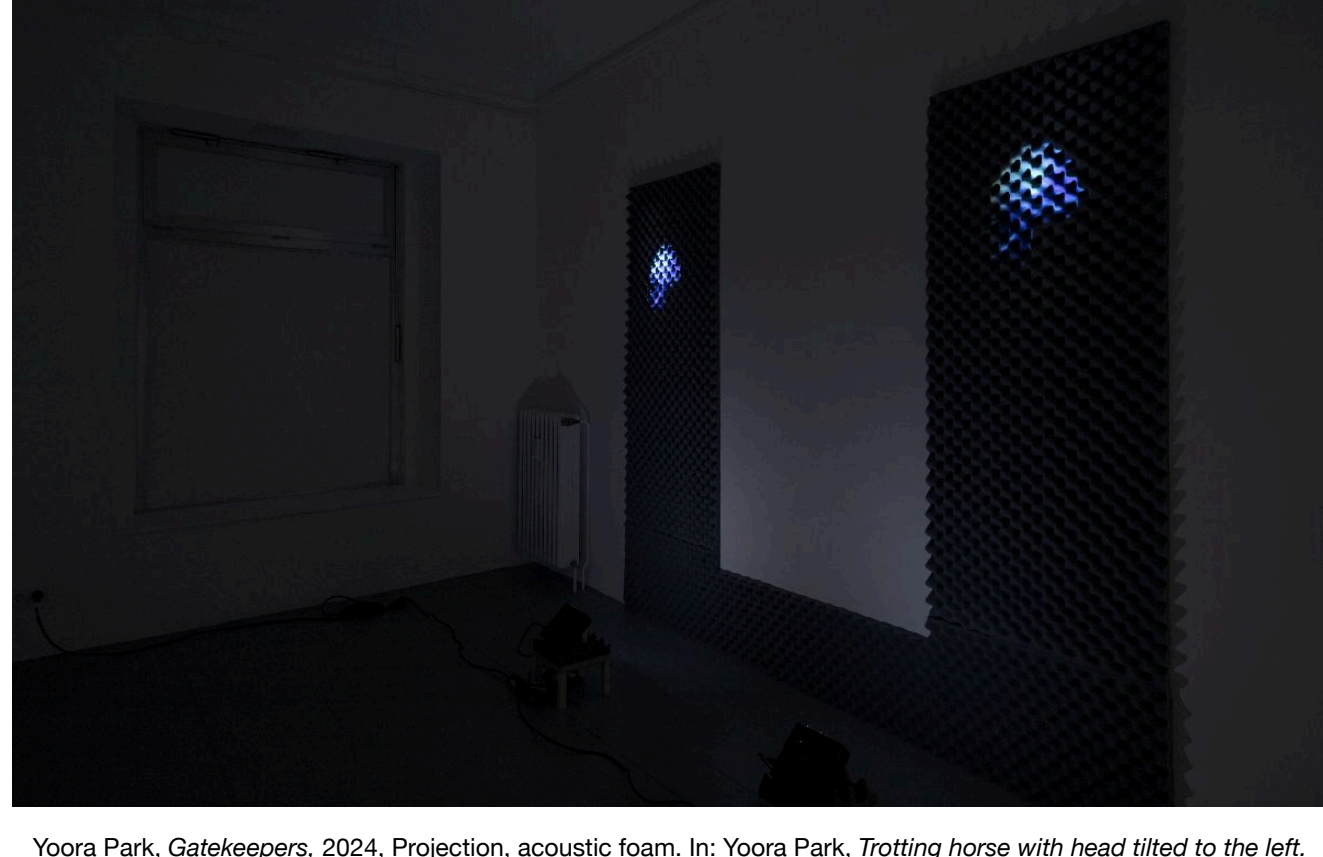
In this same room, the artist installed a U-shaped area of acoustic foam on one of the walls; a material used to dampen recording or rehearsal rooms as it does not, or if so only minimally reflect sound. Yoor Park extends the common purpose of the absorbing material by using it as a projection surface. The image changes in an unknown rhythm. On the two pillars of the U form, both a violet-colored dancing figure and a glowing jellyfish are on display. The invertebrate, fluorescent creature floats soothingly over the black, curved surface. As beautiful and meditative as the scene appears, there is also something oppressive about it. Just like the creature, which stands for the adaptability and resilience of life forms in constantly changing environments, being held captive in this narrow space. What looks like an uncoordinated dancing air dancer, Sisyphus-like, doomed to become an ante on roadsides, is Rock 'n' Roll legend Elvis Presley. He, too, energetically fluttering and dancing, seems trapped in this dark, curved scene, stylized as an icon and confined to immortality.

"Here, as I could hear, there was never weeping, only sighs that made the eternal air tremble."

– Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*

The artist speaks of limbo—a narrative originating in Catholic theology that has always been outdated, but that was officially heavily revised in 2007. It states that there is a forehell where innocent souls reside, who are denied heaven and the sight of God. In this imaginary non-place, time stands still, while one waits for absolution, bound between two states of being.

In a carefully balanced synthesis of sculpture, sound, and light, Yoor Park creates a space that, while not inviting, is challenging and perhaps oppressive, but also has a remarkable pull: one is enticed and called by all the things and phenomena to be experienced. Time becomes the defining theme—the movement of light, the breathless rhythm of the sound loop, the rhythm of the projection, the time required by the body to adapt to the darkened gallery space etc. "Temporality feels material," writes Annie Goodner in the exhibition text—and it becomes quite literally physically tangible. Time as a process. Thus, the installation - as the works partly do themselves - evolves, constantly changing through light and sound. The space breathes, it synthesizes and absorbs.



Yoor Park, *Gatekeepers*, 2024, Projection, acoustic foam. In: Yoor Park, *Trotting horse with head tilted to the left. Tail runs in a straight line against back left leg to the end of the leg. Mane is very clear and made up of straight lines. Reins on horse run from mouth to neck to back in a row of three. Hoofs are broken and missing.* Galerie Khoshbakht, Cologne. Copyright Yoor Park, 2024. Courtesy Galerie Khoshbakht. Photo: Oskar Lee.

Emptiness, openness, and free space play a crucial role here. As do the cut-outs in the wood, the cut-outs of the gong, the free, shadow-populated interstices. Emptiness is the undefined but also form-giving moment where meaning is created. The artist leaves the space, opens it, lets it go, through and despite the space-filling sound and light play. As with the phantom words, the human desire for categorization is played with. In the logic of the potentially missing, the perception of the recipient becomes the center of the work's experience, as empty spaces are then filled in and the supposedly "missing" elements are visually or physically replaced. There is a particular beauty in the rigorous spatialization of sound, the sound that distorts what was previously understandable to the point of unrecognizability. The sound leaves the purely auditory realm in order to transition into the haptic. In this manner, the experience of the works is no longer just rational but primarily physical, giving the latter a uniquely appealing ambiguity.

Generously and impressively restrained, Yoor Park leaves her installation to the conditions of space and time, whose contours she drew wisely and carefully. What remains are small traces, anecdotes, and hints that the artist leaves behind for visitors, tempting them to explore the space, to relate to it, to decode it like a puzzle while the light here and there illuminates the darkness.

Kerstin Renereg is the Curatorial Assistant to Yilmaz Dziewior, Director of Museum Ludwig Cologne. She lives and works between Cologne and Berlin.