

## PETRIT HALILAJ

# YES BUT THE SEA IS ATTACHED TO THE EARTH AND IT NEVER FLOATS AROUND IN SPACE. THE STARS WOULD TURN OFF AND WHAT ABOUT MY PLANET?\*

18 octobre - 22 novembre 2014

Ceci n'est pas une exposition. Ceci est un rêve. De la force de ceux qui font devenir Voyant, au sens où l'entendait Arthur Rimbaud (« Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de tous les sens »\*). Petrit Halilaj, né à Kostërrc, au Kosovo, en 1986, ouvre à la galerie kamel mennour un monde à la fois surréel et familier. On y entre par l'étonnement. D'abord de se trouver face à une forêt d'ocarinas, perchés sur des pattes comme sur des arbres. Ils chantent si on leur donne du souffle. Ce sont des instruments à vent du Kosovo, façonnés en argile depuis le Néolithique. Ceux-ci ont été modelés puis surmodelés par l'artiste, qui, pour cette installation, s'est fait enseigner la technique par l'un des derniers créateurs d'ocarinas au Kosovo, Shaqir Hoti.

Leurs formes comme leurs sons entraînent vers la vision fabuleuse du sous-sol de la galerie. Là, dans un lac rose-flashy bordé de terre, de branches en bosquets et de pierres, apparaît un cheval de plusieurs mètres de haut. Sur son chanfrein est posée une shoka, une longue ceinture traditionnelle où l'artiste a brodé la phrase qui donne son titre à l'ensemble :

« Yes but the sea is attached to the Earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet ? »

[« Oui mais la mer est liée à la Terre et elle ne flotte jamais dans l'espace. Les étoiles s'éteindraient et alors qu'en serait-il de ma planète ? »]

Comme tous les rêves, le dispositif imaginé par Petrit Halilaj se présente comme une énigme. Il est un récit mystérieux dont chaque élément est un univers en soi et que chacun est invité à habiter de ses propres souvenirs, ses désirs, ses horizons intimes. Bien sûr, toutes les œuvres du jeune artiste sont façonnées par les intrusions de l'Histoire dans son enfance, marquée par la guerre en ex-Yougoslavie et la vie dans un camp de réfugiés en Albanie ; mais l'essentiel, pour lui, est l'inauguration de nouveaux agencements, de nouveaux liens et leurs promesses vitales. Ainsi, l'herbe verte poussant sur les soixante tonnes de terre natale transportées à la foire d'art contemporain de Bâle (« Kostërrc », 2011) ou la vie avec oiseaux volants et compagnon dans l'œuvre qui a signé, en 2013, la première participation du Kosovo souverain à la Biennale de Venise (« I'm hungry to keep you close. I want to find the words to resist but in the end there is a locked sphere. The funny thing is that you're not here, nothing is »). Et aussi « Poisoned by men in need of some love » (2013) qui engageait la renaissance du Musée d'Histoire naturelle de Pristina dont les trésors avaient été abandonnés à la moisissure dans les caves au profit d'une exposition folklorique à but idéologique.

Pour cette nouvelle pièce, à la galerie kamel mennour, Petrit Halilaj appelle le souvenir d'un arrière-arrière-grand-père nommé Baba Can. Il ne l'a jamais connu mais le récit de sa vie fait partie de la mythologie familiale transmise par le grand-père de l'artiste, conteur d'histoires. Baba Can était un intellectuel kosovar, il a été assassiné au début du XXe siècle. Il a ouvert une école. Quotidiennement, il était appelé pour pacifier les querelles et résoudre les conflits. Petit de taille, il imposait sa fonction de modérateur en arrivant sur un grand cheval blanc et en portant une ceinture traditionnelle sur laquelle sa femme avait brodé des histoires qui devinrent des messages symboliques... Il faut toutefois dire que son don de conciliateur s'exerçait plus facilement dans l'espace public qu'au sein de son foyer...

L'exposition de Petrit Halilaj est présentée du mardi au samedi, de 11 h à 19 h, au 6 rue du pont de Lodi - 75006 Paris.

Pour toute information complémentaire, vous pouvez contacter Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin, Marie-Sophie Eiché, Jessy Mansuy-Leydier et Claudia Milic, par tél. : +33 1 56 24 03 63 ou par email : galerie@kamelmennour.com

\* Oui mais la mer est liée à la Terre et elle ne flotte jamais dans l'espace. Les étoiles s'éteindraient et alors qu'en serait-il de ma planète ?

Le lac rose-détergeant, outre sa puissance onirique, évoque l'espace intérieur des maisons kosovares où l'extrême propreté est de mise alors que l'espace public est, lui, désinvesti. Comme si les habitants cherchaient à retrouver un espace vierge en effaçant chez eux les traces qu'ils ne peuvent faire disparaître de l'espace public, voire politique.

La tension entre intérieur et extérieur, entre grand cheval et petit Baba Gan, entre ocarinas et pierres, entre lac rose et terre sombre, entre le cheval-masculin et la ceinture-féminin, instaure un territoire. Au sens où l'a conceptualisé le philosophe Gilles Deleuze : « Un territoire ne vaut que par un mouvement par lequel on en sort. Il n'y a pas de territoire sans un vecteur de sortie de territoire. Et il n'y a pas de déterritorialisation sans un effort pour se reterritorialiser ailleurs, sur autre chose »\*\*. Cette tension entre territoire et mouvement invite le visiteur à jouer avec les différents vecteurs sa propre partition. En connaissant ces mots de Petrit Halilaj :

« Peut-être que je crois aux rêves.  
A l'imagination.  
Aux miracles, ou je ne sais pas, mais...  
J'ai le désir d'offrir mon attention.  
Et être là parmi vous.  
Et ne pas vous oublier. »\*\*\*

Annabelle Gugnon

\* in *Lettres dites du Voyant*, lettre à Georges Izambard, mai 1871.

\*\* in Gilles Deleuze, « L'Abécédaire », *A comme animal*.

\*\*\* in *Gagarin 19*, « Communication seems to be lacking us as well », conversation entre l'artiste et sa sœur, 2009.

Né en 1986 à Kostërrc au Kosovo, Petrit Halilaj vit et travaille entre l'Allemagne, le Kosovo et l'Italie.

Son travail a été montré au sein d'expositions personnelles à la National Gallery of Kosovo à Prishtina, à la Kunsthalle Lissabon à Lisbonne, à la Fondation d'Entreprise Galeries Lafayette à Paris, au WIELS - Contemporary Art Center - à Bruxelles, à la Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen et à la Kunstraum Innsbruck ; ainsi qu'au sein d'expositions collectives : au New Museum à New York, à la Kunstverein Nürnberg, à la Bonner Kunstverein, et à la Westfälischer Kunstverein à Münster.

Petrit Halilaj a représenté le Kosovo pour sa première présence à la Biennale de Venise en 2013.

Il exposera en 2015 à la Bundeskunsthalle de Bonn et à la Kölnischer Kunstverein à Cologne.

## PETRIT HALILAJ

# YES BUT THE SEA IS ATTACHED TO THE EARTH AND IT NEVER FLOATS AROUND IN SPACE. THE STARS WOULD TURN OFF AND WHAT ABOUT MY PLANET?

18 October - 22 November, 2014

This is not an exhibition. This is a dream. Of the strength of those who make us Visionaries in Arthur Rimbaud's sense of the word ("The point is to arrive at the unknown by throwing all the senses into disorder"\*). Petrit Halilaj, born in Kostërrc, Kosovo in 1986, creates a world both surreal and familiar at the galerie kamel mennour. We enter into this world through astonishment, immediately finding ourselves face to face with a forest of ocarinas perched on legs as though they were trees. Breathe into them and they sing. Ocarinas are wind instruments that have been made in Kosovo since the Neolithic Era. Those composing this forest of ocarinas were modeled and then overmodeled by the artist, who undertook to learn the technique from one of the last ocarina makers in Kosovo, Shaqir Hoti, expressly for this installation.

Both the shapes and sounds of these ocarinas lead the visitor toward the extraordinary vision in the gallery's basement. There, in an intensely pink lake edged by earth, thickets of branches, and stones, stands a horse several meters tall. On its muzzle, the artist has placed a shoka, a long, traditional belt onto which he embroidered the phrase that gives the exhibition its title:

"Yes but the sea is attached to the Earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet?"

Like all dreams, the installation imagined by Petrit Halilaj presents itself as an enigma. It is a mysterious story whose every element is a world unto itself, and which each viewer is invited to people with his or her own memories, desires, and intimate horizons. Of course, all of the young artist's works are shaped by History's intrusions into his childhood, marked by the war in former Yugoslavia and life in an Albanian refugee camp; but for him, the essence of his work is in the establishment of new arrangements, new relationships, and the vital promises they hold. We see evidence of this in the green grass growing on sixty tons of earth from his native land, transported to the contemporary art fair in Basel ("Kostërrc", 2011), as well as in his cohabitation with flying birds and his companion in the work he created in 2013, on the occasion of Kosovo's first national pavilion at the Venice Biennial, "I'm hungry to keep you close. I want to find the words to resist but in the end there is a locked sphere. The funny thing is that you're not here, nothing is". This motivation is likewise present in "Poisoned by men in need of some love" (2013), which petitioned for the resurrection of the Museum of Natural History in Pristina, whose treasures had been left to mold in basement storage in favor of a folkloric exhibition with ideological ends.

For this new work at galerie kamel mennour, Petrit Halilaj calls on the memory of his great-great-grandfather, Baba Gan. While Halilaj never knew Baba Gan, the story of his life is part of the family mythology passed on to the artist by his raconteur grandfather. Baba Gan was a Kosovar intellectual who opened a school and who was assassinated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was regularly called on to calm quarrels and to resolve disputes. While small in stature, he imposed his role as moderator by arriving on a large white horse and wearing a traditional belt that his wife had embroidered with stories that became symbolic statements... That said, it should be noted that he made use of his gift as a peacekeeper more adeptly in the outside world than at home...

The detergent-pink lake, aside from its dreamlike power, evokes the interior of Kosovar homes, where extreme cleanliness is de rigueur whereas the public space is treated with indifference. It is as though the inhabitants search for an unsullied space by ridding their homes of the traces that they cannot purge from the public - and political - space.

**Petrit Halilaj's exhibition** is on view Tuesday through Saturday, from 11am to 7pm, at 6 rue du pont de Lodi - 75006 Paris.

For more information, please contact Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin, Marie-Sophie Eiché, Jessy Mansuy-Leydier or Claudia Milic, by phone: +33 1 56 24 03 63 or by e-mail [galerie@kamelmennour.com](mailto:galerie@kamelmennour.com)

The tension between interior and exterior, between the big horse and small Baba Gan, between ocarinas and stones, between the pink lake and the dark soil, between the masculine horse and the feminine belt, establishes a territory in the sense conceptualized by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze: "There is no territory without a vector of leaving the territory. And there is no leaving the territory, no deterritorialization, without a vector of reterritorialization elsewhere"\*\*. This tension between territory and movement invites the visitor to play with the different vectors of his or her own music, with Petrit Halilaj's words in mind:

"Maybe I do believe in dreams.  
In fantasy. In miracles or I don't know, but.  
I do have the desire to dedicate my attention.  
And be there in the middle of you.  
And not forget you" \*\*\*

Annabelle Cugnon

\* in Letters known as "of the Visionary", to Georges Izambard, May 1871.

\*\* in Gilles Deleuze, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, A for animal.

\*\*\* in *Çağarın 19*, «Communication seems to be lacking us as well», talk between the artist and his sister, 2009

Born in Kostërrc (Kosovo) in 1986, Petrit Halilaj lives and works in-between Germany, Kosovo and Italy.

His work has already been shown in several solo exhibitions at the National Gallery of Kosovo in Prishtina, the Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, the Fondation d'Entreprise Galeries Lafayette in Paris, the WIELS - Contemporary Art Center - in Brussels, at the Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen and the Kunstraum Innsbruck ; as well as in group exhibitions, the New Museum in New York, the Kunstverein Nürnberg, the Bonner Kunstverein and the Westfälischer Kunstverein in Münster.

Petrit Halilaj represented Kosovo, for its first appearance, at the Venice Biennale in 2013.

His work will be on show in 2015 at the Bonn BundesKunsthalle and the Kölnischer Kunstverein.

Petrit Halilaj

*Si Okarina e Runikut*, 2014

Laiton, ocarinas en terre, pierres / Brass, ocarinas in clay, stones

Dimensions variables / *Variable dimensions*

Vues de l'exposition / *Views of the exhibition* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

© Petrit Halilaj

Photo: Fabrice Seixas

Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris



Petrit Halilaj

*Si Okarina e Runikut*, 2014

Laiton, ocarina en terre, pierre / Brass, ocarina in clay, stone

200 x 13,8 x 76 cm

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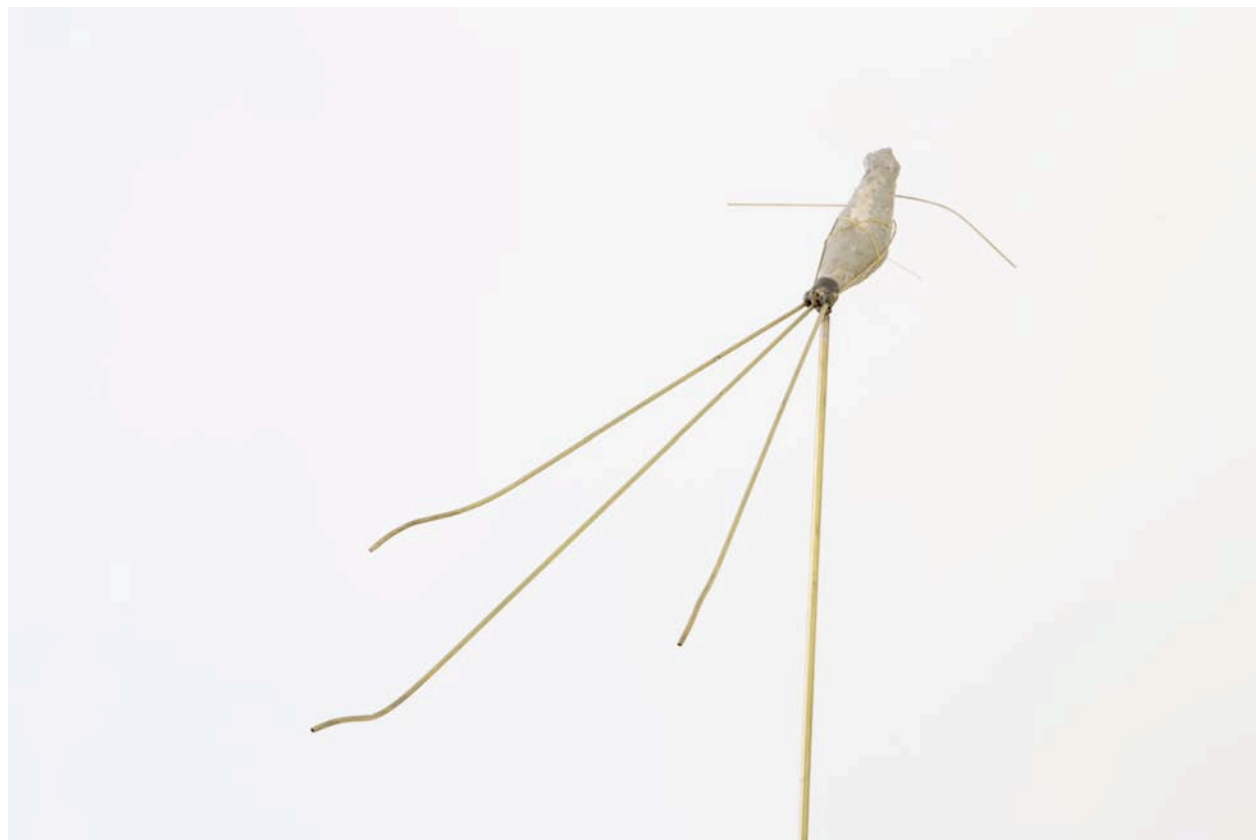
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*Vue de l'exposition (détail) / View of the exhibition (detail)* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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*Si Ocarina e Runikut*, 2014

Laiton, ocarina en terre, pierre / *Brass, ocarina in clay, stone*

175 x 210 x 75 cm

*Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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*Si Okarina e Runikut*, 2014

Laiton, ocarina en terre / Brass, ocarina in clay

58 x 13 x 6 cm

*Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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Petrit Halilaj

*Si Okarina e Runikut*, 2014

Laiton, ocarina en terre / *Brass, ocarina in clay*

257 x 7 x 8 cm

*Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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*Si Ocarina e Runikut*, 2014

Laiton, ocarina en terre, branche, pierre / Brass, ocarina in clay, branche, stone

130 x 150 x 52 cm

*Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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Petrit Halilaj

*Si Okarina e Runikut*, 2014

Laiton, ocarina en terre / *Brass, ocarina in clay*

21 x 77 x 8 cm

*Vue de l'exposition (détail) / View of the exhibition (detail)* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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Petrit Halilaj

*Si Okarina e Runikut*, 2014

Mobile. Laiton, ocarina en terre, pierre / *Mobile. Brass, ocarina in clay, stone*

220 x 40 x 15 cm

*Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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Petrit Halilaj  
*Si Okarina e Runikut*, 2014  
Laiton, ocarina en terre / Brass, ocarina in clay  
140 x 490 x 56 cm

*Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition* « Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet? », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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Petrit Halilaj

*Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet?*, 2014

Installation. Techniques mixtes (terre, branches, feuilles mortes, pierres, savon) / *Installation. Mixed media (earth, branches, fallen leaves, stones, soap)*

Dimensions variables / *Variable dimensions*

Vue de l'exposition / *View of the exhibition* « *Yes but the sea is attached to the earth and it never floats around in space. The stars would turn off and what about my planet?* », kamel mennour, Paris, 2014

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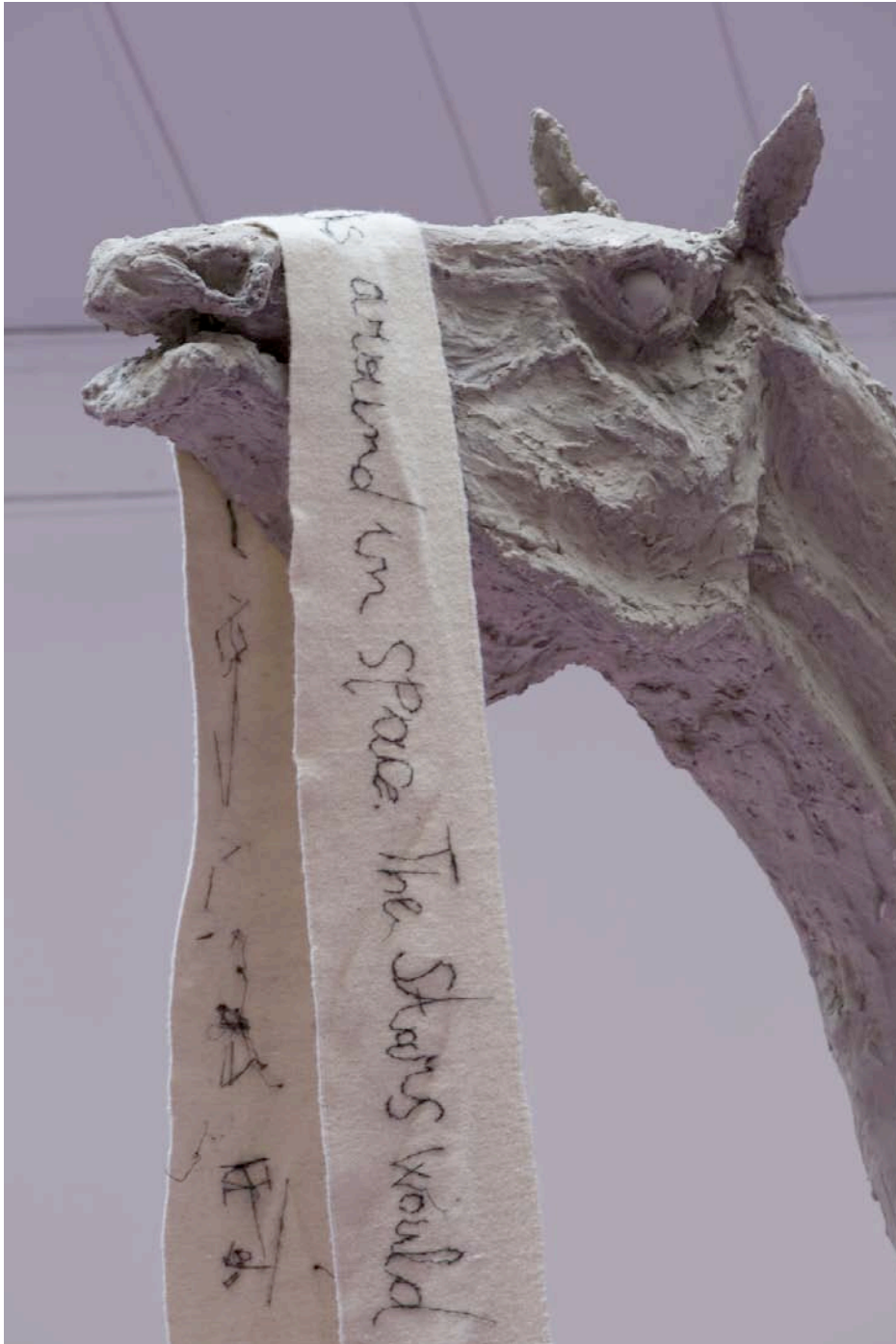
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