



Below are culled out notes from notebooks between 2022-23.

KATABASIS *journey to the underworld*

Violation of the sight taboo by a mortal who is then harmed or destroyed.

Semele, the mother of Dionysus the twice born is tricked by Hera into asking Zeus to appear to her as he does to his immortal wife. When Semele sees Zeus she is incinerated.

Psyche meets disaster because she imagines what the unseen looks like. She gazes at material objects and the divine with her own eyes.

How then can we envisage and represent what we cannot see?

Video

Latin / noun+verb

1.1.

to obtain a mental picture of, see with the mind's eye.

Theoria: a contemplative practice where a person journeys to the unseen, gazes on the forms and then returns to their community with new knowledge.



NOTES On Mood and Matter

Mood

noun

1.1.

a temporary state of mind or feeling; an emotional atmosphere.

Matter

noun

1.1.

a physical substance in general, as distinct from mind and spirit; (in physics) that which occupies space and possesses mass in rest, especially as distinct from energy.

2.2.

a subject or situation under consideration.

The English mathematician Nicholas Saunderson (1682-1739) went blind around his first birthday through smallpox. He worked as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, a post also held by Isaac Newton, Charles Babbage and Stephen Hawking. It is currently held by the theoretical physicist Michael Cates who studies soft matter and active matter.

Saunderson appears as a fictional character on his deathbed in Diderot's novel *Letter on the Blind for the Use of those Who can See* (1749), a discourse on how a person can acquire knowledge not only through perception, but also through reason. His character represents someone without the materiality of visual presence because his perceptual connection to the world is incomplete. He is blind.

Diderot argues that if a blind person suddenly started seeing, this person would not immediately understand through reason alone what they were seeing and that they would have to establish a matrix of understanding between matter, presence and mood located within that moment.

Transforming matter into mood, images of materialism into life is the only way of

experiencing existence and its bodily conditions in a wider spatial and temporal environment. The artist is a transformer working on such an invisible scaffold.

In these works I've tried to metabolise an environment through the agencies of the distinct materialities of fabric, paper, skin. By their historical references they are both present in our time but also suggest an embodiment of a distancing mechanism, a long view, because woven into it are complex set of anachronic conditions beyond the immediate. Fabric, paper and skin is sculpting with time held in tension. Gardeners might understand a similar interweaving through plants, soil, weather, seasons etc. This mood and matter of tensed time captures a broad present that is not fixed to a single track.

Working with these materialities I've come to realise that physical qualities of the material act as a trigger. It is a disturbance because it is already endowed with qualities of the image; there is an image before an image. It has inert content, it is a thing in front of a thought. In the studio the matter goes through conversions, both intuitive and conscious. This is a process of reduction to find a clearing between what is not knowable and a shape of a recognisable language which we can share.

On the Usage of Materials and Some Other Thoughts

"There is no speech we can understand if we go to the bottom." Paul Valery (1871-1945)

Oracle:

Tied up in a bag, no praise, no blame. (Japanese)

I think about works as resting, incubating, slow. Not fully revealed but entangled. At some point some of them come to an end. Some are quick like a shiver, an idea seizes and haunts. Others take time, years sometimes, waiting because they are empty of that vital possession, lifeless, deprived of the mysteries. Sometimes it is impossible to find that speech which can never be sourced. The image is intact but the access to it is lost for whatever reason I don't fully understand. I leave the knowing aside.

Odysseus watched without being watched, an unobserved observer, an unseen spectator.

For the Greeks invisibility and the question of justice was twinned. As we say, justice is blind.

My involvement with materials is autobiographical, language and form based. A material substance allows for a physical and corporeal exchange which counterbalances the nameless, the uncharted and the irrational.

Every dimension cannot be conveyed through meaning construction (subject) alone. Presence, therefore materiality which contains different constituents overtaking logic and analysis as raw, unclear, formless can support oblique functions; to me this is a necessity.

Works exist in their own opacity. They are neither abstract nor figurative. Ambiguity comes from the liminal space of being at the borders of sleep and awakening. It is filmy, murky, thick, hazy, obfuscated, veiled; an endlessness without conclusion. A story with no exit. Neither the matter of an image, nor the intentional form makes an image. The cryptic obscurity is between articulating a thought and its relationship to image. A threshold of neither entrance nor departure.

I think about Dionysus, a foreigner who is familiar. He is always a foreigner because of the natural repression present in the archetypal configuration. He is appearing as if coming from abroad though he lives in the same community as us.

On Mother Tongue

- * first language
- * native speech
- * L1

In 1975 Deleuze and Guattari published *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.

They argue that literature written by minorities in the language of the majority (Kafka writing as a Prague Jew in German) exists in a separate category and that such writing by definition is political because it lives in a “cramped space” involving various assemblages with capacities for undoing their own segments. That these works belong to a “minor literature” not because of their status, but because they are written by minorities carving out a space for themselves within the hegemon “taking flight on a line of escape” and “joyfully becoming a stranger within it”. They are written from a “deterritorialised” space of departures.

“Grasping the real, writing themselves within the real itself, they are caught up in the tension between two opposing poles or realities.”

They ask “how to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language?”.

Such writing is done on the skin, not on paper.

On Invisibility:

- * untitled
- * namelessness
- * veiled
- * obscure
- * unseen
- * latency
- * reluctance

Trial of the oracles:

Croesus of Lydia consulted all the famous oracles about what he was doing on the appointed day in 560 BC. He paid a high fee to ask Pythia, the priestess of Apollo at Delphi whether his monarchy would last long.

Pythia answered:

*Whenever a mule shall become sovereign king of the Medeans,
Then Lydian Delicate-Foot, flee by the stone strewn Hermus,
flee, and think not to stand fast, nor shame to be chicken-hearted.*

Why oracles? Because they are beyond the range of physical vision, they are illuminations of the unseen. An oracle is an irresolvable internal contradiction, a logical disjunction. It is both intelligible, performing in our minds, and yet shaping situations of tension and difficulties. It is left to us to unlock the riddle oscillating between meaning and confusion.



Being in the Studio

There's a disjunction between the studio work and activities like reading/writing. These conditions are neither interchangeable nor the outcomes and consequences have the same value.

Studio connects to a deeper strata of body expressions, it's repetitive with sudden flashes, intuitions in the sense of seeing through. There's a translucency, it's almost a neuro vegetative state. It's not cultured in itself.

It's more Hermes than Apollo. God of thieves and of merchants, and messenger of the gods rather than god of sunlight and of the arts, and of the oracles.

Maya Balcioglu, Dungeness

Images: NASA