

# LUNGLEY

Maya Balcioglu

*KATABASIS journey to the underworld*

25/05 - 08/07/2023

*Private view 25 May 2023, 1 - 8 pm  
The artist will be present 5 - 8 pm*

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LUNGLEY Gallery is pleased to present *KATABASIS journey to the underworld*, a solo exhibition by Maya Balcioglu. A text by Lucy C. M. M. Jackson was commissioned to accompany the exhibition.



*42 quads (2022)*  
Burnt cotton, fabric dye, ink  
142 cm x 123 cm

Statement for Lungley Gallery by Maya Balcioglu.

Extracts from notebooks between 2022-23:

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 By their historical references they are both present in our time but also suggest an embodiment of a distancing mechanism, a long view, because woven into it are complex set of anachronic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.

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[www.lungleygallery.com](http://www.lungleygallery.com)

2nd Floor, 53 Great Portland St, London, W1W 7LG.

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.

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.

[The full text by Maya Balcioglu is available to download from the website.](#)



*Torso* (2023)  
Fabric, latex, paper, acrylic paint  
110 cm x 67 cm

From Lucy C. M. M. Jackson text written for this exhibition:

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A *katabasis* consists of a journey down to the underworld, to a realm that is neither like heaven nor hell. Those undertaking this journey go as seekers of love or truth, and the path is not smooth. There is, usually, a return. The collection of ancient Greek religious practices known as 'mystery cult' made a ritual form of a kind of *katabasis*. A journey down, or inside, or elsewhere; the revelation of 'mysteries'; and a return and reintegration of the initiate or journeyer into their community. They returned to their life before, but they may not have been the same as they were.

When Agamemnon returns home from Troy, he is welcomed by his wife Clytemnestra. She declares she is happy to see her husband. She makes no mention of how he sacrificed their daughter, Iphigenia, on a beach in Aulis. He slit the young girl's neck as an offering to the gods. Apparently it was the only way to secure good winds and safe passage to Troy and their war. Clytemnestra insists that he, the great conqueror of Troy, cannot possibly place his foot on the bare earth. Rather he must tread on the most precious of cloths they have in the house, fine fabrics dyed reddish-purple. This dye was created by intensive labour, crushing hundreds of thousands of mollusc shells to release the purple *murex* ink. Clytemnestra's invitation to her husband is to re-enact symbolically the destruction of his house and its riches, just as he had destroyed their greatest treasure, their daughter Iphigenia. Agamemnon shows no sign of remembering how he destroyed the wealth of his house before. He does not remember the kind of woman he married when he shoots off a put-down in response to her welcome address: *Your speech was like my absence. Too long.* However, keen to make his final return home, he agrees, reluctantly, to the request. With each step on the fabrics he suppresses the memory of that moment on the beach at Aulis, when he truly saw himself and what he was capable of. We, and Clytemnestra, know as he makes his way from chariot to his long-awaited bath, that he is a dead man walking.

These scraps of cloth want to be read. They laugh and taunt us, feeling our ambivalence at beginning another journey, another attempt to become literate in living. We know now what we might find down that path.

When you approached the sacred precinct of the oracle at Delphi, inscribed above an entrance way you could read the injunction 'know yourself' (*gnôthi seauton*). It's a nice idea. Just as is true in the pursuit of any knowledge it is a circular journey, replete with violence and one that is, ultimately, never complete. This is the story with no exit. We search, we suffer violence, we forget.

Lucy C. M. M. Jackson  
2023

[The full text by Lucy C. M. M. Jackson is available to download from the website.](#)

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Maya Balcioglu has had a one person show at MAC Belfast and at the Lungley Gallery in 2021. She has shown at The Cambridge Darkroom, Armolfini, Chisenhale Gallery, Kunsthal Aarhus, Raven Row amongst others.

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Lucy C. M. M. Jackson is an assistant professor in ancient Greek literature at Durham University. Her first book, *The Chorus of Drama in the Fourth Century BCE* (Oxford, 2020), explores the role of the chorus in ancient Greek theatre after the deaths of Euripides and Sophocles. Lucy's research focuses on ancient Greek performance culture, in particular choral song and dance performances, and the ways in which Greek drama has been revived, re-formed, and reperformed in the early modern and contemporary worlds. She has acted as a consultant for the National Theatre's production of *Medea* (2014) and the *Oresteia* at Shakespeare's Globe (2015).

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Maya Balcioglu and Lungley Gallery would like to thank Arrigoni Architects, Dylan Shipton Framing, Agnese Sanvito Photography and Eral Metal in the realisation of this project.

For further information please contact the gallery at [mark@lungleygallery.com](mailto:mark@lungleygallery.com)