

Tau Lewis

*The ways of the underworld
are perfect*

03 June – 19 July 2025
8 Bury Street London SW1Y

Opening Tuesday 03 June, 6-8pm



*Earth remembers!
The joy of wild beasts
Lunar infants and trembling reeds
Angels covering the horizon like a garment*

For our first solo exhibition with Tau Lewis, four sculptural masks at the Bury Street gallery come together like a poem, while individually personifying a chapter in the odyssey of Venus in retrograde.

Masked harbingers of change, or messengers sent from the spirit realm, the sculptures gather as peaceful entities, inviting introspection encouraged by the planet Venus entering retrograde. Venus begins her descent as the bright star of the morning, temporarily disappearing from the night sky before reemerging as an evening star. In Sumerian mythology, Venus is represented by the goddess Inanna – an allegory for the human experience of descending into the underworld, undergoing rebirth and subsequent transformative potential of retrograde. Lewis weaves and encodes this moment of excavation and reassessment – a catalyst for self-reflection – into her physical personifications. Each sculpted effigy embodies a part of the deity's story: a difficult choice to leave, the journey into darkness, a cathartic release and the eventual calm. Considering themes of grief, inner child healing and shadow selves, Lewis presents four emblems of the power of transit and the overarching belief that vulnerability to challenges allows for alternate ways of being.

Having embraced experimental practices in recent years, Lewis has crafted a less controlled, more playful approach to her mask-making in this display. Conceived through this free-flowing process, the sculptures remain characteristically ripe with colour and rich in labour-intensive techniques. Beginning with only a colourway – from vibrant natural pigments extracted from beetroot and hibiscus to warm, rust-imprinted and turmeric-stained textiles – Lewis then absorbs herself in the details. Working on a smaller scale allows her to push her experimentation further, tinkering with texture, repurposing leather and beads, cultivating her application of precious fragments from earlier projects to form the strange assemblages. Lewis's use of recycled and found fabrics mirrors the process of renewal imbued in her sculptures: discarded remnants become finite resources of inter-woven histories, narratives and myths, echoing the new beginnings instigated by retrograde movements.

The ways of the underworld are perfect is a reassuring chant told to Inanna on her descent to hell – an archetype of the hero's journey, a mantra Lewis often repeats to herself and one she considers to be both the beginning and end of her sculptures. Each guardian of space exists as a landscape, a wider plane or concept with humanoid features embedded within the undulating referential and repurposed materials. Without bodies, the textural talismans are unbound, intangible vessels linked to spiritual, astrological, mythological or psychological realms. In the artist's words: 'There is a raw magnetic charge to the chaos.'

Tau Lewis (b.1993, Toronto) lives and works in New York. She has exhibited internationally with solo shows including *Spirit Level*, ICA Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2024); *Coloratura*, The Polygon Gallery, Vancouver (2024); *Symphony*, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2021); *Sparkle's Map Home*, Oakville Galleries (2020); *The Coral Reef Preservation Society*, The Hepworth Wakefield, Yorkshire (2019); *when last you found me here*, Kennderine Art Gallery, College Art Galleries, University of Saskatchewan Art Collection (2019); *when last you found me here*, The Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston (2018); and Atlanta Contemporary (2018). Her work has also featured in numerous group exhibitions including *The Impermanent*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2025); *Color Is the First Revelation of the World*, OCMA Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa (2024); *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art* (touring) Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2024-2025) Barbican Centre, London (2024); *Making Their Mark*, Shah Gang Foundation, New York (2023); *Dancing in the Light*, MOCA Toronto (2023); *Au-delà*, Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2023); *To Begin Again: Artists and Children*, ICA Boston (2022); *Black Atlantic*, Public Art Fund, Brooklyn Bridge Park (2022); *Biennale Arte 2022: The Milk of Dreams*, 59th International Art Exhibition, Venice (2022); *Awakening: seeing beyond the frame*, Musée d'art de Joliette (2022); and *WHAT DO YOU SEE, YOU PEOPLE, GAZING AT ME.*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2021). Lewis's work belongs in numerous permanent collections including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Library Collection, New York; National Gallery of Canada; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Forthcoming exhibitions include Performa Biennial 2025; Kunstmuseum Brandts, Copenhagen 2026/27; and Tramway, Glasgow, 2027.