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James  
Cohan



291 GRAND ST | SEP 21 – NOV 4, 2023

# Christopher Myers *Sing to Me of Many Turns*

Christopher Myers, *Ovide Moralise*, 2023,  
Appliquéd textile, 113 1/2 x 221 in (288.3 x 561.3  
cm).

James Cohan is pleased to present *Sing to Me of Many Turns*, an exhibition of new work by Christopher Myers, on view at the gallery's 291 Grand Street location from September 21 through November 4, 2023. This is Myers' second solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Thursday, September 21 from 5:30-7:30 PM.

*Sing to Me of Many Turns* is a retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*, presented in an epic cycle of appliquéd textile works, stained glass and sculpture. Myers filters this ancient journey through the lens of contemporary tales of migration that have shaped the Lower East Side neighborhood within which the gallery sits.

Whether thinking about his grandfather who arrived in New York through Ellis Island in the 1920s, or the innumerable forced migrations that brought his African-American ancestors to these shores, Myers is keenly aware of the mythic proportions of what it means to reframe oneself in the world. He writes, "When I was a kid, the neighborhood was an intersection point of multiple histories of migration. You could, on any given Sunday, see the remnants of the influx of Jewish immigrants in the 1930s, contemporary waves of immigrants to Chinatown, the old men living out the tail end of the bachelor society, and young folks from other parts of China sleeping in shift bed hotels and socializing well into late nights after their many jobs were over."

The appliquéd works in this exhibition are largely episodic and reflect the structure of the *Odyssey*, with nods to the other literary descendants of that seminal work like James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Derek Walcott's *Omeros*. The monumental textile work, *Ovide Moralise*, 2023, depicts a panoply of chimerical human-animal hybrids. In the process of mining mythology and casting an allegorical prism upon both past and present, Myers returns often to

the provocative, frequently taboo theme of merging man and beast, human with animal to suggest the mutability of identity. Another work, whose central subject is the immortal sorceress Circe, is a visual expression of the different kinds of power at play when one moves across borders.

The exhibition is punctuated by *The Hero Slept*, 2023, a monumental illuminated stained-glass painting in the second gallery, which depicts Odysseus washed up on the beach in a pile of leaves. In this work, Myers considers both the sense of attachment all migrants have to the liminal—the shorelines and the hyphens—and the importance of narratives of migrant bodies and Black bodies at rest.

Through a deep investigation of Homer's text and the histories of migration in New York City, Myers weaves together both practices and stories that connect to larger narratives of what it means to remake the world and yourself in each movement across the globe. From shift beds and ICE raids to old men speaking Fujianese over bird cages in Seward Park and generations of fabric workers on the Lower East Side, Myers brings these lived experiences into a radical refiguring of a classical narrative with special, even urgent, relevance for today.

Christopher Myers (b. New York City in 1974) earned his B.A. in Art-Semiotics and American Civilization with a focus on race and culture from Brown University in 1995 and participated in the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Studio Program in 1996. His recent solo exhibition *Christopher Myers: of all creatures that can feel and think*, was on view at the Blaffer Art Museum in Houston from May 20 through September 3, 2023. Myers will be featured in the upcoming 24th Biennale of Sydney in 2024. His work has been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally at venues including MoMA PS1; Art Institute of Chicago; The Mistake Room, Guadalajara, Mexico; Akron Art Museum; Contrast Gallery, Shanghai; Goethe-Institut, Accra, Ghana; Kigali Genocide Memorial Center, Rwanda; San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Myers is currently working on a Percent for Art Commission at the Brooklyn Brownsville Public Library, expected to be completed in late 2023. His work is included in the permanent collections of institutions including the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Lucas Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Mead Art Museum, Amherst, MA; Nasher Museum at Duke University, Durham, NC, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Myers won a Caldecott Honor in 1998 for his illustrations in the book *Harlem* and a Coretta Scott King Award in 2016 for illustrating *Firebird* with Misty Copeland. Myers currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

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