



**Katerina Tsebeli (Athens, b. 1963). Worms' Altar: Make Amends (former title: Make Amends), 2022. Steel, plastic, rope, lamp and compost (in the solo exhibition Fundamental Fallacy, 2023, a hydrophytic plant was added to the leachate collection container), 125 x 35 x 35 cm.**

With the work *Worms' Altar: Make Amends*, Katerina Tsebeli offers an alternative and useful interpretation of the Minotaur myth. It is a complex installation constructed with rods and metal surfaces, which morphologically refers to Duchamp's work *With Hidden Noise* (1916/1964). The work consists of the following three parts: 1) The upper level, with the composting unit, includes a large flask that hosts a colony of earthworms in organic waste for their sustenance. It is illuminated from above circumferentially with a circular lamp and is wrapped with rope to protect the colony from light. 2) The middle level, with a hydraulic pipe from the flask to an open collection container, transfers the leachate from the earthworms' decomposing action. 3) The basic level, with the phrases "See no evil / Hear no evil / Speak no evil," engraved in the metal.

The artist interprets the myth according to the multidimensional, creative, but also corrosive action of the taboo of decomposition, which she considers a cornerstone of Western civilization. She sees in the Minotaur and his confinement in the labyrinth the beginning of the imposition of taboos on everything animalistic and decomposing related to human biology. In Theseus' successful passage and the elements of Ariadne's thread and the crown, she discerns symbolisms of initiation, which allow the initiate to approach the arcane without dissolving. The work criticizes the taboo of decomposition, while highlighting its beneficial role. The idea of worms, which causes disgust and aversion in the public, is absolutely legitimate and beneficial for nature. Thus, it reveals the taboo that demands aesthetic values to function restrictively. The ultimate goal is for the work to function initiatively. It calls on the viewer to recognize the range of unnoticed restrictions and to question what prevents them from functioning fully and accepting their truth and nature.

The thread that Ariadne offers Theseus saves him because it is the countermeasure to decomposition and a defensive means against disintegration. It is made of small, individual

fibers patiently wound into something one-dimensional and light, which can be unwound from a ball and effectively hold something. The luminous crown (Corona Borealis), given by Dionysus to Ariadne, is the opposite point of reference to the unrepresentable chaos. Earthly life is based mainly on sight and light is essential. Decomposers living in the soil need moisture and only come out when there is no sun. If illuminated, they burrow into the earth to save themselves because the sun and heat destroy them. The Minotaur and Theseus represent the balance of physical and spiritual power. For a person to be healthy, they need to simultaneously care for their carnal and spiritual impulses. According to the myth, the Minotaur is at the center of the labyrinth, outcast, in an underground space, in darkness, away from the sun and weather phenomena, in a space that prohibits freedom of movement and distant viewing. The artist argues that the labyrinth resembles an intestine. Confined in the labyrinth and excluded from the rhythms of earthly life, he is left only to decompose. Whoever enters the labyrinth will dissolve as if they were in the stomach of a monster. The young men and women from Athens simply decompose within the labyrinth. Similarly, in the human soul, the decomposition of death causes the greatest terror and revulsion. Conventional daily life forgets this stage, because there are strong taboos and aesthetic values that repel this specific awareness. This organic function is covered by strong taboos and aesthetics.

The terrible secret of the Labyrinth and the Minotaur is that all people hide this monster in their belly. They are ashamed of it, because they loathe and detest everything associated with decomposition. Because decomposition is the opposite of the Apollonian, of light, of desirable eternal youth. According to this interpretation, the initiatory action of the labyrinth has to do with the revelation of this truth, which allows the initiate to accept the mystery of life, to be humbled, but then to better find their place in the world.

[For the above text, Megaklis Rogakos based his thoughts on the creator's ideas in April 2022]