

## Mythotopographies

(The Visual Work of Markos Kampanis)

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One of the exhibitions that will undoubtedly leave its mark on 2025 is “Odyssey” by Markos Kampanis at the Ghika Gallery of the Benaki Museum, curated by Konstantinos Papachristou and Manos Dimitrakopoulos.

Kampanis’ artistic engagement with the Homeric epic is not merely a tribute to one of the most important texts of Western literature; it is a profound redefinition of its spatial, emotional, and metaphysical dimensions. The exhibition includes 22 works from the artist’s oeuvre. Inspired by the Odyssey, it reveals an artist deeply attuned to the interplay between word and image, history and imagination, the tangible and the ethereal. His work transcends the boundaries of traditional illustration, offering a reflection on the enduring resonance of the epic within the collective unconscious.

The artist begins with a 15th-century manuscript of the Odyssey from the Harley Collection of the British Museum Library. This act of appropriating the specific manuscript is not archival, but transformative. Kampanis works on four painted books, overlaying the rhapsodies of the Homeric text with charcoal and pencil, transforming them into revelatory images and creating a palimpsest of textual and visual layers.

Alongside this group of works, a series of small abstract painted books in acrylic on paper is exhibited, based exclusively on themes from the epic such as Maps, Hades, the Palaces, the Cyclopes, Telemachus, the Sea, and others. This particular series is closely related to his wall-mounted works made of acrylics and transparent Japanese papers affixed to wood, since both invite the viewer to examine the epic not as a fixed narrative but as a living, evolving entity capable of endless reinterpretations.

The use of collage in his works makes its presence felt as a metaphor for the fragmentary, episodic nature of the Odyssey. By juxtaposing dissimilar materials and textures, he creates a sense of dislocation and reassembly that reconstructs the structure of the epic. The works on paper and wood are imbued with a tactile quality, a sense of materiality that activates and grounds the mythical on the physical plane. At the same time, the use of acrylic and ink introduces a fluid, almost dreamlike identity, suggesting liminal spaces between reality and imagination, past and present.

Also noteworthy is the inclusion in the exhibition of works by Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, which form a compelling counterpoint to Kampanis' work. The two artists converge through their shared engagement with the points of interface between external and internal geometries, between the structures that shape the physical world and those that define the soul. In Kampanis' case, this unified duality is expressed through his treatment of the Homeric landscape as both a physical and an ideal space. The gesture of painting becomes a form of spiritual longing, an attempt to bridge the gap between the transient and the eternal.

His works, as arcane maps of the ineffable, resemble water currents and at the same time sacred floor plans of talismanic cities. Particularly if we consider the entire overpainted manuscript and the compositions titled *The Palaces II*, *Maps I*, *Wine-Dark Sea I*, we observe that they recall alignments of prehistoric sites marking trade and travel routes and indicating the existence of an organized large-scale land and maritime network. Natural and artificial elements function as landmarks, as "navigation points" of an unceasing visual embedding. Kampanis correlates the morphological elements of a locus in a highly interesting and innovative way. He treats them as signposts forming imaginary lines of "sighting"—that is, locations through which thousands of travelers may have passed, leaving their traces behind. Points that are continuously reshaped as centuries pass, forming civilizations buried beneath other civilizations. In this way he penetrates the historical stratification that mediates between our contemporary era and the Homeric epic, exploring its continual re-significations and its mythopoetic function.

Through a masterful synthesis of media, Kampanis reminds us that where myth begins, truth is born. He constructs what I would call a "myth-topography"—a field that has existed since the dawn of the world, within which the mythical and the personal converge in an ongoing dialogue concerning both the act of creation and the Homeric narrative itself. The viewer is not merely invited to contemplate, but to engage with the works at a deep, instinctive, primordial level. One is called to see and to creatively re-envision, together with the artist, each station of the Eternal Homecoming; to participate dynamically in the escape from the Cyclopean eye of the Mind that encircles, defines, and concretizes all things; and to rise freely into the Uncreated and the Abstract, employing the cunning modes of alertness taught by the goddess Metis, becoming at last the departing and ungraspable Outis.

