



VALMONT

presents

PENELOPE

Her Journeys

GAYLE CHONG KWAN

STEPHANIE BLAKE

KIMIKO YOSHIDA

CURATED BY

FRANCESCA GIUBILEI & VALENTINA SECCO

05.05.26 - 27.11.26

Fondation
VALMONT

THE INTIMATE MUSEUM
PALAZZO BONVICINI

Santa Croce, Calle de Ca' Bonvicini, 2161A, Venezia

Tuesday - Sunday, 10am - 1pm / 2pm - 6pm

fondationvalmont.com

lamaisonvalmont.com

WE ARE ALL PENELOPE

Penelope was a subversive weaver, an artist ahead of her time. She transformed the only means of expression granted to women (the loom) into a weapon of resistance. Her endless canvas was not an exercise in patience during the long wait for her adventurous husband, but a project of sabotage against the established order; it is the strategic gaze of someone who, with intelligence and cunning, governs time rather than suffering it.

Penelope is not just a mythical figure, the result of a specific vision of the world, history, and the role of women in society, the archetype of the ideal woman sculpted by the male gaze, which yesterday, as today, imposes its voice.

Since the time of Homer's myth, Penelope has emerged as a figure fighting for her own self-determination. She is a woman who attempts to redesign and choose her own destiny, escaping what tradition would have already written for her: the petrified role of faithful, virtuous woman, devoted wife and mother, guardian of the hearth.

With the exhibition *Penelope. Her Journeys*, we want to nurture this extraordinary image of femininity, proposing a reversal of perspective, giving centrality to the female figure and voice to her story.

Who, then, is Penelope for the three artists, *Gayle Chong Kwan*, *Stephanie Blake*, and *Kimiko Yoshida*, called upon to confront the myth? She is not the emblem of obedience, but a radically different woman, seeking her own freedom, her own space for expression, and her own identity, an artist like them, who transforms experience into language. The three contemporary artists' view of this archetypal female figure gives us a complex and multifaceted interpretation of the role of women and artists today.

In this vision, the walls of Palazzo Bonvicini cease to be a domestic boundary, where tradition would have women spend their entire lives feeding and caring for their families, and become a battlefield and a space for creative affirmation.

In the works on display, Penelope stops weaving and starts telling stories. She is a woman who speaks out, a fighter who decides her own destiny and relationships, becoming the author of her own myth.

Here we are not celebrating a figure from the past, but the beginning of a new mythology: one in which Penelope's voice is, at last, the voice of all women.

Francesca Giubilei and Valentina Secco

GAYLE CHONG KWAN

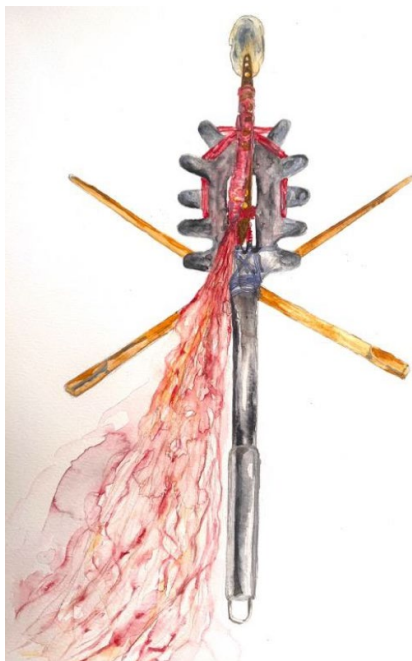
THE LOTUS EATERS

Penelope embodies the role of the mistress of the house where hospitality is inverted and forced upon her, a situation in which the domestic role and site are placed under constant siege.

*The constant pressure under which she lives has the effect of turning her into a woman who hangs grimly to the past and finds solace and comfort only in the world of sleep and dreams, though even those can be painful for her.*¹

Chong Kwan takes the classic and traditional ideas of domesticity and the domestic space and transforms them under the guise of a dream-like world into defence, cunning, tactics, and battle. The work blends **escape, memory, and resilience** in material, virtual, and performative approaches.

The Lotus Eaters is an installation that moves between sculpture, fabric, processions, and a moving-image VR landscape. Hanging fabric doubles as wearable cloaks and poles bearing kitchen utensils and fabric forms are also used in performances of ritual processions. Chong Kwan's work reflects the **home as both a battleground and a source of strength**. It reinterprets the theme of *xenia* (sacred hospitality) through Penelope's perspective, her maids, and her encounters with the 108 suitors, through surreal versions of domestic, kitchen, and household objects and images.



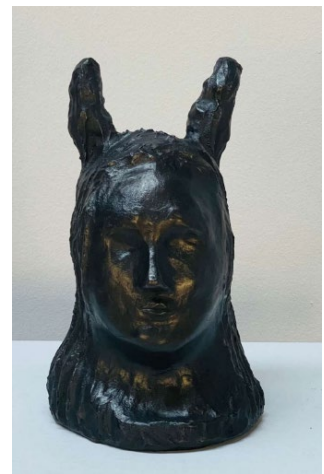
¹ Jones, Peter, Introduction to Homer's *The Odyssey*, p. xxiii, Penguin Classics.

STEPHANIE BLAKE

PENELOPE, THE STORYTELLER

While working on the Odyssey for Fondation Valmont, I started to question my own representation of the Greek Myths. I realized that the narrative of Greek Mythology has always reached us from a male point of view. So, I wondered what it would be like if it reached us from a female one. The heroic epics of mythology carried by femininity instead of virility! That's when I saw Penelope. She suddenly appeared in broad daylight! Penelope sings and weaves Ulysses story. Without her there would be no Odyssey. She is the true storyteller of this tale.
Stephanie Blake

The installation signed by illustrator, artist and author Stephanie Blake is primarily defined by a single desk, a sculpture on a stool, and a typewriter; an austere setting that foregrounds the act of writing. Seated at the desk, a bronze (self-?) portrait of Penelope becomes Homer through the act of narration. In Blake's interpretation, this identification extends further: *the artist herself coincides with Penelope*, collapsing the distance between author, narrator, and protagonist. The act of writing thus becomes both performative and autobiographical, situating the artwork within the very gesture it stages.



What was once an oral epic is here transformed into a written text, shifting the origin of *The Odyssey* from collective voice to intimate authorship. For Blake, the uncertainty surrounding Homer's identity opens a speculative space: Homer is imagined as Penelope herself, reclaiming the narrative by writing it from within. *Authorship thus becomes an act of resistance*, a quiet yet radical assertion of agency enacted in domestic stillness.

From the clatter of the typewriter emerges a continuous stream of blue waves that spill into the room. Onto this fluid surface, visions unfold: turbulent seas, gusting winds, and rolling thunder. *Waves, like words, propagate outward*, filling the space and dissolving the boundary between language and landscape, interior and exterior.

Despite its apparent motion, the installation evokes a profound sense of suspension. The endless flow recalls Penelope's perpetual weaving and unweaving, as well as Ithaca's fate held in abeyance. The rhythmic back-and-forth of the loom finds its echo in the narrative structure of *The Odyssey* itself: a story defined not by linear progression but by *cyclical return, delay, and repetition*, where Ulysses advances only by continually moving back and forth.

KIMIKO YOSHIDA

APRÈS LE MASSACRE, LA RÉCONCILIATION

In *Après le Massacre, la Réconciliation*, Kimiko Yoshida transforms the legendary expectation of Penelope into a poetic virtuality where myth, violence, and reconciliation converge. Penelope is envisioned as the ultimate reconciler, guiding the return of the absent hero and the reweaving of bonds suspended across time.

The installation combines visual, spatial, and performative elements to evoke the rhythms of waiting, return, and reunion. A pink Murano glass chandelier, *Colpo di Vento. Le retour d'Ulysse*, hangs above the dining table, its delicate colour echoing both the musk-scented hybrid rose *Penelope*, cultivated by Reverend Joseph Pemberton in 1924, and the ephemeral beauty of sakura².

In the performative dimension, the artist will stage along 2026 *Le Dîner de Réconciliation*, inviting a select number of guests to partake in the *Menu of Reunion*. Here, the culinary experience of Yoshida becomes a form of art: the table transforms into a stage, the shared meal an intimate act of reconciliation. In this ritual, the artist herself coincides with Penelope, collapsing the boundaries between protagonist, host, and author, and situating the artwork in the gesture it enacts.

Through this interplay of space, ritual, and narrative, *Après le Massacre, la Réconciliation* meditates on the delicate choreography of hospitality, waiting, and the return of what was long awaited, an absence made present through performative and sensory experience.



² cherry blossoms

THE ARTISTS

GAYLE CHONG KWAN



Gayle Chong Kwan is an award-winning British artist whose work at the intersection of historical, material, and archival research and fine art practice is shown internationally. She is known for her fantastical combinations of growths, layers, archives, artefacts, food, and waste, in large-scale photographs, installation, moving-image, performance, ritual, and work in the public realm. Her expansive practice explores social history, ecology, speculative research, contested collections, ecological degradation, and more than human. She has a PhD in Fine Art from the Royal College of Art.

gaylechongkwan.com

STEPHANIE BLAKE



Stephanie Blake is an American writer and artist. She lives between Barcelona and Paris. Her books for kids, the adventures of *Simon the Super Rabbit* have been translated all around the world and the 6th season of the television cartoon will soon be aired on French television. Her first novel for adults "*Le coup du lapin*" was published in May 2025 in France. In her artwork and writing, she explores existential problems and finds inspiration everywhere and sometimes in Greek Myths a fertile ground for creativity. [Wikipedia page](#)

KIMIKO YOSHIDA



Kimiko Yoshida is a Japanese French visual artist and photographer known for her self-portraits that transform her identity through elaborate costumes and painted backgrounds. Her work explores themes of feminine identity, cultural hybridity, and ritual disappearance.

kimiko.fr



The experience at Palazzo Bonvicini
continues with

SHAPE YOUR MOOD

NI LES SENTIMENTS NI LA MORT SONT ALÉATOIRES

THE INTIMATE CINEMA

LA BOTTEGA *of* FONDATION VALMONT

SHAPE YOUR MOOD

LISTEN TO YOUR INNER SELF

Take a deep breath. Exhale. Drop your shoulders. Close your eyes. This is the incipit of *In Minor Keys*, the curatorial programme by Koyo Kouoh for the [61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia](#). We couldn't agree more with this approach, as these few words perfectly capture the experience Fondation Valmont aims to offer visitors to our exhibitions.



With more than two hundred exhibitions opening each year in Venice, Fondation Valmont sought to present its museum space as a different kind of venue, a calmer environment where visitors could engage with art at their own pace. For this reason, starting in 2025, [Palazzo Bonvicini became the first exhibition venue in the lagoon to offer on-going guided meditation sessions](#), seamlessly connecting art and mental well-being. Led by a certified meditation coach, these sessions provide grounded guidance focused on breath and awareness inviting participants to experience moments of introspection and inner peace, whilst surrounded by contemporary art.

For 2026, [Palazzo Bonvicini – The Intimate Museum](#) will host guided meditation sessions once a month. [The meditation room, filled with Bhutanese lamps casting a warm glow, offers guests the opportunity to reserve a 30-minute moment of pure relaxation.](#) Visitors are also welcome to stop by at any time to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and take in views of the exhibition in the adjoining rooms.

For more information: info@fondationvalmont.com / 0039 041 805 0002

Meditation sessions calendar updated here: [**SHAPE YOUR MOOD**](#)

NI LES SENTIMENTS NI LA MORT SONT ALEATOIRES

Waiting for the Shakespearian Trilogy. Chapter 1: OTHELLO

*Now there's a look in your eyes
Like black holes in the sky.*

Shine On You Crazy Diamond, Pink Floyd, 1975

In a rhythm of white, black, and gold, a multitude of faces come together to form a grid-like mosaic. The work is inspired by the Ivory Coast, recalling the female portraits found in masks connected to the traditional Baoulé wooden sculptures. Revered for their spiritual and practical role, these masks represent the delicate balance between the visible and invisible worlds, between everyday life and ritual. Each series is quietly completed by a golden skull, a *memento mori*: neither feelings nor death happen by chance.

To the sound of Pink Floyd's *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, *invisible madness takes the lead*. Shakespeare's *Othello* loses his reason and acts on unstable ground, shaped by assumptions, misunderstandings, and false appearances.

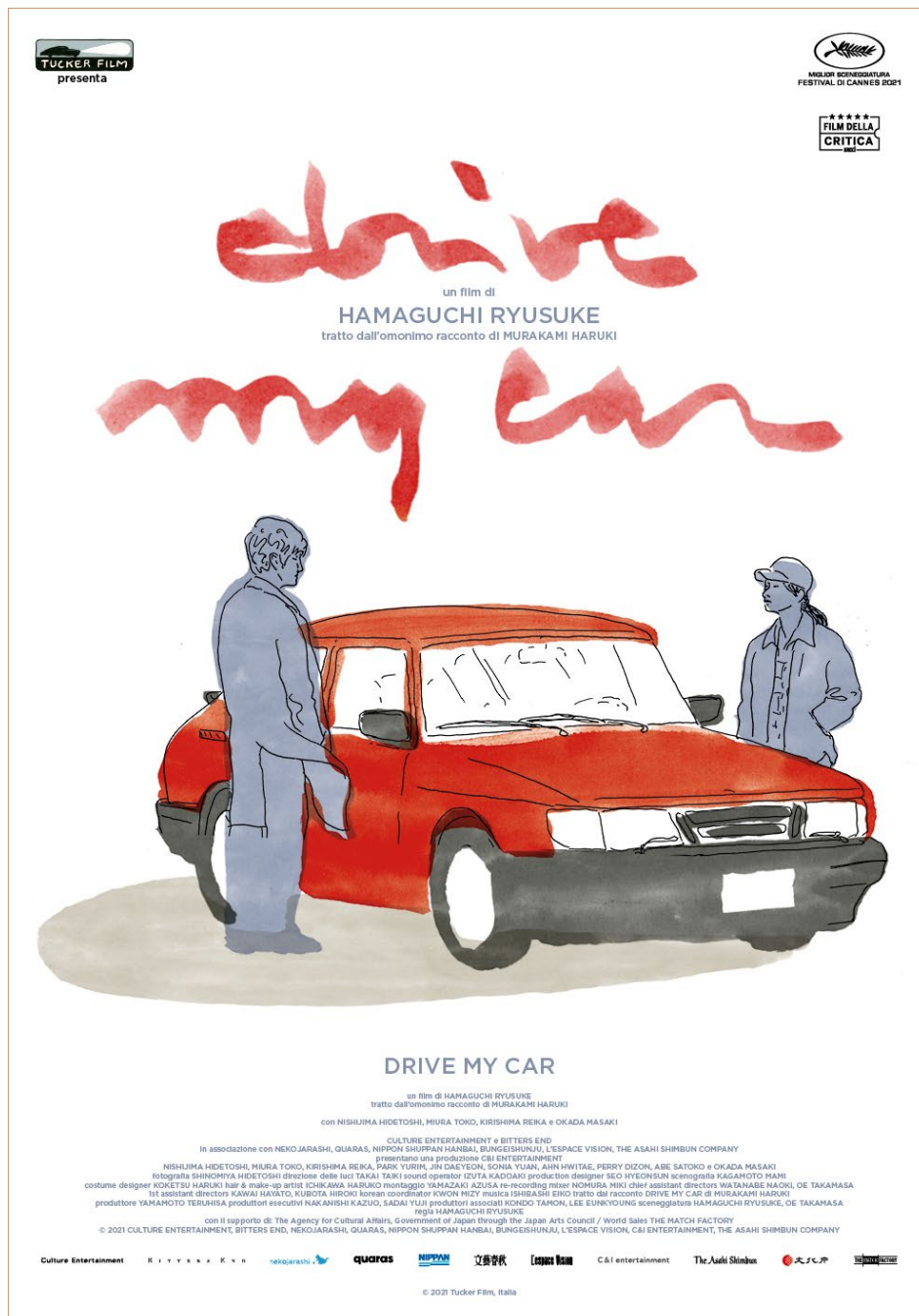
The calm presence of the masks invites *reflection on the human condition*. Against this quiet wisdom, the haunting music evokes *the fragility of the mind and the slow descent into obsession and madness*. Here, Shakespeare's Othello becomes the ultimate symbol of madness, showing the dangerous tension between inner desire and the outside world. As Othello himself says, "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; it is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on," reminding us how easily reason can break under overwhelming emotion.

The installation is meant to be a teaser for next year's exhibition at Palazzo Bonvicini, opening a *new trilogy dedicated to William Shakespeare's tragedies: Othello, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet*.



THE INTIMATE CINEMA

DRIVE MY CAR (2021, Ryusuke Hamaguchi)



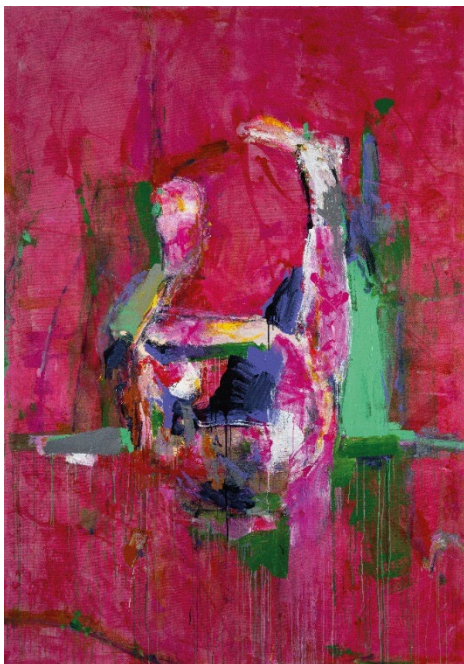
On screen in the original language with Italian subtitles

Every Thursday from May 5, 2026 to January 31, 2027 at 3 pm

For information and reservations: info@fondationvalmont.com

LA BOTTEGA of FONDATION VALMONT

Fondation Valmont nurtures a living constellation of emotions, encounters, and shared sensibilities in close complicity with the international artistic community. Guided by intuition rather than rational selection, works and projects emerge from affinity, dialogue, and mutual inspiration, shaping a deeply human and collective experience. This emotional journey unfolds across Valmont spaces worldwide — from *La Maison Valmont* boutiques to the four *Les Résidences Valmont* mansions — where creativity, craftsmanship, and artistic visions intertwine, transforming each location into a site of connection and resonance.



Penelope still expecting, Pavel Roučka, 2024

In this scenario, a new Venetian concept boutique opens its doors as a secret spot accessible only by appointment. *La Bottega of Fondation Valmont* becomes the natural conclusion to a visit at Palazzo Bonvicini. Artworks are displayed and offered for sale, conceived to intrigue and to be experienced up close, almost studied in detail. Every brushstroke, every drawn line, every pattern shape the compositions, evoking (un)imaginable connections and encounters.

La Bottega of Fondation Valmont is the new Venetian *Wunderkammer*, featuring works by international artists and artisans, carefully chosen by Fondation Valmont for their passion for authenticity, experiences, and enduring relationships.

For visiting Palazzo Bonvicini please call 0039 041 805 000 2 or send an email to:

Maria Teresa Cafarelli Partnerships and Relationships Developer

maria-teresa.cafarelli.ext@evalmont.com

PRESS CONTACTS

Valentina Secco Director Fondation Valmont valentina.secco@evalmont.com

Line Recordon Hospitality and Communications Manager line.recordon@evalmont.com

Fondation
VALMONT

fondationvalmont.com
lamaisonvalmont.com