

Roberto Cuoghi's Post-Apocalyptic 'Putiferio' on Hydra, Greece

BY NICHOLAS FORREST | JULY 01, 2016



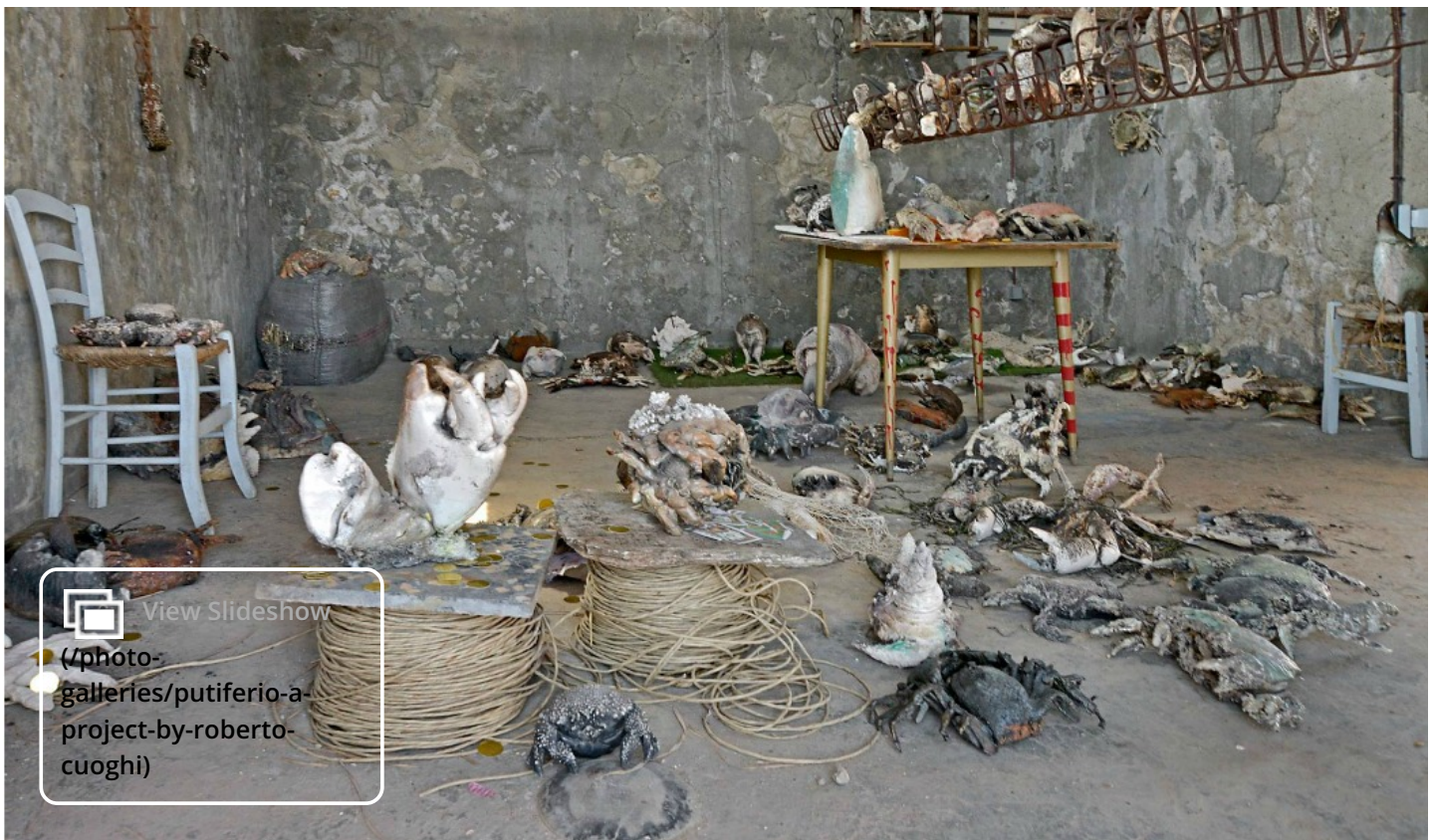
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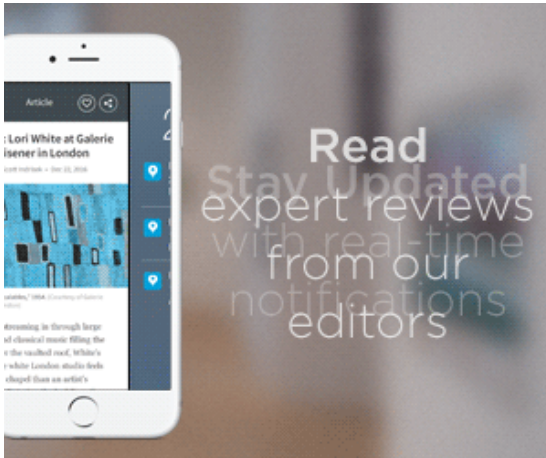
"PUTIFERIO" by Roberto Cuoghi

(© Photo: Fanis Vlastaras & Rebecca Constantopoulou)

"Putiferio" at the [DESTA Foundation's Project Space](http://deste.gr/hydra/putiferio/) (<http://deste.gr/hydra/putiferio/>) in the former Slaughterhouse on the island of Hydra is a major exhibition by Italian artist Roberto Cuoghi who works in painting, drawing, digital animation, and sound to explore issues surrounding transformation, identity, death, memory, and time – what he describes as facing “complex ideas iconographically”

Continuing Cuoghi's ongoing engagement with the concepts of metamorphosis, "Putiferio" is an investigation into the potential of transforming familiar materials into chaotic and disturbing assemblages. Using a diverse range of materials such as clay, wood, newspaper, and invented meshes,

Cuoghi explores the characteristics and properties of materials.



With a title that in Latin means “to bring the stink,” but can also “signify chaos or a small taste of hell,” according to DESTE, “Putiferio” was inaugurated with an opening night performance that involved the transformation of the area surrounding the Slaughterhouse into a site-specific camp where Cuoghi experimented with archaic ceramic firing techniques.

During the performance, Cuoghi produced about 100 crabs in different colors and patterns, mostly using refractory clay, but also in porcelain and cast iron. The crabs were then installed throughout the

Slaughterhouse, creating a dramatic and theatrical environment reminiscent of some sort of crab invasion scene from a post-apocalyptic horror film.

The firings took place in two different types of kilns, both created by Cuoghi. Paper kilns were used to fire the bisqued pieces while a five-chamber kiln was used to fire pieces that had been coloured using two three-day fermented, smelly brews made to the artist’s own personal recipes using yeast, milk proteins, sugar, and flour. Other pieces were coloured using a reduction process.

Born in Milan in 1972, Cuoghi is best known for his extreme seven-year performative experiment, which took place between 1997 and 2005, when he literally transformed himself from a pierced punk artist in his mid-twenties to a man in his sixties like his father, gaining weight, dyeing his hair, adopting his father’s mannerisms, and dressing in his father’s clothes.

Candidates from the deep water

Clashed with wasps they came to slaughter

Pinching here, biting there,

Oh my fellows please beware!

Smoke and flames, stink and froth,

Splashing in a sulfurous broth

Fished out at the seaside

Unarmed, more dead than alive

The candidates in the eventide

Took your logic for a ride

“PUTIFERIO: A Project by Roberto Cuoghi” runs through September 30 at DESTE Project Space Slaughterhouse in Hydra. (<http://deste.gr/hydra/putiferio/>)

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