

Estro

Estro # exhibition
16 - 26 November 2017

In 2015 the **AFI Collective** embarked on a journey. Taking the linguistic exchange between two sister countries - Italy and Greece - as a starting point, the artists explored the semantic and conceptual nuances of the word **οίστρος** [istros] (IT: **estro**). Using a plurality of techniques and materials, they created installations that reflect their personal interpretation of the theme. For some, the *Travel of Oistros* was the passage of migrants to a place of refuge, for others it was their own creative journey, discovering new processes and ways to work with materials.

A long time ago, the word *Oistros* travelled across the Mediterranean sea from Greece to Italy. This is one of the many words which are shared today in form, use and meaning by Greek and Italian. The oldest use of the word is that of the gadfly, the fly that bothers beasts and people alike. This leads to its figurative meaning of inspiration, a creative lightning or a sudden movement like that of a horse stung by a gadfly. Finally, the organic connotation of the term, which indicates the time of ovulation and subsequent sexual arousal in female mammals. The artists chose which connotation of the term to focus upon, introducing a fourth layer of meaning given by the concept of travel itself, from the voyage of the word oistros, to the connecting Mediterranean sea.

Το ταξίδι του Οίστρου The travel of Oistros

Judith Allen-Efstathiou
Inger Carlsson
Eva Cheiladaki
Theodora Chorafas
Corinna Coutouzi
Maria Grigoriou
Despina Pantazopoulou
Yiannis Papadopoulos

AFI Collective

Mon - Tue - Wed - & Fri 16:00 - 21:00
Thu 18:00 - 23:00
Sat & Sun 12:00 - 20:00

A project by Orasi Art
www.orasi-art.com

Artistic installations by AFI Collective
at Kerameikou 28, Athens

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Places have stories to tell, as do words, artworks and people. A space with a strong character and identity, complements and even shapes an exhibition, enhancing both the artwork and the visitor's experience. As opposed to ordinary artistic venues, unconventional spaces, such as Kerameikou 28, pose technical challenges that can add to the curatorial narrative. This building is currently under the management of Communitism, a group that envisions to re-activate abandoned heritage buildings by transforming them into vibrant, self-organized socio-cultural centers.

After the magical WWII tunnels buried in the dark under Bologna's city park where the *Travel of Oistros* was first held, the labyrinth of rooms in the Neoclassical building at Kerameikou 28 is the most fitting environment for the exhibition's homecoming. From beautiful high ceilinged rooms and mezzanines to small, womb-like intimate rooms, from winding staircases and crumbling walls to the open-air rooftop terrace and an inner courtyard, Estro calls for an explorative journey on the part of visitors - as opposed to the almost linear tale told in the Bolognese tunnels.

The layout of the building affects the positioning of artworks, which in turn informs the creation of site-specific conceptual clusters that bring about new dynamics and links between the pieces. Clusters connect with the history of the building and the area of Metaxourgeio; it is noted for the production of silk, the use of metal in the carriage repair workshops, and printing, which all link to the raw materials and techniques used by the artists of the AFI collective.

The "Carnival Room" references the space used by the Metaxourgeio Carnival and is full of colour. The artworks, however, narrate stories of loss, decay and mystery (**Allen-Efstathiou, Cheiladaki, Carlsson**).

Between upstairs and downstairs, inside and outside, metal is the privileged medium to tell the tales of oistros. One after the other, three pieces walk us from the playfulness of the worlds of plants and animals to the graveness of human concerns (**Coutouzi, Allen-Efstathiou, Pantazopoulou**).

Past the inner courtyard is the wide room in which for many years a printing workshop was operating. It now houses artworks that allow for multi-layered readings and employ materials from clay to metal to handmade paper. Different journeys are evoked in this room: the meticulous deconstruction and reconstruction of matter, the migration of people with its fragility and uncertainty - but also of hope and new life (**Chorafas, Grigoriou, Papadopoulos, Coutouzi**).

AFI Collective is an artist collective founded in Greece in 1979 with the mission to create contemporary crafts using traditional techniques. Over the years the artists have developed their individual artistic creativity and expression in great part due to the encouragement and support of the collective. AFI values technique and a high standard of quality in creating work, which reflects contemporary issues. Alongside running its own non-profit art space from 1983 to 1989, AFI's 38 year lifespan has seen work exhibited in Copenhagen, Brussels, Berlin, Hannover, Italy and of course in many cities in Greece.

Orasi Art was founded in 2015 and works transnationally to promote visual arts. Our projects focus on cultural collaboration and exchange, employing art to the means of intercultural dialogue.

Judith Allen-Efstathiou

For Judith, *Oistros* is explosion and excitement. This bursting of life is demonstrated in her work through the fertility, variety, and beauty of plant life. These intricate prints reference her previous work of still-life drawings of plants seen along an ancient footpath on the island of Kea.

① Every printed strip shows a different stage in the wild weeds' lifecycle, from growth to bloom to their inevitable drying out.

⑨ Using details of her original sketches she created these abstractions carved in copper with the use of acid.

Inger Carlsson

Throughout her artistic career, Inger had one material that bothered her like a gadfly (*Oistros*). Tulle has been haunting her for years calling her to use it again and again. She took one of her older tulle artworks and tore it into pieces. Using the long and repetitive but very rhythmic process of pleating she created this new artwork.

③ It illustrates how sometimes people in flight are forced to tear up the creation of a lifetime and then put it back together again, giving it a new form, constructing a new life.

Despina Pantazopoulou

"*Oistros* of licentiousness" is a phrase found in an Orthodox hymn sung during the Holy week.

⑤ ⑥ Despina explored the contrast between *Oistros* seen as the cause of an ecstatic act and *Oistros* as the wonderful natural phenomenon that leads to birth.

⑦ ⑧ Certain elements of this installation, such as the lightning bolt, also bear reference to *Oistros* as inspiration and to the creative process in general, during which artisans become very attached to their tools; in this case hammer and anvil.

Theodora Chorafas

Theodora constantly tests the limits of her material. Clay is a substance with many constraints but also great creative potential.

The theme *Oistros* provided the opportunity for her to vary her technique and to focus on the processes of extraction and destruction as opposed to construction. As such, she worked from big masses of clay, taking out pieces.

The resulting pieces she either meticulously decorated ⑬ ⑭ or placed close to the initial form to create a whole new entity ⑮ ⑯

Eva Cheiladaki

Eva sees herself primarily as a social worker, and believes that Art and Crafts can be used as tools to reach out to people in helping them express their thoughts. She has worked in diverse places, from prisons to zoos and has lived in many countries, always collecting stories and characters which she uses to produce dolls and puppets.

② This work is the embodiment of *Oistros*, a Human Fly! Here she used the haunting memory of the face of a man she used to chance upon in the streets of Bologna many years ago...

Corinna Coutouzi

Corinna's interactive installations, made by hammering wire on the anvil, strive to involve the public.

④ The visitor becomes the gadfly (*Oistros*) that bothers the mare and foal. Watch where you step!

⑱ This piece explores how the moment of artistic inspiration and the moment of ovulation overlap and are generated by the same magic: many things have to come together to create the necessary harmony for something new to come to life. Give the mobiles a soft push and watch what happens...

Maria Grigoriou

Maria's gadfly has always been indigo. When she works with natural dyes, she feels connected to all the past generations of artists and artisans who used the same process. *Oistros* for her is what brings Greece and Italy together: the Mediterranean with its innumerable shades of blue. The sea has always been a connector and a divider; although these past few years it also has been a place of extreme suffering. ⑩ ⑪ ⑫ Her installation points to a journey of safety for the refugees of the migrant crisis.

Yiannis Papadopoulos

Yiannis thought of *Oistros* as the impulse to take a journey and the urge to run away. He made paper by hand and used it to make these fragile constructions.

⑰ These boats reference the frail rafts used by migrants to reach a safer place. He placed lights in them with the hope they will guide the way. If you lean closely you will also see the watermarks of the word *Oistros* on Yiannis' paper.

He conceived his boats as having sails. The only thing missing is a soft breeze...