

PHOENIX ATHENS PRESENTS: Street Doves

by Mary Conroy

OPENING: OCTOBER 4

RUNNING: OCTOBER 5– NOVEMBER 15

Phoenix Athens is pleased to present the solo show “Street Doves” by Irish artist, Mary Conroy. Conroy’s aim for this exhibition has been to combine her background in ceramics with her interest in the history and currents of modern-day Athens through the study of urban wildlife. During her one-month residency at Villa Exarchia, Conroy explored the notion of materiality as experienced in Athenian culture, as well as the biophilic connection-space between human and animal inhabitants of the city.

Whilst visiting the National Archaeological Museum, Conroy was particularly drawn to representations of the dove. The dove has been depicted in Greek and Middle Eastern art for millennia to represent the Judeo-Christian spirit of God, Aphrodite, the goddess of love in ancient Greece, and is identified as a symbol of love, joy, peace, beauty and procreation. This same bird is a familiar sight in global cities to this day. During her residency, Conroy resonated with the revolutionary story of Exarcheia, its diverse urban ecology and the graceful and resilient nature of the dove. Using psychogeographic methodologies, she mapped and documented her local environment to recreate the story of this emblematic symbol, using techniques inspired by both ancient and contemporary Greek artists. This included drawing, photography, writing and sculpture.

With her focus on ecology and use of natural and found materials as a starting point, the artist made clay paint as a reference to Greek pottery which she applied to scrap materials found on the street. These ‘canvases’ are decorated using the same slip layering technique as a used by the ancient potters, uniting the present and the past through process. Conroy’s intention for this residency and final show was to combine her ongoing study of urban wildlife with Greek culture, history and contemporary lifestyle and to advocate an appreciation for city dwelling wildlife. Her organic methodology has been a fundamental point to achieving this purpose.

Public Programme

As part of the public programme for this show, the artist committed to a talk/discussion based on her new project. This took the form of an interactive open studio day which included a participatory workshop. The public were invited to sit and make a clay dove, the purpose of this was to collectively share the creative process and engage in dialogue regarding the local ecosystem.

About Mary Conroy

Mary Conroy is an artist based in Ireland with a degree in Ceramics and a MA in Socially Engaged Art. Her interests lie in the relations between various ecological populations in urban environments. Mary's practice explores humanity's experience of the natural world through sculpture, intervention, dialogue and participation. Her work employs ceramic techniques, social practice methodologies and digital process.