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Ίδρυμα ΔΕΣΤΕ
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June, 2014

PAWEL ALTHAMER: THE SECRET OF THE PHAISTOS DISC

DESTE Foundation Project Space
Slaughterhouse, Hydra

Duration: June 23 – September 29, 2014

Opening Hours,
Monday - Friday: 11:00 - 13:00 & 19:00 – 22:00
Tuesday Closed

High Resolution Images:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/k6muof1jblhve6k/AAALcIa35DnHo3uHNtKphOnEa>

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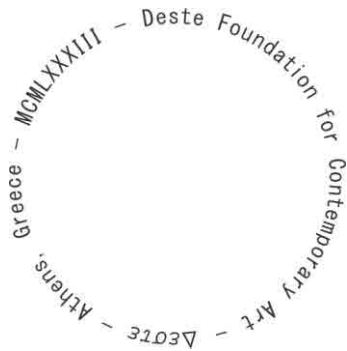
Every year since 2009, the DESTE Foundation's exhibition space at the Slaughterhouse of Hydra has hosted a contemporary art exhibition designed by an artist (or team of artists) on the basis of this particular venue. This year, the DESTE Foundation presents the exhibition *The Secret of the Phaistos Disc* by the Polish artist **Pawel Althamer**.

This is an interactive project that combines sculpture and performance with a series of experimental ways of social communication and creativity. The focus is on the nature of families, family relationships and more generally on human relationships and the way they fit into society to form a 'universal' family that lies at the centre of today's *city*. Once again, Althamer pushes the boundaries of contemporary sculpture to the point where its essence acquires a human aspect.

The main role in this work is played by the artist's own family. Specifically, Althamer's children become protagonists as they are called upon to develop and stage a happening whose aim is to explore the relations, correlations and asterisms that lie behind the existing social structures. Children and adults alike are invited to take part in the happening using handmade puppets (most of which depict the Althamer family, but others as well) to "construct" various scenarios —or messages— of their imagination. In this way the participants activate the very process and the properties of the creative act, which is the main aim of the project and the artist.

The works to come out of the performance will remain installed in the Slaughterhouse throughout the exhibition. Visitors will be able to add more elements to the original narrative and thus create new identities for the 'heroes'.

The sources of inspiration behind this project are the *Phaistos Disc**, considered to be the earliest known example of typography and encoded information (Middle Bronze Age; 17th c. BCE), and the *Emerald Tablet*, a text attributed to a figure from Hellenistic times known as Hermes Trismegistus. The *Emerald Tablet* sets the foundations of alchemic theory and practice as they are known today. This hermetic text is said to contain the secret of *prima materia* and its transmutations.



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Born in Warsaw in 1967, Pawel Althamer is a sculptor and performer. His work examines the complexity of human relations, questioning the boundaries of the individual's personal and overall identity. He is known for his collaborative projects with the members of various groups and communities as well as for his actions which attempt a subtle alteration of reality through almost imperceptible interventions in public space. Althamer is passionate in his conviction that the transformative power of art helps people find inspiration in their everyday reality.

Althamer has taken part in numerous exhibitions of contemporary art, including: *Forget Fear*, 7th Berlin Biennial (2012); *Pawel Althamer with Urs Fischer, Jacob Kassay & Jakub Julian Ziolkowski*, DESTE Foundation (Athens, 2012); *Almech*, Deutsche Guggenheim (Berlin, 2011); *Les Promesses du passé*, Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2010); *Skin Fruit*, New Museum for Contemporary Art (New York, 2010); *Pawel Althamer and others*, Secession (Vienna, 2009); *The Fifth Floor: Ideas Taking Spaces*, Tate Liverpool (2008); *Skulptur Projekte* (Münster 2007); *One of Many*, Nicola Trussardi Foundation (Milan, 2007); *Pawel Althamer*, Musée National d'Art Moderne—Centre Pompidou; (Paris, 2006); *The Grand Promenade*, NMCA (Athens 2006); 4th Berlin Biennial (2006); *Pawel & Vincent*, Bonnefanten-museum (Maastricht, 2005); *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*, 50th Biennale of Venice (2003); *Pawel Althamer*, Kunsthalle Basel (1997); Documenta X Kassel (1997).



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*** The Emerald Tablet:**

1. *This is true and remote from all cover of falsehood.*
2. *Whatever is below is similar to that which is above. Through this the marvels of the work of one thing are procured and perfected.*
3. *Also, as all things are made from one, by the [consideration] of one, so all things were made from this one, by conjunction.*
4. *The father of it is the sun, the mother the moon. The wind bore it in the womb. Its nurse is the earth, the mother of all perfection.*
5. *Its power is perfected. If it is turned into earth.*
6. *Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle and thin from the crude and [coarse], prudently, with modesty and wisdom.*
7. *This ascends from the earth into the sky and again descends from the sky to the earth, and receives the power and efficacy of things above and of things below.*
8. *By this means you will acquire the glory of the whole world,*
9. *And so you will drive away all shadows and blindness.*
10. *For this by its fortitude snatches the palm from all other fortitude and power. For it is able to penetrate and subdue everything subtle and everything crude and hard.*
11. *By this means the world was founded*
12. *And hence the marvelous conjunctions of it and admirable effects, since this is the way by which these marvels may be brought about.*
13. *And because of this they have called me Hermes Trismegistus since I have the three parts of the wisdom and philosophy of the whole universe.*
14. *My speech is finished which I have spoken concerning the solar work*

* There are several different translations of *The Emerald Tablet* available. Here it is referenced from the *Theatrum Chemicum*, Volume IV , 1963.



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