



gallery rosenfeld is thrilled to announce Iona Maria Sisea's first institutional solo exhibition at The Deruta Regional Ceramics Museum. Showcasing twenty three ceramics, this powerful body of work sheds light on the complexities of our time and the resilience of artistic expression. Within the works, Sisea draws attention to the political history of Romania in the late 1980s, symbolically told through the extraordinary story of Lache, the nation's largest bear.

Lache was no ordinary bear: historical records reveal that he was bred for size, bred from a giant male bear from the Romanian Circus and a female bear captured from the Carpathian Mountains. His sister even became a famous Romanian movie star, so good were their genes. Lache's life was one spent in captivity, surrounded by humans. He became a beloved tourist attraction after being transferred from a Romanian zoo to a local restaurant in the Alps. With a weakness for beer and sugar, visitors enthusiastically exchanged treats for photos and hugs; Lache became comfortable around humans, even loved humans. He was a veritable celebrity.

One day Lache mysteriously vanished from the restaurant, creating the perfect opportunity for Dictator Ceacesu to hunt 'Romania's Largest Bear'. Ceacesu had long wanted to break Tito's record, and name himself as the 'Greatest Bear Hunter In History'. Eventually, Ceacesu's wish was fulfilled. Lache was caught by the Dictator's own lackies, and encouraged to run through a forest, in order to make the 'hunt' more realistic for Ceacesu. Tragically, due to Lache's playful nature and affection for humans, the bear simply stood still, awaiting the beer and sugar he had become accustomed to. Frustrated by this apparent insubordination, Ceacesu shot the bear in cold blood.

Following the fall of the Romanian Dictator, a harsh reality set in: a significant rise in unemployment, particularly among women. It is within this challenging landscape that Ioana Maria Sisea portrays another story: that of Romanian women's emancipation. Eva Maria Udrea, a controversial female politician from the mid 2000s, is one such woman that Sisea focuses on. Depicted in a gold bikini and wearing a bear skin, she serves as a quasi-religious icon of resilience, intelligence and feminine power.

Ioana Maria Sisea's works are a fascinating insight into a political history wrought with controversy, humour, struggle, misogyny and power.