



Pietro Roccasalva  
"Who Shot Mr. Burns?,"  
installation view at Power  
Station, Dallas (2016)  
Courtesy of The Artist and  
Power Station, Dallas  
Photography by Kevin Todora

## Pietro Roccasalva

### The Power Station, Dallas

Pietro Roccasalva's installation at the Power Station takes its name from an episode of *The Simpsons*: "Who Shot Mr. Burns?" Its title points aptly toward the artist's own symbolic universe and to the city in which this particular *situazione d'opera* is set. Just a ten-minute drive away is Klyde Warren Park, built by Dallas's own billionaire supervillain, Kelcy Warren, CEO of Energy Transfer Partners, whose Dakota Access Pipeline currently threatens to revive America's history of genocide and environmental catastrophe.

Kelcy Warren, like Mr. Burns, seeks to establish immutable, non-decaying forms. This desire is both elicited and then immediately elided in Roccasalva's installation, which unfolds a narrative addressing the question of who has killed the sun. In the lower-level gallery one encounters freestanding partitions with brass plaques listing the titles of Italian Futurist paintings, behind which Roccasalva's "polychromes" are hidden. The artist has used algorithmic analysis to assess the mean color of each of the Futurist works in question, from which are generated elegant, indeed monochromatic, tonal paintings that reduce a futuristic past to an apocalyptic future. In their arrangement they lead the viewer toward the bleached-white sculpture of *Fanfarò* (2014), in which a boy is shown biting a lizard's tail — inverting Caravaggio's famed *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* of 1594–45 — just as the lizard offers up an *aroncino* rice ball as a symbol of the dying sun.

Upstairs one discovers a "polychrome" of the dying sun and the revelation of its assassin. In true Roccasalva fashion, the answer itself is elliptical: paintings of faceless waiters look on as the spectator faces up to the end of the source of life. In the final painting, a juicer rests atop a cathedral in place of its dome. One infers that the sun, like the planet, has been churned, its juice extracted and its body left behind as rind.

by Avi Varma