

Colbert’s lobster alter ego conquers Pompeii

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POMPEII, Campania — Scottish-born artist Philip Colbert’s giant lobster sculptures are on display on the 2,000-year-old streets of Pompeii, merging pop mythology with the ancient ruins of the iconic site.

The exhibition, titled Pop Mythology, opened on July 27, 2026 and places more than 30 monumental lobsters across the Archaeological Park of Pompeii and the nearby sites of Boscoreale, Oplontis, and Stabiae. It is billed by the organisers as the largest exhibition of the London-based artist’s career.

Q. What did you recognise when you stood in front of the ancient lobster mosaic at Pompeii?

“For me, that mosaic symbolises the lobster as a mortality symbol,” Colbert said. “It also symbolises the power of the art of antiquity and how the symbolism within contemporary pop culture has such remarkable lineage.”

Q. You call Pompeii a city. What would the people here have found familiar in your structures?

“Look at the art of Pompeii. It’s extremely mythological,” Colbert said. “There is even a small fresco featuring a warrior riding a lobster. There is a fantasy and a surrealism to the art of antiquity. It was something to create legends. I think Pompeii was pop because buildings were painted in bright colours, and the frescoes and mosaics were extremely decorative. What I find interesting about the exhibition is it challenges this notion of what antiquity is. Is antiquity just ruins that you have to look at and take very seriously as ruins? Why can’t a colourful lobster sculpture be at home in Pompeii? There’s so much of a connection between pop culture and Pompeii.”

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/colberts-lobster-alter-ego-conquers-pompeii/



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Colbert lobsters in Pompei (*Credits: Colbert*)

Q. As a boy in Perthshire, you found a fragment of a Roman coin. What does that symbolise for you?

“It symbolised this link for me as a kid growing up in rural Scotland, which felt very disconnected from the grandeur of European history,” Colbert said. “The idea of being connected to the Roman Empire, just in a field near where I grew up, was an intimate connection to another world. Finding myself 30 years later doing an exhibition in Pompeii felt like such a journey.”

Q. What has Italy given you that London did not?

“Italy has a remarkable cultural, archaeological, architectural history. I’ve also loved Italian food,” Colbert said. “I’ve just been very drawn to this incredible contextual artistic environment that Italy offers. The Archaeological Museum in Naples is my favourite museum in the world, and Pompeii is a city beyond time. I love Italian people and Italian history.”

Q. You said you became an artist when you became a lobster. What opened up the moment you put on that mask?

“It was about leaning into the idea of becoming a lobster. Since I was a kid, I liked this alien-like quality of the lobster,” Colbert said. “When I was faced with painting a self-portrait I was thinking, do I paint myself as I look, literally in the mirror? Or do I paint this creative language that I’ve been making? I thought, I’m going to lean into the identity of creativity rather than of birth. Art is our tool of freedom to reinvent ourselves. I thought I should lean into this creative persona that I’ve already created.”

Q. What are you building with your collection?

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“I was thinking the collection is proof of my madness,” Colbert said. “I became very interested in the legacy of that symbol. A lot of these artifacts are symbolic evidence of that. I find it remarkable how you can look into the past and discover so much.”

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