

Event Sculpture 6  
**Lara Favaretto, 'Doing'** (1998/2014)  
19, 20, 21 January 2015

Response by Agnieszka Gratza, 21 January 2015

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The sculptural events in *The Event Sculpture* series that drew the biggest crowds so far have been concentrated in time, lasting anywhere between four and ten minutes. Lara Favaretto's durational performance 'Doing' (1998/2015) is not over yet as I write this. Though it takes place on three consecutive days – 19, 20 and 21 January, from 11am to 5.30pm each time – the sixth, and most protracted, event of the nine that form the series is not any less spectacular and crowd-pleasing, for all its length.

'Doing' makes a strong and immediate impact, both visually and acoustically. As I approached the Henry Moore Institute around noon the distant sound of church bells mixed with that of people steadily chipping away at marble blocks with hammers and chisels. Five Leeds-based artists, male and female, had been at it for about an hour already, and were beginning to show signs of fatigue. A new team was about to take over, in fact, as we were nearing the end of their hourly shift. One of them, wearing safety goggles and gloves, was explaining to a middle-aged couple who the performers were and what they were doing. 'Is that your plot?' the woman asked, pointing to a vacant stand in the middle of a row of five marble blocks resting atop as many wooden plinths. He nodded. 'You'd better get on with it, then,' the man jovially said. 'Hammer on, hammer on.'

Proof that there had been no slacking was at our feet, on the steps leading up to the landing by the Institute's entrance. Its unpolished black granite surface was strewn with marble chippings and dusted with powder. I picked up a piece and examined its brittle, gleaming white surface; upon closer inspection the light smoky grey overtones became visible. This was Carrera marble, no less, the stuff that Michelangelo's 'Pietà' and 'David' had been carved out of. Though not especially large at fifty-by-seventy-by-forty centimetres, the marble slabs had to be heaved onto their wooden supports using a crane. The five blocks were at the limit of the Institute's front steps' loading capacities.

When 'Doing' was originally made in 1998, at the Centro di Arte Contemporanea Palazzo delle Papesse in Sienna, the three masons Favaretto had employed to reduce three marble blocks (on

that occasion) into powder balked at such waste of quality marble, an expensive building material. It took them two to three months to do it. In contrast, the artists at the Henry Moore Institute were given three days to carry out the task. The whole enterprise appeared doomed to failure from the outset. But then the possibility of failure is built into Favaretto's wider practice, fully accounted for.

In both instances, the classical sculptural material was being reduced or distilled into sound. Each of the five marble blocks on plinths placed in front of the Henry Moore Institute came with its own microphone attached to a pole, wrapped in a furry 'dead-cat' windshield. Inside the reception area, a sound technician from Lumen, the audio-visual collective based in Leeds, was monitoring the recording. The sound waves corresponding to each of the five discrete tracks were visually mapped out on the laptop screen as colour bands, one on top of the other. When listened to through headphones, the composite sound of the hammer hitting the chisel and the chisel in turn striking the marble seemed more melodic, crisper and crystalline than what I had heard minutes before outside the Institute, lost in a blur of city sounds. When the galleries open these sounds will emanate from the walls in five points, one for each of the blocks of marble.

As I left a young man said 'So that's what marble sounds like,' trying to pin down its elusive quality. He was cycling past the Institute and stopped to listen. Friends of his, he told me, are always on the lookout for interesting new sounds to mix into their electronic music compositions. Luigi Russolo would have approved. 'The Art of Noises,' his 1913 Futurist manifesto, urged musicians to broaden their sonic palette by listening to the 'infinite variety of noise-sounds' the city has to offer. One of the six families of noises he identified were, as it happens, 'noises obtained by beating on metals, woods, skins, stones, pottery, etc.'