

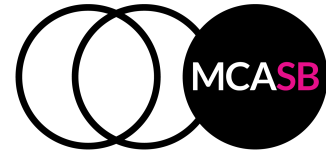
## Lara Favaretto “Digging Up: Atlas of the Blank Histories” at Villa Arianna, Naples



Lara Favaretto “Digging Up: Atlas of the Blank Histories” at Villa Arianna, Naples, 2018.

*Digging Up: Atlas of the Blank Histories*, a project by Lara Favaretto, promoted by the Fondazione Donnaregina per le arti contemporanee / Madre, museum of contemporary art of the Campania Region, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo of Turin, won the second edition of the Italian Council in 2017, a competition launched by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Art and Architecture and Urban Peripheries (DGAAP) of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, to promote Italian contemporary art in the world. The project has been put on in collaboration with the Parco Archeologico di Pompei and in concert with the Parco Archeologico di Ercolano, the Ente Parco Nazionale del Vesuvio, the Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia and the Comune di Pompei, with the scientific coordination of Anna Cuomo for Madre museum.

# Mousse Magazine



Linking together history and stories, and working across different disciplines, Lara Favaretto creates a rich interweaving of diverse times and spaces, bringing them together to form a spectrum filled with potential, discovery, and extraordinary tales, while critically redefining the concept and the experience of the work of art, exhibition, and museum.

A preview of *Digging Up: Atlas of the Blank Histories* was presented at Manifesta 12, the nomadic biennial of contemporary European art that was held in Palermo last June. The research method that underpins the project was illustrated on that occasion, showing the public how the process investigates the history of the land by means of less-known events that have taken place there.

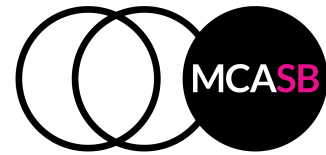
If we plunge into a future like the one imagined by Chris Marker in *La Jetée*, we find the surface of the Earth reduced to a gigantic radioactive wasteland, and human beings forced to live below ground, where the victors in the war perform experiments on the vanquished. Since they cannot use space, the scientists in this underground world attempt to exploit the dimension of time. They use prisoners as guinea pigs to send back into the past in the hope of finding resources they can use to ensure the survival of the human race, as well as to repopulate the surface of the planet by using the present. This is an extended, mobile present, in which the future may already have taken place and the past may still be taking shape.

*Digging Up* is an attempt to make come true what in the film unravels in a succession of images, entrusting the journey into the past to core boring, a mechanical process of extracting portions of the sub soil from various depths, which by its very nature embodies the stratification of time. The cores constitute the DNA of the places they come from and sampling them makes it possible to ensure reproducibility in the future, thus reversing the past into a sort of memory of what is to come, impressed upon the material extracted from the bowels of the Earth.

Shown for the first time in 2012 in Kabul, on the occasion of dOCUMENTA 13, the project was expanded and was shown again in Cappadocia in 2017. For this new chapter of the *Atlas of Blank Histories*, the investigation started out from a series of stories set in Pompeii, both inside and outside the archaeological area, reaching all the way to Vesuvius, in areas such as Castellammare di Stabia, Herculaneum, and Torre del Greco, and as far as a Pozzuoli.

The uniqueness of this land is recounted in stories and documents, and in legends handed down by the locals, pointing the way to the places where the core samples were taken. These range from the discovery in 1936 of an enigmatic magical square on a column in the Large Palaestra in ancient Pompeii, to Lake Avernus, where Virgil places the entrance to Aeneas' world of the hereafter, and which is bound up by spell of the Fata Morgana, all the way to the unauthorised buildings

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and the concealment of the archaeological site in Pollena Trocchia, and on as far as the Vesuvius Observatory. There are events of all kinds, with stories omitted, sometimes concealed, deposited in the subsoil, only to be brought back to the surface by means of coring.

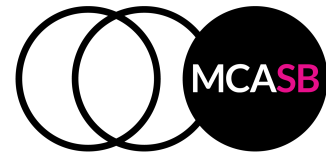


Lara Favaretto “Digging Up: Atlas of the Blank Histories” at Villa Arianna, Naples, 2018.

Once extracted, each individual core will be investigated by geologists who will examine the materials it is made of and thus identify the various periods in time: a horizontal reading that transforms the core into a sort of timeline – a spatial materialisation of the passing of time. This scientific analysis gives concrete form to the possibility of recreating, at some point in the future, the chemical composition of the ground in a particular geographical area and at a particular time, with traces of the stories it has been through contained in its DNA

Each core sample is shown in a standard conservation box and is later archived together with all the others in an iron container that is sealed and buried underground as a time capsule. It will be buried in a particular place on Vesuvius, and marked with a local lava stone bearing the date of the burial and disinterment – the latter being planned for a century later – and the geographic coordinates will be sent to the International Time Capsule Society (ITCS) in Atlanta. A plaque with the extraction data will be set up at each point where a core sample has been

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taken, creating an open-air museum of the local area, starting from the Archaeological Park of Pompeii all the way to the slopes of Vesuvius.

The material documenting the entire process of implementing the project will be available on the website <http://www.digging-up.net>, which also contains a collection of essays that give original interpretations of the meaning of core drilling.

The core samples were taken in the Archaeological Park of Pompeii from the Large Palaestra, the Tower of Mercury, the Villa of Diomedes, and the Triangular Forum. In external areas administered by the Archaeological Park, digs were carried out at the suburban sanctuary in the Fondo Iozzino (Pompeii), Villa Sora (Torre del Greco), and Villa San Marco (Castellammare di Stabia). In the area administered by the City of Pompeii, in Messigno and close to the chapel of Santa Giuliana. Further operations were carried out at the archaeological park of Herculaneum and at the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology in the National Park of Vesuvius

Thanks are also due to the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per l'Area Metropolitana di Napoli, and the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per il Comune di Napoli; the Church of Naples; and the City of Pozzuoli.

at Villa Arianna, Naples  
until 18 November 2018

<http://moussemagazine.it/lara-favaretto-digging-atlas-blank-histories-villa-arianna-naples-2018/>

WHY ARE YOU HERE ?

An interview with  
Lara Favaretto  
by Mariana Canépa Luna

Mariana Cánepa Luna: **Let's begin with misunderstandings. What do you think are the most common misconceptions writers and critics make about your work?**

Lara Favaretto: **When they stick labels to the work, but the worst is when they don't even look carefully or save time just absorb comment that other people have already made. Sometimes I have been pigeonholed as 'the circus and parties girl'. It's like analyzing hardcore cinema by reducing it to 'the one in which they fuck and that's it', erasing the sensational star system from Cicciolina up to Moana.**

MCL: **Giorgio Verzotti has referred to your practice as consisting of 'initiatives' and not 'works' – do you understand what he is getting at?**

LF: **I could think of initiatives in the sense of cultural, religious, sportive and military initiatives. It has been a long time since that piece was written. I've always tried to sustain the possibility of destroying the form and reducing the work itself to a common object, as well as how it's possible to make an exhibition without making one – projecting and encouraging its use in order to obtain the acceleration of its obsolescence.**

MCL: **Your performances, installations and objects are often made involving others. You sometimes set seemingly impossible or futile tasks for people to do. This for instance happened in *Doing* (1999), for which you asked three guys to turn a piece of marble into dust, something that took three months for them to do and you then presented as a 54 minute soundtrack of their activity. How did you continue to convince these guys to do this – they must have moaned about the pointlessness of their task? And with this piece were you trying to evoke the absurdity of certain human activities, or were you more concerned with faith in the impossible and the power of collective action?**

LF: **I got them involved by telling them my ideas, offering them as if they were material for discussion and letting them fly in every direction. I allowed all the people who attended to potentially take part in this project. They were all important and everyone could collaborate, even if with a minimal contribution. They all contribute by making me keep a distance from my own previous work, in order to produce a different outcomes each time.**



Doing, 1999

**MCL :** What are the compromises that you make when collaborating with others?

**LF :** They are not proper compromises – just types of variations that don't really distort the works' ideas, but only their external appearance. A funny compromise occurred when I was about to realise *Mondo alla Rovescia* (World upside down), in 2002, for which an all-male group of boar hunters got together to lift a donkey, and decided to call their wives together to discuss the validity of my proposal. The ladies granted authorisation on the one condition that the donkey had to be female – not a jack but an ass! They thought that it could be a pornographic image.

**MCL :** In that work you gathered a few men to turn the popular saying about impossibility 'when donkeys fly' (in English it would be 'pigs might fly') into a reality. Are there other sayings would you like to 'disprove'?

**LF :** I don't like idiomatic phrases or popular sayings. The one you refer to had been used to mock me, so I used it. I prefer to believe all the stories that I'm told, though I'm not really interested in them in themselves. I like to be surprised, and the best stories to me are the ones that still remain astonishing. The most beautiful stories I've ever heard were the ones I came across while living with the lower caste, the so-called 'untouchables' in Rajasthan, or stories from gypsy dwellings, but that's their business. I endear myself to the things I hear around me, mostly the things that are told spontaneously and enlightening the day or give a chance for the dead to fall in love.

**MCL :** In your recent Frieze Commission you sent out a letter inviting the Queen of England to visit the Frieze Art Fair (*Project for Some Hallucinations*, 2007). The letter in which she declines the invitation was pinned to a tree inside the fair. What kind of arrangements would you have made if the Queen had accepted?

**LF :** Very Few! After an official inspection by the Royal Staff everything would have followed the Royal Protocol. My work stopped before that, with the very possibility to project an apparition, a 'platonic' intervention, a Goliardic visualization, or a confrontation with the appearance of a movie star from early cinema. It was an objectless hallucination, a kind of sentimental investigation that was projected to appear yet be autonomous in denying itself. The failure was long-awaited and foreseeable, and was highlighted at the fair by the sound of applause, that put an end to the great daily spectacle as everyone was heading for the exit.



Mondo alla rovescia(The Upside-down World), 2002





**MCL:** In the context of that commission you said that 'when one listens to the narration of an idea that is so powerful it ultimately does not matter if it's ever realised'. Can you tell me another such idea or story?

**LF:** Don't you think it's like that? I think that if very few words can describe a work, just enough to capture the work's physiognomy, it could end up being even stronger than the work itself. The border is really subtle. Telling a story also means suspecting deception and trying to improve it, waiting for it to suddenly unravel, and having fun as much as I have. A story I haven't understood is: 'I've been studying disguises for a long time now. I am hired to shadow one of the most important people on the American political scene. I am currently based high in the Tora Bora caves.'

**MCL:** The comical and the satirical haunts almost every work you have made. Compressed air tanks ['Platoon', 2005], for example, that look like an army of incorruptible custodians, have party blowers fixed to them as if they are poking their tongues out. Does this sharp sense of humour also exist in your personal life?

**LF:** Of course it could be like sticking your tongue out, but above all that it is a firing squad, a betrayed or beaten army that remains standing still. It's as if they were all in their uniforms during a forced break. They exist in order to function, and they are classified as consumer goods or common objects. It's tragic!

**MCL:** When Mikhail Bakhtin analysed the literature of François Rabelais, he described the carnival as a time when legal, political and religious authority disappeared or was suspended temporarily. The carnival signalled a liberal period where every joke was possible. You have developed works around what you call the 'gift of the day', staging unexpected parades ['Treat or Trick', 2002-6] or borrowing the language of celebrations ['Confetti Canyon', 2005 or 'Tutti giù per terra', 2004]. What are you trying to liberate?

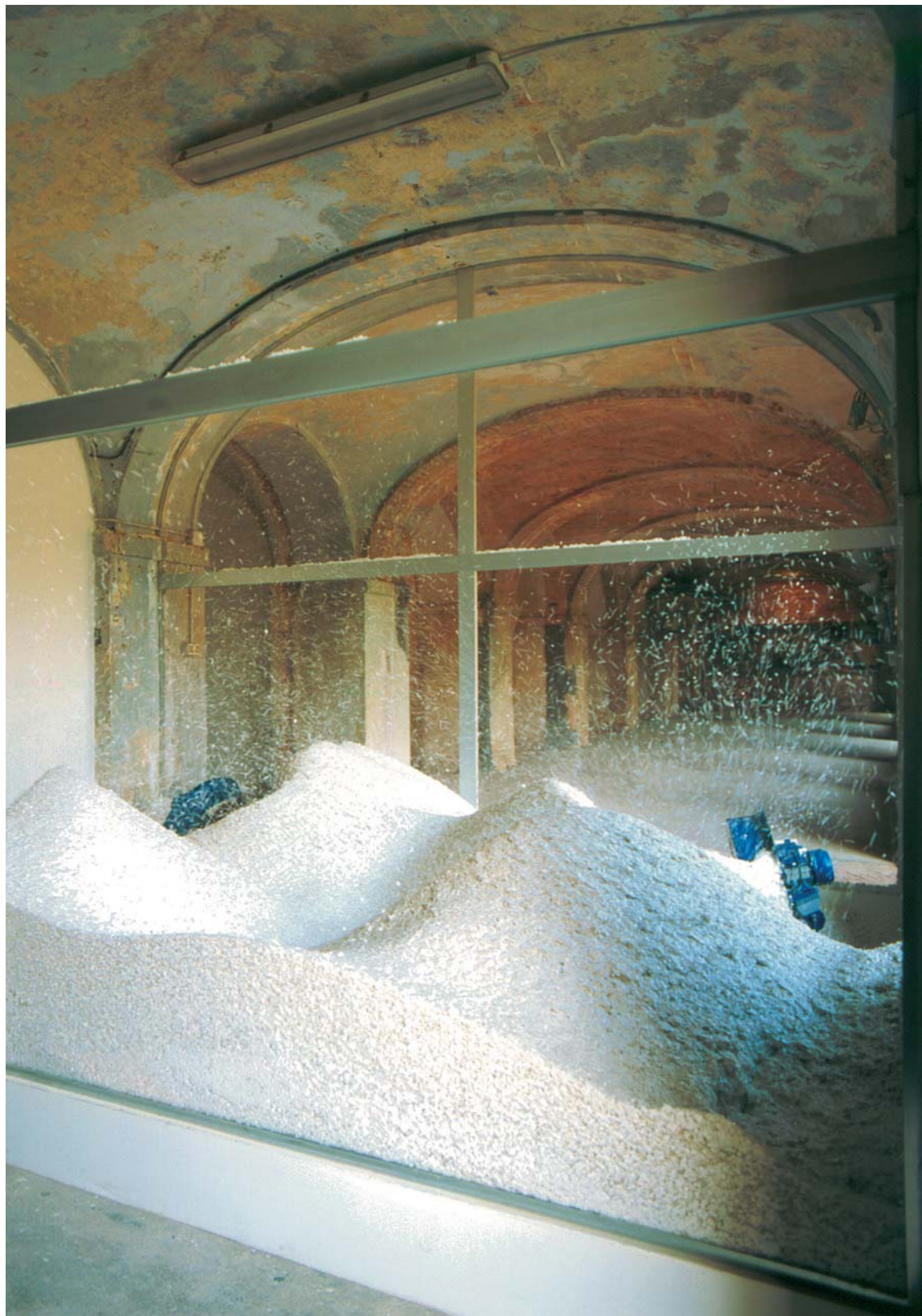
**LF:** It's like leaving a 'back soon' sign and coming back upset. I love jokes, it's like a deal with the Dark Man or the Wild. I'm working on a project with him, and the fact that it is far better destroying than creating. For those who don't know him, he stands curved-backed as if he were ashamed of something, he hardly answers questions yet he has no discretion regarding his own questions. It seems that he can't wait to go back to his world, and I cannot blame him.





CONFETTI CANYON, 2001-2005

Performance view: Ecstasy: Recent Experiments in Altered Perception',  
curated by Paul Schimmel, MOCA, Los Angeles, 2005



U. 62 *Tutti giù per terra*, 2004 Installation view



**MCL :** You give part of yourself in the *Gifts of the Day* series, these are signs of great generosity on your part. But as it has been said in Marcel Mauss's book *The Gift*, giving creates a debt to be repaid, and in a sense gifts are really never free. What are you hoping to receive?

**LF :** Maybe I don't even like presents. I always get them without necessarily asking for them and I feel they are somehow an old-fashioned tradition. I wouldn't like to disturb the dead, but I'd like to talk about the shared economy with Bill Gates, Alain Touraine, Ronald McDonald, Gérard-Francois Dumont, Louis-Marie Jourdain, Johnny Cash and Hamid Karzai, and someone from the Aal al-Bayt foundation. I'd like to know who would eventually hope to receive Eduard Reitz after giving us amasterpiece like *Heimat*, Yasujiro Ozo after making *Dernier Caprice*, Samuel Fuller after *The Naked Kiss* or Chris Marker after shooting *La Jetée*? Probably, they would expect only to go out to dinner with a Kamikaze ...

**MCL :** You often speak of the joy of the unexpected, of the unpredictable and the spectacular. Celebration is sometimes a roller coaster ride, you have a great time while it lasts but there's disappointment when it's over. Are you not frustrated by sudden ends?

**LF :** I'm glad that everything ends so that I can start over again! By being in a state of great shock everything remains potentially inexplicable, and there is a resistant space within an impotent mood where the thing is unarmed but still capable of moving you, where a single gesture is unconscious but it excites you, the cast is made with concrete but it hypnotizes you and maybe you remain impotent, dreaming of a Panzer with a proboscis pointing at the ground. It's unarmed, it's a bachelor machine.

**MCL :** When I saw documentation of the piece you did at Castello di Rivoli *The poor are mad* (2005), the beginning of Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *A Hundred Years of Solitude* came to mind. In the novel gypsies bring all sorts of marvels each year to Macondo, marking a clear event in the town's life that presents a world of new possibilities to the main character. Making the gypsy cart fly as if it was a magic trick – it seems that you are trying to honour an almost extinct sociological phenomena ...

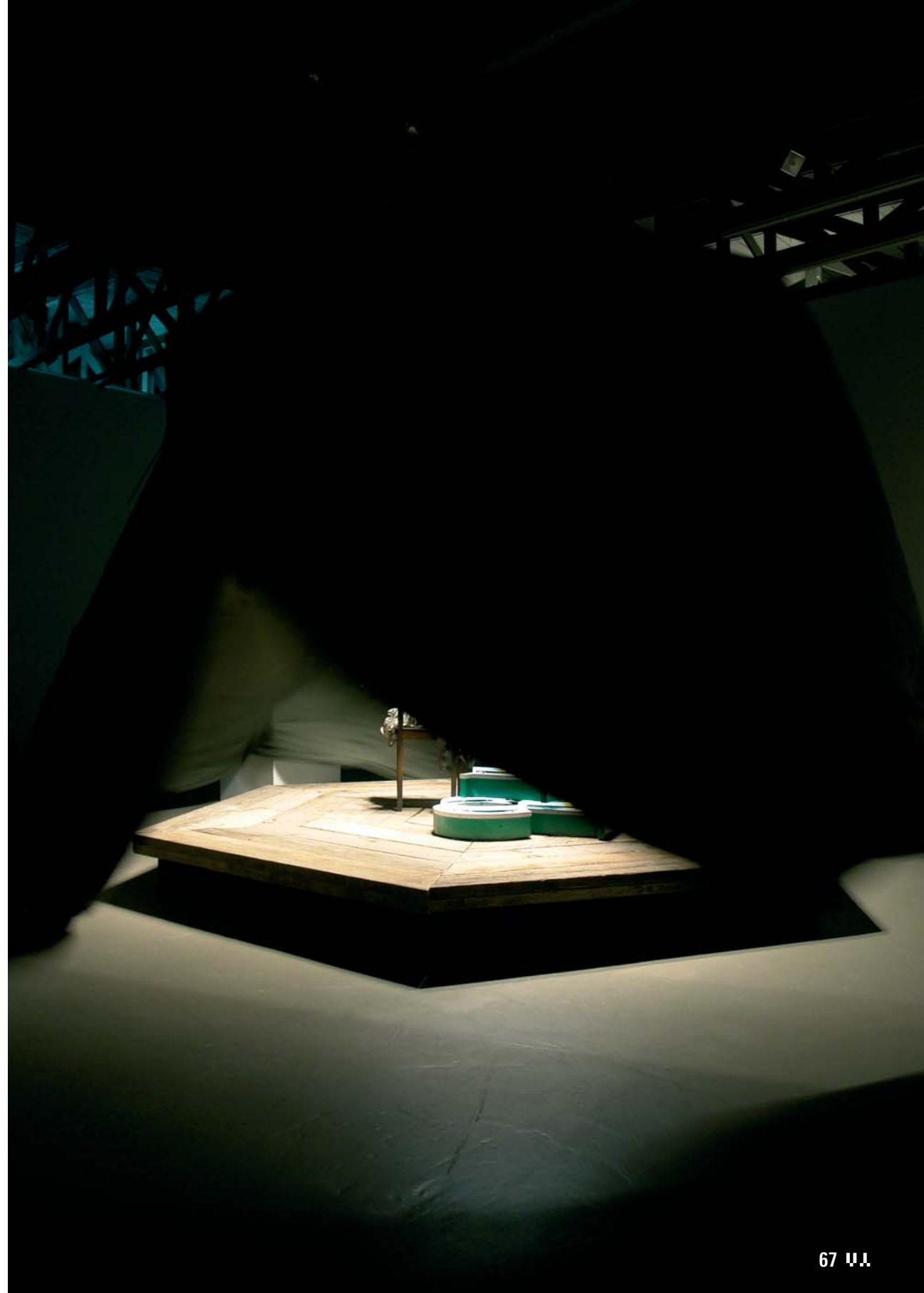
**LF :** I knew the people of Macondo. They disappear only to re-appear but that's only a trick. They do magic in order to make everyone believe that they're on their way to extinction and they are lucky that everyone believes them. In this way, they become a middle phenomenon and in doing so they become capable of an anomalous and spontaneous evolution that is open to ephemeral illusions. I follow them to learn how to be without anything, even without heroes. I listened to them as they can be whoever you wish, and all of this because of a pure need to survive.

Opposite: *I poveri sono matti*, 2005  
Installation view at Castello di Rivoli, Rivoli-Torino





*Cominciò ch'era Finita (it began while it was already over)*, 2006  
installation views at Klosterfelde Galerie, Berlin, 2006





*Gummo, 2007*  
Installation views at Artissima 14  
Galleria Franco Noero

**MCL :** Your sensibility feels more at home with Garcia Márquez's magical realism or the Felliniesque?

**LF :** Maybe, instead with Vittorio De Sica's grotesque realism, in which a shanty-town is turned into a village feast, where a visit to the cinema is a sunset. *'8 e 1/2' told again*. I also recognize magical realism in Wong Kar-Way, Harmony Korine, Werner Herzog, Aki Kaurismäki, Jim Jarmusch, Olivier Assayas – I'm always seduced by their attraction to what subtraction offers.

**MCL :** Some of your works seek group action and collective laughter, others are more private and melancholic. For instance, in *Lost and Found* (2005), you bought a lost suitcase in a lost-and-found auction. The suitcase was then placed alone in the middle of a room – is that as an invitation to imagine what could be inside this surprise box or do you see it as an anthropological object that traces someone's memories?

**LF :** It can contain anything: a time-bomb that will reach zero within one hundred years, Angelina Jolie's pants, One Million dollars, the remains of a corpse, the first forty issues of *Playboy*, the 1000 top ideas of the century... I bought the yellow suitcase in an Italian railway auction, it was one among many. I choose one every year, now even in flea markets, the next-to-last from a garbage dump. I choose from what's inside and I put other things in, I close the suitcase and throw the key away. It would ideally be installed by a passer-by. Another bachelor machine!

**MCL :** I would like to hear your response to your own question, posed in one of your works, a simple writing on a wall: 'Why are you here?'

**LF :** It's kind of a provocation by subtraction – the question itself overtakes the answer, leaving you idle and doubtful. The feel is similar to the one you get when you are absorbed in the writing: *whoever reads this is a donkey*. The very moment you have seen it, and read it you already are a donkey.

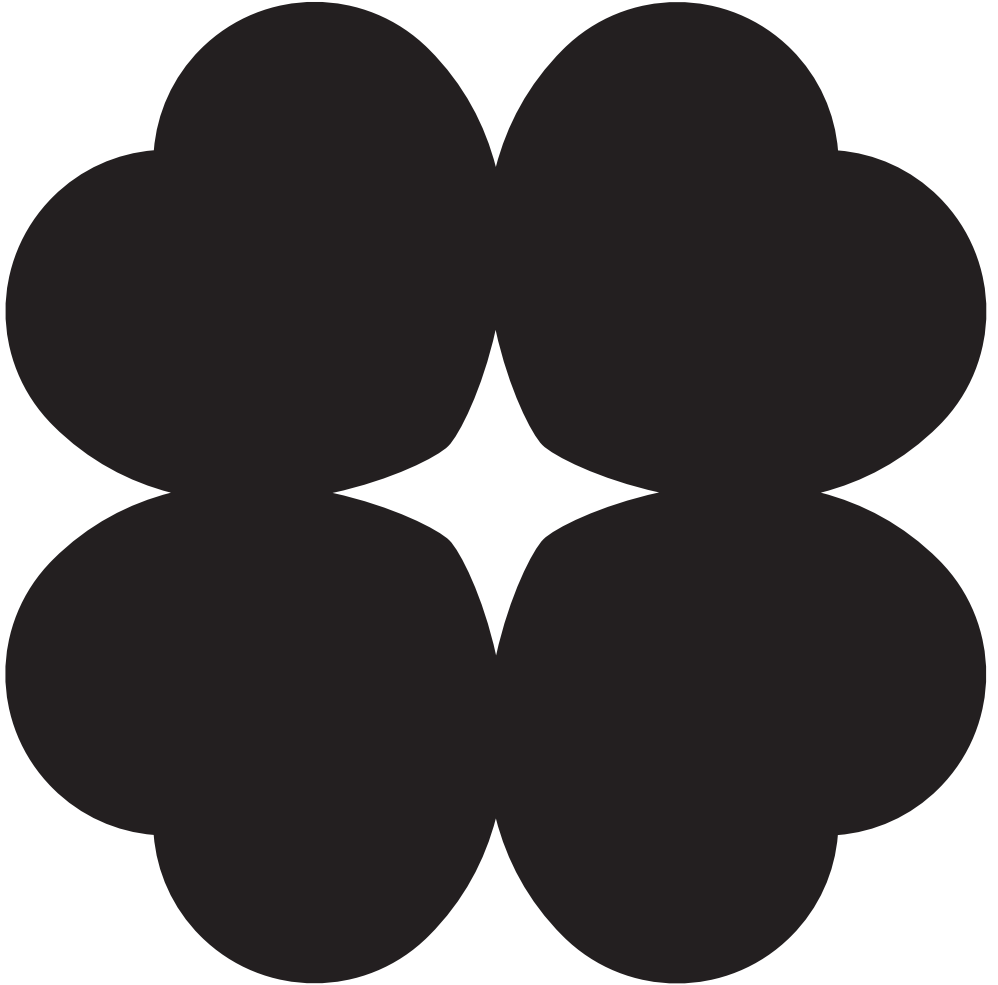
**Lara Favaretto** lives and works in Turin. In 2008 she will be artist in residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston; the Hayward Gallery, London, and at the Proa Foundation, Buenos Aires, where she will subsequently have solo shows. She will also present work at The British School at Rome and participate in the 16th Sydney Biennial.

**Mariana Cánepa Luna** is the 50% of Latitudes, a curatorial office based in Barcelona involved in the production of artistic projects since 2005 and co-directed with Max Andrews. Future projects include co-curating the exhibition 'Greenwashing. Environment: Perils, Promises and Perplexities', Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (28 February–11 May 2008). [www.LTTDS.org](http://www.LTTDS.org)



Lara Favaretto  
Good Luck

MAXXI





Lara Favaretto  
Good Luck

30 Aprile / April —  
20 Settembre / September  
2015

Gallery 4

Con *Good Luck*, di Lara Favaretto, il MAXXI continua il suo impegno a sostegno dell'eccellenza della creatività artistica italiana. Il Museo prosegue il suo cammino in un percorso volto a mettere in evidenza il ruolo, la qualità e il riconoscimento della ricerca italiana nel mondo.

Dopo dieci anni, da quando la prima opera di Lara Favaretto è entrata nella collezione permanente del Museo, attraverso il Premio per la Giovane Arte, il MAXXI dedica un'intera galleria alla sua ultima ricerca, in un momento in cui il lavoro dell'artista è internazionalmente riconosciuto come uno dei più significativi della sua generazione.

Lara Favaretto è un'artista affermata che attira su di sé gli interessi del mondo dell'arte contemporanea, un'artista la cui pratica coincide con una profonda ricerca concettuale. Le sue opere si relazionano con lo spazio e con l'ambiente e la comunità circostante e si manifestano attraverso gesti forti, quasi violenti, a volte, ma capaci di presentarsi con una straordinaria qualità estetica.

L'esperienza della visita di *Good Luck*, sarà dunque il risultato di un intreccio percettivo tra lo spazio, la materia, il tempo, le storie vissute o rievocate, in un viaggio mentale e sensoriale che lascerà il suo segno.

In occasione della chiusura della mostra verrà presentato il primo libro, curato da Lara Favaretto, che raccoglie l'intera produzione dell'artista e, che per la raffinata fattura e l'importanza delle collaborazioni, è destinato ad essere un punto di riferimento per chi voglia conoscere il suo lavoro.

—Anna Mattiolo, Direttore MAXXI Arte

With Lara Favaretto's *Good Luck*, MAXXI is continuing with its mission to promote the excellence of Italian artistic creativity. The Museum is thus pursuing its goal to give prominence to the role, the quality and the international recognition of Italian artistic research.

Ten years have gone by since, through the Young Italian Art Prize, the first work by Lara Favaretto entered the Museum's permanent collection, and now MAXXI is devoting an entire gallery to her latest creations, at a time when her work has become internationally acknowledged as some of the most significant of her generation.

Lara Favaretto is an internationally established artist who has attracted enormous interest in the world of contemporary art, and her art is the outcome of profound conceptual research. Her works interact with space and with the setting and community around them, and they emerge in powerful, almost violent actions while appearing with stunning aesthetic quality.

The experience awaiting visitors to *Good Luck* is the result of a perceptive intertwining of space, matter, time, and events experienced or evoked, in a mental and sensorial journey that is destined to make its mark.

Edited by Lara Favaretto, the first book to cover the artist's entire production will be presented at the closure of the exhibition. With the elegance of its production and the calibre of the contributors, it will become an essential source for all those who wish to know and understand the artist's work.

—Anna Mattiolo, Director MAXXI Arte



## Lara Favaretto Good Luck

*Good Luck*, progetto commissionato dal MAXXI, presenta diciotto dei venti cenotafi realizzati da Lara Favaretto dal 2010 fino a oggi, riuniti per la prima volta nello spazio della Galleria 4.

Il cenotafio è una tomba vuota, (dal greco *κενός* "vuoto" e *τάφος* "tomba"), un monumento sepolcrale dal valore altamente simbolico, eretto fin dall'antichità per conservare la memoria di un defunto senza contenerne le spoglie, collocate in altro luogo o mai rinvenute. Ogni cenotafio di Favaretto è dedicato a uno degli "scomparsi", tema di una ricerca sviluppata dall'artista nel corso degli anni, che la ha portata a riunire sotto questa definizione comune un gruppo di venti personaggi noti che hanno fatto perdere le proprie tracce, scomparendo in senso reale o metaforico dalla vita pubblica. Spinti dalla volontà di fuggire, di compiere un'impresa eccezionale, di inseguire i propri sogni o le proprie ambizioni, talvolta non facendo mai più ritorno, essi si sono sottratti alla loro identità delineata e riconosciuta dalla società, cedendo a un impulso sferzante che ha deviato in maniera irreversibile il corso della loro vita. Le storie dei venti personaggi sono state raccolte e documentate nel libro d'artista *I Momentary Monument. The Swamp*, (Archive Books, Berlino, 2010).

Innalzati in loro memoria, i cenotafi di *Good Luck* sono concepiti come volumi scultorei, diversi nella forma e nella dimensione, composti dalla combinazione di superfici in legno, ottone e terra. Prive di targhe o di iscrizioni che permettano l'identificazione del dedicatario, le sculture rispettano la condizione di anonimato scelta dagli scomparsi. Ogni elemento decorativo e commemorativo è assorbito nel silenzio delle volumetrie essenziali,

formate di volta in volta da un diverso equilibrio tra le materie impiegate e le loro relative qualità: la solidità e il calore del legno, i riflessi luminosi della sottile lastra di ottone, la terra scura, umida e informe. Nascoste nei volumi, o poste accanto ad essi, sempre immerse o a contatto con la terra, vi sono scatole di metallo, che custodiscono alcuni oggetti appartenuti o dedicati agli scomparsi. Esse sostituiscono idealmente le loro spoglie e costituiscono il fulcro dei cenotafi; chiuse ermeticamente e saldate, impossibili da aprire, le scatole continuano l'atto di sottrazione cominciato dagli scomparsi, trasmettendone il senso di mistero.

Riuniti a Roma in occasione di *Good Luck*, i cenotafi sono pensati per essere dispersi e conservati separatamente. La loro finale dislocazione disegnerà una nuova mappatura, ideale e utopica, dei luoghi destinati alla memoria degli scomparsi. La nuova cartografia, sciolta da qualsiasi legame di tipo geografico con la provenienza dei personaggi, sarà tracciata secondo coordinate emotive, determinate da coloro che vorranno custodirne il ricordo. Due volumi assenti dalla mostra – dedicati a Federico Caffè e Grant Thomas Hadwin – hanno già trovato la loro definitiva sistemazione. Rimarcando il significato e la funzione dei cenotafi, le sculture di Favaretto intendono accogliere e tramandare il ricordo delle persone a cui sono dedicati, per offrire loro una degna memoria ma, a differenza dei loro consueti intenti monumentali e celebrativi, esse sono disadorne e costituite da elementi naturali, come legno e terra, che subiscono l'azione del tempo.

Favaretto ha realizzato una serie di installazioni temporanee intitolate *Momentary Monument*, due termini in contraddizione che definiscono alcuni monumenti destinati presto a scomparire,

venendo meno alla loro natura di tramandare la memoria di un evento o un personaggio alla posterità. Queste installazioni condensano in un tempo e in uno spazio circoscritti la loro capacità di produrre memoria e significati, non in maniera definitiva, ma sollevando domande e perplessità, grazie alla loro natura transitoria.

La prima opera della serie è *The Swamp*, una palude artificiale, attraversata dal riverbero di una lama di ottone, creata nel giardino esterno dell'Arsenale alla 53a Biennale di Venezia nel 2009 e primo lavoro dedicato al tema degli scomparsi. La palude, con il suo terreno instabile e insondabile, è un nascondiglio ideale, un luogo che agisce per sottrazione, un cimitero anonimo e sommerso. Alla mitezza della sua superficie si contrappone un processo di trasformazione sempre attivo nelle profondità, che alimenta il terreno, rendendolo fertile. La palude scavata dall'artista è un deposito che segretamente accoglie alcuni oggetti e documenti, tracce degli scomparsi, provenienti dall'archivio dell'artista. L'unico oggetto che le sopravvive è la lama d'ottone, su cui è tuttora in corso un processo di ossidazione dovuto alla sua presenza nella palude e di cui ne serba il ricordo, caricandosi del valore di una reliquia. Quello di Favaretto è un lavoro stratificato, che attinge al vastissimo archivio di immagini e materiali raccolto negli anni intorno al soggetto degli "scomparsi" e che funziona da serbatoio, alimentando una riflessione che si esprime in epifanie diverse, dalla palude ai cenotafi.

Lo spazio metafisico, sospeso e senza nomi di *Good Luck* suggerisce un confronto con tematiche attuali e comuni. Esiste un diritto all'anonimato, a cambiare vita? È possibile oggi, nell'era digitale, sparire senza lasciare tracce?



ARTHUR CRAVAN

Excerpts from 'Colossus,' by Mina Loy

Even before Colossus arrived in America the legends surrounding him were so extravagant that the very idea of encountering him frightened me. From all accounts - he was amateur boxing champion of France - he would assault a building if it stood in his way. I would have preferred to forego the almost imperative ritual of meeting him, but 'haven't you met the prizefighter who writes poetry?' assailed me on all sides. In a certain circle, it was becoming 'the thing' to make his acquaintance, and my dislike of knowing less of what is going on than my friends spurred my ambition. I had first seen his portrait in an art review in which a certain sleekness of feature gave him the air of a homosexual, and this, for the time, stripped him of all mystery for me. There is nothing mysterious about a homosexual, for a woman. Man's intrigue for a woman lies in his perplexuous relationship to herself. This is a mind which would snub mine. I surmised, as I studied the portrait. 'It deals in values of luxury.' His clothes, his surroundings, looked expensive. A couple of Siamese cats lay among his negligent hands. But when I first saw him standing, stubbornly it seemed, beside Arensburg, he looked dull and square in merely respectable tweeds; not at all handsome, but not handsome - more like a farmer, a husband. I felt no premonition of the psychological infinity he would later offer my indiscreet curiosity as to the mechanism of man.

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MINA LOY BECAME A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST DURING THIS TIME THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST WAS FOUNDED IN 1879 IN BOSTON BY MARY BAKER EBBY. SHE TEACHES THAT THE 'REALNESS' OF GOD DENIES THE REALITY OF SIN, SICKNESS, DEATH, AND THE MATERIAL WORLD. ACCOUNTS OF HEALING THROUGH PRAYER ARE COMMON WITHIN THE CHURCH AND ADHERENTS TRADITIONALLY REFUSE MEDICAL TREATMENT.



failed to see, in fact to be ahead of his time if not in the field of research and achievement at least in that insight, vision, prophecy.

So why shouldn't a physicist of genius who, fifteen years later, found himself confronted with the potential (if not yet acknowledged) discovery of nuclear fission have been able to realize that the match existed and - since he lacked common sense - have turned away from it in dismay and terror? It's now common knowledge that in 1934 Fermi and his colleagues achieved, without realizing it, the fission of uranium nucleus. Ida Nodack had some inkling of it. But neither Fermi nor any other physicist took her suspicion seriously until four years later, at the end of 1938. Ettore Majorana may well have taken it seriously, have perceived what the physicists of the Institute of Rome were unable to perceive. Especially since Segré refers to their 'blindness.' 'The reason for our blindness are incomprehensible even today.' And sees it as 'accidental' since this blindness deprived Hitler and Mussolini of the atom bomb.

HYPOTHESES ON ETTORRE MAJORANA'S DEPARTURE:  
- SUICIDE  
- VOLUNTARILY WITHDRAWN INTO A MONASTERY  
- KIDNAP BY FOREIGN POWERS  
- HE EXPATRIATED HIMSELF VOLUNTARILY TO GERMANY TO WORK WITH NAZI SCIENTISTS

I'VE MADE A DECISION THAT WAS INEVITABLE. THERE'S NOT A SINGLE SPEAK OF SELFISHNESS IN IT, BUT I DO REALIZE THAT MY SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE WILL CAUSE SOME INCONVENIENT CONCERN TO YOU AND MY STUDENT.

Ho preso una decisione che era ormai inevitabile. Non c'è in essa un solo granello di egoismo, ma mi rendo conto delle ansie che la mia scomparsa o scomparsa potrà provocare a te e agli studenti. Anche per questo è purgo di ponderazioni una speranza tutta per non ottenere. L'atto di fissioni, la scienza nucleare e la scomparsa di un bambino dimostrabile in questi anni. E purgo anche di ricordarmi a coloro che lo vedevano a cominciare e ad apprezzare con lui. Inoltre, particolarmente a te, di quel che nessuno un caro ricordo almeno fino alla morte di questo raro e provvidenziale anche dopo.

E. Majorana  
I SHALL PRESERVE A FOND MEMORY AT LEAST UNTIL EVENING OR LONK THIS EVENING AND PERHAPS BEYOND

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'Homage to Albert Dadas', 2010  
Vista d'installazione/Installation view at 'Just Knocked Out', Sharjah Art Foundation,  
Sharjah (U.A.E.), 2012. Courtesy l'artista/the artist e/and Galleria Franco Noero, Torino  
Photo: Alfred Rubio



## Lara Favaretto Good Luck

*Good Luck*, a project commissioned by MAXXI, presents eighteen of the twenty cenotaphs created by Lara Favaretto since 2010, bringing them together for the first time, in Gallery 4.

A cenotaph is an empty tomb (from the Greek words *κενός* “empty” and *τάφος* “tomb”), a funerary monument of highly symbolic value. They have been erected since antiquity to preserve the memory of the deceased, without containing their mortal remains, which may be lost or in some other place. Each one of Favaretto’s cenotaphs is dedicated to a person who has disappeared. This is a theme she has developed in her art over the years, leading to her use of the term “disappeared” to refer to a group of twenty famous people of whom all trace has been lost, with them either literally or metaphorically disappearing from public life. Driven by the desire to escape, to perform some exceptional feat or to pursue their dreams or ambitions, and at times never returning, they have eluded the identity given to them and recognised by society, giving in to an overpowering impulse that has irreversibly changed the course of their lives. The stories of twenty personalities have been collected and documented in the artist’s book entitled *Momentary Monument. The Swamp*, (Archive Books, Berlin, 2010).

Erected in their memory, the cenotaphs we see in *Good Luck* are in the form of sculptural volumes of different shapes and sizes, consisting of a combination of surfaces in wood, brass and earth. With no plaques or inscriptions to identify the dedicatees, the sculptures respect the anonymity chosen by those who have disappeared. All decorative and commemorative elements are absorbed

into the silence of the simple volumes, each shaped by the different balance and quality of the materials used: the solidity and warmth of wood, the bright reflections of the thin sheet of brass, the dark, damp and shapeless earth. Hidden within these volumes, or placed next to them, buried or in contact with the earth, there are metal boxes that contain a number of objects that belonged, or are dedicated, to the disappeared. Conceptually, these take the place of their remains and constitute the core of the cenotaphs. Hermetically sealed and impossible to open, the boxes continue the act of subtraction that was started by the disappeared, conveying a sense of mystery.

Brought together in Rome for the *Good Luck* exhibition, the cenotaphs are made to be dispersed and preserved separately. Their final locations will draw a new, ideal, utopian map of places destined to the memory of the deceased. Stripped of any geographical connection with the provenance of the deceased, a new map will be traced out along emotive coordinates, given by those who wish to preserve their memory. Two cenotaphs not on display—dedicated to Federico Caffè and Grant Thomas Hadwin—have already found their definitive resting places. Pointing to the significance and function of cenotaphs, Favaretto’s sculptures aim to take in and hand down the memory of those to whom they are dedicated. This will offer them a proper memorial but, going against their usual monumental, celebratory function, the cenotaphs are unadorned and made of natural elements such as earth and wood, and thus subject to the effects of time.

Favaretto has created a series of temporary installations called *Momentary Monument*—two contradictory terms that refer to monuments that are soon destined to disappear, thus failing to act

as a means for preserving for posterity the memory of a person or an event. In both time and space, these installations compress their ability to produce memory and meaning, not in some definitive manner but rather by raising questions and perplexities by means of their ephemeral nature.

The first work in the series is *The Swamp*, an artificial swamp crossed by the reverberation of a brass blade. Created in the outdoor garden of the Arsenale at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, this was the first work devoted to the theme of the disappeared. With its shifting, unfathomable ground, the swamp makes for an ideal hiding place – a place that works through subtraction, as an anonymous, submerged cemetery. The docility of its surface is counteracted by a constantly active process of transformation in depth, nourishing the ground and making it fertile. The swamp dug by the artist is a deposit that secretly takes in objects and documents, as well as traces of the disappeared from the artist's archive. The only object to survive is the brass blade, which is still subject to a process of oxidation due to its presence in the swamp, of which it preserves a memory, acquiring the value of a relic. Favaretto's work is one of stratification, drawing on the vast archive of images and materials that she has built up over the years on the theme of the "disappeared", forming a reservoir that feeds ideas expressed in different epiphanies, from swamp to cenotaphs.

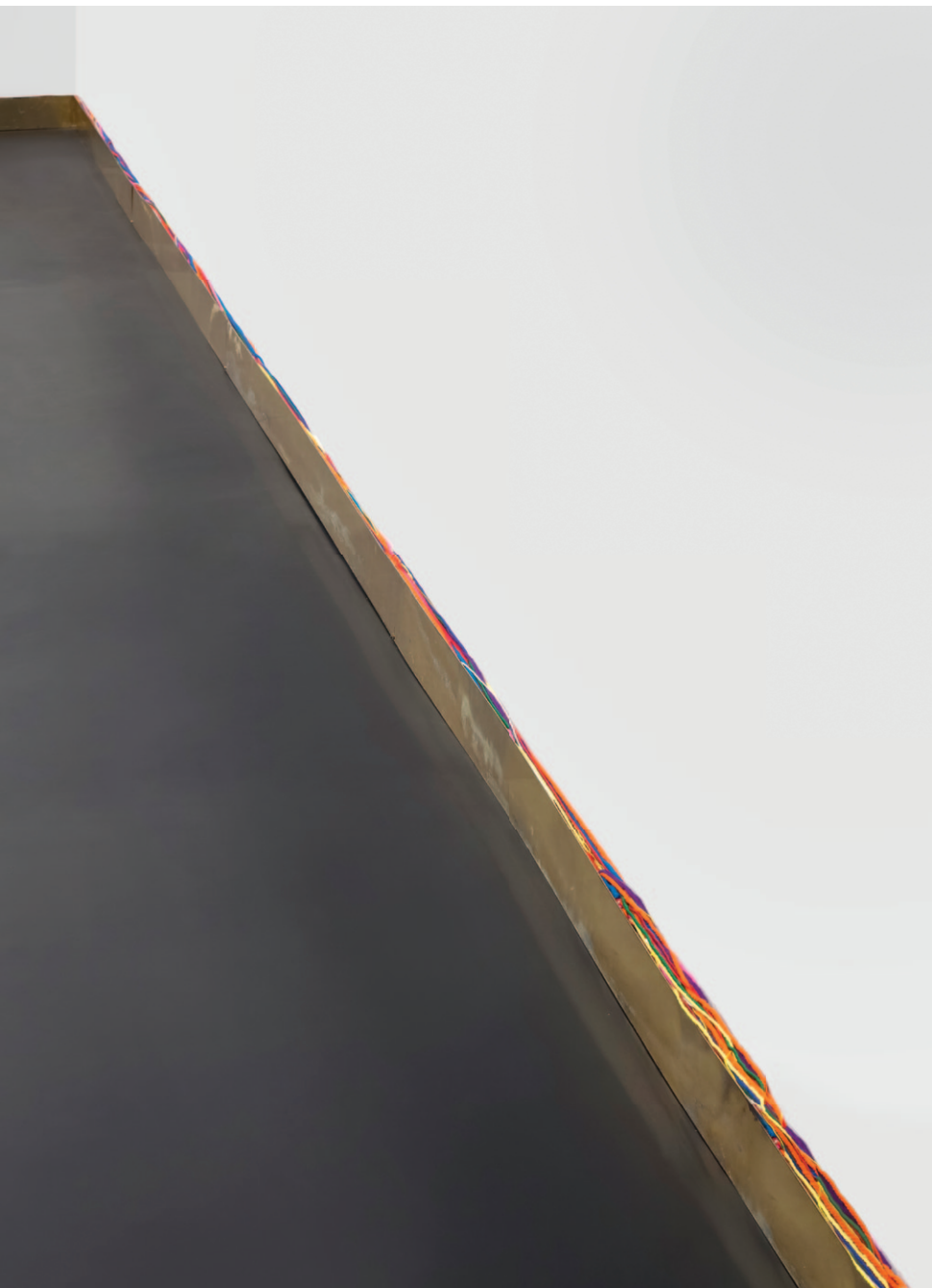
The suspended and nameless metaphysical space in *Good Luck* suggests a dialogue with everyday topical issues. Is there such a thing as the right to anonymity, to change one's life? Is it possible in today's digital world to disappear without leaving a trace?

Above: 'Homage to Albert Dadas', 2010  
Vista d'installazione/Installation view  
at 'Out of it', Klosterfelde, Berlin, 2010  
Courtesy l'artista/the artist e/and Galleria  
Franco Noero, Torino. Photo: Klosterfelde



Below: 'Homage to Bobby Fischer', 2010  
Vista d'installazione/Installation view  
at 'Out of it', Klosterfelde, Berlino, 2010  
Courtesy l'artista/the artist e/and Galleria  
Franco Noero, Torino. Photo: Klosterfelde





**BAS JAN ADER**  
(Winschoten,  
Olanda, 1942) è  
stato un artista  
olandese. Quando  
aveva due anni,

il padre fu ucciso dai nazisti per aver ospitato alcuni rifugiati ebrei. Frequentò per un breve periodo la Rietveld Academy e partì per il Marocco in autostop a diciannove anni. Da lì si imbarcò su uno yacht diretto negli Stati Uniti nel 1965. Lo yacht fece naufragio in California e Ader decise di rimanere a Los Angeles, dove si iscrisse allo Otis Art Institute. Gli anni '70 furono proficui per la sua produzione artistica: risalgono a questo periodo i suoi film sull'azione del "cadere". Nel 1975 si imbarcò per attraversare l'Atlantico su una piccola barca a vela, per un progetto intitolato *In Search of the Miraculous*. Sei mesi dopo fu ritrovata solo la barca al largo della costa irlandese.



**LESLIE CONWAY**  
"LESTER"  
BANGS  
(Escondido,  
California, 1948)  
è stato un critico

musicale e musicista statunitense. Nel 1969 cominciò a scrivere per diverse riviste, tra cui "Creem", "New Musical Express", "The Village Voice", "Rolling Stone", mettendo a punto un particolare stile affine al *gonzo journalism* di Hunter Thompson. Celebre per numerose interviste, fu un sostenitore della musica noise, del punk e di Lou Reed. Partecipò come musicista nel 1980 all'album *Jook Savages on the Brazos* con i Delinquents. Il 30 aprile 1982 fu trovato morto per overdose nel suo appartamento a New York, dove si era trasferito nel 1976.



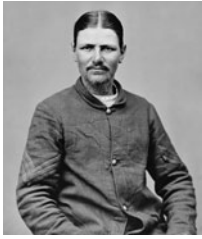
**AMBROSE GWINNETT  
BIERCE** (Horse Cave  
Creek, Ohio, 1842) è  
stato uno scrittore e  
giornalista statunitense.  
Dopo essersi arruolato  
nell'esercito, combatté  
nella guerra civile

americana; questa esperienza influenzò la sua scrittura. Dopo la guerra, Bierce si trasferì a San Francisco, dove iniziò la sua carriera di giornalista. Scrisse numerosi racconti e nel 1911 pubblicò il celebre *The Devil's Dictionary*, vocabolario satirico, in cui l'autore criticò con cinismo la società americana dell'epoca, attraverso definizioni e aforismi. La sua vita privata fu segnata dalla tragica morte di due dei suoi tre figli. Nel 1913 Bierce partì per il Sud America, dove misteriosamente scomparve.



**FEDERICO CAFFÈ**  
(Pescara, Italia, 1914)  
è stato un economista  
italiano. Inizialmente  
lavorò presso la Banca  
d'Italia, poi insegnò alle  
università di Messina e  
di Bologna e dal 1959  
fu professore ordinario

di Politica economica e finanziaria all'università di Roma. In Italia fu tra i principali promulgatori della dottrina economica keynesiana, e diffuse il suo pensiero critico e riformista attraverso numerose pubblicazioni e articoli usciti su "Il Messaggero" e "il manifesto", con cui collaborò assiduamente. Il 15 aprile 1987 Caffè scomparve dalla sua casa nel quartiere Monte Mario a Roma. Dichiarato ufficialmente morto nel 1998, la sua improvvisa scomparsa è un mistero ancora insoluto.



**THOMAS P. "BOSTON" CORBETT** (Londra, Inghilterra, 1832) è stato un soldato dell'American Union Army, celebre per aver ucciso l'assassino di Abraham

Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth. A sette anni, emigrò a New York con la famiglia, qui cominciò a lavorare come cappellaio. In seguito alla morte della moglie, si trasferì a Boston, dove si convertì al cristianesimo, si fece crescere i capelli a imitazione di Gesù e arrivò a castrarsi con un paio di forbici. All'inizio della guerra civile, si arruolò e fece parte del gruppo di soldati incaricato di catturare Booth all'indomani dell'omicidio del presidente ma, contravvenendo agli ordini, Corbett lo uccise. Dopo la guerra, compì un attentato contro "gli eretici". Fu arrestato e poi rinchiuso nell'ospedale psichiatrico di Topeka, da cui scappò nel 1888.



**ARTHUR CRAVAN** (Fabian Avenarius Lloyd, Losanna, 1887) è stato un pugile e un poeta. Dichiaratosi "cittadino di 20 paesi", durante la prima guerra mondiale viaggiò tra l'Europa

e l'America, usando anche documenti falsi. Di passaggio nelle isole Canarie, riuscì a organizzare un incontro di boxe con l'allora campione del mondo Jack Johnson per finanziarsi il viaggio negli Stati Uniti. Mito dei dadaisti e dei surrealisti, Cravan scomparve nell'oceano durante un viaggio in barca dal Messico verso l'Argentina nel 1918.



**DONALD CROWHURST** (Ghaziabad, India, 1932) è stato un imprenditore e navigatore inglese. Per far fronte ad alcuni problemi negli affari, nonostante fosse un velista dilettante, decise di partecipare alla

Golden Globe Race, regata in solitaria intorno al mondo, per cui il "Sunday Times" aveva stanziato una somma di denaro in premio. Ottenne sponsorizzazioni grazie ad alcune invenzioni tecniche con cui aveva equipaggiato la sua barca ma, appena salpato (ottobre 1968), incontrò gravi difficoltà. Segretamente abbandonò la gara, mentre continuò a comunicare false posizioni alla giuria, fingendo di compiere la circumnavigazione. Il 10 luglio fu ritrovata la sua barca abbandonata ma intatta.



**JEAN-ALBERT DADAS** (Bordeaux, Francia, 1860) era un operaio di una compagnia di gas a Bordeaux, che improvvisamente lasciò il lavoro, la famiglia e la vita quotidiana, spinto da un incontrollabile

impulso a camminare. Primo caso definito dalla medicina di allora di *dromomania*, Dadas divenne celebre per i suoi viaggi straordinari, in cui raggiunse l'Algeria, Mosca e Costantinopoli con mezzi diversi; viaggi effettuati in uno stato di incoscienza e ricordati solamente durante l'ipnosi.



**AMELIA MARY EARHART** (Atchinson, Kansas, 1897) è stata una pioniera dell'aviazione statunitense, la prima donna

ad attraversare l'Atlantico in volo in solitaria nel 1932. Nel 1936 pianificò il giro del mondo in aereo, seguendo la difficile rotta equatoriale. Dopo un primo tentativo fallito per un guasto tecnico, il monoplano bimotore "Electra" guidato da lei e Fred Noonan ripartì per l'impresa. Durante il volo, il 2 luglio 1937, l'"Electra" scomparve dalle comunicazioni radio, mentre sorvolava il Pacifico, vicino all'isola Howland.



**PERCY FAWCETT** (Torquay, Inghilterra, 1867) è stato un colonnello dell'esercito britannico e un esploratore. Nel 1886 fu mandato in spedizione dalla Royal Artillery in Ceylon (attuale Sri

Lanka), dove scoprì alcune iscrizioni su una roccia e si convinse dell'esistenza di un'antica grande città nascosta nelle foreste del Brasile, che chiamò "Z". Partito con suo figlio Jack alla ricerca della città perduta, le ultime notizie che mandò dal Brasile alla moglie risalgono a una lettera del 1925.



**ROBERT JAMES "BOBBY" FISCHER** (Chicago, Illinois, 1943) è stato più volte campione di scacchi degli Stati Uniti e del mondo, battendo nel 1972 il sovietico Boris

Spasskj in una partita considerata simbolo dello scontro tra le due superpotenze durante la guerra fredda. La sua carriera è caratterizzata da successi, alternati all'assenza dalle competizioni, come quando rifiutò di difendere il titolo mondiale nel 1975. Personalità complessa, Fischer è stato e più volte arrestato, e nel 1992 perse la cittadinanza americana per aver violato l'embargo ONU recandosi a giocare a scacchi in Jugoslavia. È morto nel 2008 a Reykjavik.



**GRANT THOMAS HADWIN** (Vancouver, Canada, 1948) è stato un ingegnere forestale canadese, impegnato nella difesa dell'ambiente, e noto per essere l'autore di un gesto assurdo:

l'abbattimento del Kiidk'yaas o Golden Spruce, un abete dorato, venerato dai nativi americani Haida del British Columbia. Il suo colore dorato dipendeva dalla mancanza dell'80% di clorofilla rispetto a un albero normale, effetto di una rara mutazione genetica. Durante una visita, Hadwin pianificò l'abbattimento dell'albero di fronte al pubblico che si era recato lì per ammirarlo, per richiamare l'attenzione e stimolare la protesta contro le compagnie del legname e contro il disboscamento. Era il 1997 e Hadwin non comparve mai di fronte alla corte che avrebbe dovuto giudicarlo.





**HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT** (Providence, Rhode Island, 1890) è stato uno scrittore, poeta e saggista statunitense, tra i maggiori autori di letteratura horror e tra i precursori del genere

fantascientifico. In seguito alla precoce scomparsa del padre, Lovecraft fu affidato alle cure della madre, delle due zie e del nonno. Costretto ad abbandonare gli studi superiori per motivi economici e di salute, visse per tanti anni isolato, dedicandosi alla scrittura. Dopo un breve matrimonio e un periodo trascorso a New York, Lovecraft tornò a Providence, dove condusse una vita in ristrettezze economiche e dove morì di cancro all'intestino nel 1937.



**ETTORE MAJORANA** (Catania, Italia, 1906) è stato un fisico italiano. A lui si devono importanti scoperte nella fisica nucleare, nella meccanica quantistica relativistica e nella teoria dei neutrini.

Trasferitosi con la famiglia a Roma nel 1912, si iscrisse alla facoltà di ingegneria, ma presto passò a studiare fisica e si laureò con Enrico Fermi. Compì un viaggio di ricerca in Germania, dove incontrò Heisenberg, e poi a Copenaghen. Al ritorno dal viaggio divenne molto schivo, fino a rifiutare la corrispondenza e diversi incarichi che gli furono offerti. Nel 1937 accettò la cattedra di professore di Fisica teorica all'Università di Napoli e l'anno successivo, durante un viaggio in mare da Palermo a Napoli, scomparve.



**BRUNO MANSER** (Basilea, Svizzera, 1954) è stato un antropologo e attivista svizzero. Dopo alcuni anni trascorsi sulle Alpi in cui si appassionò alle tradizioni locali di artigianato, medicina, e

alla speleologia, Manser decise di partire per il Borneo con lo scopo di condurre un'esistenza libera dall'uso del denaro. Visse dal 1984 al 1990 nella giungla in Malesia, catalogando flora e fauna e apprendendo la lingua e la cultura della popolazione Penan del Borneo. Manser avviò campagne di sensibilizzazione per preservare la foresta pluviale e le sue popolazioni, attirandosi le inimicizie del governo malese. Il 25 maggio del 2000 si persero le sue tracce, dopo che ebbe varcato i confini malesi, contravvenendo agli ordini.



**THOMAS RUGGLES PYNCHON JR** (Glen Cove, New York, 1937) è stato uno scrittore americano. Dopo aver cominciato la facoltà di Fisica e Ingegneria, nel 1957 lasciò gli studi per arruolarsi nella Marina

militare e, dopo il congedo, si iscrisse alla facoltà di Lettere. Esordì nel 1959 con la pubblicazione di due racconti e nel '60 si trasferì a Seattle per lavorare alla Boeing Aircraft, dove fu assunto come scrittore tecnico. Contemporaneamente redasse il suo primo romanzo, *V*, pubblicato nel 1963 e accolto subito come un cult. Ebbe una grande avversione a comparire in pubblico, non si conoscono le vicende della sua vita privata ed esistono pochissime sue fotografie, risalenti quasi tutte alla giovinezza.



**EVERETT RUESS** (Los Angeles, California, 1914) è stato un poeta, artista e scrittore statunitense. Durante i suoi primi anni di vita, la famiglia si spostò spesso negli

Stati Uniti, da Boston a Brooklyn, dal New Jersey alla California, dove poi si stabilì. A sedici anni compì il suo primo viaggio in solitaria, per poi tornare a diplomarsi e ripartire. La sua produzione artistica è strettamente legata all'esperienza del viaggio, all'esplorazione della natura. Cominciò da bambino a scrivere versi e ad annotare pensieri in un diario, ma anche a incidere, modellare la creta e a disegnare. Viaggiava su un cavallo o sul dorso di un asino, attraversando parchi naturali e deserti dell'Arizona, New Mexico, Utah e Colorado. Nel 1934 si persero le sue tracce nel deserto dello Utah.



**JEROME DAVID SALINGER** (New York, 1919 - Cornish, 2010) è stato uno scrittore americano. Figlio di Marie, di origini irlandesi e Sol, ebreo americano di origini lituane, cominciò a scrivere fin da giovane

e dal 1940 a pubblicare racconti sulle riviste "Story" e "The New Yorker". Partecipò alla Seconda guerra mondiale, occasione in cui conobbe a Parigi Hemingway. Nel 1951 uscì il celebre *Il giovane Holden*, che ottenne subito un vasto successo. Nonostante i riconoscimenti, Salinger si ritirò a vita privata, evitando di comparire in pubblico, rifiutando interviste e trasferendosi a Cornish, nel New Hampshire. Dal 1965 smise definitivamente di pubblicare. Quando Ian Hamilton cominciò a scrivere la sua biografia, Salinger intentò un'azione legale per impedirne la pubblicazione.



**NIKOLA TESLA** (Smiljan, Croazia, 1856) è stato un ingegnere elettrico, fisico e inventore di origine serba, naturalizzato statunitense. Dopo gli studi a Graz e a Praga, nel 1884 emigrò negli

Stati Uniti. Numerosi sono i suoi contributi nel campo dell'elettromagnetismo, nel sistema elettrico a corrente alternata, come all'invenzione della radio, contesa con Marconi, e del radar. Sostenuto in un primo momento da J. Pierpont Morgan, Tesla cadde in disgrazia. Morì a New York nel 1943, mentre stava progettando un'arma potentissima a energia diretta chiamata teleforce; i suoi documenti furono sequestrati dall'FBI.



**LÁSZLÓ TÓTH** (Pilisvorosyár, Ungheria, 1938) è noto per aver sfregiato la statua della Pietà di Michelangelo il 21 maggio 1972. Dal 1965 Tóth visse a Sydney, dove lavorò in

fabbrica, dal momento che il suo titolo di studio in geologia non venne riconosciuto in Australia. Dal 1967 cominciò a farsi crescere barba e capelli a imitazione di Gesù. Si recò a Roma, dove tentò di incontrare papa Paolo VI per poter essere riconosciuto come Cristo. Fu fermato in quell'occasione, ma alcuni mesi dopo si recò nella Basilica di San Pietro e colpì con quindici martellate la Pietà. Fu ricoverato in un ospedale psichiatrico fino al 1975 e poi immediatamente trasferito in Australia.

'Homage to Thomas Grant Hadwin', 2011  
Vista d'installazione/Installation view, 'Klosterfelde visits Sutton Lane', Paris, 2011  
Collezione privata/Private Collection, Miami. Photo: Nikola Krtolica



**BAS JAN ADER**  
(Winschoten, The Netherlands, 1942) was a Dutch artist. At the age of two his father was killed

by the Nazis for hosting Jewish refugees. He briefly attended the Rietveld Academy, later hitchhiking his way to Morocco at the age of nineteen. From here he boarded a yacht for the United States in 1965. When the yacht sank in California Ader decided to remain in Los Angeles, where he enrolled at the Otis Art Institute. The 1970s were very productive for his artistic work: this is the period of his film on the action of "falling". In 1975 decided to cross the Atlantic on a small sailboat, for a research project entitled *In Search of the Miraculous*. The empty boat was discovered six months later off the coast of Ireland.



**LESLIE CONWAY**  
"LESTER"  
BANGS  
(Escondido, California, USA, 1948) was an

American music critic and musician. In 1969 he began writing for various publications, including Creem, New Musical Express, The Village Voice and Rolling Stone, defining a particular style, similar to Hunter S. Thompson's gonzo journalism. Famous for a number of interviews, he was a staunch supporter of noise, punk and Lou Reed. As a musician he participated in the 1980 album Jook Savages on the Brazos with the Delinquents. On 30 April 1982 he was found dead from a drug overdose in his apartment in New York, where he had moved in 1976.



**AMBROSE GWINNETT BIERCE** (Horse Cave Creek, Ohio, USA, 1842) was an American author and journalist. After enrolling in the Army he fought in the American Civil War, an experience

that would influence his writing. After the war, Bierce moved to San Francisco where he began his journalistic career. He wrote numerous stories and in 1911 published his famous *The Devil's Dictionary*, a satirical dictionary in which he cynically criticised contemporary American society using definitions and aphorisms. His private life was marked by the tragic death of two of his three sons. In 1913 Bierce left for South America, where he mysteriously disappeared.



**FEDERICO CAFFÈ**  
(Pescara, Italy, 1914) was an Italian economist. He initially worked for the Banca d'Italia and later taught at the Universities of Messina and Bologna. After 1959 he was a

full professor in Political Economics and Finance at the University of Rome. He was one of Italy's leading promulgators of the doctrine of Keynesian economics. His critical and reformist ideas were presented in numerous publications and articles in *Il Messaggero* and *il manifesto*, with whom he assiduously collaborated. On 15 April 1987 he disappeared from his home in the Monte Mario neighbourhood of Rome. Officially declared deceased in 1998, his sudden disappearance remains an unresolved mystery.



**THOMAS P. "BOSTON" CORBETT** (London, United Kingdom, 1832) was a soldier in the American Union Army, famous for having killed

Abraham Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth. At the age of seven Corbett emigrated to New York with his family, where he worked as a hatter. Following his wife's death, he moved to Boston where he converted to Christianity, grew his hair in imitation of Jesus and actually castrated himself with a pair of scissors. At the beginning of the Civil War he enrolled with a group of soldiers tasked with capturing Booth the day after the President's assassination however, contrary to orders, Corbett killed him. After the war, he was involved in an attack against "the heretics". He was arrested and sent to the Topeka Psychiatric Hospital, from which he escaped in 1888.



**ARTHUR CRAVAN** (Fabian Avenarius Lloyd, Lausanne, Switzerland, 1887) was a boxer and a poet. A self-declared "citizen of 20 countries", during the First World War he travelled between

Europe and America using false papers. While passing through the Canary Islands he organised a boxing match with then world champion Jack Johnson to finance his trip to the United States. A mythical figure for the Dadaists and Surrealists, Cravan disappeared at sea during a boat trip from Mexico to Argentina in 1918.



**DONALD CROWHURST** (Ghaziabad, India, 1932) was an English entrepreneur and navigator. To deal with business problems, and despite not being a seasoned sailor, he

decided to participate in the Golden Globe Race, a single-handed, round-the-world yacht race, for which the Sunday Times offered a cash prize. A number of the technical innovations made to his yacht gained him sponsors but, soon after beginning the race (October 1968) he ran into serious difficulties. He secretly abandoned the race, while continuing to communicate false positions to the jury, pretending to continue navigating. On 10 July his boat was discovered, intact though abandoned.



**JEAN-ALBERT DADAS** (Bordeaux, France, 1860) worked for a gas company in Bordeaux. One day he simply left his job, his family, his everyday life, driven by an uncontrollable urge to

wander. The first medically certified case of dromomania, Dadas became famous for his extraordinary trips, arriving as far as Algeria, Moscow and Constantinople by various means; trips made in a state of unconsciousness and recalled only under hypnosis.



**AMELIA MARY EARHART** (Atchison, Kansas, USA, 1897) was a pioneering figure in American aviation and the first woman to cross

the Atlantic on a solo flight in 1932. In 1936 she planned to fly around the world, travelling along the treacherous equatorial route. After an attempt that failed due to technical problems, the Electra twin engine monoplane flown by Earhart and Fred Noonan once again took to the skies. On 2 July 1937 radio communications with the Electra were lost over the Pacific near Howland Island.



**PERCY FAWCETT** (Torquay, United Kingdom, 1867) was a colonel with the British Army and an explorer. In 1886 he was sent on an expedition with the Royal Artillery to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where

he discovered a set of inscriptions on a rock that convinced him of the existence of a great ancient city hidden in the forests of Brazil, which he called "Z". He left with his son Jack in search of this lost city and was last heard of in a letter to his wife from Brazil dated 1925.



**ROBERT JAMES "BOBBY" FISCHER** (Chicago, USA, 1943) was an American world chess champion who successfully defeated the Russian Boris Spassky in

1972 in a game considered the symbol of the battle between the two superpowers during the Cold War. His career was characterised by successes and periods of absence, such as his famous refusal to defend his world title in 1975. A complex personality, Fischer was arrested more than once. In 1992 he lost his American citizenship for violating the UN embargo by travelling to the former Yugoslavia for a chess match. He died in 2008 in Reykjavik.



**GRANT THOMAS HADWIN** (Vancouver, Canada, 1948) was a Canadian forest engineer, actively involved in defending the natural environment and famous for an absurd gesture: felling

the Kiidk'yaas or Golden Spruce, a Stika Spruce tree venerated by the Native American Haida of British Columbia. The colour of the tree depended on an 80% shortage of chlorophyll with respect to a normal tree caused by a rare genetic mutation. During a visit, Hadwin planned to cut the tree down in front of an audience that had gathered to admire it, to draw attention and stimulate protest against logging companies and clear cutting practices. This was in 1997 and Hadwin never appeared before the court that was to judge him.



**HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT** (Providence, Rhode Island, USA, 1890) was an American writer, poet and essayist, among the leading authors of horror stories and one of the precursors to

the genre of science fiction. Following the precocious death of his father, Lovecraft was entrusted to the care of his mother, two aunts and his grandfather. Forced to abandon his studies for economic and health reasons, he lived for many years in isolation, dedicating himself to writing. After a short-lived marriage and a period in New York, Lovecraft returned to Providence, where he led a destitute life, dying of intestinal cancer in 1937.



**ETTORE MAJORANA** (Catania, Italy, 1906) was an Italian physician. He was responsible for important discoveries in nuclear physics, quantum mechanics and the theory of neutrino masses.

After moving to Rome with his family in 1912, he enrolled at the faculty of engineering, though he soon switched to physics, graduating with Enrico Fermi. For research he travelled initially to Germany, where he met Heisenberg, and later to Copenhagen. Upon his return he became very reserved, to the point of refusing any correspondence and a number of commissions. In 1937 he accepted a position as professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of Naples. Majorana disappeared the following year during a sea voyage from Palermo to Naples.



**BRUNO MANSER** (Basel, Switzerland, 1954) was a Swiss anthropologist and environmental activist. After a number of years living in the Alps, where he fell in love with local traditions of

craft, medicine and speleology, Manser decided to leave for Borneo with the intent of living a money-free life. From 1984 to 1990 he lived in the Malaysian jungle, cataloguing flora and fauna and learning the language and culture of the Penan people of Borneo. Manser began a series of campaigns to raise awareness about the preservation of the rain forest and its peoples, making an enemy of the Malaysian government. On 25 May 2000 all trace of Manser was lost after he crossed the Malaysian border, against orders.



**THOMAS RUGGLES PYNCHON JR** (Glen Cove, New York, USA, 1937) was an American author. After beginning his studies at the Faculty of Physics and Engineering, in 1957 he left school to

enrol in the Navy. After being discharged he enrolled in the Faculty of Letters. He debuted in 1959 with the publication of two stories and in 1960 he moved to Seattle to work for Boeing Aircraft, where he was assumed as a technical writer. At the same time, he completed his first novel, *V*, which was published in 1963 and immediately achieved cult status. He was highly adverse to appearing in public, no details are available about his private life and only a few rare photographs exist, almost all from his youth.



**EVERETT RUESS** (Los Angeles, California, USA, 1914) was an American poet, artist and author. During his early years, his family moved often around the United States,

from Boston to Brooklyn, from New Jersey to California, where they settled. He completed his first solo journey at the age of sixteen, returning only to earn his diploma and depart once again. His art is strictly linked to the experiences of his travels, and the exploration of nature. He began writing verse as a child, recording his thoughts in a diary, as well as making etchings, modelling clay and drawing. He travelled by horse or pack mule, crossing the natural parks and deserts of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. In 1934 he disappeared in the Utah desert.



**JEROME DAVID SALINGER** (New York, USA, 1919 – Cornish, United Kingdom, 2010) was an American author. The son of Marie, of Irish origins, and Sol, an American Jew of Lithuanian origins, he

began writing at a very young age and by 1940 he was publishing stories in the magazines *Story* and *The New Yorker*. He fought in the Second World War, which led to a meeting with Hemingway in Paris. In 1951 he published his famous *The Catcher in the Rye*, which immediately met with vast success. Despite many recognitions, Salinger withdrew from public life, avoiding any public appearances, refusing interviews and moving to Cornish, New Hampshire. He stopped publishing altogether in 1965. When Ian Hamilton began writing his biography, Salinger filed a law suit to block its publication.



**NIKOLA TESLA** (Smiljan, Croatia, 1856) was an electrical engineer, physicist and inventor of Serbian origins, and a naturalised American. After studying in Graz and Prague, in 1884

he emigrated to the United States. He was responsible for many contributions in the field of electromagnetism and alternating current, including the invention of the radio, contested with Marconi, and radar. Initially supported by J. Pierpont Morgan, Tesla later fell out of favour. He died in New York in 1943 while planning a direct energy super weapon known as teleforce; his documents were sequestered by the FBI.



**LÁSZLÓ TÓTH** (Pilisvorosyár, Hungary, 1938) became famous for his attack on Michelangelo's Pietà statue on 21 May 1972. Tóth had lived

in Sydney since 1965, where he was forced to work in a factory due to the fact that his Hungarian geology diploma was not recognised in Australia. After 1967 he began growing his beard and hair to resemble Jesus. He travelled to Rome where he attempted to meet with Pope Paul VI and seek recognition as the living incarnation of Christ. He was stopped, though a few months later he visited St. Peter's Basilica, striking the Pietà fifteen times with a hammer. He was held in a psychiatric hospital until 1975 and then transferred directly back to Australia.

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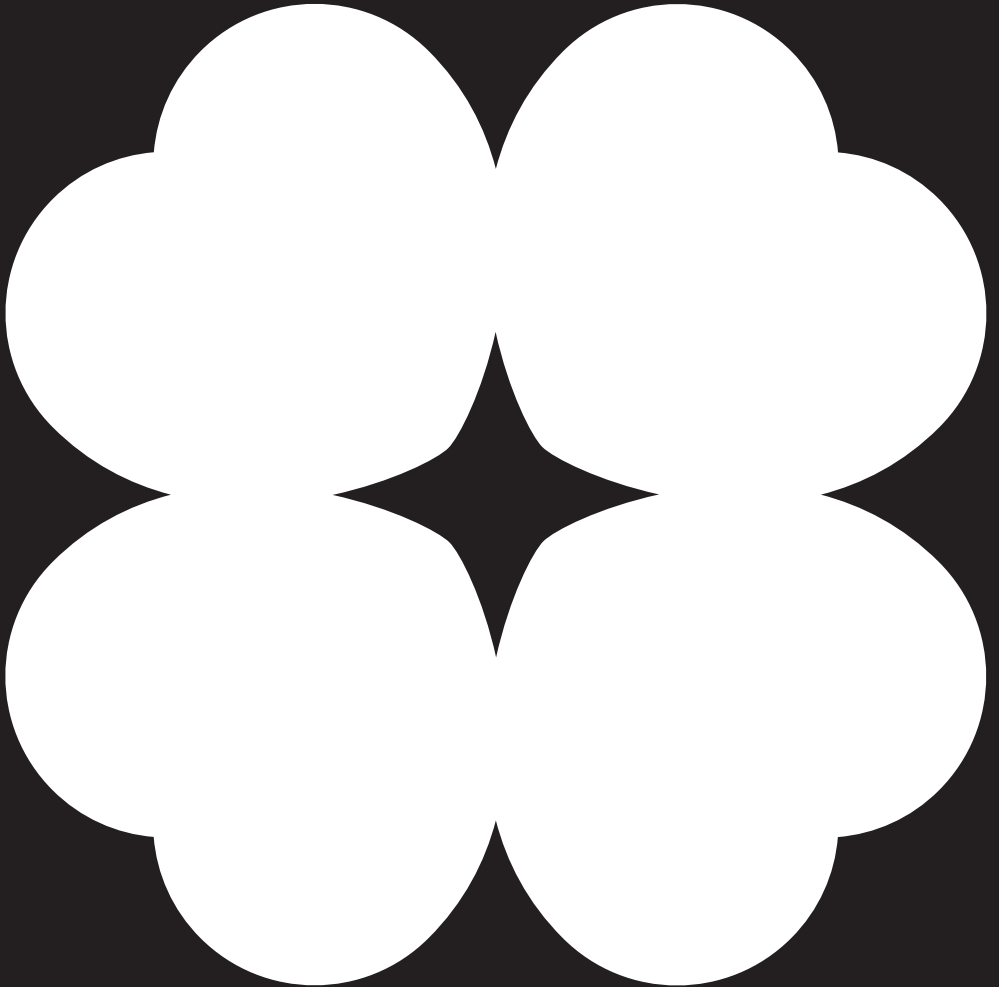
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## Lara Favaretto Back to the future #38

Elena Bordignon

22 November 2013



Lara Favaretto, *Project for a Utopia*, 2001. Courtesy: Lara Favaretto.

*In response to great demand, we have decided to publish on our site the long and extraordinary interviews that appeared in the print magazine from 2009 to 2011. Forty gripping conversations with the protagonists of contemporary art, design and architecture. Once a week, an appointment not to be missed. A real treat. Today it's Lara Favaretto's turn.*

*Klat #02, spring 2010.*

I have the feeling that many important parts of my conversation with Lara Favaretto, in the text below, have been left out. The interview took place in phases,

with continuous modifications, revisions, erasures, rewrites. I had the vivid sensation of finding myself inside a process of gestation of a work, but without the work. Now the interview is done, but the reflections made when the recorder was off, between one question and the next, have been lost. They remain closed up there, hermetically sealed in her work. The artist mentions one in particular, which helps me to visualize my feeling of loss, *Lost & Found*, a series of suitcases she fills with objects and then closes with a lock. She did this in 1997, and then threw away the key. Problematic, profound and acute, Lara Favaretto doesn't tolerate compromises in her work. She never chooses the easiest way to capture the unexpected, the unpredictable, at times the impossible. We talked a lot about failure, not as defeat but as a process that reveals the aesthetic fetish that lurks behind the artwork: an obscure object, simultaneously sanctified and hidden. She did laugh now and then, but not as often as I had imagined, before starting our conversation. One last question has been removed from the text, as it remained without an answer. Will laughter bury us? Which is a quote from one of her works, *E una risata vi seppellirà (Omaggio a Gino De Dominicis)*, from 2005. Lara preferred to end our conversation by talking about dignity, asking me: «Why, do you think we should talk about something else?».

**You have almost ten years of work behind you now. From the early works, like *Matrice#1/#2/#3*, *Contorni* or *Curva*, all in 1997, to the large installation *Momentary Monument (Swamp)* at the latest Venice Biennial.**

Ten years and more, probably to ask myself the same things. In 1995, in London, I spent lots of time throwing a yellow eraser at a white wall: a few hours a day, filming it all. I kept only ten minutes of that footage, without editing. I remember that I was in a rotten mood in that period, more than now, also because there was always too much and it always seemed like just a little.

**What was the title of that work?**

*Structure*. It's my first work and it resembles many others that came later, like *Unità strutturale*, in 1997, an idea based on the construction of a load-bearing wall with mobile parts. But I'm also thinking of the small architectural models designed to be mental spaces, almost "pocket-size", that reflected the desire to reduce reality to the bare basics. I'm thinking of the photograph of a white space, where the objects can be recognized only by their shadows. All works conceived by subtraction. *Una vale l'altra* (One's as good as another), in 1999, is the title I gave to a series of photographs taken at the rehearsals of a chorus, during their exercises. Every shot was good.

**Were you already finding the working method you have conserved, even today?**



I believe method is something you set at the beginning and then you let it evolve, naturally. Over time, I have learned to record and file away raw images and perceptions, in an automatic way, to read details in a state of immobility, with a spellbound, imperturbable gaze.

**What do you mean, exactly, by a spellbound gaze?**

It's not the glassy eye, but a type of concentration, a detachment from things. It is a condition that shortens time, a state of absence that can be interrupted in the blink of an eye. A bit like what happens in one second and a half in *Too Fast*, 2006: a video made by speeding up, as fast as is technically possible, another looped video, *La terra è troppo grande*, shown at the Venice Biennial in 2005.



Lara Favaretto, *Momentary Monument (Swamp)*, 2009. Making Worlds/Fare Mondi, 53. Biennale di Venezia. Courtesy: Lara Favaretto, Galleria Franco Noero, Torino.

**Concentration, detachment, absence. How does the work take form, how does it come into being?**

A state of concentration is a condition of investigation, and it permits you to visualize a project, not to make it. I laugh when I think back on the advice a friend gave me during the preparation of *Momentary Monument (Swamp)*, at the latest Venice Biennial. She said I should spend some time in a wellness center, getting

mud treatments, combining business and pleasure. She was kidding, of course, but the miracle often happens when you're utterly distracted. The fulfillment of a work is a process that alternates anxiety, linear developments and changes of direction. At the end of the process, when you have reached a conclusion, the various discarded possibilities come back to mind. And everything starts again with a new project, in pursuit of old and new impressions, in a new work space, with new helpers. I share the whole project with my team, often rethinking my initial idea. I don't have a studio or a place for trying things out and making them. I just have my archives.

### **How is this process inserted in the preparation for a show?**

There isn't a work made for a show, but an old project that gets reconsidered for a specific space. Thinking up a project means giving form to an apparition, and often everything arises from a suggestion conserved in the archives, that is transformed into a stop-action, a frame of an imaginary film. The completion of a work does not depend on time, it is naturally linked to a space, a context. The space and the work, in many cases, are hard to distinguish from each other. For some time now I have wondered about how to make a show without making it. But that wasn't one of your questions...

### **How can you make a show without making it?**

This is one of the four questions I wrote on a wall for the exhibition in 2008: *Why another Show? Why another Space? Why another Magazine? Why another Work?* Maybe an unmade show is what stages a space of perplexity, but I don't know... *Momentary Monument*, the installation I did in Trent in 2009, was partially this, too. If I knew how to make a show without making it, I would already have produced it, years ago: it's one of those things I would have liked to do since the start of my career. I remember that when I lived in Milan I began to work on this, with my concierge.

### **Is it possible for an artist to talk about a work without producing it?**

A work always has to be produced, even if this means subtracting, removing. Completing a work, for me, is like squelching a possibility, invalidating a presence: a bit like when no one notices you are there and you are actually there. I prefer to talk about the motives that make an image disappear, about how the image is vandalized. I like to shift from perfection to the fall, to push the work to its tipping point, its limit, to endanger it, to the point of making it yield, jam, collapse. An irregularity is amplified until it generates a state of crisis, of impotence. Like a passage from hypermodernity to a primitive state.

**When did you realize that your work was moving in this direction? Was there one work that indicated this path to you?**

Your question isn't clear to me. I do work that permits me to design a single large image, which is gradually constructed, like a sort of atlas. Everything has to interlock and coincide, but above all nothing should be repeated. Take the performance done in 1998, *Doing*, and the *Momentary Monument* made in Bergamo last year: they have a similar process, the same attitude. While the first involved the pulverizing of three blocks of marble, the second was the construction, in Indian granite, of a public money box that was then destroyed in February 2010.



Lara Favaretto, *È così se mi interessa*, 2006. Collezione MAXXI, Roma. Photo: Paolo Pellion di Persano.

**Are there other works of yours that reach the state of impotence you mentioned?**

This aspect is found in most of my works. I construct a paradox that combines cynicism, as a form of weakness, with compassion, as an emotional investigation. The fate of my works makes them like guinea-pigs. There are two works in which this relationship is most evident: *È così se m'interessa* and *Cominciò ch'era finita*, both in 2006. In the first a hemp rope with one part covered with black leather was hung from the ceiling and shaken by a mechanical arm with a motor. The second was the reconstruction of a merry-go-round disguised as military equipment: the

disguise was done with 32 German military tents, sewn together. These are both menacing devices that rotate and hit the surfaces around them, getting marred, deteriorating, ripping, and this wear and tear reveals the hidden aesthetic fetish, slowly, over time.



Lara Favaretto, *Plotone*, 2005-2008. Courtesy: Lara Favaretto, Galleria Franco Noero, Torino. Photo: Jenni Carter.

**In *Plotone* (2005/2008) I can also see this tension between opposites: an array of unarmed but rigidly undaunted soldiers who seem to simply await their demise, from exhaustion. Simultaneously pathetic and disturbing.**

When I was invited to install *Plotone* I asked them to rent nitrogen canisters, specifying only the measurements. The protagonist is a platoon, a “solid form” that seems to state its defeat and reveals its helplessness if it is attacked. It is a formation of canisters, made using functional containers that require no care. Their deterioration is spontaneous, not induced. A squad of immobile soldiers, in obligatory stillness. A stillness that is interrupted by the sound of the pressure of the air that passes through the individual whistles, in a random rhythm set with timers and valves.

**Does it make you angry when certain works, like *I poveri sono matti* (2005/2008) or *Confetti Canyon* (2005), for example, are considered fun and humorous?**

I like it if a work lends itself to various interpretations. Some people think *Plotone* is a funny work, I would add funny game. When they say that something is cheerful, or fun, I prefer to respond with something gloomy. It's awkward, like when people ask me if I'm happy. The two works you mention are both performances, with one difference: *I poveri sono matti* is a project that vanishes after a few days, while *Confetti Canyon* lasts only a few hours. The caravan and the cannon, protagonists of the two apparitions, vanish and go back into storage: a gypsy camp, for the former, and a museum for the latter. This is also what happened in *Treat or Trick*, a work I did after my trip to Cuba, where I shot a film with Sandra Milo during the Carnival of Santiago. It is a performance designed as a parade composed of fourteen masks in papier-mâché, worn and paraded through the city, without any previous announcement of the event. The parade is often misunderstood. At the end of the performance, the masks are deposited in the museum space, waiting for another trip through the streets, or a last appearance before they are finally burned. Because, as always, when a party is over everything has to start over, from the beginning.

**Another work, less well known, began when you were doing *Treat or Trick: Bulk*, in 2002. Two works that are very interconnected but very different.**

I can tell you that I still have trouble talking about *Bulk*, not so much where the formal aspect is concerned, but regarding the process. *Bulk* is an installation composed of 28 anonymous plaster forms, in pairs, held together by plastic packing belts. It is a work I made without realizing it: I saw the forms used to create the masks of *Treat or Trick* and the idea came to me. *Bulk* was constructed in two and a half months, inside a hangar, with the help of thirty male volunteers. The work consisted in making plaster casts starting with the original forms, modeled in actual size with clay. An intermediate, functional phase that made it possible to obtain a negative and to clone, at least two more times, the work *Treat or Trick*. The production, done without any attention to details, aesthetics or the choice of the material, happened using any piece of newspaper or wood that came to hand.



Lara Favaretto, *Bulk*, 2002. Courtesy: Lara Favaretto, Galleria Franco Noero, Torino. Photo: Ela Bialkowska.

**You mentioned making a film. What was that experience like, and what did it leave you with? In an earlier conversation you told me that your real passion is not art but cinema.**

Cinema is an apparition, it's an experience that keeps the imagination at a high level, how could I help but like it! I do film-watching marathons. I make every installation as if I were in a film, I conceive of it as the architecture of a vision. To get back to your question: I made a film in 2001 and I do not plan to do it again under those conditions. My decision to make a feature-length film came after I met Berardo Carboni. We immediately got into an intense discussion of sequences, almost a storyboard. Then a sort of screenplay took form, a light form that might remind you of *Permanent Vacation* by Jim Jarmusch. We imagined a story about the disappearance of an icon: Berardo thought about Alvaro Vitali, I thought of Giulio Andreotti, but in the end we decided on Sandra Milo! The story met with approval, though I often wondered if the producer knew anything about cinema or if he was just nuts. Berardo was just getting started, he had only made two shorts,

and I had no on-set experience. It was really a case of full immersion. In a short time, we wrote the treatment, talked things over with the producer, put together a troupe and shot the film. During the shooting our approach may have been awkward, amateurish, but I still felt comfortable because the film was organized, at least half of it, with a structure similar to that of my video *Sollevarlo non vuol dire volarlo*, in 1999, namely with plenty of improv. I forgot to tell you the title... *Buco nell'acqua* (laughter; the title means “fiasco”, ed.). It’s a long story. When the film was done, the editing was deemed unsuitable for television, by the prospective purchaser. So *Buco nell'acqua* was edited again, by an external editor, and then purchased by Mediatrade. Maybe some day they will show it, late at night, a few hours after the death of Sandra Milo, in a special...

**Speaking of your videos, *Sollevarlo non vuol dire volarlo* and *Shy as a Fox* are considered flows of minimal stories, impressionist chronicles of everyday people. What story did you want to tell with these two works? What were you interested in revealing?**

In *Sollevarlo non vuol dire volarlo* I involved a group of friends, with whom I was not acquainted, and organized them like a chorus. For them it was a hike in the hills, a Sunday morning outing... The people involved had to cooperate and find a way to raise a donkey, remembering the Italian saying “the donkey flies” (a trap for the gullible, ed.)... I just watched. It was like losing time, creating a hole in time. With *Shy as a Fox*, on the other hand, in 2000, I visited several Italian cities and recorded over seventy stories, trying to find the truth about the story of the dream of the fox. I edited just a few of them, trying to create a paradox between my question and the unpredictability of the answers. I met some extraordinary, at times disarming people.

**Is there a connection between the choice of the fox, the symbol of slyness, and the fact that you work in a system, that of contemporary art, where having a strategy and being astute really count?**

I don’t know how to do strategy with art, I’m not comfortable with that. It gives me the idea of something boring and distant. I’ve never thought about a problem in those terms. When I chose the fox I was not referring to a specific condition of the world of contemporary art, but to the human condition.



Lara Favaretto, *Lost & Found*, 2008. Courtesy: Lara Favaretto, Galleria Franco Noero, Torino.

**I wanted to see if you had an opinion about those who think artworks are just 50% of the success of an artist. The rest is public relations, good contacts.**

Don't make me become even more boring than before! What are you talking about? Percentages? There are too many unknown factors and it is better not to waste time on these things. It's better to collect and discard, as I love to do, since 1997, accumulating suitcases. Once a year I seal one up after having filled it with things, I lock it and I throw away the key. It's true! You want the title, *Lost and Found*, but I won't tell you the year because I don't know which one.

**From your answer, I guess you have nothing more to say on that subject. Let's get back to your work, which seems to be the only thing that really interests you.**

That's a lie! We can talk about anything, it would be more fun. You're the one asking the questions! I don't try to have good relations, I don't know many people, so I can't tell you much in the way of gossip. I never go out, though I do travel a lot. I rarely show my face.





Lara Favaretto, *Absolutely no Donation*, 2009. Tramway, Glasgow. Courtesy: Lara Favaretto, Galleria Franco Noero, Torino.

**I've noticed how much you travel. To do this interview you had to plan our appointment one month in advance. I imagine your trips are for shows. I think I missed some steps, you were in London, Aspen, then Glasgow, where you opened your solo show in October at Tramway.**

Indeed, I have a personal life that doesn't need to be told: it doesn't exist! I discovered that Glasgow is an extraordinary city. The solo show at Tramway, *Absolutely no Donation*, is my first show of paintings. You think I'm kidding. The entire installation was a tribute to Barnett Newman and was composed of 17 paintings I made in relation with three cubes of confetti, pressed by hand, waiting for their inevitable, spontaneous collapse. On the walls the paintings played with sizing and colors, movement and speed. Each single painting was composed of one or more carwash brushes, in different colors, that rotated to create an electrostatic surface generated by the friction of the plastic against the metal. The brushes polished the iron sheets to which they were attached and produced, on the sheets and the wall, an irregular silhouette of dust and colored fragments, created by their slow deterioration. This action transformed the brushes

into automata that spun without any opposition or friction, because they were consumed, though only partially. The cubes were made with 150 kg of black confetti mixed, in different percentages, with colored confetti.

**Barnett Newman wanted to make a tabula rasa of the tradition of painting, to start from scratch as if painting had never existed. That made sense in the 1940s, but isn't this reference a bit shaky today?**

Maybe it didn't even make sense back in the 1940s, maybe every work should start from a tabula rasa. It's everyone's dream, not just that of artists. Who wouldn't want to have the pleasure of doing a reset, taking it from the top? I mention Barnett Newman, but I could also cite Joseph Conrad, Jean Vigo and many others. Ignoring the past is a hypocritical pose. After all, we've already gotten past the obsession with the Postmodern, for years now.

**I thought you mentioned him in relation to the fact that you consider *Absolutely no Donation* an exhibition of paintings. Why do you think of it in those terms?**

Why else should I mention Newman? I'm not a painter, but my images are. Haven't Luchino Visconti, Olivier Assayas, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau and Alejandro González Iñárritu made paintings with their films? It might be intriguing to think about the question: how can an installation be viewed in pictorial terms?

**How can an installation be viewed in pictorial terms?**

In various ways. One example, besides *Absolutely no Donation*, might be the work I made at the Arsenale for the 53rd Venice Biennial. I know that many people did not see it, but maybe it was far away (laughter, ed.). The work I'm talking about is the above-mentioned *Momentary Monument (Swamp)*, a swamp cut by a gilded blade, containing a buried secret: objects I have dedicated to all or some of the 23 deceased persons on whom the entire project is based. The world of the vanished is one of many temperaments, intriguing, endless. The vanished are also those who age with their ideas and thus protect their visions. In any case, this research is still in progress. In *Momentary Monument (Swamp)* there is no separation between the work and the space that contains it: this makes it pictorial.

**Regarding *Momentary Monument (Swamp)*, many people wondered if the objects were really buried there. It is a work that is full of reminders: the hypothetical buried objects that rot together with the imaginary figures of vanished celebrities. Why dedicate a swamp, or «no-man's-land», as Tom Morton called it in an article (*Frieze*, issue #126, October 2009), to the writer Ambrose Bierce, the artist Bas Jan Ader, the wanderer Christopher Johnson McCandless and the chess master Bobby Fischer? Just to name a few.**

Isn't a work always a no-man's-land? The swamp is primarily an idea and a sensation, more than an image. It is a state of things and I think it can be defined as a space that swallows things up without changing. It's a sort of pit of insanity, a sunken cemetery. It shuns definitions and files away unknown documents, becoming a repository of wishes. What better place for someone who wants to return to being anonymous, to be left in peace?



Lara Favaretto, *Momentary Monument (Wall)*, 2009, Trento. Courtesy: Lara Favaretto, Galleria Franco Noero, Torino. Photo: Giulia Parri.

**The work you installed in Venice happened almost at the same time as two other *Momentary Monument*: a large moneybox placed in a square in Bergamo, and the work in Trent, *Wall*, where you built a wall of sandbags around a statue of Dante. Three works with three different developments and messages: disappearance and death in the first, altruism and solidarity in the second, defense and the space of complexity in Trent. Is there a connection among the three works? Explain the meaning you assign to *Momentary Monument*.**

I talk about perplexity, not complexity. Impossible but real, to use words that are not mine. You make a work and then you destroy it: because it has to disappear, like everything. Why should things be different for an artwork? Everything else has to vanish. What extraordinary reflections would we make if there was an earthquake and a museum were to collapse, for example? The whole collection, assembled over time, would be lost. It would be sad, but it could happen. What would be the difference with respect to a temporary monument? *Momentary Monument* is the title of a series of projects that share a linguistic paradox. For the destruction of the large piece of Indian granite I worked with specialists to plan the

breaking and the definitive destruction. For the wall of sandbags, on the other hand, the disposal happened by means of what I called an act of authorized vandalism. The swamp is something else again, it is the reclamation of the land, and it is crazy that at the end of the Venice Biennial the swamp stops being “art work” and starts being what it was before, though with one difference: that now it is fertile land...

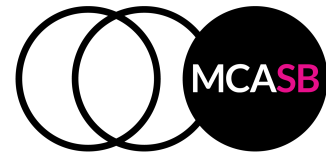
**Speaking of Trent... that installation caused much discussion, both during its construction and in the days after the opening. I was particularly struck by one of the many articles. The work was compared to the Tower of Babel, a collapse caused by linguistic distances. Art, then, as an incomprehensible language: art does not understand the people, and the people do not understand art. Did you imagine this work would be misunderstood?**

The insertion of any alien reality in a public space is an operation that calls for suitable explanation, and should be communicated in the most appropriate way. I expected the misunderstanding and I was amused by the idea that a wall of burlap bags could also be seen as a set for a documentary on World War I, the life-size reconstruction of a board game with soldiers and tanks, a barrier to protect against an expected flood, or just a moment of restoration work on the statue of Dante. The *Momentary Monument* made for Trent is none of those things: it's a trench. It is a refuge that desires compassion, clumsy but tenacious, a place in which to sum up and reorganize the state of necessities, perhaps making a more intimate, human sensibility come back to the surface. It is a wall without any aesthetic footholds, ugly and assailable, built to protect the place of perplexity and anonymity. It is the construction of an absent space, a figurative hole. It is an archaic, brutal form, and, after the collapse, it is also dramatic. It is a formless and irritating apparition, so it provokes distrust.

**There is one work, still in the project phase, whose story I would like you to tell: *Project for a Utopia*. A large balloon in the form of a donkey that crosses Europe, hosting politicians, opinion-makers and celebrities who discuss the concept of dignity. I have read that in this work you put the accent precisely on the word dignity as a minimum common denominator, fundamental for all the rights of man.**

It is a project because it has not yet been implemented, but it is all ready. It was written in 2001, after having made *Mondo alla rovescia*. It will be a balloon in the form of a donkey with wings, that can be transformed into an eclectic combination of theater and activism. *Project for a Utopia* or *Utopia Monumentale* is an airborne platform that will host and interface different viewpoints on the theme of dignity. It will be a performance that can be repeated anywhere, with the objective of exploring the greatest number of variations on the theme. Maybe I should have

**klat**



proposed it before the elections, for the campaign of Obama. Of course not! Just kidding...

**What do you want to demonstrate with this work? Is it one possible way to reveal how much we have lost touch with the sense of this word?**

Yes! I put the accent on the word dignity. Why, do you think we should talk about something else?

## Lara Favaretto: The End of Motion

Alessandro Rabottini

#16 WINTER 2008 - NOVEMBER 2008



Franco Noero, Turin, installation views of 'Uomo Bianco', 2007, iron slab, electrical box, carwash brush, wire; 'Uomo Nero', 2007, iron slab, electrical box, carwash brush, wire.

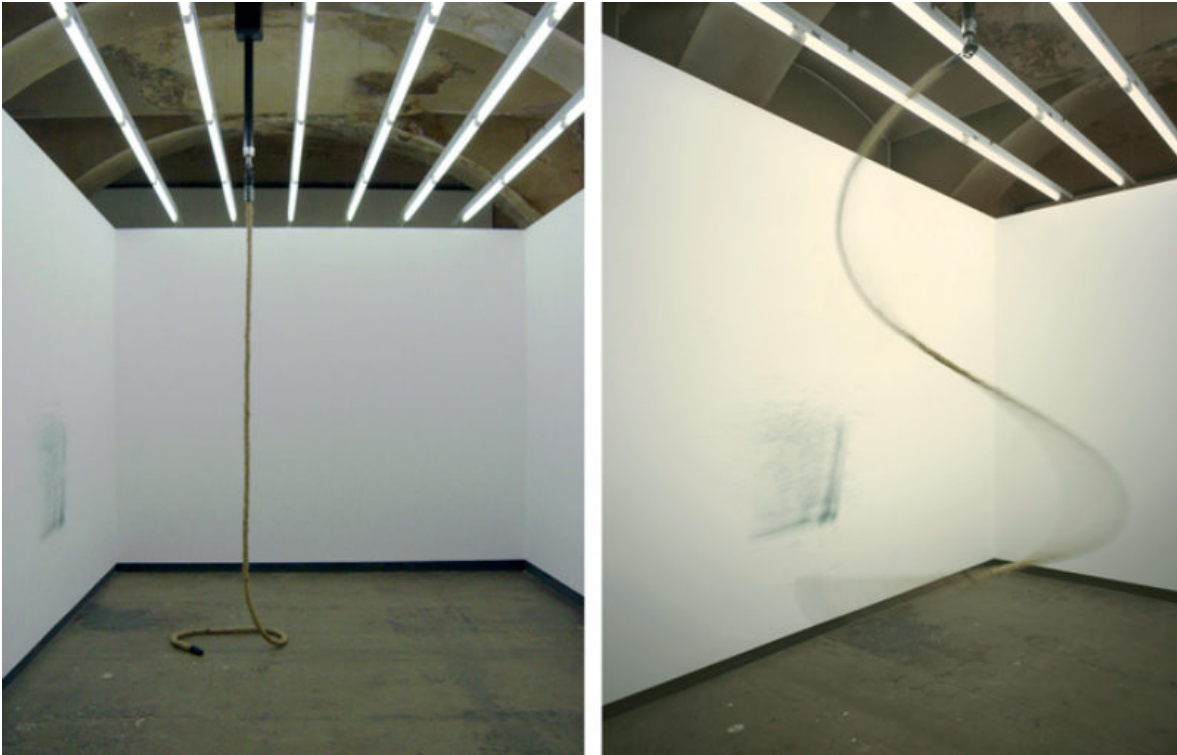
There is a history of movement that repeats itself mechanically, a history of automatism and shifting of function that ranges from how children learn to understand objects and language, through repetition, to kinetic art. It sweeps across autism and certain moments of negative and emancipatory thought, as in the case of Georges Bataille and his concept of *dépense*. It is a history of the pulsation and expenditure of energy.

In recent years, Italian artist Lara Favaretto (Treviso, 1973, lives and works in Turin) began to write a personal history of generosity and obsolescence through a work that focuses on an ambivalent treatment of the two opposite poles of aesthetic experience: on the one hand the durability of the object, on the other the ephemeral nature of the event. This investigation of hers, as in the work of artists like Robert Smithson and Gino De Dominicis, tends towards an acceleration of the end and to absorb entropy in order to finish the job that art has engaged with. It assumes the form of objects, installations or events all united by the careful planning of their collapse. The sculptures and installations continue to possess a significant performative nature that includes the mechanical nature of movement, casualty and wear. The interventions, with their limited life span, often just a few hours or a single day, show their transitory but ephemeral nature in a paradoxical

manner: through the use of heavy machines and instruments that suggest intense work, and equally intense dispersion of unproductive energy.

In many cases, the rotating movement is what determines this negative kineticism, infusing a dimension of limited time into the sculptures and installations so that, sooner or later, their existence is forced to come to an end.

*'È così se mi interessa'* (That's how it is if it interests me), 2006, is a handmade rope suspended from the ceiling at Franco Noero Gallery in Turin. The rope contains the artist's hair, which was cut after 12 years of rasta growth and swings around itself incessantly like a lasso, wearing an increasingly deep and evident mark on the wall it hits with each turn.



*'È così se mi interessa'*, 2006, rope, hair, steel, engine, leather, dimensions variable.

The idea of the mark and the mechanical nature of the movement are not without implications in any of Favaretto's works. As it requires to be set into motion, otherwise only a potential mechanism, it exists only in relation to the person looking at it at the precise moment in which the experience of the movement takes place. And despite the fact that in many cases the possibility for the public to interact is removed *a priori*, what we see is an object that senses a significant devaluation of the very idea that there is an intrinsic value to things and actions when they are not established in a vital relationship with the surrounding context.

This form of scepticism, which seems to dominate like a basso continuo throughout Favaretto's work, is the result of extensive research: the search for a reason for actions, the search for a function for art that we could define as 'anthropological', in other words, seeking a conversion of different types of human knowledge into a shared grammar. This theory, it seems to me, closes with a mark, a mark that is often formless or even simply a stain, a corrosion.

In the case of *'È così se mi interessa'*, the mark left on the wall is the result of friction between the rotating mechanism and the architecture. It is a mark that scratches, like a last attempt to prove an existence, while at the same time, accepts the impossibility of permanence. Most of Favaretto's work is filled with this kind of angry melancholy, a desire for empathy mixed with frustration and refusal. It also has an ambivalent relationship with sharing, belonging and memory. Most seem like objects of affection, but a painful affection to such an extent that it becomes necessary to anticipate mourning, to distance them. Even their slow corrosion becomes necessary.

*'Cominciò ch'era finita'* (It began while it was already over), 2006, is a perfect example of this desire to share those borders of voluntary negation. The exhibition space is dark and dominated by a large installation with a form that echoes a shrunken circus tent and a turning motion that echoes a merry-go-round. The 32 military tents that are sewn together to create her tent are constantly abraded by the rhythmic rubbing of the fabric against a load-bearing column at the Klosterfelde Gallery in Berlin. Over time the fabric will tear more and more, thus creating spirals through which the illuminated contents of the structure become visible. But the circular motion is too fast to make it possible to clearly distinguish the form of the objects assembled within this kind of imploded magic lantern.

This was the case when I saw this work for the first time after it had been opened for nearly two months. Today, more than two years later, I imagine that the interior will be different and is verging toward total consumption over years to come, as the work's activity will move towards completely wearing out the tent. I ask myself what will become of the resulting enigma as it is condemned to turning around itself until infinity? Will what was once the object of amusing fascination, wind up as a relic of a mystery and proof of an ending?





'I poveri sono matti' (the poor are mad), 2005, suspended gypsy caravan, electric lights, music (Rosamunde) installation view, Castello di Rivoli, 2005.

These are works that have absorbed the performative dynamic and that explore concepts of time, duration and loss on a reduced scale. Other works offer the same experience, defined as the 'near conclusion', on a more spectacular scale and of a more public dimension. 'Confetti Canyon' is an intervention that has been executed by Favaretto several times in Italy since 2001, and was brought to MOCA in Los Angeles one last time in 2005, for the exhibition *Ecstasy: In and About Altered States*. The work consists of an event that lasts a few hours during which three hand-triggered cannon-like devices shower the crowd with confetti, creating a sort of improvised carnival that is unexpected and off the calendar, and thus misunderstood.

'Confetti Canyon' is a seminal work which underpins the central concept of Lara Favaretto's entire oeuvre: the concept of gratuity. Starting with the intrinsic nature of carnival—a parenthesis within the context of productive activity, a place for symbolic inversion of hierarchy and suspension of the rules—the artist has developed over the years, an in-depth study of the anthropological structure of this kind of celebration. She has attempted to transfer this discourse on the momentary inversion of authority and dispersion of control, from the anthropological to the

artistic one, particularly in reference to the status of the art object as a finished product. While many of her installations are positioned somewhere between an invitation to hilarity and its immediate negation, her public interventions highlight the contradiction inherent in the concept of sharing itself. Favaretto seems to interweave considerations of democracy with a pensive melancholy, a playful vitality with the bitterness of an irremediable solitude, an urgent need to participate with an equally inflexible feeling of individualism.

*'I poveri sono matti'* (The poor are mad), for example, suspends a typical gypsy caravan 20 metres or so from the ground by a crane. Out of this relic flows the sounds of a popular polka that became famous during World War II, the most famous version of which is the German one entitled 'Rosamunde'. The Anglo Saxon public knows it as 'Roll Out the Barrel' and it is the same song mentioned by Primo Levi in *Se questo è un uomo* (If this is a man), the account of his imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp first published in 1958: 'A fanfare begins to play near the camp's gate: it plays 'Rosamunde', the well-known sentimental song [...] But once 'Rosamunde' is finished, the fanfare continues, playing other marches, one after the other, and then we see the squads of our fellow prisoners as they return from work. They walk in columns five by five; they walk with a strange gait that is unnatural, hard, like stiff marionettes made of only wood. But they walk keeping time scrupulously with the fanfare,' (translated by Anne Ruzzante).

The transformation of the human figure into a hand puppet, its movements restricted and a fixed expression, was a tenet held throughout the avant garde of last century. It served as a symbol of the impossibility of communication, of identity-related neuroses and relational problems, an expressive value conferred upon something that has no ability to express.

'Plotone', 2005, an installation at the most recent Sydney Biennial, consists of a formation of compressed air-tanks that, connected to a timer, periodically releases a chorus of party whistles. The artist describes the work as follows: 'An army betrayed or defeated stands still. Always in uniform during a compulsory stop. Compelled to their confined position, like civilian soldiers frustrated in waiting, in a silence interrupted only by single breaths.' This constant and oscillating transition between psychological and inorganic, individualistic and relational, grotesque and melancholic, is the central movement around which all of Lara Favaretto's work revolves, marking the transition between human and mechanical now bereft of existentialist connotations. Instead it revives this dichotomy within the context of a more contemporary discourse on what it means to be able to 'communicate' and share effectively today.

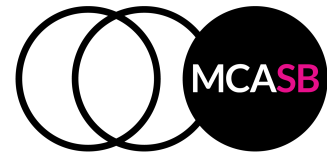


'Plotone', 2005, 20 air compressed tanks, 20 pressure regulators, 20 distributors, 20 timers, 20 electrovalves, 20 whistles, plastic cables, dimension variable, installation view, Sydney Biennial, 2008.

*'I poveri sono matti'* was conceived originally for the Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Castello di Rivoli in Turin in 2005 and exhibited again in 2008 in London for the exhibition *Perplexed in Public* organised by the Lisson Gallery. It is a fantastic apparition that, in its marvellous machineness, dominates the urban horizon for a few hours like a small miracle. This vision is surreal. The heavy machinery is in full view. There is that same sense of 'giveaway' that you experience when seeing a movie set in the street with all the tricks of the trade laid bare. We are perfectly aware of the mechanics that make all these things possible, and yet despite this we feel a sense of amazement that lies somewhere between the joy of fun and the notion that perhaps miracles can happen. Believing things are possible even when reality proves the opposite, is another important aspect of this artist's work. It is a message loaded with a strangely vital scepticism—while it might accept the inevitability of the end, that does not necessarily imply the end of hope.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to remember Favaretto's contribution to the series of projects commissioned by Frieze Art Fair in 2007, when the artist orchestrated an official invitation to the Queen to visit the fair, to which she received an equally official refusal from the Queen's personal secretary. In this consciousness-shattering, carefully planned and thematised naive form of spontaneity set against

# MAP



the officialdom and power attached to high iconic definition, lies the same dynamic that exists between Favaretto's objects turning on themselves and the architecture that is their host. This frictional dynamic knows perfectly well how things stand, and yet continues to twist obstinately, prefiguring its serene demise.

Perhaps it really is true that 'the poor are crazy' as they are able to imagine, and to dream, in a state of absolute necessity, possibly the only state in which it is possible to invent.

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