

The project presented by the American artist Sam Durant for the exhibition held at Franco Soffiantino Gallery in Turin is a personal evocation of the anarchist movement operating in Italy in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Using marble from Carrara and through traditional sculpture techniques, local craftsmen have reproduced busts of some key figures in the anarchist movement of that time. Together with portraits, the marble reproductions also depict crates and boxes for transporting dynamite and a bag of calcium carbonate on which quotes from the anarchists have been carved. Among the figures represented are Carlo Pisacane, Errico Malatesta, Francesco Saverio Merlino and Carlo Cafiero, the fathers of Italian anarchism and also lesser-known figures like Marie-Luise Berneri and futurist poet Renzo Novatore.

While it is relatively easy to imagine the link between a revolutionary message and a crate full of explosives, it is more difficult to establish the same link with a bag of calcium carbonate. Calcium carbonate is a powder that derives from the processing of the debris of marble and is used in mass production by local and foreign multinationals. This marble dust is an additive material used in several industrial sectors and the bag represents the paradigm shift that the marble economy is undergoing. Technological advancements have accelerated the excavation of marble blocks and increased the volume of marble extraction destined to the global market mainly in its unrefined state. In 1868, when Carrara's economy was in full bloom and at the dawn of the labour movement, the excavated material amounted to 111,194 tons. In 2010, the production of blocks alone amounted to 980,000 tons, only 24% of the excavated total. Despite this, the local manufacturing chain of sawmills and arts and crafts workshops is being reduced and the natural environment degraded with the resulting social and cultural decline becoming more and more evident. Starting from this complex economic and cultural reality and including Carrara's history as a major anarchist centre, the artist seeks to convey a sense of the marble industry crisis but also the theme of "action propaganda" practiced by Carrara's anarchist workers. Many anarchist marble workers were forced to emigrate, carrying with them and spreading across the world their anarchist ideas of freedom along with the trades of quarryman and stone-cutter. Some of them then returned to Italy to fight against fascism and, as in the case of Gino Lucetti, an anarchist from Carrara, even to attempted to kill Mussolini.

The choice of leaving some of the portraits unfinished, in different working stages has a specific significance and refers to events that took place in Turin in the nineteen seventies. At that time the trade unions protested the increase in bus and train fare by enacting a strategy called "autoreduction"- riders simply paid a reduced fare and refused to pay the increase. Durant represents this idea of "production cost reduction" by setting a maximum budget for the production of the entire work. If the hours of labour required to complete the pieces were higher than budgeted

amounts then the busts would remain unfinished. Hence, the works have a typically "unfinished" look, which serve as a reminder of the statues depicting Michelangelo's "I Prigioni" and hark back to an idea of society left unfinished.

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