

How robotics re-interpreted a classic antiquity for Canary Wharf

Hackney artist Davide Quayola reinvents ancient artwork Laocoön and His Sons for One Canada Square



Hackney artist Davide Quayola with his sculpture in the lobby of One Canada Square

Artist [Davide Quayola](#) spent months poring over the curves of ancient sculpture Laocoön And His Sons in Rome and reinterpreting it as a precise geometric form using computer software and robotic technology.

But when his finished work arrived to be installed in the lobby of One Canada Square one of project's measurements didn't quite add up.

"It wouldn't fit through the door," he laughed as we stand watching the evening light glancing gently off Laocoön's curves and facets.

"The crate ended up being a few centimetres bigger so we had to take it out and mount it outside. So there was this strange emphasise about its entrance."

The sculpture, commissioned by [Canary Wharf Group](#), is a reinterpretation of ancient artwork Laocoön And His Sons which was excavated in Rome in 1506 and placed on display in the [Vatican](#).

In Davide's piece you can see glimpses of the figure of the Trojan priest but his sons, Antiphas and Thymbraeus, and the serpents attacking the trio, have been transformed into abstract geometric forms.



The sculpture is based on ancient artwork Laocoön And His Sons

Davide said: "In a way all the work I do is about stripping away this iconography and replacing it with something else. So there is struggle in it still but more between structure and form in an abstract sense than the historically narrative that was there in the beginning."

The Hackney-based Italian artist was given rare access to the art collection at the head of the Roman Catholic Church – where he was delighted to discover a Latin language cash machine – as part of his ongoing research into classic iconography.

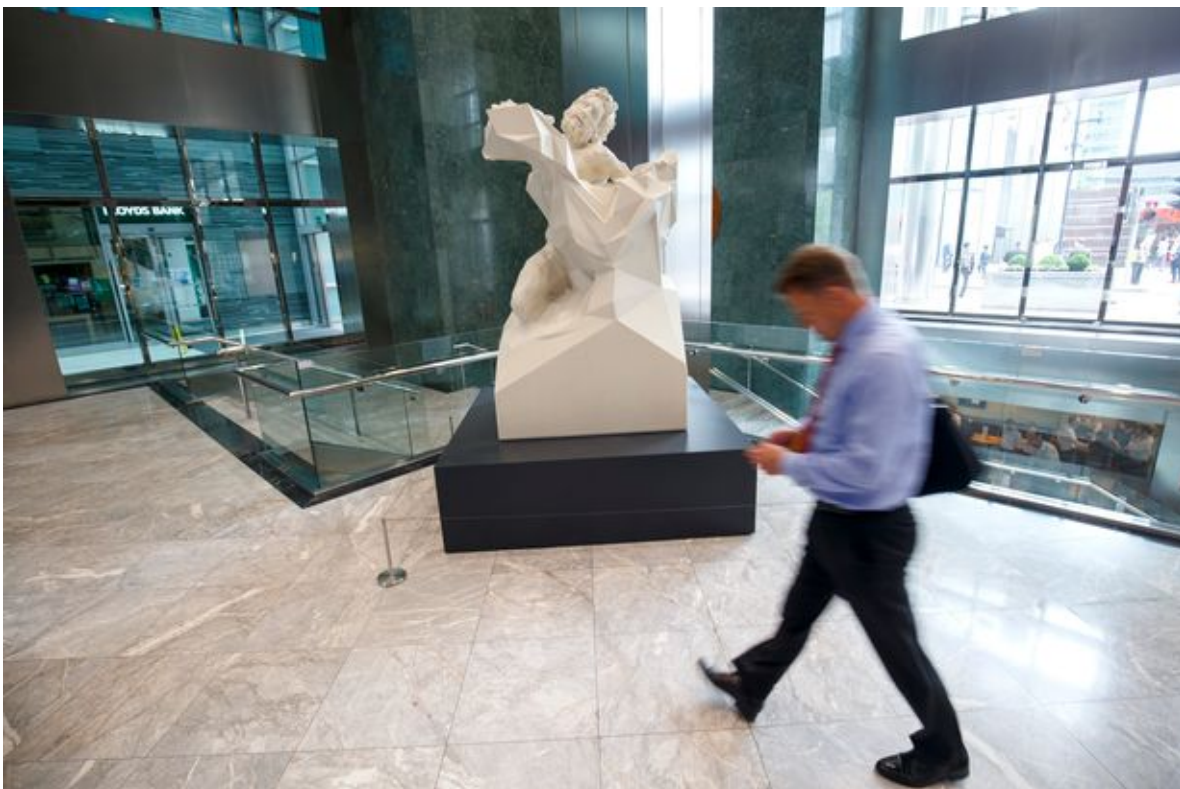
"I have escaped from Rome but as you can see, I have never fully escaped and probably never will," he said.

Davide began by creating a 3D scan of the original, which is on display in Museo Pio Clementino, and loading it into a custom computer program.

"I started with a fully finished figure on the computer and started adding these volumes almost from the original block and matter it came from," he said.

"It's not about making one object but exploring infinite possibilities. It has been envisaged as a series of sculptures and is an ongoing process so it was a difficult choice to decide which one would be fabricated."

It took several months for him to figure out how to bring his vision to life, working with **Factum-Arte**, a workshop of specialist artists and engineers based in Madrid.



The sculpture will be on display in the lobby of One Canada Square until Friday, July 15, 2016

"I have been experimenting a lot with these industrial machines over the last two years but this is the first object I have managed to do with the kind of quality that was originally envisaged.

"I hadn't used robots to work so precisely before and this geometry is very exact so it had to be made in several steps."

First robotics were used to create the artwork in several pieces in a high density synthetic material. They were then assembled and used to create silicone moulds. Once finished, a hollow piece was cast in a material made from 80% pulverised white marble powder and 20% resin.

Davide said of the finished piece: "It is the idea of taking something that belongs to one world of aesthetics, making it purely digital and then manifesting it again in a different material.

"Seeing it here now is quite satisfying, it has been a long journey."

Laocoön will be on display in the lobby of One Canada Square until Friday, July 15 and the sculpture is exhibited alongside a series of prints and a video charting the process.