



Music for 100 Carpenters @ The Boiler

The videotaping of the sound/performance installation "Music for 100 Carpenters" by sound artist Douglas Henderson, currently on view at The Boiler, was a live performance there last night. It was an earful of composed noise featuring selected occupational "music" drawn from the carpenter's daily palette, including the sound of thousands of nails shuffling in brown paper bags, and in cotton nail aprons which the carpenter/musicians held and wore, and shook on cue.

The most powerful of the sounds, hammering nails into 4x4s, dominated the score. Harnessed and manipulated, the collection of "instruments" evolved into a powerful orchestral cacophony. Paired in twos in front of saw horses, 100 or so volunteers, many of them real carpenters, lined the perimeter of the gallery space, while the audience were seated in the center. For each eight or so musicians there were "job supervisors" reading from sheets of music. It would be curious to see the music annotations and to learn how they could keep time—a magical feat.

The banging hammers on nails, and shaking bags of nails shifted throughout the different sides of the gallery in unexpected intervals. Midway in the 30 min-long piece, "musicians" picked up metallic lunch boxes opened them creating a new sound, repeated it for effect, and revealed apples which they held in their hands. In what was then a reprieve from the deafening hammering, the apples were eaten by the 100 carpenters offering a quieter counterpoint, a pervasive human crunching sound, almost locust like, and a gentle apple smell permeated the air. When the apples were finished, the carpenters retrieved the metal lunch boxes, held them out and let them catapult to the ground in unison.

The hammering and nail shuffling resumed until the sound of a whistle from the composer who sat in the exact center of the room, signaled all music to stop, and then, as if on cue the audience clapped, possibly unawares that they too had become a part of the performance, as the sound of clapping meshed seamlessly with the sound of hammering.

The videotape (in surround sound), will be showing at [The Boiler](#) gallery (191 North 14th St) through December 20.

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