



School: Bath School of Art

Researcher: Keith Harrison

Project Title: New Expressions 3: Heavy Rock| Plymouth Sound

UOA: 32

## 300-Word Statement

Commissioned by Plymouth Museum and Art gallery in 2015 as part of *New Expressions 3*, **Heavy Rock | Plymouth Sound** was a collaborative multi disciplinary work, including a public event at sea, commissioned orchestral score and exhibitions at KARST 2015, and Roche Court, 2016. Extending his ongoing enquiry into the transformation of functional materials using sound, making hidden processes public, and the deconstruction of historical and contemporary narratives, Harrison asks:

1. How might a hidden military process become a public celebration?
2. How might the existing hierarchies of a Naval Base be inverted to highlight the unseen workers involved in vital breakwater maintenance, and what new connections can be forged?
4. What methodologies might be used to challenge public perceptions of concrete as brutal and inert to become vital and poetic?
5. Can a remote publicly inaccessible art work, unseen unless at low tide, still be defined as a public work?

The project, involving collaboration with the *Royal Navy*, proposed a deconstructed recreation of George Barrett the Younger's painting *Laying of the Foundation Stone of Plymouth Breakwater* (1812), in the the Museum's collection, depicting a ceremonial flotilla and military orchestra celebrating the construction of the Plymouth Sound Breakwater. 200 years on regular placements of 100 tonne concrete wave breaker blocks continue, but conducted by the Ministry of Defence hidden from public view. Seeking to reveal and celebrate unseen vital processes and the role of the workers involved, the project explored the means of animating the concrete wave breaker blocks through sound challenging perceptions of concrete associated with Plymouth's post-war civic architecture.

The project, including public lectures, workshops and 2 documentary films, has facilitated discourse around making and authorship, an artist's social fluidity within complex collaborative public artworks, as well as wider societal issues of civic protection and the value of labour.