

francesco arena  
dieci minuti e un soffio

**PRESS RELEASE**

**March 30 – June 23, 2021**

**Opening march 30, 5 – 8:30 pm**

**Palazzo Borromeo - Piazza Borromeo 12, Milan**

“Between March and May 2020, I made a series of ten sculptures at home, always using the same amount of material - half a kilo of DAS - and the same time - one minute per sculpture. These are very simple forms born from the necessity to occupy time, to give meaning to the moment. Making them in just one minute, I wanted to use a basic unit of measurement of time: the minute actually represents a much longer time since the modeling time is only a part of the real time of the sculpture. The work sits in my head for the time of its conception and, after modeling, requires a subsequent time of drying and finally an infinite time of contemplation.

When I returned to the studio, I brought these ten sculptures with me. Every now and then I returned back and looked at them, it seemed to me that they were asking to be completed in some way. I could not further shape them, they had already become the portrait of a past moment. I then began to pair each sculpture with another object, something that already existed and had its time, something that I had collected and kept in my studio over the years, something that had been chosen without a specific reason like those exact ten minutes of manual labor that had been chosen among many. These are different objects: a turf from the place where I live, a nest found in Argentario, a wad of hair from my beard, two pieces of wood taken from a wine box, a desert rose bought on ebay, a buffalo horn taken in New York, a finger attached to its owner, three old books, a cuff of one of my shirts and two prints of Marx and Engels torn from an old copy of *The Communist Manifesto*. A year and a half have passed, the sculptures are ready and have their own specific, open completeness. The title of the work is *Le dita della mano* (The fingers of the hands). *Le dita della mano* are exhibited inside Palazzo Borromeo, lying on a long and narrow pedestal that extends from one wall for 6 meters into the exhibition space.

The work is installed on the wall that connects the room and the courtyard. Here is *Blow Stone* (2018), the other work that I decided to combine with *Le dita della mano*. This sculpture is also positioned on a platform that extends into the courtyard for 3 meters and is also a portrait of a time, but much shorter: the moment during which a piece of paper that was on my desk has moved because I had blown on it. It is a block of stone cut while keeping one of its sides natural. The block is 152 centimeters high, which is the same as the distance of my mouth from the ground. The base of the block is 25cm wide and as you go up the block narrows down to 6cm, the width of my mouth. The pad is 70 centimeters long, the same as the distance traveled by the piece of paper on my desk. The top of the block is mirror polished, smooth as a breath, while the other sides of the sculpture are left rough. The work is the portrait of a moment, of a journey, that of a piece of paper; it is the portrait of a breath, the solidification of a very light moment through the weight and resistance of the stone. This work was chosen for the courtyard of Palazzo Borromeo so that the air continues to move on the smooth surface of the breath.

Lightness and strength run after each other in these two works which, together, compose the exhibition *Dieci minuti e un soffio* (Ten minutes and a breath). “

Francesco Arena

# galleria raffaella cortese

For Francesco Arena, the relationship between the work and the space is fundamental. The first is a body that is only apparently immobile, endowed with a story that is constantly being defined. The static nature of the sculpture contrasts with this constant change - which is none other than time - and with another moving element that makes the difference: the public. The interaction takes place on this occasion in a space that is anything but neutral, Palazzo Borromeo, a place whose ancient history is revealed to us by the frescoes and architecture.

In the exhibition *Dieci minuti e un soffio*, time and sculpture are the great protagonists. Francesco Arena could be defined as a classical sculptor if we consider the materials that he meticulously chooses: marble, bronze and, in this case, stone and DAS. At the same time, his sculpture is intrinsically conceptual and takes its inspiration from the geometric shapes typical of Minimal art and the more archetypal ones of Arte Povera. Central is the different action of time on objects and people, the repetition of some typical actions of sculpture that are made of putting in and taking out, of creating full and empty spaces, of taking away and adding time.