

Francesco Arena

(Torre Santa Susanna, Brindisi, Italy, 1978)

Francesco Arena draws inspiration for his sculptures from figures and events that have marked the history of our nation, as if he were renewing an important Italian artistic tradition. However, with anti-monumental intention and an avowed political and social conscience, the artist often dwells on tragic events, controversial facts not yet clarified, or about which public opinion is divided.. From wars to the years of terrorism, up to history's most recent moments, Arena reinterprets the past as a sequence of facts— including heights, corporeal weights, kilometeric distances—the arithmetic precision of which in turn dictates the proportions of each work. Thinking in sculptural terms, the artist also interrogates history in anthropometric terms, always considering the evoked events in relationship to the space occupied by individuals and their actions. In some works, Arena relates data concerning his person, specifically the encumbrance of his body in the world through its height or weight, to historical facts, materializing in physical terms his involvement with the past he is investigating.

Genova (foto di gruppo) (*Genoa - group photo*), 2011, is an installation inspired by facts that occurred in Genoa on the occasion of the G8 international conference in July 2001, which brought together leaders of the industrial powers. Composed of ten white blocks, irregular squares arranged along a single line, the installation repropose the position assumed by each of the heads of state or government on the occasion of the official photos of the summit, when they posed alongside each other on a dais installed in the courtyard of the Palazzo Ducale. One after another, starting from the left, the blocks Arena created thus evoke the presence of Japanese premier Junichiro Koizume, British premier Tony Blair, American president George W. Bush, French president Jacques Chirac, Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi, Russian president Vladimir Putin, Canadian premier Jean Chrétien, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Belgian premier Guy Verhofstadt, and president of the European Commission Romano Prodi.

Juxtaposing the coldness of the official poses with the tragic fate of Carlo Giuliani, the young man who died during the clashes between demonstrators and the police that laid waste to the streets of Genoa during those days, Arena chooses to give each of the bases a different height, calculated as if Giuliani could still climb up and look each leader directly in the eyes. The installation is intentionally created utilizing the muddy residue from marble production, a fragile and perishable material usually discarded by marble workers. (MB)