“Little Breaths”

The seconds pass, and the minutes, and the hours. But right now, this moment is the only thing you will ever really have. It can’t be taken away, but it passes away - given up, in a gasp.

Eternity is resolved in the present: Every cell in your body is an end point of history. But it’s not life and death - it’s just life - you let go, and move on. In the darkness, in the still of night, when even time holds its breath, what are the questions you can’t ask? Or can’t answer. What is the evidence of your existence?

Profound thoughts can become beautiful things. Gabriella Bisetto, in her work, aims to find a tangible understanding of the body and its transience. She expresses her ideas in simple forms referencing the mortality of our bodies and the passing of time - very human concerns. In the heat of molten glass, air expands and takes on a life of its own as it floats to find an edge. The cooling glass hardens around the organic shapes creating orbs of impermanence frozen in time.

Elegant blown forms, related to internal organs, are a different way to think about the body. Crafting the glass helps refine the artist’s intent and the story her work tells. Light passes through the objects allowing both the internal and the external to be seen at the same time. Subtle shadows add to the rhythmic grace of the works.

Bubbles sometimes appear as suspended pebbles, but they are hollow and hold the residue of the maker’s breath. Bisetto is fascinated by the intangibility of being and the difficulties posed by representing philosophical abstractions in a corporeal form.

Some days are just days: Other days live on in the heart, replaying their significance forever. Bruised hips, hidden scars: Our continuing to live diminishes the events and injuries of our lives. “One deep breath” is one moment of the artist’s life preserved as a physical memorial, a record of a moment, brought into the present, as an object.

Bisetto’s glassworks explore the world through metaphor rather than the literalism of science, or the values of religion. “Exchange”; shots of air injected into glass during the making, later cold-worked into blocks; is akin to tiny haemorrhages breaking from one space into another in a trading of essence - a kind of osmosis.

Blood and breath are the stuff of life, one created internally, the other drawn from the outside world. Both are related to body function and to our internal organs. As a child, the artist remembers watching her father slaughter pigs on the family farm. It was a vivid, if unusual, introduction to anatomy and to the reality of living and what happens when breath is extinguished.

Red fluid-filled beads, not blood but wine, strung in reference to the Rosary, and to prayer, are fittingly analogous to the sacredness of the red fluid in us all. How much blood is in your body? Everyone gets a similar measure - about 75mls for each kilo of body weight.

A collection of glass bowls, seemingly filled with water, are a timeless reminder that at the centre of life is water, with its ebb and flow - like the air we breathe. How many bowls make a person?

Hair is a very personal thing. As detritus or as relic, it is a powerful symbol of our humanness. It can be the only thing that survives the grave, after which it may be forensically examined to reveal patterns of the owner’s life. Like the patterns in our blood, hair can map our DNA. Despite the graphic quality of the strands pressed between glass slides, the works are not quite pictures or
drawings: instead they are laid out as artefacts. Allowed to tell their own story, they are also objects for contemplation.

Bisetto’s creations explore the physicality of existence with a poetry that belies the difficult industrial processes used. Her art is about balance and about bringing into balance, and alludes to the amazing harmony and mystery of biology, interpreted through natural forms and the clarity and timelessness of glass. “Little breaths” are like sighs pressed into glass, distilling the spirit of the moment and yearnings of the soul.

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