

GRANDEUR NATURE

a free-form appreciation by Graham Hall

Present

An invisible shield reveals it's shining essence to the door. As they find the root of desire unfruitful, I have arranged for a private tour. So far all bets have been on the positive side, but unfaltering admissions of guilt have reduced the parents to shameful tears. On the other hand, as the clouds disappear into the tree tops and the leaves shuffle from step to step, more and more is revealed. Night time brings further interdependencies, but not so much as to be so concerned about in the present. "Surely", you might jest, "there must be more to it than this... I mean, life, really... you know what I mean?". Only in the surest of books can we hope to find some form of revelatory pronouncement of nature's sorry, pathetic course from the crib of the soil to the grave of the sky. Light is at one and the same time a meter for our presence and a measure of our absence, as it is so fast and we are so slow inside of it. Because, you see, of the very pale palette of your attire, I am unsure whether you are wearing any clothes at all. Yes, your breasts ought to issue milk, even though they appear to be made of wool, or bunched cotton. Are you certain these are not simulacra? Can not the fake thing also be the real thing? We may mimic with words, but sounds are such that miming is moot! Does it smell like oranges in there, or is it just me? I am standing beside a mountain and I am sitting upon the sea and I have flown in the sky above my home. Against the bigness of everything, I am so alone. Even the best of apologies cannot change how small you and I are, faced with the atom, the nebulae, and the limits or our logic against the speed of light. However, when within our own understandings, a limit to logic is the only defence against sheer madness!

Past

The future is the unknown present about which we speculate. The present is that instant that flashes by when future becomes the past. The past surrounds us and totally informs who, where, and what we are. The past might sometimes be an Egyptian hieroglyph, or perhaps a Roman temple, maybe even a world war documentary. However, as North Americans, our place is too "young" or removed in space for such signifiers to truly resonate, and so we more often than not are presented with the past as a Victorian interior. All dusty chesterfields, houseplants and velvet, patterned wall paper; it is your great-grandmother's sitting room where she sips brandy and you sit on the little padded foot-stool with the wooden, three legged base because you aren't allowed on the plastic-covered, rose coloured, floral pattern sofa, because you are too new. This is the place of simulating the romance of the out-doors by bringing it inside, by taming it, and by making it something to collect, manicure and perfect. Great-grand-dad has his library, and he assures you he's read ALL the books on the shelves, at least once (or at least given them a good thumbing through). One assumes that this is why he is so authoritative. It is 1920, Doris and Royce are young, and one day they step through the threshold of the house, beginning their future together.

Future

Sheer curtains only slightly obscured the view. She padded through the laboratory, taking care not to disturb the experiments. Through the bluish gleam of the nano-mesh she could see the plants in various states of development and mutation. All she knew about the work being conducted was all that she had been told: that the plants had been engineered in such a way as to be vessels for information. The hope was that by imbedding the combined knowledge of human-kind into the genetic fabric of specific plants, we would be able to preserve that knowledge through the endless offspring generated, and that perhaps they might create new and unforeseen connections of ideas through selective splicing and other manipulations. However, she didn't know, or hadn't been told, how the experiments were progressing. Well, she hoped. It would be a shame if all that work to rebuild the cloud-web following the great solar flare storm were for naught. But this was distraction. She had her own work to attend to. They all had been assigned work hours in accordance with the 72 hour clock, that great rectifier of time: one still had the usual seven-day week, but there were three weeks in total, each running successively... if you could somehow stay up for three days straight, and no one found you out, one could conceivably have three Christmases in a row. The middle week was the quietest on her compound, and that's where she had been placed. She enjoyed the relative solitude; it helped her to focus on the recording and organizing duties. Every now and then she might hear the roar of the garbage-belt sweeper blast a hole for a shuttle to get through, either to or from Earth, but she couldn't see it, since the window in her office faced the Moon.

Graham Hall lives and works in Montreal. His practice in drawing and painting is often concerned with personal, ideosyncratic interests, mostly revolving around ideas of history, broad social memories, and forced synthesis. He is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design (drawing and painting, 2000), and of OCAD's off-campus programme in Florence, Italy (2001).

This text is part of a writing series by members of the gallery, reflecting on the works presented during articule's 2010-2011 programming season. Graham Hall's text has been produced for karen elaine spencer and Marie-Michelle Deschamps' project *life-size* presented at articule from May 13 to June 12, 2011, and is also available as a pdf on the gallery's website.

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