

Mona Sharma : The Loss and Reclamation of Faith by Graham Hall

Faith does not question, it believes; it does not stray, it is a constant companion. It is a reliable bulwark, against which we may judge our actions and those of others. Despite this unwavering attitude, faith is nonetheless open to re-evaluation and to compromise.

Through her sculptural work, Mona Sharma confronts this often murky human construction. Though soft, pop and seemingly playful, the objects Sharma creates deal very much with trauma, destruction and disaster. However, rather than dwell upon vast tragedies such as 9/11, we are often presented with “smaller” disasters, those that exist on a more human scale. The murder of a family, the terrorist bombing of one passenger plane, the territorial disembarkment refusal of a boat-full of refugees, a dead bird, a grandmother’s funeral pyre. Side by side with these human disasters we find meditations on natural disasters; Earth breaking faith with our attempts to tame her, or reminding us that we are far from being in control.

Sharma is also deeply interested in what it means to be Canadian. As a nation largely constituted of immigrants, we are forced to find common ground, so that our sense of common national identity is wholly based on faith. We make an imaginative agreement. Our faith in the consensus of our society as Canadians is broken when individuals, organizations or governments rattle the foundation of what we may have thought to be a constant state of the country of our imagination. In order to have a reclamation, we must then make a re-evaluation of the assumptions our faith in nationhood is based upon.

Significantly, the moments Sharma chooses to represent are those which come at the “end”. The finality of horrific events becomes the point of reference for the whole, because it is the truest part of the story, the irrevocable result rather than a questionable process. This is the starting point for reclamation; as we meditate on the endings of tragedies, we begin to take back those morsels of faith which have not in fact been “lost”, but have instead been taken, stolen or otherwise perverted. Perhaps within this act there is a “righting” of faith, a correction of belief, an everyday activity as the universe unfolds, often cruelly, about us.

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, research and projects presented during article’s 2011-2012 programming season. Graham Hall’s text has been produced for the exhibition *The Lost and Reclamation of Faith* by Mona Sharma presented at article from December 9, 2011 to January 22, 2012, and is also available as a pdf on the gallery’s website.

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