What are we praying for? New photographs give some answers

Wednesday 4 March, 2015

They all say please, an exhibition of new work by London-based photographer and OCA photography tutor Sharon Boothroyd illuminates the ways in which prayers signify loneliness in contemporary society. The series of landscape images began as a personal exploration by the photographer into what prayer means to others.

Sharon first became interested in other people's prayers as a way of learning about our shared inner desires and wishes after finding prayer cards in a church. She then began to see the prayers she found on online prayer forums as being akin to wishes, with most centering around the self, without deference to the will of God or the possibility of outcomes other than those desired by the person praying. Selecting and editing some of the prayers she had read online, she created photographic interpretations for them.

The photographer's sympathy with the people whose prayers she had read increased through the process of making the images, to the point that she realised that many of the prayers had subconsciously been her own. The pairings between image and text are not illustrations of the prayers but operate as visual stimuli for the viewer to bring their own interpretation into the space between.

Commenting on the work, Sharon Boothroyd said: 'I hope the ambiguity allows for further, even conflicting, narratives and interpretations to emerge depending on the personal viewpoint and history of the person looking at them.'

OCA Principal Gareth Dent said: 'In the emphasis we place as a society on interpreting the past, we can overlook the role of the creative arts in making sense of the present. Sharon challenges us to confront our own aspirations through **They all say please,** echoing the role OCA tutors fulfil for students as they develop their own creative voice.'

Sharon Boothroyd is a photographic artist based in London and a photography tutor for the Open College of the Arts, an education charity with a 2,000-strong community of creative arts students across the UK and beyond. Sharon is the recipient of International Photography Awards in New York, Flash Forward Magenta Award in Toronto and the Royal Photographic Society Bursary. Her work has been exhibited in Canada, France, India, Portugal, Switzerland, and the US.

They all say please *is taking place at a post-production house in Soho, London between 19 March and 30 April 2015. Contact:*mark.wynter@farmgroup.tv*, 020 3100 7777 to arrange a time to see the exhibition. Admission is free.*

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