

## Unspeakable Leaking - Humaira Abid at Artxchange

March 9, 2011 | Visual Art | by Jen Graves

**Red | ArtXchange | Tues–Sat. Through April 30**

Continuing the cavalcade of great shows by female artists this month—including Elena del Rivero at Lawrimore Project and Melissa Pokorny at Platform Gallery—is Pakistani-born Humaira Abid's stunning collection of carved-wood sculptures and intricate drawings, *Red*, at ArtXchange. (Two years ago, Abid relocated from Lahore, Pakistan's cultural capital and where she went to art school, to Seattle, where she and her husband live about half the year.) *Red* is unmistakably about miscarriage. It's fearlessly direct. Adult shirts made of wood hang from a closet bar; lying on the floor below is a onesie, also made of wood, but stained horribly red. A row of nine baby bottles in bowls hangs on a wall with nipples facing outward. The third from left is red; the title is  $9-3=0$ .

Pacifiers appear repeatedly as symbols. Set against the star and crescent moon of the Pakistani flag, they're metaphors not only for comfort but also for silencing. Their mouthpieces are seen stretching and snaking into a sink drain on the surface of a kitchen cutting board—or, stained red, dangling from a drain in a pregnant torso, suggesting an unspeakable leaking.

Abid's links between the traumatized female body and Pakistani nationalism suggest the embattlement over reproductive freedoms that exists most of the world over—the United States certainly not excepted. But the work is powerfully personal, too—and it's impossible not to notice that the same body that has plainly struggled to create children has no trouble with the labor involved in finely carved sculpture. Red is the color of prosperity and power in many cultures, but this overriding feeling is of failure and horror, the kind of bleeding that turns life to death. ★



'Hung by the Freedom of Choice'



'Lingering Prayer'



'Sculptors Drawing Plays'