LEGACY OF LIFE

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requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

by
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My thesis is composed of ceramic narratives based on family legends or memories and life lessons of my experiences directly. The forms are created from photographs, either of family members or images that help recreate the experiences from my memories. The forms are sculptural and are finished in Amaco Velvet Underglazes. My pieces seek to not merely describe a story or person but make an attempt to focus on the lasting impression or emotional impact these people and events made on my own personal experience.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my parents, Bill and Alice Demastus, for celebrating and supporting me throughout my life and for giving me the opportunity to realize my fullest potential. My grandparents, John Nicholas Powley, Margret Stevens, King Sullivan Demastus and Rose Pearl Demastus, for their stories and what they have meant to me. God Bless and keep you. I thank my brother and sister in law, Lee and Vickie Demastus, and my sister and brother in law, Lisa and Peter Oyler, for their support and enthusiasm.

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Legacy of Life

The days of my childhood were steeped in story telling. The long tradition of oral history was passed on though my parents. Even now, as we gather as a family, the stories live on to educate, entertain, and remember those who came before us. As an adult, with children of my own, I am still drawn to the telling and receiving of a good story. Because of this, my thesis work involves ceramic narratives. The forms that I have created are based on family legends or memories and life lessons which come from my experiences directly.

The forms that compose my ceramic pieces are created from photographs of family members or of objects that I have researched based on images that I imagined when recalling the story. All images are generational or era appropriate.

As I moved into my thesis work I wanted to concentrate primarily on sculptural forms. The work progressed from images that were carved in low relief and pieced together in an effort to describe parts of a story to a more simplified image of one person or object based on the main character or point of a story. These sculptures show a greater range of sizes from previous work to enhance the charming qualities or dramatic impact of the subject matter.

The sculptures are in full color using Amaco Velvet Underglazes. Moving away from monochromatic browns and into a variety of realistic colors makes the people and objects more life like and animated. The choice to leave the under glaze as the finished coat was deliberate. The lack of high gloss glaze adds a quality of nostalgia since the stories are from past relationships and experiences. The effect is somewhat like a colored black and white photograph. Each piece has no less than three applications of color in an effort to show
subtle values of one color and the illusion of depth and texture. The surfaces are meant to appear a bit aged and worn.

I was first intrigued by the minimal use of color when creating a sense of reverence for family stories, the importance of lessons learned, and a view into the past. However, the posture of the figures, facial expressions, and the attention to detail on each piece enables the added color to support rather than detract from the importance of each story.

The selection of which images I chose in order to describe a story has also evolved over time. Originally my thought process was to root every story to a location and create a collection of images of that setting. Although the locations have some significance, my thesis work evolves to make no reference to a location but rather on specific people or events. I feel a lesser number of images emphasizes their importance and seems more visually dramatic. Additionally, my pieces seek to not merely describe a story or person but make an attempt to focus on the lasting impression or emotional impact these people and events made on my own personal experience.

As with any generation, we live through times of crisis and times of joy. What I feel I have taken time to appreciate through this process is how others dealt with these times and how their strength and determination have become mine as I live and make my own stories.

The ability to recreate this oral tradition with my hands in a concrete and artistic way has been extremely meaningful. These stories are my legacy of life to pass on to my children in the hope that they will learn to appreciate their heritage, benefit from our experiences, and that they will continue to tell the stories.
Figure 1

Installation View
Figure 2

Three Mile Island
Figure 3
Detour
Figure 4

Shit with the Chickens
Figure 5

The Confederate General
Figure 6

Union Infantry Soldier
Figure 7

Rose Pearl Sutton