

The Connection between Family:

A representation of generational love and strength between women

Lorah Beth Currin

The Creative Endeavor/ Portfolio Description

Beth Blake

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Introduction

During the beginning of my undergraduate art career, I was introduced to several artists who had their own voice. They could create work that was cohesive and dealt with a dramatic societal issue that they deeply related to. I felt isolated because I did not have a strong voice. I wondered if there was anything in my life that I could draw from as inspiration for my art. My work was assignment based with no unified idea. I experienced a breakthrough in the second year of school when I created a painting of my grandpa for a project about memory. He had recently been diagnosed with Alzheimers. I painted him from memory playing the banjo in my grandparents' home. From then on, I realized that my work did not have to be about a huge societal issue. I became inspired by artists like Bisa Butler who let their family inspire their work.

This exhibition is motivated by that realization. I am painting a series of portraits of the women in my family. My work is inspired by the connection and community between those women. These pieces embody the morals, strength, truths and love passed down through each generation. I create these portraits as a quilt-like representation of the women in my family. The portraits are intertwined with each other and include nostalgic objects from the subject's life. They are not a remembrance of something once departed, but rather a blanket of comfort that will remain after one is gone. Each work is created with oil paint, fabric, and embroidery stitching. As they are created, they morph and include various pieces of the subject's life.

These pieces push the boundaries of what is defined as a painting or drawing. By using embroidery thread as another medium, I am allowing a meaningful connection from my mother and grandmother to weave its way into each portrait. The medium and

materials become a part of the conversation and connect each piece to each other. My work also pushes the boundary of the typical square composition and wall display. Some pieces will be displayed on furniture or on the floor to better show the comfort of family and the home.

Background

While creating my work, I have been heavily influenced by Bisa Butler who is a current artist who creates quilt portraits of African Americans. Although she does not use paint in her current work, she is known for how she uses fabric to “paint” by separating the colors to create form. Another artist that I am inspired by is Patrick Quarm who paints on fabric. Both of these artists are heavily influenced by their childhood and other people’s stories. Patrick Quarm decides to only paint friends and family members and Bisa Butler researches each of her subjects to know about their lives before she creates the portrait.

These artists are pushing what is known in the art world as painting and connect with each subject of the portrait they complete. I am drawn to painting people I know and using my connections with others to create something innovative and new.

Purpose and Explanation of the Project

My project refers to a connection between the women in my family and the things that they have taught me. My work is meant to be viewed in an installation format in which the viewer feels as though they are inside a home created by these women. Both my mother and grandmother were first home builders, mothers, and wives. My goal

through this show is to reveal that love and strength in women can coexist even in the typical household roles.

There will be one portrait of me flanked by two portraits of my mother and then two portraits of my grandmother. Two different sides of them will be represented: one of them working and one of them relaxing. Each image will have pockets of fabric that hold important objects from their life. Connected to and coming from each portrait will be fabric that flows onto the floor and connects each piece to another. Each of these tentacles that protrude from the pieces will have something that connects each woman to another. For example, my mom and I both share a love of art. Her portrait will have a piece of fabric that comes down and leads to paintbrushes and a paint palette that then leads back to my portrait.

Approach

Each of my portraits are painted onto fabric with oil paint after the fabric has been sealed with modge podge. Then each portrait has other patches of fabric on it that are also painted. Embroidery stitching is added to each piece as line work on top of the images. I intentionally let the fabric show through in some areas of the work and use the fabric as an inspiration for the color and stitching of the piece.

Closure

In conclusion, I desire my work to communicate a connection between family and the strength of women. I want my work to push boundaries of conventional painting and create an experience of a home for the viewer.