Abstract

"Anamnesis" is a remembrance of the past and, in Platonism philosophy, is also a recollection of ideas that the soul knew in a previous existence.

For my body of work, I am attempting to piece together perceptions I have of my parents and myself into a coherent whole. My mother, by my own choice, has not been an active participant in my life for nearly a decade and many of my memories proceeding and following that time are fractured, incorrect, or gone entirely. This lack of personal recollection often makes it difficult to recall why I believe a certain truth or trust the validity of my younger self’s actions, and I often rely on my father to fill in the blanks when I try to piece the past together.

Family, its ties, and how mental illness can carry over and corrupt those ties play major roles in my work. Ivy, for example, is a favorite plant of my mother's, and symbolizes in my pieces the clinging and destructive force of her mental illness. I believe her to be fairly unwitting in that destruction - and a victim of it herself- but nevertheless the main perpetrator of the turmoil, hurt, and confusion that characterized my life until recent years. It was by recognizing that force, learning its rules, and eventually overcoming it with the aid of my father that I was able to escape it and begin the process of undoing the long-term effects it will have on me in the future.

While distance from my mother is ultimately what enabled my recovery process, it has also rendered her little more than a concept in my mind. I struggled with how to portray her as vague yet threatening, familiar yet uncomfortable, and from there, how to portray my father in stark contrast to her. By executing each piece in a framework of visually comparing and contrasting my parents and myself to each other, I found a dialogue of identity and who I tend to align myself with. I used one color each for my larger pieces to assist in these comparisons, with my solo portraits of my mother and myself being opposite - gold and purple respectively - and the double portraits of myself with each of my parents also having opposite colors. I also rendered my mother using more 2 suggestive gestures to assist in her looking more spectral than physical, and my father and myself with more descriptive and literal line.

I looked to artists such as Edgar Jerin, who also focuses on images on familial strife and uses high contrast lighting on his subjects to add drama and discomfort to his pieces. Tamie Beldue, who draws portraits in very light and ephemeral atmospheres, informed the background elements in my pieces, especially those of my mother.

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