

Meghan Sullivan

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My current body of ceramic sculpture is heavily influenced by my research of classical Roman portraiture, its use as a narrative device of power, and its indication of the passage of time. When I was in Rome, time was a strong presence and the evidence of previous ages was obvious. Living with the layers of history and visiting museums of antiquities raised questions as to what is chosen to be preserved, what is valued and the ramifications of these decisions on future generations. There is a need to acknowledge power structures as we frame our personal and cultural histories. Portraiture tells a story but we need to remember that the story has been altered and subverted by time.

Additionally, the idea of fragmented or false narrative is influenced by observations of the effect that dementia had on my father. With this disease, the narrative thread of life had been cut and memories were not accurate. My father needed his personal narrative reaffirmed every day. The question of what kind of man he had been is no longer known but had to be related to him by others. As time passed, he inhabited a new and different type of personality with only shades of his former self. Just as our understanding of history can change with time, who we are can be fundamentally altered by the ageing process. By creating works that are then presented as artifacts and icons, the narrative of the past is changed by our present interpretations.

As my work has progressed, it has been influenced by the on-going Covid pandemic and the losses sustained. The work has become less figurative and has more floral elements. I see my work as continuing to use the figure with floral or other sculptural elements. The repetition of an object that then has a subtle color shift occurring is an idea that I have been exploring in public installations. I see this type of work continuing. My ideas about marking the passage of time and how we and memories are altered by time continues to fuel my research, but it has become more subtle and abstracted.