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IP Section 005

“El Huevo Que Se Pegó Al Sartén”/ “The Egg That Stuck To The Pan”

In 1944 my grandfather, Julio Wilhelm Soto, was arrested for miscegenation (mixing of the races) in the state of Arizona. My grandfather had dark skin and was born in Puerto Rico. My grandmother, Delia, had lighter skin and came from a Mexican Indian tribe, the Yaqui Indians. My grandfather was living at military base in Arizona when he met my grandmother. When they decided to get married my grandfather went AWOL (absent without official leave) because at the time men were required to seek permission from their officers in order to get married and knew that his superiors would not approve the union. My grandparents fled to Nevada to get married and upon returning to Arizona my grandfather was arrested, jailed and discharged from the United States military. My parents, who also have an interracial marriage, were married in 1972. While interracial marriage was not common in the 1970s it was broadly more accepted than in the 1940s due to miscegenation becoming illegal in 1967 as a result of the civil rights movement.

“El Huevo Que Se Pegó Al Sartén” or “The Egg That Stuck To The Pan” is full-scale installation accompanied by video and sound that constructs an interpretation of American society and culture in the late 1960’s and early to mid 1970’s. The installation is a fully furnished living room comprised of furniture and decorative artifacts from the time period. The interior design of the room is an exaggerated representation of the era. Vividly colored furniture and accessories along with a plethora of wall decorations such as paintings, weavings, and photographs create an overwhelming and out of the ordinary sense throughout the installation. A series of short films projected inside of the space and

become amalgamated with the various decorations on the walls. The videos are combination of footage shot on 8mm film by my father from 1968 thru 1974 and new footage shot using digital technology. The films explore themes of vice, vanity, death, love, and the civil rights movement parallel to an account of everyday life. Abstract ambient music supplements the videos and installation by creating an intimate yet eerie energy in the room.

My interest in creating an interpretation of the 1960's and 1970's comes from my fascination in family accounts, American history, collecting, recreating and preservation. I come from an ethnically diverse background and many of my relatives have experienced a great deal of discrimination and struggle that, decades later, have had a profound affect my on ideals and character. I have first hand experience with racial discrimination and know the difficulty my parents had to go through at times due to their marriage. I am interested in understanding the time period when my parents were my age. Comparing and contrasting our life experiences is captivating for me because it allows met to better understand myself because, after all, I am a product of these two people. The 1960's and 1970's were a revolutionary time for change in society and culture in the United States and I plan to explore various themes of the period in my project.

My understanding of American history comes from history classes, anthropology and culture courses, movies, books and first hand accounts from my family. To me the 1960's represent a radical change in American society from monotonous conservative paranoia to an optimistic attempt to obtain equality, individualism, and to end corruption. The youth became more important than ever in deciding the fate of our nation. In the 1970's Americans became distrustful of the government and the nation's widespread

anxiety and hopelessness resulted. Events such as the first moon landing, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, President Nixon's exposure and resignation and the counter-culture movements have all served as historical inspiration to me while researching for my piece. Numerous films such as *The Long Goodbye*, *Easy Rider*, *The Graduate*, *The Deerhunter*, *Taxi Driver*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Mean Streets*, *Network*, and *Apocalypse Now* have all provided me with thematical influence as well as inspiration for costuming and interior design for my films and installation. I have always been drawn to movies from the 1970s because I find them to be more inventive and profound than current films. Films were often slower paced and had more fluid, socially relevant topics. The movies captured the essence and struggles of the era rather than being made for pure entertainment. Many movies nowadays are fast paced, unintelligible and made for business, not art. Because of the drastic changes in culture that are constantly occurring, collecting objects is a way for me to gain an understanding of a particular time period and appreciate the differences in comparison to the present.

Artists I find most inspirational in my process are Pepon Osorio, David Lynch, and Jonathon Caouette. I have made video installations in the past that experimented with projection onto objects but struggled to find balance of importance between the video and the object being projected onto. I found installation artist Pepon Osorio's work very encouraging while collecting furniture and décor for my installation. His piece "Badge of Honor" is a particularly influential piece to me. The installation consists of two fully finished rooms, located side by side. One room is an elaborate, excessively decorated teenage boys room and the other is a bleak jail cell. Interviews of a father and

son are projected onto a wall in each installation. I am always amazed with Pepon's ability to transform a vacant space into full, lively, intimate rooms. Powerful narratives are created through his choice of furniture, interior design and overwhelming amount of décor in his installations.

My installation provides the audience with a physical space to explore and acts as a portal into a familiar, yet distant time period. By using authentic pieces from the 1960's and 1970's the installation will provide a realistic interpretation of an important period of time. I chose a living room, because the living room represents the comfortable intimacy of family, it is the room where television that displayed significant societal events are viewed, and where a person displays personal objects meant for others to see. My living room installation furniture consists of a couch, a couple of chairs, a cube coffee table, a side table, a decorative lamp, an oak chest and electronics such as a record player, a radio receiver and speakers. All of the furniture was researched and inspired from the sets of movies and television shows of the era. An excess of popular décor such as brightly painted walls, paintings, photographs and weavings cover the walls. Blank frames precisely placed on the walls will serve as small screens on which my series of films will be projected.

A great deal of influence for the films I create were drawn from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* series and Jonathon Caouette's film *Tarnation*. David Lynch has a very particular manner of combining mundane, normal seeming settings with very bizarre, absurd aspects. A few main locations of the series are a hotel, a diner and the police station. His sets have a sense of normalcy but feel eerie or unusual at the same time. Sometimes an odd photo placed on a fireplace mantel, a discolored rug or other

decoration offset any innocence and makes the space feel tainted. In Caoutette's documentary, *Tarnation*, he combines old footage with new. From a young age Caouette began filming himself and the people around him. He documented his life for nearly two decades, not knowing he it would later used for a documentary. New footage, shot specifically for the documentary is used throughout the film to put the older footage into perspective. In my films I use both 8mm video footage from my father's documentation of his life from 1968-1974 and new footage, made to look old in order to create my interpretation of events of the time period.

My series of films are an abstract reflection and commentary of the transformations and events that occurred during this period of time. Footage shot using an 8mm camera will be displayed along with the films I have shot. My footage will be edited to appear as though it is 8mm film. There is a unique quality to 8mm video that digital technology cannot satisfy. 8mm film has a particular aesthetic because of the graininess, altered motion, and diluted color. The appearance of the films makes the video feel cared for, nostalgic, dreamy and one of a kind.

By having a real life account in comparison to larger events happening in the time period, history and family records intertwine, creating a concise narration. My father's films present scenes of college life, a date with mom, their honeymoon, life Puerto Rico, a high school football game, and other experiences. Watching and digitizing these 8mm films became an important family experience this year. My dad is a shy person and never exposes too much about himself, even to me. Watching these films allowed me to see a new side of my father. In a way I forced him to expose himself to me by sharing his films. While we watched the films he narrated who people were, what was happening and

what year it must have been. I could see memories flooding back to him as we watched his tapes and at times he seemed uncomfortable and on the verge of crying. One night after digitizing a couple films he had recorded in Puerto Rico in 1968 he told me that it really upsets him having to watch all of these memories play out. He explained that most of the people in the films are now dead. I saw longing and sorrow in his face that night and felt guilty for forcing him to watch these tapes that he probably would have never recovered from the basement had I not asked to see them.

The music that accompanies the films will recreate the awkward, uneasiness I felt while digitizing the tapes with my father. Low drowning and unrecognizable instruments will create an eerie, dark sense to the video installation. The installation is an invitation for viewers to compare their memories with the projected memories being displayed. The juxtaposition of the vibrant living room décor, the beautiful colors of the films and ominous, unfamiliar drowning of the music will create an unsettling, mysterious experience.

While I do not have first hand experience of the 1960's or 1970's my interpretation is well researched and will provide the audience with an engulfing experience by combining installation, video and sound. This time period is so influential to me and is an extremely important time in American history. I feel my opinion of it will provide viewers with a new perspective, interest or understanding of the era. For those who have experienced the time period, my hope is to provide them with memory, nostalgia, an open mind and appreciation for their life experiences.

