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Underwater Soldier

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UNDERWATER SOLDIER

by

Ana J. Hosier

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

Andrew Casto
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2018

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

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The goal of my honors project was to research, learn and challenge myself to hand build an approximation of an almost life size figurative sculpture of a Terracotta Soldier that would be a foundation for the regeneration of coral. Previously, my ceramic endeavors had not included pieces this large of size, nor one of a figure. I began creating abstract coral pieces because of my strong belief in advocating against the destruction of the coral ecosystem in part due to the effects of global warming. My project is an effort to illustrate this theme and also gave me an opportunity to explore my Chinese heritage.

While at the National Clay Conference in Pennsylvania, in March, I discovered new techniques and methods in building figural sculpture and I felt I could apply those methods to my Honors Project. Using buff stoneware clay, I first tried to create the figure out of one inch thick rolled slabs. However, that was not as easy as the demonstration made it look. So, I switched to the technique that I previously had learned which was coiled hand building. I researched to learn more about how to build the soldier and to make it look as realistic as possible. The coral was easier to create. Using a pneumatic extruder, I was able to extrude coils and hand build the coral pieces. Next, I planned to attach them to the soldier by slipping and scoring, which is using more wet clay to bind each piece together. I allowed the soldier and the coral to completely dry and painted it with watered down Iron Oxide to give it a reddish terracotta color. I preheated the bone dry soldier in a kiln for 24 hours at 200 degrees fahrenheit. before firing it to cone 1, 2,079 degrees fahrenheit. I made a lava glaze recipe that mimics a coral-like texture and fired the coral to a cone 6 firing, 2,232 degrees fahrenheit .

The Honors Project gave me the opportunity to realize that building figural sculptures is the greatest challenge I have faced in my ceramics studies. My concept of building with slabs was not successful because they were not strong enough to support the other parts of the soldier during the building process. Using coils and hand building each layer was more successful. I ended up deciding not to attach the coral and instead I had him sit in a reef of coral because the coral looked very odd growing off the soldier. I had some difficulties during the firing process, parts happened to break in the kiln, so I had to fix the front of the armor on the soldier by using epoxy and Bondo, a body filler, to patch the holes. This project taught me which techniques did not work and I learned what could be successful when my initial attempts failed and, eventually, I was able to reach my final goal. From this project I also discovered a lot about the real Terracotta Soldiers, such as how they were were built. They were essentially built in many separate sections and then later assembled together. Since this project didn't turn out exactly how I wanted, I would like to try to recreate another piece this large in size and try to avoid it breaking in the kiln.