Memoria

Sarah Jesup
Orchids bound my three paternal grandparents together. Phil Jesup was bitten by the orchid bug first. My namesake, Sarah Stifler Jesup, caught the bug after they married in 1959. After their divorce, Phil married another orchidist, Ann Lauer Jesup, in 1973. Together, Phil and Ann bred orchids, wrote and edited articles, and judged competitions. They were highly regarded in the orchid community, which, like their generation, is now in its twilight.

As I began this project, Ann, my last surviving paternal grandparent, was preparing to move from the family house of 55 years to a retirement community. In this time of transition, recalling memories and learning more about my grandparents felt especially important.

This elegy in etchings for my grandparents and the life’s work that connected them creates a metaphorical portrait of them by illustrating a series of defining moments in the arc of their lives. Each print tells a short story, and the short stories connect to give a more complete portrait of their lives and their hobby (or obsession). I only experienced the tail end of that journey, but in retracing the earlier steps I have come to understand family in a way I hadn’t before.

The images are personal in scale, reflecting the closeness of family connections. Each print contains two layers. The first is my orchid drawing with a handwritten story and the second is a family photo: together they form a snapshot in time. The colors of my prints mirror those found in nature. The first images in the series are produced using a laser to etch my drawing onto a 9 x 9-inch plexiglass plate, printed on white Lennox paper. Other images are created using paper lithography techniques and watercolor.

The style of the drawings was inspired by my grandmother, Sarah, whose incredibly detailed botanical drawings are displayed in my parents’ house. In part, this is my way of carrying on the family tradition. I’m not growing orchids, but I’m following in Sarah’s footsteps and transforming this family fascination into another form.
Great Cattleya

A showy orchid - not his usual style

But he worked with what the situation afforded, when the philly orchid odyssey began, the corsage market crashed, making collectible orchids like this one plentiful for the young hobbyist.

Great Cattleya
(9.25" x 9.5") Etching, 2019
Epidendrum ciliare

On its own it doesn't look like much.

But it was in my mom's wedding bouquet, in my grandma's bouquet, and in my other grandma's bouquet.

Sometimes the little things mean a lot.

(9.25" x 9.25") Etching, 2019
Lepanthes brownii

Insignificant in appearance—

The quest to document this Lepanthes launched two journeys to Jamaica.

Although they didn’t find the orchid, the search on Mt. Diablo was an adventure Phil & my dad would never forget.

Lepanthes brownii
(7.44” x 7.56”) Lithography, 2020
Ecuadorian Telipogon

Retirement can open doors.

It gave him the opportunity to take his orchid collecting to new heights.

Phil lived every day to the fullest—He was consumed with learning everything there was to know about orchids.
Epidendrum endresii

"Fox Den"
FROM A SMALL SEED, A MIGHTY COMMUNITY GREW.

PHIL WAS ENDLESSLY FASCINATED BY THE CHALLENGE OF GETTING EACH ORCHID SPECIES TO THRIVE.

SHARING HIS EXPERTISE, PHIL GAVE THE ORCHID COMMUNITY THE SAME ATTENTION & CARE HE GAVE HIS ORCHIDS.

Epidendrum endresii
(7.75” x 11.56”) Lithography, ink, and watercolor, 2020
Neocogniauxia hexaptera

(7.32” x 12.5”) Lithography, ink, and watercolor, 2020

“Do not go gentle into that good night” -Dylan Thomas
Acknowledgements

Memoria is in loving memory of Sarah S. Jesup and Phil Jesup.

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Thank you to Professor Kim and Anu Goedhart for teaching me everything I know about printmaking.

To the class of 2020 and my fellow art majors: I’m so proud of us, and I’m so sorry it ended this way. Our four years were bookended by heartbreak: our first semester saw what many experienced to be a traumatic presidential election that shook the college and America, and our last semester was tragically upended by the pandemic. These current events were formative to our experience of Haverford and will forever shape our memories of our time here. [Excerpt from the Clerk]