

if ART Gallery in Columbia, SC

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Dredging The Bottom Life & Death – Life & Death Daily Choice.

At the same time, there were *Old Skool Krispy Kream, Hanging With My Family* or *Half A Brain, Still Going Strong*, titles that suggested resilience and a life not without joy. Still, “how’s Peter doing,” the question often asked in my gallery, usually comes with worried looks and body language indicating the anticipation of bad news. For the longest time, the news seldom was great. At best, it was not ungood.

That has changed. Since April 2014, Lenzo has had six seizures rather than the 30 or more he would have had prior to that for a comparable period. He is physically much stronger. He looks great. He’s more alert than he has been in a decade. Rather than counting the low number of old epileptics, he jokes about playing basketball with his son, even though one would advise against that. There are still severe issues, such as back pain, poor sleep and milder manifestations of everything that ailed Lenzo before. But nine months in Detroit last year to help his mom regroup after his dad had died put Lenzo under new medical care. Different medication, including high CBD hemp oil, new treatments, physical therapy and a dramatic reduction of opiate painkillers has done wonders.

And so the vast majority of the two-dozen sculptures in *Peter Lenzo: New Works 2013 – 2015* were produced in 2015. The sheer amount of post-Detroit work shows the “second wind” Lenzo was hoping to relate in the exhibition title.

Lenzo’s vastly improved health has had an impact on his work. The ability to produce more, and with more control, allows him to explore a wider range of approaches to his typical, heavily adorned ceramic heads steeped in the Southern face jug tradition. Much of his production is facilitated by Lenzo’s friend and colleague-in-clay Ed Bryan, who throws the basic, blank forms that give Lenzo the starting point for his work. “Ed has been inundating me, and that does two things. First, it makes me wonder how I am going to use the forms. Second, it has really motivated me to make more. I can still throw a little but not nearly as well as I used to. It’s something I have lost, so I have a lot of respect for it. When I used to throw them myself, and a couple of them dried out, I figured I could replace them. But now they are more precious.”

Because of better control, many of Lenzo’s recent ceramic heads look more “regular,” more precise, even though he makes sure to leave facial proportions slightly off. He’s been making more torso pieces or figures from the waist up instead of limiting himself to heads, as he had in recent years. “Ed brought a bunch of cylinder forms, so that got me to make more of the torso pieces.”

Lenzo now puts more ceramic shards and fewer whole objects in and on his sculptures, in part to be less obvious about their symbolic narratives. The origins of many shards – say, from his parents’ home – still give them the autobiographical quality



“Red Mary” by Peter Lenzo

typical of his work, but viewers have to dig deeper to understand and focus more on form and shape to appreciate the sculptures. And Lenzo has to make them aesthetically compelling because he can’t rely solely on objects to tell the story.

“I really like those shards,” Lenzo says. That he used them more long ago occurred to him during an exhibition earlier this year of ceramic heads he made in 2000–2002 with his then very young son Joe. “The older pieces were nothing but shards. When it’s a shard, it loses history for most people, but I think the broken pieces tell the same story. Harder to decipher, but in some ways much richer.”

In other ways, too, much of Lenzo’s current work is sparser. No longer does he have to put everything in only a few sculptures, telling the whole story at once. “When I wasn’t making that much, I was spending more time on them and put much more stuff

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October 25

Kristy Bishop, Charleston
Eileen Blyth, Columbia
Michael Cassidy, West Columbia
Colleen Critcher, Florence
Tonya Gregg, Hopkins
Tina Hirsig, Charleston
Donna Hurt, Charleston
Jason Kendall, Columbia
Shannon Rae Lindsey, Columbia
Stephanie Shively, Columbia
Michelle Van Parys, Charleston
Katie Walker, Greenville
Paul Yanko Greenville

Part II
November 5 –
December 20

Aldwyth, Hilton Head
Brant Barrett, Surfside Beach
David Boatwright, Charleston
Michaela Pilar Brown, Columbia
Yvette Cummings, Conway
Stacey Davidson, Rock Hill
Lauren Greenwald, Columbia
Herb Parker, Charleston
Kristi Ryba, Charleston
Lee Sipe, Columbia
Enid Williams, Greenville
David Yaghjian, Columbia

701 Center for Contemporary Art

Part I: Opening Reception: Friday, September 11, 2015, 7-9 pm

Part II: Opening Reception: Thursday, November 12, 2015, 7-9 pm

Reception free for 701 CCA members, \$5 suggested donation for non-members

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