

Taking of a Soul

This is the expression/posture of having no more to give. Being forced from a life of freedom and the destruction of your culture. What else can be taken? Even though you struggle to maintain a connection to your identity it becomes the past – the future is a better way, its prosperity and the past is lost and then cleansed. Only survival will keep the culture and stories alive.

The figure is stripped of regalia;
No social status- No merits of bravery—Nothing of honor—Nothing of identity

The posture maintains a sense of spirituality. His wrists are bound, although the lashes are such that they could be removed. His lashes are continuous- connecting him to Mother Earth, the creator and his culture, but he is now contained within a small box– the future – prosperity– reservation. Does he remain bound by his conviction?

The skulls below are all iconic and important symbols of the Native American culture; ancestors, buffalo, grizzly bear, wolf and eagle. Not until sculpting this piece did I see a larger picture. Each of these icons were driven to near extinction (the removal, relocation and elimination) to make way for the future – that better way. The cast off medal represents the peace and friendship gifted by government representatives.

Even though this sculpture was inspired by the Native American's journey, it holds value and is a reflection for anyone struggling to maintain and preserve a connection to their past. By no means may it be comparable to the atrocities suffered by the Native Americans, but there is a heartfelt depth of loss. We as Americans seem to do well at cleansing our immediate past by making it socially unacceptable.

PURE FREEDOM

One cannot think of the Plains and Mountain Indians of the West without the horse. They are woven into their life and identity. On one of our journeys while traveling on a two lane highway across reservation land. As we came over a rise, a young boy was riding bare back along the fence line at full gallop. This was a beautiful and amazing sight to see. The ease at which this boy rode as his horse charged forward, that image will stay with me forever.

What evolved was Pure Freedom, a sculpture that expresses; confidence, skill, trust, understanding, relationships, control and spirituality all wrapped up in an adolescent. The posture not just riding with no hands, his arms cast back, eyes closed—a confident—daredevil—free spirit. My connection to this concept was when I road my bicycle with no hands, which I know is not the same as being on the back of a 1,000lb animal.

The horse – large Appaloosa, which the Nez Perce were noted for with a large body – Roman nose and rat tail. The horse is gelded to suggest the Nez Perce's selective breeding skills. Something that was not a common practice among the Native Americans. The horse is portrayed in a cantor – to express an ease, enjoyment of experience, a love of freedom, and a special bond. The geometric base supports the sculpture, but more importantly is a window to freedom, no hoof touching the ground.

One of the great elements of creating is how happenstance can play such a critical role in bringing a sculpture to fruition. I struggled with sculpting the young Native American boy, there were few historical photos in my research. As happenstance would have it I met Shane and his son CJ, the perfect Nez Perce model.

The sculpture represents everything the Native American's fought and struggled not to lose or sacrifice; Simple and Pure Freedom.