

Duality

In the United States, there are many families in which one or both parents originally moved here from other countries. Children born into these families are Americans, but they often have a strong cultural pull towards a foreign country bias. People in this situation often have interesting stories to tell. The artist, Maureen Costantino, is the only child of an Italian father who arrived on these shores in 1948 and an Italian-American mother from a largely Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY. Ms. Costantino grew up as an American kid in a very American community in upstate NY, but under the guidance and tutelage of her patriarchal and heavily influential Italian father. She learned from an early age to navigate between the often confusing waters of needing to be American because she lived in America and conforming to her father's Italian-from-Italy family social norms.

This exhibition explores the artist's duality in a blended American and Italian family, as well as her relationships with the world outside the family border. She mostly uses the common denominator of food, which is very important to Italians, whether they were born in Italy or elsewhere, to tell her story. The body of work comprises functional food-related and sculptural ceramic pieces that illustrate anecdotal vignettes into Ms. Costantino's impressions gathered along the way. Fruits and vegetables figure heavily into the designs, which are colorful, bright, and happy. Many pieces feature the Majolica technique, which is heavily used in creating Italian and other Mediterranean ceramics. Majolica is contrasted with other techniques, sometimes on the same piece, to further give the impression of duality.

Maureen Costantino answers to many descriptions: yes, Italian-American, but also only child, wife, working mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, career professional, retiree, lifelong artist. In the past five years, her work as an artist has celebrated the exuberance of hard-earned freedom to exclusively pursue one's own interests. In doing so, she has leveraged her experience in photography, painting, the graphic arts, and writing to explore the exciting new world of three-dimensional ceramic arts, an area she had previously never considered. She mostly creates whimsical, one-of-a-kind functional pieces for use in the home but is also taking an interest in sculptural forms. Ceramics has become Ms. Costantino's new and ongoing palette of choice and vehicle for artistic communication.