Memories of childhood

Yun-Ryoung Lee

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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

By

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PREFACE

Most people have memories of their past. These could be good or bad memories. They could be about big events or small happenings. No matter how delicate the feeling or great the impression, we have special moments that we would like to remember. To remember these moments we might write, take pictures, or engrave images on our minds.

A clear sky, a boisterous laughter, and playing games with friends-- these are the memories of my childhood, and they make me feel special. Through this thesis I want to share my childhood with everybody and show them my memories. Jewelry is my means of communication.

I want to thank everybody who has allowed me to have beautiful memories in the U.S.A. I specially would like to thank friends who I met at R.I.T.: Lolly and Ong, Conney and Kevin and Alex and Mark. Without their help, I would have had a hard time in the U.S.A. I would like to extend special thanks to Ernesto who always helped me write a nice paper. Of course, I would also like to give thanks to L. Urso, M. Stanitz and R. Hirsch for their critical eyes, helpful inputs. Most of all, I appreciate my parents for their patience and understanding. Without my parents' help it would have been impossible to make this thesis. I would like to give special thank to my husband who gave me the needed push and encouraged me from the beginning. Finally, I would like to give special thanks to my son In-Young who is growing up a healthy and inspiration boy.
INTRODUCTION

As society changes the concept of jewelry, the value of jewelry has changed. Unlike food, shelter, or clothing, jewelry is not essential for survival, yet it has existed since time immemorial as tokens of power and self expression. Until the early twentieth century, precious materials were often used in the jewelry trade. Therefore, jewelry was considered as wealth; its role was to exhibit a person's financial status and position in society. That is, it remained either a status symbol or secure form of investment. However, in this day there is increasing interest in the creative individuality of art jewelry. This area of jewelry design is not only generally more affordable, but also more expressive of artistic trends. The eventual importance and intensity of art jewelry is much the same as that of a painting or sculpture.

The concept of jewelry has changed for both jewelers and wearers. Most people have a primal urge to possess a small, tactile object with very personal associations. No matter what the material value of this object may be, its fundamental purpose lies in its spiritual and emotional concept. With their body, their clothes, and their jewelry, these people convey certain messages. Moreover, consciously and subconsciously, we allow other people to conclude, in a glance, what kind of persons we are. We also try to differentiate ourselves from the crowd and stand out as individuals with the sort of jewelry we wear. Therefore, it is very important for both jewelers and wearers to understand the fundamental meaning and function of all forms of jewelry. This is as powerful and essential to the individual today as it ever was.
MOTIVATION

I sometimes ask myself, "Is jewelry art? Is it possible for jewelry to reach the level of other art forms, like painting and sculpture?" I simply answer "Yes." Painting and sculpture are art forms without question, but jewelry is often labeled as "craft" without consideration of the possibility that it could be art. However, there is no boundary in any particular art media. I try to express what is in my mind through jewelry in the same way that painters use canvas and paint to transfer their imaginative conceptions and sculptors carve marble to complete their works. I make jewelry that can stand on its own as interesting autonomous artifacts.

All art is a means of communication, and jewelry gives us a means of expressing intellectual and emotional concepts. Nowadays, both jewelers and wearers allow jewelry to be used as a symbol of self-expression. The fundamental purpose of this thesis is:

1. To make jewelry which symbolizes what is in mind, and to communicate these thoughts to the wearers.

2. To show people how jewelry can be an "art form." Through my jewelry, I want to convey my true voice. This true voice is inspired by an experience from my past. My jewelry will evoke past experiences from my wearers' memories. Hopefully, these memories spread smiles on their faces. That is the kind of jewelry that I want to show.
JEWELRY AS A EXPRESSION OF MEMORIES

Most people have memories and experiences that remain from their childhood. That is why the old poets seem to evoke the muse of memory as something wholly outside themselves. Similarly, I was "trying to say something" through my jewelry. The jewelry that I work with reminds me of my childhood.

Childhood----

Everyone has their own childhood, and mine was based on doing everything with nature and spending most of the time playing in and exploring the surrounding environment. The following thought illustrates my childhood experience.

Clouds, wind, and sky
Stones, dirt, and a piece of wood
Friendship and fraternity
It gave me more than it had.

I named a set of ten pins that represent my childhood, "Land game." The first set of four pins represents the first stage of the game (Fig -- 1). In this stage, we start with a small piece of land and a stone as a tool to obtain land. As one flicks the stone forward, one establishes a parameter of what is to become his or hers territory. A line is traced from the place where the stone uses to lie to where it currently lies. This process continues until all the parameters are established and the territory is defined by lines. The next three pins express the middle stage of the game (Fig -- 2). Now, the game becomes boisterous. Keen competition for land and complex linear patterns characterize the climax.
Finally, everything is quiet. No one is within sight and everyone goes home. There are no clear lines and the game is over. The last three pins of the series represent the last stage of the game (Fig -- 3).

The materials and processes used in the "Land Game" series were dictated by the shapes and characteristics of the game. Some of the techniques employed in this series include construction, kum-bu, and roller printing. The first two sets of pins were made with sterling silver wire and 14k and 18k gold. Firsts of all, the basic shape of rectangles, which represent the land, were made by hammering sterling silver. Second, I cut the thin sterling silver wires and hammered each wire. Next, I soldered the thin hammered wires into each rectangle, creating the lines. When the pieces were done I patinated them black.

For the last set of three pins, which represent after the game, I used sterling silver and gold leaf. First, I cut the sterling silver as rectangles and then I used the kum-bu technique. Second, I roller printed them with mesh and chased on the parts where I had done kum-bu. Finally, I made the silver white by pickeling.

The next series "Jack Stones" consists of four pins (Fig -- 4), three necklaces (Fig -- 5, 6 &7), which can also be used as pins (Fig -- 8), and one wall piece (Fig -- 9). This series is based on a Korean game which is very similar to the "Jacks" game of the U.S.A. In Korea, however, we use stones instead of a plastic ball and jacks.
Playing under a clear sky made the game more enjoyable and we became one with stones, the land, and the clouds. This game left beautiful impressions.

In order to make "Jack Stones" I followed my imagination. I used casting, chasing and wood carving to make the pieces look natural. First, I cast stones and fossils to get images from nature. Second, I chased clouds that represent the sky. I used 14k and 18k gold wire to express the movement of stones which connect the land and the sky. The pins were made by combining these elements. The three necklaces and the wall piece were made with the same techniques as with the set of pins. The blue dyed wood and black wood frames, which make the necklaces, represent the sky and the land.

When I made these pieces, I could not think about finished works. I just followed my heart and the pieces proceeded with passionate excitement. The making of these pieces became a new experience which will remain in my mind as a beautiful picture. I hope that people will identify with and enjoy my jewelry. My jewelry pieces can carry meaning and they can be a tool for wearers to remember their childhood and express it.
JEWELRY AS AN ART FORM

In these days, awareness of contemporary "art jewelry" has been increasing among the public. Some jewelers make nonfunctional jewelry and work in non-precious materials to make their work inexpensive because they hate the values of wealth, status, and power, still, others use sculptural form in their jewelry. Nevertheless, it remains hard for common people to relate to this type of work.

Jewelry artist Tomas Gentille writes "Jewelry as art form can fulfill the function of something which is worn, however, it is an important distinction that this work need not to be used. Often it is not displayed in the traditional "wearing" method, but shown using the same criteria as painting or sculpture. If worn, its usage requires a series of aesthetic judgments by the maker as well as the wearer. It is necessary that the work evokes some feeling beyond the configuration the piece takes, i.e. ring, armlet, pin or a form that is unique. Energies within the work, no matter how simple or complex, quite, or loud, are ones that must embody qualities beyond pure ornamentation."

I agree with his statement. It should be an obvious enough point that jewelry is for wearing. However, I regard jewelry as an "Art" rather than as wearable ornamentation which has to be worn in order to be seen properly. My jewelry has its own appeals and aesthetics, and its images become important.
For example, the works illustrate in figs (5, 6 & 7) are made of blue dyed wood frames represent the sky, and black wood represents land. They function as both necklaces and wall pieces. Also, the silver frames represent a past time. They can be worn as brooches and provide us a different time and space. Through these pieces, I want to show viewers my recollections.

As I mentioned earlier, I want my jewelry to be wearable and to be art forms. I hope to help people understand jewelry and to urge them to wear jewelry as a means of discovering their self-identity.
LAND GAME

Four Pins

S. Silver, 18K Gold, Gold Leaf

3" X 3"

(Fig 1)
Land Game

Three Pins

S. Silver, 18k Gold

3" x 3"
Land Game

3 Pins

S. Silver, Gold Leaf

3" x 3"
Jack stone

Four pins

S. Silver, 14k Gold, 24k Gold

3"x3", 3"x5", 4"x3", 3"x3"
Jack Stone

Necklace & Pin

14k Gold, S.Silver, Blue dyed wood

10"x10"
Jack stone    Necklace&Pin

14k Gold, S.Silver, Black wood   8"x15"

(Fig - 6)
Jack stone
Necklace&Pin

14k Gold, S.Silver, Bule dyed wood
14"x8"
Jack stone

Three Pins from the Necklaces
Jack Stone  
Wall Piece

S. Silver, Bronze, Blue dyed wood  
12"x12"  
(Fig -9)
Jack Stone

Three Necklace and 1 Wall Piece

(Fig 10)
CONCLUSION

With this thesis, I made jewelry that carries my personal experiences. Hence, I want it to be understood by others as an art form.

When I started this thesis, I was "trying to say something." However, at this point, I am not so sure whether I choose the correct vocabulary. I feel that my work is not complete, but this might be the reason why I have to continue making jewelry.

