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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Imaging Art and Sciences
In Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Family Where You Always Are

By

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APPROVALS

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Date: March 9, 2000

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Date: 3-9-00

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Date: 3 · 10 · 00

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

During the time I have been studying at RIT and working on this thesis, I have received outstanding help and encouragement from my committee members and my friends such as Professor Thomas Lightfoot, Professor Max Lenderman, and Professor Bob Cole. I, indeed, appreciate their encouragement, enthusiasm, and love while supporting me in the development of my artwork and also helping me survive on my own.

I especially want to thank my parents for their faith and love. And also, I would like to thank my husband, PoWen Liu, who supported my achievements and stood by me, whenever I needed him.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is an attempt to explore and articulate the meaning of the relationships between my family and myself, which I regard as essential when considering the body of my work. This thesis, as a completion of the Thesis Show in the School of Art in May of 1999, identifies the concept behind and within my installation art work.

I originally studied textile design, specializing in wall hangings and floor-cover tapestries, to earn my B.F.A. and M.F.A degree in Korea. However, I was still interested in installation work in fiber so I came to R.I.T. to explore the field of fine arts. My desire for doing installation work in fiber continued to develop as I studied in the Fine Arts Studio program at R.I.T.

For seven years in Korea, I emphasized the perfection of the techniques of masterpieces in my work. It was a grateful period, but I received no inspiration for producing my own artworks. During my first year in the Master's of Fine Arts program at RIT, I struggled to define the concept for my artwork. I was dealing with emotional experiences and searching for the sensibility behind my creativity. Meanwhile, I explored new types of expression through painting and sculpture. Also, at that time, I studied a new skill in the weaving and textile program. Using the computer-weaving loom allowed me to create my works on a larger scale. At this period, I responded to my works based upon aspects of the relationships between my family and myself.

I grew up in a family full of love, loyalty, and faith. For a long time, however, I had not recognized these potential ideas and I didn't realize how those concepts influenced my life and my art work. Through this thesis work, I re-explored my family's love, faith, and loyalty.

During weaving my four woven pieces, every single one had been constructed with different patterns that evoked the unique personality of the each family member I recognized at that time. I couldn't stop missing my family, and I realized how much I love them. My commitment to creativity was only the way to recall my family to me. Meanwhile, I successfully assembled the memories of my family and identified the long relationships between us.

This thesis work, *Family Where You Always Are*, consisted of four fine cotton woven pieces (45 inches x 9 yards/EA) accompanying three silk painting works (45 inches x 4.5 yards/EA) and two groups of painted ceramic tiles (4 inches x 4 inches x 200 pieces.) These nine pieces of my installation totally occupied a twelve cubic foot physical space. In this installation work, I presented rhythmic swirls within a warm nesting space that referred to the spirit of my family, and I suggested harmony with red, blue, white, yellow, and black. These colors are cultural and personal symbols: red symbolizes ambition; blue suggests intelligence; white represents wisdom; yellow evokes faith; and black depicts intimate relationships.

FAMILY WHERE YOU ALWAYS ARE

Since I left my family to study in America three years ago, the essential concept of my art works is to define the meaning of my family. This critical question forces me to think about myself as a part of family and develops my art works to depict emotional experiences and internal perspectives of the relationships with my family. For so many reasons, I could not visit my hometown after I came here to the United States, but I could bring my family into my art works. The inspiration of love, loyalty, and faith from my family are represented in the installation art work by being settled in the external and internal space.

The one, fine cotton piece woven with pattern #1 (fig 1-a) represents my father. He studied electronic engineering and loved to travel all over his country. Then, for his business, he visited several eastern & southern Asian countries, America and Europe. He met so many international friends and told me about their lives, their careers, and their beautiful friendships. He enjoyed his world and shared with me “Whatever you want, do your best, then, you will get it!” Since my early childhood, he never told me “to do or not do” anything. Whenever I asked him to help me make a decision, he would say, “you think one more time, then, you will know the best thing to do; what you decide is your responsibility.” My 11th summer we went to the river and he taught me how to swim. My 20th summer my father taught me how to drive a car responsibly and for so many weekends we went camping where he

taught me how to enjoy nature. During my childhood, my father was a good friend and a great father.

The second woven piece with pattern #2 (fig 2-a) stands for my mother who has been the guardian of our family. She has sacrificed herself for my family. She is a special woman because she loves her family so much, that she spends all of her time, energy and intention on our family. Her silent life suggests how to live as a wife, a mother, and a woman. Believing in her husband and children makes them go further for their dreams and future. Her heart is deep, warm, and sweet. A mother is a home, which one can always go back to for resting and recharging.

The third woven piece with pattern # 3 (fg.3-a) symbolizes my only brother. He is one of my true friends, and he receives loyalty from his family. He knows how to love people, indeed, and how to use his talents for others. His energetic life creates full joy for my family.

The last woven piece with pattern # 4 (fg.4-a) exemplifies myself who is the one with endless passion, desire, and ambition for the unknown future. When I was in Korea, as the main concept of my work, I searched for my own identity. Until I came to the U.S.A to study, I never recognized my family as a source of my artistic inspiration. While I have been away from home for three years, I have been terribly lonely, looking for a way that I could be with my family. I didn't know what to do, but I am an artist, so I brought my family into my artworks. After that, I was

happy everyday because, eventually, I could portray them all and show the love I felt for them through my artworks. Finally, in this way, I found my family again. Moreover, I found the truth that one is from a family and wherever one is, the family is in one's heart.

PRODUCING THE THESIS WORKS

1. COMPUTER WEAVINGS

During my time at RIT, one of my successful studies was the Computer Weaving class, because the computer-weaving program, ProWeave Version 3.0 for Macintosh Computers, is able to improve a variety of design skills and to support most modern technology for my large-scale installation works. As an applied drawing program, this weaving program eliminates the drudgery of physical drawing of patterns, reduces design work, increases weaving speed greatly and most importantly expands design scope and horizons. With the knowledge of basic weaving theory, I intended to experiment more with computer weaving techniques. While weaving on a computer weaving loom, I explored my original design possibilities and the techniques of twill weave.

Four of the unique designs represented the individual personalities of my family members. When I drafted each one of the designs, I recognized each one of my family members that I intended to portray on the woven pieces. Therefore, each one of the woven works depicted an image of the personal characteristic of my family.

The following designs (fig.1, 2, 3, 4) feature the original drafts of the four woven works. These figures suggest that the black and white version of the drafts consist of the scale of black as the default color for the warp and white as the weft.



fig. 1-a



fig. 2-a



fig. 3-a



fig. 4-a

2. SILK PAINTINGS

Silk painting incorporates a variety of techniques, such as batik, stenciling, resistance, bleach, alcohol solutions, and salt solutions. However, for my thesis work, I focused on the free drawing of silk painting using Chinese ink and non-toxic silk painting colors with salt solutions and alcohol solutions. In addition, every silk painting needs a finishing process that requires steaming for 3 hours.

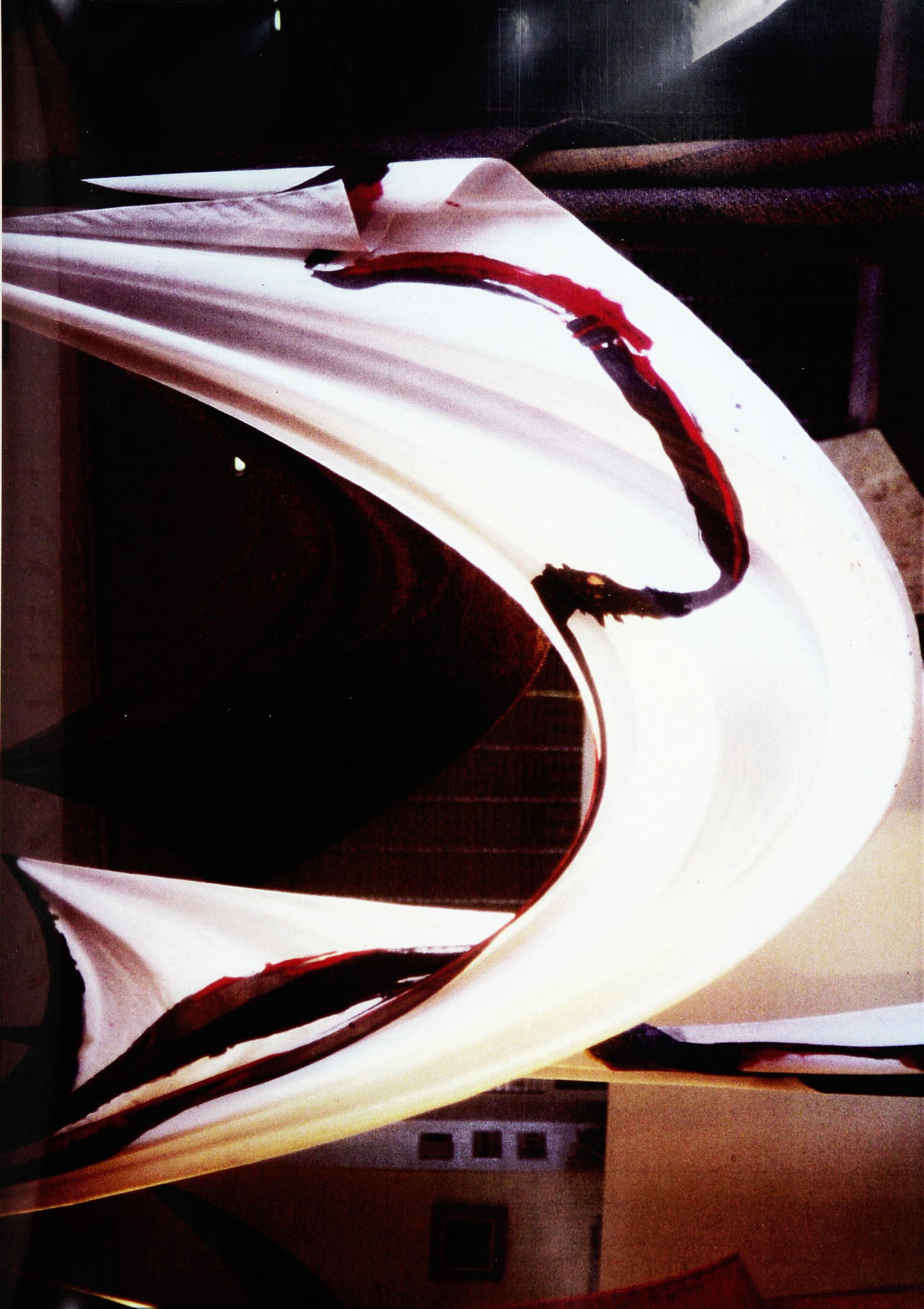
The silk paintings consist of three pieces (45 inches x 4.5 yards / EA) that suggest the inner relationships between my family. The rhythmic swirls of the determined brush works surround a white background, evoking the warmth, comfort, and joy of my family. The harmony of vivid red, deep blue and amorphous shaped yellow brush marks depicts the memory of love, faith, and loyalty of my family.

In these silk paintings, the brush strokes of strong and warm black create the elementary expression of my emotional condition including the abstract image of the performance of painting without pre-sketching. The brush traces never stopped or never went back to correct errors, nor hesitated to represent the emotion of the moment when I painted with the strong inspiration from my family. My emotional experiences with my family were translated into the sensual motion of the rich, black Chinese ink. The overlapping blacks and bleeding reds especially conveyed that these paintings were created out of spiritual joy and intensity.









3. CERAMIC TILES

The 200 ceramic tiles were made of Raku clay and painted with cobalt blue. After applying a coat of clear glaze, these tiles underwent Raku firing. Working with totally different media was an exciting experience for me. The rough surface of the clay tiles was an advantage for brush work and controlling tone for a perfect expression.

The ceramic tiles featured the delicate and emotional blue lines. The energetic swirls of the blue lines suggested the future relationships between my family and myself. When I painted on the clay tiles, I intended to interpret the hope that I will receive from my family. Also, I focused on re-matching those tiles in a different way from the first painting work. The re-matching ideas produced a surprising result for the installation work because the new image of both lines and backgrounds created the illusion of scenery that portrays my wish and expectation for my fundamental relationships with my family in the future.





INSTALLATION

Occupying a twelve cubic foot space was a challenging task; however, I was very excited about the room that was waiting for the installation of my creative work. For four days, I couldn't stop enjoying the actual time when I installed my thesis works. Installing was a totally different concept from a studio activity. In fact, I had a perfect three-dimensional canvas for my fabric and ceramic pieces that would bring out the harmonic energy and the rhythmical movement. Prior to the installation I was nervous even though I loved the idea of expressing my concept.

These thesis works, *Family Where You Always Are*, were installed to translate the deep relationships among my family members representing the past, present and future. Also, the dramatic look of the installation connoted the meaning of family in a way everyone might understand. In addition, audiences were a necessary and potential element because they touched my pieces and felt the essential expression of my emotions and the spirit of my family. Allowing interactive performances with the audiences endowed my pieces with soul.

The four woven pieces were hung from the ceiling to the floor, and the three silk paintings were set between the woven pieces. In addition, the ceramic tiles were placed on the floor, under the silk paintings. These tiles persuaded the audience to interact with the nesting spaces between my pieces. The external spaces of my installation represented

the internal spaces of my inspiration. Thus, each movement of lines and colors in my works portrayed the spirit of my family.







CONCLUSION

As I mentioned at the beginning, the goal of this thesis was to seek the meaning of the relationships between my family and myself. During this research, I investigated the message of our close relationships through a process that included defining the concept of the inspiration for my creativity, developing the technique for my visual expression, and writing this paper to express my ideas. Investigating the definition of my concept was a wonderful encounter because I found my family again, and I understood them as the elementary source for my art work.

Here I am with my mother's wisdom, my father's intellect, and my brother's respect. There they are with my love, faith, and loyalty, which originally came from my family to me. When I discovered the significance of my relationships with my family, I believed that the message referred to my life and art work. It was a great time to study this interesting subject that was in my heart and that influenced me all the time. Finally, as an artist, I listened to my soul and created my interpretation.

This thesis work, *Family Where You Always Are*, successfully expressed my emotion and spirit, which I considered the essence of my work. The installation work of my thesis entirely represented my feeling and the inspiration of my family. The exclusive visual statement in my installation work required many hours of work and patience. Consequently, producing this thesis work was an exciting experience. Presenting my concept in a way that included audiences was also a great

opportunity. Moreover, I had an exciting time exploring the aesthetic communication of my art work and developing proficiency with these new methods.

Through this thesis, I have had unexpected opportunities, such as developing good friendships, discovering a new possibility for aesthetic development, and seeking the future for my artistic narration. I would like to continue installation work in fabric art and further explore environmental fabric sculpture.

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