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**Between the Covers**

by

**Elizabeth Lee Cantrell**

**B.A. University of Virginia, 1988**

University of Colorado Libraries - Boulder

**A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts  
in photography and media arts  
Department of Fine Arts  
1996**

University of Colorado at Boulder



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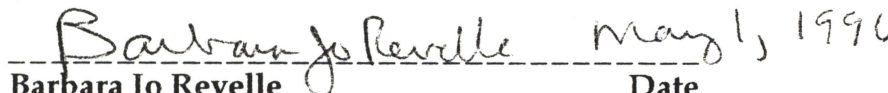
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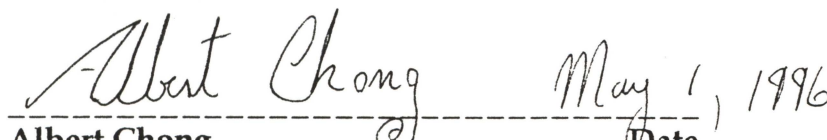
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Department of Fine Arts

by

  
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Melanie Walker Date

  
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Barbara Jo Revelle Date

  
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Albert Chong Date

  
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Alex Sweetman Date

**Cantrell, Elizabeth Lee (M.F.A., Photography and Media Arts)**

**Between the Covers: Photographic Installation and Handmade Books**

**Thesis directed by Associate Professor Melanie Walker**

**"Between the Covers" is an installation of handmade books,  
paper and photographic images representing themes  
of nostalgic memories and  
works concerning male and female issues.**

**The exhibition opened March 15th, 1996 and was displayed  
until April 2nd, 1996 in the CU Art Galleries located in the Sibell Wolle  
Fine Arts Building at the University of Colorado at Boulder.**

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### Purpose of the Exhibition

"Between the Covers" began its conception in the fall of 1992 when I began to make books as a form of creating a personal experience with the viewer while manipulating image placement. As I have always been interested in working with an entire space instead of remaining constrained by the confines of the vertical walls and two dimensional work, traditional work of photographers and painters, I became intrigued and enamored by the placement of objects within the entire space. Installation pieces became my focus and books became smaller installation pieces to me.

Additionally, books allowed the viewer to grasp the actual art piece in a tangible form, and possibly even add to the understanding of the piece through the simple touch. This exhibition is an extension of these two forms: the installation and the books.

The invitation to the show depicts me dreaming, in between two down comforters. I am between the covers. Essentially the exhibition is me. The books I have made. The paper I created. The memories I have collected and preserved. My ideas about male and female issues as well as my view on the idea of high art verses craft. The photographic images touch a variety of subjects from architectural and iconic forms, to food, to human collages resembling landscape views, to items that form a visual diary from my past. Most of the works are in a book format with some books extended into larger installation pieces as the interiors of these books are duplicated on single sheets and shown in grid form from behind the displayed book. Some images within the books are blurred and deconstructed in order to reference memory, as we all remember bits and pieces of an actual situation. The overall thematic core of this exhibition is about nostalgic memories represented in the way we construct our own memories and store them or confine them from changing by placing them in a book. It is also about giving: giving a person a new perspective or view; giving away my perspective; giving away a book that can be taken back with one to become a personal part of their life.

### Arrangement and Description of the Works

As the viewer approaches the gallery space, one see a wall, framed by the opening entrance to the gallery, with my name and the name of the show. Directly beneath the title is a 60"x60" grid of opened and closed books mounted on the wall. Some of the books are displayed so that the viewer can leaf through the book while others are mounted in such a way that one cannot open the book. The corners and the middle of the sides of the square have open books that visually form a semi-circle perpendicular to the wall.



These books contain all the letters I have ever received from friends and families. Each book is a different year with the book containing letters from 1990 on the upper left hand corner and the book containing letters from 1991 in the upper right hand corner and so on until the bottom right corner which displays the book containing letters from 1995. The front and back covers of these books are flush with the wall, and each letter is bound into the book as a separate page with a butterfly bind so that as the book is opened the inside contents form a fan shape. Viewers can leaf through the books and pull out letters from the original envelopes that the letters were sent. This is the first insight into who the artist is by the correspondence of friends and family. The rest of the grid is comprised of books that I have made over the last four years. Some books only display their covers, while others are mounted in such a way that only a certain page in the book can be viewed.





The density and arrangement of these books immediately speaks to the title of the show, yet it is completely different in feeling and message as to the rest of the exhibition.

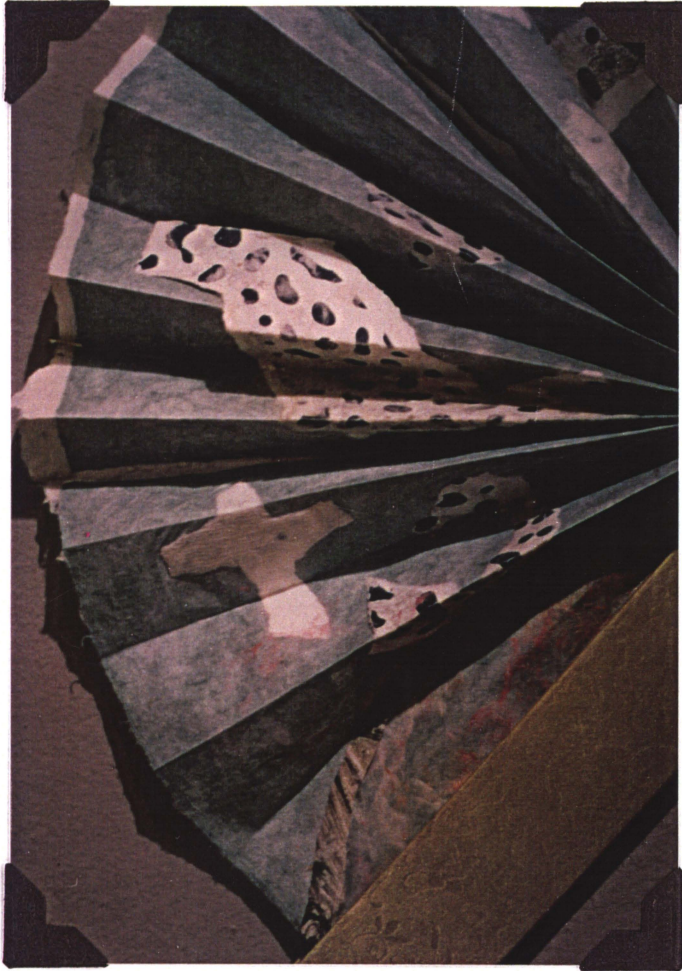
The viewer then chooses whether to go right or left to enter the gallery space. If the viewer decided to go to the right, to their immediate right they see a handmade paper and book piece called "Ascent," but their attention is immediately drawn to the installation piece to the left and alongside the perpendicular wall called "Memory Raft" as a large well lit boat captures the eye.

"Ascent" is four panels of 11x14 handmade paper. Abaca, dyes and collaged paper pieces create this column of gestural and painterly abstract forms. The bottom page has several horizontal collaged pieces that look like steps or stairs. From this piece the page directly above it has a gestural quarter circle that goes from the bottom of a circle to the right. Above this piece another page has a similar gesture with the movement of the marks sweeping up and over to the left, beginning at the three o'clock position and ending a bit past the twelve o'clock position. The top page has the

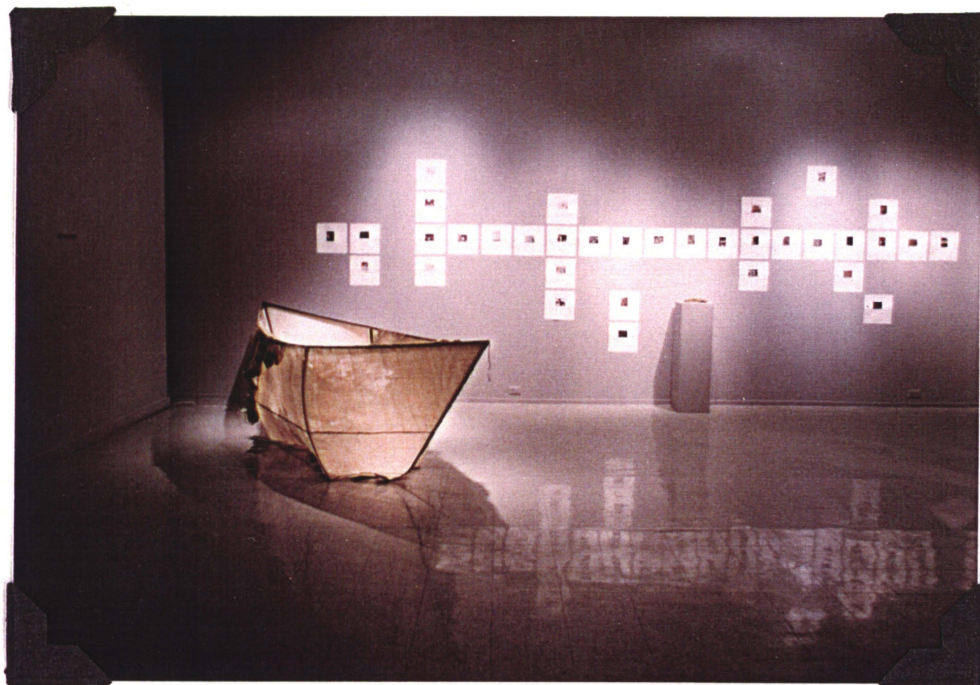
Chinese character of Lun, which means Mankind. To the left of these pages is a fan book consisting of the same handmade paper as the four displayed pages mounted on the wall. These pages in this book have earth, hearts and crucifixes within its pages, but without extreme inspection, one would not be able to see these. Mounted on the wall, this book cannot be leaved through as the pages of the fan are steadied and mounted as well as the case. The case for the book is small and when closed creates a three sided box ten inches in length and about an inch in depth. This is the most colorful piece within the show. Located in an area where it will not collide with the other pieces of natural colors and fibers, this piece does contain subdued grays and whites to offset the sea green color of the paper.







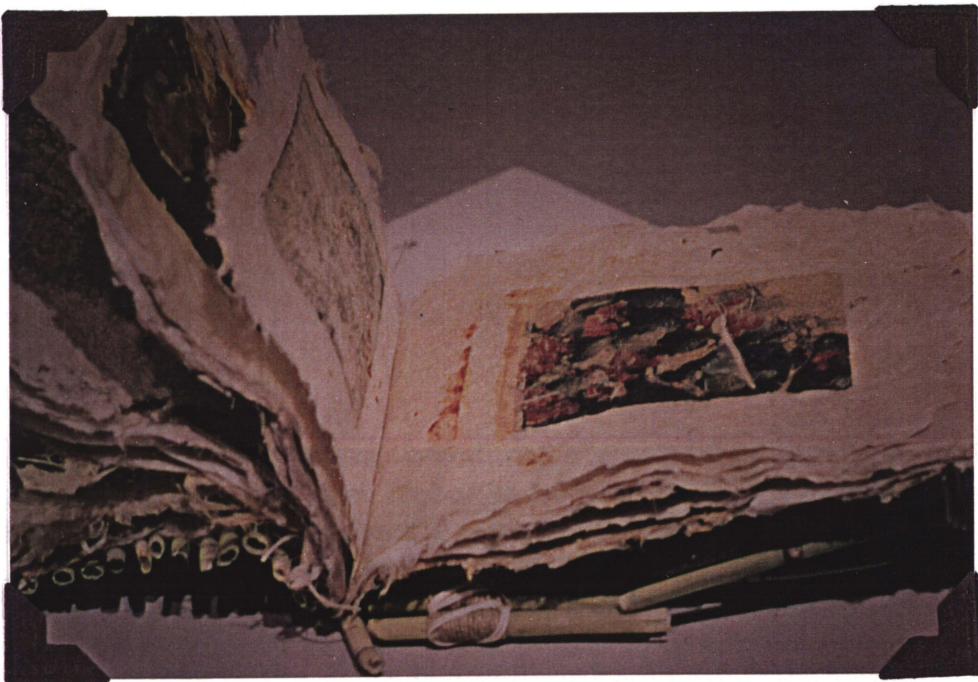
Perpendicular to the wall with "Ascent" is "Memory Raft." Thirty five 11x11 pieces of hand torn reeves bfk paper line the wall in primarily a horizontal line that is broken in two places and moves diagonally and vertically in some other areas. These white squares form a painterly backdrop for a podium which displays a small 5x8 book. "Memory Raft" began as this small book. The cover is made out of hortussiccus horsetail reeds bound together with waxed linen thread into a form resembling a raft. Inside, handmade paper by Gail Wagner has been bound and transformed a bit by forty different images gathered from 1988 to 1992. The original images in slide form were edited down and chosen for their reference to a specific incident and encounter. Each image has a different significance into places I have traveled as well as being special locations of intimate relationships I have shared in my past.





The thirty-five photographic images on the wall are Polaroid transfers which create a one of a kind image from a slide by the process of transferring a Polaroid image onto paper. Emulsion from the Polaroid print pulls apart in different areas so that no two prints are ever the same. As these images were transferred to Polaroid film and then to the handmade paper with certain details lost through the transfer process and as bits of the Polaroid emulsion would not adhere to the paper in certain areas, details of the actual image became skewed and altered, just as our brain filters certain details when retaining a recollection of an event. These images and the book contain imagery from my past and allure the viewer to attach their own memories as they view these specific instances. The images along the wall are duplicates of some of the images from the book, but the coloring and actual consistency of each image remains one of a kind.

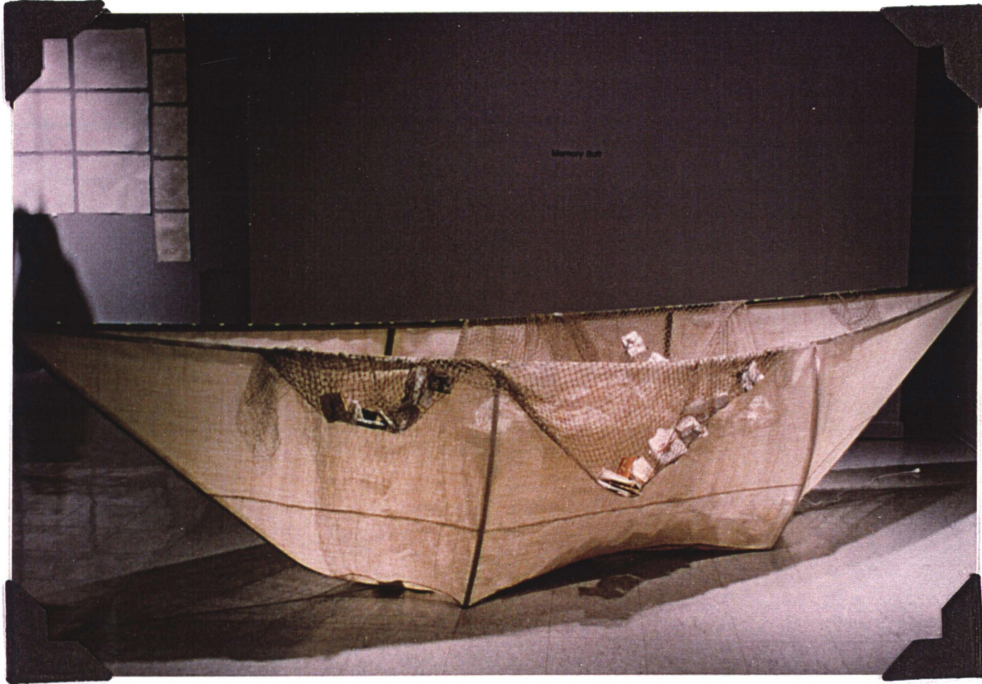






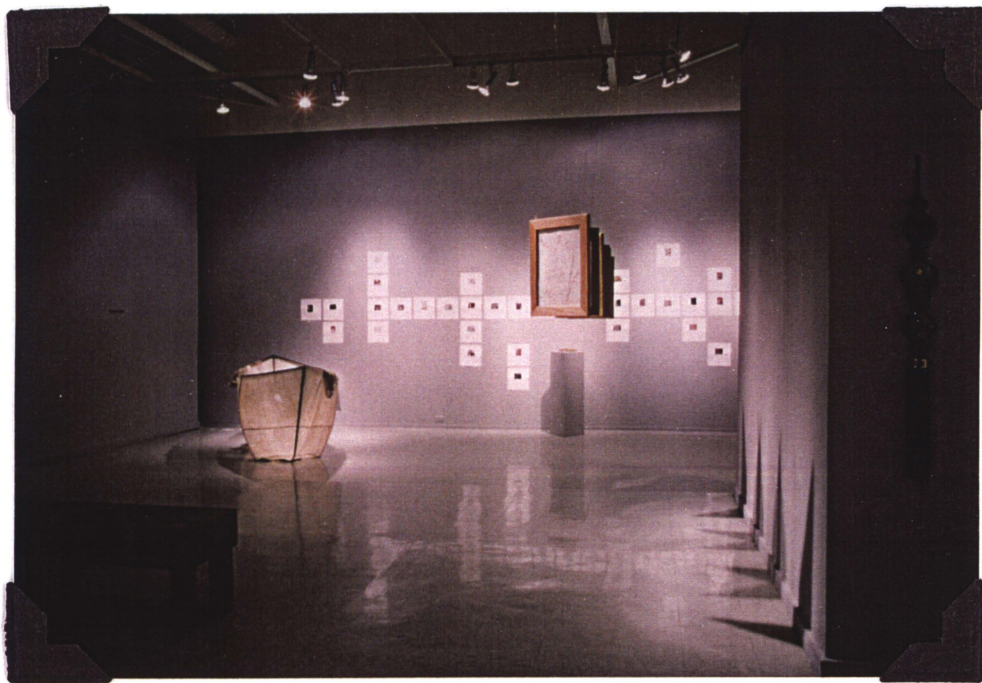
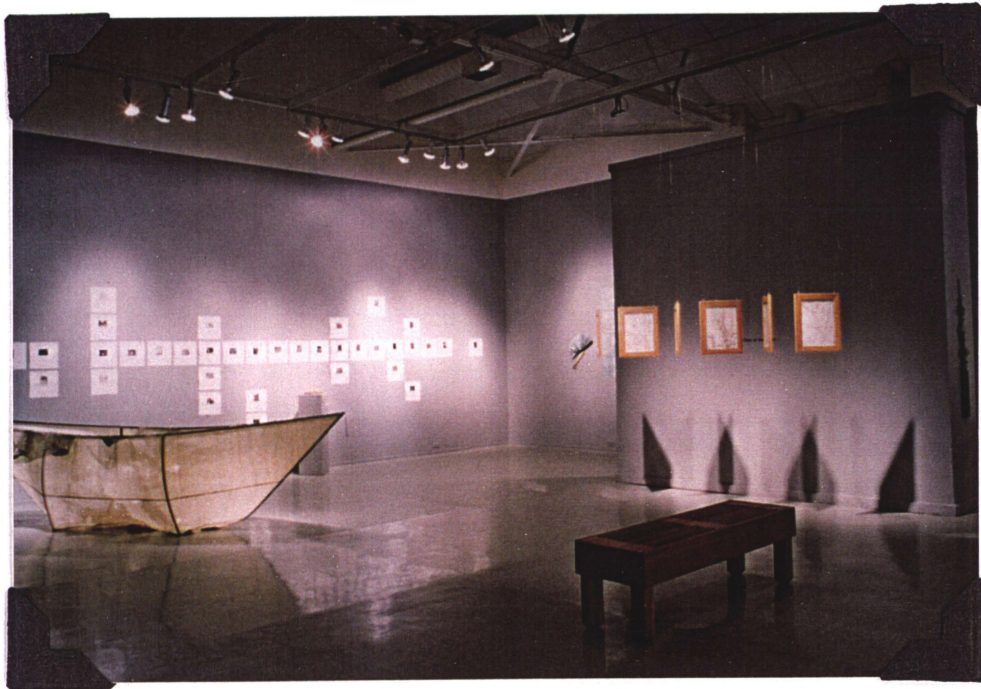
Alongside of the left side of these images rests a large boat, approximately ten feet in length and three feet at its widest width. This boat is covered with hemp fabric that is sewn together with sea green silk ribbon. Inside the boat a fishing net carries hundreds of small handmade books which fill the boat. Each book is comprised of a cover made out of handmade paper and an interior of plain white paper. A few of the books have images on them as the paper inside these books are from discarded prints, drawings and books I have made in the past. Viewers are encouraged to take a book as a gift and record their own memories.







As the viewer turns their back to "Memory Raft," they see the rest of the pieces. Alongside the back of the title wall is another handmade paper piece called "Affairs of the Heart." Six panels of 11x15 paper decollaged with dried wild flowers and Korean and Chinese writing hang from the rafters above. Each of the six panels are a page from a book that has been taken apart and framed with a two inch natural oak stained glass frame. Hung in a zig zag approximately three feet from the wall, the entire piece mimics two other accordion book pieces exhibited in each of the left corners of the gallery. The cover, more brightly decorated than the rest of the pieces has the title of the book in hand painted lettering. This piece has separate pages dedicated to male, female and abundant seed. In Korean, they are written out... Namja, Yoja: male, female. Hyundae, meaning contemporary, is also part of this book.



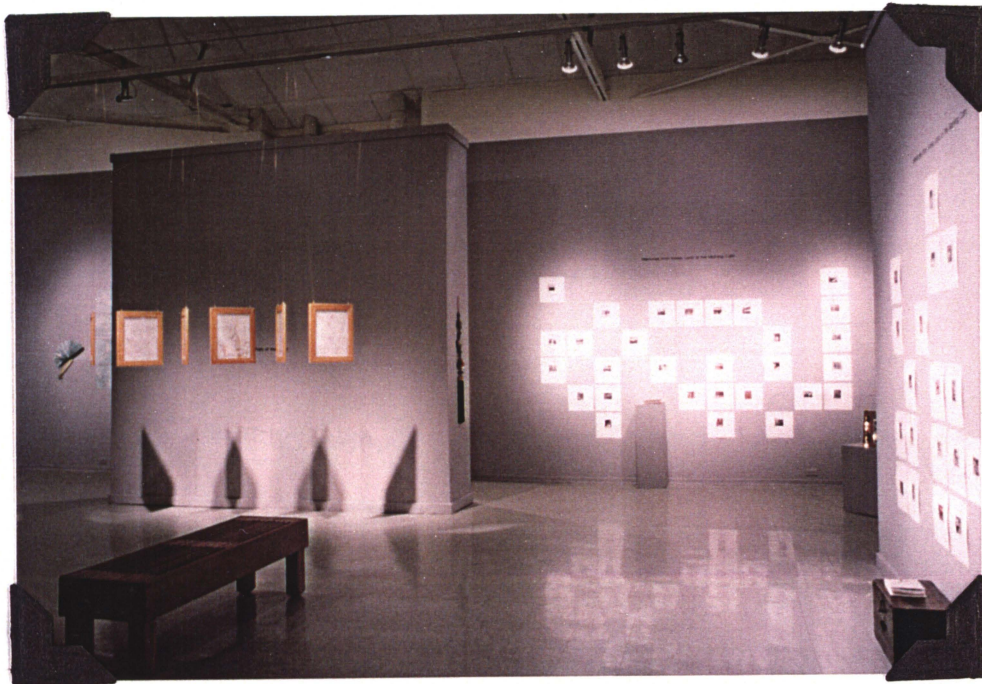


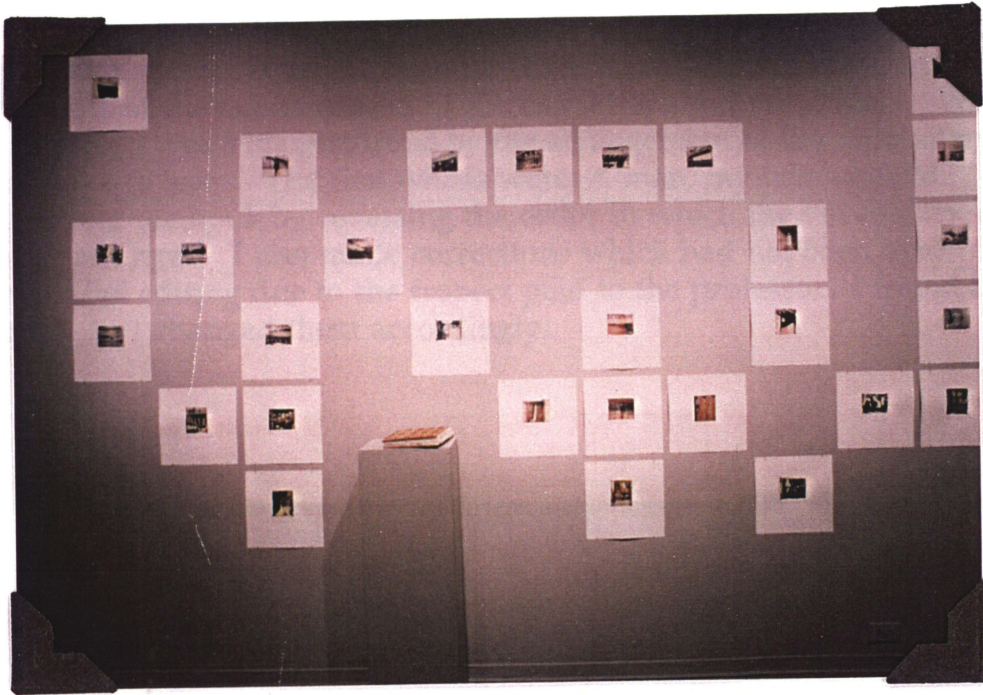






"Memories From Korea: Land of the Morning Calm" are shown on two different walls. If the viewer decided to go to the left when entering the gallery space, they would see these pieces and "Illumination Zoning" first. "Memories From Korea: Land of the Morning Calm" is segmented into two different themes. The south wall has architectural and iconographic images with a hand copied book of the Korean language book I studied while in Korea. A podium with this book is placed in front of the wall lined with twenty-nine 11x11 squares of Polaroid transfers arranged in a painterly grid. The top horizontal depicts images of the distinctive Korean rooftop. Not as ornate as the Chinese nor as severe as the Japanese roofs, the Korean roofs are a simple example of the clean yet consistent curve found only within Korea. Other images shown are windows, doors, storefronts and landscaped trees or iconographic images such as the Korean guardian grandfathers called "Harajabee's."





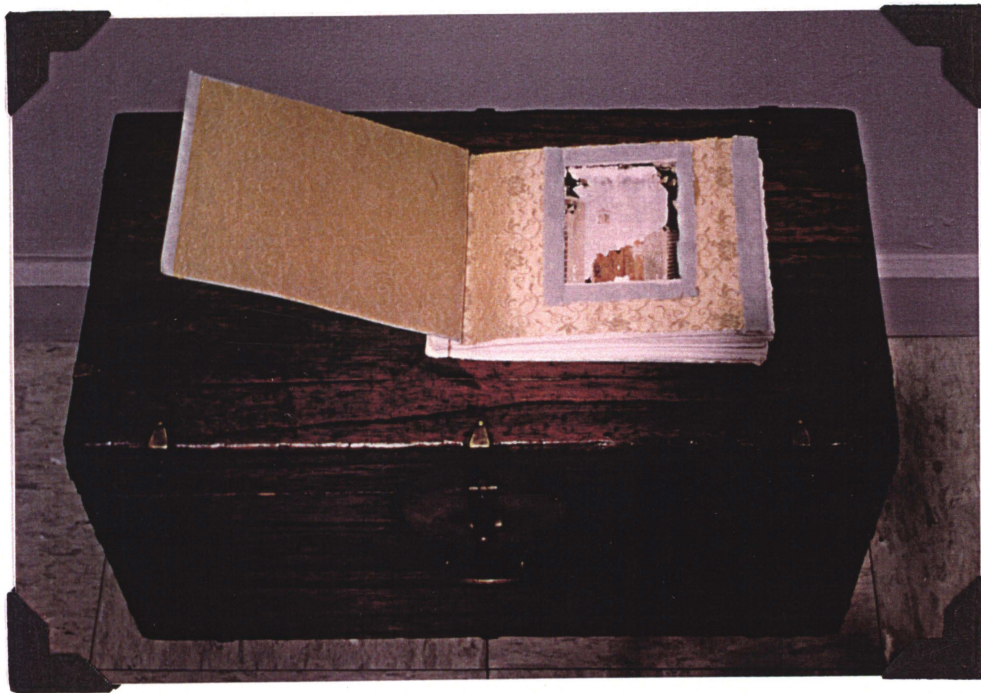
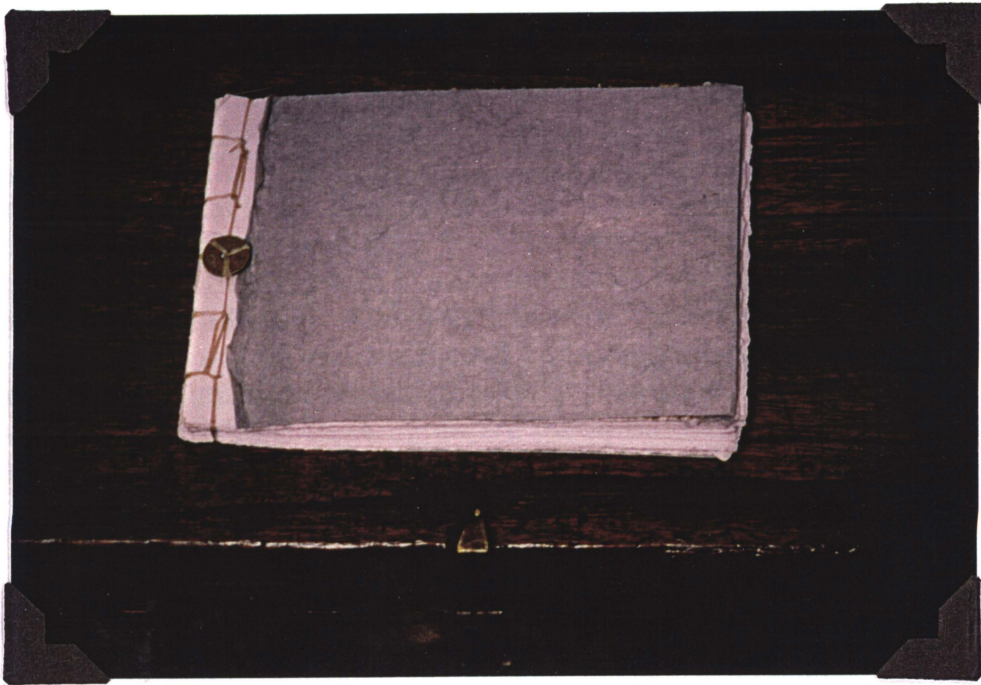
"Hanging Lantern" 1996 by [unclear]

The book's cover is ornate with bus tokens and copper wire. Inside the contents of the books consist of Korean letters and vocabulary. When studying, I was a bit perturbed by the arrangement of the vocabulary words we were to learn. The first words were: A man, my wife, a child. I rewrote the book by reversing the order in which the vocabulary words were arranged. I also made corrections which had not been made during the initial editing due to the respect paid to the professor. I found a few errors and changed them accordingly.

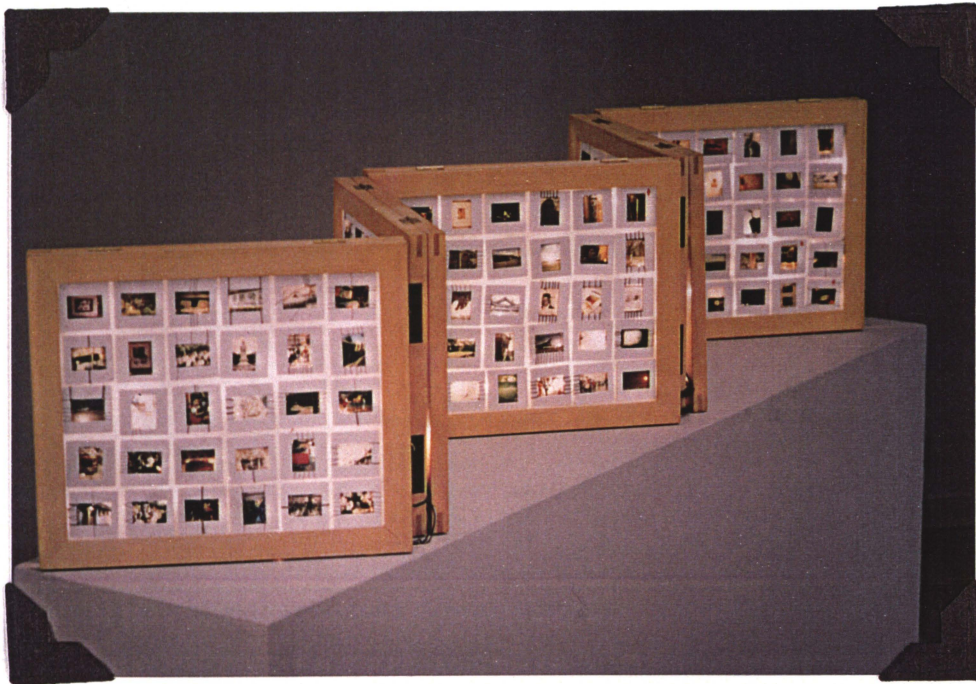


Twenty one 11x11 squares of Polaroid transfers form another grid behind the Korean scholar chest and the book Memories From Korea: Land of the Morning Calm. These images depict the wide variety of foods found at the marketplaces within Korea. The book itself contains images from both walls and the poetry of three Korean American poets.





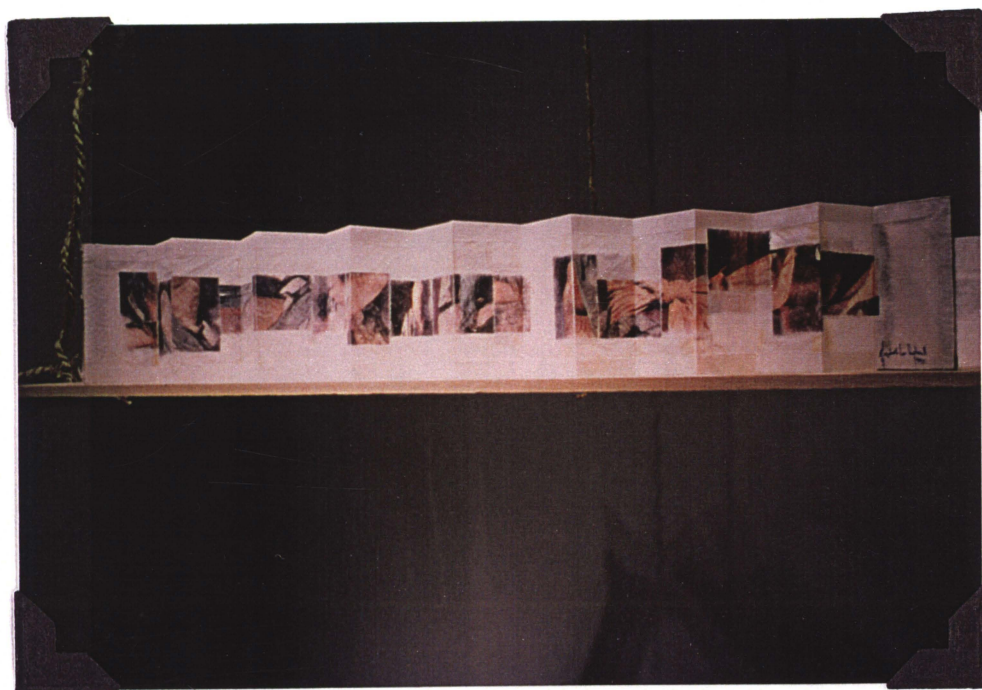
"Illumination Zoning" is an accordion book made of six wood frames containing discarded slides sewn onto cotton muslin. Each panel consists of two sides with white Christmas trees lights running through each of the panels. It speaks of the idea of craft, embroidered work and bookmaking as something which is usually considered not high art, but it is exhibited in such a way that it is. This piece to me is a sculptural piece which uses traditionally considered craft work to form an image book. Half of the images are slides taken in the United States and half of the images are slides taken in Korea. The cotton muslin, thread and wood make an encasing around an electrical cord running within the piece. This encasing is similar to female gender as it is often seen as a vessel while the electrical Christmas trees lights are metaphorically symbolic of the male semen that travels periodically within the female womb.

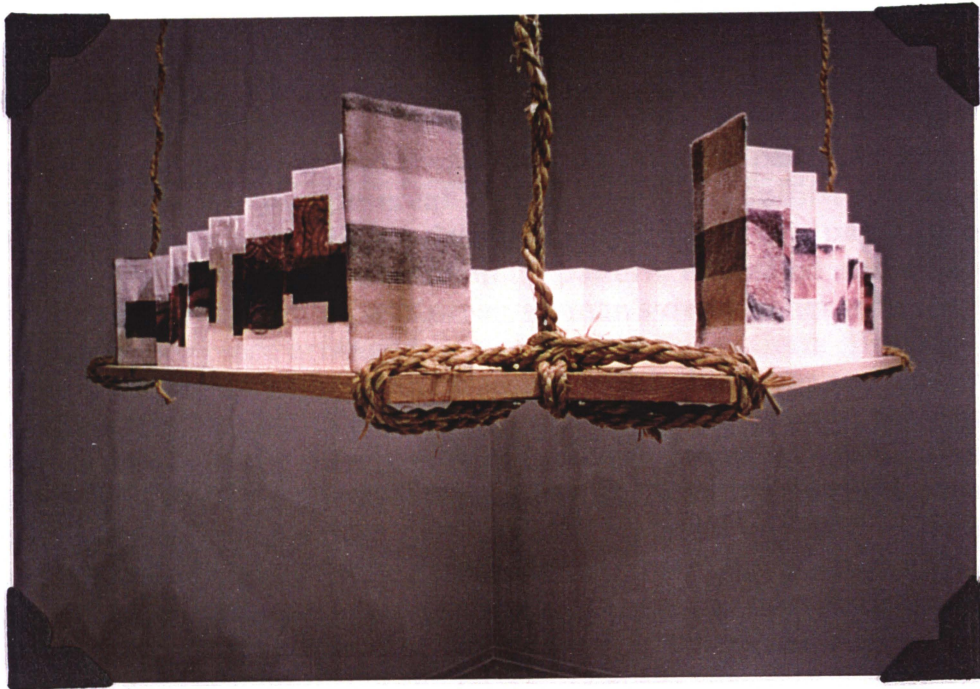




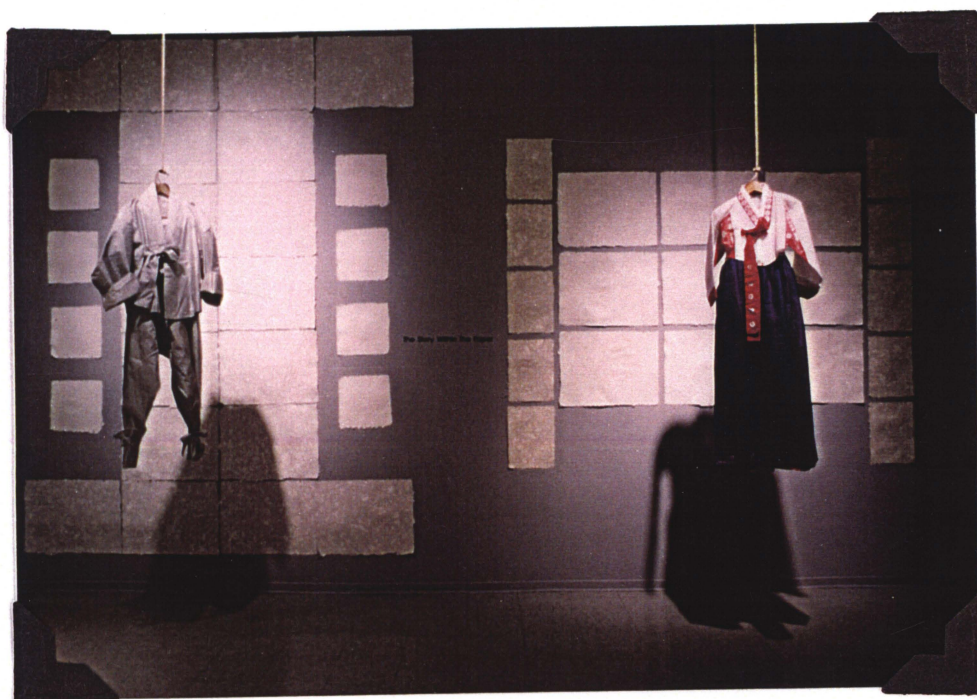


"Neither Dominance: Male/ Female" is a three part book series which appears to be a landscape of mountains at first glance, but with closer inspection, one sees that it is actually fragmented human forms collaged together to create a landscape like feel. These accordion books are arranged in a triangular form that is hung from the ceiling. The viewer can go inside the equilateral triangle to view the other side of the books. One of the books is comprised of collaged images of a male while the other book is comprised of collaged images of a female. The third book is completely white. Not only does this piece reflect the traditional role of the human nude as landscape, but it also refers to the duality of a neither dominant male/female relationship by the male and female books not referring to either male or female. One would not know which was which if the books were not noted as such.





"The Story Within the Paper" consisted of two different patterns of handmade paper which was made of Abaca and recycled paper pamphlets from my wedding in 1994. Two distinct patterns were created on the wall by arranging the paper into two different geometric patterns. In front of the two pieces are two different Korean traditional outfits. On the left is the traditional male wedding dress hanging in front of a paper piece arranged in a fashion similar to an "I" pattern, elongated and masculine. On the right is a traditional Korean woman's dress hanging in front of another paper piece arranged in a somewhat "H" pattern. Bits and pieces of the wedding ceremony can be seen through the paper and one could definitely distinguish that a musical score running through the paper as well as words of the members within the ceremony and the Christian ceremony too, but to the actual meaning that was deciphered by the reader, one would only place their own imaginative meanings to it. This piece was intended to allow the viewer to attach their own ideas and thoughts as to what story they wanted portrayed. As for the the words and music embedded into the paper, this was done so as to contrast paper that contains the story on top of the paper. Literally the story was in the paper, screened and obscured of the actual meaning similar to the obscured images of Polaroid transfers found within the rest of the exhibit.







## Influences

Throughout my time in graduate school I have been pushed and molded by my advisors and professors. Barbara Jo Revelle opened the doors of placing my own personal and societal issues into my work. Alex Sweetman directed my interests into viewing other bookmakers and artists working along the same vein. Albert Chong pushed my work to become more accessible, cleaner in presentation and easier to understand. Melanie Walker showed me alternative techniques that would be an easier vehicle for presentation, and encouraged me to work in a the way that the viewers could perceive the tactile and calm presence my work exudes. In addition, she labored to par down my work so that the simplest but strongest ideas would show.

I began the program seeking out theory and discourse related to art criticism, women's issues, and multi-culturism. Here I was fortunate enough to study within a program that supported and nurtured such ideas and enabled me to study with other professors outside my program like Lucy Lippard and Linda Herrit, as well as other artists brought here through the Visiting Artist Program. Fortunately, one of the visiting artists I was strongly motivated by was John Wood. His images and sequencing of images as well as his partner, Laurie Synder, and her love of handmade books was the beginning of my love for bookmaking. I was deeply influenced by books such as New French Feminism's edited by Elaine Marks and Isabel D. Courtivron, Ways of Seeing, by John Berger, Mixed Blessings, by Lucy Lippard, and other writers such as Roland Barthes, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Martha Rosler, and Jo Spence. Keith Smith's books on bookmaking enabled me to try new forms of alternative binding with Non-Adhesive Binding: Books Without Paste or Glue triggering my love for a variety of bookbinding. At age 26 (for the first time!) I learned how to question information and develop my own critical and creative ideas. The social implications of what art could and should be became clear. Objectification of people (women and minorities especially) became apparent. Seeing and being surrounded by other artists who were tackling a wide variety of issues (e.g. homophobia, environmental concerns, cultural plurality, feminist thought sexism and racism) gave me more support to pursue the issues I felt needed exploration.

After my second year of graduate school I was blessed with the opportunity to travel to my mother's homeland of Korea under the umbrella of the J. William Fulbright Foundation. With this grant I was able to learn more about my matrilineal heritage and the works of Korean handmade books besides learning more about the male and female issues I was so interested

in learning. It was the Land of the Morning Calm that enabled my past studies to mull and stew and finally bring forth the work shown in the exhibit. Here I was able to learn about myself through the cultural actions of the Korean people. Gift giving, integral in everyday life of a Korean, became clear. My own actions of becoming friends with someone and often times being considered overbearing and over doing in maintaining a friendship could be seen in the way the majority of the Korean friends I made there also treated me. The strong sense of loyalty and commitment to maintaining a friendship abounded within the people I met in Korea. The giving of gifts as an act of friendship and simple traditional custom when entering a person's home was abundant within the Korean culture. I found myself seeing for the first time the way many of my western friends viewed me by the actions of my new Korean friends.

In 1976, at the age of eleven, I was fortunate enough to go with my family to return Harnmoni, my grandmother, to her native soil. At such a young age I was unable to fully grasp the meaning of what was happening to me and what I was really seeing. To me, Korea was a place that had very large, funny telephones; tall stairs and long hallways that would lead to loud, exciting trains that gave exuberant rides; numerous course dinners with so many different types of kimchi; and many small, strange cars that seemed to honk continually. My Korean mother's stereotypes for male and female sex roles were ingrained within me as a child. I remember the story of how hard it was for my father to persuade Harnmoni to sit and eat at the same table with him. It was the custom for women to serve men first and then eat later. The family name was carried on by the male, uplifting his position to a higher status than that of the female, who loses her name. Respect, especially respect for elders (the parents, the teachers and ultimately the authorities) was as important as the divisions of male/female and went hand in hand with the strong sense of family. My position in the family, as a female, an elder child and a constant example to the younger siblings, shaped my attitudes and instilled notions of what and how I was to behave and interact within society.

After being in Korea I learned these family stereotypes were extensions of the Korean stereotypes of male and female patterns. Living in a traditional Korean boarding house, Hasuk Chip, I observed the strict adherence to the cultural lines between men and women. Students, all over twenty still behaved as adolescent students within the United States. At one house party, I thought how strong these lines were still intact by observing the young adults. All the women sat on one side of the room while all the men sat on the other side. Conversations with my fellow house mates amazed me as I found the majority of them believed it



important to marry within the Korean race. They felt that it would be wrong to marry outside their race. When pressed for reasons why they would retort as to it was traditional.

The art I sought out were the traditional and contemporary Korean arts and crafts, concentrating on painting and bookmaking. My own creative work consists of photographic art pieces (collages, paintings and books) is concerned with women's issues, identity or mistaken identity, and cultural pluralism. Fortunately, the year I was there was the year of the book. Several exhibitions glorified the beauty and tradition of books. At the National Museum there was a retrospective on the books made within Korea at Buddhist monasteries that exemplified the high craftsmanship and honor books play within Korean culture. I was given a new understanding to the meaning of art through these exhibitions. Seeing these century old books gave me a different insight into producing books as works of art. With this education and with the ability to view, first hand, museums and galleries, as well as the land and people, I was able to continue my art making practice with greater authority.

By studying in Korea, I more accurately understand my mixed heritage and thus, better address the issues of cultural diversity so imperative in these times of increasing racial tension. The creative work that an experience in Korea enabled me to make, helped me portray the possibilities of maintaining one's distinct heritage within the United State's culture which seems to aspire to homogeneity. I believe my work speaks to such and incorporates my ideas of equality while also showing the traditional crafts of art such as bookmaking and paper making.

## **II. Analysis of the Work**

### **Metaphors and Meanings**

The two main issues of nostalgic memories and male/female issues override the smaller metaphors and meanings within my work. "Memory Raft" and "Memories From Korea: Land of the Morning Calm" speckle the viewer with images that trigger their own thoughts of situations that seem similar. The act of giving a tangible art piece to the viewer when they take a small book with them strengthens the idea of giving the viewer a new perspective and fresh look at common images.

"Affairs of the Heart," "Illumination Zoning," "Neither Dominance: Male/Female," and "The Story Within the Paper" all reference my ideas about male/female roles. The definitive split and constant balance of maintaining the male and female, the yin and yang within us all, is balanced within the paper, the books, the separation of the costumes, and the purposeful use of specific materials. "Illumination Zoning" created with discarded slides, slick, and unnatural, sewn onto cotton muslin with fine cotton thread mimicking the traditional women's craft of needlework or sewing, encases the technical innards of the white string of lights flowing through the vessel as semen flows through the insides of a woman. My own take on the ideas of male and female role models are shown in "Neither Dominance: Male/Female." Here an equilateral triangle shows the male and female and then the third blank book depicting an equality and removed quality that one cannot distinguish the male or the female from first glance. Only with closer inspection can one see the notations of the male symbol and female symbol to specify which book is which. "The Story Within the Paper" is only identified as male and female by the costumes in front of the paper pieces and the taller and elongated, possibly more phallic positioning of the paper in creating the grids behind the costumes.

Repetition is abundant within the entire show. The hundreds of small handmade books, the numerous 11x11 squares of white paper with 3x5 photographic images, the hundreds of slides sewn onto the muslin sheets, the repeated pieces of handmade paper and the process of making Polaroid transfers in the methodical printing fashion all relate to a kind of ritualistic art making. Many viewers have commented on the meditative and peaceful atmosphere the entire show gave to them. This healing and calm aura could only come from the ritualistic art making and the attention to detail and ingredients used in making the work.

### **Background Stories**

The day of my one year wedding anniversary, my husband and I drove towards Colorado in separate cars. As he drives extremely slow, I had the opportunity to collect wild flowers on the trip while waiting for him at several different areas. These flowers once dried and pressed were to be placed within an album I was to make for the beginning of a collection of wild flowers gathered on each of our anniversaries.

Once we arrived in Boulder, he left. I made "Affairs of the Heart," the book about the male, female and abundant seed that would not come to be for the two of us out of the flowers that were gathered for our would be

anniversary album. That summer of 1995, I also gathered all the old pamphlets I had made for our wedding ceremony a year ago and made an oatmeal consistent paper pulp that created "The Story Within the Paper." Tearing each of the pieces of paper that recalled our spiritual commitment to one another was a small part in the realization that the ceremony was a sham. Transforming the paper into larger pieces of paper that only showed bits and pieces of words and music were to me the broken promises of the ceremony.

The traditional Korean costumes displayed in front of the paper pieces were my parents. The man's wedding dress was made for my Dad in 1964 as a gift from my mother's mother to my Dad. The traditional Korean women's dress was worn by my mother for special occasions.

The poems written in the book, Memories From Korea: Land of the Morning Calm, were poems written by three other Fulbright grantees who were of the eleven grantees for the year of 1993-1994. They read their poems at my first solo exhibition at Yonsei Gallery in Seoul in December of 1993.

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