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Visual Exploration of Cultural Intersections

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ABSTRACT

merging cultures, form, and materials

Personal exposure to, and in-depth investigations of cultural artifacts can be used to inform visual explorations that represent the universal experience of existing in a world where cultural boundaries are blurred and constantly evolving. Cross-cultural understanding and visual language are expanded throughout the research and making processes, resulting in work that has increased resonance with diverse audiences.

Artifacts are not only expressions of a specific group of people, but also reflections of societal influences on one's thinking, creating, and experiencing the world. In an increasingly global society, there is more interaction between cultures, resulting in a greater exchange of beliefs and perspectives. Through this exchange, certain aspects of a culture are retained, while new approaches to form and material are also introduced. When culturally-specific methodologies and aesthetics are visually or conceptually layered, work is produced that communicates relevant, meaningful narratives about the intersection of cultures.

INTRODUCTION

where i have been and where i am going

When I find myself in unfamiliar surroundings, I become increasingly aware of the intricacies of mundane objects. There is a freshness present in the unfamiliar that is difficult to find in everyday life, where many things have become invisible with time. As far back as I can remember, I have sought out experiences that encourage me to see the world from a new perspective, whether it be traveling to unfamiliar places, or focusing on an object from behind the lens of a camera.

My interest in different cultures began in my youth and deepened over time, eventually leading me to Asia. For two years prior to graduate school I lived in Seoul, South Korea, teaching art and language courses. Over that two-year period it seemed that each day presented something new—sounds, images, customs, and relationships. My heightened sense of awareness began when I stepped aboard my Korean Air flight to the Incheon Airport. During the fourteen hour flight, I found myself staring at people and listening to them speak; I was deeply curious about the way Koreans behaved and interacted. I watched people replace their shoes with slippers, and the flight attendants bowing as they handed passengers items with two hands. Their hair and outfits were perfectly placed and pressed—unlike the increasingly casual service I was accustomed to aboard airlines in America.

This was the beginning of a time in my life filled with constant reflections upon my own culture, as well as that in which I was living. Clothing, architecture, maps, temples, newspapers, and Korean characters were all sources of intrigue and inspiration. I found that while humans have universal needs and desires, they express them in vastly different ways. The desire for beauty and self-expression through art manifests itself differently in each culture, and is also reflected in objects crafted to meet basic needs, such as clothing, housing, and food.

I began incorporating ephemera I had collected, such as subway tickets, maps, and other printed materials into design projects. I was also inspired to explore new methodologies in my work. Many aspects of Korean culture involve the use of layering and mixing to create both conceptually and visually harmonious objects. This layering is evidenced in everything from cuisine to art, and inspired me to explore new methodologies in my work. Although I learned to read Korean, my vocabulary was limited, so I layered and collaged my collected materials to create books and posters that focused solely on the formal relationships of design elements. Eventually, I introduced printed materials from my culture into the designs to create a narrative about the intersection of cultures.

The more time I spent in Seoul, however, the more my desire shifted from wanting to simply layer artifacts, to wanting to understand their function, history, and meaning. I wanted my work to be more conceptually significant—to tell a story rather than just be formally interesting. I started to read books about individualist and collectivist perspectives and belief systems. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently and Why* by Richard Nisbett provided valuable information and insight about different perspectives and approaches to problems and relationships, as did *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers* by Leonard Koren. Yet my daily conversations and experiences with Korean friends were the most influential in my understanding of the culture; over time I learned about the artwork, interpersonal relationships, societal changes, customs, and general way of life. It was through these experiences that I became aware of the importance of truly understanding the objects I was using in my creative process, rather than simply borrowing the visual language of the unfamiliar place in which I was living.

MAPPING CULTURE

beginning to understand individualist and collectivist perspectives

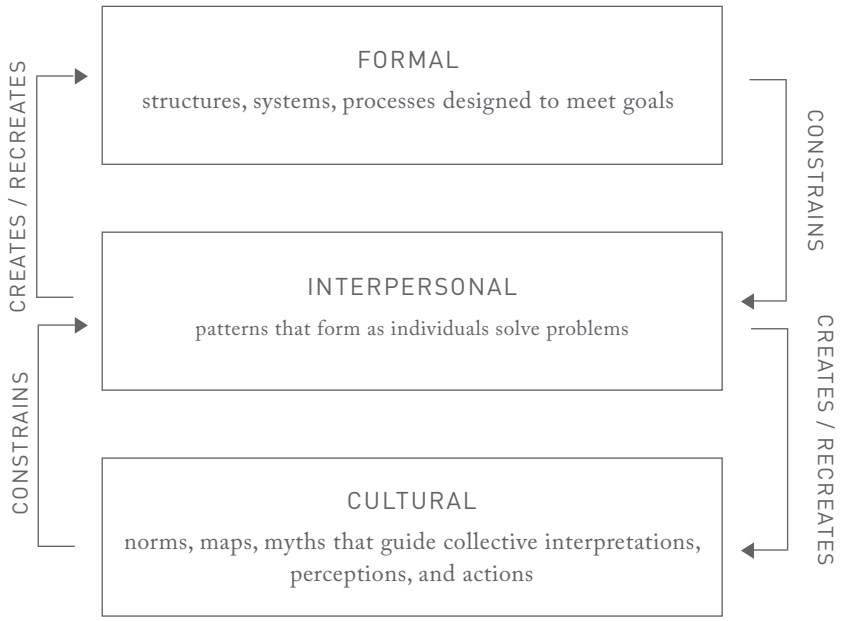
To strengthen my work, I wanted to understand why cultural artifacts, methods for creating, and perspectives vary so greatly, and how these differences are perpetuated and reinforced by societal structures. I found the work of the early twentieth century Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky to be valuable. Vygotsky founded socio-historical psychology, which asserts that:

> ...the species-specific characteristic of human beings is their need and ability to inhabit an environment transformed by the activity of prior members of their species. Such transformations and the mechanism of the transfer of these transformations from one generation to the next are the result of the ability/proclivity of human beings to create and use artifacts—aspects of the material world that are taken up into human action as modes of coordinating with the physical and social environment.[1]

A person's cognition and perspective are constructed at a specific place and time, and as a result, this context influences and constructs their interpretation and use of objects in their environment. These culturally-specific perspectives then result in different approaches to making. Once I began to understand the psychological and social differences among cultures, I became curious about how these different beliefs and values were manifested visually. I began exploring the dichotomies of Eastern versus Western thought and the contrasts between individualist versus collectivist cultures.These are somewhat ambiguous categorizations, but I found them useful in helping me to move forward with my research.

I began a process of diagramming to explore relationships between various aspects of these contrasting ideas. I created simple visualizations, which enabled me to better understand complex theories. I mapped the socio-historical theory to understand the cyclical perpetuation of culture; the reader-response theory to understand the constuction of meaning within a specific context; and collectivist and individualist belief and value systems to understand cultural perspectives and behaviors more deeply.

1 Wertsch, James V. *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1994.

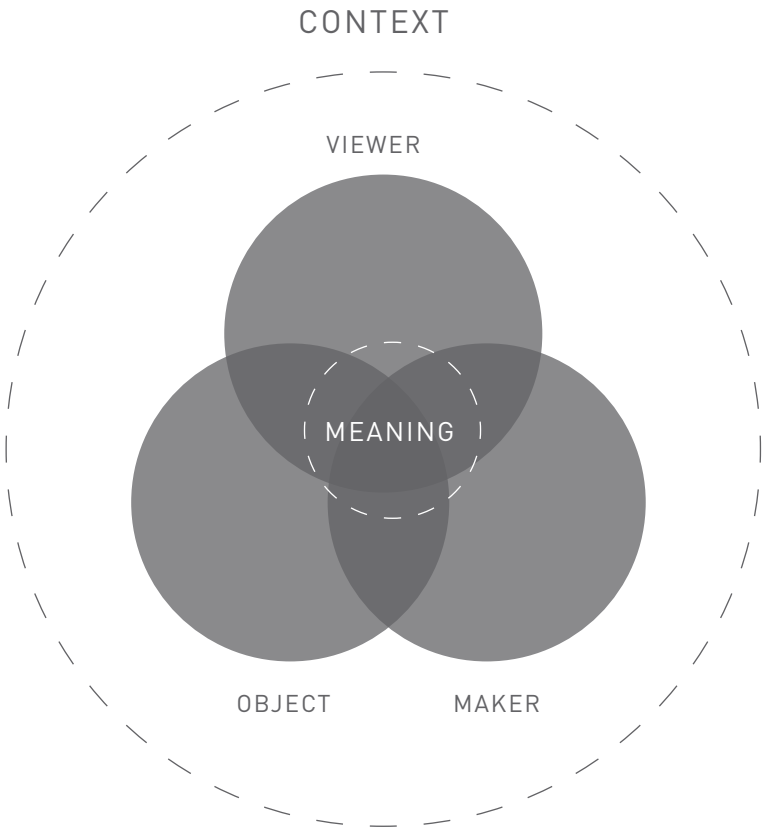


ABOVE

Formal structures in a society, such as the government or education system, constrain interpersonal relationships and the way people approach and solve problems. These approaches and methods then establish/create and guide cultural norms, perceptions and actions. These beliefs and behaviors then constrain interpersonal relationships, which then creates and recreates the formal structures within the culture—resulting in the cyclical perpetuation of culture.

RIGHT

This diagram is based on the reader-response theory by literature researcher, Louise Rosenblatt. It demonstrates how one interprets and perceives the meaning of an object. Within a specific context, there is a viewer, maker, and object. It is at the intersection of these three that meaning is constructed. If one or more of these elements changes, so does the meaning of the object.



COLLECTIVIST

In collectivist cultures, people tend to value hierarchy, ascription, stability/tradition, formality, fate and destiny, indirectness, monochronic time, and interperssonal relationships. Each of these values can then be placed in larger categories of cultural values—indirectness, responsibility, exlusion and intensity, and idealism and autonomy. This diagram reveals that collectivist cultures are more concerned with authority and survival (adhereing to cultural norms and maintaining harmony) than individuality and fulfillment.

INDIVIDUALIST

Individualist cultures tend to value meritocracy, equality, chnage and progress, informality, personal efficacy, polychronic time, activity, and directness. These values result in a society that is more concerned with individuality and fulfillment versus survival and authority.

REFLECTIONS + EXPRESSIONS

obsserving people, their environments, what they make and leave behind

A place and its people are often remembered and defined by the objects a culture produces, uses, and leaves behind. These artifacts tell stories about lives, landscapes, rituals, and beliefs. By studying them, we are able to gain insights into places and people that are seemingly unfamiliar. Without physically journeying to distant places, we are able to conjure up images of colors and forms associated with them. Although I have not traveled to India, when it is mentioned I immediately imagine women in colorful saris made of silk and adorned with intricate jewelry. I think of how different the attire is from that in America, both in form and color, and this causes me to wonder what this difference means, and what its significance might be. This is one of countless examples, however. We all have strong associations with specific places that have been constructed over time, through personal experience, or acquired knowledge. We are all able to imagine Egyptian hieroglyphics, Japanese kimonos, the nearly monochromatic palette of the desert landscape, or the geometric grid of New York City. These visual qualities and structures are evidence of the reciprocal relationship between design and culture.

Our environment greatly influences our behavior and perspective, and thus the way we express ourselves as individuals, and as collective cultures. These expressions are manifested visually in an infinite number of ways, whether it be through dress, artwork, use of color, the structure of cities and homes, or the objects we use inside of them. Although inspiration for creative work is most easily derived from that which is in our immediate environment, pulling from our existing knowledge in tandem with observation and research of artifacts outside of it can introduce a new perspective and aesthetic.

OBSERVATION

looking closely at cultural artifacts

Close observation of artwork and utilitarian objects has the potential for introducing new methodologies into the design process. However, this process must also include a series of questions and investigations into the purpose of these objects, such as including the meaning of particular materials, colors, and forms. What is the significance of the object in both a historical and contemporary context? How has its meaning shifted over time? What is the equivalent or parallel object within our own culture? Without this knowledge, we may create work that is formally beautiful, but short of fulfilling its conceptual potential, or one that communicates an unintended message.

KOREAN ARTIFACTS

18th Century Joseon Dynasty white ware glazed water dropper.

INVESTIGATION

researching, exploring, making, and understanding

Researching an object, ideology, or culture allows us to achieve a level of understanding necessary to intelligently integrate new approaches and attitudes in our design processes. Personal experience in a culture, or conducting formal research about it, are of equal value to informing creative approaches. Moving beyond casual observation, and into the realm of conscious and intentional research is crucial. To illustrate this, I selected as an object of study the Korean pojagi and explored its history and use and to see how its visual language might be used in a Western context. Pojagi were originally used in a Buddhist context, as tablecloths or sūtra[2] coverings during the twelfth century. Over the next hundred years, they became commonly used by all Koreans—as a sack, food covering, or bedding. Royalty used solid colored pojagi—ranging from pink to purple—for special occasions. Commoners created more functional quilts made of fabric remnants and scraps that resulted in irregular, colorful pieces.

Over time, pojagi have become carefully constructed pieces of art that are mainly used during weddings, or as present wrappings, and made of silk which was formerly only used by royalty. Their history is somewhat similar to that of American quilts, in that they served a functional purpose and were often made of scraps. However, American quilts are often characterized by specific patterns and shapes, as opposed to the often abstract and irregular construction of pojagi. In this example, the aesthetic differences and methods of construction of these artifacts do not possess great meaning, yet they reflect the perspective and values of each culture.

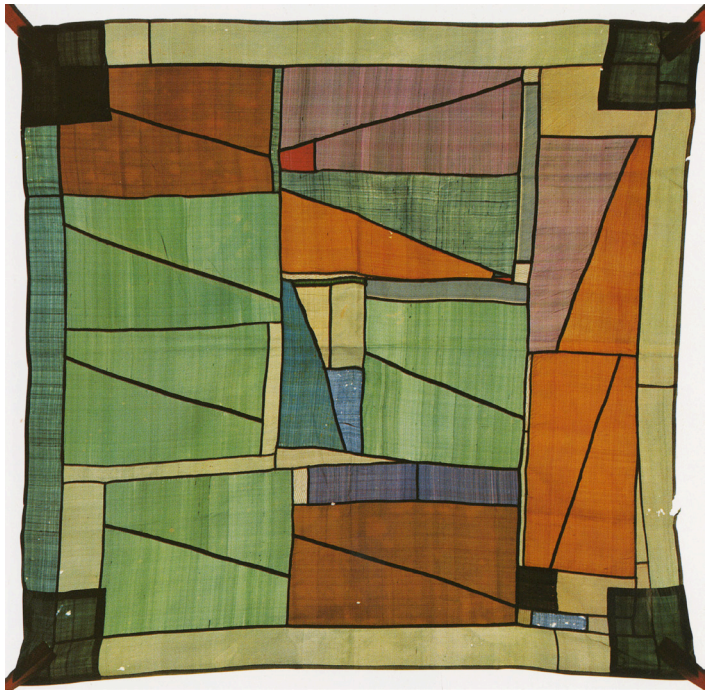
In his book, *Wabi-Sabi: for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*, Leonard Koren describes the Japanese philosophy of Wabi-Sabi, and how it is manifested visually as "the beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. It is a beauty of things modest and humble. It is a beauty of things unconventional." In one section of the book, he makes a comparison between modernism and wabi-sabi, and their reflection of the individualist culture of the West versus the collectivist culture of the East. These beliefs are inevitably reflected in the objects produced by these cultures, and the methodologies used to make them. For example, he contrasts the geometric, solid colored machine-made objects that are so prevalent in industrialist cultures, with the handmade, Zen influenced objects fashioned from natural materials that are more common in Eastern cultures.

2 A Buddhist or Jain scripture. Roberts, Claire, and Dong-Hwa Huh. *Rapt in Colour: Korean Textiles and Costumes of the Chosen Dynasty*. Sydney, Australia: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 2000.

WABI-SABI + MODERNISM

In *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets, & Philosophers*, Leonard Koren compares the aesthetics sensibilities of the Japanese philosophy Wabi-Sabi and modernism.

WABI-SABI	MODERNISM
primarily expressed in private	primarily expressed in public
implies intuitive worldview	implies logical / rational worldview
relative	absolute
looks for personal, idiosyncratic solutions	looks for universal / prototypical solutions
one-of-a-kind / variable	mass-produced / modular
there is no progress	expresses faith in progress
present-oriented	future-oriented
believes in fundamental uncontrollability of nature	believes in the control of nature
romanticizes nature	romanticizes technology
people adapting to nature	people adapting to machines
organic organization of form (soft, vague shapes / edges)	geometric organization of form (sharp / precise shapes / edges)



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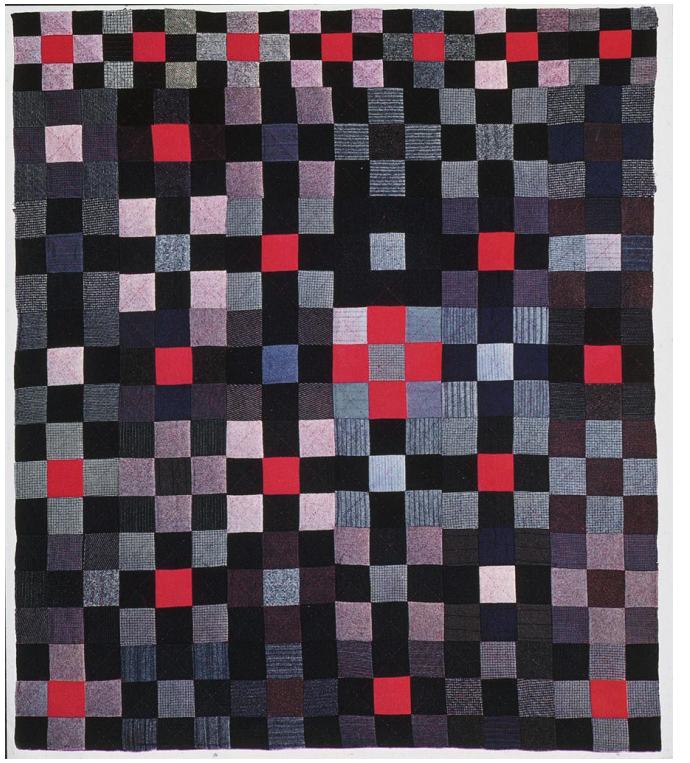

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KOREAN POJAGI + AMERICAN QUILTS

1 Unknown, 19th Century Korean, 74 x 76cm
2 Unknown, 19th Century Korean, 60 x 60cm
3 Unknown, 1910 American, 207.6 x 210.2cm
4 Unknown, 1890 American, *Hired Hand's Quilt*, 74 x 76in

Quilts made by a group of African American women from Gee's Bend, Alabama closely resemble traditional pojagi in that they are abstract and irregular, pieced together with non-uniform fabric. This is evidence of parallel responses to similar situations, resulting in a similar aesthetic. Interestingly, some modern pojagi made in Korea have become more geometric, resembling American quilts. The message of these objects begins to change when elements from each are layered upon one another, often by artists and designers who intentionally attempt to construct new meanings or narratives based upon their knowledge of the artifacts.

GEE'S BEND QUILTS

Women in Gee's Bend, Alabama created these abstract and irregular quilts which are similar to the organic forms used to make Korean pojagi.

MERGING CULTURES

intersection of perspectives, beliefs, and aesthetics

Globalization has allowed for vast and instant exchange of information, images, ideas, beliefs, and products between cultures——both in the physical and virtual realms. Attitudes, methodologies and forms that were formerly isolated within the boundaries of a specific place have been released and adopted by other cultures. Evidence of cultural exchange and influence can be seen throughout all aspects of a society including attire, language, architecture, transportation, attitudes, and beliefs. Some adoptions are temporary trends, but others have a great and lasting affect on the visual or social landscape of a culture.

Chinese writing comprises one of the oldest writing systems in the world. It contains over 40,000 characters and is often characterized by its gestural script style. However, it is now common to see Chinese fonts that draw inspiration from Helvetica, a typeface designed in Switzerland for alphabets consisting of Roman characters. Here we see one culture exhibiting the visual language of another; the intersection of cultures is so ubiquitous that it sometimes disappears until we pause to look closely.

CHINESE TYPOGRAPHY

This is an example of cross-cultural influence demonstrated through the design of digital letterforms and characters. The Chinese characters shown here are set in Adobe Fan Heiti Standard, which has a similar geometic, neutral appearance to the Swiss typeface, Helvetica.

28

个 学 期
又 设 了
新 的 程

A B C
D E F
G H I

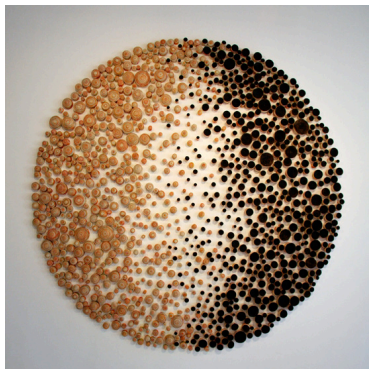
29

In his book *White*, Japanese graphic designer Kenya Hara describes the significance of the color white in both Japanese culture and design aesthetics through the principle of itoshiroshi (shiro is Japanese for white), which is described as an intense purity full of potential. He states that "...the foundation of Japanese aesthetics lies in empty space and a host of meanings have been built upon it. An important level of communication thus exists within the dimension we call 'white.'" He compares the way white is used in design, to communication among Japanese people, where much is left unsaid, yet much is conveyed. This contrasts greatly to direct communication often used in western cultures, where every thought is verbally articulated rather than simply understood through non-verbal means, such as eye contact, a bow, or nod.

It is interesting how cultural values regarding communication, indirect in the East, and direct in the West, are often manifested visually through art and other cultural artifacts. When we learn that white and empty space are interpreted by other cultures as potential and are of equal importance to text, image, or color in communication, we can begin to understand an aspect of another culture, as well the work being created within it. Suddenly the often minimalist and colorless sculptures, paintings, posters, and architecture produced by designers from the East are far more than simple forms; they are communicating through the emptiness.

Bei Li Liu is a Chinese multi-disciplinary artist whose work often addresses her experience of being from the East and living in the West. Through explorations with various materials, such as paper, thread, ink, and wood, she communicates the complexity of contradictory value systems, and the challenge of navigating a world where the two are constantly intersecting. Bei Li's work shows evidence of cultural collision through material, methodology, and concept, and it embodies itoshiroshi or whiteness through the "pauses" between the often repetitive forms. Her carefully spaced, minimalist installations are not full of silence, but rather potential and meaning that interacts with the forms to create a message; the emptiness is not merely a formal consideration. In an installation piece titled 'Origin', Bei Li used hundreds of rolls of Chinese spirit money, which is burnt for ancestors and spirits in the after world as an offering. Half of the rolls were left in their original state of warm tones, while the other half were charred black. The rolls were arranged in a circle, which "brings together the solid and the void, the present and the absent into one complete whole, and alludes to the balance and linkage between the current world and the after world." Here, she not only considers the importance of emptiness in communication, but also mentions the "complete whole", which is characteristic of design in the East.

It is far more common in the collectivist cultures of the East to consider objects in terms of their relationship to one another, versus individualist cultures where objects are often considered independently. The result of these considerations and this perspective is multi-layered work that communicates through the material and form in a manner uncommon in the West. However, knowledge of the purpose of design elements and methodologies such as those used by Bei Li Liu, or based on principles of the Japanese aesthetic described by Kenya Hara, has the potential to transform the way one considers, perceives, approaches, and creates visual work. A multi-cultural approach should not focus on the idea of multiculturalism per se, but draw from the roots of cultural expression. By approaching objects from outside of our culture in this way, we become aware of the use of materials and colors that have the potential to strengthen our message. This approach is more concerned with introducing new methodologies to guide our design process than with the final result. Through this way of working, we become more culturally aware and are more able to create work that is reflective of this knowledge, as well as relevant in modern society, where cultural differences are fading.



COMMUNICATION THROUGH EMPTINESS

'Origin' by Chinese multi-disciplinary artist Bei Li Liu "brings together the solid and the void, the present and the absent into one complete whole, and alludes to the balance and linkage between the current world and the after world." [3]

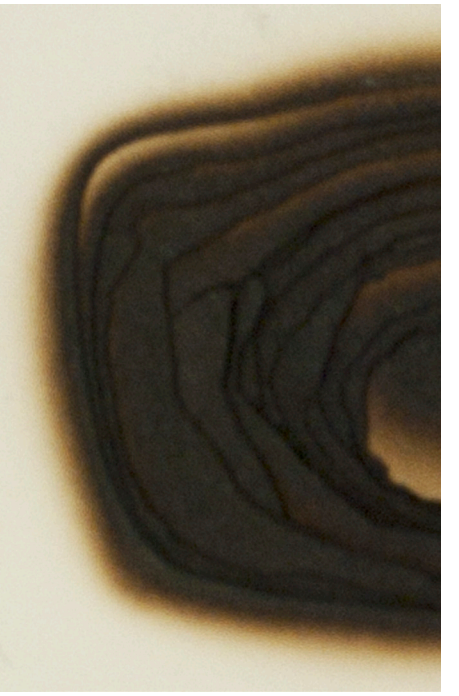
3 Liu, Bei Li. Beili Liu Studio. Web. Dec. 2011. <http://www.beililiu.com>.

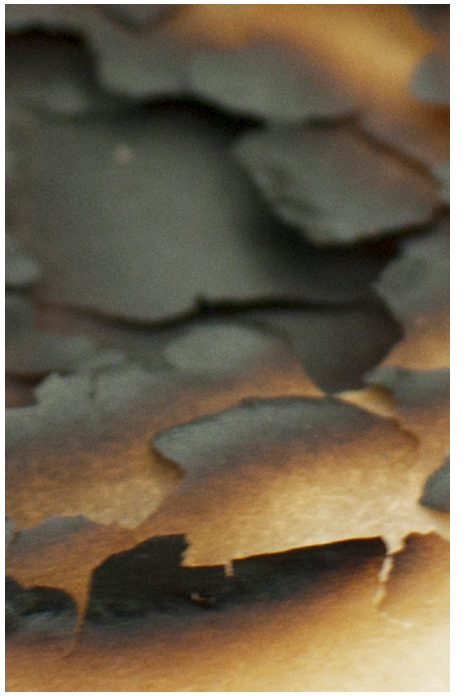
CREATIVE PROJECTS

letterpressed remnant monoprints
transfer monoprint book
sumi ink prints + poems
sewn grid installation

Letterpressed Remnant Monoprints

In a studio class project during my third smester, I was experimenting with the effects of burning on a series of paper books. After the project was completed, I was drawn to the irregular, organic shapes that emerged. I decided to partially wet individual sheets of paper and burn away the dry areas. The result was a series of ambiguous forms. I then inked these remnants and letterpressed them to create a series of monoprints. I wanted to layer them with more regular, geometric lines, so I used parts of Roman characters to cut into the burned paper and made another series of prints. This work reflected both unpredictable and controlled approaches. As I was working on this project, I thought about Koren's discussion of the contrast between Eastern and Western aesthetics. The use of imperfect forms generated by natural processes, coupled with hand-inking, reflected an appreciation for one-of-a-kind, unique outcomes. The perfectly constructed, digital letterforms reflected the values of modernism in their precision, and reproducibility.





BURNED PAPER FORMS

Close-up images of stacks of paper after having been exposed to a single piece of sumi charcoal. The resulting forms were irregular, organic, and sometimes sculptural. This project inspired me to continue working with burned paper.

BURNED REMNANTS

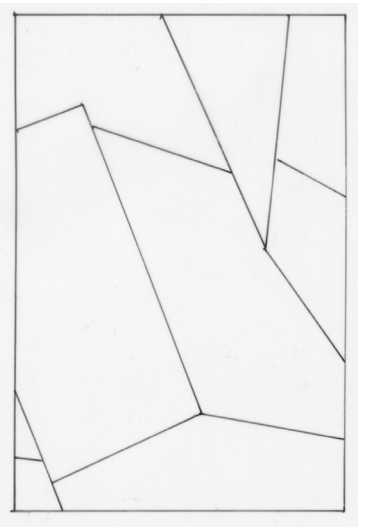
The results of applying water to paper and burning away the remaining dry areas to create these unpredictable, irregular shapes.

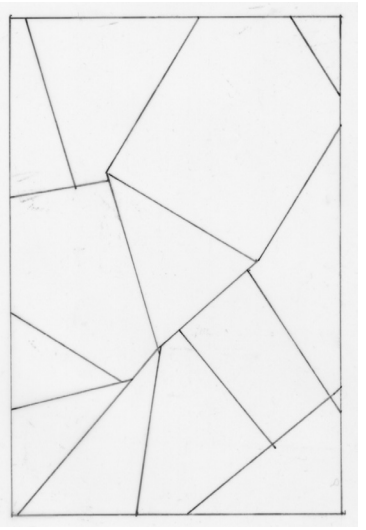
LETTERPRESSED MONOPRINTS

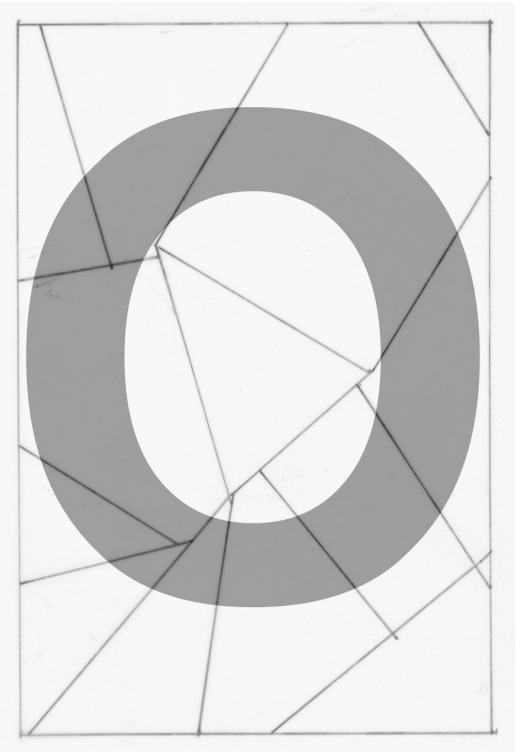
The paper remnants were inked and printed on a press. They were then scanned. Helvetica-bold letterforms were then added. The result is a visual dialogue between organic and constructed form.

Transfer Monoprint Book

In the project, grids derived from Korean quilts (pojagi) were drawn on tracing paper. These were layered on top of large, uppercase Helvetica bold letter forms. I then used the grid to cut the forms into abstract, geometric shapes. These were transferred onto paper using acetone—creating compositions that revealed the imperfection of the transfer printing process, as well as the regularity of the letterforms. This project primarily focused on a formal exploration to discover relationships between form and counterform, and to communicate through emptiness and voids. The project emerged out of my desire to focus on a single artifact in Korean culture. While living in Seoul, I often saw hand-sewn patchwork pieces and wanted to merge this aesthetic with the letterforms that make up such a large part of my work. I chose Helvetica for its neutral, geometric form. When I cut the printed letters and rearranged them, they resembled abstract shapes that possessed qualities of both Roman and Korean characters. This project made me aware of how thoroughly a single object can be explored. As I was working, I became increasingly curious about pojagi and its history. This curiosity led me to research further, which in turn provided me with more information for visual explorations.

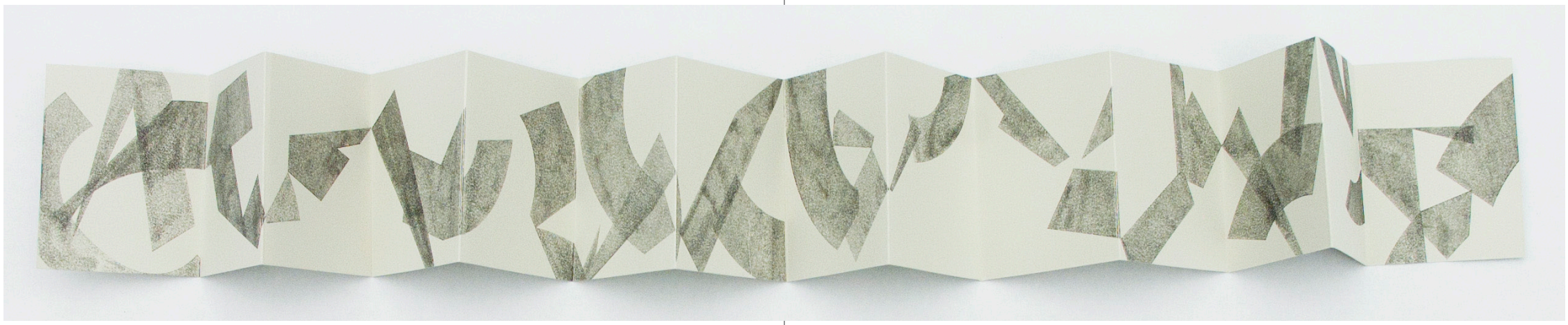


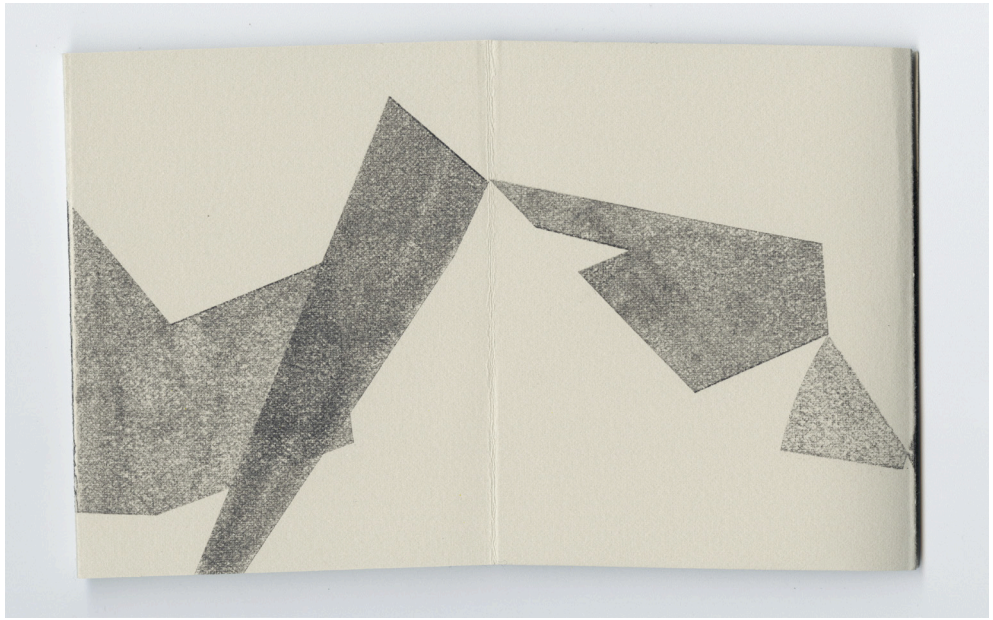


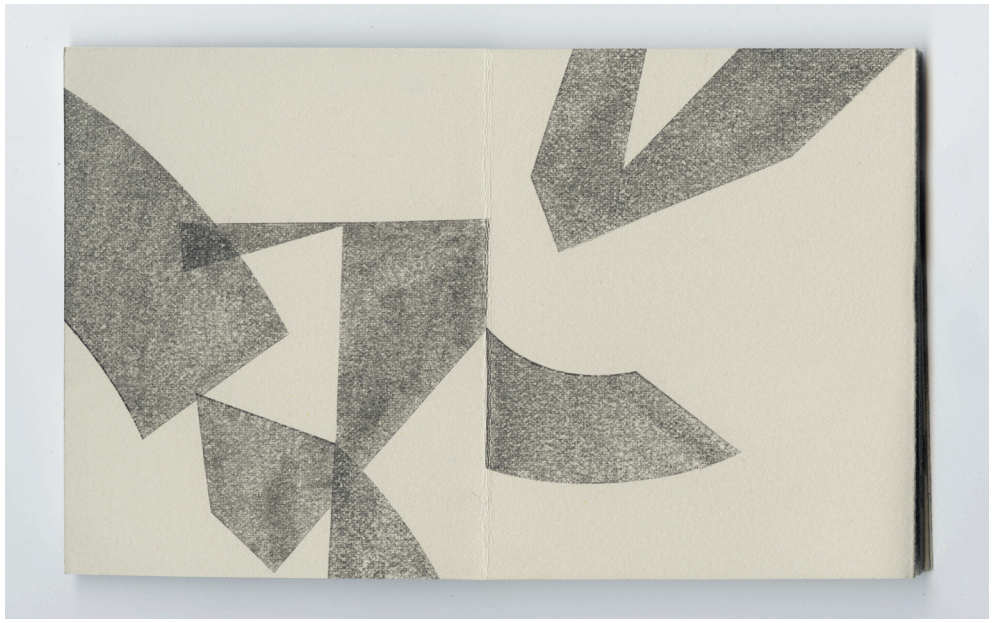


POJAGI GRIDS

Grids based on patterns derived from Korean pojagi were layered on top of a Helvetica-bold letterform. The letterform was then cut to create abstract forms that reflected an equal influence of each component. The resulting forms were used to make a series of prints which were then arranged in an accordion-fold book.

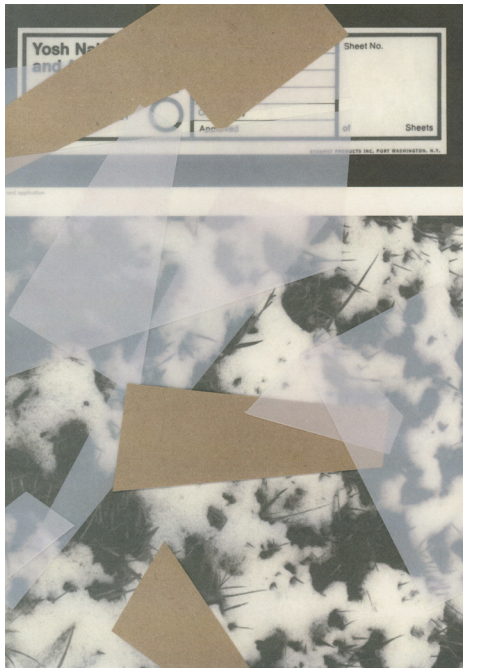


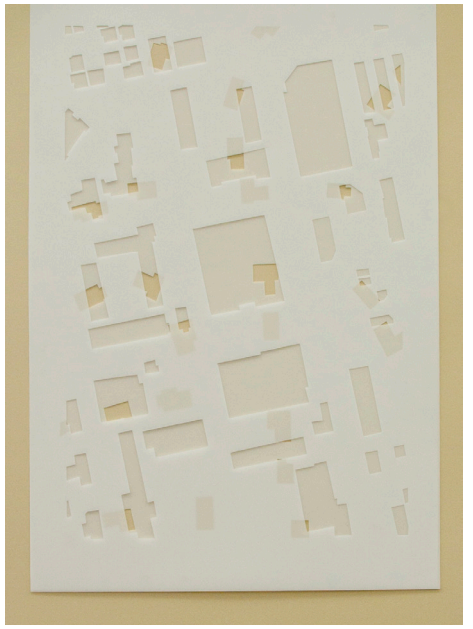




LAYERING

Craft paper and vellum cut and layered to represent the way people are influenced and affected by their environment and individual experiences. An exploration of form, layering, and abstraction.





Sumi Ink Prints + Poem Book

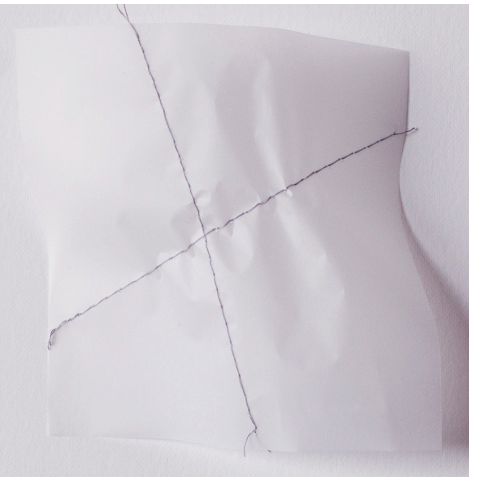
I had used sumi ink and charcoal in previous projects and was curious about what would happen if I applied these materials on matte mylar sheets. After a bit of trial and error, I created a technique that resulted in beautiful organic forms. I applied a small amount of water to the mylar, followed by a small amount of ink. I repeated the process in another area, and created paths of water that connected them. The ink would slowly move through the water, leaving its faded trace on the mylar. The combination of the ink and the softness of the mylar resulted in a precious object. I generated several compositions on 8" x 21.5" sheets and decided to incorporate them into a large format book. To continue the theme of drawing from both Eastern and Western sources, I decided to weave the words of two thematically related poems: *The Rest of My Life* by Ko Un and *Time Is Time* by Isaac Maliya. Each of these poems reference the passage of time and how it is perceived by humans. I output the interwoven poems on white Rives BFK paper and then layered the sumi ink prints on top of each page. An interesting contrast emerged between the rhythm of the words and the ink formations. The process of creating the ink forms was very meditative, and I feel as though this is reflected in the final piece. For a long time, I have wanted to create prints using different materials and mediums. This project served as a shift in the direction of my work—I became completely lost in it, and gained the confidence to continue creating work that affects me in that way.

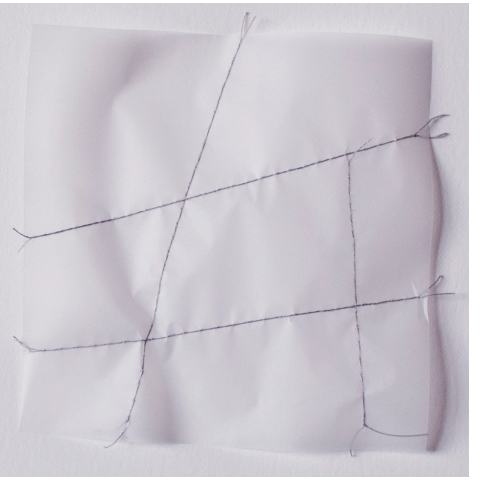
INK PRINTS

Sumi ink slowly flowed through water paths on mylar, which resulted in natural, organic forms. Six prints were layered on top of six pages containing poems by a Korean and American poets. The ink formations and words intersect, reflecting different methodologies and cultural perceptions of beauty and perfection.

Sewn Grid Installation

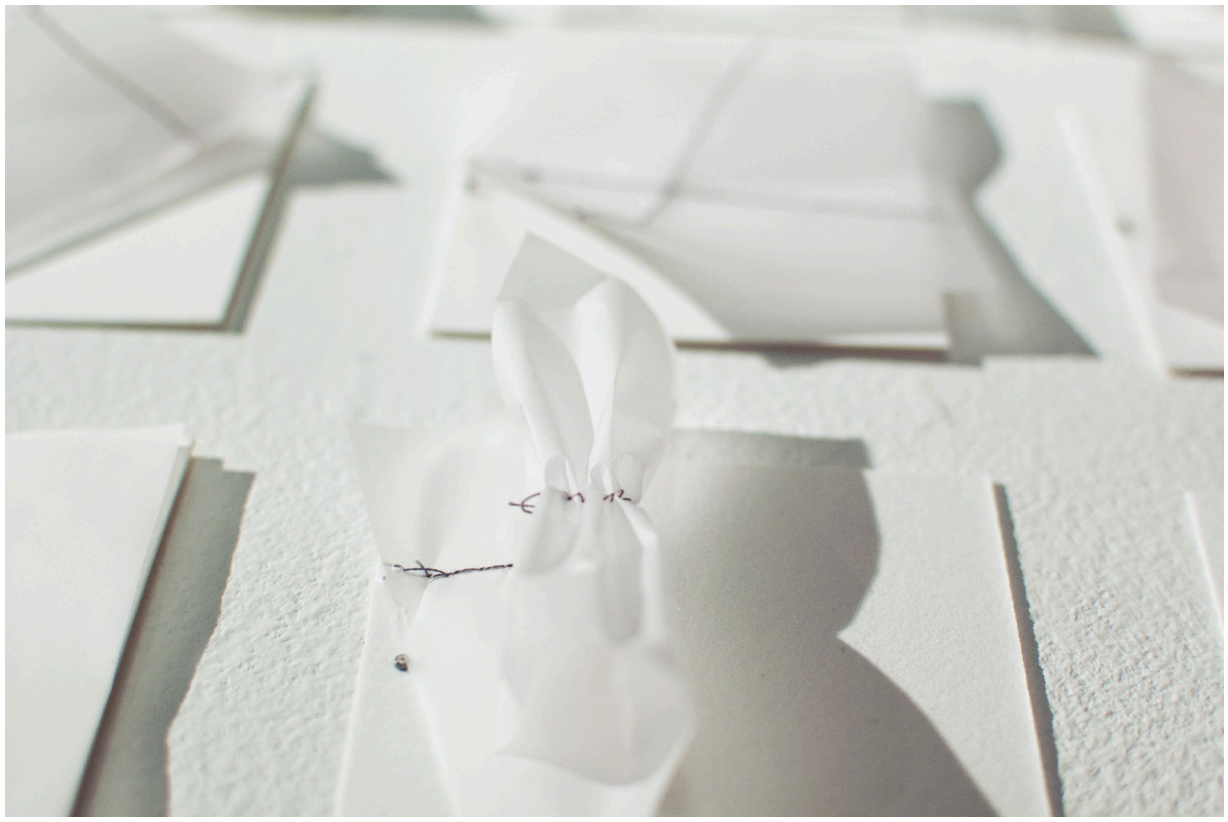
The abstract construction of Korean pojagi and the work of several Korean, Japanese, and Chinese artists inspired me to explore making work that exhibited the rhythm, subtlety, and quietness of these pieces. My goal was to create meaningful narratives through the use of minimal materials. For this project, I cut 100 3" x 3" pieces of tracing paper and sewed one, two, or three lines of gray thread through each. As I guided the paper through the sewing machine, its form changed from the tightening of the thread, resulting in a series of abstract, sculptural forms. I then mounted each square on a 3" x 3" piece of paper to reference its formerly perfect shape, and combined the squares into a grid installation on the wall. Light falling on the paper creates a series of shadows—creating another layer of rhythm and patterning. The use of tracing paper communicates simplicity, purity, and organic form—created by a single thread. By combining these abstract forms with the structure of the grid, I hoped to express an intersection of the planned, often geometric forms I encounter in my culture, versus the imperfect, natural forms I often saw in Korea. I believe the success of this project lies in how it reveals culturally different approaches to both making and organizing form. I learned the value of becoming familiar with materials—examining and manipulating them, and knowing how they behave.





INSTALLATION

Individual sections of a grid of 100 3" x 3" sewn pieces of tracing paper attached to 3" x 3" pieces of white Rives BFK paper.



REFLECTION

where i'm going

I came to grad school with the hope that I would have a life-altering experience—that I would walk away a new, enlightened, more knowledgeable person. By the end of the first week, I felt as though I had just spent hours in classes being taught in a foreign language (yet I nodded my head, pretending to know every word, name, and theory that was thrown my way). By the end of the first month, I questioned my abilities and everything I thought I knew about art, design, and myself. By the end of the first year, I felt lost and little different from the person that started the program nine months earlier. I started project after project only to abandon them just when they started to show potential. I was often paralyzed by my fear of failure and disappointment in my work. The insecurities and uncertainties that I had managed to bury over time had surfaced, and I came undone (in the most positive sense of the word).

If we never come undone, then how are we to rebuild ourselves? How are we to put our pieces back together in new arrangements if we never engage in experiences that break them apart? I think this process often happens despite our best efforts to keep everything together. At some point near the end of the third semester, I finally discovered what I wanted to research, read, make, and pursue. I found the starting point, a beginning. I finally began to rebuild myself with new compositions that consisted of pieces of information, images, sounds, colors, conversations, materials, languages, knowledge and interactions I had collected over the past year and a half. Perhaps I have not become a completely new person, but I now see the world in a new way. I think about, perceive, and approach work differently. To me, this has been the most valuable part about graduate school—learning to think and see in ways I never knew existed.

I plan to continue exploring the reciprocal relationship between culture and design, and to experiment with new methodologies. There is much more for me to learn and discover about cultures. I hope to do this through traveling, developing relationships with people outside of my culture, and continuing visual and formal research. There are countless ways to layer forms and materials to represent the intersection, connectedness, and exchange of aesthetics, belief systems, and perspectives. My work will serve as visual questions and reveal curiosities about aesthetic and cultural relationships. It is through this process that I will continue to restructure myself and my ever-changing filter through which I view the world—hopefully always discovering new beginnings.

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Arnett, William, Arnett, Paul, Beardsley, John, and Livingston, Jane. *Gee's Bend: The Women and Their Quilts*. Atlanta, GA: Tinwood, 2002.

Released in conjunction with The Quilts of Gee's Bend national exhibition tour, this book introduced me to the beautifully abstract and unique quilts created by African American women in the rural town of Gee's Bend, Alabama.

Hara, Kenya, and Jooyeon Rhee. *White*. Baden: Lars Müller, 2010.

Through this simple and poetic book, I learned about emptiness, void, potential, and imagination, which altered my approach to and interpretation of space in my work.

Knodel, Gernhardt, Hix, H.L., Cho, Kyoung Ae. *Portfolio Collection; Kyoung Ae Cho*. Telos Art Publishing, England, 2003.

Kyoung Ae Cho is a fiber and mixed media artist who explores processes in nature, and the way human beings interact with and interrupt them. Her work influenced me to discover the relationship between the hand of the artist and organic processes of natural materials.

Koren, Leonard. *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge, 1994.

The Japanese philosophy of Wabi-Sabi greatly influenced the direction of my work. Once I learned to embrace imperfection, I began to allow the materials to guide my process, resulting in intricate, organic forms.

Liu, Bei Li. *Beili Liu Studio*. Web. Dec. 2011. <http://www.beililiu.com>.

Contemporary Chinese multi-disciplinary artist Beili Liu often creates work that visualizes her experience of being from the East and living in the West, encountering contradictory beliefs and value systems. I was able to relate to her use of layering to express the intersection of cultures. Her work, both conceptually and aesthetically, influenced and inspired my process.

Nisbett, Richard E. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently, and Why*. New York: Free, 2003.

This note social psychologist's book helped me to gain a greater understanding of different cultural perspectives and belief systems, and how to consider them in my work.

Roberts, Claire, and Huh, Dong-Hwa. *Rapt in Colour: Korean Textiles and Costumes of the Chosen Dynasty*. Sydney, Australia: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 2000.

Rapt in Colour exhibits traditional Korean quilts, pojagi, and tells of their interesting history. This artifact served as the basis for several of my creative projects.

Roberts, Elise Schebler, and Jennifer Chiaverini. *The Quilt: a History and Celebration of an American Art Form*. St. Paul, MN: Voyageur, 2007.

This book discusses the history and aesthetic of America quilts, which served as and important comparison and parallel to the Korean pojagi I used in my work.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1978.

Through Louise Rosenblatt's writing on theories in literacy, I understood the relationship between context, maker, object, and viewer, which encouraged me to approach my work in a cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary way.

Wertsch, James V. *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1994.

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky's socio-historical theory is based on the principle that cognition and perspectives are embedded in a specific time and place, which served as the framework for visual investigations of cultural intersections.

This book is typeset in Adobe Caslon by Carol Twombley, based on the original typeface of William Caslon. The headers are set in DIN by Albert-Jan Pool. It was printed by Lulu.