

BOJAGI INSPIRED

I have been creating a series of sculptural vessels as a metaphor for human emotion, memory and experience. For this series, a vessel is any type of container used to hold something. These sculptural vessels are created out of diaphanous textiles, using a design originally inspired by *Bojagi*, a traditional art form in Korea. *Bojagi* is the wrapping cloth used to cover, store or carry everything from precious ritual objects to everyday clothes and common household belongings. It is usually a square cloth of various sizes made out of silk, cotton, and ramie. *Bojagi* was originally made by anonymous women throughout the *Choson* dynasty (1392~1910) in Korea. Leading isolated lives in a society in which the ideology of Confucianism was dominant, they had no art education. Despite this, they developed *Bojagi* with artistic beauty and unique styles. They applied various techniques such as embroidery, painting, dyeing, gold leaf, and quilting to employ its motifs, patterns and colors. They made good use of small, otherwise useless, pieces of leftover cloth, patching them up into useful wrappers.

My interest in *Bojagi* does not lie on how to re-create traditional *Bojagi*, but on how to extend the basic patchwork structures into my sculptural vessel forms. I am fascinated not with *Bojagi*'s overall design but with the process of making it, one patch after another. The woven fabric is made of repetitive horizontal and vertical structures; the process of *Bojagi*-making is composed of a series of vertical and horizontal actions that move against and beyond the fabric itself. It involves collecting cloth scraps, re-configuring and re-constructing them for a different use, which I interpret, is the way our memories form between layers of time and space. The daily moments we experience are modified, fantasized, deleted, reconnected and stored as a collection of memories. In this context, I convert flat cloth patterns into sculptural vessel forms to metaphorically contain memories, which are stored where a layer of time and space intersect. Folding, wrapping, and sewing are employed to transform two-dimensional fabrics into three-dimensional enclosed forms or vessel, which function as a private and sacred place where people record their memories. Enclosed textile vessel forms with printed images and texts demonstrate narrative work in both pictorial and sculptural fields.

For instance, I created a large number of purple and transparent double-layered chiffon fortune cookie forms (see *Purple on Thursday*). Each had a short text of historical significance written on it; I interpreted a fortune cookie as a vessel, holding individuals' wishes. To reveal intangible yet vivid memories and emotions captured inside the vessel forms I intensified their fragility with the semi-transparency of a sheer fiber. I would like to continue creating textile sculpture and installation work, transforming the homely act of sewing and converting traditional cloths into art that embraces life and society.

Bojagi, a traditional Korean art form, inspires Eun-Kyung Suh's work. *Bojagi* are cloths wrapped around objects for protection and transport. Made from small scraps of material, *Bojagi* are often decorated to form beautiful patch-worked wrappers. Suh uses this technique to protect memories and experiences. Her installations comprise many pieces containing small bits of information in sheer cloth. Often the packages are silk-screened with images and text, offering clues to their contents. She will show textile vessel forms,

using sheer silk organza in five different colors, which derives from the Five Movements, Eastern philosophy. The five colors include blue, red, yellow, white and black, corresponding to the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal and water) and directions (east, south, center, west, north). Personal memories for time and place will be condensed in the standard colors and housed in the textile vessel forms.