

*Spare elegance shown in two MIA installations*

**DOUG HANSON**

Startribune, Minneapolis MN

Jul. 2010

The Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program often pairs artists whose works dovetail in some way, a practice encouraged by its two adjoining gallery spaces at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. But it's hard to recall two shows more conceptually in sync than the current exhibits by Eun-Kyung Suh and Mayumi Amada. Both interpret the fleeting transience of life with installations marked by spare elegance and mystical vision.

Eun-Kyung Suh has created a wonderfully nuanced installation dealing with our fragile memories of lives that come and go too quickly. The recent death of her father inspires large parts of her show, which is titled "The Voided."

The artist makes highly original use of *bojagi*, the ancient Korean practice of sewing together spare fabric pieces to make containers of all sorts. From squares and rectangles of silk organza, Suh patiently stitches boxes that serve as vessels for human memories. No larger than a foot on any side, each box contains a black-and-white family snapshot printed on white linen.

Silk organza holds a given shape yet is sheer enough to permit the viewer to vaguely discern the photos inside even without looking through the small rectangular openings that Suh includes in each box. And where the fabric pieces overlap you get quarter-inch-thick bands that the artist builds into nicely abstracted Mondrianesque grids across the boxes' exteriors.

Most affecting is Suh's installation dedicated to her late father, in which fabric shapes climb like vines up the opposing corners of one wall. "White," to the left, seems to burst upward with blossom-like white forms that fold around colorful fragments taken from her father's ties and shirts. "Black," at the opposite right corner, features black fabric folded into ominous shroud-like shapes that look like triangular monks' cowls. They incorporate dark bits of fabric taken from the childhood clothing of Suh's daughter.

This unexpected reversal – giving the daughter's motifs a funereal cast while recalling the deceased father with brightly life-affirming, expansive motifs – brilliantly evokes the mutual presence of life and death in all moments of existence.

It's not easy to capture intellectual or spiritual ideas in visual metaphors, but Suh and Amada have done so in a rewarding dual exhibition that attests to the ongoing originality and vitality of the Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program itself.