

Loss

Loss : The loss of individuality through the individual

My thoughts return to the very beginning, to my childhood, and the things that I have lost. I have lost not only material things like toys and accessories: but also fragments of memories, and peace of my mind. And in my memory the very first thing I ever lost was an umbrella.

Umbrellas have a special meaning for me. I used to enjoy being underneath an umbrella, table, or closets when I was little. Particularly, I used to enjoy taking naps, reading story books and playing with my dolls under the umbrella. The umbrella was the most important object for me at the time, because it provided the most comfortable sense of place like the mother's womb. However, as time passed, I could no longer spend time under the umbrella. Spending my time under the umbrella as I grew brought on comments by adults, like: "Why are you acting like a child?" Not only had I grown physically but in the social consciousness, a mature person acting like a child seemed immature.

Just like that, I came to lose the first precious object that I remember. I soon began to find other precious spaces, memories and objects that slowly replaced this umbrella. However, as I grew up and things began to change, things that were like precious 'umbrellas' to me started to become destroyed, abandoned and taken away. As if a balloon is blown away or is popped by someone as a joke, the precious things in my life like the 'umbrella' were blown away, just like that.

This installation work represents the most comforting objects, memories and spaces of my growing-up years that are often symbolized as my 'umbrellas'. In the work, I made four groups of busts in four different sizes, consisting of 1, 3, 5, and 7 busts. The primary numbers 1, 3, 5 and 7 cannot be divided by any other number than itself or number 1. I used this characteristic of primary numbers to emphasize the 'self'. Sixteen differently-colored umbrellas, complementing the added total of the four primary numbers 1, 3, 5 and 7, were suspended from the ceiling.

I made 4 different sizes of busts, from small to large. The 5 smallest busts signify my ego in elementary school years. They also signify the vanishing of 5 'umbrellas' that were precious to me, and that vanished due to my physical maturation. The 5 symbols include dolls, bathtub, playground, laundry basket and space under the table.

The 7 busts next in size signify my middle school years. I lost the most number of 'umbrellas' during this period. My endless days at the hospital kept me from having an ordinary school life. I lost 7 umbrellas at this time, and they gave me the most unbearable sense of loss. The 7 things I lost were school life, free time with friends, travelling, picnics, physical education classes, delicious food, and hair. My days at the hospital kept me from being able to eat delicious food and there was nothing I could do about my falling hair. Also, the places I could visit were very limited, besides the hospital, home, and the classroom. Hence, I have no memories of going on picnics with friends, travelling or playing sports.

The next three busts signify my high school years. I lost three 'umbrellas.' My medical treatments were over, but I was so busy returning to my ordinary everyday life, and there was no free time for me as a high school student in Korea. Most Korean high school students can't afford to do anything else with their time but to study and prepare for the university entrance examination. I lost things like talking with my friends, comic books and everything else but time devoted to studying.

The one largest bust signifies my college days. Grown up, I was able to defend things that were precious to me, and they are still precious in my life. However, I lost my biggest 'umbrella' at this time in my life: a home. Leaving Korea behind, my new life in Chicago was so unfamiliar and

uncomfortable for me. The 'umbrella' I lost at this time in my life, was the cozy and comfortable home.

I used black cloth to represent the darkness of this sense of loss, and used different colored threads to symbolize different sense of loss according to different periods of my life. All 'umbrellas,' each signifying particular preciousness was made with very bright colors. I made the umbrellas with the most vivid and playful colors, as if to signify how much joy and sentimental value they offered to my life. Unfortunately, those things disappeared due to changes in myself and my environment. I am no longer holding onto the handle of my umbrellas. Like a drifting balloon, my umbrellas are vanished in thin air.