



I depict landscapes. However, be they abstract or representative images, my landscapes lie beyond landscape itself. I want to recover memory and be consoled through these landscapes that are distinctly mine. And these landscapes are mine because the process of adding colors, defining shapes and rendering compositions is not to create something esthetically pleasing. Rather these are my means of reconstructing broken memories, finding something that I could never reach, and recovering the times that I lost. That is, these landscapes are not a mirror nor merely a form of artistic expression. Rather, they represent the consolation and rediscovery of my past, present and future.

My landscapes are an attempt to recover the memories of villages that have disappeared. Starting in the late 1970's, many provinces and rural areas near the capital of my country, Korea, were destroyed in accordance with our government's Country Modernization Plan. During this period, a beautiful and peaceful town where my grandmother lived was forcibly demolished. Later, I visited the town. All that remained of the town were four houses; one of them was my grandmother's. I was present during the town's final hours, since the eviction deadline (before the final demolition began) was only two days away. The shocking moment is still deeply engraved in my memory. I still remember that many people wept, because the histories and roots of many generations of families were being destroyed. The shocking moment, including the town people's grief, is imprinted in my mind, never having left my memory. The way I coped with this tragic memory and consoled my

broken heart was to recall the peaceful and gorgeous place that my grandmother's town once was. Therefore, the landscape images arise from my recollections and imaginings of the town before it was destroyed. However, even though my memories are both bitter and painful, I applied spirited color combinations in my landscapes that suggest positive experiences. The colors reflect a state of mind. I orchestrated the colors like soft and romantic musical pitches. Describing my 'memory-scapes' with poetic color is one of my challenges because I have to overcome the sorrowful memory.

Also, when I was twenty years old, a large town where I was growing up since I was in middle school had to be demolished according to Korea's Urban Reconstruction Plan. I had to see bulldozers break down houses one by one every day. Whenever I stepped into the street, I counted the demolished houses. I felt the importance of my teenage years were being torn down, because each location in the town recalled special moments and special memories for me: a small theater where I watched a horror movie for the first time in my life was there, too. At that time, I was twelve. There was a hill where my mother brought my sisters and brother, and told us about our father. On the hill, I overheard about my sister's love affair – I was fifteen. In order to get a glance at a handsome high school boy, I always made it a point to walk by the corner of a shabby grocery store – I was eighteen. And that shabby grocery store was the first structure to be demolished.

My landscapes don't portray many houses and man-made structures. What I remember of the town are a few houses and the 'guidance trees'. 1979, April 5, seven

o'clock in the morning, when I finally moved to a new place, it seemed that my teenage world was completely falling apart. What I had wanted to remember for my whole life was completely gone, even the guardian trees. However, I conveyed the landscapes by creating a natural emotional connection with myself. This approach is seen in color passages that suggest lyric emotions. One of the emotions is indicated in the images as two trees, which are the guardian trees that served as the town's main entrance.

My paintings don't directly portray specific landscapes, although they are firmly rooted in my memories of the villages that have disappeared. The paintings are another attempt to overcome my caged teenager life. My father passed away when I was ten. Our family had an extremely difficult time, and so my mother had to work from early in the morning to late at night every day in order to support four children. I envied my friends who went on family trips on holidays or vacations. Even a small picnic on Sunday was too luxurious for us. I always imagined the "outer" world, but I couldn't complain to my mother who sacrificed so much for her children. What lay beyond my house was always my dream that I could never reach. This longing for "outside" is still very intense. However, I depicted the longing as a silent, an elegiac view of the land. I am still afraid of expressing my strong longing to my mother.

In addition, things got harder for me after I became a wife. This is because; it is traditional in Korean culture that a wife always should obey to a husband and his family in order to make a marriage work. And I was forced to follow that unfair notion. This psychological conflict is indicated in my work by means of double

images, the combination of the interior of my room with a landscape, or a landscape looking over a table inside of a room. Sometimes, I painted the reflection of a river that I imagined from the window of the room where I lived. Also I combined the effects of complex compositions in my images by means of multiple perspectives. Multiple perspectives create for me a depth of emotions. This approach is a metaphor of suppressed longings. My images are dream-like and provide clues to my turbulence and pain of my teenage life.

My paintings echo the suppressed rage that I mentioned earlier, even if the images seem soft and poetic. Nevertheless, I still have a strong desire to get rid of these bitter memories, to overcome the painful residue of my emotion, and build my future with positive experiences. This intention led me to paint the series of small paintings. With these painting, I tried to recall the forgotten times by focusing on the people who are always seeking anything new, like a new city, new technology or a new country. And I tried to get back to the time of my caged youth. In this series, each painting/canvas has a different face, different weather, different distances and multi-perspectives. The multi-perspectives embody various suppressed and uncontrollable emotions. The dark skies and turbulent sea storms symbolize the emotion of my depressed teenage life. Some towns appear tiny but luminous, welcoming the light on the horizon, trapped between violent, dark seas and skies. These are symbols of my hope. Other paintings are rendered with very bright colors portraying vivid surroundings and a big storm covering the towns. That big storm is to be interpreted

as the horrible announcement of the demolition of the towns. Such paintings of violent weather are representations of the churning emotions of my youth.

Astonishingly, I found myself being consoled, and I recovered gradually through my studio work. My brush strokes are becoming more aggressive and free, and shapes don't have strict boundaries as they did in my earlier paintings. I believe that the tighter paintings were an indication of my feelings of suppression. Moreover, the newer compositions have greater variety and suggest more dynamic energies. The colors are very intense reds, stimulating yellows and pure whites. These chromatic color schemes, I believe, are further evidence of consolation and the rediscovery of myself through a bold passion.

My landscapes are a journey, the journey of my youth. The journey started with grievous memories of my early years. However, these painful recollections are receding into my past. I am now beginning to accept the fact that these memories are also precious parts of my life. Now, I am standing at a turning point in my life, which is ready to be filled with amazing memories that I'm bound to create in the future. Of course, just as I began this journey on an empty canvas in my studio, I will continue to record the stories of my journey on the canvas. This is why these landscapes are forever mine.