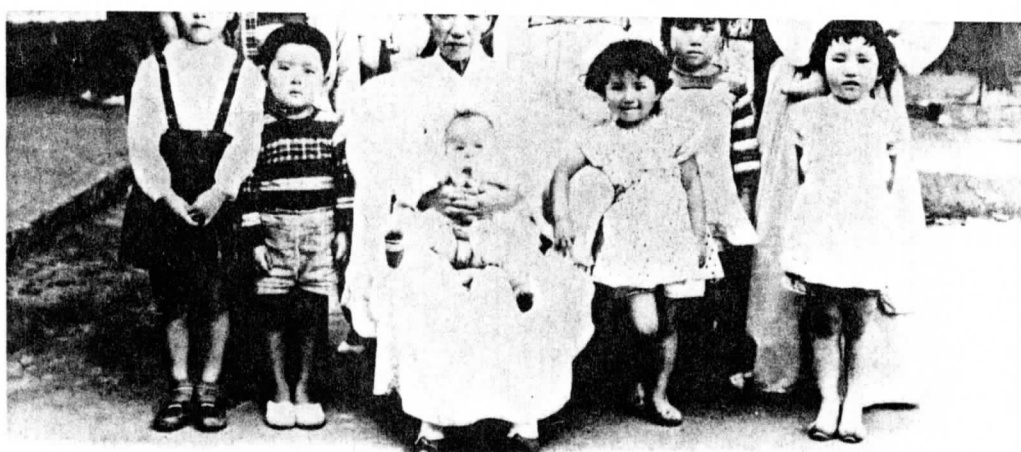


peats and therefore reinforces the isolated image of self, Billops constantly invents characters, creating a family network and commenting on experiences in a multiracial world. The appearance of various languages in her work (drawings with Chinese and Japanese legends, sculptures carved with Arabic glyphs) gives it an international feeling. The "Kaoshiung Series" (1982), a group of drawings named for the city in Taiwan where the artist and her husband lived in 1982, is not so much about that place but recalls a "marvelous fight" the couple had. These drawings were also inspired by a figurative sculpture "Remember Vienna" (1981) depicting romance and commemorating a trip these two took to Europe. In both "The Story of Mom" and another series of works titled "Smoke and Blue on the Stairway to the Stars" (1986) and based on Billops' mother and father, the artist succeeds in immortalizing "...the beauty and style that had always been a part of my parents' lives."<sup>2</sup>

For Jamaica Arts Center, Billops has created a new suite called "The Kids from Red Bank." These characters are based on stories from Billops' mother and aunt about Red Bank, New York, the first place they lived after leaving their South Carolina home. The sculptures that are part of the installation are life-size and smaller ceramic chairs that are incarnations of some of the people from these family tales; they are also accompanied by drawings. In addition Billops will screen and lecture on her film "Suzanne, Suzanne" (1982). This work focuses on the struggle of her niece with drug and child abuse. In Billops' words the film is about "a black middle-class family in trouble with itself," and also reveals "that the safeguards and trappings of middle-class life do not make us immune to the troubles of living."<sup>3</sup>

Yong Soon Min has described herself as an art activist, one who combines artmaking with social action and theory. She is inspired by Min Joong, a new multidisciplinary movement in Korean art, meshing contemporary and modernist art-forms with social and political content and a critical stance toward the West and Japan. As a Korean who is also a naturalized U.S. citizen Min's work explores both her native land, particularly its reality as a divided country and her experiences in this country. Her relationship to the larger American culture seems similar to that of the African-American, once described by W.E.B. DuBois as "born with a veil and gifted with a second sight in this American world — a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other...."



Yong Soon Min as a child  
standing 2nd from right with extended family in South Korea

Approaching the art of installation quite differently from both DeMonte and Billops, Yong Soon Min does not create numerous objects that eventually will be installed somewhere. Rather she begins with the concept and the site. She may use photographs, newspapers, lettering and other materials whose linear placement along gallery walls evokes a narrative feeling or voice. Yet, as with DeMonte and Billops, each piece represents a continuation of her own story, exploring dichotomies; the sense of uprootedness vs. the need to immigrate; assimilation vs. regard for Asian heritage; Korea's current political turmoil vs. the recovery of ancient history. In a recent room-size work entitled "Half Home," Min covered most of the installation with tracing paper. Viewers thus had to experience the work through "the veil." This installation evoked physically what is usually only a feeling, creating the sensation, for the audience, of not being able to understand and of otherness.

Writing in the mid-seventies of women's/feminist art, Lucy Lippard made some observations that continue to hold true in the case of the artists in this exhibition of installations. Lippard found the works to have a strong narrative autobiographical content full of personal secrets, and also noted a fragmented quality, in the sense of serial or repeated elements/images.<sup>4</sup> As contemporary women Claudia DeMonte, Camille Billops and Yong Soon Min assume through their art an intellectual freedom feminist in its largest sense. In nontraditional, non-heroic materials they create their own new worlds and icons, and signal the decline, in the "postmodern" world, of Western patriarchal hegemony. As critic Craig Owens has said: "What if not the emergence of Third-World nations ... and the women's movement—the voices of the conquered—has challenged the West's desire for ever greater domination and control?"<sup>5</sup>

#### Notes

1. William P. Miller, Jr. *Three Artists Installations: Charles Abramson, Jorge Luis Rodriguez, Pedro Perez* (New York: Jamaica Arts Center, 1986)
2. Camille Billops, interview with George C. Wolfe, *ISSUE, A Journal for Artists* (New York: Reflex Horizons Ltd., 1985) p. 27
3. Ibid.
4. Lucy Lippard, *From the Center: feminist essays on women's art*, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976) see especially the essay "What is Female Imagery" and "Ree Morton: At the Still Point of the Turning World."
5. Hal Foster, ed. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Washington: Bay Press, 1983) Craig Owens "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," p. 67