

Korean family adjusts

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U.S. citizenship after they have fulfilled their five-year residency requirement. But their main concern at the moment is getting settled into their new life.

"The children don't speak English and staying here in a Korean household they don't know much about the outside world," observed Young-Ja. "But they aren't homesick. They like it here," she added, noting that all three children have been enrolled in Bloomfield's public schools.

Their happy expressions are evidence of their joy. After two years of living without a mother, and another year of uncertainty about their emigration, their future seems secure.

Their father, Yong-Soon, has just begun the difficult process of looking for work in his field. In Korea he owned his own import-export business, but he intends to begin his American career working for someone else.

"He doesn't know business in America and his English is not too good yet," Young-Ja explained.

Young-Ja came to America thinking she already had a job, only to find upon her arrival that someone had been hired in her place.

"I was offered a job as a designer in a jewelry shop after I graduated in 1976. They wanted me to work there, but I didn't have a green card. I was still considered a student, so I had to go back to Korea.

"Since then other people have taken the places. All the benches are full. So I have to wait for an opening. I met

the owner and he told me 'We'll call you.' It's possible I'll look for another job."

Regardless of her ultimate employment, Young-Ja plans to continue metal-smithing at home.

She held her first one-man show in 1976 at the Birmingham Gallery. She hopes to have a second exhibition completed in about two years.

She has also participated in several prestigious exhibitions including the 1975 National American Sterling Design Competition and the 1977 Exhibition of Modern Korean Handicrafts.

IT WAS DURING her early studies at the Han Kook gem institute in Seoul that Young-Ja became aware that many techniques and mechanical processes had been developed in the U.S. which could aid designers and craftsmen.

She explained, "In Korea, the designing of an object and its execution are divided between designers and craftsmen. I have found the western concept of a designer-craftsman to be a much more clay approach to metal work."

Young-Ja also differs from her Korean peers in her use of designs.

"Korean culture is replete with symbols from Confucian philosophy," she said. "I am not satisfied to simply execute these old motifs. I hope that they will serve more as points of departure to stimulate more personal and contemporary forms."

Her pieces are usually functional, but with a design that stands by itself as a total work of art. She frequently combines highly-polished brass with resins and metal fiori (many bright-

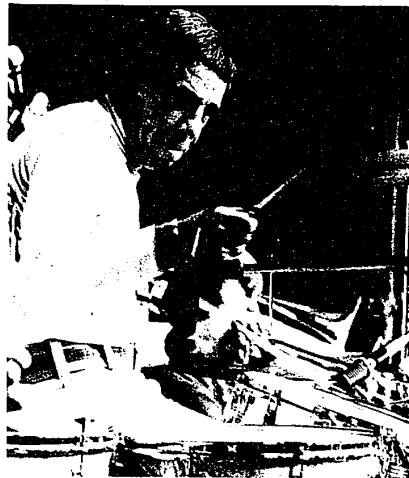
colored flowers) for an effect that embodies unmitigated charm.

How does she execute such delicate work so masterfully? Her formula seems to be patience, hard work and love.

"I treat my metal work with as much care as I would treat a child until I get the result I desire," she concluded.



An example of Young-Ja Seo's work is this piece of gold and semiprecious stones shown in her show in 1976.



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