



# Today's Child & Family

## An Artist's Story

Megan Rye, who was adopted from South Korea through Children's Home Society in 1976, paints in a photorealistic style. On the cover, Megan's *Girl with Flowers* depicts Emily and Kathy Colwell, mother and daughter; Emily was adopted from China through CHS in 1996. *Baby in Basket*, below, depicts Emily's mother, Kathy, meeting her adoptive parents in Michigan in 1957. An article profiling the artist begins on page 4.



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# Making Her Mark

A Painter's Art and Life, Intertwined

BY DIANE RICHARD

Megan Rye describes her first moments on earth in matter-of-fact terms.

*"It was like I dropped from the sky,"* she says.

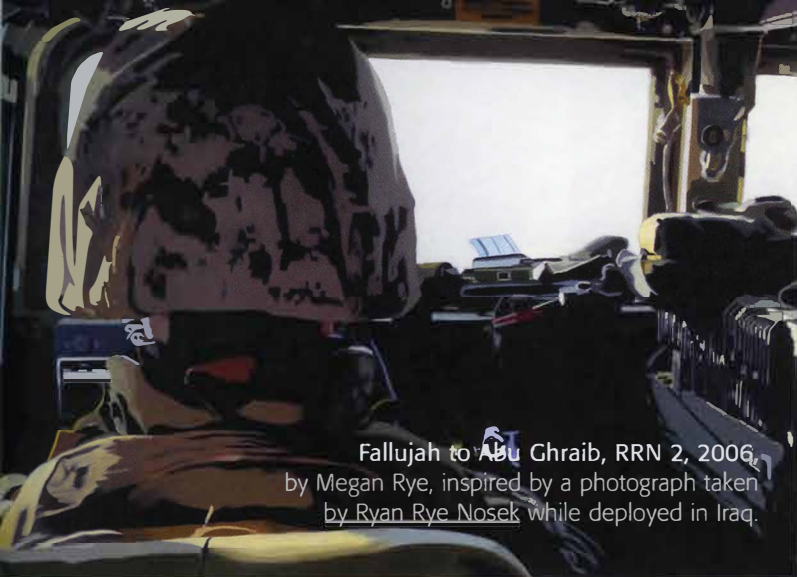
*Iraqi Store, RRN 1, 2006*, by Megan Rye was inspired by one of about 2,000 photographs taken by the artist's brother, Ryan Rye Nosek.

Born in 1976, she was abandoned on the front steps of a South Korean police station with a note charging the finder to "Take care of this child."

Her earliest months were spent shuttling between a foster home and a hospital in Seoul. Deliverance came when Karen Rye and Steven Nosek of Minneapolis adopted her through Children's Home Society & Family Services; David Pilgrim, vice president of adoption services at CHSFS, was their social worker.







Fallujah to Abu Ghraib, RRN 2, 2006,  
by Megan Rye, inspired by a photograph taken  
by Ryan Rye Nosek while deployed in Iraq.

When Megan arrived in the United States at seven months old, she was underweight and developmentally delayed. This was not uncommon in the early days of international adoption, when child-welfare services were not as good as they are today. “She was just this little teeny person, only 12 and a half pounds.”

Megan’s parents immersed themselves in nurturing their daughter. “Once she decided to eat about two weeks after she arrived, she blossomed,” Karen says. “Once she started moving, she never quit.”

*“My art and my life developed simultaneously.”*

### Always an Observer

A teacher with a background in child psychology and early-childhood development, Karen noticed that her daughter was extremely attentive. “She’s always been the observer,” she says. Coupled with this ability to focus, Megan also demonstrated well-developed fine motor skills.

“She started drawing from a year on,” Karen says. “She was always making her mark.”

Megan went to a nursery school that emphasized the arts, and at age 5 started taking classes at the Edina Art Center. “Art was a therapeutic tool in my life from an early age,” she says. “My art and my life developed simultaneously.”

Today, at 31, Megan is painting full time and lives in Edina with her husband, James Tucker. Strong and athletic, she plays tennis and does cardio-kickboxing when she isn’t hunkered down in her basement studio.

Her résumé reads like a straight arrow through fine-arts education. Megan studied art through the teen program at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) while attending public school in Edina; graduated from the Perpich Center for Arts Education, in Golden Valley, Minnesota; and earned a bachelor’s degree from the Rhode Island School of Design. After three years studying art in Rome, she earned a master’s in fine arts from the University of Minnesota. Last year, she went to the prestigious Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine.

Today, the art world is taking notice of Megan. She is a Minnesota State Arts Board Grant recipient and won a Jerome/MCAD Foundation fellowship in 2005; an exhibition of fellows’ work took place at MCAD in October.

### Major Exhibitions, Local Patrons

Her big break came last summer, with a show at the influential Forum Gallery in New York City, featuring her most recent work: paintings based on photographs her brother Ryan Rye Nosek took while deployed as a marine in Iraq.

Working in oil in a controlled, photorealist style, Megan captures her subjects in slick, saturated color, bathed in glowing light, in vivid, multilayered scenes of the daily mayhem and boredom that plague civilian and military life in a war zone. She hopes the paintings will “open up conversation, not shut it down.” Her work will be the subject of a solo exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in fall 2007.

Megan’s primary patrons are JoAnn and Gary Fink, who founded and direct the Museum Louvre It or Leave It; Gary is a CHSFS director emeritus. They introduced her work to the Forum Gallery, and their support has allowed her to pursue art full time.

“Megan is very strong, very intelligent and knows exactly how to push herself forward,” Gary says. “Most people predict she’ll be a big star.”

Through the Finks, Megan also reconnected to CHSFS by sponsoring a child in Vietnam through the International Child Welfare program.

Growing up, Megan refused to attend culture camps and other opportunities to connect with Korean adoptees. In her family, being adopted “was never a source of tension for me,” she says.

### “You’re Adopted?”

To illustrate the point, she recalls a time when a younger brother—she has five siblings and step-siblings—was surprised to find out they weren’t related by blood. “He said, ‘You’re adopted?’ To me, that’s such an example that race is learned.” Still, being Korean in a majority culture set Megan apart. “Anytime you’re a minority in a culture, you’re an outsider,” she says. “It’s not a negative thing. It makes you an observer. Sometimes it makes you lonely. All these are characteristics shared by artists.”

She returned to Seoul once, in 2003, on a weekend jaunt from Tokyo. On a map, she located the hospital she was brought to as an infant but she didn’t go any farther. “It was powerful enough to be in the city, to retrace the slender threads I had,” she says.

Someday, she may tease those threads a little more to see where they take her. For now, though, she’s happy to be where she is, and who she is. “I feel a sense of belonging and gratitude that I’ve been able to have this life and be an artist, that it was meant to be.”