

'Found and claimed': Local artist's exhibit inspired by adoption referral photos

Artist Megan Rye, a Korean adoptee herself, says she wanted to capture the Minnesota adoptee community as a whole in her Weisman Art Museum exhibit.

Author: **Sharon Yoo**

Published: **6:49 PM CDT March 29, 2022**

Updated: **7:09 PM CDT March 29, 2022**



MINNEAPOLIS — It was a day back in 2016 that gave artist Megan Rye pause.

"My son was born in 2014, and my daughter came in 2016," Rye said. "The week after she was here, I happened to be randomly flipping through the photo album and I came across my

adoption file referral photographs. Those were the photographs a family who is waiting for a child receives when the child is ready for placement."

As a Korean adoptee, Rye had seen the baby photographs of herself hundreds of times. However, somehow that day six years ago, it hit differently.

"This is all I have from my seven-and-a-half months in Korea," she said. "Are these few teeny, little fading black-and-white photographs. And I had just come home from the hospital with my little girl, and we already had just a mountain of stuff — like baby clothes, toys and books and footprints, ultrasound photos. And I thought, 'This is all I have.'"

As was the case with the dozens of other adoptees featured in her exhibit — it's all they had too.

"People didn't come with clothes and stuffed animals and family albums. Some people had more information about their birth family; many don't," Rye added.

That photo is the first hello; a picture worth a thousand words. Rye thought she had to capture it somehow.

Knowing that Minnesota has the highest concentration of Korean adoptees, she felt they needed some sort of Minnesota connection too.

"Somewhere along the line I was also very fixated on the Korean flag and I realized that the inner-most circle of that target logo connected to that circle in the Korean flag, and I thought, 'Bullseye,'" Rye said. "This is the right material for these bags."

"I wanted that target to really read as a symbol of something that was wanted or chosen, a target," she said. "I wanted it to connect to the heart."

To encompass the complexity that is adoption is a hard task, but one Rye felt she could do.

"I think two things create an adoptee: One, you're abandoned, and two, you're found and claimed," she said. "And holding my little girl after her birth, all those feelings and realizations were really clear to me."

"I think adoption is a profound act of love," Rye reflected. "It's also a leap of faith for all of these families to have entrusted a completely unknown artist to tell their story. That's a leap of faith, too — to allow art to tell a story."

Foundling: 100 Days exhibit is now up at the Weisman Art Museum. It will be on display until May 22.