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iris yirei hu, *Detail of La Ofrenda en la casa*
de Juana, Antonio y Porfirio (2018).

Acrylic, oil, textiles on canvas,
60 x 67 inches. Image courtesy of the artist
and Women's Center for Creative Work.
Photo: Ruben Diaz.

iris yirei hu, *the Poem (after emi*
kuriyama) (2018). Embroidery on burlap,
79 x 29 inches. Image courtesy of the artist
and Women's Center for Creative Work.
Photo: Ruben Diaz.

iris yirei hu
at Women's Center
for Creative Work
March 24–April 27, 2018

iris yirei hu is a kind of shaman, connected to an alternative world shaped by an alternative cosmology. It is from this well of her wisdom that she assembles her *Survival Guides*. The connotation of a “survival guide” is extreme; the most severe of the self-help guides. It implies, by its very existence, that survival is only one option among other (potentially bleak) possibilities. Those who follow the survival guides tend to be equally extreme—exhibiting the will and resilience to prevail over some mortal catastrophe. Just as they say, “there is no atheist in a foxhole,” I imagine that there are no survival guides in easy times.

Each of hu's works in *Survival Guides* is a chapter in her body of work—and they too are extremist. These full-room installations are colorful and bright, richly patterned and textured, maximalist and joyful in their inability to sit still. Every work is multiple by design: wall works spill onto the floor, floor works stretch up walls, paintings are fused with fabric collages, poetry becomes embroidery.

Earlier *Guides*, such as *when the Sun devours the Moon and joy* (both 2017), were cathartic and psychedelic tours through her shattering grief and tender healing in the wake of

devastating loss. Though her recent body of work—*Survival Guide: inheritance*, housed in the Women's Center for Creative Work—felt far more demure and grounded. Created in residence as a part of WCCW's “Health/Care” quarter, hu's work in the most basic sense is about how inheritance might become a form of healing.

For this exhibition, hu went beyond her own personal heritage by including participation from eight collaborators and their extended families. By doing so, hu explores the concrete products of time, bonds, lineage, and posterity, inviting in even those that are not hers.

To enter the installation, one must remove one's shoes and shift around *the Poem (after emi kuriyama)* (2018). *the Poem* is made up of floral sashes of Tawianese Hakka fabric (a recurring material in hu's work and a nod to her Taiwanese heritage). One must duck beneath the burlap curtain bearing the words from the late kuriyama: “the poem I wanted to write you didn't make it in here but I see it everywhere so tell me where you can see it so I can see it too.” kuriyama's words are a prelude to inheritance. hu and kuriyama ask us to trust the incomplete, the intangible, and the perpetually shifting. And much to the tune of the prelude, the small room where *Survival Guide: inheritance* lived felt like a work in progress.

The richly hued walls (two equally large horizontal bands, a warm gold above a deep blue) were punctuated

by hu's paintings and embroidery. hu's largest work, *La Ofrenda en la casa de Juana, Antonio y Porfirio* (2018), features a ring of scenes from the lives of a family of Zapotec weavers of Oaxaca, Mexico. The tenderly painted vignettes encircle an extra-terrestrial sunset and are framed in a flowery Hakka border. An *ofrenda*, or “offering,” is commonly associated with the Mexican Día de los Muertos alters that are lovingly assembled to memorialize and honor loved ones who have passed away. With this in mind, the whole room became an elaborate *ofrenda*. Among the offerings: a lantern made out of an American flag dotted with pompoms, a hanging sculpture, and a delicately assembled bridge made of sticks and string holding a set of miniature vessels. A number of shiny white worry stones rested on *Magic Carpet* (2018), a floor work created by hu's eight exhibition collaborators along with their mothers, children, partners, or kin. By entering, we inherited this *Survival Guide*. Every work was an offering not to just a loved one, but to us, and anyone who takes their time, attention, and remembrance to these objects.

Wielding the crafts of her collaborators and their families as a part of her own, hu is not supplanting their history with hers (or vice versa), but argues for the import of the elaborative and hybrid nature of inheritance itself. *Survival Guide: inheritance* is a demonstration that personal and collective histories are shaped through a unique