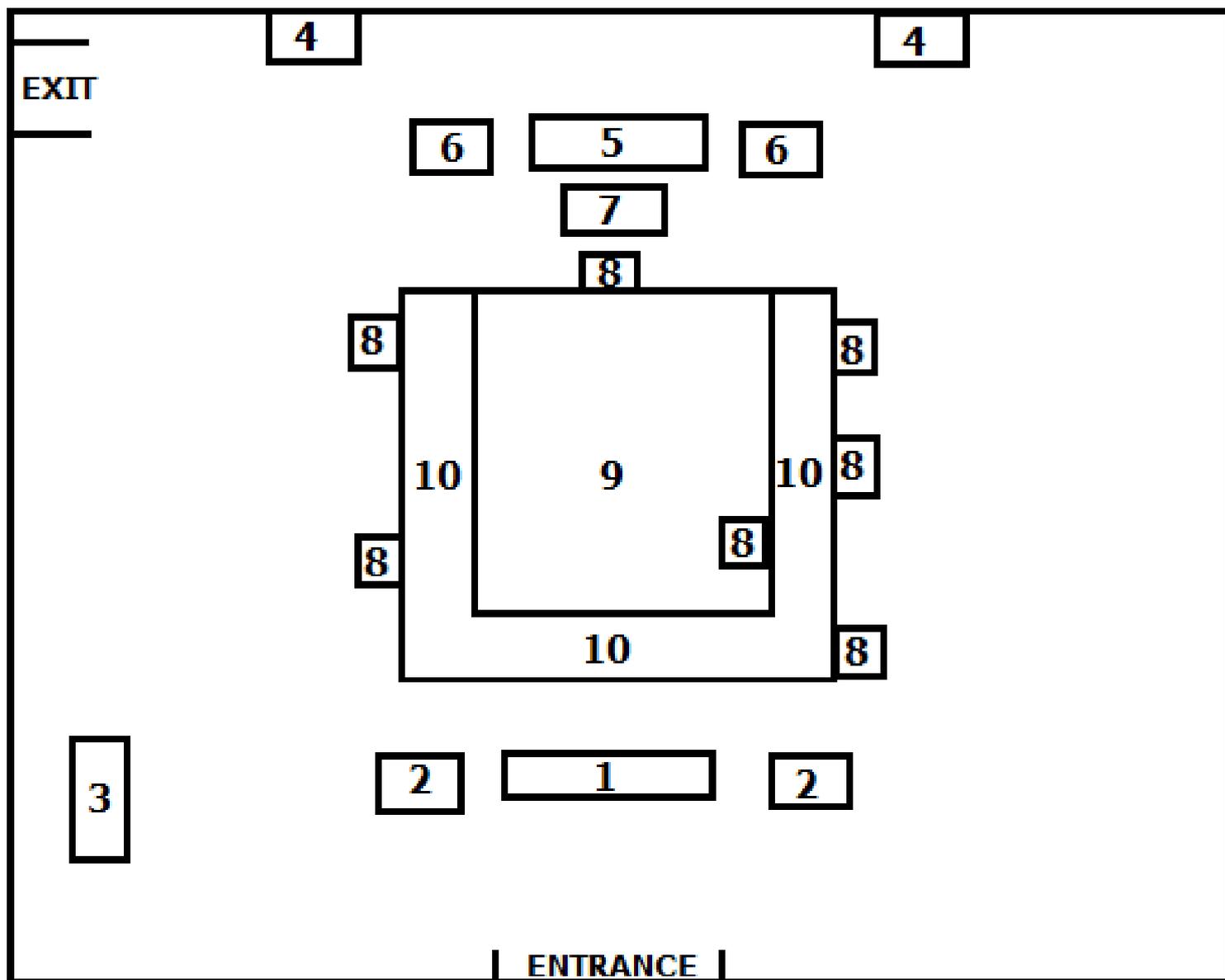


Large Print Guide
Zadie XA: House
Gods, Animal
Guides and Five
Ways 2 Forgiveness
20 September 2022 – 30
April 2023



Gallery 2

GALLERY 2 FLOOR PLAN



Introduction

Korean-Canadian artist Zadie Xa (b.1983) brings together new sculptures, textiles and paintings in an immersive installation. Drawing on her own lived experiences, Xa explores a multiplicity of hybrid and diasporic identities in her work. Korean mythology and folklore provide the narrative framework for her investigations into systems of power, home and belonging.

In the exhibition, Xa pays deference to funerary and worship practices in Korean shamanism, and creates a journey through the space led by different 'guides': deities, spirits and animals. Upon entering, the viewer is confronted by the first guide: a suspended cloak representing the deity Princess Bari or Bari Gongju (translating as 'throwaway' or 'abandoned princess') who leads souls to the underworld after death.

The marionettes on either side are haetae: horned beasts that resemble both lions and goats. In East Asian mythology, they are protectors that help society distinguish between right and wrong.

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Many other animal figures in the artworks, such as the orca, fox and dog, are also drawn from folktales. The artist perceives animals as 'avatars': embodiments of ecological, political and cultural shifts within our world.

Designed in collaboration with the artist Benito Mayor Vallejo, the large central structure is inspired by Korean domestic architecture and contains artworks that represent household deities who offer protection and good fortune. Through choreographed lighting that evokes the transition from day to night, and audio comprised of sounds from nature, percussion and voiceover, Xa traces a ghostly presence, pointing to the passing of time and a journey into another state of consciousness.

The final part of the exhibition's title Five Ways 2 Forgiveness is inspired by an eponymous anthology of short stories by the American author Ursula K. Le Guin (1929-2018). A rigorous critique of colonialisation, Le Guin's writing combines speculative fiction, science fiction and parable.

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These are languages that Xa also employs in her work to disrupt and expand our perception of the world around us. By drawing on folktales, mythology and spiritual and religious rituals, Xa elevates belief systems and ideologies that have often been marginalised during the rapid industrialisation of the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as by legacies of colonialisation.

Five Ways 2 Forgiveness also references the belief that by paying respects to one's familial ancestors, past wrongdoings could be forgiven. The pursuit of forgiveness is critical to Xa's own process of exploring how diasporic communities can become disjointed or alienated, and how reconciliation may be sought by acknowledging those who came before us.

List of Works

1. Princess Bari, 2022

Machine-stitched fabric, photo-printed cotton and mother of pearl buttons, copper bells on hand-dyed linen

2. Haetae:

Left marionette: Chicho, 2022

Right marionette: Fizzgigmo, 2022

Acrylic on photopolymer resin, faux fur, string and wood

3. Grandmothers, 2022

Hand-sewn and machine-stitched mixed fabrics, bleached and dyed denim, shell buttons and dried flowers

4. Mountain folk:

Left mask: Horangi (Orange Tiger), 2022

Left mask: Halmoni (Grandmother), 2022

Acrylic on photopolymer resin

Many works in the exhibition, including the masks, marionettes and paintings, feature different animal species. In fables all around the world animals are often protagonists who help instruct society or highlight power structures and moral quandaries. The recurring presence of the tiger and the seagull as examples in Xa's work reflect her continued exploration of the 'trickster' archetype within folklore: both represent a disruptive outsider whose presence provokes and inspires change from dominant social and cultural orders. Tigers are also deemed sacred in much of South and East Asian religion, yet are an endangered species as a result of human actions.

5. 4 the Women of Iodo, 2022
Machine-stitched fabric, photo-printed cotton,
mother of pearl buttons, copper bells on hand-
dyed linen

6. Stewards:
Left Kite: Magpie, 2022
Right Kite: Seagull, 2022
Hand sewn and machine stitched linen on wood

7. Cabbage, 2020
Acrylic, polystyrene, polymer resin on wood

8. Companions – Kkoktu (funerary figurines) (top of the house, clockwise from entrance):

The Guide, 2022

The Warrior, 2022

The Acrobat, 2022

The Musician, 2022

The Dancer, 2022

The Caregiver, 2022

Haetae, 2022

Acrylic on photopolymer resin

The small hand-painted figurines that line the roof of the house are named kkoktu. In Korean funerary rituals, these objects accompany the deceased into the afterlife, protecting and caring for them. Each figure has a different role, indicated by its name, and is drawn from mythology.

9. House, 2022

Machine-stitched linen over wooden frames with choreographed lighting and audio elements, onngi (earthenware jar) and three bujeok (talismans)

10. House Gods, Animals Guides and Five Ways 2
Forgiveness, 2022

Oil on canvas

House is inspired by a traditional Korean home known as a hanok. Here, its walls are wrapped in hand-dyed linen, alluding to jogakbo: a style of patchwork used to create domestic wrapping cloths (known as bojagi) from scraps of fabrics. During the Joseon dynasty (which ruled Korea from 1392 to 1987) and within Korean folk religion, bojagi were largely made by women who would wrap objects of value with the hope of increasing good fortune. In a nod to these traditions, Xa wraps the frames of the house to create a space of sanctuary and care. Placed on the ceiling beam is a danji: an earthenware jar filled with rice that enshrines a household deity to protect the home.