

**PRAISE  
SHADOWS**  
ART GALLERY

## ***INTERNAL NAVIGATION***

### **A SOLO EXHIBITION BY YU-WEN WU**

On view September 9 - October 10, 2021

Opening Reception  
Sunday, September 12  
4 - 6 pm



**August 31, 2021 – Brookline, MA** | *How do we internally navigate the world, the times, and within ourselves?* For interdisciplinary artist Yu-Wen Wu, this question provides the basis for her upcoming exhibition at Praise Shadows Art Gallery, opening on September 9, 2021. The Boston-based and Taipei-born multimedia artist has long explored migration vis-a-vis art, science, politics, social and cultural constructs, and natural phenomena. In this new exhibition, ***Internal Navigation***, Wu is both artist and geographer, translating her movement through the world and within her environment into richly detailed drawings and installations. Featuring 18 immersive works created from multiple layers of tea leaves, gold, books, bamboo reeds and paper, her story is filtered through a variety of different media. Yet in all her work, Wu seeks to determine the position of her course, the lengths she's come, and the distance yet to travel.

Wu states, "I address lifelong interests and questions that resonate for me. It is largely about interconnections, movement, migration, and displacement. As someone who immigrated at an early age, the conversations around assimilation and the position of being Asian American are all part of my experience and my inquiries."

In a series titled *Yes, No, Maybe*, she contemplates her grandmother's wooden moon blocks, which are a divination tool used by practicing Buddhists to seek guidance through a simple yes-or-no question. These divinity blocks, worn down by her grandmother's 86 years of life are rubbed smooth, and yet they are also scuffed and nicked from decades of being tossed on temple floors. On their last trip to the temple together before Wu's family emigrated to the United States, she recalls, her grandmother brought along her blocks, and this time she asked the gods: "Will we be safe and happy in America?"

Coupled with this question is the immigrant's prayer for a better life on the other side of the world. In a work titled *Intentions* (pictured above), Wu interprets this wish in the form of a large Buddhist mala bead fashioned from Taiwanese tea leaves, strung together on a red string and gilded into radiant golden orbs. In the exhibition space, the long strand descends from the ceiling and coils onto a low pedestal.

Equipped with questions and prayer, the artist begins her journey. At the center of the gallery *A Silver Moon*, a luminous and intricately drawn silver moon, orients the viewer, as Wu takes the visitor on an odyssey born from longing and dislocation. We encounter *Walking to Taipei*, a 20-foot work that began on a whim in 2010, when the artist wondered what would happen if she used Google maps to search for direction — by foot — from "Boston to Taipei." That search result is one that she has never been able to duplicate in the 11 years since: step-by-step directions for the 11,749 mile journey, which according to Google would take 155 days and 5 hours, starting with a cross-country walk across the United States, and then a long kayak trip across the Pacific ocean. Each individual direction from the Google map result has been cut out and affixed to the scroll, mapping the journey. Just as one views a traditional Chinese landscape painting by gently unscrolling to view through each vignette, Wu's *Walking to Taipei* conjures a similarly immersive and tactile experience.

What happens, though, once we arrive? In a three-part work on paper, *The Accumulation of Dreams*, Wu has created a rhythmic and sumptuous set of drawings with gold foil to articulate the American Dream — referencing the mid-19th century boom in Chinese migration to America during the Gold Rush. Gold stands as a metaphor for success. Yet success could be as simple as living a decent life. Wu's exhibition acknowledges the eternal anxieties in immigrant populations. *Do we ever really belong? And if we do, what must we lose in order to find ourselves?*

**IMAGE CAPTION (L to R):**

Yu-Wen Wu, *Intentions*, 2021, Gilded tea leaves, red string, on wood pedestal

Yu-Wen Wu, *Not All Alike VII*, 2021, Gilded tea leaves

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Sarah Brown McLeod

sarah@sarahbrownmcleod.com

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**About the artist**

Yu-Wen Wu is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Boston. Born in Taipei, Taiwan, Wu's subjectivity as an immigrant is central to her artwork. Relocating to the United States at an early age, her experiences have shaped her work in areas of migration--examining issues of displacement, arrival, assimilation and the shape of

identity in a new country. At the crossroads of art, science, politics and social issues, her wide range of projects include large-scale drawings, site-specific video installations, community engaged practices, and public art.

Wu recently exhibited *Lantern Stories* at Chin Park in Boston's Chinatown, a widely acclaimed public artwork commissioned by the Greenway Conservancy (2020). A similar project has been commissioned for San Francisco in 2022. She is the 2021 recipient of the Mass Cultural Council Artist Fellowship, and was recognized by *Boston Magazine* as the 2021 Best Artist in its annual Best of Boston issue.

Other large-scale commissioned works include a 38' sculptural drawing for the Chao Center at Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA; and two multichannel video projections for the Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN. She was a fellow at Yaddo in 2018, and was the 2018-2019 Artist-in Residence at the Pao Arts Center Boston. The durational project *Leavings/Belongings* that originated at Pao was included in the SITE Santa Fe exhibition *DISPLACED: Contemporary Artists Confront the Global Refugee Crisis* (2020-2021). Her upcoming public art project in Boston will be unveiled Fall 2021 as part of the public art organization Now + There's Accelerator program. Her work is included internationally in public and private collections.

#### **About Praise Shadows LLC**

Established in 2020, Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a commercial gallery space in the Boston area showing the work of emerging and mid-career artists.

We believe that the art ecosystem is filled with untapped potential, and our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship — exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. Praise Shadows Art Partners advises artists and companies in the creative industries on strategic partnerships and marketing. Our work is local, global, and virtual. [www.praiseshadows.com](http://www.praiseshadows.com)

**313A Harvard Street**

**Brookline MA**

**02446**

**Wednesday - Sunday 11am - 6pm**