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Online Viewing Room

Xyza Cruz Bacani: *Ancestors/Descendants*

20 March - 20 April 2022

www.christinepark.net/viewing-room/xyza-cruz-bacani-ancestors-descendants/

Artist Statement

Being a transnational citizen means having my heart scattered in different places. It can be a gift, but the pandemic has made it almost a curse. When the pandemic started, I was in the Philippines on a short visit that turned 19 months away from my art community friends, and I felt isolated. My heart was broken repeatedly as news of friends, acquaintances, and community members succumbed to the virus.

Before Covid, I was a visitor to my own home, viewing it from an outsider's lens as I spent more time travelling and documenting different cities and countries. Since I left the Philippines to work in Hong Kong when I was 19, I have never really returned. The pandemic that upended lives forced me to stay and become part of my hometown. I returned to the place of my ancestors and started documenting the lives of the people I grew up with, our neighbors, and the place that was once just a memory.

The way I view the world has evolved because of the pandemic's uncertainties. When it started, I was as scared as everyone else, but I decided to document it because I am doing it for my descendants. I documented healthcare workers' who bravely combat the unseen enemy; women's issues like homebirth and farmers who suffer from food insecurity. As an artist with the facts, I subscribe to the tradition and ethics of journalism. I let things happen and never intervene, but when documenting a pregnant woman who needed to be in the hospital. I felt at that moment that, given the circumstances, I need to help. I was reminded that I am human first before I am a photographer. As an ancestor, the life saved that day is more important than an image.

Why do we do the things we need to do? If not for us, then for who? This series of images is about my hometown in the Philippines during the pandemic. I became an ancestor to my homeland. It guided my process, as it is not about me anymore but about those who will come after me. I felt the urgency to spotlight these stories for the future generation because tomorrow is never promised.

Xyza Cruz Bacani, New York, March 2022

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