Story: Maria Elena Scott • Photo: Kunsthalle Musuem • June 07, 2023

Art Exhibit Featuring 200,000 Flowers Opens at Cleveland Public Library

Law's "Calyx" exhibit at the Kunsthalle Museum, Germany, 2023.

British artist Rebecca Louise Law this weekend will debut "The Archive," an immersive three-dimensional exhibit featuring thousands of flowers, in the Cleveland Public Library's Brett Hall in the Main Library.

It opens on Saturday, June 10 at 10 a.m. and will be on display through spring 2024.

Saturday's opening will feature Law as well as representatives from the library and LAND, a Cleveland art studio that helped curate the exhibit.

The Archive is the 15th annual installment of Cleveland Public Library's public art series, See Also. In library lingo, "see also" means "look here." The series is designed to bring visitors to the library and bring thought-provoking art to people of all backgrounds.

"The name 'Archive' was inspired by placing these treasured materials into a library. Some of the natural materials are 20 years old and many have come from artworks made all over the world," said artist Rebecca Louise Law. "My collection is starting to become an archive of past artworks and plants."

Law's work, which has been featured around the world, uses real flora, preserved and connected with copper. She says she came to art through painting and views her work as three-dimensional paintings.

"The space became my canvas, natural materials are my paint and copper wire binds it all together," Law said. "The viewer then brings the artwork to life by entering into the artworks. I study our human relationship with nature, allowing the viewer to explore natural preserved materials up close."

Sustainability is both a theme in Law's art and a key part of her process. Over the course of the last 20 years, Law has amassed a collection of more than 1.5 million "natural elements" like flowers and pine cones.

In preparation for The Archive, Law partnered with local businesses and institutions like funeral homes and hospitals to collect flowers that would otherwise be thrown out. More than 100 local volunteers strung together and processed the 50,000 natural elements, which were then preserved in a flash freezer.

"Local hands and local plants are essential to my concept. I take 'site-specific' quite literally," said Law. "I save every flower and every petal… The local natural materials are entwined with my own collection of preserved plants and once the installation is taken down these will then be used again for future installations."

This week, Law and a team of artists will suspend more than 200,000 flowers from an 18-foot Douglas fir wood frame.

The Archive is free and open to the public during library hours (10 a.m. -6 p.m. Monday to Saturday). For those interested in getting more involved with The Archive, Cleveland Public Library is accepting applications for volunteer docent positions until Saturday, June 17.

L | A | N | D studio