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STETSON UNIVERSITY

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Fiber Art on Display at Stetson University's Gillespie Museum

Weaver Kayla Powers uses plant pigments to create colorful cloth in "Naturally Dyed Textiles" exhibit

DELAND, Florida, Jan. 25, 2021 – The 19th century was a time of dramatic change throughout the world, including the creation of synthetic fabric dyes.

Chemist and entrepreneur William Henry Perkin produced the first synthetic dye serendipitously in 1856. Before his discovery, natural plant dyes were the only source of dye available, and became a lost art until recent years.

Eco-enthusiasts have found that natural dyes are a sustainable option compared to chemical and synthetic dyes, which are harmful to the environment.

[Kayla Powers'](#) "Naturally Dyed Textiles" exhibit will include six individual art pieces that feature various textile techniques and a range of natural color, Feb. 1-26, at the Rinker Environmental Learning Center's environmental gallery, 230 E. Michigan Ave., DeLand, 32723. The building is adjacent to the [Gillespie Museum](#) on [Stetson University's](#) campus.

Powers is also a visiting artist who is participating in a one-week residency thanks to Stetson's [Department of Creative Arts](#), the [Artists and Lecturers Series](#) and Gillespie Museum.

Stetson faculty, staff and students and the community can learn more about Powers and her [display](#) during a free livestreamed artist talk via Zoom on Monday, Feb. 1, 4-5 p.m.

Powers also will be conducting a free livestreamed virtual demonstration via Zoom on the natural dye process on Tuesday, Feb. 2, 3-4 p.m.

Participants can register and receive Zoom links and information after sending an email to the Gillespie Museum: gillespiemuseum@stetson.edu

"I have a strong connection to the natural world," said Powers. "I'm inspired by the limitations of a seasonal palette and the utilitarian nature of woven cloth. I also find the potential for beauty in unlikely places, including winter landscapes."

[Madison Creech, MFA](#), visiting assistant professor of creative arts at Stetson, met Powers while taking some courses at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine.

"Kayla wasn't the instructor, but she provided the curious minds in my class with many impromptu, natural dye demonstrations," said Creech. "She led the students on magical journeys, including hikes and drives to find pine cones and St. John's wort to dye our basket-making materials, which were transformed into tantalizing yellow and pink hues."

Powers also will be conducting a natural dye plant scavenger hunt at the [Volusia Sandhill Ecosystem](#), which is located on the Gillespie Museum's scenic environs. The workshop will include searching for local natural dye plants along with demonstrating techniques for extracting color and dyeing textiles with Stetson's Special Topics in Art students on Monday, Feb. 1, and Tuesday, Feb. 2.

"We look forward to exploring and participating in the native landscape and urban reforestation projects with Kayla on the Gillespie Museum's grounds, along with searching for hidden enchantment and learning about the historic traditions of plant dyes," said Karen Cole, PhD, director of the Gillespie Museum.

"Students in my Special Topics in Art course are focusing on how to interpret and transform the natural world around them with a variety of art and craft-based techniques," explained [Katie Baczski, MFA](#), visiting assistant professor of art at Stetson. "In Kayla's workshop, students will be creating dyed fabrics to further understand how textile materials are developed, processed and surround us in everyday life."

Powers, who is a weaver with a Bachelor of Arts in art history, criticism and conservation from Western Michigan University, started her Salt Textile Studios business more than three years ago in Detroit, Michigan. Her work is focused on local natural color that is derived from plants and foraged and cultivated in the city.

She also brings an urban sensibility to the preservation of the traditional crafts of weaving and dyeing. Her process begins with coaxing color from both native and invasive plants, including roots, bark, leaves and flowers.

Powers is also a place-based artist who designed an outdoor installation titled "Local Color," which was a year-long study of natural dye plants found in Detroit. The project was a culmination of her time spent studying both plants and textiles and dyeing more than 50 skeins of wool and using the wool to weave a series of tapestries.

Guests may be allowed on campus to view the "Naturally Dyed Textiles" exhibit at the Gillespie Museum when COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted at Stetson University. Admission is free. The exhibit also can be viewed online.

About Stetson University

Founded in 1883, [Stetson University](#) is the oldest private university in Central Florida. Stetson focuses on intense learning experiences in a supportive community that allows students to develop their voice in a connected, inclusive environment. Stetson University ranks No. 5 on U.S. News & World Report's 2019 list of Best Regional Universities (South), and has been recognized as one of The Princeton Review's 386 Best Colleges, 2021 edition. [Stay connected](#) with Stetson on social media.

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