ALMINE RECH

Tia-Thuy Nguyen: Flower of Life

Nov 18, 2023 — Jan 7, 2024 | Château La Coste, Le Puy-Sainte-Reparade, France

Château La Coste is pleased to present a new addition to its Art & Architecture Walk, a captivating installation by Vietnamese artist Tia-Thuy Nguyen titled 'Flower of Life' (2023), alongside an exhibition from 18 November 2023 – January 2024.

'Flower of Life' is an 18m-tall dead oak tree that Nguyen has reinvigorated and saved through the act of reconstruction, putting into practice the lessons she has learnt about fragility of existence, fostering an appreciation for the impermanence and mutability of life. An immediate connection formed when the artist first encountered the tree during a visit to Château La Coste in 2014. On discovering that it had died several years later, and unprepared for the loss, Nguyen felt compelled to conserve its spirit.

The artist frequently draws inspiration from the Law of Conservation of Energy, which conceives that the total energy in the universe always remains constant, undergoing perpetual transformation. This theory finds resonance with Buddhist philosophies, which emphasise the interconnectedness of all things. 'Flower of Life' masterfully explores the confluence of science and spirituality as the tree's energy transcends its former state to be reborn as a unique and poignant work of art.

Nguyen sees each of her works as a 'performance of nature' and part of an engine that follows the motions of the universe's cyclical energy, connecting natural light, the work and the viewer. 'Flower of Life's foundation comes from the tree's original structure, now enveloped in a metallic armour formed of multiple welded steel plates, adorned with rugged nodules and grooves that embrace the bark, reflecting and shimmering in the ambient light. Delicately suspended from its branches are thousands of individually stainless-steel leaves with quartz stones, handcrafted in the artist's native Vietnam, arranged in clusters that sway gently in the wind. Stood in the very spot it once thrived, and basking in the natural sunlight of Aix-en-Provence and the vibrant presence of Château La Coste's visitors, this majestic tree embodies the infinite interplay of energy. The overall image is reminiscent of the 'money fortune' tree, traditionally displayed in Vietnamese homes during Lunar New Year festivities to pray for prosperity.

The artist will present an accompanying exhibition in Château La Coste's Oscar Niemeyer Auditorium featuring works that derive from 'Flower of Life'.

'Flower of Life' sits alongside Nguyen's Silver Room, a structure inspired by a traditional Vietnamese house made of wood and bamboo, which also features on the Art & Architecture Walk.