

Tammy Helenske is turning Sac State's Arboretum into an art gallery.

(Sacramento State/Jessica Vernone)

Sacramento State's University Arboretum will become an art gallery on Wednesday, Nov. 30, when art student Tammy Helenske presents a performance piece, "Barmecidal Banquet: An Illusionary Feast of Dreams."

The presentation will run from noon to 8 p.m. and include a large structure, lights, lasers, and a fog machine.

"As I started my senior project, I wanted to do an art piece in which I acted alone, unaware of others," Helenske says. "I wanted to challenge the illusion of dreams – the ones we are often driven tirelessly to accomplish in life."

"Barmecidal Banquet" will begin with a 100-square-foot metal frame that Helenske will construct in advance. Starting at noon, she will slowly assemble the internal section, which will consist of hanging boxes representing her dreams. Later, she will cut down the boxes, open them, and perform the "dream" inside each.

As the sun sets, Helenske will activate LED lights to reflect off the surrounding environment. Toward the end of the piece, she will use the laser lights and fog machine. Chairs will be provided for those who wish to stay, and Helenske hopes the lighting and fog will evoke a dreamlike experience that will be surreal, emotional, and darkly playful.

The Arboretum is located at the north end of the campus and comprises 3 acres with more than 1,400 trees, shrubs, and perennials from around the world. Specimens include trees from areas such as South Africa, western Australia, and Chile, according to Professor Michael Baad, director of the Arboretum.

For Helenske, it was the perfect setting. "Michael Baad's dedication over the last 48 years has created a unique and stunning environment for a performance piece," she says.

The performance will take place rain or shine.