

Freedom Baird M'16

with Emily Canales '24, Emily Elliott, Ethan Flematti '25, Nell Gould '99, Elodie Hornedo '25, Gabby Kay '23, Kylie Marden '24, Jonise McCalla '25, Dylan Reid '23, Michelle Stevens '19, Faeryn Seddon '24, and Paul Swenbeck '91

Floreal, 2023

Lichen, sponge, flock, pine, maple, beech, cotton, paint, beads, bones, stones, figurines, planters, soil, living and synthetic plants

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Freedom Baird's installation *Floreal* provides a calm transition into the museum. Our eyes and minds adjust from the busy streets outside to the quiet galleries inside. Part distraction, part subversion, the artwork creates an escapist miniature topography on the surface of the welcome desk. The desk holds various knickknacks and toys. By encouraging visitors to play with the toys, this installation rewrites the rules of museum engagement. Opposite the desk, we see planters filled with various greenery. Apparent only to the most perceptive viewers, the intermingling of real foliage with plastic vines reminds us to look consciously at the world around us.

Whether her materials are natural or human made, biodegradable or permanent, the artist wants us to reflect on where they originate and their lifespans. Central to Baird's work is an inquiry into how culture is expressed by communities. By drawing our attention to our surroundings, *Floreal* brings the importance of place—whether a garden or a museum lobby—into the foreground. We take part in this consideration as we make the museum our personal oasis.