FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Contact Information:
Emily Brown
Public Relations Coordinator
Mid-Continent Public Library
ebrown@mymcpl.org
O: 816.503.4187
M: 816.809.9630

‘Mother Nature’ on Display at Woodneath Library Center

Mid-Continent Public Library Receives Donated Sculpture

Independence, MO – Mid-Continent Public Library is pleased to announce the arrival of “Mother Nature” at its Woodneath Library Center off Flintlock Road. Created by artist Ariel Bowman as a self-portrait during her studies at the Kansas City Art Institute, “Mother Nature” is an intricate clay sculpture depicting a woman’s head with various species of flora and fauna woven into her long hair. The work of art is a gift from the Kansas City Public Library on behalf of Jonathan and Nancy Lee Kemper.

“We’re tremendously grateful to the Kansas City Public Library and the Kempers for their generous donation of this beautiful sculpture to our Library,” said Kira Green, Woodneath Library Center Branch Manager. “Similar to literature, art is an expression of creativity that both inspires and evokes thought and conversation. As a space where people can come together and have these conversations, the Library is truly the perfect place to exhibit pieces like this, and we are excited to expand our art displays in the future to continue these vital conversations.”

Created as a “hollow build” through a combination of slabs of clay and coils in a honeycomb-like structure, the unique, ceramic sculpture stands at 42” tall and weighs more than 700 pounds. The structure, after taking more than a month to build, was finished with various glazes and stains and then residual salt fired.

The animal and plant life included on the structure are all native to North America and were inspired by Bowman’s upbringing in Dallas, Texas, where she spent a great deal of time in nature with her family, including her father who is a wildlife conservator. The sculpture pays homage to her passion for biodiversity, which nearly resulted in a career in zoology before she decided to pursue art instead.

“In this monumental self-portrait, I was striving to personify the idea of a ‘mother nature.’ The animals and plants among the figure’s hair are wild and flowing, representing the state of untamed nature,” said Bowman.

“Mother Nature” will remain on display at Woodneath Library Center indefinitely and will provide inspiration for some activities during the Library’s annual Access Art events in April during which the public can take free
art courses led by instructors from The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the Kansas City Art Institute. In addition to its ties to the art community, Bowman is proud to have her work displayed at the Library because of her lifelong love of reading.

“I love that I have a piece in the Library there. That’s really great,” she said. “There are a lot of books from my childhood that really influenced my work.”

And after all, Bowman noted, “Art, in general, is just another way to tell a story.”

For more information about the artist, or to see more of her work, visit her website at arielbowman.wordpress.com. “Mother Nature” can be viewed any time during regular branch operating hours.

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*Mid-Continent Public Library* is the largest library system in the Kansas City metropolitan area, operating 31 branches and four Library-To-Go locations and serving over 792,000 people in Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties. The Library strives to enrich our citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration. MCPL is a **2014 National Medal for Museum and Library Service winner**. Connect with the Library on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.