

Laura Da': Why Lazarus

October 14 – November 15, 2025

Urban Arts Space,
Lazarus Building,
Columbus, Ohio



Design by VIER5

“We enter the poem from a place of inquiry, ‘Why Lazarus’, more than a question, the title hints at a possible lament, an explanation, an outcry to an ancestor or symbolic figure. The core inquiry of the poem is ‘Why’, reaching beyond the etymology of the English and into Shawnee language and worldview, Koociwe/Newaaci, which hints at the union of why and how, drawing thinking into the woven experience of past and present.” (Laura Da’)

The poet and educator Laura Da’ (Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma), across three collections of poetry - *tributataries* (2015), *Instruments of the True Measure* (2018), and *Severalty* (2025), each published by the University of Arizona Press - has enacted a deeply personal accounting of Shawnee history, community, and selfhood. Grounded in the historical removal of the Shawnee from Ohio, first to Kansas and ultimately to Oklahoma, Da’s poetry offers a timely celebration of Shawnee survivance and life. Specifically, through the character of Lazarus Shale, Da’ has created complex personality who not only embodies the history of Shawnee removal but also the vitality that is central to contemporary Indigenous creativity. The exhibition *Laura Da': Why Lazarus* centers the poem ‘Why Lazarus’ (from *Severalty*) which unfurls through the corridor space of the

Urban Arts Space, poignantly located in the old Lazarus Department Store building in Downtown Columbus, Ohio. Walking alongside Da's poem in the gallery, located on the banks of the Scioto River and the Scioto Trail (now US 23-High Street), will offer visitors a uniquely visceral experience of Shawnee spatial and temporal knowledge.

Learn

The posters in the exhibition have been designed by VIER5, along with the book *Ruderal Society: Excavating a Garden. Four Poems by Laura Da'. Ohio Edition* (2025).

The exhibition is organized by Richard Finlay Fletcher, Laura Da', Marti Chaatsmith and Elissa Washuta and made possible through a Spark Grant from the Mellon Foundation and The Ohio State University.

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of public events centered around Da's visit from November 5-12, 2025, in collaboration with the OSU American Indian Studies Program and Newark Earthworks Center. More information on these events can be found at go.osu.edu/laura.

Saturday October 25, 2pm Scioto River Poetry Walk with Richard Finlay Fletcher at Urban Arts Space

Laura Da' Visit (November 5-12)

Thursday November 6, 4:30pm Exhibition Reception at Urban Arts Space

Friday November 7, 8pm Poetry Reading with fabian romero at Two Dollar Radio

Sunday November 9, 2pm Spark Birds and Migratory Legends Workshop at Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Monday November 10, 5pm Reading and Roundtable with Amber Blaeser-Wardzala and Elissa Washuta, 311 Denney Hall, Ohio State University

Friday November 14, 10am Documentation and Design Workshop with Marco Fiedler (VIER5), online.

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