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Chelsea Patch

No Phones Allowed In This Indoor Forest In Chelsea

Want to escape the city? An artist has created an indoor forest, complete with trees and a campfire.

By Ciara McCarthy

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CHELSEA, NY — A new art installation in Chelsea not only encourages you to completely unplug from modern life, it demands it.

The exhibition, from the artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian, requires that visitors put their cell phones in a locked box while they enter the heart of the exhibit, an indoor forest

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

complete with pine trees, crickets and a small, artificial campfire, according to a press release.

Hovnanian's three-part exhibition, titled "The Women's Trilogy Project," debuted at the Leila Heller Gallery in Chelsea in February. The heart of the current exhibition lies in an indoor forest, where visitors enter one at a time after leaving their phones at the door. Guests enter the dimly lit room guided only by a lantern and the light from the stars and campfire that are a part of the installation. Part 1 of the exhibition is called the "NDD Immersion Room," which Hovnanian named after a concept known as "Nature Deficit Disorder."

The concept was coined by the writer Richard Louv, who has linked children's decreasing connections with nature with trends including negative moods and reduced attention span.

Visitors can spend as long as they want walking through the small, quiet forest, but are unable to document the experience with their phones.

Hovnanian, 58, [told Avenue magazine](#) that an executive visiting the exhibit panicked when she saw a call come through on her phone, which was still locked in the box.

"I've also had people come out crying," Hovnanian told the magazine. "They say it reminds them of their childhood memories."

An adjacent part of the exhibition is "The Waiting Room," which has charging stations and little pods where people can use their phones.

Part II of the exhibition opens in April, and Part III opens in June. The Leila Heller Gallery is located at 568 W. 25th St.