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A tower of laurels is coming to the middle of Times Square

By Anna Rahmanan

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The new public installation "The Poem" opens on April 8.

"The Poem," by Cuban-born artist Raúl Cordero, is a 20-foot tower featuring a cascade of mountain laurel hiding an illuminated haiku inside of it. How cool is that?

"The landscaped structure is designed to narrow the sensory overload of Times Square to a concentrated line of vision, drawing the eye to a patch of open sky and the words of the poem overhead," reads an official description of the work, which will stay put through May 4. "Playing with the architecture and energy of Times Square, Cordero offers us a respite from the attention economy in the form of poetry and nature."

Barry Schwabsky, a poet, created the haiku specifically for the installation. You'll notice that the characters of the piece light up in glowing bulbs of black light attached to the interior of the foliage. Given the way

that each letter and word takes shape, viewers will have to linger to take in the entire message—and that's on purpose.

"[The setup] is emblematic of Cordero's ongoing investigation into [the] effects of the digital age on the human mind, specifically our waning ability to focus and the increasing urge to relentlessly multitask," reads the description. To put it simply: the new art piece seeks to calm New Yorkers down.

In addition to the installation, the artist will present a slew of text-based video works on the billboards that define the neighborhood, plus free public programs that will feature the city's diverse poetry community. You can expect readings and live performances by artists including LaTasha Nevada Diggs and Paolo Javier.

There's just something about seeking peace and calm in the middle of the hustle-and-bustle of Times Square that makes the entire experience so New York. Right?