La Jolla artist opens exhibition in Poway

BY EMILY SORENSEN

A new art exhibit featuring the art of La Jolla resident Grace Chow, as well as some of the artwork of her in-laws, Chow Chian Chiu and Chow Leung Chen Ying, is on display through Feb. 23 at the Poway Center for the Performing Arts (PCPA), 15498 Espola Road, Poway.

There will be an artist’s reception for the show from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 14, where Chow will give a talk and painting demonstration (at 11 a.m.).

The exhibit will feature about 10 to 12 traditional Chinese brush paintings of the late Chow Chian Chiu and his wife, Chow Leung Chen Ying, and about 40 of Grace Chow’s paintings, which include mixed media, oil, acrylic and Chinese brush painting. Chow Chian Chiu died in 2006, and his wife in 2005.

Grace Chow said she’s been exhibiting her in-laws’ art alongside her own for about 10 years. Her in-laws’ art will be on display in the main lobby, while her art will be on the wall facing the lobby and upstairs.

Every show she does has a different theme, often based on her world travels. This show, her fifth at the PCPA, is based on her travels in Alaska, Canada’s Northwest Territories, Turkey, Israel, China, and Fiji, as well as some inspired by San Diego.

“The whole show has many different varieties of artwork,” said Chow. “When you see it, you’ll be very surprised, because some of them seem like it is aimed for children, and some for adults, because I use different mediums and different thought processes.”

SEE CHINESE ART, B19

What Was … and May Have Been

Bygone buildings’ potential revisited in Historical Society exhibit

BY PAT SHERMAN

The La Jolla Historical Society is raising about a dozen razed (or fundamentally altered) buildings from their proverbial graves to show how they might have complemented today’s landscape if preservation had been given the same consideration as development.

The interdisciplinary exhibit, “What Was Is,” running Feb. 14-May 17 in the Society’s Wisteria Cottage Galleries (780 Prospect St.), fuses the prudence and foresight of historic preservationists with the vision and creativity of local architects, visual artists and writers.

In conceiving the exhibit, historians from La Jolla Historical Society (LJHS) and Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO) developed a list of 24 significant structures in La Jolla and San Diego that have been lost to time and expediency — buildings that, had they survived, likely would have been considered among today’s historic resources.

SEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, B8
FROM HISTORICAL SOCIETY, B1

The list included residences, schools, transportation depots, commercial buildings, cultural venues, hotels, public park structures, a library and a even a brothel. Each contributor was asked to select a structure as a point of departure, reflecting on the circumstances that might have allowed its continued existence.

“Some artists went right to the heart of the idea of adaptive reuse and took a literal run at it,” LJHS executive director Heath Fox said. “Others took a more conceptual approach.”

Fox said the exhibit is designed not only to highlight history, but to make it relevant to viewers, showing how it can be “interpreted in creative ways to inform the present and to help shape the future.”

La Jolla structures on the list included the historic, albeit crumbling Red Rest and Red Roost cottages on Coast Boulevard, which James Brown of Public Architecture selected.

Red Rest, Red Roost cottages

Unable to demolish the structures and redevelop the property as a hotel (due to the cottages’ historic status) or find a solution that included at least partial restoration, the 1894 cottages have stood virtually unmaintained for three decades — what preservationists consider “demolition by neglect.”

Fox said Brown (the local architect shepherding the futuristic La Jolla Shores home proposal on Whale Watch Way) created a set of narrative drawings that envisioned using the most salvageable parts from one cottage to restore the other. It would be raised 50 feet above ground on stilts to protect it from projected sea level rise due to global warming. (One of the project parameters was to promote a conversation about the sustainable built environment, and the cultural and environmental benefits of historic preservation).

“The other cottage (or its remnants) would be buried 50 feet and encased in a concrete tomb,” Fox said, adding that Brown envisions a designated caretaker grooming an apprentice to succeed him.

Wonderful Windemere

Designer-craftsmen Roy McMakin (Murals of La Jolla), who conceived of the exhibit, and business partner, Tom Mulica (both of Bankers Hill-based Domestic Architecture) chose Windemere, the first Craftsman Cottage built in California (1894) and designed by master architect Irving Gill. In 2011, the property owner, seeking to build a larger, more modern home for his family, demolished the structure on Virginia Way.

In a series of digital CAD renderings, McMakin and Mulica proposed a scenario in which the cottage is instead moved onto the front-yard setback, and a more modern, contemporary residence paying homage to Gill’s later works (La Jolla Rec Center, La Jolla Woman’s Club) be constructed at the rear of the property, each home complementing the other.

McMakin said he lived on Prospect Street (where he studied Gill’s architecture), while attending graduate school at UC San Diego (where he studied Gill’s architecture), and would often wander by and peer in the windows when it was vacant.

“I was pretty sickened by its demise,” he said. “I just felt like one way or another there were lots of ways that could have
La Jolla architect Jennifer Luce of Luce et Studio created this conceptual furniture piece, ‘Lost Limb’ (rolled steel and brass plate), that pays homage to the history of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company in San Diego, which delivered iron, gold, coal, produce and other cargo to a pier at the foot of Fifth Avenue. Courtesy

The type of thing that did not have the complexity of buildings today where trained architects need to be involved ... as well as consultants on building, plumbing and electrical."

In a series of graphite drawings, Enos deconstructs one of the cottages, displaying the jumble of its parts, while using the elements of another cottage to reconstruct it in his own fashion (fittingly titled, “Have It Your Way”).

“It relates to today’s whole do-it-yourself movement, where so many people are involved with their own remodeling projects,” Fox said.

Pacific Coast Steamship Company
In “Lost Limb” (rolled steel and brass plate), La Jolla architect Jennifer Luce ventured in an even more conceptual direction in reviving the story of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company (PCSC). Its ships traveled the Pacific Coast from Mexico to Alaska, unloading coal, gold and produce at 20 ports, including a pier that stood at the foot of Fifth Avenue in downtown San Diego.

“Unfortunately, we do lose buildings now and then. ... Having a narrative around remembering them I think is an amazing idea,” said Luce, who was previously commissioned to create a PCSC-inspired art installation at Hilton San Diego Gaslamp Quarter — the exact site where the PCSC pier stood before infill and expansion of the downtown coastline.

“I have an affectionate history with the subject matter so when I saw it the list of potential projects I thought, ‘We have to do that,’” she said.

Luce’s piece also tells the tale of PCSC’s San Diego agent, S.T. Johnson, whose mother reportedly gave each of her children a few drops of saltwater at birth to protect them the sea. Johnson would survive five shipwrecks during his 54 years with PCSC.

“We’re sort of celebrating that story as well in an etching,” Luce said. “I’m really looking forward to presenting (the work). It’s a really critical part of San Diego’s history and growth ... tethered to all these other places.”

Lead organizers for “What Was Is” include Fox, McMakin, Murals of La Jolla curator and former Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego curator Lynda Forsha, and participating artist David Jurist, whose contribution was inspired by the architecturally compromised 1958 Oxley House, a mid-century modern residence on La Jolla Farms Road. ◆