Art, science join forces for ‘Weather on Steroids’ show

‘Future Souvenirs,’ by Eva Struble in consultation with Richard Somerville, is an installation addressing long-term changes in San Diego agriculture. Using ad banners from the 1930s and ’40s, the artist depicts fruits and vegetables then-plentiful in the region that are now endangered due to climate change.

Historical Society to host inspired exhibit on climate change

BY MARÍA JOSÉ DURÁN

O ne of the art works included in the upcoming La Jolla Historical Society exhibit, “Weather on Steroids,” on display Feb. 11-May 21 at Wisteria Cottage, 780 Prospect St., is a sculpted marble globe representing the Planet.

Titled “Tipping Point Climate Change,” the sculpture by Lilleane Pebbles has the continents appearing lower than the oceans to reflect sea level rise. According to a description in the show’s catalog, “A wire figure on the base pushing the globe represents a man’s greed and mistreatment of the environment.”

‘Tipping Point Climate Change,’ by Lilleane Pebbles in consultation with Art Miller and Alexander Gershunov, features a 10-inch diameter sphere made from Nuvoloso marble selected by the artist in Carrara, Italy.

Meet community booster, gala-goer Kristi Pieper

BY MARÍA JOSÉ DURÁN

Editor’s Note: Welcome to La Jolla Light’s “People in Your Neighborhood” series, which shines a spotlight on notable locals we all wish we knew more about! Light staff is out on the town talking to familiar, friendly faces to bring you their stories. If you know someone you’d like us to profile, send the lead via e-mail to editor@lajollalight.com or call us at (858) 875-5950.

R eal estate agent, volunteer, party organizer, bank teller, fashionista, mother and professional smiler Kristi Pieper can’t walk down a block on Girard Avenue without greeting some of her neighbors or high school friends. This whirlwind of blond, curly hair and leather high heels has been rocking the streets of La Jolla for five decades.

Where are you from?

“I’m born and raised in La Jolla. I was born at the old Scripps Hospital. I went to La Jolla Presbyterian for preschool, Scripps Elementary for kindergarten, La Jolla Elementary, Muirlands Junior High and La Jolla High.”

What changes have you seen in La Jolla over the years?

“When I was growing up, we had five working elementary schools, we had four or five grocery stores, two of them along Girard Avenue. We didn’t even imagine that there would be a Westfield UTC Mall, in fact, when that was starting to be built along with the La Jolla Village Square Mall, we would think, ‘Where is that?’ It seemed so far away.”

Are you married? Got kids?

“Yes, I’m married and I have three kids, Dane (19), Drake (17) and Nan (16). Dane is a freshman in Santa Monica College. My

SEE KRISTI PIEPER, B18

La Jolla resident Kristi Pieper at one of her favorite lookouts in Bird Rock, MARIA JOSÉ DURÁN
of our planet.”

The sculpture is one of more than 10 pieces that artists from California developed for the exhibit after dialogues with Scripps Institute of Oceanography (SIO) scientists who research climate change or related matters. In this case, the artist worked closely with scientists Art Miller and Alexander Gershunov, who acted as consultants for the exhibit.

“To me, that piece looks like the planet is going to start rolling down a hill,” Gershunov said. “But to someone else, it might mean that humanity is holding the Earth, saving it from rolling down the hill.

“We are on a tipping point of this geological age when humanity settled down and developed agriculture, complex society, history, science and everything that we enjoy about culture,” he continued. “And this climate period is coming to an end, because now humanity is becoming a major force in shaping the Earth’s environment, including climate.”

Gershunov added that when humanity realizes what is happening, it will acquire the power to change this tendency. “And that’s why this collaboration is so important,” he concluded.

Gershunov worked alongside curator Tatiana Sizonenko and La Jolla Historical Society executive director Heath Fox to create the “Weather on Steroids” show. The friendship between Sizonenko and Gershunov, both of Russian background, was the source of the idea for this exhibition.

“Also,” Sizonenko said, “in the 13 years that I’ve lived in California, I’ve experienced the changes in the climate myself.”

Cosmic Collaboration

Sizonenko previously worked with Fox when he was Assistant Dean of Arts & Humanities at UC San Diego, and since the university is busy celebrating the 50th anniversary of its Visual Arts Department, the nearby La Jolla Historical Society became the perfect venue for the show. “La Jolla has many connections with SIO in different ways,” she added.

For Fox, hosting the exhibit was a natural step in the evolution of the Historical Society’s art space. “History is not just about the past, it is also about understanding the past, informing the present and shaping the future. Our mission is to make the diverse past of La Jolla relevant for contemporary society, so La Jollans are informed when they make decisions today that are going to affect the future.

“Science comes out of the laboratory and art work comes out of the studio, so this exhibit is an opportunity to provide a junction for those things so they can be communicated to the public,” he explained. The exhibit will feature the work of both scientists and artists, with panels about the science alongside the artwork.

“Scientists usually work by consulting with other scientists,” Sizonenko said, suggesting that scientific knowledge is sometimes not easily available to the public. Gershunov added, “Some of these art works are more abstract than others. In some cases, it’s clear what the artist is trying to convey in a visual way; you can actually sort of feel it. So that’s the beauty of this collaboration, because art is accessible to everybody.”

because the conversation about climate change needs to go even further in our current political situation.”

The name of the exhibit, Gershunov explained, is an analogy comparing the changes of climate caused by the greenhouse effect to how steroids modify an athlete’s performance. “There’s a great athlete who just won a competition, and you ask, ‘Did she win because she took steroids?’ It’s very difficult to answer that question, but if you look at her performance over the time she started taking them, you can see the effect of steroids.”

Who’s Who

The participating artists, most of them from San Diego, include Tiersa Cosaert, Judit Herisko, Cheryl E. Leonard, Dana Montlack, Lilianee Peebles, Oscar Romo, Marcela Paz Luna Rossel, Eva Struble, Paul Turowski, Ruth Wallen and Allison Wiese.

The SIO scientists involved include Michel Boudrias, Michael Dettinger, Alexander Gershunov, Kristen Guiguais, Ralph Keeling, Manfredi Manizza, Art Miller, Walter Munk, David Pierce, Richard Somerville and Shang-Ping Xie.

After its La Jolla Historical Society run, the exhibit will move to the San Diego Central Library Gallery, downtown, June 10-Sept. 3.

IF YOU GO: “Weather on Steroids” will be on exhibit Saturday, Feb. 11 through Sunday, May 21 at Wisteria Cottage, 780 Prospect St. Public hours are noon-4 p.m. Thursday-Sunday. Admission is free. A reception for Historical Society members will be hosted Friday, Feb. 10. (858) 459-5335. lajollahistory.org