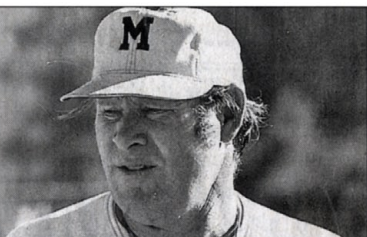


**DORMANT COM
ONCE DOMINANT**

Forty years ago, team played for NorCal championship

SPORTS B1



**ARTIST GEARS UP
FOR BURNING MAN**

Nicasio woman wins grant from organizers for 'Celtic Forest'

LIFESTYLES D1



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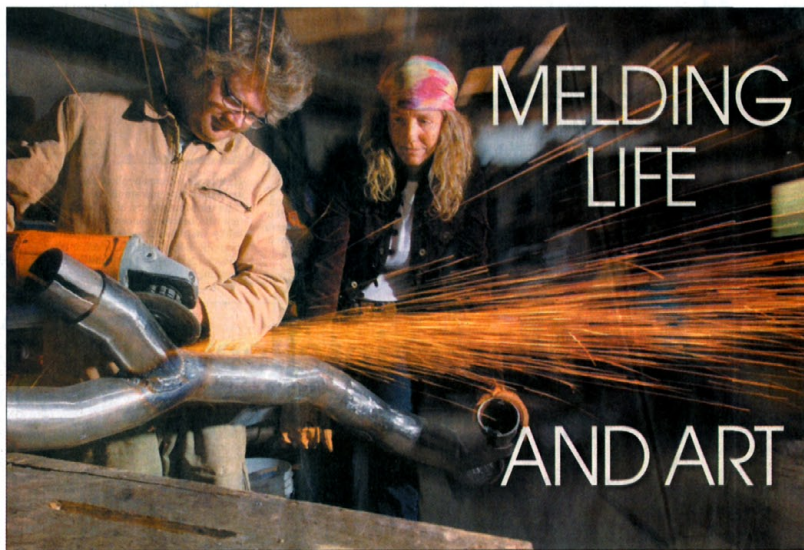
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LJ photo/Frankie Frost

HOT ART: Laura Kimpton is an artist who lives on a 70-acre art compound in Nicasio. She and husband, Jeff Schonberg, are involved in a project called 'Celtic Forest,' which consists of fire-belching metal trees the couple will take to Burning Man.

IF YOU GO

Marin artist Laura Kimpton's work, along with pieces by artists Lisa Kokin and Nancy Youdelman, will be part of "Women's Work," a show from Sept. 4 to Sept. 29 at the Donna Seager Gallery at 851 Fourth St. in San Rafael. A reception for artists is 6 to 8 p.m. Sept. 15. Call 454-4229 for information.

"She's always had her own vision. She's always had this incredible sense of freedom."

— Bobby Sarnoff, childhood friend Laura Kimpton



VISION: Laura Kimpton calls her artwork a 'combination of really expensive antiques and junk.'

Nicasio artist creating fiery steel sculpture for Burning Man

By Paul Liberatore
IJ reporter

AMID THE creative clutter of her capacious studio in Nicasio, Laura Kimpton is in charge of "the aesthetic layout" of a spectacular work of art that's being created for Burning Man, the annual "experiment in radical self-expression" in Nevada's Black Rock Desert.

The tall, willowy 44-year-old artist has christened her 70-acre ranch "the Marin County headquarters of Burning Man 2007," which begins Aug. 27 and ends Sept. 3 — Labor Day.

With her artist husband, Jeff Schomberg, and "fire genius" Bob Hofmann, she developed the concept for a project they're calling "Celtic Forest," winning a grant from the festival organizers to build it.

"Celtic Forest" consists of four gleaming steel trees up to 22 feet tall, topped by flame-spitting candelabras. The trees surround a fiery moat containing a steel sculpture of a winged Belisama, the Celtic goddess of fire.

"We're making a really good

piece of art, so it will be a fun place to hang at Burning Man," she says. "I like to put on parties, so I get to put on one of the best parties in the world out there."

For Kimpton, a former Deadhead, Burning Man and its thousands of participants, called "burners," have replaced the community of like-minded free spirits who used to follow the Grateful Dead from concert to concert.

"My group of friends and I would see each other backstage at Grateful Dead shows, and that was my social life," she explains. "When that died, I went and found Burning Man on my own. And slowly but surely it

became a group of people who enjoy this idea of living in a way in which you're kind, you're present, and you're having experiences that make you feel young and happy."

Four years ago, Kimpton came to a turning point in her life. She turned 40. Her father, whom she remembers as "a charming, cool guy," died of leukemia at age 65. And she

MARIN

PROFILES

LAURA KIMPTON
▶ AGE: 44
▶ HOMETOWN: Nicasio
▶ OCCUPATION: Artist

See Kimpton, page D6

KIMPTON: Celebrated marriage to Schomberg asking guests to bring gnomes

From page D1

met her future husband at Burning Man. Schomberg was driving an "art car" he'd made around the desert playa that looked like a giant Hoover vacuum cleaner. "It was pulling a carpeted little kid's pony, and I was wearing a cowgirl outfit," she recalls with a giggle. "I asked him, 'Can I ride your pony?'"

Met at Burning Man

From that romantic beginning, they rode off into the sunset together. Two years later, they collaborated on their first art car at Burning Man: a flaming steel horse pulling a rusted steel cabin-like carriage that she describes as "Little House on the Prairie" meets "Mad Max."

Impressed by that artistic endeavor, the renowned sculptor David Best took them under his wing. Best is known for constructing immense temples from discarded wood sheets, ornate punch-outs from toys and other products. The temple is burned to the ground in one of the most sensational rituals in the eight days of Burning Man.

In 2005, a 30-foot-tall wooden chapel constructed by Best in San Rafael's Canal neighborhood as part of a public art exhibit drew fans — and city officials, who slapped a stop-work order on the project for building code violations. The towering structure was torn down.

Since 2000, the six temples he's created all have had different themes. This year's is the Temple of Forgiveness.

"I go there for David's temple," Kimpton says. "It's going to be the most beautiful thing in the world."

Married on 7/7/07

Best built a smaller temple that floated in a pond on Kimpton's Nicasio ranch to celebrate her marriage to Schomberg last month on the auspicious date of 7/7/07.

In keeping with her party-throwing, artistic nature, guests were asked to bring garden gnomes as wedding presents. The gnomes were arranged in a canyon where the couple said their vows. The ceremony was conducted by a shaman, and the bridesmaids all wore black T-shirts with "Laura's Angels" on them.

"Laura's art isn't separate from the way she lives her life; it's part of it," says Donna Seager, who will be showing Kimpton's work at her Donna Seager Gallery in San Rafael in a September show with artists Lisa Kokin and Nancy Youdelman called "Women's Work."

"Even her wedding," Seager says, "was a work of art."

A daughter of the late Bill Kimpton, founder of the Kimpton hotel and restaurant chain, Laura grew up in what her childhood friend Bobby Sarnoff of Mill Valley describes as a "con-

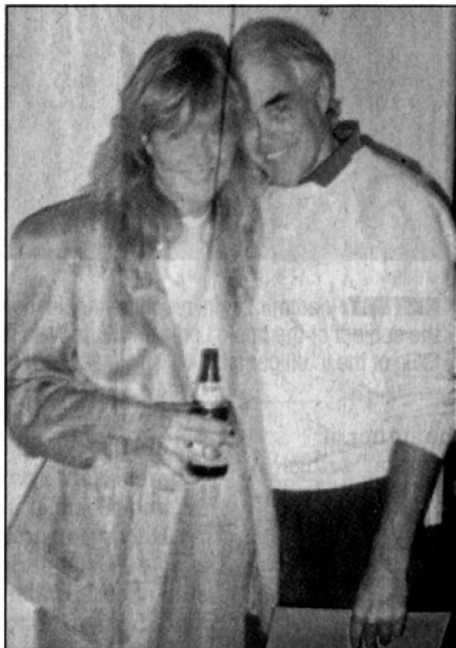


IJ photo/Frankie Frost

HER MESSAGE: Laura Kimpton's artwork explores women's issues and lately is turning to the effect of toxins on health and the human body.

"Much of her work is about female empowerment. She's always been interested in art, but she's really evolved, developing the skills and the style that allow her to say what she wants to say."

— Bobby Sarnoff, childhood friend of Laura Kimpton



1989: Laura Kimpton celebrates with her father, Bill, when she graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute.

ventional" suburban neighborhood on Chicago's North Shore. "But Laura was anything but conventional," Sarnoff remembers. "She's always had her own vision. She's always had this incredible sense of freedom."

Kimpton earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in art and education from the University of Iowa. With her heart set on a career as a photographer, she got a bachelor's degree in photography from the San Francisco Art Institute.

After graduating, she hitchhiked across Africa by herself, floated down the Congo River, lived with Masai warriors, took pictures, got herself in and out of trouble. It was a thrilling adventure, a little too thrilling.

"When I came back, I decided I didn't want to be a photographer," she says. "As a woman, the photography I wanted to do was really, really dangerous."

Kimpton went back to school to get a master's degree in counseling psychology from the University of San Francisco and worked with at-risk students as part of a special program at Del Mar School in Tiburon. She felt she could relate to the troubled kids, many with learning disabilities, because of her own dyslexia.

Burned out after six years at Del Mar, she moved on to Redwood High, where she started the photography department band, Len Dell'Amico, a videographer for the Grateful Dead, she taught at Redwood for four years until her daughter, Kiley, now 8, was born.

Kimpton had been living in Fairfax, but bought land in

Sonoma to escape from the stress of teaching and to be a full-time mom to Kiley. But she was too bursting with creativity to lie low for long.

"I sat on my butt for a year," she recalls with some dismay. "But, when Kiley was 3, I decided I wanted to go back and do my art."

She began by creating Photoshop collages, then started gluing various found objects to them, making them three-dimensional, and dripping them with wax. Before long she was putting together extraordinary assemblages, encasing found objects — toys, TV knobs, luggage, stamps, stuff she finds lying around that she calls "ground scores" — in encaustic wax.

"The thing about my work is that it's a combination of really expensive antiques and junk," she says with a laugh.

Women's issues

Kimpton's work is powerfully message-driven, often exploring women's issues and lately turning to the effect of toxins on health and the human body.

"Much of her work is about female empowerment," says Sarnoff, who has several Kimpton pieces in her Mill Valley home. "She's always been interested in art, but she's really evolved, developing the skills and the style that allow her to say what she wants to say."

For someone who's been a full-time artist for a relatively short time, Kimpton has been remarkably successful. Distinguished

art patron Rene di Rosa awarded a piece of hers "Best in Show" in a juried exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santa Rosa.

Earlier this year, she broke into the New York art scene with a solo show, "Burning Words," at the New York Studio Gallery in Manhattan.

Last year, she was featured in "Mynd Too," a solo show at the Schomberg Gallery in Los Angeles. And in 2005 she created an installation that she called "Committee of Me" at the Pigman Gallery in San Francisco.

Moved to Nicasio

After living in Sonoma for four years, she bought the Nicasio spread with its warehouse-size studio and its ranch house on a hill where she and her husband, in Kimpton's words, enjoy "the best view in the world."

Her place isn't your average West Marin farm. The road to it is marked by prosthetic limbs and the hills are dotted with plastic merry-go-round horses.

She is an adviser on green practices to the Kimpton's EarthCare program of using eco-friendly products and services in its hotels. And she's deeply committed to the Slow Food (an international organization devoted to sustainable agriculture and traditional food ways) and raw food movements. She's also a supporter of Marin Organic, an association of organic producers in Point Reyes Station.

For her, her art and her passions are inseparable, as solid as if they were glued together in one of her wax creations.

"Every year my art has taken a huge step," she says. "It couldn't have gone any faster. It's about living creatively, rather than living under stress. I think that's what it's like when you're in your 40s. You don't have time to get stressed. You just go forward."

Paul Liberatore can be reached at liberatore@marini.com



Laura Kimpton: "Look at Me" at the Donna Seager Gallery.