



Photos by RENEE FRANCOEUR/Advocate staff

Larissa Blokhuis' "Urchin Light Box" pictured above, is a part of her GlassEarth exhibit, a reflection on the human connection to the natural world and the division development causes in the connection. It is on display at the Kiwanis Gallery in Red Deer until Aug. 24.



The hanging blown glass works are part of Blokhuis "Deep Sea Creatures" series. At right, a work called Billow.



## GLASSEARTH EXHIBIT AT KIWANIS GALLERY

BY RENÉE FRANCOEUR  
ADVOCATE STAFF

Suspended sea creatures with spiralling tentacles. Neon orange, twisting trees. Moss-like organisms huddled around old metal contraptions under a thick globe.

They have various, thought-provoking labels: Unearth, Aerial Embrace, Nudibranchs, Trap and Anemone and are all made of glass.

Handblown and crafted by artist Larissa Blokhuis, these pieces make up the exhibit GlassEarth, currently on display at the Kiwanis Gallery at the downtown branch of the Red Deer Public Library.

Blokhuis, who divides her time between Vancouver and Calgary, said the body of work is about how flora and fauna are parallel with the human experience and at times the same.

GlassEarth is an imagining of what the world would look like if it becomes as hot as it has been in the pre-historic past, she said.

"There's a certain amount of negativity in the art world about the future of where our society is going and there's this idea that humans are creating a situation where humans are not going to be able to survive on the planet anymore with pollution and all the environmental destruction," said Blokhuis, 27. "This is a way of reclaiming some positivity and saying that evolution is continuing and things will change and maybe the planet won't be

recognizable in 200 years but that it can repair itself and ... we'll see new creatures and new interspecies relationships happening."

She hopes the exhibit encourages people to participate in that instead of trying to dominate the situation.

Her piece, *Cozy*, has been popular with the public, she said.

With green, people-like glass figures atop three bases similar to mushrooms, *Cozy* reminded one viewer at the show opening in Red Deer in June of "a house party where you can hop from room to room to know what's going on," said Blokhuis. "I thought that was an interesting take. I like to hear people's interpretations because it's usually not what I was thinking of and makes me see it in a different way and potentially add to it next time I'm working."

Blokhuis, who started glassblowing at 16 during a summer program at the Alberta College of Art and Design in Calgary, took a new approach to this exhibit, incorporating a number of different materials, such as wool, wire, wood, concrete and ceramics.

"I've had a lot of comments about the wool and glass combo particularly. People seem to really like that," she said of the wispy effect the coloured wool creates behind different shapes of glass. "I kind of stagnated a bit after leaving the art school environment and became really focused on being a good glassblower and I forgot that I'm not a glassblower, I'm an artist who blows glass."



"Cozy" is another work in Larissa Blokhuis GlassEarth exhibit.

She attended a course at Pilchuck Glass School in Washington state in 2011 which "put her in a different head space" and reinforced the idea that she could do anything she wanted with her art.

It changed the way she created art and now she sees beyond blowpipes and furnaces and finds inspiration everywhere, she said.

"My ideas come from taking in

information. I tend to think in a very linear, right angles type of way. I watch a lot of news and documentaries. ... I'm always looking at what is happening around me and what can I make that will either fit in with it or contradict it for what I need to say or what will motivate people to act."

Blokhuis grew up in Calgary but took a summer art course at Red Deer College in 2007 and returned to the city in 2012 to work as a teaching assistant for internationally known glass artist Jeff Holmwood.

Blokhuis's next show will be at the Spruce Grove Art Gallery in Spruce Grove, titled *Western Connections*.

In 2015 she will also be showing her work in an Edmonton exhibit called *Discover* at the McMullen Gallery.

GlassEarth runs in Red Deer until Aug. 24. For more information on Blokhuis or to purchase one of her pieces, visit [larissablokhuis.weebly.com](http://larissablokhuis.weebly.com). [rfrancoeur@reddeeradvocate.com](mailto:rfrancoeur@reddeeradvocate.com)



Larissa Blokhuis. "Unearth" work made of glass, wire, concrete and wool. At right, is "Transform."

