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Thursday, March 10, 2016

## Diving into art

### *Vandenberg to display photographer's images*

BY TIMOTHY O'HARA Citizen Staff

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The USNS Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg will once again be transformed into one of the longest underwater art galleries, as world-renowned artist Andreas Franke will display 12 pieces of art on the wreck off Key West.

In 2011, the Austrian commercial and modern artist and photographer attached 12 images to the 510-foot World War II-era ship. The pieces stayed on the ship for several months and transformed from their time under water. Also, the work was later shown in 2013 at the Studios of Key West for an exhibition.

On April 1, Franke and a group of divers will begin attaching his "Stavronikita" series, originally exhibited on the wreck of the SS Stavronikita off Bridgetown, Barbados. The process should take about two days to complete, Franke said.

The images, which Franke described as Baroque in nature, have never been shown in the United States before, according to the artist.

There will also be land-based exhibits of the work before being placed on the Vandenberg and after it is brought back to the surface.

The series will be exhibited before being deployed in its original state at both the History of Diving Museum in Islamorada on March 30 and then at a yet-to-be-announced location March 31, according to Capt. Joe Weatherby, an organizer of the sinking of the Vandenberg and the art project.

Organizers of the event have invited all Key West boats and divers to accompany and photograph the pieces are they are attached to the wreck.

The show also helps celebrate the beginning of the annual tarpon fishing season, Weatherby said. This catch-and-release fishery is vitally important to the springtime economy in Florida, traditionally a "shoulder" season. The Vandenberg is also routinely visited by tarpon during this time of year.

"This is truly one of the celebrity fish of the Florida Keys and an important part of our tourism economy," Weatherby said. "The goal of the project is to fully engage the diving, fishing and arts community."

Franke's work will be brought up to the surface in late July, again accompanied by a large contingent of scuba divers, Weatherby said. The 12 images will then be dried and sealed. There will be an after-opening of the images at the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary's Eco-Discovery Center in Key West, following which the images will remain on exhibit for approximately six months.

"One of the most interesting aspects of the project is to watch the transformation of the art while it is underwater," Franke said. "It is interesting to see the clear artwork turn into a truly unique piece of art."

Information about the art project can be found at <http://www.thesinkingworld.com> (<http://www.thesinkingworld.com>).

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