

Recreating mythical stories on canvas

Printmaker Helen Gerritzen loves working with extremes.

In her new print show at the SNAP Gallery, trachea and the hero, and other such stories ..., the artist illustrates her highbrow Greek mythology theme with everyday found objects such as a bare tree branch and an old pair of antlers.

"I like making work that has dualities and pairings," she says. "Newer work I've been doing has been pairing objects with its shadow."

The artist and University of Alberta instructor says these newer shadow prints allow her to illustrate another set of opposites she's long been fascinated with: the tension between the physical, mortal body and the more symbolic, mythic, religious and metaphoric reality associated with it.

"I want viewers to respond to the work on a physical level, as well as the intellectual."

Many of her large print works are cre-

PREVIEW

Helen Gerritzen's trachea and the hero, and other such stories ...

Showing at: SNAP Gallery, 10309 97th St.

Until: Oct. 7; meet the artist at a special reception Thursday, Sept. 7 from 7 to 9 p.m.

ated specifically to be on the human scale to facilitate that direct relationship between the body of the viewer and the physical objects and bodies in the work.

"In a way, I'm making people ask themselves what is more important: knowledge or physical experience."

In her artist statement, Gerritzen says she deliberately seeks "to blur the boundaries between media, form, knowledge and perception." To that end, her work is very much open to interpretation.

"People can look at the work and rein-

terpret the myth I'm referring to in the way that makes the most sense for them."

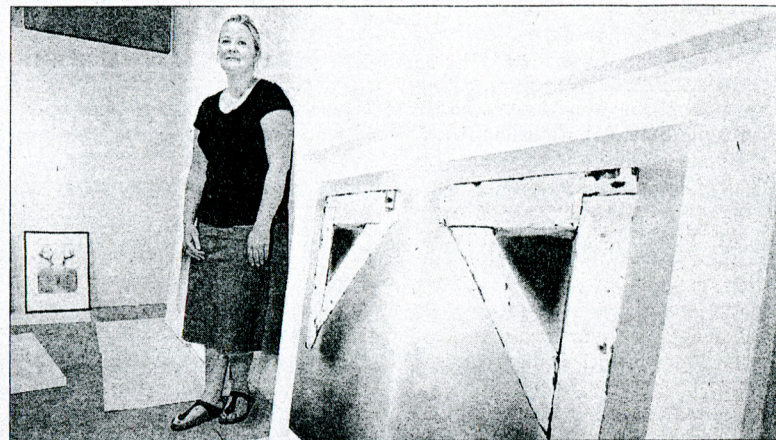
In the SNAP exhibit, she has created an open-ended retelling of the tragic mythological tale of Daphne and Apollo plucked from the pages of Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*.

Daphne was a nymph (a minor goddesses of nature) who didn't appreciate being sexually pursued by Apollo. She prayed to Gaea to be rescued from the randy god of prophecy, medicine, music and poetry. Gaea promptly transformed the distraught Daphne into a laurel tree.

"There are so many visuals associated with the old stories and these are also tales that both males and females can identify with," she says.

Her decision to work with this legend started with a series of drawings she did of a plastic trachea she'd come across during an anatomy drawing class she was giving.

This led her to imagine the desire felt



SUPPLIED

Helen Gerritzen incorporates everyday objects into her myth-telling works.

by Apollo and Daphne's state of mind at "the moment she is becoming the tree," her trachea representing her last human breath as well as connecting up visually (i.e., it being a treelike body structure) with the branches and antlers also represented in the show.

Gerritzen's love of extremes also extends to her material processes. Work

in the show features both traditional etching processes and contemporary digital photography technology as well as work that mixes the two techniques.

"Even though I'm working with digital processes here, I'm not much of a technological person. I'm still using my father's old film camera from the '60s."

Gilbert A. Bouchard