

Artist recreates old greek myths

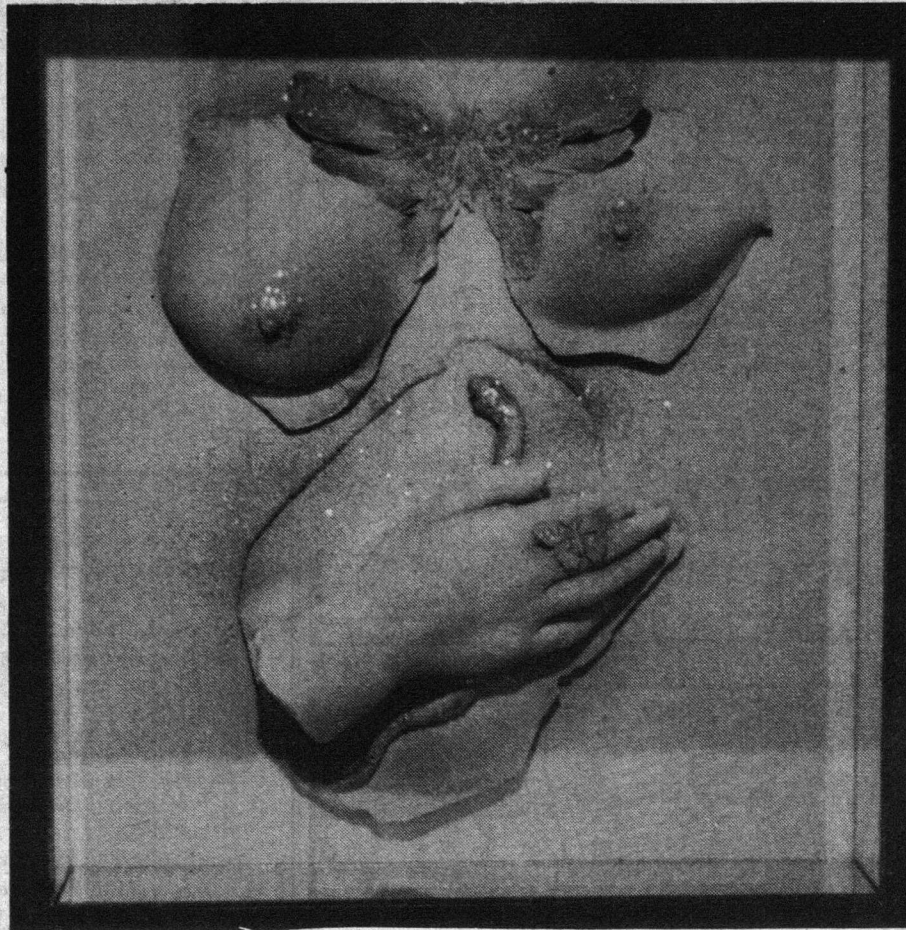
by Greg McHarg

Jennifer Dickson is an emerging Canadian artist visiting Edmonton with a show of her work, which is at the Ringhouse Gallery until February 2nd. Dickson is not a native Canadian; she left her birthplace, South Africa, at the age of sixteen to study painting and print-making in England. She did graduate studies in Paris with Stanely Hayter, in his renowned printmaking school, the Atelier 17. Dickson arrived in Canada, with her husband, in 1969, willing to "start over".

Dickson's show at the Ringhouse contains projects spanning the last decade. Though she has worked in a variety of media, everything is based on photographic imagery. Her favorite subject has been the human figure, which she has used to re-interpret classical themes. *Aphrodite Anadyomene* is her most recent project in the show. She worked on it while she was at the U of A as a visiting artist in 1984.

Dickson uses fragmented and abstracted images of the female figure to represent her version of the birth of Aphrodite. These images are carefully cropped and she uses the technique of photo-etching to develop rich tonal ranges and textures.

Three Mirrors to Narcissus is her interpretation of another Greek myth, and was completed in 1978. Again she uses a photo-etching technique to create a rich textural tonality. In addition Dickson has hand tinted these prints. The tints are subtle enough to compliment rather than distract from the grainy finish of the prints. There are some beautiful images in this three part series. Each part features a different male model and his interaction with his mirror image. Dickson uses the mirrors inventively, although some of the images are more successful than others. This inconsistency may be due to her interest in narrative continuity. The quality of some images as self-contained works of art, specifically those at the end of the third movement of *Narcissus*, seem to



Work by Jennifer Dickson now showing at the Ringhouse Gallery.

have been compromised for the sake of the narrative whole.

This conflict is more evident in the five parts of her *Earthly Paradise* series of color xerography prints from 1980. Four of the five parts place humans in a variety of theatrical settings. The narrative whole of each part is emphasized to the detriment of the individual images. Her works are not poor but lack the consideration given those works from

the *Narcissus* and *Aphrodite* series.

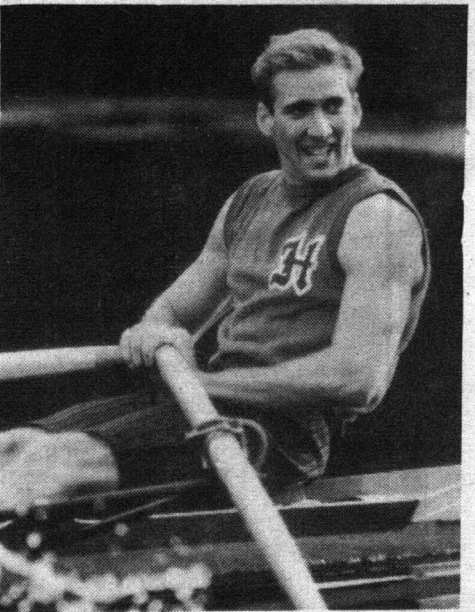
For example, in the segment labelled "The Dreamer" a sleeping male figure is contrasted with a marble figure. The marble man is a beautiful and well photographed sculpture. Unfortunately, his perfection merely makes the flesh and blood sleeper look inadequate. With the exception of "The Garden", Dickson's aforementioned work makes the other parts of the *Earthly Paradise*

series look like a collection of movie stills. "The Garden" is a series of images of the vegetation and architecture which contain the garden. These color prints are well considered, classically balanced compositions. They capture, through the absence of any living thing, a mood of serene timelessness.

The same can be said of Dickson's series of cibachrome photographs taken at Versailles in 1983. Again, she has composed the images of the palace and garden carefully; this time with better control of the color reproduction. Again, the absence of humanity suggests a timelessness, and the autumn rain and dark finish lend a note of melancholy to the scenes.

Since arriving in Canada, Jennifer Dickson has nurtured a supportive group of collectors for her work. Despite the support, she has had to supplement her income as a freelance lecturer. Her collection of 10,000 slides of Baroque architecture is in great demand among Canadian architects and students. She has also been a sessional instructor which she has finally given up, calling it "slave labour". Dickson says, "I have good instructional skills which I have never been able to use to the extent that I would like." This is due, she complains, to the system of tenure in Canadian universities. "Tenure is part of a corrupt academic system. Instructors with tenure are no longer accountable. They perpetuate mediocrity and prevent the transfusion of new ideas and enthusiasm." Nevertheless, Dickson praises the U of A printmaking department as, "... the best in the country with respect to facilities and instructors."

Her status as a recent arrival onto the Canadian art scene and her exposure to art schools in the US and Europe have left her in a unique position of being able to comment more objectively on that scene. Her outspokenness as an artist and Canadian is as welcome as her work.



Nicolas Cage rows to victory.

Film is up the creek without a paddle

The Boy in Blue
Twentieth Century Fox
Capital Square

review by Virginia Gillese

If Ned Hanlan's life was a trite and predictable as *The Boy in Blue*, which is based on him and his accomplishments, he was subjected to a very superficial existence. Edward (Ned) Hanlan was a Canadian who, in the late 19th Century, became a world champion rower. The film introduces Ned as a working-class bootlegger on Lake Ontario who learns to row quickly in order to evade the police. He begins rowing competitively and is exploited and manipulated as a profit-making enterprise by most of the people around him. Ultimately, he achieves both personal (yes, he gets the girl) and competi-

tive (yes, he wins the big race) triumph. It's a real "good conquers evil" and "he lives happily ever after" show.

Produced by Twentieth Century Fox, the film was shot entirely on location in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Although the arts are flourishing in Canada and deserve recognition, the English-speaking films being made are, for the most part, not very good. Unfortunately, *The Boy in Blue* is not an exception to this.

Nicholas Cage (*Racing With the Moon*, *Birdy*) plays Ned. The ability he brought to his previous roles in entirely lacking here. Ned comes off as self-indulgent when he should be sensitive and stupid when he should merely appear uneducated. Instead of an idealistic young man, we're presented with an unfocused character whose virtue

seems to result from instinctual reactions rather than a desire to aspire to better things. Cage comes off as hollow in most parts, delivering his lines as if even he couldn't believe them. The rest of the cast including Christopher Plummer, don't do any better.

Charles Jarrott, the director, didn't do anything wrong; he just didn't do anything right. The directing, like the script, is banal. There's a limit to how inspired one can be watching someone row a boat in slow motion, or pull ahead and win a race at the last minute. Seeing Cage train for his races is too much like having to witness Sylvester Stallone, as Rocky, prepare for a fight. Sweaty, muscular bodies are becoming redundant. The film's lack of depth and inability to get beyond the cliché make it very long and monotonous indeed.



The Album Playlist is based on Airplay — a combination of programmer preference and listeners' requests. Tune in every Sunday at 12:00 for the Alternative Countdown — the favorite albums, EP's singles and tapes.

Albums

1. Queen Ida & Her Zydeco Band — Caught in the Act (GNP Crescendo (US))
2. I. Braineater — Artist Poet Thief (Independent (Canada))
3. Various Artists — Force of the Blade Anthology (Banzai/Polygram)
4. Moev — Dusk and Desire (Profile (US))
5. Albert Collins, Johnny Copeland & Robert Cray — Showdown (Alligator/WEA)
6. Fair Warning — You Are the Scene (F.W. (Canada))
7. The Waiting — Self-titled (The Waiting (Canada))
8. Various Artists — Questionable (Compilation) (Jonestown(Canada))
9. Thomas Mapfumo & The Blacks Unlimited — Mr. Music (Earthworks/Rough Trade/WEA)
10. Living Proof — This Trip Is For Real (100%/Independent (Canada))

Singles, EP's and Tapes

1. Wartogs — Go From Here (demo)
2. David Sylvian — Words With The Shaman (Virgin/A & M)
3. Slow — Against the Glass (Zulu (Canada))
4. Night Twisters — Self-titled (Tango (Canada))
5. Unwarranted Trust — Honour's Calling (from Dementia 5 tape)
6. Severed Heads — Dead Eyes Opened (Netwerk (Canada))
7. Emily — Propaganda (Tape)
8. Psyche — Thundershowers In Ivory Towers (Mass Production (Canada))
9. The Mix — Break Up Shake Up (Zoons (Canada))
10. Full Time Men — Self-titled (Coyote/Twintone (US))

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