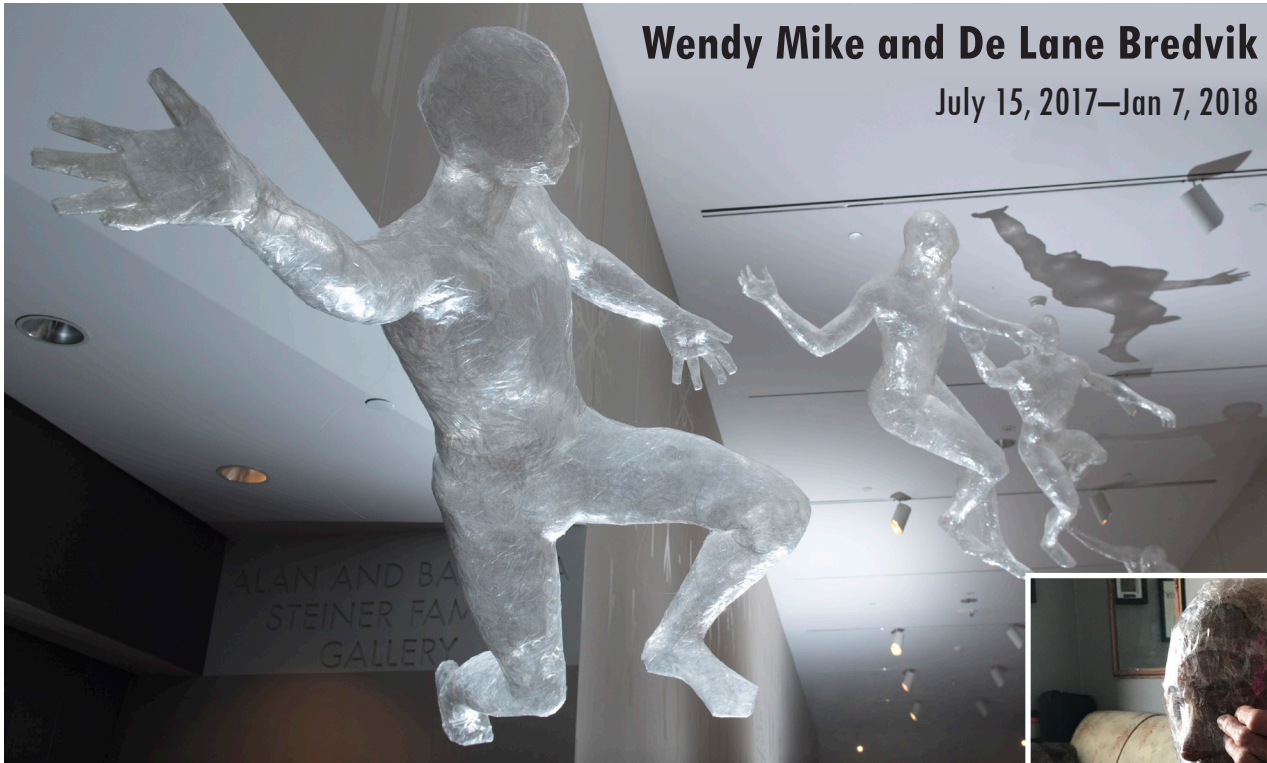


# RAGNARÖK ANTHROPOCENE

Wendy Mike and De Lane Bredvik

July 15, 2017—Jan 7, 2018

Photograph by Mark Reis



Photograph by Ingrid Black

The installation is inspired by Ragnarök, a series of future events in Norse mythology in which the death of major figures, various natural disasters, and the complete submersion of the world in fire and water ultimately result in a fertile rebirth, reconciliation of the gods, and re-population of the human race. Given the destructive wildfires and floods that have wreaked havoc on the Pikes Peak region in recent years, Ragnarök serves as a cautionary tale, asking us to consider our sacred and practical responsibilities to the earth.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In Norse mythology, gods and giants personify civilization and its opposing force, chaos. Each plays their necessary role in intertwined, cyclical, and predetermined action. The story of Ragnarök is part of this cycle: the void before the beginning of the world, the creation of the world, its destruction through fire and flood, and the beginning of the next new world. At the end of the story, it is hinted that the cycle of destruction/rebirth will repeat itself yet again.

In *Ragnarök: Anthropocene*, we also include the name newly given to our current time, “Anthropocene,” to emphasize the fact that human beings are now playing out the roles of creation and destruction — the gods and giants — in the Ragnarök story. How can we benefit from identifying repeating elements and cyclic patterns in the present, and adjust our behavior to ensure survival and strengthen civilization?

## THE GODS

The spiral of sculptures that represent the gods form an ellipse inscribed within the rectangle of the gallery space and hint at the foundational geometry that was used in the creation of the larger composition.

Models for the gods were chosen from our modern-day “gods,” competitive athletes, many of whom are current and former Olympians. By virtue of our Colorado Springs location, we have unique access to them. Interviews with locals who survived the Waldo Canyon fire and subsequent floods further served to inform the authenticity of our installation, and ground it firmly within our community.

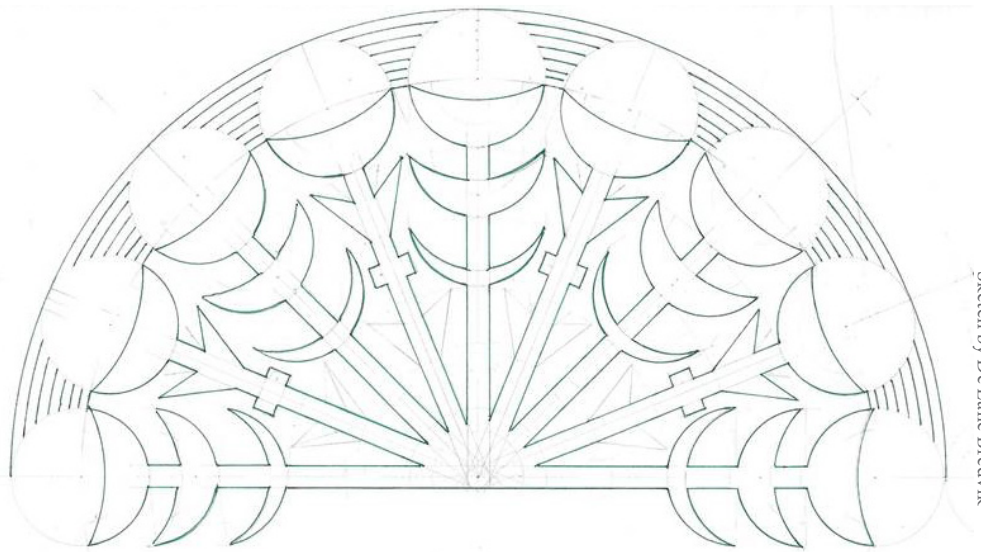
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Sketch by De Lane Bredvik

## THE WORLD TREE

The World Tree in Norse Mythology is Yggdrasil, and it provides a conceptual structure for understanding not just this world inhabited by human beings, but also the worlds of the gods, giants, dwarves, elves, and even the dead. Yggdrasil survives Ragnarök, sheltering two human beings who repopulate the new world. Entering the gallery space through the doors where the World Tree's trunk is implied symbolically repeats the emergence of the surviving human beings and begins the next cycle of life.

## THE RUNES

The gallery walls are painted with five stanzas detailing the story of Ragnarök (translated at right). The runes, painted with only a difference in sheen, appear and disappear as the viewer walks through the installation, encountering varying angles and sources of light. The “Galdrastafir,” painted similarly in gold, are magic charms of protection; for example, the Helm of Awe Galdrastafir at the north end of the gallery creates fear in your enemy and ensures victory in battle. The title of the installation, *Ragnarök: Anthropocene*, is transliterated, written both right to left and left to right on the panel in front of the Helm of Awe. All transliteration of the runes in the gallery are the work of Dr. Jackson Crawford, Instructor of Nordic Studies and Coordinator of the Nordic Program at University of Colorado in Boulder.

It was at the very beginning,  
it was Ymir's time,  
there was no sand, no sea,  
no cooling waves,  
no earth, no sky,  
no grass,  
just Ginnungagap.

The old tree sighs  
when the giant shakes it —  
Yggdrasil still stands,  
but it trembles.

The sun turns black,  
the earth sinks into the sea,  
the bright stars  
fall out of the sky.  
Flames scorch  
the leaves of Yggdrasil,  
a great bonfire  
reaches to the highest clouds.

I see the earth  
rise a second time  
from out of the sea,  
green once more.  
Waterfalls flow,  
and eagles fly overhead,  
hunting for fish  
among the mountain peaks.

Then the dark dragon  
will come flying  
down from the dark mountains,  
that glistening serpent.  
Nithhogg will bear corpses  
in his wings  
as he flies over that valley ...  
(now I must retire.)

## REFLECTION

By offering illuminations of the gods in motion, spiraling through the story of Ragnarök locked in battle with the unseen giants, flanked by the Yggdrasil and the Helms of Awe, we hope to share an experience of profound terror, and beauty captured in something as fleeting as a gesture; the barest breath of form created nearly from the atmosphere it occupies and infused with light. A moment of presence for the viewer to pause, to observe, to experience the relevance of this ancient human tribal tale, and reflect upon our roles and responsibilities in the Anthropocene.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Hailing from the Pikes Peak region, visual artists Wendy Mike and De Lane Bredvik prove that art is inherently powerful and transformational.

### De Lane Bredvik

*Although my process is infused by academic rigor gained from earning a Master degree in architecture from Harvard's Graduate School of Design and undergraduate degrees in studio art and art history, I rely heavily on emotion and the creative process to develop and communicate my ideas.*

delanebredvik.com



Photograph by Jen Gutches

### Wendy Mike

*Art has the capacity to bypass the intellect and go straight to the heart. From there, new ways of thinking and feeling can emerge. Transformation becomes possible. This kind of holistic experience is what I'm after.*

wendymike.com