

the Arts



THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR PAINTING: Robin Raznick, daughter of an Atlanta rug dealer, says boots are made for walking and painting. She painted this pair for California hotel mogul George Rosenthal. Send Raznick your favorite pair of Tony Lama's, furry scuffs or stiletto pumps and she'll manufacture a watercolor copy to hang in your home. Of course, you'll have to foot the bill. To contact the artist, call 415-359-7235 or write: 1365 Lerida Way, Pacifica, CA. 94044.

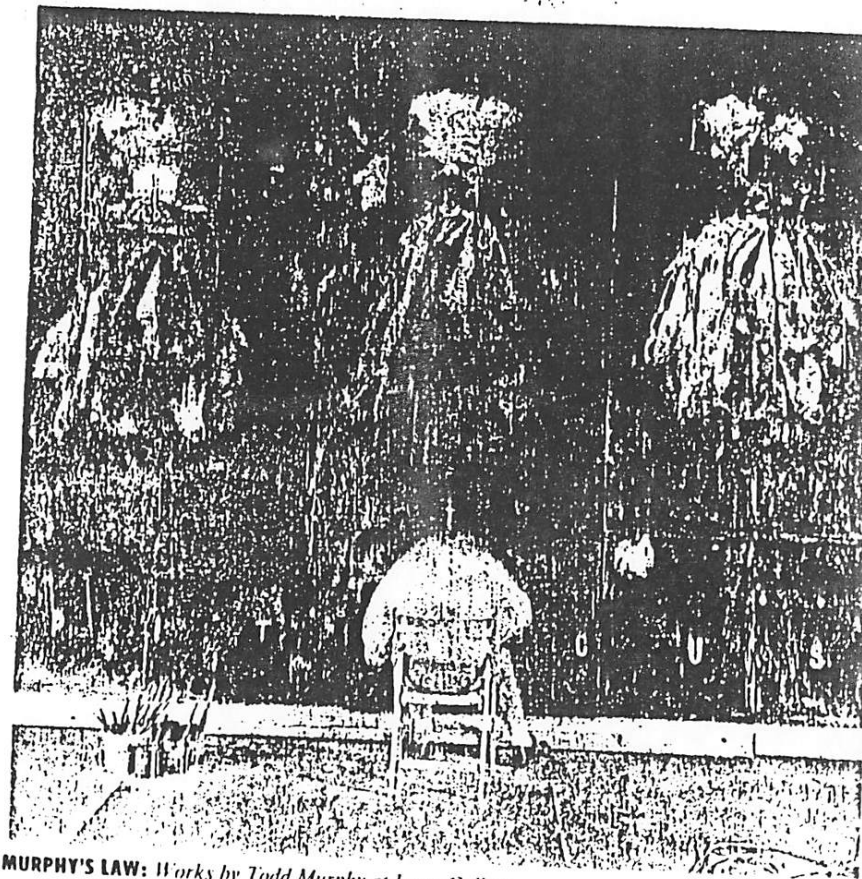
ART REVIEW

LUANNE SANDERS

ROLL MODELS

Atlanta's hot young painter Todd Murphy usually scouts models for his billboard-size figurative masterpieces while sipping espresso with aspiring screenwriter chums at Café Intermezzo. On any given night, a striking Japanese actress or buckish Athens folk singer will wander into the intown dessert bar and with one keratogenous glance have the artist mesmerized.

But not so with his latest body of work, *Visions of the Twenty-First Century*, opening at Lowe Gallery Friday January 11. For this



MURPHY'S LAW: Works by Todd Murphy at Lowe Gallery.

powerful series of paintings and sketches, Murphy posed antique dress forms on rollers found in junk stores around town. Using a variety of the lifeless girlish frames (along with one real teen-age model named Lauri) the painter produced hauntingly beautiful Degas-inspired images that make a 21st

Century impression.

The assemblage is true to Murphy form---mixed media on plexi, wood and canvas--but the refined female figures and use of rich, sumptuous colors is a departure from the painter's brooding male literary subjects of the past. He also experiments with

photography, apply various photos to the image to create a high sophisticated collage effect. The texture reflects Murphy's uncanny sense of style while the figures provide further evidence that the artist is a skilled draftsman.

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evidence that this artist is a skilled draftsman who clearly understands the human form. Such a grasp of the anatomy was Degas' forte and it makes sense that Murphy would draw inspiration from the French Impressionist's tender dancers.

"This is what started it all," says Murphy, pointing to a picture of the Degas bronze sculpture of a young ballerina Grande Danseuse Habille. Degas cast the pre-pubescent dancer in bronze then adorned her with real fabrics such as a tutu of pink gauze and a ribbon of pink satin in her sculpted hair. The bronze is perfection, the fabric is human and the combination of the two is ingenious.

Murphy succeeds in achieving the same effect in works such as *The Femmes of Red Clay Poetry*. The three forms are as rigid and erect as the dress forms he posed to paint them but the heavy skirts of a crude cloth wrapped around the figures add texture and life. The alluring 12-foot by 15-foot painting is just one of nearly two dozen studies presented in the Lowe exhibit. In an uncharacteristic move, Murphy also offers scaled-down sketches on wood that he calls "shrouds."

Known for having a penchant for exposing the artistic process as well as the art, Murphy also will display the antique dress forms alongside the artwork. He has embellished the dress frames (one has a tutu fabricated from dried roses) to let them emerge as sculpture. The result is a diverse sampling of Murphy's untrammelled talents.

"I've gone from three-dimensional sculpture to two-dimensional photography to drawing and painting," explains Murphy. "I'm dealing with changes. All the mediums keep changing and that's intriguing to me." His masterful handle of the mediums has made Murphy Atlanta's most celebrated young artist who can now command \$10,000 and

up for larger works. His relationship with Lowe is a new one which should benefit artist and gallery alike.

Lowe is presenting Murphy along with the works of 13 other Southern artists in this show. All share unusual mediums and messages in their artwork. "I wanted to create a visual catalogue of strong Southern visionaries," says owner Bill Lowe. One such artist is sculptor Rick Batton, who makes large baskets out of steel. "You should see his hands," says Lowe. "It looks like he has been crucified."

Also check out the "image fusion" paintings of Michael Beauchemin and the bizarre Carnal Gothic canvases by art professor Larry Edwards. These inventive works, in concert with Murphy's evocative images, will make for a splendid show and hell-raising opening reception Friday night. ■

Todd Murphy's Visions of the Twenty-First Century, along with works by other Southern artists, runs through Feb. 16 at Lowe Gallery, 75 Bennett St. Space A-1 at Tula.

ART NOTES