

SUMED 8 SQUARE MILES AND ANNIHILATED 135,000. TROOPS WORKED THROUGH THE FOLLOWING WEEK CREMATING 500 CORPSES AT A TIME ON HUGH STEEL GRATES. GOEBBELS REMARKED THAT THE BOMBING WAS THE WORK OF LUNATICS.

Todd Murphy

MURPHY:
“The keen awareness that human beings have arrived at an unknown crossroad from which there is no turning back informs much of the art being created now.”

b. 1962 in Chicago, Illinois. The artist received his BFA from the University of Georgia in 1986. His work has appeared in major exhibitions throughout the South and has now reached a national audience. He employs a diverse array of mediums seen in his monumental paintings, his sculptures of found objects, and his studies on paper which connect and interconnect in a symbolist resolution of his vision, a story to be told. Murphy is part of the second generation of artists of the Post-Modern period that began with the Neo-Expressionists in the eighties.

The first generation rejected the strictures inherent in American art movements from Abstract Expressionism to Minimalism and Conceptual Art. Because artists such as Mittendorf, Baselitz, Clemente, Paladino and others returned expressive qualities to art, critics identified them with the earlier movement of German Expressionism (also, because many of the artists were German). But the convenient classification of artists into styles had already begun to break down in the 1980s. Today artists feel free to make art out of anything, and to roam the landscape of art history for ideas. In this uncertain decade on the cusp of a new millennium, many artists are exploring the meaning of time, history and the human condition.

The keen awareness that human beings have arrived at an unknown crossroad from which there is no turning back informs much of the art being created now. There is an historical connection between what is happening in art currently and the conflict between technology and the life of the spirit that occurred one hundred years ago in Europe. Artists of “le fin du siècle” turned inward to explore and question their role in society and the direction of western civilization, giving rise to Symbolism. Many artists today are creating hermetic works, just as the Symbolists did, except that now they are drawing resources more varied, and influenced by later styles that emerged from symbolism.

Todd Murphy conceals stories within layers of visual clues, challenging viewers’ perceptions. In this exhibition, an obscure portrait of a woman is actually an altered photograph of a man posed in a 19th century gown that merges with royal blue paint applied to the underside of plexiglas. The hard, impersonal plastic surface is both physical and symbolic barrier: the viewer

can only intuate the meaning of this work, yet at the same time is beguiled by its mystery.

“Pithecus” is a mural-scale mixed media work. Two reclining men in profile are reverse painted in sweeping brushstrokes of blackish brown on plexiglas, and appear to be suspended in air. One figure is depicted from the waist up on a smaller piece of plexiglas behind the larger one. Rough white markings and fragments of newspaper on the prone figure of the top layer suggest disintegration. The viewer looks through the transparent layers to a canvas on which the passage of time seems to be marked. The title is a play on the word Pithecanthropus erectus, the early name for Java Man. The immense size of the work envelops the viewer, making her a part of prehistory, and aware of her own mortality. The thought arises that time may be running out for civilization.

“Bee Boy” is a small sculpture made of found materials, including what appears to be a conical bee hive which is actually made of beeswax above the head of a primitive figure. What are we to surmise about this enigmatic work—has the artist abruptly changed his style? No, he is merely exercising his Post-Modernist right to make art out of anything, and to play with an idea that has emerged unconsciously.

Mimmo Paladino

b. 1948 in Paduli, Italy. The artist studied at Liceo Artistico di Benavento from 1964-68. He visited New York and Brazil during the 1970s, and in 1985 had a retrospective exhibition in Munich.

He was a member of Transvanguardia, also known as the “Wild Ones”, or “Bad Painting”. Paladino describes his paintings “as a voyage to the interior of existent things” that are designed to free the creative unconscious. In his work, ancient signs co-exist with spontaneously created images. Paladino believes in the importance of structure and representation in art, and not in the



The Collector's Vision. Collection of Peter Spierer
Catalog entry Todd Murphy, Kennesaw College, Nov. 1995

Todd Murphy
Bee Boy, 1994
mixed media
33" x 7" x 7"