

ART

SLEIGHT OF THE ARTISTIC HAND

It is always a rare artist indeed, who is capable of not only being talented and creative, but is also able to achieve the ultimate feat of artistic legerdemain by enabling others to enter a different world through his creations. Artist Todd Murphy is one of those rare people. From the theatre of his mind, he is able to create powerful, compelling art that acts as windows into his special world. His art can best be compared to the writings of Tennessee

Williams - dark, troubling, complex, "southern" in outlook but still universal, and occasionally humorous.

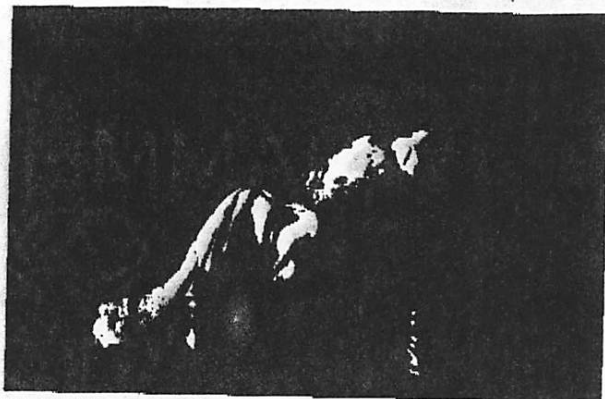
The real stars of his one person show are his large, mixed-media "scenes" that beguile the viewer through their dramatic sense of light and dark and the tantalizing ambiguity of their meaning and content. There's a very special sensibility at work here, sort of Rembrandt meets the Theatre of the Absurd. Literary allusions are unmistakable.

These works defy an easy classification. While wall-hung, they are three-dimensional and combine elements of installation art. Because of their size, it took a 30-foot Ryder truck to get them here from the artist's studio in Atlanta. After sketching his idea on paper, he then goes about setting up a life-sized version, which he then photographs.

The photograph is then enlarged back to life-size and is combined with paint, layers of Plexiglas, and various other materials. The final result is hard to adequately describe. The Plexiglas alone adds so much to the experience by producing depth, reflections and by increasing the voyeuristic elements of the works. The masterpiece of the show is of a white-robed figure vaguely resembling a pope lying in state - only it isn't! Even the genders of some of the figures in these

works are ambiguous.

Just as fascinating are the smaller, mixed-media paintings and small constructions. A rusted breadbox with an exquisite patina becomes a



Todd Murphy - Cocoon, 1994, mixed media, 12' x 16'.

shrine for an enigmatic, little figure. There's no substitute for talent, as this show proves. Go see for yourself! At the Mindy Oh Gallery, 300 W. Superior, through October 1st. For information, phone 312/587-9065.

Justin H. Sunward, abstract and figurative painter, has exhibited in galleries and museums from New York to California.

BOOKSHELF

WEST OF YESTERDAY EAST OF SUMMER

West of Yesterday, East of Summer, by Paul Monette, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994, 103 pp., \$17.95.

Paul Monette's *West of Yesterday, East of Summer*, a collection of new and selected poems, covers the 20 years between 1973 to 1993. During

that same period, he also wrote six novels, five movie novelizations, three other books of poetry, a memoir, and a National Book Award-winning autobiography. This year also saw the publication of a critically acclaimed collection of essays.

For all intents and purposes, Paul Monette may very well be the most important living gay writer. While there are others who are certainly better, it would be hard to think of another contemporary gay writer, with the exception of Larry Kramer, who has covered so many literary bases in his lifetime. He is especially important because he is a recognizable name among the mainstream community, as well as the gay community. While not an official member of the legendary Violet Quill writer's group, he is at least one in spirit.

This is where the phrases "living gay writer" and "in spirit" come in to play. Paul Monette, who is somewhere in his mid-to-late '40s, is living with full-blown AIDS. Like Audre Lorde (dead from cancer at age 58) before him, Monette may soon become the next great voice the gay community will lose before their time.

Not as formal as Thom Gunn, nor as cosmic as Allen Ginsberg, Paul Monette's poetry is, as he says in the collection's introduction, "definitely not for sissies." Especially not anything from his 1988 book of elegies, *Love Alone*, or anything written since. Seven of the 18 elegies are included here. They are, in a word, difficult, not the language, but the content.

Written after the death of his lover, Roger Horwitz, they are poems that quake with anger. "Pain is not a flower, pain is a root/and its work is underground where the moldering/proceeds the bones of all our joy," he writes in "Gardenias," where gardening and the ghost of Billie Holiday mingle. In "Manifesto," he lashes out at "Mrs. Hay/bagwan of the leper set," the government and organized religion,

TOP VIDEO RENTALS

MAINSTREAM

1. *The Crow*
2. *Threesome*
3. *For a Lost Soldier*
4. *Serial Mom*
5. *Like Water for Chocolate*

ADULT

1. Jeff Stryker *The Tease*
2. *Midnight Run (Jock #63)*
3. *Deep in the Woods*
4. *Sauna Paradise*
5. *La Maison Bleue*

Courtesy of Nationwide Video