



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'Mishima' takes 'provocative' look at artists' confrontations

An artist dances with a friend in a gay bar at night. The friend makes a joke about the artist's flabby shoulders. Instead of telling the friend how hurt he feels, the man leaves him and goes home. The friend phones him and the artist arranges a rendezvous in front of his house. There he tells his friend that he can't bear to look at himself in the mirror, so displeased is he with his own appearance.

Such confrontations between people are the stuff of which Paul Schrader's "Mishima" is made.

"Mishima" treats the life of the provocative Japanese writer and celebrity Yukio Mishima. The film itself is extremely provocative. Any large spectacle that its advertising might lead one to expect is absent. Indeed, the film is very intimate. People talk, feel helpless, make decisions and carry out actions.

Three main narrative levels extend through the film simultaneously: vignettes from the artist's life, filmed in black and white; scenes from three of his novels, filmed in loud colors on stylized sets; and the events of the last day of Mishima's life, filmed in muted colors, in which he and officers from his private army entered the Japanese Army Headquarters, tied up the commander, and addressed the garrison from the roof. These soldiers refused to listen, and Mishima committed ritual suicide.

The characters in the fiction, as well as Mishima himself, are loners. This is consistent with other Schrader films, including "Taxi Driver," which he scripted, "American Gigolo" and "Cat People." In "Mishima," the main characters all perform destructive acts, but these acts are presented as being the result of a constructive private search, not of destructive social pressures.

Thus in the first fictional episode, the young temple acolyte Mizoguchi, stuck in a world that has neither horizon nor sky, is entranced and paralyzed by the beauty of the

golden pavilion where he works. Deciding to burn it down, he loses his stutter and breaks through his claustrophobic universe.

In the second episode, the narcissistic Osamu is bored with his friends' discussions about the wounds of art. Dissatisfied also with sex, he resolves both problems by first building up the muscles of his body, and then by letting his new girlfriend tarnish his beauty by lacerating it.

In the third episode, the focus of the film shifts from the individual's relation to beauty and art to the individual and political action. Isao, a young cadet, leads a group devoted to overthrowing Japan's capitalist leadership and restoring the country to the Emperor, thus restoring the sun to its proper place. Isao assassinates the most powerful capitalist. He then runs to the ocean's edge and commits hara kiri as the sun rises.

The rest of the film deals with Mishima's own attempted military takeover and suicide. In the standard "life of an artist" film, the artist's works are presented as being the fruits of his life. In "Mishima," however, the climax of the artist's life becomes a fourth story.

Before seeing the film, I was afraid that the music (by Phillip Glass) and the sets would draw too much attention. Not at all. The music is restrained, and "Mishima's" only theatricality is not really in the sets, but in the importance given to decision and action.

Since "Mishima" concerns itself with nothing less than what the proper relation should be between art and action, words and the body, the film takes high aesthetic risks. The risks pay off because the abstract concerns never detract from the immediacy of the human relationships. "Mishima" is worth seeing several times.

"Mishima" is currently showing at the Bijou through Thursday.

By Michael James

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"I don't see him on a social basis now," Block said.

"I thought he was a super athlete. He was always running, and I understand he was training for the Olympics," Block said. "Now he's focused on school, like he was before, with his running."

Donald Prickell, director of rehabilitation for the Center for Neuro-Educational Therapy in Eugene, told the jury that examinations and reports indicate Rosier suffers cognitive and psycho-social deficits. Prickell said Rosier will

need about 10 years of cognitive rehabilitation. Costs for rehabilitation would be about \$2,000 a month for the first two years, he said.

It is obvious Rosier is compensating for his deficits, Prickell said.

"It was very clear to me that this is not an individual who can process a large amount of information; he's easily distracted," he said. "An inability to plan, organize and follow through can become a problem."

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