

# Interactive toys; dress-up; skewed dreams

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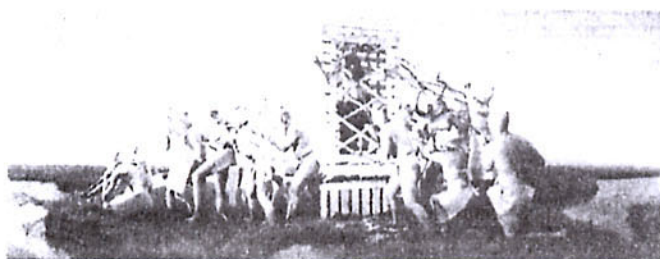
PROVINCETOWN – The East End of Commercial Street, intoxicating with the scent of roses, honeysuckle, and the sea on a warm day, must have as

many galleries as lower Newbury Street. Here, the mood is homier and more inviting, and the turnover of exhibitions – most galleries change shows every two weeks or so, cramming as much art as they can into one summer – is dizzying.

The Silas-Kenyon Gallery at the Schoolhouse Center, former site of the legendary Long Point Gallery, is one of the largest venues in Provincetown, and director Michael Carroll encourages local installation artists to show there. When I visited, artists were still installing their work, so I missed out on what Melanie Braverman and Lynn Stanley had to offer. Candice Crawford and Amy Kandall both had strong work.

Crawford's show, "Candy's Land of Cranky Toys," is a delight.

In his "Alter Ego" series, Michael Stuetz creates personas that he then photographs.



Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick are showing at the DNA.

Crawford is half artist, half engineer, building interactive sculptures with cranks, shafts, and pistons she urges her viewers to play with. She built the giant central sculpture, "Candy's Land," from big, brawny branches she's bolted together. Walk around it and you'll find handles to grab onto and crank, which make wooden dragonflies bob and a turtle thrust his head from under his shell. The gears are intentionally unfinished and awkward; Crawford wants her audience to tussle with her work in order to make it their own. The moment the viewer forgets she's playing with a work of art is the moment Crawford achieves her end.

Kandall, a ceramicist, has a disturbing array of figures on view. The largest are straight out of the earliest, grisliest versions of fairy tales like "Sleeping Beauty" and "Red Riding Hood." The latter lies on a bed in her cape; turn her head, though, and she becomes the wolf. Kandall subscribes to psychologist Bruno Bettelheim's notion that all characters in a story add up to one psyche; Red Riding Hood and the

CANDICE CRAWFORD,  
AMY KANDALL  
At: the Schoolhouse Center's Silas-Kenyon  
Gallery, 404 Commercial St.,  
Provincetown, through July 27

MICHAEL STUETZ,  
BARRY GEORGE  
At: the William-Scott Gallery, 439  
Commercial St., through July 20

MARY BEHRENS, PETER  
HUTCHISON, KAHN/SELESNICK,  
JOEL MEYEROWITZ  
At: DNA Gallery, 288 Bradford St.,  
through Aug. 1

wolf are flip sides of one woman, representing innocence and power.

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Across the street at the William-Scott Gallery, photographer Michael Stuetz takes a similar tack, letting two characters play out the conflict in one psyche. In his color prints from the "Alter Ego" series, he follows in Cindy Sherman's footsteps and creates different personas that he then photographs. Where Sherman plays dress-up alone, Stuetz invites his friend Matt Lyons into the picture, and the two act as foils for each other. Stuetz's character is more active, often more outrageous than Lyons's passive observer. In one shot, Stuetz hams it up in heels and a platinum blond wig as a halftime show plays on TV while Lyons slouches on a bed, reading.

Stuetz's colors are saturated, heightening the tension between the two characters. Are they brothers, roommates, lovers, or friends? The narratives are potent with implication. Despite Stuetz's daring, he seems the more fragile of the two, and Lyons alternates between protector and judge.

Also at William-Scott, Barry George's forged and welded steel sculptures take contemporary, whimsical approaches to sometimes mythic subjects. "Icarus, Toddler Stage" shows a winged baby, half-ceramic, half-metal, strapped in a harness strung like a swing to a red rod, arcing up toward a yellow sun.

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At the DNA Gallery, Mary Behrens continues to scrutinize the way fantasy is forced on us through

travel magazines and postcards. Behrens scans images from those sources, digitally alters scale and color, then rephotographs the result. It's a dream of a dream of what we're supposed to be dreaming.

The resulting series of Polaroids show sunsets, sunrises, lakes, and mountains as ungraspable, fuzzy little impressions of paradise. Behrens's larger photo collages give us intense colors and misty views, fractured by the seams of the collage. They at once seduce and push us away.

Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick have expanded upon their apocalyptic narrative of photographs, artifacts, and text, "Transmissions From the Schottensmofkuntfig," which showed in Boston's Pepper Gallery earlier this year. The installation describes the life of mute bog dwellers in Northern Europe after Armageddon. Kahn and Selesnick have created blue cyanotypes and black-and-white digital prints – sharp, hallucinatory images of the bog dwellers in a marshy, deserted landscape, garbed in beaks and miters, enacting rituals we can only guess at. They give us all the tools we need to concoct our own wild tales.

Peter Hutchison uses snapshots, video stills, and photos shot from television in his photo collages, and, like Behrens, achieves a haunting but unreal idyll. "Mutated Forest" shows mountains dropping down to giant blue flowers, which perch on what look like huge stalks or blighted trees in the standing water of a swamp. He's a genetic manipulator, playing with scale and collage to create something luscious yet frightening.

Joel Meyerowitz is best known for his color photographs capturing the sumptuous light of the Cape. Here, he's collected something he's less known for: portraits, shot between 1977 and 1983. Most are of women and girls, languorous and teasing and warmed by that caressing sunlight. He titles the collection "Odalisque," because many of his subjects chose to lie down during the somewhat lengthy exposure of the photo, but all of the images have that mysterious allure that male artists so love to portray in their female subjects.