

## Galleries

## Meditating on Eastern disciplines in Provincetown

By Cate McQuaid

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PROVINCETOWN — In a beach community that also happens to be an art colony, dreary days — and there have been plenty in the last few weeks — flood the art galleries with dejected sun worshippers. Luckily, there's no lack of good art to see.

Tabitha Vevers and Daniel Ranalli, married artists but not artistic collaborators, offer up deliciously complementary shows at DNA Gallery. Vevers has always focused on the figure, Ranalli on the landscape. Vevers is a painter, Ranalli a photographer and environmental artist. In these two shows, the artists approach Eastern meditative disciplines from divergent angles.

For years, Ranalli has made earthworks, leaving his own mark on the land. He continues that theme with the "Zen Dune Garden" series. He draws designs in the sand with a rake, then photographs them. The subtle and fleeting gestures ripple out from blades of beach grass in billowing loops. Creating a Zen garden is a meditative act and results in a serene place. Ranalli makes his in the dunes around Provincetown; the photographs not only record the earthworks but place them in the greater context of a landscape that changes almost as quickly as the wind erases the garden. "Zen Dune Garden" is the gentlest work by this artist that I've seen, showing man's footprint on the earth as a collaboration with nature, not nature's enemy.



Daniel Ranalli's "Zen Beach #1" is on display at the DNA Gallery, as are works by his wife, painter Tabitha Vevers.

Vevers revels in exquisite materials, so it's no surprise that she's happened on Persian miniature painting, with its bright tones and gold leaf, as a source. In her "Yoga Series," she paints nude women in yoga postures on small pieces of ivory, a synthetic ivory, and borders them in gold leaf. In some works, she takes these rigorous celebrations of flesh and spirit toward the surreal by imagining where a supple spine and a high dose of kundalini energy might lead you. "Pushmepulluvasana" shows a tangle of eight legs and two torsos striving toward communion of souls. These works have a wonderful, erotic power.

Vevers has also put together a book of hours, drawn in ink on goat vellum, in which she writes and illustrates nuggets of yogic wisdom. She stains the vellum to suggest an ancient text. These are didactic and a bit pat; the "Yoga Series" has more mystery.

Also at DNA, fabulists and photographers Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick offer new chapters in "City of Salt," a body of work they've been putting together for a couple of years. Kahn and Selesnick write elaborate stories — in this case, laden with allegories about capitalism and war. Then they stage and photograph panoramic scenes from the stories.

Their work gets ever thicker with metaphor and dream imagery. It's becoming a maze in which a seemingly new passage turns out to be somewhere we've been before. Still, it's hard to resist a good story and the digitally altered photos, which stand on their own as startling phantasms.

**Clarity and power**

Paul Resika, now in his mid-70s, studied with legendary Provincetown art teacher Hans Hoffman back in the 1940s and '50s, and has since grown into something of a legend as an artist and teacher himself. His show at Berta Walker Gallery leaves no doubt as to the power of his painting. The saturated colors, the simple, graceful forms — in a sense, this is nothing new; artists have been painting at this edge of abstraction for a century. Yet Resika's work has such clarity and power it seems new.

Look at "July, 2001," a magnificent blood-red scene in which sky melts seamlessly into water under a hot, white sun. Boats cluster in the middle of this horizonless seascape, their black and white forms built from elementary planes and arcs. A sliver of a black mast slices

the sky in half. The boats' reflections, in slats of gray and black, float downward. Boats and reflections make an island of form in a sea of color. It's the work of a playful master, at ease with his materials.

Varujan Boghosian has collages and constructions at Berta Walker, riffing on art and literary history. In "After Hans Arp," a construction, he uses that artist's geometric forms and mixes in his own sense of humor. On the backside of an old painting, he hangs a yellow billiard ball, like the sun, over a gray length of plaster, which could be the swelling sea, and two anchors at the bottom. It's a sly, economical piece, recycling art, junk, and art history.

Also at Berta Walker, Gilbert Franklin makes classical bronze sculptures of women, with clean lines and every now and then a jazzy edge, like "Dancer," whose skirt flies around her jutting hip.

**Tabitha Vevers, Daniel Ranalli; Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick**

At: DNA Gallery, 288 Bradford St., Provincetown, through Aug. 27.  
508-487-7700. www.dnagallery.com

**Paul Resika, Varujan Boghosian, Gilbert Franklin**

At: Berta Walker Gallery, 208 Bradford St., Provincetown, through Aug. 24.  
508-487-6411. www.bertawalker.com