

Surprising finds in Provincetown

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

PROVINCETOWN — The Julie Heller Gallery, one of the mainstays of the Provincetown

GALLERIES gallery scene, is also one of the few that is not

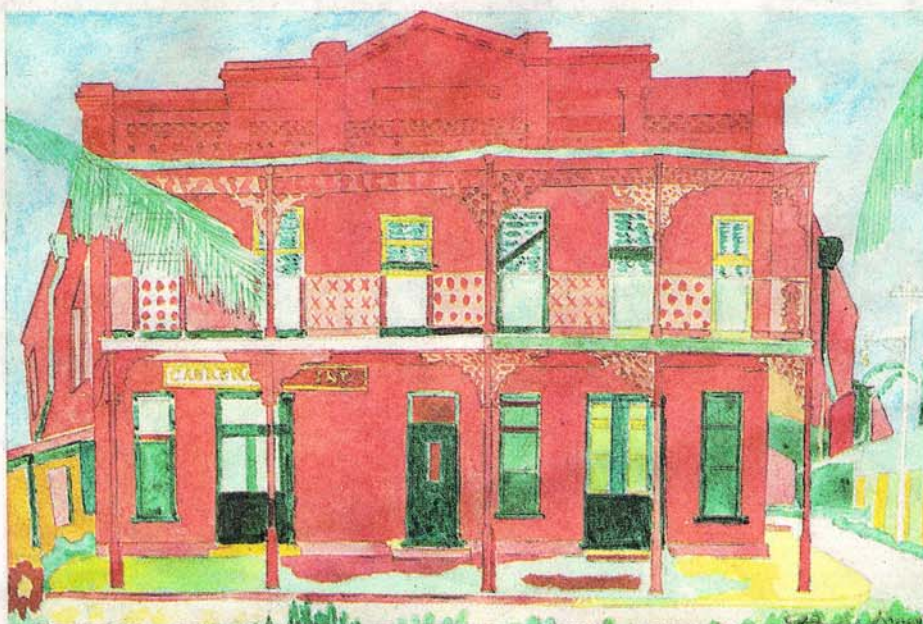
located on bustling Commercial Street. It's a weather-beaten beach shack sitting in the sand at the end of Gosnold Street. The building was the Box Office Museum for the legendary Provincetown Playhouse, where Eugene O'Neill staged his early plays nearly a century ago.

Works hang salon-style on the wall of the tiny, jam-packed space. There's a rare Hans Hofmann color print, "Composition in Blue," for instance, and a lugubrious and imposing biblical painting by early modernist Marguerite Zorach, "The Expulsion." Other pieces lean against the baseboards in stacks. Heller specializes in the 20th-century modernists who passed through Provincetown, but here and at the gallery's satellite, Julie Heller East, on Commercial Street opposite the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, you can also find work by contemporary artists.

Both places feel like treasure troves. You have to be careful not to stub your toe on the art, and you may need to prowl through piles of it to find a gem you didn't even know you were looking for.

On Gosnold Street, Heller is now spotlighting Douglas Brown, a self-trained artist who worked in the 1920s and 1930s, traveling around painting watercolors of vernacular architecture and the occasional portrait. It's a refreshing and strange body of work, bearing the marks of someone who never was properly taught principles of perspective and volume, yet in his wavering lines and smart use of color, captured something original and true.

"Cabrer . . . Inc.," for instance, shows a curiously alive building bright as a strawberry, with an airy porch along the second floor and palm tree branches floating in from the edges. The details



Douglas Brown's painting "Cabrer . . . Inc." at Julie Heller Gallery in Provincetown.

are precise, if a bit loopy — the roof is slightly lopsided, and the walls fan out on either side beyond the building, as if it were some kind of foldable stage set.

At Julie Heller East, there's a wall titled "Master Works," which features items such as a 1935 Milton Avery print depicting a droll Louis Wiesenberg, an artist colleague of Avery's, with slightly pursed lips, as if he is assessing a painting, and a lush, undated monoprint by Oliver Chaffee, "Two Fish," with two pale smears of fish crossing paths in a black sea deliciously blotted and dabbed into watery blossoms.

On another wall hangs Karl Knaths's "Vista Del Mar," a shimmering abstraction in which he drapes color in stuttering and slashing brushstrokes on a slender scaffolding of black lines, either delicately curved, or bold and vertical. His evocation of space, contracting and expanding, is terrific.

Drop in at either gallery — you don't know what you might find.

Group delights in contrast
Several artists who show in



Corey Corcoran's "Bird Brained" at Four Eleven Studio.

Boston at LaMontagne Gallery, Samson, and Steven Zevitas Gallery have gone all in for a group show at Four Eleven Studio, and it's a delight to see them mix it up. Steve Locke's painterly nudes, with their rough-brushed daubs, make an almost shocking juxtaposition to Suzannah Sinclair's minutely detailed nude "Faded Flowers," which is in turn followed up by Alexia Stamatou's frolicking, multicolored

phallus in "La Petite Mort (rainbow spectrum)."

Painter Summer Wheat's expressionistic zombie portrait "Rosewart Sevetweth" hangs near Corey Corcoran's equally startling "Bird Brained," which peers inside the skull of a prone figure, filled with flamingos, hawks, and the like, with white, electric bolts containing the menagerie.

Heaven knows what algorithm Jeff Perrott has set for himself with his pair of abstract paintings, but "RW90 (Vestige)" and "RW92 (Gazer)" are loose, with bright, muscular rainbow strokes on natural linen. They make a great counterpoint to "O(77)," the obsessively tight drawing in ink and colored pencil by Julie Miller, in which hot tones shimmy away from two lovely, flat puddles of yellow in the middle of the piece — eggs, sunny-side up, on hallucinogens.

Catching up the viewer

Over in Wellfleet, Julia Salinger's mixed-media drawings at Farm Project Space + Gallery are clearly automatic drawings: The artist simply follows her lines, which sometimes spring from or

DOUGLAS BROWN
At: Julie Heller Gallery,
2 Gosnold St.,
Provincetown, through
Sept. 6. 508-487-2169

MASTER WORKS
At: Julie Heller East
465 Commercial St.,
Provincetown, through
Sept. 13. 508-487-2166,
juliehellergallery.com

BOSTON CONTEMPORARY
At: Four Eleven Studio,
411 Commercial St.,
Provincetown, through
Sept. 4. 617-915-7432,
www.fourelevenstudio.com

JULIA SALINGER:
Sometimes I Am So Full
At: Farm Project Space +
Gallery, 15 Commercial St.,
Wellfleet, through Sept. 3.
617-650-9800,
www.farmproject
space.com

morph into text, and often tangle into abstractions that are at once fey and dire. These work best when Salinger holds back just a bit. "Early Self Portrait," for instance, has a head shape on a long, narrow neck, with shoulders that look more like the base of a tree. Inside the head, there are more circular forms — one might be a propeller, another an eye — and a vexing strand wavers to one side, like a thistle tugged by the wind.

All these works have snarls that catch you up. Salinger has made several drawings on pages from a book of poetry from her grandfather's collection. In that group, "Does Blood Have Memory?" features vaguely figurative forms in white outlined in black, surrounded by red. The forms are spiked and harsh, angry or grieving. Like the painter Joan Snyder, Salinger pours her heart into her work, and as with Snyder, there's a sense of both purging and healing in the process.

Cate McQuaid can be reached at catemcquaid@gmail.com.