

## Bright and Dark

By Cate McQuaid, Globe Correspondent | July 25, 2003

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"Playland," the summer group show at Miller Block Gallery, features artists who dabble in surreal narratives. I love this kind of work, because it laces images of play and innocence with dark undercurrents. It's at once bright and dissonant. Seth Michael Forman paints Bruegel-like scenes that brim with mystery, like one of a man holding a hose to a cat's mouth. Amy Cutler actually borrows images from her dreams; in "Uluh Beigh," painted all in reds, a bed cracks in half as a girl kneels nearby, inserting her arms into the cuffs of a white dress. We don't know what's going on, but chaos and tenderness haunt the work.

There are drawings and paintings by art-world up-and-comers, like Kojo Griffia, Laylah Ali, Lori Nix, and Marcel Dzama. Local artist Kay Ruane makes rich, unsettling narratives in her graphite drawings. Nicholas Sistler is a relative unknown from Chicago. He paints impressive tiny interiors with a mouse's eye view, dizzying composition, and warm tones. His work doesn't seem to belong in the mix- it's more about space than narrative. But the show on the whole does its work, mixing sweet dreams with nightmares. ■