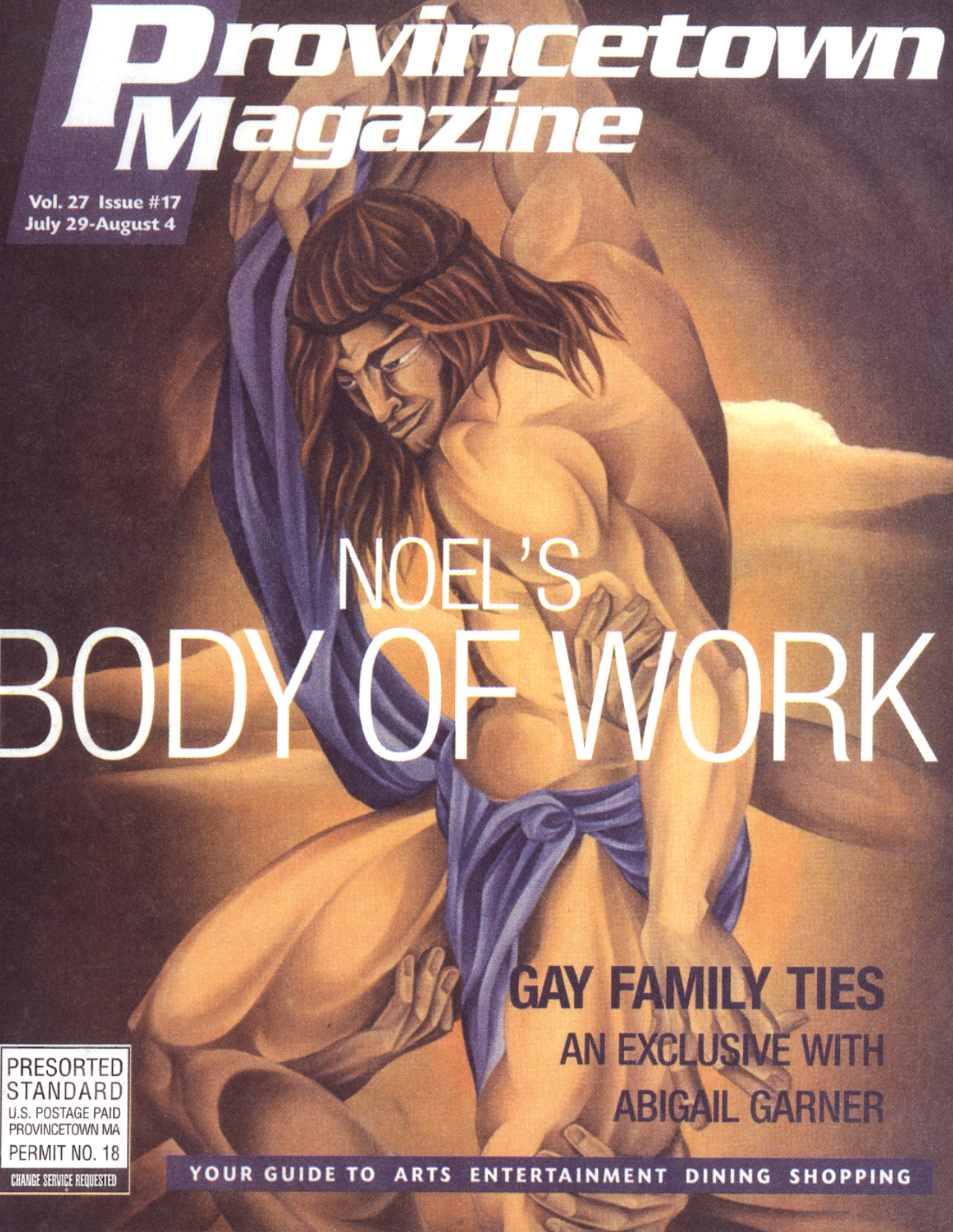


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NOEL'S BODY OF WORK

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NOEL'S BODY OF WORK

BY BRENNER THOMAS

Former Boston resident and figurative painter, named simply Noel, is coming off his biggest show ever. Last month at the Liquid Blue Gallery in Miami, Florida he exhibited some 35 oils, original drawings, mosaics and giclees (high quality digital reproductions) in a show he titled "Overture."

It's an appropriate moniker for the new work, a selection of which will be shown at Provincetown's Passions Gallery starting July 30. The collection—a continuation in his interest in stylized, dramatically composed nudes—represents a new direction for the artist, a beginning, a taste of what's to come. "Overture" unveils, in the artist's words, a less Cubist interest in his subject matter. His figures, though still abstracted, are in this show softer, less geometrical. He's interested now in a more realistic approach. "As I grow as a person," Noel explained in a telephone interview from Miami, "the body of work changes with me."

Bodies are important to Noel's work. They populate his canvases. Figures, solitary or grouped, luxuriate across the picture plane, thoroughly muscled, and all but nude. Clothing doesn't exist in this world. Fabric is merely incident or accent, curving around some thick physique, its contours as deep as those of the muscles it drapes. If his figures weren't so flawlessly executed, you might want to call his bodies fetishized; every part is wrought, embellished, perfectly illuminated in a sensual topography of light and shade. "I want to use the body as a composition," explains Noel, "not just as a body, not just to present a body. If I see a muscle group that somehow I can embellish a little further to make it balance with the subject matter or to make that pose more dramatic or more intense I will."

That Noel spent 15 years of his life as a professional dancer isn't difficult to see. Before starting his full time art career in 1986, the Cuban-born artist danced and toured around the world with Alonso's. He moved to the U.S. in 1981 to dance with Ballet

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NOEL IN HIS STUDIO WITH "MEDEA" & "VICTORIA 1"

Concerto and went on to perform with Dance Miami, Boston Ballet and the New England Dinosaur Dance Company. An injury forced him to leave ballet in 1987, and at the urging of his friends, he soon after began to paint.

He had his first show in Provincetown in 1986. Most of his 15 paintings sold and suddenly a career in the visual arts seemed possible. He enjoyed continued success in his studio/gallery in Boston's South End and with representation at Passions Gallery where he's shown for 12 years. He moved into Miami in 1989 where his sexy, stylish images struck a chord. It was there that Noel, at the urgings of his publicist dropped his surname. "It was getting confusing," he says citing the practical nature of the omission. "I was signing the pieces as 'Noel' but was known as 'Noel Suarez.' People weren't sure who was who." So like the bodies he renders in oil, Noel streamlined.

Noel no longer dances but his paintings and drawings are alive with movement. The elegant curves and precise gestures of his figures are those of a dancer, his pictures the frozen snapshots of some larger ballet. As in "Leda and the Swan," that classic pagan tale of rape and retribution, where the protagonists in Noel's hands are entwined in a kind of duet, their bodies fusing with each other but also with the ground and sky. The painting is a pirouette, the figures, the landscape that surrounds them just about to begin to spin. "Movement," he explains, "is always present in my work. I have to feel the movement in order for me to feel the painting."