



Anthony Cudahy, *Two Inside (common fence)*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 30".  
PROVINCETOWN

## “Intimate Companions”

PROVINCETOWN ARTS SOCIETY: MARY HEATON VORSE HOUSE  
466 Commercial Street  
July 3–September 8, 2020

Misfits have a habit of finding their way to Provincetown, Massachusetts. The former Cape Cod whaling outpost became a thriving colony *dégagé* for the avant-garde and sexually *outré* during the early twentieth century—a legacy that continues to draw the queer creative set to the seaside town. “Intimate Companions,” a group show organized by curator Joe Sheftel, takes its cues (and title) from David Leddick’s 2000 “triography” of painter Paul Cadmus, photographer George Platt Lynes, and New York City Ballet cofounder Lincoln Kirstein, all of whom were Provincetown habitués. The show, which

features works by Cadmus and Lynes alongside pieces by more contemporary artists, is a compact exploration of queer intimacy that charts the history of its representation.

Cadmus's etching *Two Boys on a Beach No.1*, 1938, depicts a pair of strapping youths in a concupiscent seaside folly. In it, a nonchalant bather lies naked in the sand, reading a paper and eating fruit, while his companion, stretching and yawning after waking from a nap, is clad in a pair of unbuttoned jeans and a suggestively ripped T-shirt, exposing the taut musculature of his oh-so-Grecian torso. While Cadmus rarely discussed the homoerotic undertones of his images publicly, the sexual charge of *Two Boys* is undeniable, portraying a love that (once) dare not speak its name with unabashed sensuality. Anthony Cudahy's painting *Two Inside (common fence)*, 2020, seems tamer, as it depicts a male couple in casual repose on a couch. Yet this domestic tableau is unsettled by the image above them: a nocturnal rendering of two pale figures—ghosts?—seemingly lounging in the grass.

Other works in the show present queer bodies with a refreshing frankness and humor. Standouts include Doron Langberg's *After Work*, 2020, a painting of a man's flaccid cock and balls à la Gustave Courbet's 1866 canvas *L'origine du monde*, and Carlos Rodriguez's *Pink Light*, 2017, an oil of a reclining "bear" in full tumescence. In these images, the Apollonian physique of gay male fantasy gives way to an appreciation of the body as it is: imperfect, and all the lovelier for it.

—Joseph Akel