Photo finish

Check out the bizarre and the beautiful at fall’s top photography shows.

By Howard Halle

RAY K. METZKER
A midcentury photographer, Metzker pushed darkroom techniques to create extreme contrasts of dark and light, resulting in images of film, abstract beauty. Compositionally rigorous, his photos were formal but also exquisitely poetic. Laurence Miller Gallery, 20 W 57th St (212-397-3930, laurencemillergallery.com). Through Dec 23.

VALÉRIE BELIN
The French photographer presents large-scale color photos of female mannequins superimposed over vector graphics sourced from internet stock-image sites. Massive in their strangeness, they explore such issues as beauty and artifice with kaleidoscopic verve. Edwynn Houk Gallery, 745 Fifth Ave (212-750-7070, houkgallery.com). Through Dec 19.

RINSEKE DIJKSTRA
For this video installation, Dijkstra visited a dance school in St. Petersburg, Russia, where she documented students aged 8 to 12. Over time, the girls gain proficiency, but the better they get at bending and twisting, the less human they seem. Marian Goodman Gallery, 24 W 57th St (212-977-7160, mariangoodman.com). Through Dec 19.

MORTON BARLETT
A Harvard dropout whose life remains something of a mystery, Barlett is best known for creating a fantasy family of life-like doll children, aged 6 to 16, that he dressed up and posed before the camera. However, he also shot other photographic subjects, including conventional images of kids, which he hoped to market. Here, his signature work is presented alongside archival material to chart his development from hobbyist to outsider artist. Julie Saul Gallery, 545 W 25th St (535 W 22nd St, saulgallery.com). Through Dec 23.