

They play with light and glass

A dizzying approach in photos, murals

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Mary Kocol, the photographic bard of Somerville, takes to the skies in her intoxicating new body of work at Gallery **GALLERIES** NAGA. Kocol, best known for depicting Christmas lights in her hometown as well as urban gardens and the architecture of the city, has come untethered; gazing straight up, it's hard to tell whether you're in Somerville, Jamaica Plain, or Los Angeles, and she visits all three in this show. Inspired by "Almond Blossom," van Gogh's painting of tree branches etched against a brilliant blue sky, Kocol aims her camera toward the heavens and shoots tree blossoms from below, at twilight.

The results, in two formats, are dizzying. The square photos, shot with the most basic plastic camera, are blurry at the edges and crisper in the center. "Cherry Branches Against Blue Sky, Arnold Arboretum, Boston" with its sharp, pink blossoms in the foreground, swells moodily out of the sky and then pops into the viewer's vision, like a drunk teetering into your path.

I prefer the rectangular format images, made with a higher-end Fuji 120mm camera. Every square millimeter is crisp. Kocol took advantage of her flash and ambient lighting from traffic signals and streetlights to amp up the eerie glow. "Blooming Ornamental Pear Tree, Walnut Street, Somerville" appears spookily lit from below, the foreground blossoms a frosty white compared with the warm pink ones in the distance.



Above: Mary Kocol's "Lemon Tree Above the Pool, Los Angeles," part of her show of new work at Gallery NAGA.

The sky in "Lemon Tree Above the Pool, Los Angeles" is such an electric blue, with lemons and palm fronds vibrating against it, I almost had to look away. With no horizon, the viewer has little sense of orientation. All we see are blossoms spinning against the heavens.

Also at Gallery NAGA, Terry Rose's paintings are about chance and chemistry. Rose pours pigment and varnish onto flat aluminum, and plays with the stuff as it dries — maybe he tilts the aluminum panel, maybe he blows air across the paint. Skins form and wrinkle. Bubbles pit the surface. Oils disperse. Powder-like pigments drift and sparkle.

Paintings in which he uses the most types of pigment, such as the two-panel

"Opallios," are fluid and dense. The glossy purple and brown background looks threatening yet alluring, a living shadow. An organic form swims across it, seeping with layers of tone and texture, splatters and rivulets; the whole of it could be a luminous undersea organism.

The much simpler "Yuangshuo" clearly has Asian influences. Set on a vertical panel, like an old scroll, the piece features the crest and plunge of a creamy waterfall, which sinks into a vapor near the bottom. Along one side Rose has deposited black and silver blots, threaded together, like parachutes dropping over the falls — or calligraphy along the side of a Japanese ink drawing. The sheer variety of textures Rose pulls from letting paints react against one another is astonishing. He sets the stage, but in a sense, the painting paints itself.

MARY KOCOL: Twilight Garden
TERRY ROSE: Inquire Within

At: Gallery NAGA, 67 Newbury St., through Oct. 2. 617-267-9060, www.gallerynaga.com

Cate McQuaid can be reached at cmq@speakeasy.net.