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## A forest of shadows at the Danforth

Katherine Gulla's images dance between the light and the dark in intriguing exhibit in Framingham.

Can a shadow cast a shadow?

Look at Katherine Gulla's intriguing photo images of shadows of trees throwing shadows on the walls of the Danforth Museum of Art, and decide for yourself.

Gulla freezes in transparent plexiglass the "shadowy essence of trees" she photographed through changing seasons at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston.

In "Cast Shadows," the West Roxbury artist is showing 13 Lambda prints that draw viewers into the dance of light and shadow while still indoors.



PHOTO/ CONTRIBUTED/KATHERINE GULLA. IMAGES COURTESY OF GALLERY KAYAFAS

"Untitled" from Katherine Gulla's "Cast Shadows" at the Danforth Museum of Art in Framingham.

Displayed at regular intervals across all four walls of the Swartz Gallery, Gulla's printed shadows spread gray-black branches across puddles of light.

Like X-rays of tumorous lungs, each image evokes memories of warm walks beneath a canopy of pine boughs or skeletal elm branches reaching across winter skies.

Executive Director Katherine French compared Gulla's images to music for their ability to capture an ephemeral moment in multidimensional art.

"They open us to experiences we've all had," she said. "Each one gives a different experience of walking in the woods. Katherine Gulla's work distills it to the essentials."

Gulla's current art seems to share elements of her two prior creative interests, painting and making videos. Like a film, her photo-transparencies freeze moments in time. Like a painter, she controls its final shape by giving texture to the play of light.

French explained Gulla uses a 35-millimeter camera to take pictures of trees and then uses Photoshop on her computer to remove "unnecessary information." After they are printed on clear film, the cleaner images are mounted on 39-by-26-inch plexiglass sheets that are covered with a thin ultraviolet filter to protect the surface.

To re-create the effect of sunlight passing through trees, Gulla's images are hung in the gallery at an acute angle so overhead lights cast shadows through them onto the walls.

French said Gulla's exhibit is being shown as part of the Danforth's New England Currents series, which showcases recent work by the best emerging artists in the region.

While Gulla photographed trees in the Arboretum over the course of a year, French said the exhibit was organized based on "aesthetics rather than chronology." She said, "We tried to arrange them based on complimentary forms and which looked right next to another one."

French doesn't worry visitors more comfortable with realistic art will regard Gulla's images as indistinguishable or too abstract to appreciate. "I don't think this will be a case of 'Seen one. Seen them all,'" she said. "Each one provides a different experience of people walking in the woods."

Gallery owner Arlette Kayafas, who exhibits Gulla's work, described the Danforth pieces as "more than photos."

"They're sculptural pieces and extremely fresh. Her work is very much about the mystery of light and how it diffuses. In a room, you really feel as if the shadows will move around and disappear," she said.

The founder and owner of Gallery Kayafas at 450 Harrison Ave., Boston, she said Gulla's "underlying concept is to lift light off the surface and make it into an object."

She pointed out that contrary to many viewers' initial expectations, fuller images were taken during the summer when leafy trees blocked the sun. Sharper images revealing distinct patterns of branches were taken during the fall or winter when there was little vegetation to block the sun.

Kayafas said, "Summer feels like a Monet painting with light passing through the lily pads. Throughout the fall and winter, they feel dark like a line drawing where the edges are well-defined."

Kayafas, who has collected art with her husband for 40 years, urged viewers to approach Gulla's work "with an open mind."

"I think if people come to the Danforth without preconceived ideas about what they're going to see, they'll get their own visual vocabulary and won't need it explained," she said. "Be open-minded. Feel comfortable and enjoy it without any definitions."

#### **THE ESSENTIALS:**

Katherine Gulla's work will be displayed at the Danforth Museum of Art, 123 Union Ave., Framingham, through May 18.

Gulla will give a talk at the Danforth about her work at 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 18.

The museum is open noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. It is closed Monday and Tuesday.

Admission is \$8 for adults, \$7 for seniors and students and free for children under 12 and Danforth members. The museum is wheelchair accessible.

For more information call the museum at 508-620-0050 or visit the Web site, [www.danforthmuseum.org](http://www.danforthmuseum.org).

For information about Gallery Kayafas, visit [www.Gallerykayafas.com](http://www.Gallerykayafas.com).