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VISUAL ARTS & ARCHITECTURE

Nature's own art is focus of exhibit

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Kathryn Kolb and Marilyn Suriani approach landscape with a touch of reverence in "Natural Selections," on view at the Rialto Center for the Arts.



Courtesy of Marilyn Suriani

Marilyn Suriani's photograph 'Burnt Orange' is a fiery sunset reflected in water that is both abstract and like a painting.



Courtesy Thomas Deans Fine Art

Kathryn Kolb's 'Rodinian Rocks' captures a stunning western vista of mountainous rock that almost takes human form.

REVIEW

"Natural Selections: Kathryn Kolb and Marilyn Suriani" Through Nov. 16. 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Mondays–Fridays. Prices: \$1,100 –\$4,000. Rialto Center for the Arts, 80 Forsyth St. N.W., Atlanta. 404-413-9849; www.rialtocenter.org **Bottom line:** An elegant pairing of contemplative photographs.

Using traditional photographic methods, Kolb has built a well-established career in environmental fine art photography. In this exhibition, she presents selected desert views from Arizona, Nevada and Southern California, with a mix of broad, light-infused vistas along with compelling close-ups of stalks, branches and buds.

In "Rodinian Rocks" Kolb captures powerful, rounded rock and streaks of teal cloud forming a surreal composition. "Blue Sky Ocotillo, Sonoran Desert" takes advantage of a brilliant blue backdrop to contrast emerald stems that wriggle upward across the picture plane. "Sunset Cholla, near US Route 93" is a particularly elegant photograph, with its startling, backlit spray of starry spikes, offset by shadowed shafts of cactus.

Like Kolb, Suriani approaches her subject matter as if to highlight not only its beauty, but its meditative aspects. Known for portraiture and gritty urban documentary, as well as more recent explorations of nature, Suriani allows her lens to linger on the interplay of light and movement in bodies of water.

"Untitled, Berkeley Lake" is a large wash of wave printed on canvas, appearing like a color field painting of softly varying hues. "Burnt Orange" is a stunning view of a fiery sunset reflected in water, in forms that shift and flow like burning lava. Suriani's digital images are often printed on watercolor and other fine art papers as well as metal, enhancing the intentional blurring of boundaries between painting and photography.

Curator Karen Comer Lowe adeptly arranges similar works that nonetheless heighten the stylistic differences of these two photographers. For example, Kolb's delicate "Red Weed, Joshua Tree National Park" contrasts with Suriani's equally refined "Japanese Red Maple, Berkeley Lake, Georgia."

Another effective juxtaposition is Kolb's "Desert Tree 2," rippling stems against a cobalt sky, paired with Suriani's black and white "Water Branches," an eerie, cerebral image.

Both Kolb and Suriani elicit dreamy responses, transforming the environment into serene imagery while capturing it in its natural state. Kolb's photographs celebrate the integrity of earth, sky and plant life, embracing each as its own entity. Suriani's works create mood from movement and light, offering her vision of nature as a vehicle for reflection.