

# ARTFORUM

## Kara Joslyn

M+B

612 NORTH ALMONT DRIVE

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The grayscale paintings in Kara Joslyn's "Tragic Kingdom" portend surreal, vaporous worlds that might have been plucked from the depths of Platonic allegory or Jungian psychology. Spindly saplings, humanoid figures, colorless blossoms, foreboding interiors, and grinning moons suggesting disembodied masks parade through primordial voids. Visual dichotomies flood these compositions. Vague shadows stretch from illogical light sources and from fields of matte black paint. All is rendered in airbrush with nary an errant mark.



Joslyn's source materials include mid-century instructional booklets for making paper figurines; her eccentric subjects and seemingly voluminous forms are actually painted representations of folded, creased, and curved sheets of paper. This novel use of trompe l'oeil solidifies the viewer's impression of each painting as an enigmatic house of mirrors. In *No tree no shade (tragic kingdom)* (all works 2019), oblong shapes emanating from splayed, barren trees masquerade as both cast shadows and discrete paper objects, perverting negative and positive space. This anxious, desolate landscape quickly bleeds into metaphor—solid matter shifts, and nothing is as it seems.

As if threatened by an invasive force, *Gatekeeper (trouble ahead, trouble behind)* depicts an ominous masked effigy that resembles both a Frankensteinian beast and a reconstructed toy, standing on a patch of transitional ground and brandishing a hockey stick. Darkness looms not only at his back but all around.

— Jessica Simmons