

Kay Ruane's female figures make a striking debut

By Barbara B. Buchholz
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gallerywatch

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Badlands or Hawaii. In "Forest," a large nude stands in a darkened forest amid bare trees, her posture perfect and her long delicate arms softly holding a lily that appears on fire. The location was a place between Seattle and Portland that Ruane photographed when the couple stopped when Doug was on his way to Mount St. Helens.

The second artist Lyons Wier exhibits is Mark Barone, whose memory paintings in oil of his Chicago family members are both serious and a bit humorous. The seriousness derives from the subject matter — Barone is shown excluded from a sister's birthday party in one painting and in another a small child is depicted with a female figure posed somewhat seductively. The humor comes from Barone's depiction of people whose body parts are out of proportion and of architecture that consists of crooked doors and windows. The show continues at 300 W. Superior St. through Dec. 20.

Group shows are a popular way for many galleries to wind up the year. At Lydon Fine Art, the group show effort does not work, however, because Pier Wright's large colorful abstract oil paintings on canvas, recently

Gallery owner Michael Lyons Wier is using his December exhibit to debut the work of two young artists.

Kay Ruane, who draws classic-style female figures in graphite on paper, sometimes building up as many as 20 layers, is an artist whom Lyons Wier has followed for the past year. When he first saw her work, he felt the three-part panels she assembled with a figure at the center did not hold together. But when she submitted slides of female figures — many showing just a part of a figure, others of nudes in landscapes or in relation to an object, such as an oversized cabbage — he felt that her work had sufficiently matured to make sense compositionally.

Ruane's work is intriguing for several reasons: her technical dexterity in capturing the nuances of the human figure or parts of the figure but never a head, her ability to give Classic-looking figures a contemporary sense of being, and her imaginative way of placing the figures in settings that make visual, if not real world, sense.

Many of the scenes were inspired by places visited with her husband, Doug, a documentary filmmaker, such as the



In Kay Ruane's pencil on graphite "Volcano" at the Lyons Wier Gallery, a woman's hands hold a cabbage.

the focus of a solo exhibit, dominate and distract.

Yet the show is still worth viewing because of the other works: Cheryl Warrick's acrylic memory paintings that combine abstract forms in landscapes, Mark Metcalf's small moody land- and cityscapes, and Fre-

drick Nelson's large oil paintings of small staccato-style strokes zipping across hot colored backgrounds. The single large Helen Frankenthaler mixografia on handmade paper, "Guadalupe," while beautiful, seems out of place in this show of less well-known artists. The

show continues at 301 W. Superior until Jan. 7.

Another group show works much more successfully. Gallery owner Ann Nathan presents the latest painted metalwork of Wisconsin artist Bill Reid, mixing Reid's small whimsical creatures with work from other gallery artists whose media are entirely different: Jim Rose's forceful steel furniture adaptations of Shaker wood cabinets, Dale Gottlieb's soft Tibetan rugs inspired by Bill Traylor's folk art paintings, Tom Vebeher's standing lamps with serpent forms and Mike Zarembo's small fiberglass figures, including a stewardess atop a working clock and a smiling bellhop atop a television-style screen that flashes the message of "quality service with a smile."

The stars of this show are definitely Reid's creations, which reveal his continuing imagination and the obsessiveness that leads him to work with minute, highly detailed forms that move and open to present another artistic layer. In his "Zombie Family Picnic," Reid has crafted all the trappings for a family picnic, down to four tiny red checked mats, a hamper with dishes, wine and cheese and small "Zombie" children who politely sit.

The show continues at 218 W. Superior St. through December.