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How often does the MidCoast Fine Arts Gallery have fireworks for an opening? There were explosions in the sky on Friday night in LeClaire, and I wondered if maybe... Alas, the aerial attack marked Tug Fest. Even so, MidCoast's current show of works by Katie Kiley and Steve Sinner merits a fireworks display. Once again MidCoast has chosen two artists whose styles complement one another for a single show. Katie Kiley is a painter and printmaker, while Steve Sinner works with wood turnings.

Katie Kiley expresses her work quite well in her artist statement: "Above all else, I love to draw the figure. I delight in the infinite beauty of the human form, the bones and muscles, the skin and hair, the eyes and ears, the mouth and nose." The love and care for her work comes through in her paintings. They are somber yet elegant. I especially like the use of gold accents in the framing of many of her paintings and prints.

There are four intaglio prints, one graphite drawing, and seven paintings in this show. They range in price from $325 for her prints to $1,275 for many of the paintings to $9,000 for her painting Guardian of the Body. Kiley is selling some of her work through a gallery in New York, so an investment now might pay off as her sales increase.

One of the things I noticed about Kiley's work is the sculptural feel she has for her subjects, and it would be interesting for Katie to try her hand at sculpture. With clay and modeling, the masking of the face done in several of her works would be unnecessary. She could finish out or not finish out the clay or casting material to the extent she wished. I say this because I get the same feeling looking at her paintings that I have gotten from viewing some of Henry Moore's sculptures. There is the same interaction of figures, using a suggestion of form and weight of the body without specific detailed illustration.

I also noticed – when I cropped some photographs of her work – that as her images were simplified, they became more dramatic. It seems that Katie is also on to this, because two of her works – Back Bridge and Black and Blue – are more elemental and less documentary that the others. Rather than showing a full head and torso as she does in Embrace, we see only the

back and sleeve of a shirt. Because Katie uses the contrast of light and dark in her work, it appears to me that she wants to enhance the drama of these images.

Even in her more sculptural work, you can capture a more dramatic feel by cropping the image. A stark detail of Embrace, for instance, shows only part of the head and forearm.

Steve Sinner works in wood and writes, “A passionate love for the beauty of wood is the basis of my ardor to create art from this fickle material. I seek to reveal this passion to the viewer. … Seeking new ways for wood to express beauty is a constant, and I frequently am uncertain if the expressions more properly belong to the wood or to me.” The last statement by Sinner echoes Michangelo’s comment that images were contained within the blocks of marble delivered to him; it remained only for the artist to uncover them. It is that tension between artist and medium that Sinner expresses so well.

Sinner has 19 works in this show, ranging in price from $170, to $250 for many, to $5,000 for his maple vase with silver leaf Only an Ocean Away. The prices for these works appear quite reasonable; I haven’t often seen wood turnings of this quality available for such a low price. One more unusual feature in Sinner’s work is the use of piercings in his goblets. Steve talks about this with reference to his goblet Windows: “Vertical piercing is used here to create a feeling of the arts-and-crafts style. The larger openings are filled with translucent red material.” He also has a piece whose pattern of piercings recalls the spans of a famous Quad Cities landmark, titled Centennial Bridge.

Steve’s work shows fine craftsmanship with a flawless fit and finish. The classic shapes lend an elegant air to his work. Steve has a way of highlighting the most beautiful grains of the wood he is using. His work also radiates the love and care he puts into it.

The current show at MidCoast Fine Arts gallery is well worth the trip to the Iowa Welcome Center in LeClaire. The pieces are reasonably priced and would be good investments that might appreciate in value, besides being lovely additions to one’s visual environment.