

New Approach to Old Art in Lytle's Figures

By MICHAEL KIRKHORN of The Journal Staff

c. 1970

Richard Lytle, a 34 year old Yale University artist, is showing 20 charcoal figure studies at Grand Avenue galleries, 2101 W. Wisconsin av.

As an announcement, that may not sound like much. The figure, after all, has been studied before, incessantly, in fact, by artists for thousands of years. It has been done sumptuously and opulently, sparsely and angularly, geometrically, classically, prosaically—one might suppose that all the options had been exhausted.

Fortunately, Lytle has not exhausted his. His drawing is resourceful, original, and inventive. His lines are thrilling passages, clear, sinuous, complete. His accentuation of details is masterful. His confidence – what he dares leave out- is exciting.

Studied in Italy

Lytle graduated from Yale in 1957 and received his master of fine arts degree in 1960. He assisted Josef Alberts in both painting and drawing before going to Italy where he studied painting on a Fulbright scholarship. He was an instructor in color and drawing at Yale from 1960-1963, dean of Silvermine Guild, Silvermine, Conn., from 1963-1966 and then returned to Yale where he is an associate professor.

His work has been shown in 18 exhibitions. It is included in the collections of New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, the Museum of Modern Art, Yale University Art Gallery, and in Columbia University's collection.

Lytle's show is the first of an artist with a national reputation at Grand Avenue galleries, which previously has featured young local artists exclusively. The Lytle show will continue until April 11, from 1 to 5 p.m. every day but Tuesday and Thursday, when the gallery is closed. On April 20, a show of new prints and watercolors by Gabor Peterdi will open at the gallery.

Technique Varies

Lytle's figure studies, all of female models, were done between 1967 and 1969. In technique they differ significantly.

Some are drawn and shaded in careful detail throughout; in others the viewer's attention is captured by the power of Lytle's concentration on certain essential

volumes, while other parts of the body are drawn deftly and decisively but without shading. In some drawings light and shadow fall in defined zones; in others light and shadow are more subtly blended.

It's easy to talk about "line" without recognizing its value, but even a visual illiterate would respond to Lytle's superb drawing. Some have great emotional strength; others are without resonance, curving perfectly on an expanse of whiteness.

There is a unity of pose and emotional tone in these drawings which perhaps contributes as much as technique to their effect. The models were posed in graceful if not always relaxed positions.

Considering their expressiveness, it is odd that the weakest drawings seem to be several where the models are looking directly out at the spectator, where the sense of personal identity seems to interfere with the visual statement Lytle was making about them.