



Risa Sekiguchi's still life, "Steak & Letter," has the intensity usually reserved for human portraits.

Human/nature

Artist melds the
two strong forces

GALLERIES

By Margaret Hawkins

Risa Sekiguchi

- Through May 30
- Lyons Wier Gallery, 300 W. Superior
- (312) 654-0600

Risa Sekiguchi's still life paintings at Lyons Wier Gallery focus on the small and inanimate. Intensely painted portraits of food dominate this small, strong show, and she presents her subjects with a gravity usually reserved for human portraiture.

A raw rib-eye steak sits on what appears to be a handwritten letter. Well-marbled and thick, the meat glistens with the kind of pure beauty that raw food often possesses. The letter suggests a relationship, a potential for communication in the food's preparation and consumption as well as in the words themselves.

Similarly, Sekiguchi's paintings of sashimi salmon in a plastic bag and a broken-open pomegranate are dramatic, almost sacramental in the solemn and symmetrical way they occupy space. They are painted as more than still life subjects, more than props and symbols. They are central characters in the rituals and meanings surrounding food, and Sekiguchi grants them dignity as such.

Margaret Hawkins is a local arts critic.