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Special to *The Washington Post*



The fedora of Patrick LoCicero's collage "The Bachelor" recalls Magritte's bowlers; top, the photograph "Blue Garage #1" by Gay Cioffi, a study in form.

LoCicero and Cioffi at Ralls

Seattle artist Patrick LoCicero makes attractive paintings and collages using gold leaf, pages from Sears catalogues circa 1940, and old dress patterns; often they're washed in mustard-colored paint to ape old age. His formula guarantees their appeal; nostalgic types will swoon. Only a few of his pieces, though, hold much interest beyond their decorative surfaces.

"The Bachelor" has the ubiquitous businessman's fedora floating in midair, over pages from an old school reader detailing punctuation lessons. The hat's mid-frame levitation act winks at surrealist Rene Magritte's bowlers. But much of the rest of LoCicero's work has lost any art historical traction and fallen deep into the ditch of cuteness. Cutouts of Edwardian collars and turn-of-the-century beach balls feel as contrived as those faux-Victorian scrapbooks you buy at Hallmark.

In her back room, Marsha Ralls is showing District photographer Gay Cioffi, who likes old things, too. But much grittier ones. Cioffi's favorite theme is architectural elements (this past spring, her show at the American Institute for Architects was devoted to Peruvian facades). At Ralls, she's showing snaps of disused loading docks and rusty metal doors taken around town, from U Street to Georgia Avenue.

Don't go expecting a tour of local landmarks, though. Cioffi's best prints zero in on form. "Blue Garage #1" is a blue corrugated metal door sandwiched between rusted brown walls. Cioffi steps in so close that her image almost loses its original context, becoming something entirely new—a block of glass or an X-ray. Or simply an elegant study of color and form.

Patrick LoCicero and Gay Cioffi at the Ralls Collection, 1516 31st St. NW, Wednesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., and by appointment, 202-342-1754, to Aug. 31.