

Artist follows in father's footsteps

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Hereditary talent?

NOT FOR CIRCULATION

By JANICE BRADBEER

Mississauga artist Gwen Oakes admired her father's work so much that she followed in his footsteps. But, she first took time out to raise a family before venturing on the fulfilling but often precarious challenge that besets an artist.

The daughter of well-known Toronto commercial artist Leonard B. Self, Oakes used to enjoy her father's work. He was responsible for the marquees at the Loew's Theatre, opposite the Eaton Centre. Self would airbrush and paint pictures of the famous stars and signs for upcoming attractions. He also started the Self Studio in Toronto.

"He always thought that I took after him, but I didn't take it seriously until after I had brought up four children," says Oakes of her father, who died in 1951.

Her decision was made five years ago when she introduced herself to the oil medium. She found oils easy, "because you can put a light color on dark," but progressed to watercolors three years later because she found them delicate and more of a challenge. She also enjoyed the clean effect they produced.

She now paints primarily in watercolors



Artist Gwen Oakes shows some of the watercolors which are on display this month at the Toronto Dominion Centre. Her success with her showing there last year has resulted in her devoting more time to her art.

(Staff photo by Tim Chevrier)

and prefers the freedom of landscapes to portrait painting. "I can paint as much as I wish to paint. I use more imagination and there is more flexibility," she explains of her subject matter, which consists primarily of country scenes, like old farmhouses.

She likes to work at home from sketches, notes and sometimes photographs she has taken. Past paintings in this area have included her old apple tree and peonies in the hot, broiling sun of her back yard home and the shores of Lake Ontario at Marie Curtis park on the

Mississauga-Etobicoke border.

The results of her landscapes have been impressive. Currently a member of the Mississauga artists' workshop, Oakes has exhibited at, among other places, the Lakeview Library, the Topic Gallery and Juried Art Show, as well as the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition at Toronto City Hall (where she will exhibit July 9-11) and the Toronto Dominion Centre.

Oakes exhibited at the TD Centre in March 1980, May 1981 and again this month, which will be all

watercolor. Last year her showing of 30 paintings of mixed sizes of oil and watercolor was quite successful. "I sold seven paintings to an executive last year," she recalls, adding, "four to another man who wanted to know when I'd have more. I was quite overwhelmed last year."

Because of this positive turn of events, Oakes intends to paint more steadily this year. "I'm retired from going to work. The painting isn't a living and it started out as a hobby, but I'm doing well at it," she explains.