

SMITH, VIVIAN

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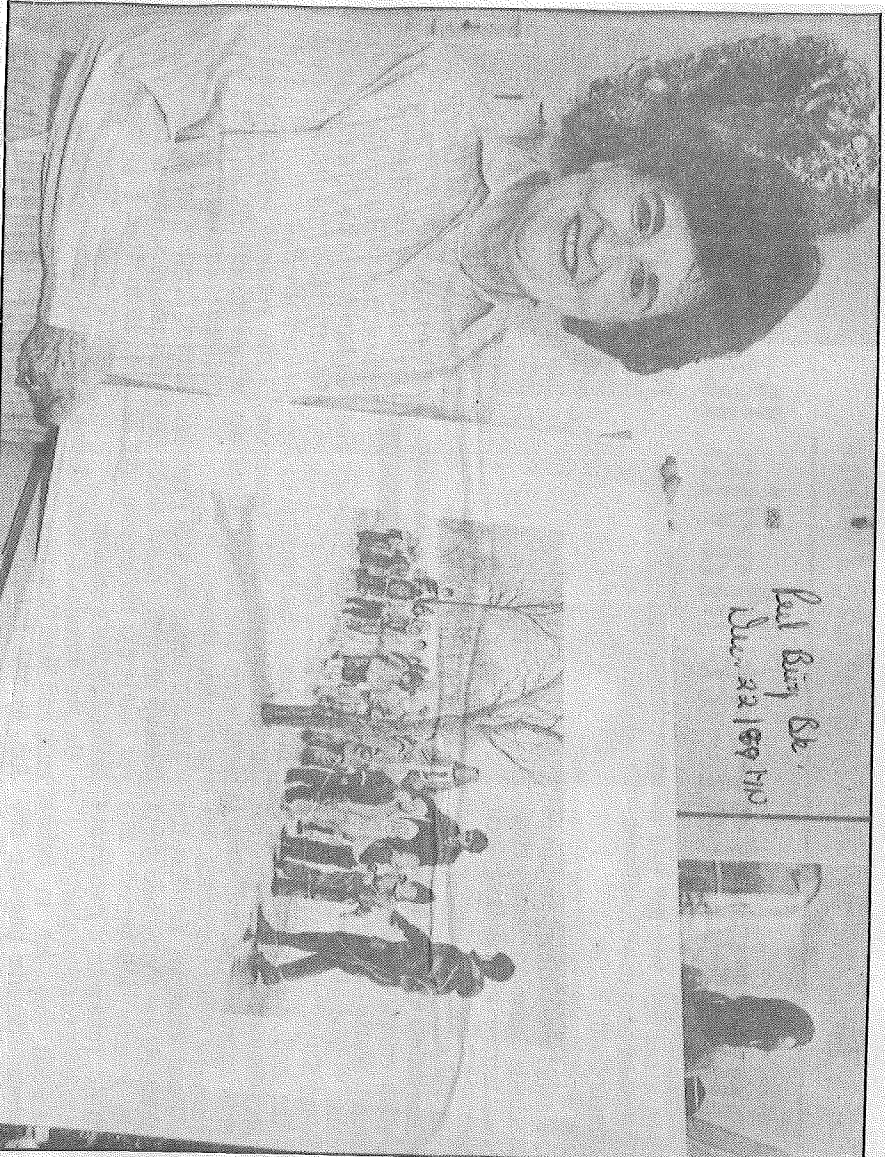


Photo by Joel Robertson
Mississauga artist Roxann Vivian Smith, with her most recent work, entitled *Wintery Walk*. After 28 years of painting as a hobby, Smith has found a promising future in limited-edition prints.

A bright future for local artist

By JULIE KINKAID
Special to *The Mississauga News*
It may be wintery white outside

but the future looks rosy for Roxann Vivian Smith. After 28 years of painting from her Mississauga home, Smith has embarked on a promising career in limited-edition prints. In addition, she has 12 art cards on the market and Carleton Cards has printed one of her paintings. The resulting Christmas cards are now available in local stores.

Rosy is an appropriate description for Roxann Smith.

"After all, pink is my favorite color," she says, leading the way into her pink-and-white living room — white wicker, white fireplace and rosy pink accessories everywhere. On one wall is her award-winning watercolor of pink rhododendrons.

"I submitted five paintings to a juried show in British Columbia," Smith says, "but since I didn't know a rhododendron from a tulip at the time, four of the paintings were of hybrids and were rejected. It was a good experience, though, since all of the other paintings were sold and I learned something about flowers."

Two paintings in her living room are mementos of her travels; one is a portrait of a crew member on the boat Smith sailed on in the Virgin Islands. The other is of a 3-year-old Caribbean named Marcus, which she "wouldn't part with for anything."

A floral painting in the dining room is a beautiful example of the tissue-paper collage technique that Smith patented several years ago. "I've stopped doing these because the materials are hard to find now and it was very time-consuming."

Smith began painting as a hobby when her three children were small. About 20 years ago she decided to paint professionally and hasn't looked back since. Her early work was done in oils, often with a palette knife. She has dabbled in pen-and-ink drawings and collages but now paints in watercolor exclusively.

"It's good to switch about until you find your best medium and one technique can help you with another one."

The subjects of her paintings over the years have varied from

still lifes to landscapes, figures and flowers. Since the late '70s her love of antiques and architecture has led her to paint heritage houses and buildings.

Her paintings of local landmarks became so popular that Smith decided to try decorator and limited-edition prints.

"Prints are a whole new field," says Smith. "You have to choose more universal subjects and more subdued colors."

With her fondness for pink, it's not surprising that her first two limited editions were of old homes in pink brick. Her most recent limited edition, *Wintery Walk*, is a scene of nursery children trudging through the snow. A companion print, entitled *By the School Yard Fence*, is expected to be released this Christmas. When asked why children are being featured in her most recent work, Smith laughingly admits that her oldest daughter is expecting her first child in February.

"Time is my biggest problem," Smith says. "At the moment, I only have time to exhibit at Harbour Gallery in Port Credit and Cobblestone Gallery in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Between painting and teaching at Lorne Park Hall and Springbank Visual Arts Centre I put in a lot of hours. Over the years, I've learned to paint very early in the day and very late. And I got an answering machine so I can paint undisturbed."

Smith still finds time to attend seminars that deal with the business side of painting.

"Artists are very isolated in their work," she says. "It's good to talk shop with other artists and learn from each other's experiences and mistakes."

Smith also enjoys attending local art shows.

"Artists can go flat. We need to be inspired by someone else's work at times."

In the 1990s, Smith is planning a September exhibition in Toronto. She also plans to open an art and craft establishment with her two daughters in St. Catharines in a couple of years. Smith also has begun preliminary work on her mother's biography, which she says is going to make a fascinating book.