

Mississauga's Maude fights for equality

By JO ANN STEVENSON
Times staff writer

She's an "island people" with a passion for water, a self-proclaimed nut and an early Libran, destined to hate all things distasteful (such as garbage and riots) and to love serenity, organization and art.

With a personality akin to TVs Maude and a proponent of women's status in the arts, Roxanne Vivian Smith, mother of three and part-time doctor's receptionist, is a promising Canadian artist whose work is handled by the McDowell Gallery in Toronto.

Ten years ago, Roxanne began painting in earnest and discovered her forte, water color. "I feel a desire to capture and hold fast a fleeting moment in nature, an action on a busy street or the flavor of a foreign land," she says.

"My best paintings are of things with which I've become absorbed, fountains, brooks, water, flowers and the color pink," she says.

Since travelling abroad (recently to Mexico and Greece) with a group of painters and photographers, Roxanne says she senses the new atmosphere in each country, but resigns herself to snapshots and rapid sketches to be developed into paintings when she comes home. Home to Roxanne has been Mississauga for the past 20 years.

"The trips inspire my painting, but they also serve to expel some of the isolation an artist feels when sequestered with an easel day after day." Roxanne says people contact is a big reason she still works in an office part time.

Women in the arts? Roxanne says women still have to fight the stigma of being "Sunday painters" because their bread is often already on the table. To do her bit, Roxanne headed a committee for the Pauline McGibbon Cultural Centre of Toronto which opened recently. It is a centre primarily for women in the arts. "Men won't be excluded," says Roxanne, "but women will be the focus."

On opening day, Roxanne recalls personally wiping the plaster from the 150 chairs intended for the dignitaries and guests, hiding the painter's ladder and brush and welcoming guests while kicking loose papers behind her.

In the last few years Roxanne has participated in many group shows and has had 15 one-woman shows.

Currently her art is displayed for show and sale at the McDowell Gallery at 2600 Yonge Street. The show continues until this Saturday.



MORRIS LAMONT/THE TIMES

Roxanne Vivian Smith thinks women must fight to have their talent acknowledged.

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SMITH, Roxanne Vivian