

opinion

review

Sudbury artist a 'master-in-the-making'

By LOUIS F. WILLIAMS

One steps into a salon of the French Library and sees France all over the walls in the watercolors and oils of David Roth. A young, attractive receptionist asks eagerly, "what do you think of the exhibition?" Hardly have you made an approving remark, moulding in mind phrases for your article, than she is exclaiming excitedly about how "old world" the paintings are, how much in "the tradition of the masters," and how unique that a 27-year-old American, not quite yet extricated from the dust of Sudbury, Mass., could imbue his canvases with such poignant visions of Europe.

David Wells Roth has reached the French Library on Boston's Marlborough Street, the best way that an artist could: via Paris. And he got there through "old world" magic, just the way Hollywood fabricates it. A Parisian physician, Dr. Frank Choffrut, happened to see one of Roth's paintings in New York and, instantly smitten by the artist's sensibility, proposed a kind of barter-of a few works annually in exchange for the use of an apartment in Paris, in a building owned by the doctor. Not only has this arrangement,

begun in 1982, continued, but Frank's contributing another apartment in the south of France.

Of course, this is amazing progress for an artist who went to Lincoln-Sudbury High School, graduated from Boston University's School of the Arts only six years ago and who immediately went "out on the street," so to speak, working solely at his career. Along the way, he won some awards, but more importantly, received commissions from people who were as overwhelmed by his talent as the Choffrut brothers.

Library exhibition

Some exquisite examples of that talent will be on view at the library (266-4351) until July 3 (only nine days, by the way, prior to the tenth annual Bastille Day "bal musette" celebration). Indeed, in the exhibition, the visitor will find the touch of "a master-in-the-making," as someone has said. Both the watercolors and the oil paintings show us a craftsman who is not 27 on canvas, for he mixes color with a mature and eloquent eye. It is his color, in particular, at times lustrous and golden, or hazily radiant, or dusky, brooding, that gives his landscapes much of their



ROTH

character. From the melodramatic tones of "Sunset over the Seine" and "Notre Dame" to a whole series of alpine scenes ("Rock and Ice," "View near Tignes," "Mountains with Bridge," etc.)-almost bleached in hue-there are sensuous tints and shadings that remain peculiarly his own.

If, as another commentator has pointed

out, this aptitude is most striking in restive pieces like "Ruins of Provence," "Dusk," "View in Vaucluse," "Paris Nocturne," and more commonplace in those that feature "bright blue weather" ("La Tourch," "St. Martine," "Il Tudy," etc.), there is the attraction in all the work of the scene itself and the artist's special perspective. Furthermore, a kind of abstract impressionism seems to dominate his style at present-appearing with most impact in "Ruins of Provence." At first glance, this watercolor suggests a sloping heap of coal, but the fascination is that it never really becomes defined beyond dark, amorphous rubble very stirring, overhung by a sky slaty in color and full of chunks and updrafts that seem to be suctioned off to the left.

The receptionist was watching for me when I came out of the salon. Something of recognition passed between us. Something that said, "Yes, the 'old world' magic is here; yes, it could be announcing a 'master-in-the-making.'"

David Wells Roth: an extraordinary fate may lie ahead; do be perspicacious as you undertake that "making."

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