

Value of experience shows in contrast between artists

By Robert Smythe

It's Sunday afternoon, and Aylmer's Galerie l'Imagier is a popular stop for the Outaouais' hip young francophones out for a drive. Yesterday they were taking in a recently opened two-woman show by Rita Roderigue and Gisele Bouvier.

Both are local artists, sharing a common love for bright pure color. Roderigue, the more experienced of the two, exhibits 20 pastel drawings and water-color paintings. Her work is assured, unhesitating and lively.

The pastels — portraits, still-life and landscape, are

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drawn with a constant and heavy pressure, biting into the rough, colored paper with a flickering energy.

Studies of young women, posed in chairs against a background of rhythmic parallel lines, are very sweet pieces. *Melanie*, a little girl in a dotted pinafore and red stockings, slouches forward with determination, pinning her legs together to keep from squirming.

Like the other portraits, strongly warm and cool lighting is cast across the sitter's face, where the

pastel pencil has scrubbed back and forth to produce the densest application. Rarely are any passages smudged or blended: The artist wants to keep the medium as thick and rich as possible.

For the still-life works there is less need for a single central focus, and more overall decorative pattern revels in lush color for its own sake. *Le temps des cerises* is a table-top scattered with kitchen gear and glossy red cherries. The choice of a cherry-red frame is clever.

Perhaps the most abstract pastel is *Jardin de rocailles*, where the rock garden's blossoms and bare spots are lyrically arranged in a staccato of hot pink on a neutral mossy rocky ground.

As for the small pieces by Gisele Bouvier, on display in the gallery's second room, to say that it is the artist's first public exposure, and that her work is a series of highly developed color-pencil and felt-pen doodles on paper with no coherence whatsoever, is sufficiently caustic.

La Galerie l'Imagier, at 7 Front Street in Aylmer, has very limited hours: 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, and 2 to 4 p.m. on weekends. The current show remains there until October 16.