



Artist William Ramage of Sudbury adds details to a mural which is actually a kind of self-portrait. He draws his own face by occasionally stepping to a mirror and examining details from a distance of five inches. (Photo by Russell)

Artistic Connection in Sudbury: *Ramage Revels in Light*

By SHERRY RUSSELL
SUDBURY — "Connections" were what artist William Ramage said helped him sell a pencil drawing last month to Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, for \$6,000.

A remarkable connection, on appearance, acquainted the curators of a midwestern college art collection with Ramage's work, which he creates in his remote home in Sudbury.

But Ramage had taught

at Ohio State for three years. His print was on display in Allen Stone Galleries in New York City and the Ohio curators saw it there, recognizing Ramage's name.

The Stone gallery will receive 40 percent of the sale, leaving Ramage \$3,200 for a piece that took five months to complete.

Ramage sounds like a scientist as he explains why he draws faces that measure nine by five feet in size.

"The face in itself has an infinite number of variables," according to the artist. He observes texture, tone, reflections and proportions. These qualities, he said, are affected by factors such as night and daylight, which eye you look through, and proximity to image.

Five months is too long to ask any friend to sit perfectly still as a volunteer, Ramage said. So, he explained, he looks in a mirror and draws his own image. But he denies his works are "self-portraits." As of now, his \$6,000 sale is called a "pencil drawing."

The art pieces—pencil drawings are realistically graphic but, according to Ramage, are not primarily images. "The image," he said, "is something I imposed on the information." And, he added: "Every piece of information on the drawing is a direct result of what I had perceived."

The phenomenon of the eye's ability to see light is Ramage's attraction to this

(See Page 19: Artist)

Artist

(Continued from Page 13) type of art, he said. He calls it an evolutionary coincidence that we have developed an eye that can absorb light.

As he continued to explore the nature of light, Ramage formed a hypothesis that light is formed in layers. But Castleton physics professor Kenneth Flowers said that supposition is incorrect.

Light, Flowers said, gradually energizes the rods and cones in our eyes. That process explains why, when Ramage gazes at the surface of his face, he can observe subtle light variations not seen immediately.

His creation is essentially a study of the human face. It is based on a round shape with eyes, nose and mouth, Ramage said. But it is not "just a picture to hang on the wall," due to size and the nature of the subject. Ohio State will build a wall with a plexiglass frame to display their purchase.

Four days a week the artist teaches at Castleton State College. His technique of realistic drawings, he said, is "just transferr-

ing information." He teaches beginning art students to do the same, to perceive how something looks and transfer it to a one-dimensional plane.

Working at home 30 hours a week gives Ramage freedom to create a controlled atmosphere. He uses a photometer to read the light values in his living room. He knows that the contrast ratio changes from night to day, even with the shades drawn shut.

As he works, light from outside is blocked and a bright, bare bulb hangs at the top left of the drawing. Shadows on the face indicate a consistent source of light. Each node on the face is painstakingly highlighted.

Just as photos are a controversial issue in the art world, Ramage's enlarged realistic images may also raise the question, "Is it art?" The challenge for Ramage as an artist is to

decide what information to include and what to leave out. He leaves out at least half of what he observes in his study as he looks at his face only five inches from the mirror.

So far Ramage has produced five drawings of this scale. He is aiming toward an exhibit in Whitney Museum in New York City in a year or two.

In the meantime, CSC's Fine Arts Center will show some of his work Nov. 8 for a few hours while Ramage presents a lecture.