

Paris inspires El Paso artist to broaden perspective

By Kathleen Raphael

Special to the Times

PARIS — The city of art, culture and history is now a source of inspiration for former El Pasoan Ann Massey.

"Paris is an understated and elegant city," Massey says, smiling while watching the frenetic traffic race through Rue St. Jacques.

Massey, raised in El Paso, visited Paris several times before deciding four years ago that the city was the place she and her art would flourish.

And she was right. Once she was settled, she found France and all of Europe to be a giant palette of people, places and ideas.

Traveling throughout the



Massey

continent and England, she maintains constant exposure to great art and memorable impressions that she interprets in her drawings and paintings.

"It is easy to travel here," Massey says. "Recently, I went to The Hague and saw (Gerard) Ter Borch's work. Having constant contact with art helps me to improve. Here I can explore, learn and create."

Known for her wax pencil drawings created by meticulous layering of line over line, Massey creates por-

See it here

► **See Ann Massey's work:** Her oil painting "Day's End" is hanging in the Contemporary Gallery of the new El Paso Museum of Art.

► **The picture shows** an exhausted woman sprawled on a sofa.

traits of depth and detail that are lifelike and warm.

"The layer-over is quite extraordinary. Her nudes are incredible," El Paso artist and gallery owner Hal Marcus says.

Marcus describes Massey as a person who is passionate about her work, with a

lust for life that has spurred her to broaden her artistic pursuits.

In 1990, Massey expanded her love of realism into painting. Again, it was her interest in detail and layers that brought expression to her work.

Using the "Old Master's Technique" she learned at the Schuler School of Fine Art in Baltimore, she achieves a tonal quality much like that of the Dutch work of the 1600s.

The technique is lengthy and painstaking. Massey says she begins with a drawing, paints a brown pigment on the canvas, then thinly layers on more and more pigment.

"The layering gives the

painting depth, and the surface has almost no texture," she says.

Massey averages about six pieces a year; a painting may take more than three months to complete.

When finished, the hours of work yield a painting meticulously executed in muted earth tones that reflect the elegance and understatement of the city she has chosen to call home.

Massey says her biggest markets are the United States and England. "My work doesn't have a broad commercial appeal, but it sells too quickly for me to maintain a gallery," she says.

Her realism captures a moment in time.

"I don't have the 'story of my painting' because that destroys the illusion of the piece. Viewers can interpret the story the way they see it and that adds to the interest," she said.

Massey's oil painting "Day's End" can be found in the Contemporary Gallery in the recently opened new El Paso Museum of Art. The picture shows an exhausted woman sprawled on a sofa.

Her work also is included in numerous exhibits in the United States and abroad. Private and corporate collections throughout the world display her work.

"El Paso should be very proud of her accomplishments. She is a fine artist and a sensitive person," Marcus said.