

Even with his landscape projects, Roy Rydell has time for canvas

By CANDACE ATKINS

NEXT MONTH, HE WILL turn 69. He will also open a one-man show of acrylic paintings at the Art Center in Santa Cruz. Later this fall, his landscape design at the new La Manzana restaurant, gallery and shopping complex in Watsonville will be unveiled.

"There are so many people my age who should be enjoying themselves," said Roy Rydell, who's as full of life as his works of art. "I sent an announcement of my art show to the newspaper that's delivered in mobile home parks. I hope some of those old kids in the mobile homes will be inspired."

Rydell divides his time between two loves, landscape architecture and painting. To him, both are fine art.

His career in landscape design includes work on the Sunset Books building, Pacific Garden Mall, Deer Park Shopping Center, Abbott Square and the new Transit District building in Santa Cruz. His current project at La Manzana, in the old Meadow Gold Crea-

mery and Greyhound buildings in downtown Watsonville, will include both interior and exterior design.

Rydell and La Manzana owner Manuel "Manny" Santana share their ideas for what they call the "environment" of the complex.

"The fact Manny is an artist too, means a great deal," said Rydell. "It's two artists working together. He likes participating."

For now, Rydell and Santana look beyond the dusty construction site and envision the walkways, benches and greenery that will be in place by the Christmas holidays. This process, says Rydell, is similar to creating a painting.

"That's what's funny, in a way. There is a strong sense of design in my landscape and my paintings," said Rydell.

While an artist can control a painting's size, color and texture, Rydell said, landscape architecture, even with the most precise plans, is dictated by nature.

"Think of the rigid aspects of landscape architecture," he said. "Nature and growing

things have minds of their own. If they're not happy where they're located, they aren't going to do it for you. With the wrong gardener, they'll die on you.

"Plant material really says something to people. It's emotional. They love it."

Rydell works on industrial, commercial and residential landscapes. His favorite, he says, is private homes.

"I really like people. There is a real satisfaction in creating something for people that's going to delight them," he said. "But some clients have a difficult time. They just can't visualize. They tell me what they want, but they use such emotional terminologies. They say they want a soft garden — does that mean pink and blue? Yellow and white?"

Until three years ago, Rydell's landscape business kept him so busy, he had little time to paint. He decided to start painting two days a week and work at his regular job the remaining three days.

"It's really such a treat," he said. "But the paintings started piling up. After three years,

I've executed more than 80 paintings."

About 20 of his recent works will be part of his Art Center exhibition Monday to Sept. 30 in the Pink Room at India Joze. All are still-life fabric studies that bring to mind Baroque texture and use of space.

Rydell considers the works "very theatrical," and said some remind him of altars. He arranges fabric in his studio and usually paints directly on the canvas, with no preliminary sketching. Each painting is a new experiment, he said. He often paints successive works in similar tones, and works tend to be either completely warm or cool.

"I'll work in the same colors, then I'll want something fresher, something different," he said. "After 80 paintings, I'm still intrigued with fabric — I could paint fabric forever. It becomes richer and richer. It takes on new qualities."

Roy Rydell's one-man show will open Monday and run to Sept. 30 in the India Joze Pink Room, Santa Cruz Art Center, 1001 Center St. No admission charge.

