

## Purely Passionate

Coast  
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Maybe it's the notion of being bundled up and cozy when a dramatic storm hits, or that untangled sense of freedom and possibility we feel at the beginning of the new year. Whatever the reason, winter tends to click on a switch inspiring us to take inventory of our internal life and assess the creative and spiritual impulses that guide us to the core of our own individual reality show. Suddenly, there's time for curiosity's whim and a fresh focus to live life more passionately once we clear away the clutter from holiday excess and make room for those great intangibles.

The theme of passion as an electrifying force for examining tender turf is explored by several dynamic women artists who are hitting their stride in separate Laguna Beach exhibits during feisty February: Rita Blitt at Marion Meyer Contemporary Art (February 3–March 15); and, at the Peter Blake Gallery, Janet Rosener and Bridget Burns (February 3–27). Although each artist lives and works in different regions of the country and their work has no similarities either visually or by their creative process, they all appear to be concentrating on an intense emotional landscape that is about vision and unbroken human connection.

Rita Blitt: *The Passionate Gesture* at Marion Meyer Contemporary Art, is an abbreviated survey exhibit of this highly-acclaimed Kansas Citybased artist who has enjoyed a lifelong career as both a painter and sculptor, and whose work can be found in numerous private and museum collections worldwide. Whether realized in two or three dimensions, Blitt's work re-defines the act of mark-making by becoming a sort of choreographer whose own spontaneous movement is captured in the drawn gesture, or frozen in elegant fabrications that celebrate her love of dance. The work seeks to elaborate her premise that internal rhythm in the body is looped with natural instinct, and that the painterly mark is thus evidence of energy spent joyously, as in the robust *Fire Dance*. In fact, rumor has it that for the last 15 years, Blitt, now 73, has been prone to paint with two hands and two brushes simultaneously, often with her eyes closed, in the manner of a symphony conductor. Interestingly, her unusual sculptures, sometimes monumental in size, are indicative of her mastery in isolating specific trace marks from drawings or painterly mass to create new fields of playful activity in stainless steel dips and arcs, noteworthy in the intriguing shelf sculpture *Rollicking Spirit*, as well as in the totemic grace of *Stability*. The courage to experiment, added to her passionate expressions in response to nature and music, underscores Blitt's work with a healthy sheen of optimism that grabs the gut and simply doesn't let go.