During spring commencement ceremonies at Washburn University, Rita Blitt was conferred an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree. She is shown with Washburn President Dr. Jerry B. Farley.

Rita Blitt receives honorary doctorate

Washburn University conferred Rita Blitt an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree during spring commencement ceremonies May 11.

Blitt was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and as an elementary school student won a scholarship for Saturday classes at the Kansas City Art Institute. She attended the University of Illinois and graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1952 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. In 1953 and 1955, she again attended the Kansas City Art Institute where she studied painting. Blitt's work celebrates love of life, nature, music and dance. To describe her work, in 1977 she wrote "I feel like I'm dancing on paper." An award-winning painter, sculptor and filmmaker, her words "Kindness is contagious. Catch it!" have inspired people all over the world.

Her works are included in many museums and private collections, including: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, John F. Kennedy Library, National Museum of Singapore, Spencer Museum of Art, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Nevada Museum of Art, Spertus Institute, Skirball Cultural Center, Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art, Kennedy Museum of American Art and the Mulvane Art Museum. Her sculptures can be found in Australia, Israel, Japan, Singapore and the United States.

The Rita Blitt Gallery and Sculpture Garden at the Mulvane Art Museum on Washburn University's campus opened in November 2017 and is the home of the Rita Blitt Legacy Collection. The newest exhibit "Expressions of Freedom," which opened in early May, is an exhibition of drawings, collages, paintings and mixed media works expressing the beauty of line and form. The art will be on exhibit through Aug. 2 and is presented in conjunction with Washburn University's WU-mester theme for spring 2019: freedom of speech and expression.