


Artist brings her joy to Kansas City

Kansas City Jewish Chronicle
September 30 2011

By Marcia Montgomery

 Lunarblitt, 2006, bronze and steel, 36x20x8 inches, is a smaller version of one which once was at Oak Park Mall and made with different materials. "Discovering and Sharing Joy," Parts I and II, two exhibits by native Kansas City artist Rita Blitt on display this fall at Longview Community College and Penn Valley Community College, have this name for a reason. The drawings, paintings, sculptures and films reflect Blitt's joy of life.

"An abundance of it has been inspired by movement in nature and in music and dance," the internationally-known artist says. Blitt's paintings are noted for their colorful, sweeping, swirling lines and circles. Her paintings and sculptures are modern, airy and pleasing to the eye. These exhibitions are a limited historical survey of Blitt's spontaneous lines. You can view some of Blitt's work, including films demonstrating the processes by which she creates, on her website, www.ritablitt.com.

"In 1975, I walked up to my yellow ball sculpture in Oak Park Mall and as soon as I saw that sculpture I said to my husband, 'This feels more like me than anything I have ever created,' and I realized it came from a tiny doodle," she explains. "I realized I had been doodling and throwing it away all my life. So I said if I'm going to continue to put art out into this world, I'm going to create what is uniquely me and those lines are me."

Exhibitions

The Longview exhibition "is a glimpse of how my drawings evolved after that 1975 moment," and demonstrate how some of Blitt's sculptures evolved from those drawings. Two such examples are "One," which she drew in 1976, and 1993's "Iceland Surge." The sculpture "One," dated 1984, can be viewed at the Renaissance Building I in Overland Park. "Iceland Surge" will be on view at the exhibit.

Blitt says everything she has created since that moment of realization has come from her "spontaneous line." "After letting these lines flow for a couple of years, I picked up two conté crayons and started drawing with two hands at once. It is so natural to the human body; everybody can do it. But it shocked me when I started doing it. A year later, I wrote that I feel like I'm dancing on paper."

Featured in the Penn Valley exhibition of Blitt's flowing lines in paint and sculpture is a meditative series of 40x30-inch canvases. These 10 paintings are entitled "A Sacred Moment" and form an integral whole.

"With deep emotion, I rapidly created one after another and titled them 'A Sacred Moment.' I like to think of them as one work of art," Blitt says.

Other paintings and sculptures in this exhibition also "dance to silent music."

The Longview exhibit begins and ends with Blitt's ever-present "yellow ball."

"'Lunarblitt XVI' ... begins the exhibition, while 'The Sun Still Shines' painting ends it," she says. "In the center of the exhibition is a large painting with a yellow ball, 'The Courage to Hope.'"

Blitt says she has known for many years the importance of the circle in her life's work, especially the yellow circle, but wondered where it came from. In her book, "The Passionate Gesture," there's a chapter called "The Journey" that goes back to her childhood. In 1941, she drew a birthday card for her mother — with a yellow sun.

"I said aha, that's what it is, it's the sun."

Several short films will also be screened at these exhibitions, including her two newest, a 2011 work "Collaborating with the Past," featuring music by composer Pavel Haas, who died at Auschwitz, and "blur," a 2010 film documenting the creation of a series of 14 paintings done by Blitt while listening to the music of Lansing McLoskey.

Blitt's greatest joy

For all the tens of thousands of doodles, drawings and paintings Blitt has created throughout her life, she says her greatest joy is all the works she still has in her mind that she wants to do. Indeed, there are many, many works already in existence that are hidden from public view and Blitt wants to find a way to share them.

While Blitt's art is being acquired by museums and private individuals, she takes great pleasure in giving to non-profits desiring art to enhance

their environment. The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art recently acquired two additional works on paper and a sculpture.

"I'm not terribly commercially-minded; that's not my motivation for creating," she says. "I want to get my work where there are blank walls and where people gather, to bring joy to them."

Blitt also donated some of her work to Healthcare Rehabilitation Center in Vermont. "The letters I have gotten about the joy that I bring to the psychologists, mental health workers and clients and to their atmosphere is very thrilling to me.

"My goal in life is not only to share my work, but to bring peace to the world."

Skywalk sculpture

The Skywalk Memorial Foundation, a non-profit corporation committed to honoring and remembering the 114 people who lost their lives and those who were injured on July 17, 1981, commissioned Blitt to create a sculpture that will serve as the focal piece of a memorial honoring the victims, rescuers and survivors of the Hyatt skywalk collapse.

A rendering of the sculpture will be on display at the Carter Art Center on the campus of Penn Valley Community College Oct. 4. That's the opening reception for Blitt's "Discovering and Sharing Joy: Part II: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture and Film." The sculpture itself will be revealed when the memorial park opens, which is expected to be in the summer of 2012.

Blitt's fifth-grade art teacher, Ruth Ann Angstead, was injured in the skywalk collapse. "The fact that I can now pay tribute to her, the other victims and survivors, is deeply satisfying to me," Blitt said.

Rita Blitt Exhibits

Metropolitan Community College-Longview
Cultural Arts Center
500 S.W. Longview Road
Lee's Summit, Mo.

"Discovering and Sharing Joy: Part I: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture and Film"

Oct. 1-Nov. 12

Opening reception — Saturday, Oct. 1

6:30-8 p.m. — Public reception with artist

7 p.m. — Presentation in the theater

Carter Art Center
Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley
3201 Southwest Trafficway
Kansas City, Mo.

"Discovering and Sharing Joy: Part II: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture and Film"

Oct. 4-Nov. 5

Opening reception — Tuesday, Oct. 4

5-8 p.m. — Public reception with artist

5:30 p.m. — Artist's Gallery talk