

## LOCAL NEWS

*Blitt retrospective: The passionate gesture*

By Suzi Brozman

*Special to The Chronicle*

ATLANTA — Rita Blitt talks, thinks and moves like a person half her age. The Kansas City-area painter, filmmaker and sculptor was in Atlanta last month for the opening of her show, "The Passionate Gesture: A 65-Year Retrospective of Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture and Films of Rita Blitt." The show runs through Jan. 12 at the Hudgens Art Center in Duluth, Ga.

Blitt's family began to notice her talent when, as a 3-year-old, she copied pictures of flowers from letters sent by her grandfather, who was an embroidery designer. At 9, she won a scholarship for classes at the Kansas City Art Institute.

"That made me feel that someday I'd be an artist, but I didn't dream I'd be on museum walls like Rembrandt," she said during a tour of her show.

After college and a time teaching, Blitt gave birth to a child and to a new career. "I needed to follow my bliss. I needed to create art."



RITA BLITT

Her first New York exhibit was in 1969. She moved from representational, realistic paintings into the realms of monumental sculpture, line drawings and movies. In 1975 she was sculpting, creating works in wood, metal, acrylic and other materials.

She realized that her doo-

dles, the expressive lines she was drawing almost by accident, were the essence of her art. "I must put out what is me, not what is anyone else. I started putting my doodles on good paper. Everything I've done from that moment has come from that sense of line and spontaneity."

In 1977, without knowing why, she began drawing with two hands at once, translating her love of movement and dance into her art. "When those lines come from my hands ... I feel like I am dancing on paper."

By the 1990s she was closing her eyes as she painted. "At first I was shocked and embarrassed. Then I realized my eyes were closing out of emotion, so I didn't fight it. I let lines flow and started making sculpture from my lines. I work intuitively and quickly. What happens happens. I must remember that the reason I create is that this is my joy in life, second only to my family."

Asked about her favorite medium, Blitt said. "Anything that makes a mark. Right now, I'm working in oil pastels. I have learned to let go and have the courage to just do it. If I force it with demands or expectations, that takes the joy out of it. If I can make people feel good, that is my great honor."

Blitt created a 25-minute film, "Dancing Hands: Visual

Arts of Rita Blitt," in 1984, and several other short films in the years since. Her "Caught in Paint," a six-minute collaboration with choreographer David Parsons and photographer Lois Greenfield, captures the sense of dance and movement she incorporates into her art.

Jewish identity and concern for the welfare of the world have always been visible in her life. Blitt's mother was a Hadassah activist who worked on behalf of Israel. Blitt uses her art to contribute to causes aimed at promoting peace. And her daughter has created a film about the trafficking of women in Nepal and Thailand.

Blitt has been married for 55 years. She maintains studios in California, Colorado and Kansas. Her motto is "Kindness is contagious. Catch it!" You can preview her works and read more about her at [www.ritablitt.com](http://www.ritablitt.com).

*Suzi Brozman is a contributing writer for the Atlanta Jewish Times, where this article first appeared.*