

## entertainment, art etc. . . . entertainment, art

By Paula Schumacher  
Entertainment Editor

Honesty in each creation — that is the most important part of art for Rita Blitt, Leawood.

"I create from what I feel. I'm inspired by life — particularly by nature, by music, by dance," the lithe, dark-haired artist said.

During my whole life of creating, I've been inspired by movement. Movement in nature and especially dance . . . the shape, the balance, the line. How do I explain it; it's just a part of me. The drawings just flow out of me." The words cascaded, fell together as she gestured broadly with her arms and hands.

The local artist, whose drawings are currently on display at Johnson County Community College Library, deals in abstract art which she usually does not name.

"I had the freedom to create what I felt; I want the viewer to have the freedom to feel and see what he wants when he looks at the art. I don't want to tell anyone what to think." The small, agile woman pulled her legs up under her and sat cross-legged on the floor. Pieces of art surrounded her.

"Here's some of the first work I did," she scurried from her cross-legged position and pointed to an oil painting hanging in the hallway of her home.

"There was a lamp in our first little apartment in Chicago. See, here's the base of the lamp — it was like a man's leg — here's the bulb." The explanation ended as quickly as it started. She pointed to another oil.

"That's my daughter. She was really angry; she was leaning over the table." The painting showed a swirled face and a tilted head with black braids jutting out each side of the head. A viewer can almost feel the anger.

The oils hang in various places in Mrs. Blitt's Leawood home, but intermingled with them are drawings with which the artist is presently enthralled. "They just flow — come like

Before the drawings, came sculpture.

How did that work? Oils and sculpture take time. Wasn't that quite a switch to go to the line drawings which come so quickly?

"Oh, no. You see, I always worked fast. In fact that's why I had to go from oils to acrylics. I painted so fast, the oil didn't work for me.

"The one thing I did that surprised myself was to give up the colors. I love colors." She pointed to another multi-colored oil painting and glanced down at the numerous pieces of black and white line art lying at her feet.

"I tried some drawings in color, though. Here's this one." Lines — green, red, blue, orange — flowed across and down a sheet of

white art paper.

The line drawings became an important part of the artist's work just three years ago.

"I had always scribbled on scrap paper, unconsciously and consciously in preparing for each painting or each piece of sculpture. But never before January 1975 did I allow myself to release the drawings that were stored within me. They just flow."

Sometimes the drawings follow a series of patterns. A rectangle divided in various ways; lines deviating from the vertical and horizontal combination to just a single horizontal line.

"I felt kind of dumb putting that one line across a blank paper, but that is what I felt; that is what was

needed to complete the series."

One series done by Mrs. Blitt ends with a blank sheet of paper.

Her drawings and paintings are in Kansas City, in New York; sculpture pieces can be found in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Illinois, and Missouri; monumental sculpture has been placed in malls in New Jersey, Missouri, Kansas, Illinois and Maryland.

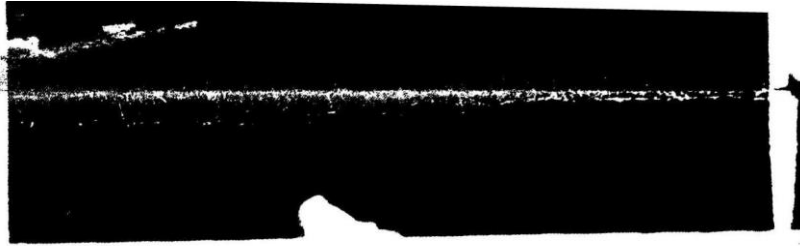
Over 15 shows are credited to the versatile artist.

"My show at the College is one of the first times I've really assembled all my work as it relates. I have a feeling that this show, organizing it, will lead to other things."

## Dance, music, nature



The oils hang in various places in Mrs. Blitt's Leawood home, but intermingled with them are drawings with which the artist is presently enthralled. "They just flow — come like that." The artist snapped her fingers three, four, five times.



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This art flowing from her is often used to "find the answer to the sculpture" she may be creating. "I used to try to fill up an empty spot with my sculpture now, I find something that's right for a beautiful spot."

Mrs. Blitt's work with sculpture started in 1969.

"I was doing some murals for a shopping center in St. Joe (St. Joseph, Mo.) and the architect wanted a sculpture to give more meaning to a large area."

Her first sculpture was a ceiling-suspended piece designed into an abstract of flying birds. Then came the experimentation with different materials.

Cut-outs of sheet metal, covered with canvas and twisted into free-form shapes were painted. More

sculptures were created with plastics and later with acrylic sheet.

The plastic sculpture in front of the J. C. Penny's Store at Oak Park Mall was designed by Mrs. Blitt and her creation of 9,000 feet of beaded chains suspended with 250 colored plastic discs decorates Indian Springs Shopping Center.

Mrs. Blitt "experimented and fought" to shape her first pieces of sculpture. The acrylic cut, burned, cracked her hands. But work continued, and more malls requested her creations.

Mrs. Blitt has five pieces of sculpture at Rockaway, one of which is a 17-foot by 9-foot bronze and stainless steel sculpture of the American flag on which Rockaway students could

engrave their names on the stars.

"I've always loved creating flags. That's a beautiful piece of art to work with," Mrs. Blitt said.

It was after the creation of various sculptures that Mrs. Blitt became dissatisfied with her original work for the St. Joseph shopping center.

"I went back and redid it. That was at my own expense; but I just couldn't leave it there. I wasn't happy with it. I learned so much from the others. I have to like what I do; the architect has to like what I do. I want everyone to be as thrilled as I am about a piece of work."

Mrs. Blitt does not do her own fabrication on the sculpture, "but I work with the fabricator closely once I

decide which metal or plastic I will use, and together we work out the actual techniques of putting the work together."

Once the work is completed, it still means delivery and getting welders and masons to install the sculpture.

When her work started, giving names to art pieces bewildered her, "my husband and I thought for days and weeks about names. Then one night it hit me; I would call them 'blitts.' Orblitts are those that hang. Stablitts rise from the ground. Aquablitts are those related to water . . . and so forth." Mrs. Blitt excitedly recalled the decision. Again the words tumbled out.

Her work took on names as Orblitt I, Orblitt II until "I did this piece." Mrs. Blitt pointed to a picture of a freeflowing, curved design made out of three-eighths inch steel plate.

"We called that one Nessie after the Loch Ness Monster."

That piece is on display in Rockaway.

Deviating from oils to drawings; from color to black and white; allowing honesty and freedom to dominate all work; selecting unique names for her sculptures — all those concepts speak for originality in the local artist.

But one more point emerges.

Mrs. Blitt does her drawings with two hands.

"I didn't think about it; I just did it. It just seemed one day when I was drawing that I should use both hands." That was in 1977.

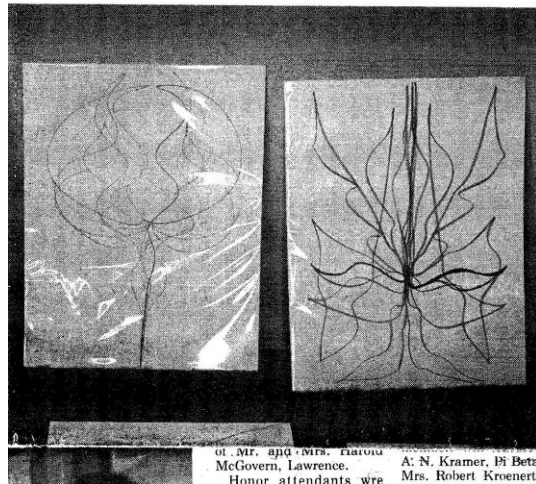
"How can a dancer dance without using the whole body? How can I draw without using all of my body?"

"I love dance myself. I've never been able to dance because of bad knees, but with using two hands — I find it almost impossible to draw with one hand now — I can feel like a dancer."

The artist pulled out drawing after drawing. Some stood alone, many fell into a series. She sat in the

## are inspire artist

LEAWOOD ARTIST, RITA BLITT, creates with honesty, feeling. Her two-hand drawing often evolve into sculpture pieces in various malls across the country.



of Mr. and Mrs. Harold McGovern, Lawrence. Honor attendants were A. N. Kramer, Phi Beta Phi; Mrs. Robert Kroenert, Chi program. Center open to