

Campus Anticipates New Gift to UCM's Outdoor Sculpture Collection



Sometimes gifts come from unexpected places and change the way we look at the world. For over a year, the UCM Gallery of Art & Design has had the privilege to work with one of Kansas City's most recognized artists, Rita Blitt. This artist's work will soon enhance the campus of the University of Central Missouri through her recent gift of a large outdoor sculpture titled "Fantasy."

"Fantasy," a commanding steel sculpture measuring over nine feet high and eight feet in diameter, was fabricated in 1985 and installed at the site of the Bannister Mall complex in Kansas City, Mo. The sculpture is an example of the modernist art aesthetic, focusing on the movement of line and shape. Outlining the soft curves and lines of a swan-like form, "Fantasy" is an example of the abstract style and reminiscent of the first public art sculpture funded by the National Endowment for the Arts' "Art in Public Places" program, Alexander Calder's "La Grande Vitesse." The placement of "Fantasy" is under review and will add to the aesthetic beauty on UCM's campus, currently home to 14 public art works.

The connection between the UCM Department of Art & Design and Blitt was initiated with the help of Jan Leonard, senior vice president of United Missouri Bank in Kansas City who also serves as the executive director of the Rita Blitt Foundation. As a result of this collaboration, and with the help of Leonard, the Gallery of Art & Design extended an invitation to Blitt to exhibit her work on campus in a one-person retrospective show. An exhibition of this caliber allows the UCM Gallery to display an exhibition from a major internationally known artist. In addition, Blitt's gift of "Fantasy" entrusts the university with a significant work from her artistic legacy, preserving it for all to enjoy for years to come.

The retrospective exhibition of Rita Blitt's work, titled "Fear of War, Courage to Hope...While Dancing," is slated to debut in

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the UCM Gallery of Art & Design in August of 2011. Featuring 22 works of art, the exhibition includes paintings, drawings, and sculptures that demonstrate Blitt's versatility and strength across artistic mediums. Exhibiting bold brushstrokes, colorful movement and abstract forms, the exhibition portrays Blitt's career-long themes of hurt, joy, hope, life and nature, most importantly, "... all while dancing."

Rita Blitt's love affair with art began at age 10 when she won a scholarship to the Kansas City Art Institute. Her work has since been on exhibit to the public in the Kansas City area and beyond. Throughout her prolific career, Rita Blitt has completed over 30 public sculptures, has held numerous exhibitions of her paintings and drawings, and is an award-winning filmmaker. Blitt finds that her artwork is, "... as much about caring and celebrating life as it is about music and dance."

Drawing upon dance and music as inspiration for making art, Blitt has always been interested in intersections between the two artistic mediums. Her cross-genre film "Caught in Paint" is a collaborative project with David Parsons and members of the Parsons Dance Company, and is as much about dance as it is about painting. Shown at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, "Caught in Paint" features the artist painting on four-by-eight-foot pieces of transparent mylar while dancers are seen in mid-air imitating the dancing lines of Blitt's paint strokes. The video "Caught in Paint" will be shown at intervals during the opening reception at the Gallery of Art & Design.

Through her passion and efforts, Rita Blitt strives to make the world a better place. She aided in the worldwide effort to stop violence in every nation through her poster and campaign "Kindness is Contagious. Catch It!" which was presented to every member of the United Nations. Blitt's collection of gallery works and public sculptures is truly international, displayed in such places as Australia,

Germany, Italy, Israel, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Uganda and throughout the United States. In another example of her generosity, she recently donated more than 20 works to the Health Care and Rehabilitation Services Center of Southeastern Vermont.

Details regarding Rita Blitt's coming exhibition "Fear of War, Courage to Hope ... While Dancing" in the Gallery of Art & Design and installation of "Fantasy" on the UCM campus are being finalized. The location will certainly focus on where the university and community members can best view and enjoy "Fantasy." ■

"Fantasy" (top), a sculpture and example of modernist art created by Kansas City resident Rita Blitt (below) is coming to the UCM campus.

