

## Bronfman Family Jewish Community Center: Rita Blitt

# Dancing Lines

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

**WITH A PAINT BRUSH IN EACH HAND, ARTIST RITA BLITT DANCES LINES ONTO PAPER.**

“Painting is a physical gesture for me,” said Blitt. “I am moving when I paint. It is my dance. It is my music.”

Her artwork, which includes works on paper and canvas, sculpture, and film, is on display for the first time in Santa Barbara at the Bronfman Family Jewish Community Center Gallery through April 17th.

Blitt has been creating art all her life. As a child, she was encouraged early on by her teachers and has a vivid memory of learning the word ‘create’ as a fifth grader. “Hearing this word still gives me

chills. I feel it in my body. It’s thrilling, exciting, and magical,” she said. As a ten and eleven year old, Blitt won scholarships to study at the Kansas City Art Institute on Saturdays. She returned



Rita Blitt

there for graduate school after attending the University of Illinois and graduating from the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

But her inspiration for drawing goes back even earlier. Blitt’s grandfather, who was a designer for an embroidery company, would send line drawings along with his letters. As a toddler, Blitt responded to her grandfather’s drawings by sending her own. “Lines are very important in my work, and I still echo his lines back to him,” she said. “I have these lines within me, and I have been painting them out.”

In the 70s, Blitt began using two hands to draw and paint. “I found I needed to use both



*The Sun Still Shines II* (2008) by Rita Blitt

hands to feel whole, to be me, and to be honest,” she said. Blitt’s dancing lines are now expressed through multiple mediums, including drawing, painting, sculpture, and film. In her award winning, documentary film *Caught in Paint*, Blitt paints on a large, transparent surface while members of the Parsons Dance Company interact with Blitt’s spontaneous gestures. Blitt met dancer/choreographer David Parsons when he was a teenager in Kansas. “I was mesmerized by his movement,” said Blitt. “After the show I told him he’d be a great artist someday.” The two have enjoyed a collaborative friendship ever since. “I’ve always responded to dance and music, but my relationship with David has enhanced it,”

said Blitt. *Caught in Paint* has been shown at film festivals around the world, including the Cannes Film Festival in 2008.

“Before, my inspiration was the movement of water, the wind in the trees, dance and music,” she said. “Now, when I work, I am a dancer.”



*Sensuously Stacked Steel* (2005) by Rita Blitt

Bronfman Family Jewish Community Center is located at 524 Chapala St. The gallery is open Monday through Thursday 9-5 and Friday 9-3. For more information, call 957-1115.