

Sculptor mixes fantasy and realism

By LINDA LAMPEL
Staff writer

She plays and works with the wax and after several hours a shape emerges. After forming the head, she takes it off and realizes the figure doesn't need one.

"Things don't really have to be as they are in real life," she says.

Nannette Chapman Blinchikoff, mother, wife and now professional artist has come into her own in the world of art.

Last Thursday night, the John Bacon Associates Art Gallery at 9 W. Chase Street in downtown Baltimore presented 'Musical Art,' featuring her work with a reception.

Her work, 'The Boys in the Band,' consists of a five-piece wax jazz band. The pieces can be ordered individually or as a unit, in their wax state or cast in bronze.

Gallery owner John Bacon gives her work great praise.

"We wouldn't have a reception and feature her for a month if we didn't think very highly of her as an artist," Bacon said. "She is the first sculptor we have ever cared to exhibit."

Bacon says he discovered her through her book, *Promoting Fine Art in Baltimore*, written two years ago.

"(Her work) is very funny. She shows a great sense of humor as well as a great deal of artistic sense and skill in executing her ideas," Bacon said. "We look for excellence in design and excellence in execution and she certainly showed both of those in 'The Boys in the Band.'"

When Blinchikoff works on an art series, such as 'The Boys in the Band,' she has no idea beforehand what she will sculpt.

"I go with the wax and I let the wax tell me what I'm going to do," she says. "The image takes shape in the technical point of view. I deal with whatever comes. I let my subconscious take care of the subject matter and my conscience take care of the technical aspects."

Blinchikoff began to pursue an art career during her first three years of college.

But the Randallstown resident gave up her artwork to marry and to raise three daughters.

She didn't return to the mold until 1972, when the children were all in school.

"I realized I was missing something," Blinchikoff recalls. "I wanted to learn metal sculpture so I took a welding course and it was the first

time I realized sculpture was my main interest."

From there, Blinchikoff taught private art lessons for 14 years and developed a fine arts program for the Winand Elementary School recreation council program.

"I figured they (children) had enough crafts in class that they didn't have the exposure to the fine arts of drawing and painting," she says.

She remembers making the decision to sell some of her work.

"At that point you become professional," she says. "Selling something makes an artist feel your work was worth something."

She sold her first welded steel nude and remembers being "ecstatic." A husband and wife visited her home and examined her artwork.

She specifically remembers winking at her husband, Herman, behind their backs, mouthing the words, 'I think they're going to buy it,' and then turning around, hiding her excitement, and acting completely professional.

Blinchikoff creates most of her artwork in series'.

"Anytime I sell the first piece in a series, it's always very special," she says. "It's like selling your first piece."

She also works at selling furs for Mano Swartz in Towson, four or five days a week. She calls that her social, people time.

Artwork is her private time.

"Being able to create art gives me a sense of accomplishment — of something that's totally mine," she says, "something that isn't related to anyone else but myself. It gives me the independence."

Her current series evolved in part back in 1980 when she filled hand made molds with wax and began playing with them. The figures were like birds, but also had horse-heads with manes.

The Puma People emerged in 1980, with catlike faces, human figures but no hands. The paws were not really defined.

She left her sculpting for several years to work on her masters thesis, *Promoting Fine Art in Baltimore*, which explains what artists need to do to become known.

She became the president of the Maryland chapter of Artist Equity, a group of professional artists in the state, joined to a national affiliate, charter member of Sculptors Inc. and board member of Maryland



Photo by Linda LampeL

Nannette Chapman Blinchikoff, a Randallstown resident, shows her recent work 'The Boys in the Band' during a reception for the artist at the John Bacon Gallery in downtown Baltimore.

Lawyers for the Arts.

Her name is included in *Women in Maryland*, and her art has become part of the permanent collection at Towson State University.

Early this summer, she picked up her animals for the first time since the layoff. She stood up the characters and out of the blue — with a little help from MTV — decided to make one a lead singer of a band and the other a trumpet player as a tribute to Louis Armstrong.

She says her three best works of art are her three daughters, Marlene, 24, Laurie, 23 and Carrie, 20.

"I was determined that the girls were going to have a profession that they wanted to have," she says.

Marlene pushed a career in art to the side to obtain a masters degree in clinical social work. She works in the discharge planning department of St. Josephs Hospital in Towson.

Laurie wanted to become an architect ever since she was in the

seventh grade. She will graduate June with a masters degree architecture from the University Maryland.

Carrie is a junior at Maryland studying early education.

Husband Herman earned bachelors and masters degrees electrical engineering in high school through the Johns Hopkins Scholarship Program, while employed at Westinghouse.

He took a two-year leave absence to earn his Phd after he married.

Blinchikoff says her current series is the first stage of many she plans for orchestras and musical combinations.

She recently attended a performance of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, but had difficulty seeing the musicians.

"All I could see were these animals playing in the Baltimore Symphony," she said.