

Book Smart

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Nannette Clapman Blinchikoff's latest artwork is an experiment in cardboard. She joined strips of the material together because she was fascinated by its shape.

In a way, she says, it parallels her life.

"There are two flat planes pushing in on one wavy line," she says in the living room of her Pikesville home. "The wavy line is the constant moving line of life. And the two flat planes disturb the movement. It parallels my life, most everyone's life. We all have responsibilities. When someone is doing a lot of things, even if it's things they like, it's a constant pressure."

Since 1972, Mrs. Blinchikoff has juggled a great deal — she's been a student, an artist, a teacher, a daughter, a mother, a wife. In 1984, she added author to her long list of titles.

As part of her master's thesis from Towson State University, where she returned to earn a bachelor's degree when her three daughters were in school, she wrote a guide book, "Promoting Fine Art," about the business of art in Baltimore and Maryland. She has updated the book four times and is now working on a guide for Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia. That book is due out by December.

Next month she will begin lecturing on the book. On Sept. 18, she will speak at the Columbia Art Center from 7 to 9 p.m.; and at Catonsville Community College's Owings Mills campus on Oct. 18 from 9 to 11 a.m. She also will sign the book at Bibelot's Book Bash '97 in Timonium on Nov. 2, 6 to 9:30 p.m.

The guide book lists the policies, practices and procedures of 147 art entries — agencies, organizations and galleries — in Baltimore City and Maryland's 23 counties. It is a veritable how-to for artists who also need business savvy if they are to make a living at their craft.

"For every artist who creates and wants to sell his or her work, the book would be helpful," said Mrs. Blinchikoff, who turns 56 this month. "There are galleries that don't want to sign a contract,

and an artist needs to be protected. Why would an artist want to exhibit somewhere that won't sign a contract? The book helps them look at the reality of exhibiting with a gallery."

In the foreword of her book, Arnold Lehman, who recently left his post as director of the Baltimore Museum of Art, wrote, "Until 'Promoting Fine Art,' no comprehensive guide to this information existed in an easy to access format. In order to succeed in any economic period, artists, as 'professionals,' need to have the best information possible about governmental and business activities that might have career implications."

Mrs. Blinchikoff collected the data for the book by sending an extensive questionnaire to different organizations, inquiring about everything from the exhibition space to pricing guidelines.

The art entries are listed alphabetically and by county. The self-published guide also includes detailed maps that Mrs. Blinchikoff designed on a computer.

While she is excited about the publication of the latest edition of the guide, Mrs. Blinchikoff is thankful that the project is almost complete and she can once again return to sculpting. Since 1979, she has exhibited her work, which she has produced in everything from fiberglass to bronze.

The home Mrs. Blinchikoff shares with her husband of 35 years, Herman, a retired electrical engineer at Westinghouse, is filled with her work. Each piece seems to tell a story about a different aspect of her life.

In the dining room, headless torsos are bronzed on one side, black on the other, depicting the duality of each person.

"There's a part of us we show, and a part we keep inside," said Mrs. Blinchikoff, whose parents were raised Orthodox and

with whom she attended the Orthodox Liberty Jewish Center. "The black part shows the cavernous depths within each of us."

A stack of bronze figures, called "Five in Combat," is a metaphor for the different demands that have been put on her at one time. "Notice the figure on the bottom is pregnant," she said. "I didn't even notice that until after it was done. It just seemed to be the different parts of me fighting for their own identity."

A mirrored case holds "The Runner," a series of pieces she en-

visioned while waiting for her husband to cross the finish line at a 50-mile race he ran in Boonsboro, Md. Sticking one's head in the case creates a sense of movement from the work.

"I was watching the people come in, and I tried to catch the anguish in their faces," said Mrs. Blinchikoff, who learned about that pain firsthand when she ran her first marathon a few years after she created "The Runner." The piece was exhibited at a runners' expo before the Boston Marathon.

A screaming, disfigured face, covered in barbed wire, is called "Silent Horror," and was made in memory of the family her mother, a native of Poland, lost in the Holocaust. Additional pieces in this series wait to be put together into a larger piece. Alone, they resemble the charred remains of a human face. That is the look she hoped to achieve, using paper and wax.

The cardboard pieces are drastically different from Mrs. Blinchikoff's other work. The first piece, a collage of primary colors she hopes to reproduce in a larger size and in metal, has a whimsical feel to it. It fits in quite well with the colorful children's toys she has in her home for her grandchildren. Her five grandchildren, ranging from 4 years old to 17 months, come to her home and often receive art lessons from their "Ama."

"I was surprised that I created something this whimsical," she said. "I'm very pleased it came up as it did. It was very healing for me to work on this after my father died [in February]. I have always believed art is a healing process." □

PHOTO BY DENNIS DRENNER



The Arts

Artist Nannette Clapman Blinchikoff hopes her updated guide to the local art scene assists her colleagues. ☐