

'Dance is a technique of movement, eases tensions, is a meditation'

By Eloise Dungan

"Langley, I think I'll write a book."

Blanche Phillips Howard, carver of stone and wood, metal sculptor and lover of the dance at an age society pigeonholes as "senior," half hoped her husband would discourage her.

"Fine," he said.

"So I knew I'd had it," she remembered, sipping coffee in the sunny living room of their Potrero Hill home. A stocky figure in bottle green corduroy slacks and a black turtleneck sweater, Blanche Howard was talking about her venture into another area of the arts — authorship.

"We were just back from London and settling into Cambria, down the coast near San Simeon, when I found some notes my dance teacher, Ellen Kearns, had sent me years ago.

"It occurred to me that it was too bad they couldn't be published. Then I thought O, my God, I can't even type. Forget it. Then I began to feel I just had to do it. And Langley didn't discourage me."

A friend resurrected a typewriter and a book on touch typing. "It didn't work too well, because I am missing a finger tip. A piece of sculpture fell on it. I am up to ten words a minute. I pick and peck."

A new field for sculptor

With the manuscript completed, she got turn-downs from some small local publishers. Then an old friend who had published a book on her work 27 years ago turned up. "I bullied him into reading the book. He thought it was good and sent it to a friend at Simon and Schuster."

Coincidentally, "Dance of the Self" will turn up in Bay Area book stores the week that Blanche Phillips Howard and her distinguished painter-printmaker husband, John Langley Howard, open a joint exhibit in the lower concourse gallery of Bank of America Center, California and Montgomery Streets.

This is their second joint show in San Francisco and is scheduled Feb. 1 through 28.

Berkeley-born John Langley Howard has been a producing artist for more than 40 years, and his work dates from the social realism of the 1930s, through abstraction and into a kind of lyrical realism.

In their sunny flat with its rambling view of The City framed by Twin Peaks, painter Howard gravitates from his drawing board and paints in one room to a printing press in another.

Sculptor Howard works in a roomy basement area with glass doors that lead into a tiny patio bursting with potted plants. She works now primarily in brass, has been concentrating on figurative work, often broken up and combined with abstract shapes. She works directly into her material.

During the 25 years of their married life, the Howards have lived and worked in Mexico, London, Greece, New York. "And Boca Chica, Texas, on the beach. That was an experience," says the sculptor.

"I find that I need the stimulation of the city. London can crush one."



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"I find that I need the stimulation of the city. Langley can work anywhere. One of the reasons I decided to write the book was that Cambria was, well, provincial. I had time, so why not?"

Blanche Howard began to draw at an early age and as long as she can remember has loved to dance. "When I found Ellen Kearns' class in New York I fell madly in love with it.

"It isn't modern dance; it is a technique of movement, not something you 'try' to do but a sense of being. It eases tensions, and it is exhilarating. It is a moving meditation."



A BOOK on the dance is a new venture for sculptor Blanche Phillips Howard, right, working on movement patterns with Miriam Borne.



BRASS sculptures by Blanche Howard and paintings and prints by John Langley Howard go on exhibit at Bank of America Feb. 1.



Examiner photos by Walt Lynott

SCULPTOR Howard and painter John Langley Howard in his studio.