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## Spiritual Truths

Paintings, sculpture capture 'Birthrights'

By KATHERINE KENNEDY

**"B**irthrights, Blood Rites", an exhibit of paintings by Charlotte Lichtblau and sculpture by Sy Gresser, will be on view from June 3 to June 22 at the Exhibition Space at 112 Greene St. in the SoHo section of Manhattan.

"It is said, if Titian hadn't painted the Assumption of the Virgin so convincingly, we would have been spared another dogma," Mrs. Lichtblau told Catholic New York. "I think art can point out truths more convincingly than theology."

The painter, who is a Catholic, tries to convey the spiritual truths of subjects like the Last Supper and the Crucifixion in large, wildly colorful paintings, much influenced by the German Expressionists.

Mrs. Lichtblau, 61, was born in Austria, but said she was influenced by the medieval German and Gothic painters, rather than the softer Viennese tradition, and by Byzantine artists and El Greco.

The artist emigrated to the United States with her family in 1940. "I painted when I was six years old. I was always a painter," she said. Many of her family members painted as a hobby, and she has an aunt in Switzerland who is a professional painter.

The artist married at 18 and returned to Germany with her husband, also Austrian-born, who was a member of the U.S.-occupation forces after the war.

"I was very fortunate, because in the town where we lived, Hof (Germany), there were a lot of displaced artists who were forbidden to paint (by the Nazis) which may account for (my) German Expressionist tendencies," she stated. "Painting is a way to fight against time. When you see something very beautiful, you want to eternalize it," Mrs. Lichtblau said.

**O**ne of the groups being exhibited is the Hagar cycle. It deals with the story of the slave Hagar, Abraham and his wife, Sarah. She said her paintings of Hagar, 17 in one year, were inspired by



**ON EXHIBIT**—Charlotte Lichtblau's "Sarai Presents Hagar to Abram I" is part of "Birthrights, Blood Rites" at The Exhibition Space, Manhattan.

a series of poems and sculptures by Gresser. His poetry cycle, "Hagar and her Elders," in turn, was inspired by an article Father Patrick Ryan, S.J., of Fordham University, wrote about Hagar's son Ishmael.

"I think art is one of the very few outlets of the spiritual... It belongs with faith," Mrs. Lichtblau said. "The sensual, visual intake is frequently more important than dogma," she said of the viewer's possible response to art. "The art scene here has become so commercial and the avant-garde so bankrupt that the only linkage left is non-material institutions like the church," she said.

The exhibit was previously shown at Duke University Chapel. The artists have also had joint shows at the Memorial Chapel at Sweet Briar College, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and Berkeley Center at Yale Divinity School.