

LYDIA SPITZER RHEINFRANK, 1909-1999

# Artist shaped by N.Y. studies

BY MARK ZABORNEY

BLADE STAFF WRITER

Lydia Spitzer Rheinfrank, an artist who studied in Paris, Florence, and Greenwich Village as a young woman, and a member of a prominent Toledo family, died of congestive heart failure Sunday in Harborside Health Care, Perrysburg Township, where she had lived about five years. She was 90.

Mrs. Rheinfrank, formerly of the Eagle Point Colony, Rossford, and East River Road, Perrysburg Township, had been in poor health recently, her daughter, Jenny Rheinfrank Barthold, said.

"She very much enjoyed painting pictures," her brother, John, said. Her specialty was portraits of children and, until about 15 years ago, she accepted commissions to work in oil or to do pencil drawings with watercolor wash.

She was born in Toledo and grew up in the Spitzer family home on West Woodruff Avenue. She was a graduate of the Smead School for Girls in the Old West End, the predecessor to Maumee Valley Country Day School, and Vassar

College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., majoring in art history.

She studied the technique of pastels for a year in Paris before she went to Vassar. She lived in Florence with her family for a year after Vassar, working in wood engraving and etching and designing silver objects. She studied at the Toledo Museum of Art in 1931 and 1932, followed by two years of study in New York City's Greenwich Village. There she studied oils with sculptor and painter Alexander Archipenko and worked with artist Guy Pene DuBois.

"What a time to be in the village, with that great bohemian flourishing of the arts," her daughter said.

Mrs. Rheinfrank's grandfather, A.L. Spitzer, was a local banker, financier, and real estate mogul who moved to the Toledo area in 1883 and built the Spitzer Building downtown in 1896. He died in 1933. Her father, Lyman Spitzer, founded the former Spitzer Paper Box Co. He died in 1979. Her brother, Dr. Lyman Spitzer, Jr., renowned internationally as an astrophysicist, died March 31, 1997. Her sister, Luette Eaton, died July 8, 1997. Their brother, John, is a lawyer

and president of the Spitzer Building.

Mrs. Rheinfrank and her husband married in June, 1935.

She was honored by the Toledo Artists Show of 1935 for the best figure painting. She won first prize at the Junior League regional art show of Cincinnati in 1937. Her oil painting, *Martha in Blue Chair*, received grand prize for "most meritorious work" and a silver medal from the Toledo Artists Exhibition of 1938. She donated her artistic talent to her church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Maumee, in the early '60s by designing needlepoint kneelers for the sanctuary and the church memorial book for the foyer.

For much of her marriage, "her life centered around my father's interest in boats," their daughter said.

Still, she cultivated her mind and read extensively, her daughter said.

"Her years as a bohemian in Greenwich Village shaped her attitudes later," she said.

Her husband died in April, 1986. Surviving are her son, Lamson,



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**Rheinfrank: She had studied the technique of pastels in Paris before going to Vassar.**

Jr.; daughter, Jenny Rheinfrank Barthold; brother, John Spitzer; seven grandchildren; and nine grandchildren.

There will be no visitation. Memorial services will be at 3 p.m. Jan. 8 in St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Maumee. Arrangements are by the Witzler-Shank Mortuary, Perrysburg. The family requests tributes to Maumee Valley Country Day School or to Vassar College.