

**A LEAP OF FAITH:
THE CALL TO ART**



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A LEAP OF FAITH

The Call to Art

By

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With a Foreword by

Valerie Appleton, Ed.D., A.T.R., M.F.C.C., N.C.C.



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This book is dedicated to my sister, Nancy Bachrach, President of the defunct Toes Club, and my two wonderful children, Kaitlyn Leah Darby and Bryan James Darby.

FOREWORD

In any profession, brave authors are needed to write about paradigm shifts. As Hillman revisioned psychology by analyzing it, Ellen Horovitz examines art therapy in a method that is true to art therapy. In her new book *A Leap of Faith, The Call to Art*, she examines the diverse and convergent roles of the therapist as artist, and artist as therapist.

As a member of Ellen Horovitz' doctoral committee I was interviewed for this volume. Her questions about art making, healing, and transcendence caused me to reflect on my own professional life in sometimes disturbing but rich ways. What had changed in my art while working on a burn unit for 13 years? Did I ever forfeit parts of my identity as artist or art therapist, while acquiring advanced titles? Can I share professionally what I learned personally from my art and professional life? As in this book, I have found the journey taken with Ellen Horovitz to be an affirming one.

With her groundbreaking text, *Spiritual Art Therapy: An Alternate Path* (1994), Ellen Horovitz asked art therapy to enlarge its definition of practice. Though not intended as a sequel to the original treatise on spirituality, this new book engages spiritual and values questions in an effort to define what is essential in art therapy. In *A Leap to Faith, The Call to Art*, we return to the primacy of art in her life. This return to art, or the "call to art," changed her identity and efficacy as a therapist. We see artwork, fiction, and clinical work change as insight occurs. She states:

Since returning to studio my therapeutic interventions have changed considerably. I have been transformed and in the process my work has also transmuted. We engaged in rather unconventional practices in the name of "human art." We became art.

The casework throughout the book provides models for integrating the assessment and intuitive features of art therapy practice. Drawn from over 15 years of research and clinical work at Hillside Children Center and as an art therapy educator, her work is shared without guile. For example, in the poignant case of Brian, the honesty and synchronicities of the story provide moving examples of change for both the patient and therapist. We see how exploring new directions offered her better answers from the initial assessment measures, through the art therapy process, and visits with the client

years later. As is typical of Ellen Horovitz' writing, the case reminds us to be aware of quality control in our profession. She demonstrates how to discover if art therapy works—by asking the patient.

Spirituality links across this treatise through an interesting syllogism. The fundamental process of art making that guides personal and professional life is described as "*elemental play*." Play is seen as the intrinsic element of the art making process that offers directions for resolution of conflicts, the evolution of personal growth, and ultimately "*soulution*." This concept of "*soulution*" is fundamental to her thesis, that art offers the necessary elements of healing. In this way the spiritual dimension of her work shines through. I do not believe she would ever separate it. For Ellen Horovitz, the leap to understanding requires faith. Faith, or the suspension of disbelief, leads the author to an understanding of the creative state. The creative state is further likened to the diagnostic category of depersonalization. However, rather than being a pathologic state, Ellen Horovitz describes the process of creative immersion as a healthy dissociative state. Further, she suggests the thought-provoking concept that individuation is a by-product of this dissociative condition.

During a time of capitulated services and pressures for changes in our professional roles, a return to the studio may be a leap of faith for many in clinical work. However, this book offers a timely perspective for the art therapy profession. Reading it, we are left with a deeper sense of purpose and identity, both as artists and as art therapists. Ellen Horovitz makes a call to art, for the novice and for the seasoned art therapist that will prove to be provocative and fulfilling. For any reader, whether trained in art therapy or not, it validates the transcendent aspects of art, creativity, and play. In these ways, it affirms what is numinous and as she suggests, sacred about art.

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*For there are dark streams in this dark world, lady, Gulf Streams and Arctic
currents of the soul.*

CONRAD AIKEN, PRELUDES FOR MEMNON

INTRODUCTION: PRIMING THE PUMP

Mourning, Loss, Soulution, and the Studio

The studio. That word alone reminds me of my senses. As a creative human being, the idea of the studio is analogous to the crisp sound of leaves crunching beneath my feet, the salt smell of the ocean as the waves lick the sandy shore, the feel of silky wet clay as it rises in my hands on a potter's wheel. In short, making art —being art connects me to my most primal senses, my healthy self.

I believe that when looking at the etiology of dis-ease, focusing on mourning and loss issues *must* be the principal step towards recovery (Horovitz-Darby, 1994). Without this primacy, there may be change but not resolution, evolution or *soulution*. *Soulution* evokes the concept of wedding a humanistic approach to one's work and operating from the heart. If one truly functions from this center, one cannot help being both authentic and demanding the same from others.

In this book, I operate from the aforementioned position as well as suggest a return to the studio, not just for myself but also for my patients and students. I demonstrate how very elemental this creative drive runs in our innermost psyche. But here the term "studio" requires definition. There are many that romanticize the studio, viewing it perhaps as an elitist sanctuary where the artist retreats to compose "great works of arts," masters if you will. Few artists or art therapists for that matter may have the conditions just described. Instead, they may work in a corner of a room. While most artists long for more elaborate surroundings, the maxim, "home is where you hang your hat," may be applicable here. That is, the studio need not be fancy but instead offer a refuge to practice creative thinking. Essential ingredients for such space imply growth, discovery, and risk-taking.

While the studio space may offer an outlet for such joyous productivity, oftentimes, the art does not. The art can be riddled with a litany of unwanted guests, each clawing to get out and be received. Like the facets of dissociative identity disorder (DID), the artistic temperament can be split asunder and the artwork may reflect such confusion. Nevertheless, this labyrinth may eventually wend its pathway toward a more integrated whole and produce

salubrious results. While the work can be harrowing, the results can engender a more harmonious human being. This was my experience in “living with my art.”

Living with One's Art

It is important for the reader to know that this book was an outgrowth of creating “a room of my own” (much like Virginia Woolf (1929) did in her hallmark book of similar name). And like Woolf, for me, the space truly became a sanctuary. The carryover caused me to invoke the same spirit in my clinical office. I invited patients to carve out a space for themselves and even “sign” the wall.

So the “studio,” by definition, can have multifaceted meanings. But for me, it indeed became a shelter, in which I worked and even slept. This retreat was not an altogether conscious one. But, what occurred from this experience was quite a surprise to me and not at all what I had expected. The result of creating this sacred space changed my view on how to conduct therapy and perhaps how to truly “draw from within.” For in living with my artwork, sleeping with my work, and then arising to my work, my foci changed and so did I. It gave me pause in thinking about the possibilities when working with my patients. The results were staggering. Indeed, it also was for me.

Chapter 1 highlights the artwork, which evolved from this sanctum, and includes my psychosocial genogram. Indeed, this resolve to carve out my own space came from the need to redefine myself. Personally, I had been going through an enormous change and my surroundings reflected this shift. Divorced and single-handedly raising my two young children caused me to redefine not only my turf but also my identity. Naturally, this introspection threw me back into therapy and my art.

I have always turned inward for solace. As a child of a manic-depressive mother, I learned to cope independently. Reliance on myself was always paramount. It had to be. Once again, as I was faced with operating solely, I longed for definition of myself as an artist, writer, mother, therapist, and above all, human being. The return to my studio was the result. My sister, Nancy Bachrach, to whom this book is dedicated, recognized this urgency. Through her generosity, I was allowed to redefine a place for myself. She offered me the money to turn my unlivable basement studio into a studio suite. She supported me in myriad ways but mostly she believed in my direction and me. When the renovation to my studio was completed (with fully tiled bath, 8 x 10 feet, that housed my Shimpo[®] ceramic wheel), my children remarked that I had “moved out” of the house. Indeed, in a sym-

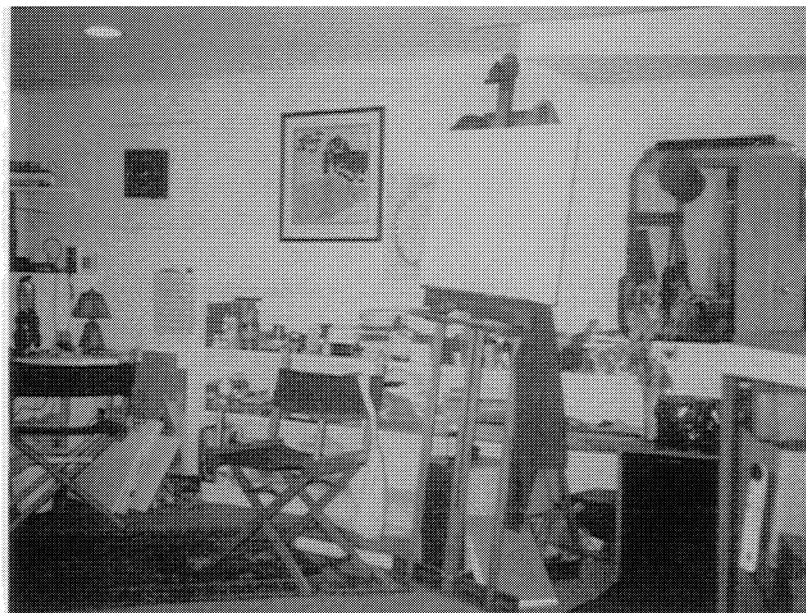


Figure 1. The Studio Space.

bolic sense I had and by doing so I had created a “space of my own.”

It was in this place that I carved out and marked my self. I worked in this space, slept in this space, and reclaimed my spirit in this hallowed refuge. What I learned from living with my art, my pain, and my preconscious psyche was that operating in this manner was very different than going to a studio to work: I lived in the studio. I slept in the studio. I danced under headphones in the studio. I wasted in the studio. I ate and drank in the studio. I was the studio. The carryover had enormous implications personally and in my work as a therapist. I was changing radically.

This change impacted every fiber of my existence. Contemporaneously, I was enrolled in a doctoral program at the Union Institute. The metamorphosis was staggering. My attitude at work changed. My interactions and relationships changed. I was mutating so quickly that even I became aware of these swings. But as I returned again and again to my art and my self, I was modeling the same for my patients and for my students. I began to note secondary gains in my patients and my students. And my students were beginning to model the same with their patients. It was like a ripple effect from a pebble cast into a great body of water.

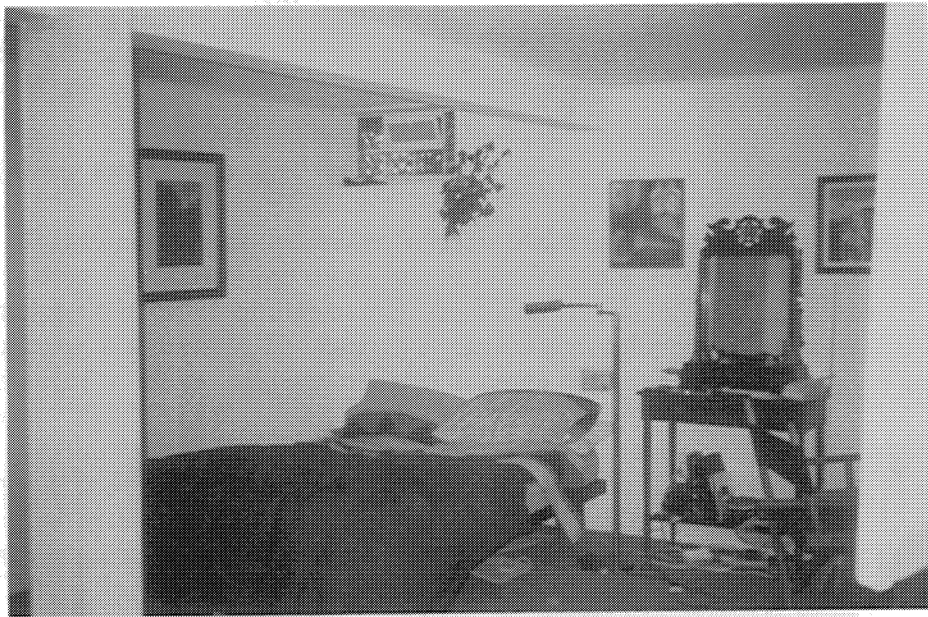


Figure 2. The Bedroom Studio Space.



Figure 3. The Bathroom Studio Space.