

Dr. Ellen Handler-Spitz Research Sabbatical, 2008

During 2008 summer, Tom Hall, Director of the Baltimore Choral Arts Society, interviewed Dr. Ellen Handler Spitz, Honors College Professor of Visual Arts, in connection with her latest book, "The Brightening Glance," for his WYPR program, Maryland Morning. Tom is especially interested in the notion of attracting children and young people as emergent audiences for classical music, and Ellen's book contains a chapter on music, which illuminates their awareness and response to music. (Go to www.wypr.org to hear the entire interview.)

Ellen's other activities include her acceptance of an invitation from The New Republic to be the writer on their Children's Desk in a new website initiative, a project which will begin sometime this fall; in her column she will address not only children's literature, but a variety of other issues involving children's cultural lives. *A propos*, she is currently guest editing a special issue of "*The Journal of Aesthetic Education*" on children's literature. She has also submitted an invited essay, "Zig-zagging with Full Stops from Play to Art," to Prof. David Getsy of the Chicago Art Institute for inclusion in his book to be published by Penn State Univ. Press on play and art.

Relevant to her work in art and psychology, Ellen presented the keynote lecture at Emory University at a fall 2007 conference titled "Psychoanalysis in the University: Teaching Psychoanalytic Ideas in a University Setting," A few days later in Baltimore, she presented on "Loss as Vanished Form" at the International Trauma Conference at the Marriott Hotel, Baltimore Inner Harbor.

With regard to her work on children's literature, she lectured on William Steig at the Academy of Medicine, New York, and on Maurice Sendak at the NY Psychoanalytic Institute, New York, December 2007. These lectures have been combined in an essay to be published in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*.

Her work on children's cultural lives and on art and psychology also resulted in another essay called "Empathy, Sympathy,

Aesthetics, and Childhood: Fledgling Thoughts," which appeared in the journal *American Imago*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2007, pp.243-257, published by the Johns Hopkins University.

During January 2008, Ellen was invited to lecture in several cities in India on the subject of children's literature; while there, she met a number of the Indian colleagues whom she had previously encountered in Kolkatta at Jadavpur University in a conference called "Reading Children." After visiting one of her Indian colleagues and her family in New Delhi, Ellen traveled to Bhubaneswar in Orissa, where she spoke at the newly founded Bakul Children's Library, an institution entirely manned and supplied by volunteers from around the world. Also in January, she lectured at Utkal University. After this, she traveled to Mangalore, where she delivered the keynote address and other lectures at the Children's Literature Association of India (CLAI) national annual conference and met Deepa Agarwal, a prominent writer of children's books, from Delhi, and other scholars as well as some outstanding graduate students from Delhi University. Ellen continued her lectures in Chennai, speaking both to the faculty of a large secondary school and to parents at a pre-school, where she sat on the floor and shared the spotlight with a mesmerizing storyteller.

She spent the spring writing in Paris, doing research in Germany, and in May, published an essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education Review* ("Fond and Fearful Memories of an Influential Professor,") a memorial to one of her graduate school professors in philosophy at Columbia University. While in Europe, Ellen attended a conference in April on Louise Bourgeois at the Centre Pompidou (Mieke Bal: "Art Clips"). She was interviewed by Marjorie Ingalls for a piece in *The Forward* ("Vivid Imaginations") that deals with fostering children's imaginations. She also gave several lectures in Germany at the Ludwigsburg Hochschule near Marbach-am-Neckar and published a letter in the *International Herald Tribune* (6/17/08). She presented a lecture on psychology, art, and children to a group of Parisian psychoanalysts (6/23/08) and was invited to be interviewed for a television show to be shot on location at the home of Alberto Manguel in southern France (Canadian, Irish, Australian TV) on "Reading and the Book" but was unable to attend.

In April 2008, Ellen was elected to membership in the New York Institute for the Humanities, a group of mostly NY-based intellectuals, academics, artists, and journalists. From 8 Sept until 8 December 2008, she will be in residence as the Erikson Scholar at the Erik Erikson Institute in Stockbridge, Mass. where she will continue her writing and research, give several lectures, and reconnect to the Clark Art Institute, where she was previously a fellow.

Ellen has been invited to write a column called "Apropos the Arts" for the journal *American Imago*; her column will appear quarterly.