

# A GUIDE TO ART THERAPY MATERIALS, METHODS, AND APPLICATIONS

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A Practical Step-by-Step Approach

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ELLEN G. HOROVITZ

ROUTLEDGE

# **A Guide to Art Therapy Materials, Methods, and Applications**

Written by a well-respected author and practitioner in the field of art therapy, *A Guide to Art Therapy Materials, Methods, and Applications* is an innovative, comprehensive text that guides readers in how to use basic to advanced art materials and methods in a wide range of clinical settings. Through the lens of both developmental stages and assessment, the book offers practical step-by-step instructions on how to incorporate these materials and methods into therapeutic work with patients of all ages and populations. In addition to such classic tools as drawing, paints, pastels, and clay, coverage of materials and special topics extends beyond the existing literature to include glass, knitting, quilting, wood burning, felting, digital applications, phototherapy, byproducts, and more. Unlike previous guides, this book specifies population benefits and contraindications for each material and technique. This research-based guide for using art materials in a safe and effective manner will be a welcome resource for students, seasoned art therapists, and mental health counselors.

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# **A Guide to Art Therapy Materials, Methods, and Applications**

A Practical Step-by-Step Approach

**Ellen G. Horovitz**

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**To Meghan DiPasquale, Esq., Tom D'Antonio, Esq.,  
Christopher D'Angelo, MD, and Victoria Korth, MD.  
Thank you for making me “whole” again, in more  
ways than one.**



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# Contents

<i>About the Author</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<b>1 Considerations on Safety and Art Materials</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Regulation of Art Materials</i>	1
<i>Types of Hazards</i>	2
<i>General First Aid and Summary of Ways to Minimize Risks</i>	4
<i>General Information and Precautions for the Basics: Clay, Paint, and Papers</i>	5
<b>2 Developmental Stages, Assessment, and Holistic Considerations</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Chronosystem Patterning and Genograms</i>	9
<i>Assessments as Indices to Understanding Your Patient(s)</i>	11
<i>Development</i>	17
<b>3 Basic Materials and Techniques: Strategies and Case Studies</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Introduction</i>	23
<i>Where to Draw the Line, and the Basics of Setting Up Your Studio for Sessions</i>	24
<i>Drawing: The Very Basics – Pencils, Erasers, Pastels, Charcoal, Markers, etc.</i>	27
<i>Papier-Mâché</i>	35
<i>Collage</i>	38
<i>Alcohol Inks</i>	41
<i>Watercolor and Acrylic Paints</i>	45
<i>Printmaking</i>	52
<i>Clay</i>	59



<b>4</b>	<b>Advanced Materials and Techniques: Strategies and Case Studies</b>	<b>69</b>
	<i>Introduction</i>	69
	<i>Phototherapy Techniques</i>	69
	<i>Premo Sculpey</i>	87
	<i>Clear Packaging Tape</i>	91
	<i>Freezer Paper</i>	95
	<i>Citra Solv: Using National Geographic Magazines</i>	100
	<i>Using Laser Printers and Citra Solv</i>	106
	<i>Photofusing onto Glass</i>	110
	<i>Creating in Glass Using Dichroic, Frit, Glassline, and Other Elements</i>	113
	<i>Painting on Existing Glass Products</i>	116
	<i>Threaded Applications and Healing</i>	119
	<i>Digital Applications for a Twenty-First-Century Palette</i>	139
<b>5</b>	<b>Byproducts and Miscellaneous Applications</b>	<b>156</b>
	<i>Introduction</i>	156
	<i>Making Soap</i>	157
	<i>More Ideas from the Garden</i>	166
	<i>Using Found Materials</i>	174
	<i>The Byproduct of Love: A Secondary Gain for the Therapist</i>	178
	<i>Additional Resources</i>	181
	<i>Index</i>	183

# About the Author

## Artist Statement

I am inspired by nature, our transcendent and limited co-existence in the universe, and humor. A term I have coined in my publications is “aesthetic arrest.” This is what drives me when truly inspired to create formed art. Because of my background as a licensed art therapist, certified yoga therapist, psychotherapist, and author of eight books, science constantly embeds itself in my work, whether through alchemy of materials, or how science and art plaits the brain. Art both fulfills and sustains me. Imagination is my driver and I incorporate all different media into my art pieces. My artwork has been sold both nationally and internationally and is represented in numerous private collections and galleries.



Dr. Ellen G. Horovitz, PhD, LCAT,  
ATR-BC, E-RYT, LFYP, C-IAYT

Photo by Eugene V. Marino, Jr.

## Offerings

I have lectured and conducted workshops nationally and internationally and am available to travel to your organization or conduct personalized workshops in your studio. I am also in private practice and offer art therapy, yoga therapy, and psychotherapy as a means of communication.

To learn more about me, or my art, please visit my websites [www.ellenhorovitz.com](http://www.ellenhorovitz.com) and [www.yogatherapy.com](http://www.yogatherapy.com) or my Amazon page.

## Publications

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# Preface

Art proceeds by trusting in the human capacity to contain and convey its rage and its pain, and to transform residuals of violence into ethical relations via new forms of mediation that give birth to their own beauty and define them. It is to trust that we will be able to bear in compassion the unbearable, the horrible and the inhuman *in the human*. Critique is not lost in this artistic entrustment. Rather, critique becomes participatory in it.

Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze* (1995)

This comprehensive handbook covers information on how to therapeutically use the most basic art materials right through to advanced media and byproducts. Everything from safety of materials is covered, including detailed step-by-step instructions to use in a clinical setting. Numerous case studies are included, as are population benefits and contraindications for each material herein. Written for the beginning to the seasoned art therapist, this handbook can be used by *all* mental health counselors as a guide for using art materials in a safe and effective manner.

Even for the advanced art therapist, the first chapter may be illuminating. Researching safety and equipment was eye opening for me as much of the information that I had thought to be true had changed. So even for the expert clinician, I highly recommend that she or he review the information in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 sets the tone for how I work as an art therapist/yoga therapist/mental health practitioner. This chapter briefly discusses the importance of assessments, culture, belief systems, somatic issues, and holistically understanding your patient(s). (For a more thorough dive into those materials, see Horovitz, 2014.)

Chapter 3 begins by discussing how to set up your studio and deal with issues around time management, vacations, attire, clean-up, studio management, establishing rules, and etiquette for groups. For the beginning (and perhaps the more practiced) clinician, these aforementioned issues are meant to set the tone for your practice. Additionally, discussion of the most basic materials and DIY (Do It Yourself) recipes are embedded in this chapter. Case studies, population benefits, and contraindications of each material are considered in this chapter and each chapter that follows.

Chapter 4 outlines resources that I have employed. Because of my extensive art background (which preceded my education as an art therapist), I offer the

reader countless ideas from analog to digital applications. Once again, numerous DIY recipes, applications, and research findings sprinkle the chapter via case studies, population benefits, and contraindications for all covered media. An exhaustive array of ideas and research is jam-packed into this chapter. And while this may be a section for the veteran art therapist, I encourage *all* readers to peruse it and utilize the ideas amassed as a springboard into your own practice and imagination. The last part of Chapter 4, which deals with digital applications and ethical issues surrounding this newer palette, discusses case studies where I have used apps in my clinical work.

Finally, Chapter 5 closes this book by presenting case studies, population benefits, and contraindications with ideas for using byproducts and recycled sources in art making. There are myriad reasons for this chapter, including the importance of being resourceful with art materials, and making a difference in the world. Modeling that to your patient(s) breeds respect and appreciation. In so doing, you are showing that you not only care for your patient but also for the world that we inhabit together.

In closing, the reader should know that throughout this book I use the word “patient” instead of “client” to define my relationship in the healing process. The reasons are multifold but may have to do with legal terms and definitions. “Client” is aptly defined as “a person or organization using the services of a lawyer or other professional person or company,” whereas patient refers to “a person receiving or registered to receive medical treatment” (Dictionary.com, n.d.). While I am neither a lawyer nor a medical doctor, my alignment falls on the side of medical treatment, and so I think of my “patient” and myself as partners in this work together, co-creating toward wellness. (The old adage that “you cannot take your patient any further than you have gone yourself” is applicable here.)

The great Edith Kramer, my mentor in art therapy, used to close her personal notes to me with the following farewell, which I offer in kind to my readers: “ever art.”

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# Acknowledgments

Crocheting . . . is an invitation to step back and breathe, to immerse yourself in the joy of creating. Each stitch is a meditation, a prayer and wish for the person you are gifting. When I crochet, each stitch is filled with loving prayers for the recipient. When we immerse ourselves in crochet or any other creative outlet, it gives us the chance to pause, to release, to let go, to embrace what is at hand, and focus on the work. I weave love, paint joy, bake compassion, stitch kindness, and give my heart when I crochet. Here, I enter a space that is gentle, soothing, restorative, and healing.

Karen Armstrong (personal communication, printed with permission)

There are many factors that go into writing a book. But I always start with the people who have enabled me to cross the finish line. First and foremost, I thank my family: my husband, Jay (Gene) Marino, Jr. has championed me every step of the way; my children Kaitlyn (Darby), Bryan (Darby), Nick (Marino), and Paolo (Marino) (and soon to enfold Heather Foster) have encouraged me to keep writing, no matter how bleak the tunnel ahead; my sister, Nancy Bachrach, and brother-in-law, Orin Wechsberg, graciously sheltered my Kaitlyn during her bicoastal year; my brother, Len Horovitz, MD, and sister-in-law, Valerie Saalbach, have continued to sustain me through all of my endeavors with love, music, and humor; my mother, Maida Horovitz, who birthed me into this world and taught me the art of loving a good read; and finally my loving cats, Schlomo and Sydney, who licked, purred, and de-stressed me through the course of this writing.

The following art therapists (my art therapy family) also sustained my efforts through friendship and thoughtful feedback: the late Edith Kramer, Laurie Wilson, and Elizabeth Stone (my NYU mentors and now friends); Irene Rosner-David; Donna Betts; Judith Rubin; Linda Gantt; Michael Franklin; Patricia Isis; David Gussak; Marcia Rosal; my moon sandwich, Bruce Moon and Cathy Moon; and Martina Reiss.

Finally, my friends (also family, and listed in no particular order) are a constant well of support: Jessie Drew-Cates, Janet Root (and all of my Fiberista friends), Karen Armstrong, Janet Rock, and my (Westside) YMCA family for ministering to my health.

Numerous companies gave support so that I might provide a thorough review of their product lines and these companies are listed in the Additional Resources section. But specifically, I wish to acknowledge Melissa and Steve Zeitler (Citra Solv products) for their continuing support for all of my books since 2011, and Sarah Yan-Soucy (Pébéo) for her incredible generosity of time.

And last but not least, I wish to thank my editors at Routledge, particularly Elizabeth Graber. I am eternally grateful to the Keystroke editing team and the indispensable skill set of my premier proofreader, Ben Woolhead (of Read 'N' Right). I remain indebted to Ben as well as to the entire Routledge family; as always, I wish to thank Anna Moore, who first opened the door to my writings and accepted me into the Routledge fold.

# 1 Considerations on Safety and Art Materials

At the end of the day, the goals are simple: safety and security.  
attributed to Jodi Rell, former governor of Connecticut

## **Regulation of Art Materials**

When I grew up in the 1960s, safety regulations were lacking, to say the least. But times have changed. And while I still love the smell of gasoline and like toxic substances that challenge my health and safety, as an artist and therapist I need to protect my patients and/or potential consumers. Thus, it is important to have some facts on hand.

### ***Consumer Protection***

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC, an independent regulatory agency charged with protecting the public from injury or death associated with consumer products) now oversees the labeling of hazardous products. That's a tall order. The CPSC requires labeling of art materials that have the potential to cause chronic health effects under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (FHSA) (Public Law 100-695).

Under the FHSA, an art material is defined as “any substance marketed or represented by the producer or re-packager as suitable for use in any phase of the creation of any work of visual or graphic art of any medium” (U.S. Code 1277). Children's products that meet this definition include, but are not limited to, crayons, chalk, paint sets, colored pencils, and modeling clay. Thus, the CPSC recommends that parents/guardians purchase only those products that are labeled with the statement “Conforms to ASTM D-4236” and that do not have any cautionary warnings on the label. (The ultimate guide for arts and crafts is available as a downloadable PDF and thus I will only summarize its salient points here. See USCPSC, n.d.)



### ***Considerations When Working with Children's Arts and Crafts***

Non-toxic art and craft supplies intended for children are readily available. But one should *always read the labels* and purchase only art and craft materials intended for children. For certain chemicals and exposure situations, children may be especially susceptible to the risk of injury. Since children are smaller than adults, exposures to the same amount of a chemical may result in more severe effects. Moreover, children's growing bodies, including their developing brains, nervous systems, and lungs, may make them more susceptible to chemicals than adults. Differences in metabolism may also affect children's responses to certain chemicals. All of these factors need to be taken into account when using art materials.

Children's behaviors and cognitive abilities may also influence their risk when working with art materials. Children under the age of 12 are less able to remember and follow complex steps for safety procedures, and are more impulsive, making them more likely to ignore safety precautions. Thus, adult measures need to be in place since children have a higher risk of toxic exposure than adults because they are (1) unaware of the dangers, (2) not as concerned with safety precautions as adults, and (3) often more curious and attracted to novel smells, sights, or sounds. (Much like my own attraction to gasoline as a child.) (*N.B.: Children do not have to be using the art and craft materials themselves to be affected; careless child or adult artists can accidentally expose other children to hazards. So be forewarned.*)

Thus, adults need to model safety procedures, use appropriate safety gear and measures, and carefully read cautionary labels in order to protect their younger consumers. Children need consistent reminders of safety rules; *there is no substitute for direct supervision*. (Under the FHSA, most children's products that contain a hazardous substance are banned, be they toxic, flammable, or other hazard identified in the statute. However, the Commission *may* exempt art materials that satisfy all three of the following criteria: (1) the hazardous substances are required for functional purpose, (2) the products are labeled with adequate directions and safety warnings, and (3) the materials are intended for use by children who are sufficiently mature (e.g., can read and heed such warnings – a pretty tall order for most children). Thus, I cannot emphasize enough that it is the responsibility of the art therapist to decide which products one can safely use with any population.

### **Types of Hazards**

#### ***Mechanical Hazards: Strains, Breaks, Cuts, Crush Injuries, and Burns***

Virtually any object can damage the human body. The most common injuries include cuts, scrapes, crush injuries, and burns. And because I will be covering burn survivors when discussing materials, one has to think about the

psychological fallout of (for example) deciding whether or not to have lit birthday candles to celebrate a child's birthday. (This actually came up when running a burn survivors' group for children where the art therapists wanted to have a cake to celebrate one child's birthday. First, we asked the patient how he felt about having lit candles. He wanted them. Thus, we used them but with caution.)

### ***Chemical Hazards: Inhalation, Skin Absorption, and Ingestion***

Chemical exposures can occur through breathing fumes and vapors, absorption through the skin, or swallowing. Admittedly, I "point" my brushes by placing them in my mouth. (While I am aware that, over time, exposures to such chemicals may combine to damage my health, this is *not* a method that I would teach a child or an adult. Instead, I would demonstrate how to wipe the brush head at a 45-degree angle (side-to-side) in order to avoid toxicity.)

*Even adults may taste art supplies or chew on drawing implements.* I once had a dementia patient who tasted her paint. As a result, we supplied her with pudding and water with food coloring to avoid any hazardous results. Art therapists need to think outside of the box and continually adapt to patient needs. Back in the 1980s when I first started out as an art therapist, I was working with a quadriplegic young girl who really wanted to paint. So, I affixed a paintbrush to her headgear so that she could readily paint on paper. In time, she became so



*Figure 1.1* A young quadriplegic girl painting a clay object, using her mouth to hold the paintbrush.

#### 4 *Considerations on Safety and Art Materials*

adept at using the paintbrush that she asked to use it by holding the handle in her mouth. While not the most sanitary decision, she had greater control over where the paint went and therefore a more successful outcome. Today, there are even mouth-painting easels; but it seems that people still use paintbrush handles directly in their mouths to control the media. (You can find videos of motorized mouth-painting easels on the internet; see for example this one at the Spinal Cord Injury Zone: [www.spinalcordinjuryzone.com/videos/11880/motorised-mouth-painting-easel](http://www.spinalcordinjuryzone.com/videos/11880/motorised-mouth-painting-easel).)

### **General First Aid and Summary of Ways to Minimize Risks**

#### ***Eye Exposure***

- 1 Hold the eye(s) open with fingers and rinse immediately with water for at least five minutes. If wearing contact lenses, remove them after five minutes of washing and continue to rinse the eye(s) at least at five-minute intervals. (*N.B.: Rinse time depends on the degree of irritancy associated with a particular product.*)
- 2 For more advice, call the National Poison Control Center Hotline (1-800-222-1222), the nearest certified Poison Control Center, a doctor, or 911 if necessary.

#### ***Skin Exposure***

- 1 Rinse the skin with water.
- 2 For more advice, call the National Poison Control Center Hotline (1-800-222-1222), the nearest certified Poison Control Center, a doctor, or 911 if necessary.

#### ***Inhalation***

- 1 Move the person into fresh air.
- 2 For more advice, call the National Poison Control Center Hotline (1-800-222-1222), the nearest certified Poison Control Center, a doctor, or 911 if necessary.

#### ***If Swallowed***

- 1 *Immediately* call the National Poison Control Center Hotline (1-800-222-1222), the nearest certified Poison Control Center, a doctor, or 911 if necessary.

#### ***Minimizing Risks***

- *Know your materials.* Read warnings and labels. Take extra care when using unfamiliar products.

- *Limit exposures.* Substitute more hazardous materials with less dangerous ones. Avoid exposures to toxic materials.
- *Stay clean.* Always use protective gear, and practice good hygiene and waste disposal.
- *Clear the air.* Control dusts, filter air, add clean air, and remove fumes with proper exhausts.
- *Store materials properly.* Keep out of reach of children. Label all products.

## **General Information and Precautions for the Basics: Clay, Paint, and Papers**

(*N.B.: The following information has been adapted from the Art and Craft Safety Guide (USCPSC, n.d.)*.) For a complete listing of all art materials and handling, the author urges the reader to download the free PDF file. This is just a partial adaptation of that comprehensive brochure which has been published to protect the consumer.)

### ***Clay/Modeling Clay***

- Components may include hydrated aluminum silicates (with crystalline silica), talc, vermiculite, asbestos (a contaminant in some talc and vermiculite), kaolin, alumina, diatomaceous earth (silicon dioxide), and sand.
- Potential health effects from chronic long-term exposure to clay dust or powdered mix include skin irritation, lung diseases/infections (e.g., asbestosis, silicosis), and cancer (e.g., from asbestos).
- *Read the product label.* When possible, choose the safest materials available (e.g., those with few or no cautionary/warning labels).
- Avoid inhaling dust. Ensure appropriate ventilation or use a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-approved toxic dust respirator.
- When possible, use premixed clays to minimize exposure to large amounts of clay dust.
- To reduce dust inhalation, do not pulverize dry clay or sand “greenware” (unbaked molded and shaped pottery). Instead, finish greenware while damp/wet.
- When cleaning, do not sweep dust. Use a wet mop, rags, and/or a vacuum with a HEPA filter system.
- Wear gloves and/or use moisturizer to prevent dry skin.
- Rest wrists frequently to avoid repetitive stress injury (e.g., carpal tunnel syndrome).

### ***Clay Glazes***

- These are mixtures of silica, fluxes, and colorants for finishing or coloring clay.

## 6 *Considerations on Safety and Art Materials*

- Glazes may be toxic by inhalation, ingestion, and skin contact.
- Only use lead-free glazes or those with sodium, potassium, calcium, or magnesium fluxes. (Components may include arsenic, uranium, lead, chromium VI, lithium, beryllium, cobalt, antimony, cadmium, nickel, barium, vanadium, soda ash, potassium carbonate, feldspars, and fluorspar. Some glazes may contain solvents.)
- Use a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-approved respirator when working with powdered glazes if you are not using premixed glazes.
- Use a wet mop, rags, or HEPA vacuum to clean up spilled powders. Do not sweep.
- Avoid spraying glazes but if you do, use a spray booth equipped with a fan that exhausts to the outside.

### ***Painting General Information/Precautions***

- The potential hazards from paints are primarily associated with some of the vehicles/solvents (e.g., aliphatic and aromatic hydrocarbons, ketones, and alcohols) and pigments (e.g., lead carbonate, chrome yellow, cobalt arsenate).
- *Read the product label.* When possible, choose the safest materials available (e.g., those with few or no cautionary/warning labels).
- Use premixed paints to avoid the inhalation of dry pigments/dyes/powders.
- Use water-based products or observe the precautions on hazard-labeled products to reduce the potential hazards from solvents.
- Close containers of paint, pigments/dyes, and solvents when not in use.
- Remove paint from the hands with vegetable or baby oil and then wash with soap and water.
- Avoid turpentine and mineral spirits. Instead, for clean-up purposes, it is highly recommended that the user try Citra Solv, a natural organic cleaner.
- Be aware of the flammability potential of solvents.

### ***Specific Paint Materials Compounds***

#### *Caseins*

- These consist of dried milk, pigments, and preservatives.
- They can be hazardous to people with asthma.

#### *Encaustics*

- These consist of a suspension of pigments and other materials in wax.
- They can be a burn hazard.