

**JUDITH E. VIDA**

***What's Missing?***

Writing this as a catalog essay for an art exhibition collided with the final illness of my mother. A concentrically-spiraling network of associations emerged, much as it does in the context of psychoanalysis, functioning quite literally as a *net* to draw me toward facing some aspects of my life that had long eluded either mastery or acceptance.

In scholarly and critical writing about art, the personal is unacceptable. The writer's personal intersection with the work at hand is considered irrelevant and even irresponsible. But, speaking as a psychoanalyst who has learned from art and artists, writing that is empty of the personal has no interest for me and, more than that, is impossible to understand. When I am writing, the trail of my thought, feeling, and memory illuminates the inquiry, allowing a deeper penetration into the work, and a *deeper penetration of the work into me*. Following my trail, and privileging it, is not easy to do. It requires an abandonment of destination and the foregoing of intention, of preconception, of self-consciousness, and of critique; and it draws on *everything*. I am always afraid that the trail will be fruitless or silly. But when, improbably and against expectation, everything at hand suddenly *does* converge, I have a heightened sense of being in the world. (This is also how I work as a psychoanalyst.)

I invite you to follow the trail with me, to consider your own trail, and to see where we meet.

*Judith E. Vida is a Past President of IFPE. Her longstanding commingled interests include Sándor Ferenczi, contemporary art (with her husband, Stuart Spence), and The Autobiographical Dialogue as concept and practice, developed with Gershon J. Molad*