

Welcome, subscription@alm.com | [Sign Out](#)

[Law.com Home](#)
[Newswire](#)
[LawJobs](#)
[CLE Center](#)
[Online Store](#)
[Our Sites](#)
[Advertise](#)

ALM

Stay Connected with LAW.COM'S **FREE** E-Newsletters!

Register for **1, 2, 3** or as many as you need - they're **ALL FREE!**

**THE NATIONAL
LAW JOURNAL**
WWW.NLJ.COM

30-Day
FREE Trial

[GO >>](#)
NEW! Search one year of NLJ
 Advanced Search

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[NLJ Home](#) > [Columns](#)

OFFICE SPACE

Make your own kind of music

Tracey I. Batt, Esq.
June 18, 2007



New Jersey Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts director Tracey Batt

My tastes are, shall we say, eclectic. When I was an associate at a big firm in Manhattan, my office was filled with an unimaginable range of ... stuff.

I almost said "tchotchkes," but there can be negative connotations associated with that word, indicating low value or shoddy workmanship. The same can be said for the word "kitsch." Even if some of the things I had in my office were tchotchkes, they were tchotchkes of the highest possible quality, whether or not that is an oxymoron.

My shelves held a collection of *Yellow Submarine* figurines and a numbered, limited edition, *Yellow*

Submarine lava lamp, as well as Janis Joplin, Alice Cooper, and Ozzy Osbourne action figures. My 50-CD stereo, with surround sound speakers spread around the room, had so many flashing lights and so much chrome that it looked like the Mother Ship, and I half expected a George Clinton action figure to step out of it at any given moment.

The calming effects of Charo the Rumba Fish, a betta in a vase, cannot be overstated. When Charo was not enough, I had a misbegotten Teddy bear that I used as a voodoo doll. I also kept a broken ruler in a vase on my desk. When visitors invariably asked about it, I answered that it was to remind me that, no matter how good it feels, hitting a misbehaving computer with a stick is good for neither the computer nor the stick.

All were welcome in my domain. I kept a giant roll of bubble wrap on the floor, on which I, and anyone else who needed a bit of stress relief, could jump if the need arose. I even served tea and cookies in my office for the entire department twice a year, once the last business day before Christmas, and once the day before Thanksgiving, in conjunction with the annual ceremonial playing of *Alice's Restaurant*. I was probably the only New York associate ever to have 15 people attend an office memorial service for a fish.

The walls, however, were the best part of my office. Portraits of Eric Clapton, Marvin Gaye, and Ray Charles by Ronnie Wood kept a watchful eye on me. The fabric-covered wall over my desk, where I was supposed to tack office memos and "to do" lists, was an explosion of color. It was covered completely with photographs of family and friends, postcards, magazine clippings, and reprints of artworks I had collected from many of the world's museums.

I was even something of a minor celebrity. Various publications ran a number of articles, with photographs, on my office and me. At a Bar function, somebody actually recognized my face — aren't you the one who has that amazing office?

So now we come to the question you are dying to ask me: WHY? Why on earth would I keep so many things in my office of great personal value, or great intrinsic value, or both? The answer has many layers.

First, I am a creative person. Make no mistake about it, creative people come up with creative solutions to legal questions. A person

.....ADVERTISEMENT.....

LAW.COM
 Stay Connected with
LAW.COM'S FREE
E-Newsletters!

Register for **1, 2, 3** or as
 many as you need -
 they're **ALL FREE!**

LAW.COM
IN-HOUSE COUNSEL

SUPER SECTION

FEATURING :

- In-House News
- Sample Forms
- Compensation Information
- Briefing Papers
- In-House Blogs
- CLE Webcasts

SEARCH NOW



who can think about a problem in a new and different way is incredibly valuable to any law firm. Stifling creativity in one way leads to stifling creativity in other ways. Allowing yourself to have creative outlets allows the creativity to flow into your work product as well.

Second, I sometimes needed to remind myself of who I was, as I swam in the corporate sea. Surrounding myself with my favorite things served as a constant reminder that I am a unique individual.

Finally, and most importantly, I spent a great deal of time in my office. I found that I did not mind it as much as I thought I would when I was able to listen to music and make my office as much like home as possible. I was able to turn working long hours into a pleasant experience. If I was too stressed to perform adequately, I had numerous ways of relaxing myself, whether through listening to calming music, watching Charo swim, immersing myself in the color therapy of Art History, or venting my frustrations on the Voodoo Bear or the bubble wrap. If I was too tired to work, I had other musical options and a dozen different types of tea to jump-start my psyche.

I am not suggesting that you should go as over the top as I did. You do not need to play music in your office so loud that you fear getting a letter from ASCAP accusing you of unlicensed public performances of music. But you should have at least one thing in your office that reminds you of who you are, and that they are lucky to have you.

Tracey I. Batt, Esq., is the Executive Director of New Jersey Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, Inc. Before joining NJVLA, she was the Associate Director and Legal Services Manager of Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts and an associate at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP in New York, where she practiced copyright and music licensing law for seven years.

[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Email this Article](#)[Comment on this Article](#)[Reprints & Permissions](#)

[about ALM](#) | [terms & conditions](#) | [privacy](#) | [advertise](#) | [about NLJ.com](#) | [contact us](#) | [subscribe](#)

Copyright 2007 ALM Properties, Inc. All rights reserved.