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The Apartment Was Worth the Wait



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

PRIVATE SANCTUM It took 75 weeks before Tony LeRoy, who calls himself an "intuitive counselor," could move into his two-bedroom apartment.

By STEPHEN P. WILLIAMS
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WHEN Tony LeRoy was 3, he saw his grandmother. She was talking. The only problem was, she had been dead for years.

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"My mother laughed it off, so when it happened again, I kept it to myself," Mr. LeRoy said recently in his fifth-floor walk-up on West 83rd Street. He leaned forward in his reproduction Eames lounge chair and confided, "It was my first psychic experience."

He grew up in Flushing, [Queens](#) — his mother was a Haitian immigrant and his father had roots in Haiti, Canada and France. In true first-generation style, he has forged a singular American path as a dreadlocked

"intuitive counselor" — the term he prefers to psychic — with an office on Lower Broadway and hundreds of clients, including celebrities like [Isaac Mizrahi](#), who has described his experiences with Mr. LeRoy in magazines like W.

During his teenage years in Flushing, Mr. LeRoy, now 36, became fascinated by [Manhattan](#), even though his family pretty much avoided it.

"I was the kid who always loved the city," said Mr. LeRoy, looking down from his window at the building that Jerry Seinfeld spent five years renovating to house part of his collection of sports cars. "I'd cut school and come in and hang out in Greenwich Village. Everyone here seemed more open-minded than in Queens."

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It was about this time that he started taking his psychic experiences more seriously. He said he often found that he would be hanging out with one friend or another when he'd feel a stomachache coming on. He didn't understand what was happening.

"Then I learned that if I talked to my stomachache, I would hear words in return," Mr. LeRoy said. "For instance, once it said, 'Mother.' So I asked the person I was sitting with, 'How is your mother?' And he said: 'Wow, I was just thinking of her. You won't believe what she did to me.' And as we talked, the ache disappeared. I realized I was just absorbing everyone's stuff. I started focusing on what was happening."

Mr. LeRoy said he believes that everyone has psychic abilities but that he just exercises the psychic muscle more than others. He added that he has no control over the information that comes to him and certainly can't predict everything in the future, especially his own.

That became clear when his psychic abilities first met the New York real estate market.

He was 23 and desperate to find an affordable apartment in Manhattan, after spending several years bouncing between sublets, house-sits and his family's home in Queens.

Then one day, out of the blue, he turned to a friend and said, with utmost self-assurance, that he was going to find an apartment in the city soon, even though he didn't know how he was going to get it or how he was going to pay for it. His friend was skeptical.

A few days later, Mr. LeRoy was at his job handling viewers' calls at a televised psychic show, no longer on the air, when a woman called. She said that her boyfriend wanted to move in with her but that she wasn't sure it was the right thing to do. Mr. LeRoy immediately intuited the boyfriend's motives.

"I said: 'Wow, you have inexpensive rent, don't you? That's the reason he wants to move in,'" Mr. LeRoy recounted.

Shocked at his perspicacity, the woman said, "Yes, it's rent-controlled. I've been suspecting that's what he wanted all along."

Mr. LeRoy replied, "If you need a roommate, let me know."

A week went by, and the woman didn't call. Then a friend took him to an organic restaurant for lunch and so annoyed the waitress with endless requests for dressing on the side, quieter music and other things that she sent a new waitress over.

"The new waitress looked at me and said, 'Tony!' and hugged me," Mr. LeRoy said. "She said, 'I'm the one with the apartment — from the TV.'"

She invited him to move in, just as soon as she settled some problems with the landlord involving rats and water damage. She called Mr. LeRoy with an update every week or so for the next 75 weeks. "I never would have predicted it would go on so long," said Mr. LeRoy, sounding somewhat like the cobbler whose own boots need mending.

Finally, in 1995, he was able to move into a completely renovated light-filled two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan. He and the waitress remained roommates for five years, until she moved to Alaska and he took over the apartment.

His bedroom, in the front of the apartment, is about 10 by 12 feet, with one window, and just enough space for a bed and a dresser. An American Indian-style wall hanging made of leather, wool, rabbit fur and bird feathers hangs on the wall.

The kitchen is functional and more spacious than those in many New York apartments.

In the living room, a deep blue transparent Indian sari marked with gold threads and tiny mirrors runs the length of one wall. At the back of the apartment, the guest room that doubles as storage area is larger than the "master bedroom" but noisier, too, thanks to the children of the tenants next door.

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The apartment is a private place, where only Mr. LeRoy's best friends ever visit.

He conducts his business, for which he charges clients \$200 a session, from a 300-square-foot office in the Flatiron district. His clients include fashion types, psychotherapists and media people.

When they visit, he analyzes their souls, which he says he can see with his eyes closed, does a Tarot card reading, listens to their "spirit guides" and then answers any questions. He also periodically flies to Los Angeles to visit clients there.

He said he was not interested so much in predicting the future as he was in "holding up a mirror to people's lives to show them ways in which they could create changes — I'm interested in helping people find their personal power."

He insists he isn't a therapist, and to avoid that sort of relationship, he refuses to let people schedule appointments more often than once every three months.

For Mr. LeRoy, being so intuitive can be exhausting. In crowds, he says he picks up sensations from all over. He avoids the subway, where he can feel trapped amid too many impressions of too many people.

And sometimes he'll leave the office completely drained by working with clients. "My apartment is my escape, the place where I recharge," he said.

Mr. LeRoy has an altar there, with different spiritual objects that friends have given him, including a Ganges River stone, a drawing of Jesus and a figure of the Hindu deity Ganesh. When he wants to escape inward, he contemplates these objects or meditates.

"But sometimes I'll just procrastinate," he added with a smile, glancing at the large TV near the couch and the laptop on the table. These objects, too, are sacred in their way, because even psychics need time to tune out.

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