

Pre- and Peri-Natal Psychology, 1(1), Spring 1986

Pre- and Perinatal Expressions in Art

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Over the last two decades, it has become increasingly accepted that the pre- and perinatal period influences many different aspects of our personal lives. In psychology, this is often seen in dramatic ways because psychologists are dealing with people who wish to work through personal problems. Being an artist, and having access to my prenatal memories, I have come to recognize that expressions of pre- and perinatal memory through symbolism and styles is a common element in many artists' work.

Once one starts to look for it, the birth symbolism is often obvious, but I think even more so, artists share in common, a feeling or memory state that they work from that has its roots in the pre- and perinatal period. The artist subtly expresses these early feelings in the shapes, styles, and/or myths he/she uses.

Through the process of working nonverbally, intuitively, and with a feeling sense, the artist often reaches a preverbal, memory state. When working with a regressive therapy method, these are the same things that the therapist tries to encourage in order to bring forth perinatal memories—to be nonverbal, but still aware; to listen to the body in a feeling sense for memory; and to accept intuitively one's individual truth. This is in many ways the same process that the artist goes through to create, therefore it should not be surprising that pre- and perinatal memory should be expressed in art.

Throughout history, there have been many works of art that express natal and prenatal experiences, some of these created for the collective consciousness to satisfy group feelings or myths, while others were created strictly as an expression of an individual's specific past. For the most part, I think these symbols and myths have been created out of subconscious drives and that there has been little or no consciousness of the pre- or perinatal roots of the work.

One of the offshoots of the feeling therapies and of the Pre- and Perinatal Psychology Movement is the newly developed methods to gain access, in a conscious way, to early memories. For the artist, this opens up new frontiers with opportunities to work from the subconscious as

the surrealists, among others, have and (I think this is an important step forward) to actually use the prenatal feeling state and one's prenatal memories in both a subconscious and conscious sense to create art.

As an artist, using my subconscious and my personal history, I find I have to do a lot of non-objective listening to my body. Through this process, sculpting becomes both an act of creating and discovering, for like any journey back to inner memories, there is always that insight both into the self and society. Artists have always symbolized the pre- and perinatal period; perhaps a change is about to come in this creative act as more artists become consciously aware and connected to their early memories.

I have shared an exhibition of my sculpture titled "THE EMBRYO SHOW SERIES" at the PPPANA Convention in Sant Diego. I look forward to sharing my work with you and would like to discuss ideas about art, symbolism, and myths in relation to pre- and perinatal memory.