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The creator's experience in wood sculpture

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The creator's choice of art materials and his interactions with it reflect the dialogue between the concrete and the abstract materials of his life (Bar-On, 2007; Markman Zinamanes, 2010). There for the significance of the art materials is substantial for the understanding of the artist's experience within the field of art therapy (Betensky, 1995). This study is based on a qualitative method. It has examined the artist's experience in wood sculpting while addressing the theoretical framework of Expressive Therapies Continuum (Hinz, 2009; Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Lusebrink, 1990). This framework has helped to explore the various involved aspects in the creative experience and the relationship between them. The research sample included eleven non-artists participants. They were documented during creative process with wood and were asked to relate to their experience through semi constructed interview and reflective writing.

The analysis of the main findings of this study shows that the experience of wood sculpting, using the assemblage technique, is characterized by prominent movement, sensory, perceptive, emotional, symbolic and cognitive elements. It was possible to describe the wood sculpting process in five general developmental procedures, most of which included the phase of visual association. The artists' focus on the formative characteristics of the materials that were used, reflects a prominent presence of the perceptive element of the experience, which acts as an inclusive and balancing foundation for the emotional aspects of the experience (Hinz, 2009). In addition, there is a reciprocal relationship between the movement and cognitive elements involved in the artist's experience of wood sculpting. Part of this relationship can be explained by the findings of research in the field of brain activity (James et al. 2002). Another significant finding showed that the use of the various work instruments affected the elements of the experience. Thus, the use of hot silicon glue was perceived as easy and effective. It has even provided the participants with a learning experience in comparison to working with other work instruments (a hammer, a saw etc.). Using those instruments was perceived as masculine, and working with them was experienced as a sublimatory experience with destructive aspects.

It is possible that wood sculpting is perceived as masculine not only due to stereotypical interpretation but also due to its capability to unify all of the elements of aggression and boundaries (Bernstein, 2002). In addition, the use of wood as sculpting material is associated with themes of construction, the themes of life and death and the themes of balance and aesthetics. Moreover, the assemblage technique made it possible for the participants to have a various experiences in dismantling and assembly processes that led to the creation of the final product. These aspects of wood sculpting are relevant to art therapy practice and can be used with a variety of populations, such as children at the latency period, adolescents (Kramer, 1979), children with attention deficit disorder and sensory integration problems (Hinz, 2009), adults (McMurray, Mirman & Meisel, 1994) and patients suffering from neurological impairment (Lusebrink, 2004).

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