

EPF ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

March 24th, 25th, 26th, 2023

CANNES, FRANCE

ILLUSIONS

DISAPPOINTMENT, ILLUSION, IMAGINATION

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Xenia was born a disappointment to her parents. She had the misfortune of being a girl; her parents expected a boy after having had two girls. Her mother wrote the word “no condolences please” on the door to warn visitors that she did not want them to feel sorry for her. One year later, in the same hospital another baby was born, this time a boy. Xenia blew the unique candle of her “one year old” birthday cake on the hospital bed, while her little brother suckled the mother’s breast. It is with this story that Xenia began her 15 years of psychoanalytical treatment three times a week.

In his article “*The Unwelcome Child and his Death drive*” Sandor Ferenczi discovered that many children with serious life threatening illnesses were “unwelcome guests of the family”.

“All indications show that these children had observed the conscious and unconscious signs of aversion of impatience on the part of the mother, and that their desire to live had been weakened by these.”

Xenia’s desire to live seemed on the contrary to be strengthened by the many difficulties she faced since early childhood: beatings, perversity, and sexual abuse. She told of how she would spend hours in her room, allowing her imagination to roam freely and creating stories wherein her omnipotent fancy could find form. Was it the strength of this “transitional space” her room where she was free to imagine and where the “*substance of illusion*” could be created.

According to Abram, Winnicott introduces the necessity of illusion as an enabler for the individual to negotiate inner and outer, extending Freud's theory of the reality principle: " It is usual to refer to 'reality testing' and to make a clear distinction between apperception and perception. I am here staking a claim for an intermediate state between a baby's inability and growing ability to recognize and accept reality. I am therefore studying the substance of illusion, that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion."

My presentation will explore how the psychoanalytical space served as a *transitional*, *phenomena* for Xenia to create artistic objects (films) to punctuate her psychic evolution which seemingly was blocked, manifested by the repetition of trauma in daily life while her 'artistic' creativity' – six films- illusion – imagination – were the witness of her psychic evolution.

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