

# Betty White: Art Sanctifies Experience

Posted by [Catherine Tammaro](#) on Apr 25, 2011 in [Blog](#), [WordFlow](#) | [No Comments](#)



If an artist were to decide that her unconscious mind and feeling states should direct her work, does she then decide that the artistic success of the piece she has created, or her whole body of work for that matter, depends on how much of her deep self is revealed or in turn how easily that work is understood by those who view it?

Carl Jung the great psychoanalyst and interpreter of anthropological symbolism said, "The secret of artistic creation and the effectiveness of art, is to be found in a return to the state of 'participation mystique', to that level of experience at which it is man who lives and not the individual." Such is the world view of Cabbagetown artist Betty White, who successfully documents her life's landmarks in personal, accessible and moving works of art.

Entering her work space, I am surrounded by shells, tied sticks, stones and pieces of nature, full yet organised tables of pastels, papers, books and musical instruments, cabinets of curio and treasures. I know I am walking into a specific {mind} set; the outward manifestation of the inner creativity of Betty White. A work in progress, pinned to the studio wall attracts me, other powerful works hang in frames along the hall. The large works on paper consist of sculpted pressed paper pieces; images in pastels, pencil and other media. Each handsomely framed piece in Betty's hallway gallery, seems to represent a specific chapter of her experience; a visual Book of Hours. The sculptures; wrapped or tied pieces in small archaic looking figurative shapes, suggest a child bound to a mother, or perhaps a shaman ~ as the rock itself. Nature-crafted, artist-made talismans of some unconscious longing or markers of change.

Born in Worcester Massachusetts in 1944, into a family of accomplished musicians and scholars and having achieved her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1966 from The University of Colorado, White began her career as apprentice to Olly Reinheimer, the prodigious Brazilian fibre artist in Rio de Janeiro. She has enhanced her skills as a textile artist, by taking paper-making workshops in Montreal and at O.C.A.D. in Toronto. She taught at The Canadian Guild of Crafts in Montreal and The School House in Toronto and ran a paper-making course for teachers at The Children's Museum in Boston. Betty has exhibited in France, recently in Mexico; Toronto, Martha's Vineyard and Boston and her work is in the collections of Readers Digest, The Canada Council and Art Bank. Her works are also collected privately.

Senior Art Teacher at The Montcrest School, Betty White lives her art and about that process she comments; "I plug into a sort of 'archetypal' imagery that makes sense; my own creative visual language. I know a piece is finished is when it's original, natural and emotionally true." Thus Ms. White names herself 'Modern Primitive'...someone who somehow carries in her bloodstream, the echoes of a distant past."