


# Reflections of Near-Death Experiencers' Observations in the Works of Mahmoud Farshchian Based on Raymond Moody's Approach

ISSN (P): 2980-7956

ISSN (E): 2821-2452

 10.22034/jivsa.2025.498534.1111

Elaheh Sadeghi<sup>\*1</sup> , Hasan Razmkhah<sup>2</sup> 

**Correspondin Author:** Elaheh Sadeghi

\*1 Master's degree student in painting, Faculty of Art, University of Neyshabur, Neyshabur, Iran

<sup>2</sup> Department of Painting, Faculty of Art, University of Neyshabur, Neyshabur, Iran

**Email:** elahae.sadeghi@gmail.com

**Citation:** Sadeghi, E. & Razmkhah, H. (2025), "Reflections of Near-Death Experiencers' Observations in the Works of Mahmoud Farshchian Based on Raymond Moody's Approach", *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies of Visual Arts*, 2025, 3 (6), P. 227-230.

**Received:** 08 January 2025

**Revised:** 29 January 2025

**Accepted:** 01 March 2025

**Published:** 07 April 2025

## Abstract

Painting, as a powerful medium, can depict concepts beyond words. Understanding the observations of near-death experiencers presents a challenge in this field. Raymond Moody formulated a model based on the similarities of near-death experiences, which encompasses common themes such as out-of-body experiences, passage through a tunnel, a sense of stillness and peace, encountering a luminous being, and entering a transcendent realm. Painting can serve as a medium to represent these metaphysical experiences. Mahmoud Farshchian is among the artists whose works reflect celestial and spiritual themes. As a child, he survived a near-drowning incident, an event he later claimed influenced his artistic vision. Using surrealistic symbols, undulating and radiant colors aimed at representing the spectrum of light, meticulous attention to detail, and unique compositions, Farshchian creates a space that transports the viewer beyond tangible reality. These artistic characteristics closely align with the descriptions of near-death experiencers as outlined in Moody's model. To understand the manifestations of near-death experiencers' observations in Farshchian's works based on Moody's perspective. The question is: What aspects of near-death experiencers' observations are reflected in Farshchian's artworks? This study employs a descriptive-analytical-comparative approach, with data collected through library research. Farshchian, through circular compositions, fluid colors, and intricate details, creates a transcendent and dreamlike atmosphere that resonates with the characteristics of near-death experiences. This research confirms that art can serve as a bridge between the material world and metaphysical experiences.

**Keywords:** Painting, Near-Death Experience, Afterlife, Raymond Moody, Mahmoud Farshchian.

## 1. Introduction

Throughout history, art has conveyed experiences and emotions that transcend the limits of language. Among the most difficult to depict are near-death experiences (NDEs)—profound events reported by individuals who approached death and were subsequently revived. These accounts frequently contain recurring themes such as out-of-body perception, encounters with spiritual beings, passage through tunnels, and overwhelming feelings of peace or enlightenment. Because such experiences surpass conventional comprehension, their visual representation demands artistic approaches beyond traditional methods. In 1975, Raymond Moody systematized research on NDEs in his seminal work *Life After Life*, presenting a framework of their common elements. While his study did not seek to prove the existence of an afterlife, it offered a phenomenological and psychological analysis of NDEs, underscoring their universality across cultures.

Since then, Moody's model has become foundational to NDE studies, influencing both academic discourse and artistic interpretations. Among artists engaging with transcendent themes, Mahmoud Farshchian occupies a prominent place. His visionary style, influenced by Persian miniature traditions and illuminated manuscripts, employs intricate detailing, fluid compositions, and luminous palettes that evoke the transcendental qualities described by NDE experiencers.

Profoundly shaped by a childhood near-drowning, Farshchian's art reflects his lifelong engagement with themes of light, motion, and spiritual transcendence. This study investigates how Farshchian's paintings align with Moody's model of NDEs. Through comparative analysis, it explores the intersections of mystical motifs in his art with the phenomenology of NDEs, shedding light on how visual language encapsulates metaphysical experience. By examining

specific paintings resonating with NDE motifs, the research contributes to understanding the interplay between art, spirituality, and near-death studies, offering insight into how the unseen becomes visible through artistic expression.

## 2. Research Review

The representation of spiritual and transcendental experience in art has long been a subject of inquiry in both art history and psychology. Farshchian's work, distinguished by celestial motifs and surreal symbolism, has been analyzed through metaphysical, religious, and traditional Persian perspectives. Taqizadeh Momen and Kafshchian Moghaddam (2020) examined Persian painters such as Farshchian, Iran Daroudi, and Mehdi Hosseini, exploring how they drew on the Persian philosophical concept of the Imaginal Realm. They argue that Farshchian's paintings serve as visual manifestations of mystical encounters rather than mere illustrations. Similarly, Rezaei Nabard (2018) highlighted the role of imagination and spiritual vision in Farshchian's compositions, noting how swirling, fluid forms evoke visionary states aligned with Islamic eschatology and NDE testimonies. Sheikhi and Gharaei (2019) studied Farshchian's depictions of angelic figures, emphasizing his divergence from traditional miniature painting by foregrounding luminosity, divine presence, and transcendence. Their findings draw parallels between Farshchian's celestial beings and the radiant entities described in NDE accounts. In another study, Firouzi, Azheer, and Bakhtiari (2021) analyzed Farshchian's art through Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy, linking his radiant palettes and representations of divine light to the metaphysical role of illumination as the essence of existence and knowledge. This interpretation resonates strongly with NDE reports describing encounters with a luminous, all-knowing presence.

From a psychological perspective, Fox (2002), Lester (2005), and Miller (2021)

examined the impact of NDEs on artistic expression, demonstrating that survivors often depict tunnels, radiant figures, and ethereal landscapes in their art. These insights reinforce the connection between Farshchian's childhood near-drowning experience and his visionary, spiritually infused artistic language. While prior scholarship has illuminated mystical and metaphysical elements in Farshchian's work, few studies have analyzed it explicitly through the lens of NDE research. This study addresses that gap by applying Moody's model as a comparative framework, showing how Farshchian's symbolic, compositional, and chromatic choices resonate with NDE accounts.

### 3. Research Methodology

This research employs a descriptive-analytical approach, guided by Raymond Moody's model of NDEs. The study aims to identify and interpret visual elements in Farshchian's paintings that correspond with NDE characteristics as described by experiencers.

A qualitative method was adopted, combining library-based sources, textual analysis, and visual examination of 17 selected paintings. Data included published NDE accounts, interviews with experiencers, and detailed analysis of Farshchian's imagery. Moody's 15-stage model was applied, including elements such as out-of-body awareness, tunnel passage, encounters with light beings, and entry into otherworldly realms. Paintings were selected for their thematic alignment with NDE reports. Analytical focus was placed on composition, symbolism, color, and spatial structure. Particular attention was given to circular and flowing forms, radiant light sources, and faceless figures—elements that closely correspond to reported NDE motifs. Through triangulation of visual data, NDE narratives, and comparative studies in metaphysical aesthetics, this research ensures both accuracy and interpretive depth.

### 4. Research Findings

The analysis revealed six key aspects of correspondence between Farshchian's artistic language and NDE accounts:

#### Circular and Fluid Compositions – Out-of-Body Perception

Swirling, circular compositions create a sensation of motion and weightlessness, mirroring experiencers' reports of detachment from the physical body. Works such as *Toward the Light* and *Song of the Phoenix* evoke multi-dimensional awareness and expansion beyond material constraints.

#### Light and Color Representation – Vision of Divine Radiance

Farshchian's luminous palettes, radiant halos, and glowing central lights closely resemble experiencers' descriptions of overwhelming, loving light. Paintings such as *Rainbow* and *The Winged Horse* employ iridescent gradations suggestive of colors beyond earthly perception.

#### Symbolic Depictions of Spiritual Journeys – Passage Through the Tunnel

Spiraling pathways, ascending figures, and layered perspectives recall the tunnel motif described in Moody's model. In *The Unknown Road*, faceless figures progress toward an ethereal destination, symbolizing transition from material to spiritual domains.

#### Faceless Beings – Dissolution of Ego

Experiencers frequently describe encounters with luminous but indistinct entities. Farshchian's faceless, enshrouded figures in works such as *The Fountain of Paradise* embody this dissolution of individuality into collective consciousness.

#### Absence of Linear Perspective – Spatial Freedom.

Farshchian often rejects vanishing-point perspective, producing flattened yet immersive spatiality. This echoes the panoramic, all-encompassing perception described in NDEs, where experiencers

perceive multiple viewpoints simultaneously.

#### Central White Light – Divine Presence

Radiant white or golden light occupies a central symbolic role in Farshchian's paintings, as in *The Praise of Power* and *The Abode of Ibrahim*. Figures are depicted moving toward luminous sources, evoking attraction to divine presence.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Mahmoud Farshchian's paintings visually embody the themes of near-death experiences as outlined in Raymond Moody's model. Through circular motion, luminous color transitions, symbolic figures, and non-linear spatial structures, Farshchian conveys the ineffable qualities of transcendence, spiritual encounters, and altered states of consciousness. His rejection of strict perspective, integration of faceless radiant beings, and symbolic use of divine light produce an atmosphere that mirrors the metaphysical dimensions described by NDE survivors. Farshchian's art not only reflects mystical narratives but also translates ineffable human experiences into visual form, offering a bridge between material and metaphysical realities.

Ultimately, his paintings reveal the potential of visual art to articulate experiences that transcend language. By engaging with themes of death, afterlife, and spiritual ascent, Farshchian provides both personal and universal interpretations of the journey beyond life, inviting viewers to contemplate existence, transcendence, and what lies beyond.

### Funding

This research received no financial support.

### Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and writing of this article. All authors approve the content of the manuscript.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank colleagues and advisors who provided valuable scholarly insights for this paper.