

TITLE

## **Drawing and the Cognitive Niche**

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KEYWORDS

Drawing; Cognitive niche; Situated cognition

ABSTRACT

My drawing practice explores place. I return to the same place and draw, I take materials and alter their state to make drawings. I spend time repeatedly within a place to understand the knowledge gained. I draw to gain knowledge and to understand. In one location I have returned to draw from the same spot repeatedly over a year, initially as a reflection upon Merleau-Ponty's stance on a phenomenology of movement. These repetitive acts of drawing enabled a layered situated perception of that environment, my research became fully focussed upon drawing as a tool for engagement with the environment.

The science of cognition has opened new philosophical approaches to perception and cognition. The stance of situated cognition theory is concerned with the notions of embodiment, embedding and extension (Robbins and Aydede). These three conceptions envisage cognition as a process involving a multi-sensory individual moving within a contributory dynamic environment, which allows perception to build and knowledge to be generated (Noe). This knowledge can be used to relate to and alter the environment.

Drawing can be considered part of a cognitive process and I wish to explore this within my research. Drawing takes its place as does, seeing, perception and art within a philosophy of biologically structured organisation (Noe). Research in the biological sciences, are producing paradigms around the idea of extended physiology. A suggestion that some processes central to biology lie external to the organism (Wilson). This seems analogous to the notions within situated cognition theory particularly that of niche construction theory (Odling-Smee). This contends that organisms make changes to their environment which then feedback and have an effect upon the development of the organism.

The concept of the niche has been developed within other research disciplines for example the social niche and the cultural niche, however that of the cognitive niche (Tooby & DeVore) is of interest within my research. Cognitive niche theory places cognition within a fully situated compartmentalised space where thoughts, concepts and memories are held. This extended space elides physiological thought processes with our inhabited environments.

In my paper I contend that drawing is a tool which changes our environments, and is a process which allows humans to create niches. My paper places my durational drawing practice within the context of cognitive niche construction theory. This opens the possibility of re-framing drawing within a cognitive process.