

# Embodiment, Movement and the Uncommon Senses

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by

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# *Experiences*

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- *While commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, experiences are memorable*
- *Experiences involve engaging an individual*
- *The organization becomes the stager-offering an experience, rich with sensations created within the consumer*

# *Aesthetic Experiences*

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*We address the links between consumer experiences and the body- not just the process of thinking bodily*

*but*

*how the body affects the logic of our thinking..*

*The simultaneity with which people see, hear, feel, taste and smell art...*

# *Three frameworks.....*

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*Merleau-Ponty - phenomenology of the body*

*Lakoff and Johnson - metaphors and image schemata*

*Fauconnier and Turner - conceptual integration*

# *Consumer literature*

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- *Two levels of awareness- the conscious or phenomenological and the cognitive unconscious level*
- *The former makes individuals aware of their bodies in their thoughts while the latter involves all the unrecognized activities , including the neural processes of message transmission and learning that enable individuals to think and act*

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- *Thompson and Hirschman 1995*
  - *Celsi et al -1993 (sky diving)*
  - *Arnould and price – 1993(white water rafting)*
  - *The focus is on how the social world helps to shape individual bodily meanings and practices*

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- *The state of one's body has been interpreted as a material sign of the moral character within*
  - *Consumers try to carefully monitor the physical appearance of their body*
  - *We suggest that embodiment can be understood not only at this level-the phenomenological level but also at the cognitive unconscious level*
  - *Csikzentmihalyi and Robinson's (1990) study of museum curators*

# Merleau -Ponty

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- *Perception is both a physiological event and intellectual judgment*
- *Skill acquisition requires imagination and the ability to respond to situations continuously*
- *The motivation to learn skills is based on the body's tendency to grasp situations –(body hold or maximal grasp)*
- *After a point the body simply takes over*
- *Virtual body explorations*

# *Metaphor-* *Lakoff and Johnson*

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- *Metaphor is a bridge between two disparate or unrelated entities or concepts.*
- *It helps to map what is known on to the unknown*
- *Lakoff and Johnson describe it as follows:*
  - *Source domain is more concrete and target domain more abstract*
  - *E.g. Juliet is the sun –*
  - *The sun is the source domain and Juliet is the target domain*

# *Image Schema*

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- *Metaphors are not just rhetorical devices but cognitively underlie and help structure our understandings of what speakers do .*
- *It is tied to image schemas*
- *Image schemas are experiential gestalts that emerge during sensori-motor activity as we manipulate objects, seek orientation spatially and temporally and direct our perceptual focus for various purposes*

# *Source and target domain*

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- *The human body serves as a source for metaphorical thought and language*
- *Tacit connection between embodied action and abstract thought*
- *Since the body is the source domain, a few image schemas such as Balance, container, path-goal-force and time form the foundation.*

# *Types of schemas*

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- *The image schema –Balance- motivates various phrases referring to a person's attempt to restore equilibrium of the body and mind*
- *Containment schema–our mouths and bodies are experienced as containers. When the container is open, linguistic action is possible and when it is shut, there is only silence*

# *Conceptual Integration*

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- *Fauconnier and Turner [2002]*
- *In some metaphorical expressions , two or more domains may be involved*
- *Domains may be blended into a separate conceptual space which takes aspects of all domains and has a structure of it's own*

# Features

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- *Emergent Structure is generated in 3 ways:*
  - *Composition = Blends can contain elements not found in inputs*
  - *Completion = Pattern completion is basic to perception. We bring background knowledge to the blend*
  - *Elaboration = We treat them as simulations and run them...*

# Notes on ethnography

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- *11 months of field work in a museum*
- *Field notes and diary and in depth interviews*
- *30 visitors in all (long interviews)*
- *Guided tours/ audio guides*
- *Age, gender, knowledge of art, frequency of visits*
- *10 experts including curators and art lovers and 20 non experts*
- *Hermeneutic analysis*
- *Focus on three exhibits/permanent collections*

# *Discussion:*

## *Haptic Visuality*

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- *Consists of touching and seeing*
- *Through virtual body enactments it makes viewers more active, because they draw on their imagination.*
- *Viewers focus on the image itself-its physical configuration- rather than on the narrative . This in turn elicits a more sensuous response*

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- *Nancy –computer programmer-has no training in art . She uses the zoom lens effect-moving between figure and ground to get a good grasp on why the Mona lisa is such a famous painting. She realizes that the woman in the painting is watching her –a haptic element of the painting. By trying to answer this question she is also reducing the disequilibrium created by the question.*

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- *Perception and skill learning requires an active body.*
  - *Nancy not only perceived the art work with her eye but also grasped it through her movements-her kinesthetic and proprioceptive senses worked in tandem with the eye, that touched the object.*
  - *She also make a distinction between the real mona lisa –that follows you with her eyes- and any facsimiles that do not. Benjamin calls this the aura of the object –which eternally works magic on the viewer.*

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- *Another painting that affected her was Frida Kahlo's – "The suicide of Dorothy Hale"*
  - *Even though she knew little of Kahlo's work she relived the experience of this woman jumping off a large building and plummeting to her death.*
  - *She felt the vibration of the paint, the sensation of blood, the force of the body hurtling through the air and hitting the ground*

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- *She was overwhelmed not so much by the story of the suicide but by the sensation of falling.*
  - *There was no official story line- But it was emotionally full.*
  - *To confront a recorded message with a recollected image generates possibly a fund of personal memories ....a new act of remembering which in turn affects the aesthetic experience*

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- *Kahlo's representation of Dorothy's suicide brought to the surface-the surface of the body-the horror of taking one's life. In mimicking [virtual body enactments] the experience of falling in Hale's body, Nancy evokes a kinesthetic sense of touch.*
  - *The eye's readjusting from plane to plane [following the tumbling body] is the representation by one part of the body [eye] of what another part of the body would feel if one were to jump off a tall building*

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- *Nancy's confusion arises because of the blood on the frame –an indication of what should have been a shattered body. Yet at a more abstract level, the blood on the frame plays on the idea of what should be contained within the body, [the coffin during burial] and the artist's frame.*
  - *The container schemata are used here as a primary metaphor. But image schemata alone do not capture the richness of the experience*

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- *It is only through a complex process that we are able to identify the requisite motor imagery of a falling body, to elaborate on the process of how a hurtling body could remain composed on impact and to come to terms with the blood on the frame and what it means.*
  - *It is by entering the painting's body that the viewer comes to experience the canvas as sensation*
  - *In Kahlo's painting, the invisible becomes visible and the insensate becomes sensate*

# *Sound*

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- *Audio technologies disrupt traditional ways of seeing*
- *Surround sound effect subverts forward gaze of subject*
- *Sound blurs the boundaries between the inside/outside of body*

# *Sound 2*

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- *Immersed in sound individuals can lose themselves*
- *Audio text, labels and catalogues create a form of ceremonial rhetoric*
- *Audio guides-stimulates at least 3 of the senses: sight, sound, touch and movement. Hence impact is profound*

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- *Emotion as forces=people are containers for emotions which themselves are substances within the container. The body is a container for emotions. For Soutine not to be able to let out a scream suggests that he could not access this emotion except through his painting.*

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- *Sound is ambient and textural and can thus be haptic reminiscent of the affecting presence in oral tradition.*
  - *If art makes visible what is invisible, then sound has the same potential.*
  - *Chatting with the listener is one way of breaking the linearity of story telling and the narrative authority of curators.*
  - *Where vision has been typically privileged, the sight lines may be ruptured through sound*

# *Smell and Taste*

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- *Taste = Aesthetic evaluation often defined in terms of the cultivation of the eye*
- *“taste” =sensations of the palate*
- *Kant=judgments about beauty transcend individual perceptions*

# *Smell and Taste 2*

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- *Odor has an effect before a form is recognized*
- *Meaning given to Odors are culturally defined*
- *Since Odors cannot be contained, smell is delegated to the realm of the emotional and Irrational*

# *Calla lily vendor*

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- *By focusing on taste and smell, we underscore the importance of virtual body explorations in apprehending the aesthetic. Jennifer backgrounds vision and foregrounds touch and smell*
- *Reference to thick yellow stamens etc., draw attention to the smell.*
- *The shape of the flower is similar to the lips of the woman*
- *Large bunches overshadow the woman*

# *The Mexican exhibit*

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*Ingesting art is akin to eating food.*

*When taste is used [eating] the art work becomes more immediate*

*Audiences become aware of their bodies and the subject/object dichotomy breaks down into intimate processes of chewing and ingesting.*

# *The Mexican exhibit*

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*What was not consciously registered at the moment of olfactory permeation in Mexico, and only partially recognized when viewing the pictures is now firmly etched in memory through the story telling process.*

*The container schemata is used here –and odors as elements that are uncontainable yet have the power to transform an individual's thought.*

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*Conceptual blending is important because it is through elaboration and completion that we understand that Peter was referring to the odor of poverty.*

# *Concluding Remarks :Perception and Imagination*

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- *Consumer Perception is both a physiological and intellectual judgment.*
- *It is closely linked with imagination*
- *Although one acquires knowledge primarily through the eye and the act of seeing, many participants found themselves in situations where seeing allowed them to engage in other sensations – touch, taste, sound and smell.*

# *Perceptual Rules*

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- *Perceiving an object requires grasping the object as a whole as well as in terms of its parts. Body-dependent order of presentation affects how object is perceived*
- *Every sensation can be potentially summoned by viewers whose virtual body allows them to participate-body part by body part –in all of the sensations. It is not as Kant suggests a higher order activity divorced from the body.*

# *Perceptual Rules contd.*

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- *Existential phenomenology allows us to grasp the conscious process. To get at the unconscious we need image schemata and conceptual integration*
- *Metaphors hold the key to unlocking the deeper processes of embodiment .*
- *Thinking and reasoning are also based on neural processing.*

# *Emotions*

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- *Finally, during our interviews we also noted that many of the participants' metaphorical projections involved emotions.*
- *Nancy moves from a discrete emotion – fear, to describing the felt quality of fear – tremendous sadness.*
- *We argue that the body is implicated in these affective states through the language used to express them, for emotional language clearly draws on the same image schemata, or primary metaphors, used in other contexts.*

# Contributions

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- *In Consumer research, the term 'consumer experience' is used extensively –Arnould and Price's study of river rafting, Celsi's study of sky diving etc. None of these studies discuss how consumer embodiment is central to our understanding of what constitutes an experience. Embodiment has not been treated as a theoretical construct, so far.*

# Contributions

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- *In consumer research the focus has primarily been on the phenomenological –even for discussions of embodiment [eg. Craig Thompson and Haytko’s study of fashion;*
- *Belk et.al., study of consumer desire highlights the idea of desire as arising from the body –yet, they too do not treat embodiment as something to be examined in it’s own right.*

# Contributions

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- *Embodiment is central to our argument in this paper –we tap into this phenomenon through metaphor and conceptual integration*
- *We provide de-familiarization through Epistemological critique*
- *Consumer researchers have just begun to understand the sensuous negotiation that life demands*