Abstract:

**Autonomic Drawing: A Postphenomenological Research Project**

Key words: drawing, postphenomenology, variational practice, human-technology relationship, wearable tech, intentionality, embodiment.

- The topic of this proposed paper for NAFAE Research Symposium is to present a brief overview of my current postdoctoral drawing research, described in pedagogical terms.
- Using the example of a particular drawing research project (Autonomic Drawing), the aim is to describe my approach as an example of interdisciplinary practice-led research.
- In describing how postphenomenological research is understood in epistemological terms, I will offer a detailed account of the how the main method associated with it – variational practice – operates within my drawing research.
- Variational practice operates in tandem with various method(s) of serially developed drawing. Together they form part of my methodology for conducting practice-led research through drawing.
- In combination with wearable technology, variational practice allows the researcher to query contemporary phenomena in empirical and embodied terms. This forms a potential pedagogic strategy for demonstrating how to rigorously conduct practice-led research.

**Postphenomenology** is a non-foundational and interdisciplinary style of phenomenology developed by American philosopher Don Ihde. It combines a pragmatist approach with an empirical turn, re-placing the emphasis on doing phenomenology in the manner originally envisaged by Edmund Husserl. Standing apart from its 'transcendental', 'existential' and 'hermeneutic' predecessors, the aim of postphenomenology is to explore contemporary topics like the human-technology relationship in tandem with traditional phenomenological concerns like embodiment and intentionality. At its core lies the method of variational practice – in looking at any phenomenon, one must place it within its possibilities, its variations. As a doctoral researcher exploring the link between drawing and the phenomenological ‘stream of consciousness’, I found this method invaluable for developing my practice-led research. As a postdoctoral researcher, I develop it in interdisciplinary terms.

**Autonomic Drawing** combines a method of serially developed drawing with wearable tech and variational practice. The aim is to query the phenomenon of so called ‘automatic drawing’ in both embodied and empirical terms. The term autonomic refers to the autonomic nervous system – the involuntary response of the body to external stimuli. This can be measured via wearable sensors that record electrodermal skin response (EDA), worn whilst the subject is drawing voluntarily i.e. with intention. Treating the drawings and the EDA readout as forms of 'data', I argue that the relationship between the (voluntary) intentional act of drawing and the (involuntary) embodied EDA response can be explored, using the method of variational practice to deliver unexpected results.
Bibliography


