**Extracts from:**

**Cain, P. 2010. *Drawing*: *The Enactive Evolution of the Practitioner***

*Bristol, Uk and Chicago, USA: Intellect.*

**Introduction**

‘Discussing the difficulty experienced in being asked to account for the development of her work as an undergraduate: ‘many reasons for decisions in the activity of drawing were not apparent to me. In fact, if I had been pushed to describe my state of mind or the conditions for the decisions made during making, I might have done no better than to describe a state of absentmindedness. Retrospective explication was sometimes more possible, but during the process this was elusive or at best ambiguous.’ (17)

As representational work gave way to more abstract non-representational drawings ‘about’ landscape she was ‘developing my work in response to the way in which I alternated between focussed awareness and dis-attention whilst making the drawings.’ (18)

Cain was preoccupied with the issue of knowing/not knowing where to go in the drawing process, and how or whether the practitioner could be aware of it. She argues that there is a discourse that presents the articulation of process as negative for artists (Cain quotes Henry Moore as an example of this, p19).

‘As I moved through my journey to reconcile my own experiences with these differing opinions, my views about the activity changed. From initially considering drawing as a finite event towards the production of an artifact, I began to consider drawing as *process* – as an end in itself. As a consequence, my focus became the evolution of the practitioner rather than the evolution of the drawing, and how to map this evolution became equally as important. The vital question was not as my tutors had asked, ‘what is this drawing about?’ but rather ‘what have I come to know about the world through making this drawing?’ (19)

Cain came across Francesco Varela’s ‘biologically-based theory of *Enactive Cognition.* Considering drawing as an enactive phenomenon allowed me to regard the drawing practitioner not as an individual entity operating in isolation from the environment, but rather as part of an eco-system in relation to the world around him or her. In this scenario, thinking occurs within the processes of interaction between the two.’ (19)

An account of an ‘in-depth and rigorous example of the nature of learning in creative research.’ (20)

‘.. I could not have foreseen the ways in which my search for an answer to my initial question would reveal so much about the symbiotic relationship between *what* I know (my subject matter) and *how* I know it (my methodology i.e. the principles and ideas which govern how I go about my practice). The account of my experience of the methodological evolution of this research is integral to what I have come to know and how I have come to know it, revealing what Mey calls the ‘gesture of my thinking’ (May 2005). ‘ (20)

‘One of my two main aims in recounting my journey in this book is to provide insight for other practitioners about how ‘research through practice’ requires us to face some difficult questions. These include, for instance, how one deals with the notion of subjectivity during an investigation, or how one might deal with the primarily philosophical condition of *self* in practice, or how a situation of ‘not knowing’ with the head might be incorporated and valued in contexts which often require us to be certain and explicit. Although I have focussed on the artistic practitioner, these issues are not particular to my investigation but require navigation by anybody who wants to find things out for themselves through ‘doing’ things rather than conceptualizing about them. These are perhaps particularly relevant in the context of artistic research due to the contentious issue of whether ‘research through practice’ is or is not possible. They are also relevant in the sense that research in Art and Design is thought of by some as lacking in academic heritage, and as a consequence often relies on borrowing methodologies from other more academically established disciplines.’ (20)

‘As a result of my experience I have come to view thinking as not simply a consciously reflective post-activity event but as a process which occurs on an innately self-reflexive subconscious level as part of activity – a process where ‘not thinking’ or ‘not knowing’ might be valued. In relation to the educational circumstances that evoked my investigation, I now see the case for teaching skill (which seems to have been forsaken in the curriculum of many art schools) because of the depth with which I have paid attention to my own experience of learning in an activity.’ (20)

‘The second aim of recounting my journey is to share a flavour of the experience of what it’s like to be engaged in a process, where often the questions which are at the core of the enquiry are not always visible at the outset but emerge only as the enquiry progresses. In other words, how can we find an answer to a question we don’t yet know? The nature of this type of experience is, I suspect, at the very heart of researching through the practice of many physical activities such as movement, music, archaeology, sculpture – the list is endless. I have found that participant in (rather than the easier and more natural avoidance of this kind of process, has assisted me to practice and value the consistent intention I needed to navigate the points in my working process when I have to just engage blindly.

It is because of this crucial participatory aspect that I have made the decision to write what is in effect an academic piece of research, not only in the First Person, but by incorporating a record of my own thinking process as part of this.’ (20)

‘Before and whilst writing this book I thought long and hard about the extent to which my account should incorporate a record of my own thoughts which accompanied the practical task of researching, and the nature of the decision I made as part of this. This was because the observations and connections I made could be thought of as being highly personal or, at worst, nothing to do with my apparent subject matter. Whilst writing, I came to appreciate how this personalized description of one’s experience was indicative of, and in fact absolutely necessary, towards a full account of the nature of experiential thinking. Implicit in this is the realization that what comes to be known through experience has to be recognized, identified and made sense of by oneself. I can identify what I know about my experience not only by showing to myself what I come to know, but also by showing to myself how I validate this to myself. In other words, my discoveries are only as important as I understand them to be.’ (21)