

The skillful body and affordances for material mimesis

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According to Ann-Sophie Lehmann (2015) the material turn in art history “is still in need of a coherent theoretical framework in order to analyse how concrete materials and techniques make and achieve meaning”. This is also true of material mimesis. I will show how Lehmann’s (2015) preliminary theory as well as Lambros Malafouris’ (forthcoming) latest ideas on his Material Engagement Theory can via the notion of affordances (Gibson, 1979) be linked to work in the field of embodied/enactive cognitive science (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991; Chemero, 2009) and to Tim Ingold’s (2013) work on the role of materials in skilled action. Affordances are the possibilities for action provided by to us the environment. In recent philosophical work we have defined affordances more precisely as relations between (a) aspects of the *material environment* and (b) abilities available in a form of life (e.g. in the human form of life). (Rietveld & Kiverstein, 2014, p. 335). Once we see concrete situations of material engagement as a kind of skilled action (Rietveld, 2008, *Mind*) this opens up the perspective of using a proven conceptual framework from embodied/enactive cognitive science: we can understand material engagement theoretically as a form of *skilled intentionality*, i.e. as engaging with multiple affordances simultaneously in concrete situations (Rietveld & Kiverstein, 2014; Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014, figure 1; Rietveld & Brouwers, forthcoming; Malafouris, forthcoming).

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