

Dr Ted Nannicelli

University of Queensland

Stream E: Cultural Change and Creativity in Science and the Arts

Title: Aesthetics and the Limits of the Extended Mind

Abstract: For all of the waves that 4E (embodied, embedded, extended, enactive) cognition has made in other parts of philosophy, there have been few sustained discussions of it in conjunction with aesthetics. Recently, however, this has begun to change. According to Daniel Hutto, for example, “The arrival of [4E] accounts of minds [...] might influence and reshape our thinking about the production and appreciation of art” (211). This paper considers a particularly provocative and popular externalist thesis – The Extended Mind Thesis (EM), most notably advanced by Andy Clark – in relationship to art production and reception. My argument is that EM does not create pressure on us to radically revise our conceptions of artists, their creations, or our appreciation of them. On the contrary, an analysis of our creative and appreciative artistic practices casts doubt upon EM’s applicability to the artistic realm.

My conclusions are not wholly negative, however, and certainly should not be interpreted as suggesting there is no place for “the new sciences of mind” in our study of art and aesthetics. Kim Sterelny’s account of cognitive scaffolding offers a modest, plausible model for further inquiry into how the relationship between individual(s) and environment shapes the processes and products of artistic creation. Furthermore, the conjunction of historical research and 4e cognitive theory that John Sutton cites in the work of theatre scholar Evelyn Tribble may plausibly complement the work on collaboration and authorship that is already being undertaken in aesthetics, drama, and literary studies in different guises. However, if 4e cognitive theory is to make a contribution to our understanding of art and aesthetics, it will need to be in collaboration with traditional humanistic methods of analysis that are geared towards the specificities of our cultural and social practices.

Bio: Ted Nannicelli teaches at The University of Queensland. His papers can be found in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and *British Journal of Aesthetics*. His most recent book is *Appreciating the Art of Television: A Philosophical Perspective* (2017). He is the editor of *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind* and co-editor of *Cognitive Media Theory* (2014).