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Am I here or there? Space and Action in Aesthetic Experience, Abstract

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BODY of KNOWLEDGE

Am I here or there? Space and Action in Aesthetic Experience

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When viewers approach a canvas that delivers a life-like, almost photographic rendering of a scene, the person's perception of space and body might change considerably. Through a combination of perception and imagination they are transported from 'here' to 'there'. They remain in the physical space surrounding an artwork but also engage in imaginary actions within the pictorial space. This situation exemplifies the account of multiple states of existence and the flexibility of cognition. It also highlights the connection between perception of space and actions that can be performed within it.

The aim of the paper is twofold: presenting experimental data on subjects' experience of space and action when viewing Vermeer's paintings (1) and framing the data within the wider theoretical context of embodied cognition paradigm (2).

Regarding the first objective, physiological measures (eye movements and body sway) will be described with particular attention to the indices that suggest that the imaginary actions and places have an effect on viewers' bodies. With reference to the second objective, relevant aspects of embodiment theory will be discussed such as the concept of motor components of spatial cognition and affordances.