

Creative Sketching and the Traveller's Experience

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Objectives | An argument for how the act of creative sketching can enhance a traveller's experience. Drawings are much more than snapshot recordings of a place or thing. The value of sketching lies in the meditative process rather than an aesthetic evaluation of the product. Sketching is a way of creating reverence and dignifying the subject.

Methodology | This is a philosophical argument which draws on literature of sketching, religious experience, and the author's personal experience.

Main results and contributions | It will be explained that drawing can be an act of 'reverence.' Reverence is like a language, in that it is not an isolated activity, but is contextual and situational. (Woodruff, 2014). Woodruff writes about music and theatre and justice, as examples of reverence. The author has included drawing in this analysis. For example, drawing the inside of a church, or a couple resting on a bench, is perceived as respectful rather than intrusive and voyeuristic. This is a contextual activity which involves more than the isolated self of the artist. Further, the traveller's heightened attention on a subject is an active meditation, unlike many tourism experiences which are essentially a passive looking-at-things. The unmediated experience of drawing connects the artist to the place in ways that can strengthen one's virtues of compassion, awe and insight. Thus, creative drawing can be described as a type of "ethical labour" (Smith & Duffy, 2004). Finally, drawing has been described as a way learning to "see" (Franck 1993). In an almost unconscious proprioception between vision, mind and hand, sketching is an activity that transcends routine perception, and results in what could be described as a religious experience.

Limitations | (not applicable)

Conclusions | The author argues that the modest tourist activity of drawing can be a religious experience. William James, for example, writes in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, that one variety of religious experience is the "grateful admiration of the gift of existence" (James, 2012, p. 83). Sketching is the very instantiation of this response to existence. Similarly, the 'peak experiences' described by Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 1970), and the 'flow' experiences described

by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), both involve an immersive activity that creates a feeling of oneness and connection to all of existence.

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