

PAINTING THE MENTAL CONTINUUM: PERCEPTION AND MEANING IN THE MAKING

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What happens within our thoughts and feelings as we view a photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson of an aged man entering a cab, Vermeer's *Head of a Young Girl*, or Dali's *Premonition of Civil War*? How do we derive meanings, ideas and emotions from a portrait of Anne Frank, or to an arresting image of an atomic diffraction pattern made with an electron microscope?

In *Painting the Mental Continuum: Perception and Meaning in the Making*, architect and artist Herb Greene offers a compelling new analysis of such pictures and our responses to them, reinforcing his arguments with original collage paintings. His objective is to reach people who feel the power of images but have not paused to explore what is in the image – and in themselves – to make them feel this power. For example, in finding the “godlike hidden hand” in the headdress of Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance*, Greene points out details, contexts and overviews that influence thought and feeling, and shows how imagination shapes them into meaning.

In the second part of *Painting the Mental Continuum*, Greene introduces philosopher Alfred North Whitehead's ideas on perception and interpretation of the visual world. He also incorporates contemporary discoveries in the fields of cognitive science and neurobiology that confirm the validity of Whitehead's insights. By applying Whitehead's ideas, with their emphasis on imagination and our dependence on the body-mind with its genetic inheritance, Greene achieves precision and originality in his explanations. By imaging the painted ground of his collages as a “mental continuum,” in which the viewer unifies feelings and ideas into symbols, Greene also offers readers a new approach to understanding collage as an art form.

Illustrated with more than seventy reproductions, including ten by Jan Vermeer, *Painting the Mental Continuum* embraces a wealth of fresh insights that will guide readers, specialist and non-specialist alike, as they explore the intersection of art, philosophy and cognitive science.