

# SENSATION AND SUGGESTION: WILLIAM JAMES AND SADAKICHI HARTMANN'S SYMBOLIST AESTHETICS

*EMILY GEPHART*



Although American art critic Sadakichi Hartmann made only one brief reference to William James's work, this essay argues for the philosopher's underlying influence on Hartmann's aesthetic beliefs. Some of James's most important insights regarding integrated sensation, cognition, and consciousness appeared just as Hartmann was establishing his critical voice. By exploring commonalities between James's pragmatic philosophy and Hartmann's endorsement of symbolist indeterminacy, I show how the critic was indebted to Jamesian models of embodied aesthetic experience. James's pluralistic inclusivity also fostered Hartmann's emphasis on interactivity between perception and interpretation, and nurtured his progressive belief in modern art's uplifting potential.



A connection between William James and the eccentric German-Japanese-American art critic Sadakichi Hartmann (1867-1944) may not seem immediately apparent. Hartmann was a flamboyant bohemian intellectual and Greenwich Village habitué: he penned lyrical, symbolist poems; he authored scandalous plays about the private lives of Christ, the Buddha, and Mohammed; he composed dazzling multi-media theatrical spectacles; and he produced wildly experimental perfume symphonies.<sup>1</sup> But he is probably best known by art historians and cultural critics as an astute observer of America's changing aesthetic tastes in the years bracketing the turn of the twentieth century. His opinions helped to promote photography's artistic merits as well as to nurture emerging modernism in painting – particularly the incipient abstraction that came to define modern art in the later twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Hartmann lectured widely on these topics, and among several significant books, he wrote a two-volume *History of American Art*, a survey of Japanese aesthetics and a comprehensive study of James Abbott McNeil Whistler. His most substantive contributions to advancing the cause of modernism, however, were made in the wide-ranging essays he composed for periodicals, from his own short-lived publications *The Art Critic* and *Art News*, to mainstream magazines such as *McClure's*, *Musical America*, and *Brush and Pencil*. Above all, his essays for Alfred Stieglitz's groundbreaking journals *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work* supported the work of modern artists across multiple mediums, and offered valuable insights into modern art's developing formal priorities.

But although James and the younger writer both had a formative aesthetic education abroad, and both orbited Boston's cultural and intellectual spheres in the early 1890s, it is unlikely they ever met.<sup>3</sup> If Hartmann attended any of James's lectures, or found any specific texts useful to his advocacy of modernism, the critic never mentioned them. He made only one brief direct reference to James's influence, describing him as one of the "mightiest intellects" active during his brief residency in Boston.<sup>4</sup>

In like measure, James's writings never mention the eccentric aesthete, nor does he show much interest in the symbolist avant-garde to which Hartmann devoted favorable regard.

Although it is therefore hard to know for sure which of James's writings Hartmann encountered, striking if speculative commonalities emerge in their work. This essay seeks to shed new light on the Jamesian insights that ground Hartmann's symbolist aesthetics by exploring the productive entanglements between art, literature, philosophy, and psychology that animated American intellectual culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Prior writers such as Jane Calhoun Weaver and Rachael Ziady DeLue have evaluated the influence of physiological aesthetics and psychological discourses on Hartmann's writing, yet despite tantalizing suggestions that deeper connections between James and the critic might exist, these are hard to prove and have not been thoroughly investigated.<sup>5</sup> By placing James and Hartmann in conversation, I hope to enhance the understanding of two intellects whose ideas nourished new forms of modern American culture, since some of James's best-known proposals about integrated sensation, cognition, and consciousness were published just as Hartmann was establishing his critical voice in the early 1890s.

I contend that James's conceptualization of the stream of unified consciousness shares important affinity with Hartmann's emphasis on the totality of sensation and cognitive comprehension that arose from the psychological 'suggestiveness' of symbolist ambiguity. According to Hartmann, such indeterminacy was an invitation to interactive perception and interpretation, and thus the democratic ethos at the core of James's radical empiricism also corresponds with Hartmann's belief in art's progressive capacity to activate engaged viewership in a pluralistic nation. Even though James did not endorse avant-garde modernism directly, his pragmatic philosophy helped Hartmann establish art's underlying cultural and scientific worth: Hartmann proposed that when 'suggestive' art set a beholder's perception and imagination to work in concert, the interpretive problem-solving that resulted revealed dynamic consciousness in operation.

I build towards this analysis by assessing Hartmann's formative experiences and early critical writing, first considering James's influence on the avant-garde circles within which the critic assembled his aesthetic values. Hartmann's encounters with symbolism and psychology in Paris in the 1890s established the philosophical groundwork upon which he built his subsequent writing. Then, examining how James's affirmation of unified consciousness fostered Hartmann's emerging beliefs, I investigate how the critic nurtured reciprocity between art's material form and embodied experience. Emphasizing the primacy of experience, James's thought upholds Hartmann's proposal that all art – even the seemingly opposed representational aims of photography and increasingly abstracted painting – addressed the conscious and unconscious mind simultaneously. Ultimately, I explore how Hartmann framed the value of 'suggestion' in light of James's pragmatist aesthetics. The philosopher's ideas fostered the dynamic interpretation that Hartmann sought to cultivate in American beholders, and which his own criticism exemplified.

### **SYMBOLISM AND JAMES'S PSYCHOLOGY**

Hartmann's background epitomized a kind of modern American pluralism: born to a Japanese mother near Nagasaki in the late 1860s, Hartmann spent his early childhood in his father's native Germany, receiving a thorough education in philosophy and languages. Reluctant to follow the naval career planned for him, Hartman ran away from boarding school, and was sent to live in Philadelphia with relatives in 1882, where he pursued independent studies while working in an engraving shop.<sup>6</sup> During his spare time, he offered his services as a translator and occasional secretary to Walt Whitman, whose metaphysical philosophies both he and James esteemed highly.<sup>7</sup>

Spending a year in Paris in 1892 as an international arts correspondent for *McClure's* before returning to settle in the United States, Hartmann discovered the symbolist avant-garde in literature and the visual arts. He encountered leading artists, critics, and symbolist writers at poet Stéphane Mallarmé's regular

Tuesday gatherings: among them painters Whistler and Claude Monet, playwright Maurice Maeterlinck, and poets Gustave Kahn, Jules Laforgue, and Remy de Gourmant.<sup>8</sup> Hartmann thrilled to rapport with Mallarmé; the two corresponded about the philosophical precepts of symbolist art, theater, and poetry.<sup>9</sup> Hartmann capitalized upon these experiences as his critical career subsequently flourished first in Boston and then in New York, beginning in the early 1890s.

Symbolists responded to the same uncertainties about the modern world's unsettling changes that motivated James's pragmatist philosophy of scientific knowledge. They investigated the slippery relationships between words, images, and meaning, and they evaluated the differential truth revealed by materially grounded experiences of reality and their imaginative, visionary counterparts. The movement, however, was extremely diffuse across media; in art it was equally diverse in style and substantive preoccupations, encompassing the proto-abstract form of Odilon Redon, as well as the tighter illusionism of Fernand Khnopff.<sup>10</sup> While some symbolists pursued lofty Swedenborgian correspondences, Wagnerian intermediality, or Neoplatonic idealism, others delved into perversity and decadent literature, esoteric doctrines, or the Catholic revival, traits visible in the occasionally bizarre work – like Jean Delville's occult fantasies – displayed at Josephin Péladan's Salons of the Mystic Order of the Rose + Cross, the first of which Hartmann may have attended.<sup>11</sup>

Still others, especially those in Mallarmé's orbit, were motivated by the philosophical questions at the heart of the contemporary science of the mind that also concerned James. As the discovery of the unconscious came together, symbolist artists and poets followed the emergent disciplines of physiological psychology and psychopathology, hoping scientific discoveries might shed light on the mechanisms of perception, consciousness, protean creativity and transcendent insight.<sup>12</sup>

Direct reference to the perception of art may be rare in James's publications, despite his early career ambitions to pursue painting, but his discerning observations about the relationship between the

sensation of aesthetic effects such as color, shape, or sound and consciousness developed across many published essays and lectures in the 1890s, and the seeds of his pragmatist aesthetics emerge in the publications from which Hartmann and his symbolist peers gleaned core philosophical beliefs.<sup>13</sup> Léon Marillier's extensive 1892 review of James's *Principles of Psychology*, published in four parts in *La Revue Philosophique*, animated discussion in these heady, avant-garde circles about the dynamic exchange between modern science and the arts.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as Richard Cándida Smith has observed, "[p]ragmatism and symbolism were two parallel experiments in the reconstruction of 'science,' meaning, in this case, theorized knowledge rather than ... practices for observing and classifying natural phenomena."<sup>15</sup> Claiming authority where imagery was concerned, as well as command of materialist and metaphysical debates, many symbolists believed their own cultural products could make vital contributions to modern science.

Symbolist artists and writers alike investigated purely imaginative experiences and tried to convey the veiled, mysterious, or irrational forces of the dipsychic mind that enabled unconscious or transgressive revelation. In shaping an evolving, mutable discipline in his *Principles*, James also synthesized a vast body of knowledge, some of which these symbolists had already mined for inspiration. Citing French neuropathologists such as Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet, physiological researchers such as Hermann von Helmholtz and George Trumbull Ladd, and leaders in psychometrical measurement such as Wilhelm Wundt and Hugo Munsterberg, James referenced scientific discourses that informed symbolist art's subject matter as well as its style.<sup>16</sup> But even as painters and poets regarded psychology as a scientific key to art's transcendent, enduring meaning, they hoped it would prove capable of unlocking many doors to the complexus of consciousness.

In his essay "The Hidden Self," James argued for investigation of the "exceptional mental states" that offered fascinating glimpses into the "effects of the imagination" that symbolists strove to

express.<sup>17</sup> This realm comprised the “unclassed residuum” of the mind’s mechanisms that not only inspired continued symbolist pursuit of sacred trances, psychic visions, pathological hallucinations, and dreams, but also affirmed psychic and spiritual phenomena as vital sources of knowledge about perception and consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Citing Janet’s popular psychopathological study *L’Automatisme Psychologique*, James acknowledged commonalities between the mind’s arcane abilities and the practices of empirical psychology, freely crossing coalescent disciplinary boundaries even as he sought to provide rigor to often discredited spiritual phenomena.<sup>19</sup>

Inspired by this optimistic branch of symbolism upon which James’s ideas took hold, Hartmann’s aesthetic beliefs and ambitions resonated with the philosopher’s noetic pluralism, even as it was still evolving in the later 1890s. Hartmann recognized art’s powerful emotional, spiritual, and perceptual engagement with the embodied mind, and he embraced a pantheistic regard for cosmic consciousness in his own plays and poetry. James’s proposal that every individual had the capacity to forge a sense of cohesive meaning from disparate yet integrated psychological forces validated the intuitive, visionary insights that Hartmann regarded as vehicles to modern revelation.<sup>20</sup>

Hartmann honed his judgments and expounded on his experiences in *The Art Critic*, founded in Boston in 1893. Determined to mold the future path he foresaw for modern American art, he minimized associations between psychological knowledge, cultural degeneracy, and mental pathologies; he focused instead on art’s unifying potential.<sup>21</sup> Hartmann made early mention of modern painters such as Paul Gauguin, Maurice Denis, and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, but he did not encourage American artists to emulate any European aesthetic traits directly. Rather, he tailored his analysis of the avant-garde to suit American sensibilities and, in alignment with James’s pluralism, he emphasized the movement’s progressive, utopian virtues.<sup>22</sup> He argued for “an American art, which would be characteristic of our

country,” and for painters who “will test their talents in new realms,” such as contemporary psychological discovery.<sup>23</sup>

Hartmann fostered these goals by coordinating symbolist interest in mystical phenomena with empirical science. He observed that symbolist artists were “not satisfied with their tangible existence, [but] want to trace their origin into the mysteries of mysteries that are weaving in ever changing visions around the throne of infinite eternity.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, like James, Hartmann grounded these interests in scientific rigor, observing that modern artists take “delight in analysisation [sic] of all psychological phenomena,” and seek “to wipe away the inconsistent theories of the past” by making the “boldest investigations into all sciences and especially into psycho-physiology.”<sup>25</sup> Hartmann demonstrated erudite awareness of the science in question: after citing Charcot’s work on hysteria, hypnosis, and perceptual pathologies, Hartmann also connected symbolism’s modern ambitions to Wundt’s psychometrical perceptual experiments.<sup>26</sup>

Hartmann’s assessment of these fin-de-siècle aesthetic trends failed to credit James’s important synthesis directly, but the critic set up pragmatic psychology as an essential tool for comprehending modern, symbolist art and its effects. Yet if Hartmann sought to provide some structure to symbolism’s heterogeneity, its very diversity resisted dogmatic interpretation, and thus his description of modern art echoed the inclusive psychology of faith for which James argued in *The Will to Believe* in 1896 and thereafter.<sup>27</sup> This psychology was a secular science nonetheless capable, as Albert Pinkham Ryder’s work showed, of inspiring “a picture impressive like religion, which is the highest art,” as Hartmann affirmed in 1897.<sup>28</sup>

*The Art Critic* folded after only a few issues, but Hartmann’s critical acumen won followers; and in the essays he wrote for *Camera Work* and other magazines starting in 1898, he advanced symbolist values and Whistlerian departure from conventional representation in pursuit of transcendent meaning. Hartmann and Stieglitz shared an abiding interest in art’s underlying psychological effects; their publications served as testing ground

for articulating the scientific possibilities of modern forms across multiple, coevolving, and divergent styles and mediums.<sup>29</sup> In response to the heterogeneity he saw not only in symbolist art but also in America at large, Hartmann was equally heterodox in his praise, arguing for an inclusive national and cosmopolitan modernism. He endorsed the enigmatic painting of Whistler, Ryder, and Thomas Wilmer Dewing, as well as the percipient realism of Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, while later he supported the more forthrightly abstracted forms of Marsden Hartley, Max Weber and John Marin, among others, long before their reputations were established. His promotion of photography – still novel as an art form – ventured across arguments for the pictorial effects of Edward Steichen, Clarence White, and F. Holland Day, towards the increasingly un-manipulated aesthetics of Stieglitz’s own work. By commending groundbreaking formal innovation while still extolling the progenitors of these aesthetic developments, Hartmann showed his own kind of Jamesian pluralism, emphasizing the underlying perceptual values on which aesthetic multiplicity rested.

#### **CONVERGENCES IN THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

Filled with imagery that served as essential scientific models, James’s writing helped Hartmann and his symbolist peers to realize art’s epistemological value: for them, art was not only capable of *stimulating* a mind through aesthetic form, it was also a body of knowledge capable of *simulating* the mind in action. Although not unique to James, his conceptualization of dynamic unity between sensation and perception, conscious and sub-conscious states in “*the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life,*” was key to showing Hartmann and his symbolist peers how art could serve as a paradigm of transcendent, purposive knowledge.<sup>30</sup> The stream of consciousness was an aesthetically satisfying poetic metaphor from which deeper psychological premises took shape, demonstrating the power of analogy in all human understanding.

The inestimable importance James ascribed to the fluid currents at the fringe of consciousness was also consonant with symbolist belief that art's varied material stimuli transmuted even the smallest sensations into revelatory insight. Indeed, James attested to "the significance, the value of the image [that] is all in this halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts it – or rather that is fused into one with it."<sup>31</sup> In this formula of synchronized consciousness, the body's senses were a vital counterpart to the mind's intellectual capacity for discriminating thought. "Our very senses [are] organs of selection," he wrote; they demonstrate a rudimentary episteme that orders the chaos of stimuli. For James, this was akin to artistic creativity: "The mind, in short, works on the data it receives very much as a sculptor works on his block of stone," extricating from all the possible figures within it the one that finally emerges. Thus "the world of each of us, howsoever different our several views of it may be, all lay embedded in the primordial chaos of sensations, which gave the mere *matter* to the thought of all of us."<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, amid such productive sensory chaos, there was plenty of room for exchange between the arts and the sciences. Whether revealed in poetic imagery or in pictorial form, art fashioned equivalents to the internal sensory and cognitive structures through which relationships between the immediacy of perception and the totality of consciousness were configured. For example, in one of the first mentions of Paul Gauguin's work in America, Hartmann echoed James's "great blooming, buzzing confusion" – his characterization of primordial, un-mediated perceptual experience.<sup>33</sup> Describing the dazzling but inchoate visual assault that some observers found typical of modern painting, Hartmann commended Gauguin's experiments with elemental, plastic form, in which the avant-garde artist "discovered that the first consciousness we receive of the outside world consists of a confusion of color dots."<sup>34</sup> Hartmann thus not only affiliated Gauguin's abstraction with experimental methods, but also with the formative perceptual experiences it offered to viewers.

In later essays, James's ideas continue to reverberate in Hartmann's descriptions of American artwork, and their ineffable effects on spirit and mind. "The emotional thrill, which is derived, sooner or later, from every work of art, is felt instantaneously and as a totality," he affirmed, and continued, "painting aims primarily at affording us the greatest pleasure of color, of the variegated reflection of this world, unalloyed by other considerations."<sup>35</sup> Hartmann particularly praised artists who distilled meaning from a wealth of sensory abundance: "No creative mind has ever come into the world without finding a chaos, either within or without or beyond him, which he has to fill with order and life." But he emphasized the coordination between interior and exterior perception necessary to a unified creative act. "The poet and the artist get their material out of two worlds – the outer and the inner," Hartmann argued, neither of which is sufficient in itself: "They have to forage in both and combine their treasures."<sup>36</sup> From discrepant, even chaotic sources – natural stimuli and internal images alike – artists interwove material sensation with immaterial, imaginative, and abstract concepts. Art, therefore, could model a Jamesian representation of unified consciousness.

#### **"ABSOLUTELY SENSATIONAL EXPERIENCE"**

Hartmann likely found James's emphasis on embodied sensation in *Principles* equally inspirational. The philosopher insisted that automatic responses to stimuli – from the most visceral reactions to the nuances of aesthetic discernment of art – arise prior to conscious awareness. Yet, these bodily phenomena combine seamlessly with emotional and cognitive understanding to produce a total, unified experience. This was, in fact, essential to art's form. "The pleasure given us by certain lines and masses, and combinations of colors and sounds, is an absolutely sensational experience," James insisted, producing a feeling that was not only an innate response, but simultaneous with a higher order class of thinking.<sup>37</sup> Hartmann similarly upheld the fundamental principle that art should speak to body and mind at once. "A painting should first of all appeal to our emotion," he claimed, eschewing

“practical information” in the search for “keener aesthetic enjoyment.” Art’s “essential pictorial qualities should directly delight our senses, just like an accidental play of sunlight and shadows,” Hartmann insisted.<sup>38</sup>

But James had also observed that not all stimuli commanded equal value: we attend foremost to any “aesthetic characteristics [that] appeal to our sense of convenience or delight,” since art’s material form had the capacity to solicit and direct attention amid the continuous sensory and cognitive flow.<sup>39</sup> “Concords of sounds, of colors, of lines, logical consistencies [or] teleological fitness affect us with a pleasure that seems ingrained in the very form of the representation itself,” he wrote, as they provide “aesthetic emotion, pure and simple.”<sup>40</sup> James opined, however, that such sensory perception was its own fundamentally valuable kind of knowledge: it may have been pre-cognitive but was also selective and discriminating, enabling judgment and taste.

Even on a primal level, then, James explored how the mind organizes stimuli that attract attention, meet criteria of interest, or demand action, amounting to a kind of unconscious cognition that ordered bodily responses relative to memory and experience. According to Hartmann, art also delivered a primary, unconscious, but no less formative kind of knowledge: “Painting should be a visual language that speaks directly and distinctly to the cultured mind.”<sup>41</sup> Yet its inherent visual order – its compositional grammar, syntax, and vocabulary – also revealed how an artist’s formal choices coordinated with their dynamic, underlying perceptual habits.<sup>42</sup> Arguing in 1903 for *The Influence of Visual Perception on Conception and Technique*, Hartmann observed: “There exists some relationship between the visual perception of artists and the style of the work they are producing,” and he proposed that all artists are “unconsciously influenced by their visual disturbances.”<sup>43</sup> Their resultant forms revealed individual perceptual anomalies, habits of attention, and even, perhaps, the underlying structure of their thought.

However, these perceptual experiences were not merely encoded in the work of an artist *a priori*, they also produced a

*posteriori* effects on beholders, mobilizing both intuitive and cognitive interpretive processes. To Hartmann, art's 'appeal to delight' arose not only from primal, pleasurable bodily responses to the emotional effects produced by concordant color or mellifluous sound, but also from parallel recognition of the deeper totality of art's "structural units."<sup>44</sup> Like all sensory stimuli, art's pattern and design, geometrical shape and rhythm, or even poetry's meter and stanza directed selective sensory attention alongside higher-order representational frameworks. If initially perceived sensorially, these comprise "the intelligent and austere understructure of all arts, in a palace as well as a poem, in a symphonic movement as well as in a monument or a mural decoration." Hartmann continued, "A painter who pursues this path of the harmonic relation of parts will have the big conception of the generality of things, without which art lacks ... inner harmony."<sup>45</sup> And in perceiving this "generality," a viewer's own responses synthesized discrete stimuli and generated interpretive satisfaction.

Hartmann believed that such convergence between artist, object, and viewer emerged free of any conscious determination, but was spontaneously produced by the totality inherent in a work of art itself. Assessing photographer and painter Edward Steichen, he observed, "[o]ne cannot fully grasp his intentions, and it is very likely that he is not conscious of them himself."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, such elusive, unconscious qualities crossed boundaries between art's form or style, creation and reception, and earned Hartmann's highest praise: "Steichen is a poet of rare depth and significance, who expresses his dreams... with the simplest of images," yet they "add something to our consciousness of life." Even in his representational photographs, "lines, blurred and indistinct" are "visionary forms which rise in our mind's eye."<sup>47</sup>

#### **THE VALUE OF "A MERE SUGGESTION"**

Such blur and indistinctness served an important underlying purpose to Hartmann, allied to the symbolist aim of providing perceivable form to elusive, immaterial experience.<sup>48</sup> The

ambiguity that Hartmann advocated most passionately across mediums demonstrated ‘suggestiveness,’ a term that appeared throughout his critical oeuvre, and which correlated with James’s psychology. Writing in *Principles*, James noted, “Every one of our conceptions is of something which our attention originally tore out of the continuum of felt experience.”<sup>49</sup> Yet, “every one of them has a way ... of suggesting other parts of the continuum from which it was torn ... This ‘suggestion’ is often no more than what we shall later know as the association of ideas. Often, however, it is a sort of invitation to the mind to play, add lines, break number-groups, etc. Whatever it is, it brings new conceptions into consciousness.”<sup>50</sup>

Later, in *Talks to Teachers*, James connected this property more directly to the arts: “The words of a poem,” or indeed “the properties of material things,” had profound associative power. Therefore, one could “start from any idea whatever, and the entire range of your ideas is potentially at your disposal ... there is no limit to the possible diversity of suggestions.”<sup>51</sup> In “imaginative minds” he observed, this free play was particularly liberating: “one field of mental objects will suggest another with which perhaps in the whole history of human thinking it had never once before been coupled.”<sup>52</sup> For artists as well as for their critics and beholders this playful proposal offered a wealth of possibility.

Hartmann’s own process was analogous to James’s complex writing-as-thinking, as he worked through his sometimes conflicted responses to art, and explored how his own perceiving, feeling, thinking mind sorted through aesthetic experience. He tested paradoxical proposals, praising Mallarmé’s ability to produce “intelligible unintelligibility” from “vague poetical suggestions.”<sup>53</sup> Applying these principles to pictorial art, Hartmann’s earliest mention of ‘suggestion’ appeared his 1896 review of Arthur B. Davies, a painter “like the French Symbolists” in his “suggestive, ultra-individual art.”<sup>54</sup> Hartmann proposed that Davies possessed exceptional modern insight into the mind: the “striking characteristic of his suggestiveness is of psychological origin,” the critic avowed.<sup>55</sup> Yet Hartmann could be inconsistent,

and he never precisely defined what he meant by ‘suggestivism’ or ‘suggestive’ form in art. He came closest to articulating these properties in a 1904 discussion of the “blurred effects” in painter Dwight Tryon’s landscapes. As Tryon “begins the process of weeding out all unnecessary elements” from “mental notes” and “conceptions ... developed in the mind,” he makes “the forms appear less solid, and more ethereal, the colors dissolve into nameless nuances, the details lose all obtrusiveness and the composition ... assumes a dream-like character.”<sup>56</sup>

Hartmann did not discuss it, since he rarely mentioned specific artworks in any of his criticism, yet Arthur Davies’ *Children of Yesteryear* (ca. 1897, oil on canvas, Brooklyn Museum) demonstrates such ‘suggestive’ elements. A procession of vaguely delineated children flow past the wide-open eyes of a woman to the right moving towards a distant, mist-shrouded river at the horizon. Engrossed in her apparent imagining, she gazes into the indeterminate, atmospheric landscape: the texture of Davies’ conspicuous pigment obliterates detail, refusing to describe a clear or coherent space. The young figures are similarly rendered in small dots, dashes, smears, and daubs of color that blend into an undifferentiated mass. We may see these obscure bodies as illusions of the woman’s introspective nostalgia, a tributary of all-but-forgotten memories made real. But in taking on a tactile, material form that requires a viewer’s efforts to discern, these vague allusions also conjure associative images in the beholder’s mind. The puzzling painting conveys fluid exchange between form and concept, between concrete evidence and imaginative interpretation.

Spanning discrete media, criticism, and literature, associative ambiguity was more than mere vagueness, however. It also served to model the unconscious responses and experiential processes provoked by the senses, and it compelled a viewer’s active spectatorship. Describing Steichen’s photographed landscapes again, Hartmann claimed, “A mere suggestion suffices him. It is left to the imagination of the spectator to carry them out to their full mental realization.”<sup>57</sup> In such an encounter with a material

object, the significance a viewer ascribed to it exceeded the cognitive matching of memory to mimesis. Activating unconscious responses, 'suggestive' artists inspired states of revelatory confusion as viewers opened their minds to meaning beyond the limits of subject, surface, and superficial appearance; beholders were invited to participate in the production of meaning alongside artists, critics, and psychologists.

### CONCLUSION

James and Hartmann both spent their careers testing ideas and working towards the reconciliation of many, and even competing, strains of thought. Like many critics of his generation, Hartmann sought to distinguish his own voice as he nurtured artists whose work upheld his beliefs. Embracing coalescing sciences and philosophies helped him generate an equally variable, inclusive kind of criticism that made room for diversity and divergence. Hartmann saw his own role related to the kinds of psychological discoveries that James forecast, in his ability to ascribe significance to the 'suggestive' properties that modern artists increasingly pursued: "It is the art critic's duty," he wrote, "to enter an artist's individuality, to discover his intentions – intentions of which the artist himself is perhaps unconscious – to judge how far he has realized them, and then to determine what place he occupies in the development of a national and cosmopolitan art."<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the echoes of James's ideas that resonate throughout Hartmann's writing suggest more than casual familiarity or coincidental correspondence. If at best such claims must remain speculative, the importance of psychological knowledge to modern self-awareness was a core belief for both that affirmed the role of progressive modern culture in a heterogeneous democracy. Above all, Hartmann argued that the role of all art, pictorial and literary, should "elevate humanity." Across American arts, "there is enough to satisfy every taste," he avowed. Advocating common, psychologically significant aesthetic values between superficially dissimilar modes and media was essential to "a future in which art

will show herself ... a worthy leader in the great cause of social and moral improvement.”<sup>59</sup>

School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts  
[Emily.gephart@tufts.edu](mailto:Emily.gephart@tufts.edu)

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hartmann’s biography is assessed by Weaver in her book *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist*, who also re-published a few poems and most important essays, and who provides a full bibliography and checklist of artists named in Hartmann’s essays. Concerning his imprisonment at Christmas, 1893, on obscenity charges brought about by the publication of his play *Christ*, which contained scenes of an erotic nature, see Knox, *The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann, 1867-1944*, 3; Hartmann’s perfume concerts are discussed in Bradstreet, “A Trip to Japan,” 51-66.

<sup>2</sup> Hartmann, *Valiant Knights*; many of the critic’s pivotal essays on modern art and photography are republished in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist*.

<sup>3</sup> For a valuable biography of James, see Richardson’s *William James in the Maelstrom of American Modernism*.

<sup>4</sup> In Hartmann’s unpublished autobiography, written April, 1915. Box 1, Sadakichi Hartmann Papers, Rivera Special Collections, University of California, Riverside.

<sup>5</sup> Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann, Critical Modernist*, 1-44; DeLue, “Diagnosing Pictures,” 42-69.

<sup>6</sup> The most detailed biographies of Hartmann are provided by Knox, *The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann*, and Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist*.

<sup>7</sup> Hartmann connected James and Whitman in his unpublished bibliography, designating both capable of “true national expression.” See also Hartmann, *Conversations with Walt Whitman*; and James, “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings.”

<sup>8</sup> “A Tuesday Evening at Stéphane Mallarmé’s,” 26-30.

<sup>9</sup> Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Many authors have addressed the interpretive challenges of symbolist diversity, among these see particularly Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context*; the essays in Facos and Mednick, *The Symbolist Roots of Modern Art*; and Goldwater, *Symbolism*.

<sup>11</sup> Hartmann translated the preface to the catalog of the first Salon de la Rose + Croix for the first issue of *The Art Critic*.

<sup>12</sup> I borrow here the title of Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*.

<sup>13</sup> For the development of James’s aesthetic principles, see Shusterman, “The Pragmatist Aesthetics of William James,” 348.

<sup>14</sup> Reference to James’s essays appeared in French periodicals from the 1870s to the late 1880s. He was reviewed by Marillier in 1892, and then appeared regularly again after 1900. See Smith, *Mallarmé’s Children*, 268 n23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>16</sup> Brain’s *The Pulse of Modernism* assesses the research in physiological aesthetics and psychology most informative to the European avant-garde.

<sup>17</sup> James, “The Hidden Self,” 361.

<sup>18</sup> Morehead, “Symbolism, Mediumship,” 77-85; Taylor, *William James on Consciousness beyond the Margin*, and Harrington, *Medicine, Mind and the Double Brain*, 140-41.

<sup>19</sup> James, “The Hidden Self,” 363. For insightful examinations of James’s boundary-crossing psychology and philosophy, see Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries*.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, “Metaphysics and Consciousness in James’s *Varieties*,” 18.

<sup>21</sup> Hartmann was familiar with Max Nordau’s controversial 1895 book, *Degeneration*, but was ambivalent about its condemnation of avant-garde art. See DeLue, “Diagnosing Pictures,” 47.

<sup>22</sup> The utopian aims of American symbolism are evaluated by Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting*.

<sup>23</sup> Hartmann, "A National American Art," 44-49.

<sup>24</sup> Hartmann, "Modern French Painting – An Art Historical Study," 29-30.

<sup>25</sup> Hartmann, "Notes on the *Fin-de-Siècle* movement in Art and Literature," 7. Hartmann's awkward neologism 'analysiation' attests to the novelty of the science he discussed.

<sup>26</sup> Hartmann, "What is Fin-de-Siècle?," 9; and "Notes on the Fin-de-Siècle Movement," 6.

<sup>27</sup> For more on the early demonstrations of James's 'thick pluralism' in *The Will to Believe*, see Algaier, "Reconstructing James's Early Radical Empiricism," 47.

<sup>28</sup> Hartmann, "A Visit to A. P. Ryder," in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann*, 263.

<sup>29</sup> Assessing "La Modernité in Painting," Hartmann observed two 'antagonistic' yet coexistent trends, neither of which was determinant. See Weaver, *Hartmann: Critical Modernist*, 87.

<sup>30</sup> James, *Principles 1*, 239.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 284 and 288.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

<sup>34</sup> Hartmann, "Modern French Painters," 29.

<sup>35</sup> Hartmann, "On Pictorial and Illustrative Qualities," 183.

<sup>36</sup> Hartmann, "On the lack of culture," 21-22.

<sup>37</sup> James, *Principles 2*, 467 and 468.

<sup>38</sup> Hartmann, "On Pictorial and Illustrative Qualities," 181 and 183.

<sup>39</sup> James, *Principles 2*, 305.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 468.

<sup>41</sup> Hartmann, *The Whistler Book*, quoted in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann*, 322.

<sup>42</sup> DeLue, "Diagnosing Pictures," examines Hartmann's adoption of a medicalized model of art analysis in his appropriation of perceptual science as a tool.

<sup>43</sup> Hartmann, (as Sidney Allan), "The Influence of Visual Perception on Conception and Technique," 23.

- <sup>44</sup> Hartmann, "Structural Units," 19.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> Hartmann, (as Sidney Allan), "A Visit to Steichen's Studio," 26.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Concerning indeterminacy in late nineteenth century art, see Gamboni, *Potential Images*.
- <sup>49</sup> James, *Principles* 1, 465.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> James, *Talks to Teachers*, 81
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., 85.
- <sup>53</sup> Hartmann, "A Tuesday Evening at Stéphane Mallarmé's," 10.
- <sup>54</sup> Hartmann, "A Word About Mr. Dodge and Mr. Davies," 7.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> Hartmann, "The Technique of Mystery and Blurred Effects," 24.
- <sup>57</sup> Hartmann, "A Visit to Steichen's Studio," 27.
- <sup>58</sup> Hartmann, "Art and Artists," 39.
- <sup>59</sup> Hartmann, "A National American Art," 47.