



The first Wellness program: Yoga in the installation for Justin Sterling: *Chapel of the Rocks*

## BENEFITS OF ART AND HOW TO OPTIMIZE THE EXPERIENCE

Studies like that done by UC San Diego explain cognitive processes and tendencies in the ways people experience art. For those who would like to deepen their aesthetic engagement with art, a recent episode of NPR's "Life Kit" suggested ways to approach a museum visit to optimize the benefits of art's documented effects on mental well-being.

Among the tips

- have an open mind rather than preconceived notions,
- be guided by emotional responses,
- and spend time closely observing the texture, technique, and movement in a work of art, and regarding it from multiple perspectives.

The main principle is to find art that sparks a personal connection and explore that connection further.

## WELLNESS PROGRAMS AT THE MUSEUM

The Museum's Education and Programs department offers an additional avenue to enjoyment of art and enhance the health and well-being of visitors. See the Museum's website to discover Wellness Workshops that explore the intersection of mind and body through art in the galleries and garden.

# THE ART + EMPATHY RESEARCH PROJECT

## What Our Gaze Reveals about Our Engagement with Art

Art has always been one way we are reminded that no two people are the same. Each artist has a unique perspective on the world, an inner life and consciousness that we may be able to understand or have empathy with through viewing their art—but that reminds us of our own distinctiveness, as well. And visiting the galleries with others can remind of us that, too, as when we are enthralled by a piece that leaves another person cold.

Researchers with the Art + Empathy Research Project at the Arthur C. Clarke Center for Human Imagination at UC San Diego have been using various technologies and tools to probe these questions using the latest methods in computational neuroscience. One study used a technique known as eye tracking to explore how patterns of gaze relate to aesthetic engagement while healthy adults viewed paintings on display at the San Diego Museum of Art. The eye-gaze tracker records a viewer's eye movements, which allow the research to map onto a work of art where the viewer's attention was directed and for how long, over the duration they spent looking at that painting.

This study has revealed two types of viewers: strong responders, whose viewing time tended to increase linearly with the magnitude of arousal evoked by a painting; and weak responders, who viewed all paintings for roughly the same relatively short amount of time regardless of the evocative properties of the painting. The eye movement and gaze profiles of strong responders suggested that they were more focally attentive, really zeroing in on details within the painting, while weak responders tended to broadly scan paintings from a "big picture" perspective. Further, computational models of the visual saliency of each of the studied paintings tended to predict focal gaze of strong responders better than that of weak responders. In other words, strong responders tended to spend more time than weak ones looking at localized regions of the most salient portions of a painting.

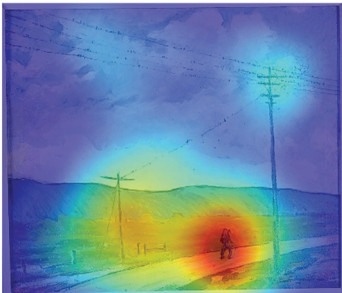
These findings suggest that strong responders were overall more sensitive than weak ones to the visual properties of the paintings—that is, their gaze patterns were likely more heavily modulated by basic perceptual features, such as color, contrast, intensity and so forth—and that tended to correlate with their aesthetic and emotional response to a work of art. Future studies are needed to explore the basis of these differences, as well as new approaches for how to help people with diverse sensitivities cultivate appreciation for the multiplicity of artistic styles of expression.

*Migration*

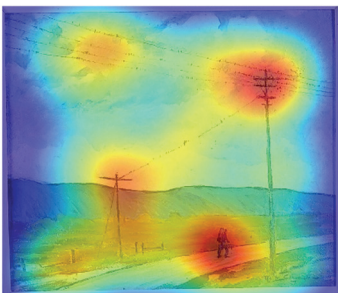
by Otto Henry Schneider

Saliency Map of *Migration*

## Distribution of Weak Responders' Fixations



## Distribution of Strong Responders' Fixations



Strong responders' eye-gaze fixations—particularly focal fixations—tend to be more broadly distributed across focal areas of a painting. In the heat maps plotted from the eye-gaze tracking of visitors to the museum in the two bottom panels, the scale ranges from dark blue (very few fixations) to deep red (highest concentration of fixations). In the saliency map, the scale ranges from blue (minimally salient) to dark red (most salient).

# What's On View

Please check [SDMArt.org](http://SDMArt.org) for up-to-date information on hours, exhibition dates, and safety guidelines. Information is subject to change.

## On View Now—Upstairs

Impressionism and Post-impressionism

Art of Devotion

Art of the Portrait

Renaissance to Realism

*Carlo Mirando: In Search of Sonder*  
(through November 19)

## On View Now—Downstairs

Gabriele Münter

Art of the Americas

*O'Keeffe and Moore* (opens May 13)

Visible Vaults

Arts of Iran

Arts of South and Southeast Asia

Art of East Asia

*Mountain, Meadow, Citadel:*  
*The Many Landscapes of Afghanistan*

German Expressionism

*Modern Women*

Art of the 20th Century

## Free Galleries

*Young Art: Comfort and Calm*  
(closes May 15)

*Bruce Davidson: Subway* (opens June 3)

Visit [SDMArt.org](http://SDMArt.org) for more information and updates.

# Programs & Events

## APRIL–SEPTEMBER

Listed below is just a small sample of additional programs and events.

Please visit [SDMArt.org](http://SDMArt.org) for up-to-date information on all lectures, tours, special events, and much more—virtual and on site!

For Art Alive see pp. 18–23 | For *O'Keeffe and Moore* related events, see p. 11

Membership, admission, and program fees support Museum initiatives. Events and programs have been available online for years along with many new offerings made possible by investment in new technologies, expanding the Museum's digital footprint.

Programs will take place on-site or virtually. For information on ticketing, registration, and how to access the event links, visit [SDMArt.org/events](http://SDMArt.org/events).

All programs and events are subject to change.

### Docent Council Bus Trip

The Museum docents are planning a bus trip to The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum for Wednesday, April 26. This is an all-day event open to members and non-members, family, and friends. Tickets and RSVPs are required. Visit [SDMArt.org/docents](http://SDMArt.org/docents) for important trip information and how to sign up.

### Art of Reading Book Club

Members Free / Nonmembers \$20

Museum boardroom

Saturday, May 13 • 10:15

Please register at [SDMArt.org](http://SDMArt.org)

Coffee and light snacks will be served.

Join fellow book and museum lovers for coffee and lively discussion during the Art of Reading book club. Book club will be discussing Pulitzer Prize-winning art critic Jerry Saltz's latest book, *Art is Life*. Saltz draws on two decades of work to offer a real-time survey of contemporary art as a barometer of our times. Chronicling a period punctuated by dramatic turning points—from the cultural reset of 9/11 to the rolling social crises of today—Saltz traces how visionary artists have both documented and challenged the culture.

### The Museum Store Summer Sale

Our famous Museum Store Summer Sale begins June 15 and runs through June 20! Take advantage of massive discounts on overstock and clearance items!