

# Covert painting simulations influence aesthetic appreciation of artworks

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New research published in *Psychological Science* investigates the ways in which the physical state of our bodies may play a role in shaping what we think, feel, and perceive.

How does art create aesthetic pleasure?

Drawing from existing theory, Helmut Leder of the University of Vienna and his colleagues hypothesized that experiencing a physical resonance with the movements that the artist made when producing the artwork may be one source of aesthetic empathy and, therefore, pleasure.

To test this hypothesis, the researchers asked participants to rate the [aesthetic value](#) of neoimpressionist, pointillist-style paintings and postimpressionist, stroke-style paintings from the late 19th century. One group was instructed to mimic the stippling or stroke-style movements five minutes before viewing the paintings, while another group mimicked the movements while they were rating the paintings.

Those participants who made stippling motions while rating the paintings found the pointillist paintings more aesthetically pleasing, whereas those who mimicked stroking [motions](#) while rating the paintings found the stroke-style paintings more aesthetically pleasing.

According to the researchers, these results suggest that activating [neural circuits](#) associated with the same movements that the artist made when producing the work may influence how viewers experience and perceive

works of art.

**More information:** [pss.sagepub.com/content/early/ ...  
956797612452866.full](https://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/...956797612452866.full)

Provided by Association for Psychological Science

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