

Marcia Brennan

# Curating Consciousness

Mysticism and the Modern Museum

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## *Acknowledgments*

The idea for this book first arose on a spring afternoon in 2001, just before I left Providence to go to Houston. I was walking with my teacher and advisor, Kermit S. Champa, and telling him how museum collaboration projects were going to be an institutional priority at Rice University. Kermit turned to me and said, “Well then, when you get to Houston, you might want to look into James Johnson Sweeney.” At the time, I couldn’t have guessed the magnitude of what sounded, at first, like one of Kermit’s casual suggestions. In retrospect, however, I suspect he had a pretty good idea of where all of this would lead.

Because so much of the conceptual framework for this book is based on the transdisciplinary intersection of art history and the study of mysticism and comparative religion, I am deeply indebted to two distinguished colleagues and friends for helping to illuminate both the ground under my feet and the sky above

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Anna Brzyski kindly invited me to contribute a portion of chapter 2 to the anthology *Partisan Canons* (Duke University Press, 2007); and Ivan Gaskell and Francesco Pellizzi enabled an earlier version of chapter 5 to appear in *Res 52* (Autumn 2007). These sections are reprinted with permission. A related essay focusing on Sweeney's relationship with his patrons, the art collectors John and Dominique de Menil, appeared in the catalogue for the twentieth anniversary celebration of The Menil Collection, *A Modern Patronage: De Menil Gifts to American*

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