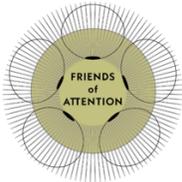


Chat Thread –
Friends of Attention
Gathering # 8
Ekphrasis as an Attentional Mode
(Len Nalencz & Anna Riley)



- 14:28:26 From D. Graham Burnett : A deep point: Ekphrasis as the way a poem “slows down” to pay attention....
- 14:32:32 From D. Graham Burnett : Anna: just so I understand — you are reading texts collected BY Sophie Calle (from a lot of different people) _about_ this painting — yes?
- 14:32:46 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Yes, that’s my understanding.
- 14:32:52 From Leonard Nalencz : Yes!
- 14:33:00 From D. Graham Burnett : Got it!
- 14:33:44 From Eirene Visvardi : These are also recollections of the painting that is missing, correct?
- 14:33:57 From Sal Randolph : Yes
- 14:34:40 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Could you link to this image please?
- 14:35:05 From Sal Randolph : It would be great to have the Calle text somewhere afterwards
- 14:35:35 From Grace Caiazza : Agreed!
- 14:50:53 From Sal Randolph : Some of our group's conversation

Sal: It is a reminder of how language and visual depiction each function. The poem had no trouble holding all that impossible life.

Rebecca: Auden's Musee des Beaux Arts, how the important incident, person falling from the sky, isn't even noticed by othes within the painting.

Gabriel: Auden is supplying that attention that the people in the painting are not

Shep: barely a nude and barely a bath, so the title itself is a kind of ekphrasis. The descriptions were working hard to invoke the blurring and the watery atmosphere. A similar tension as is in the Auden, the difficulty people have in their descriptions.

14:51:00 From Sal Randolph : Sal: The impossibility in the Bonnard is the impossibility of describing.

Gabriel: The importance the title has in narrowing the field of attention.

Brad: The shield is like opening up into infinite space. A narrative technique used in film, the frame within a scene that opens into the past and the future.

Memory and attention are ultimately divine, whereas in Calle the memory and attention are multiple and human.

Rebecca: The description where the person walked past the body for 7 years and now the body is dead. With familiarity something becomes invisible, it ceases to be there. Quotidian daily life, as we brought up in an earlier session.

Someone: Ophelia

Gabriel: no story in the Bonnard, non narrative, no past and no future (unlike Ophelia).

Brad: The narrative in the Bonnard are just implied in the painting, the art historical setting, everything that is not directly depicted.

Rebecca: The shield was propaganda.

14:51:03 From Alexandru Balgiu : Justin Khaled Katarzyna Jonathan Alex:

description of Jonathan as a painting

narrative imbrication

Raymond Roussel Locus Solus

a channel for another

synesthetics

Hannah Weiner, Clairvoyant Journal

experience and reality

where is subject?

Louis Lüthi, On the Self-Reflexive Page

The page becoming aware of its existence

Cortazar the continuity of parks

Insertion of a literary rock into reality

14:51:18 From Jared and Stevie :

narrative paths individual relationships with narrative or object changes remembrance, randomness of circumstance shape how we see/what we remember, timelines of sttic image versus larger mythos

what signifiers leave space for larger narrative? the bath collapses time, but the images on the shield (wedding, battles, etc.) are events in time

what creates remembrance of looking at an object
what makes something a symbol
collective memory versus individual memory

14:51:51 From John (he/him/his) Muse : We talked about oral performance (Homer's performance, the oral performance of Calle's fragments); we talked about "time frozen." We talked about the role of memory (to be supplemented by language) and invention (language produces a kind of visuality, an image).

14:51:53 From Sal Randolph : These chat after-notes are like the Calle descriptions of the painting

14:52:28 From Dominic Pettman :
"Is the experience of images an experience of time, or leaving time?" . . . something about images, memory, and slowed temporality . . . something so different between the epic poetry and the Calle descriptions . . . the latter about absence and recall . . . the shields in Homer could be considered an old-school montage . . . does looking at images generate or pause time? . . . are we in control of that, or the image? . . . maybe we can only control the narrative, rather than the experience . . . images lie about time all the time in their static nature . . . we too often fail to pay attention to the encoded time of looking . . .

14:52:38 From Dominic Pettman :
the way looking is temporalized has a political function . . . cf. protest images . . . the power of ekphrasis is to disrupt and reorder the time of looking . . . palimpsest effect . . . artworks generating a new layer of art by describing previous images . . . (conflation there between art and image, as we tend to do) . . . those contemporary Afghan carpets that have helicopters and such, to narrate recent wars etc . . . would be interesting if The News was sometimes a giant carpet, with key images, but no overdetermined, causal narrative . . . finally, are images more "truthful" than narrative . . . getting lost in Borgesian map/territory . . ."

14:52:41 From Gabriel Perez-Barreiro : @sal totally!!

14:53:01 From Carlos Montemayor : We talked about how in ekphrasis a new inventive space and time suspends a narrative to draw attention in a different way. Also how memory played a role in reciting the Iliad and how different this is from personal recollection.

14:53:44 From Shep Steiner's iPhone : the narrative of Bonnard's painting is almost a colportage experience. it moves from inside a bath to an outside perhaps a pool of water. yet the description remains inside a nude in a bath

14:53:55 From Adam Jasper : GC: The Sophie Calle fragments created a lived sense of the work, the Homer felt more distant. GC noted that she could not get the same "aura" regarding the shield ekphrasis that was available in the Nochlin.

14:53:59 From Leonard Nalencz : Thanks Casey

14:54:08 From chiara : We talked about how ekphrasis empowers witnessing, and the possible clash between ekphrasis and images

14:54:23 From Sal Randolph : Titles as a kind of attentional prosthetic - a pointer, or as Gabriel suggested, a narrowing, an aperture.

14:54:59 From Adam Jasper : SD note the way that reading about the painting changed the way that the painting appeared, changed what it was possible to see in the image. The experience of attention also functioned to exclude other possible objects of perception.

14:55:24 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Also ekphrasis not as description but as invention, not only of something-to-see but of another kind of time, other kinds of actions. Connected this to the intersection of two current temporalities: how to see and feel the pandemic in time; how to see and feel the protest in time.

14:55:30 From Morley Musick : In our group, Chiara mentioned how ekphrasis is different than the kind of descriptions news anchors give of images. We talked about how some kind of remembering enlivens art and some takes away from it.

14:55:45 From Sal Randolph : The poem Rebecca mentioned:

14:55:53 From Sal Randolph : Musee des Beaux Arts
W. H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong,
The old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

14:55:53 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Add this: <https://poets.org/poem/shield-achilles>

14:56:00 From Sal Randolph : In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away

Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

Pieter Brueghel, The Fall of Icarus

Oil-tempera, 29 inches x 44 inches. Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels.

14:56:41 From CASEY : Auden and William Carlos Williams both wrote ekphrastic poems on Brueghel's painting of the fall of Icarus.

14:56:59 From Catherine Hansen : This is not something our group (Casey's group) talked about, but on my mind: Aeneas who "delights in the images / not recognizing the future events."

14:57:10 From Gage McWeeny : Room 3? (6?)

We talked about the arrested attention of Ekphrasis, and the anthropomorphization of literary attention in that mode. But also, the ways in which such moments also teach, produce what registers as "human" and its dependence upon a capacity for attention. Also, the "skimmable" nature of those moments w/in a text, like, "ok, plot has stopped now for this very bounded description, maybe I can check out a little bit during this ekphrastic passage." And, on the other side, the way that such moments also feel highly allegorized, moments of reflection upon the nature of representation itself, problematizing representation. On the Calle, we were interested in the "recall" of an attention to a painting that was never really paid attention to in the first place, possibly! And then, how interested her work usually is in the non-personal / impersonal, but here, lots of subjective impressions, etc. Feel free to add / amend / correct pod-mates!

14:57:18 From Helen Singh-Miller : <https://poetryarchive.org/poem/memorial/>

14:57:24 From Anna Riley : I can send you the whole essay

14:57:28 From Carla Nappi : If any of y'all is interested in a book of feminist poetry re-reading Plato's Symposium (on love, on death) hit me up and I'll send you some from a (my) book that was just published (link in a sec)

14:57:29 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Yes, Catherine. I love that line.

14:57:30 From Kyle Berlin : Who owns experience/an accounting of experience? The difference between the singular and the plural subjective ekphrastic account. Is one more reliable than the other? How do we speak of the absent across time and difference, with no fixed reference?

14:57:38 From Catherine Hansen : What future events are hidden or encoded (or maybe just eminently visible to some future person...)?

14:57:38 From adam green : Talked about different kinds of ekphrasis. How the shield texts were conjuring a sort of “impossible” object (which was subsequently attempted to be visualised in artworks , (a kind of reverse emphasis?)) ; compared to more usual kind of emphasis where you are describing an already existing art object.

14:57:41 From rebecca : Rebecca here. I can recommend hearing Alice Oswald’s poem Memorial online. As Jeff mentioned, she does this entirely from memory. It is extraordinary.

14:57:44 From Carla Nappi : <https://www.mqup.ca/uninvited-products-9780228001317.php>

14:58:16 From Grace Caiazza : Any links to Memorial reading?

14:58:34 From Adam Jasper : EQ: The shield text is /polished/ [not clear if this is a pun — aj] Whereas in the description of the painting, there are multiple, disconnected narrative voices. If we were to encounter such a painting in a museum, and were surrounded by such voices, it would also transform our durational relationship with the painting. It would bring us to spend time with the image.

14:58:41 From kristinlawler : Like la jete
At the end of something things slow down, become more cinematic, the spatial visual image
You can see simultaneity, in space, a pause, like in the Iliad too
We can all feel that something is ending
Time is expanding and contracting and the visual pause becomes our reality
It has all already been forged, past, present, future
How do we write this?

14:58:41 From Adam Jasper : The method slows us down, so we can see more.

15:00:07 From Adam Jasper : AB: I imagine paintings blurring into each other over years of standing around them. Perhaps there was a Monet in the same room. As I read Homer for the first time in many years, the impossibility of memory of that length is what hit me. I imagine that I would have to see it to remember it, but I do not think I can.

15:00:24 From Catherine Hansen : Our group also talked about what Kyle Berlin’s group talked about

15:00:30 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Interested suddenly in the difference between ekphrasis of what is represented and an ekphrasis of representation as material form, i.e., not of what the photograph shows but of the photograph as an object.

THE EXERCISE

15:01:05 From Dominic Pettman : do we pay attention and then write?

15:01:11 From Dominic Pettman : or both at the same time?

15:02:42 From Alexandru Balgiu : consciousness (streaming)

15:06:17 From Adam Jasper : In the centre, a fine tempietto, a pavilion surrounded by its monastic garden. Green herbs, mostly medicinal, are tended to by the silent celibates who walk these shaded avenues.

15:09:33 From Adam Jasper : The silence of the centre is absolute. The walls of this garden are thicker than the garden is wide. And outside its walls, in the tumult out there, there is only an endless, full, interior to be administered, or ministered to. The last remaining outside is in here, around this little pavilion, surrounded by the nodding krauts, that will heal you if you eat a leaf, but poison you if you eat three.

15:10:01 From D. Graham Burnett : Lets take one more minute...

15:10:46 From chiara : The sad boldness of institutionalized defense. Its anonymity, its modularity, make difficult to point to its vulnerability. It is impossible to hear any sound.

15:12:54 From Larry Berger : The lovers had arranged to meet each other in a glade at the center of a five-sided forest.

15:12:54 From kristinlawler : the kids on the streets are making that case

15:13:22 From kristinlawler : colonialism=police state

15:26:33 From Zach McLane : What is the connection between propaganda and ekphrasis?

15:26:40 From Sal Randolph : Our session on the shields:

Sam: Guantanamo and the prison in the US on the bottom - elements of Heradlry as metonyms for geographic totality.

Khaled: Parables, heraldry. The word "armed" and hadid (?) Arabic for iron or steel. The Arm. Broken arms. The arms of the soldiers. The invisible arms. The armed planes.

Will: Lines and lines of teracotta warriors. Everything on the right became the hard engraved mark making of tombs. on the right, even though it was prisons, was diaphanous, materially porous.

Sonali: Materiality - the welded corners, steel, the repetitive and iterative nature of things - the dream of empire is repetition of geometries without end.

15:26:50 From Sal Randolph :

Sal: The contrast between the images that came up for me from the first exercise, remembering the protests yesterday at Union Square, the various and individual bodies and signs, in contrast with the nonliving feeling of the shield images.

Khaled: The individual and repetition,

At protests: the standard sign, the way it was made, the "uniform" of what people were wearing.

Sal: I didn't have the right uniform. I lost my sign, I had a Whole Foods bag - I was embarrassed.

Khaled: I brought a baby.

Will: In this town the protests are like endurance performance art. One or two people standing or kneeling for hours. Shrewmansburg, outside of Ithaca.

Sam: I liked the material reading that you were giving.

15:27:46 From John (he/him/his) Muse : In the center of the shield, a hole, a park, a five-sided crypt
And the center is the playpen where
uncivil servants remember all the things they're not permitted to tell themselves, their families, their lovers.
In the center of the shield, a bin full of toys and plastics and fabrics, for the insects and bees, that will die and die, for the glory of goods and services.

15:28:46 From William Lamson : thank you Anna and Len!!

15:28:48 From Gabriel Perez-Barreiro : Thanks Len and Anna!!!

15:28:54 From Carla Nappi : Thank you!

15:28:55 From Hatim El-Hibri : These are all the same image, even if they are different photographs. What they repeat are hard lines, opaque surfaces, a status quo that is stasis, and a capacity to inflict harm with indifference and impunity.

To stay within the images make it hard to breathe. I can also see how for some people, this image looks like the guarantor of the good life of the 'American dream.'

15:28:59 From chiara : Thank you!

15:29:03 From jared and stevie : Thanks Anna and Len!!!!<3<3<3

15:29:04 From D. Graham Burnett : freindsofattention@gmail.com

15:29:04 From Sal Randolph : Thank you Len and Anna!

15:29:06 From Alexandru Balgiu : Merci :)

15:29:06 From Khaled Malas : Thank you!

15:29:16 From Maddy Ruiz : Thank you!

15:29:17 From Grace Caiazza : <3 Thank you all

15:29:17 From Sal Randolph : And Ed!
15:29:18 From Zach McLane : Thank you!
15:29:20 From Kyle Berlin : John Berger: ten dissipatches about endurance in face of walls
https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/article_2343jsp/

15:29:23 From Anthony Acciavatti : Thank you!
15:29:25 From Sarah Ordway : Thank you!
15:29:28 From Eirene Visvardi : Thank you very much!
15:29:32 From Brad Fox : Group 2 (I think) — Kyle, Molly and Larry

15:29:35 From Brad Fox : The classical shields imply an end to the empire —
which image in this US shield implies the end?
—the desperation of the guard in front of the imperial kitsch of the monument?
—the parking lot of the Pentagon?
—the facelessness of it all

The imperial shields imagery described walled cities with vibrant life within — where was the vibrant city here?

What do we put on our shields?

Or do we go shieldless?