



ATTENTION FILM SCREENING AND COALITION-BUILDING
(presenting documentary films and the FoA Coalition Rolodex
from ISA Interns Dylan Liu and Bonnie Hartman)
3 March 2023

14:14:24 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

Bringing in Graham Burnett in absentia to recount our team retreat on 2/19!
Also: please keep your camera on! That's one of the rules of the call!

[DGB presents on the Attention Labs team retreat and coalition building]

14:24:16 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

Kicking it to Claudia next! No need to worry about the bell - if it doesn't work, we improvise ;)

[Claudia leads a warm up entitled The Handheld Camera]

[Transition to screening of documentary rough cuts]

14:42:42 From Henry Schmidt to Everyone:

love that!

[Breakout discussing the films' role in messaging and coalition-building]

15:01:06 From Julian Chehrian to Everyone:

Henry - People caring about attention outside of elite university networks. There is a sense that there are many different kinds of attentional expertise. But picking people suggests that there is something new about attentional commodification in form of phone psychometrics. I think you can describe factory work as a kind of attentional control or commodification (e.g. Taylorism as expropriation of attention). I think that the rolodex and the groups (leisure activities, manual or craft work) we've selected -- occupations -- there is a sense that working at the register at Starbucks is not the kind of attention that is broached as being something of interest. There is a kind of inclination towards beekeeping, lacemaking, and surfing. Which I love. The

directions we look to to find sources of expertise are still very particular. What would it mean for someone who works at a Tyson chicken production plant to speak on this. Is that the kind of attention we are interested in?

Julian - I asked if more conflictual sites of instrumentalized attention, e.g Amazon Warehouse, connected to Henry's point about history of psychotechnics and industrialization of attention, are case studies that would fit our criteria. [See Rebecca's point on significance of pleasure!]

Rebecca - Some of those things that are in the rolodex relate to exercises that are remedial. It is not for nothing that during the pandemic there was an enormous increase in people's interest in crafts. These are small worlds that we can control, when during pandemic we could do little to control what was happening. There is issue of seeing (seeking beauty).. using your eyes to focus on something and attend to that outside of yourself. Then there is doing (making), where actual act of making the thing forces you because it requires some expertise of craftsmanship. It forces you to attend. Both are about being in the moment. The film about the waves is about developing instinct to turn around and merge with the waves. What neither of those films really does it necessarily (first more successful than second) is connect to some of the issues that Peter discussed as important to the labs. They are free-standing. One wants, before the end of the film, to in some subtle way bring it back to what the problem is and how one can connect to other people if this speaks to you as a film. What do we want people who see the film to come away from it with?

These practices that we've gathered as case studies involve pleasure. Many of these practices are ones that people turn to for pleasure. Recovering sense of joy/wonder when you are focusing. One of the things that the attention labs could do as an add-on is to do an activity-- a craft--where people actually make something, and feel the difference.

Melissa - The two films we saw were not about someone doing that for a profession. Thinking of Henry's comments, I'm wondering if the message of that is that attention that happens in pursuit of craft/leisure activity is somehow more sacred than attention that happens in the work environment. If you find someone who can speak to attention practices in an Amazon warehouse -- is someone talking about attention practices in site of extractive labor somehow less valuable? Which brings up Rebecca's reference to craft history. In time before we had lot of leisure, craft was same as survival activity. Making bread/textiles as practices of everyday survival. Is the important thing for people to find a form of craft that is not connected to their means of survival?

15:02:07 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

Our breakout room noted that Filmmaking ITSELF is an attentional practice - so we played with the idea of making a self-examining documentary from Dylan's perspective! ie a "behind the scenes"...

15:02:38 From Kasia Skorynkiewicz to Everyone:

How to explain "attention" in a simple way where everyone will understand it and not focus on the word "attention" but more of the "how" to do attention

15:03:21 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

Will Lamson - Attention discourse is already visible, in a way, in surf documentaries, rock-climbing documentaries, etc. It was the lay person doc that really *pushed* my idea of what attention could be!

15:04:05 From David Landes to Everyone:

The language of "attention" often forecloses the language that practitioners think by. I often ask questions without that word: how do you approach X, how do you read X, give me new eyes, new ears, that I wouldn't have if I read the steps.

I find that my students can do this if I tell them to move from the language of procedure process to the language of perception process. Don't give me the nouns/verbs but your adverbs. Attention lives in the adverbs in the HOW. Also, since attn is everywhere - break it into pieces: what are your attn problems and attn goals. Pick one at a time, explain it in a 2 second window. This helps a lot when students are writing about attn.

[Second breakout: coalition-building strategies]

15:12:05 From Lane Stroud to Everyone:

From first breakout: - eve -2nd one: att as care is the primary driver of my interest. homelessness as invisibility. reconnecting to that att to att. - 1st one was more the surfing itself.

Lane: what was maybe missing from the surfing one was surfers watching waves before surfing. when i surfed, i was a practitioner waves are different when you think about waves as sets. the thing I'm doing is a practice.

Laura: love surfer one. the connection to att as service but also as survival. caught two waves, took control of my mind. 2nd one affirming identity of poeple, more intetionality doing niche work.

Ana: one thing missing in both pictures is recognizing the sanctuary of attention because they are both sanctuaries -- examples in the first one: surfing with the sea / surfing with the students, all of them are sanctuary related.

Relevance of timing: its not about productivity of catching waves as a surfer, what the surfer attends to is connection to the sea and the time

15:12:32 From David Landes to Everyone:

"Break down the Attentional lenses you use in your practice"

"How would you characterize your states and types of presences you carry through your practice?"

15:12:34 From Julian Chehirian to Everyone:

Second breakout:

David: To get conversations going w people on subject of attention, I ask people to describe their "attentional lens." Words that tell me the how of an attentional lens.

We therefore can ask, without over-specifying, many different people.

therapist: "I listen for what is not there, for what is not said"

Photographer: "I look not only at objects, but also for what is between objects"

Kasia: The juiciness is in the "in-between"

Prompt at mana contemporary: observe everything happening around you and write it all down.

Being present and in the moment

David:

I would ask someone: how would you characterize your state or the type of presence you carry through your practice?

15:13:40 From Ana Marques to Everyone:

- att is accessible yes, but it's not anything. there's a level of difficulty ("supreme effort" by Simone Weil)

- FoA puts att at the center of att

- maybe coalition means more recognizing existing sanctuaries, creating common territories

- (Lane was building an argument about coalition and unison)

15:14:51 From Lane Stroud to Everyone:

(Lane doesn't build arguments well with a clock counting down)