

**THIS THREAD GATHERS THE EMAILS THAT LAUNCHED THE “FRIENDS OF ATTENTION”
GATHERINGS in APRIL of 2020**

For other relevant material, click [here](#).

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Apr 10, 2020 at 2:10 PM
Subject: An Invitation -- Thinking Attention, together...
To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dear Friends:

Greetings to you, in this strange and terrible time. I hope wherever this message finds you, you are safe and well, and those near to you (in space, in spirit) are holding up before the challenges of our moment.

Like you, I am sure, I have been moved, in the last weeks, by the work of those who have brought what they could to this crisis -- and at 7pm, each day, here in New York, when people go to their windows and fire-escapes to bang on pots, and clap, and sound whistles and horns (in gratitude for the healthcare workers; it celebration of another day), I am reminded so powerfully of how we hunger for solidarity -- and how little of this true sense of each other is left to us.

AND SO...

I have just combed through my email for friends and colleagues and acquaintances I know share my interest in ATTENTION (and in practices of attention, and in the history and politics of attention). **And I am writing to invite you to join me, if you wish, in what I hope will become a little (weekly?) "Working Group" -- or seminar, or quarantine collective, or whatever it becomes...**

We will have a short reading, and have some discussion. How it will work, exactly, will be a function of how many people join. So that is TBD. But it is simply an open session, to continue our work of *thinking about attention* -- philosophy, history, science, practice, art.

And so, some specifics:

- 1) The first session will be next Friday, the 17th of April;**
- 2) It will run from 12 noon EST, till 1:20 pm (80 minutes);**
- 3) Could you RSVP if you are interested, please?**
- 4) I'll send a Zoom Invite to everyone who does, along with a short text that we can use as a jumping-off point.**

I am very much hoping some of you will join me in this -- just so we can have the simple experience of seeing each other, and thinking a little together, and seeing what thought and talk and attentive care can do, now.

And perhaps, when this terrible tide recedes, we can share a world that is a little kinder, a little more generous, a little more sane....

In hope,

Graham

www.dgrahamburnett.net

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Apr 15, 2020 at 11:20 PM

Subject: Our Friday session!

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dear All:

Here's hoping this message finds you managing (at least) and possibly even *flourishing* (in whatever ways that is possible in this moment).

AND IT IS EXACTLY THAT (the possibility of some form of flourishing in this moment) that *we are going to be experimenting with together **this Friday***. Very much looking forward.

TIMING:

We're going to gather (virtually) from **12 noon to 1:20 pm EST**

LOGISTICS:

I'll email a Zoom invite about 30 minutes before we start.

FORM:

As I wrote you in the original invite, my hope for this occasion is that we will use it to launch an exploration of what sort of "community" (of inquiry, of practice, of interest, etc.) might be possible in this medium/format and under our current conditions. My invitation went to a mix of friends and colleagues and collaborators all of whom share some interest in ATTENTION -- and many of whom have crossing connections of one sort or another. Let's see who shows up on Friday, and then go from there! (I know we've all probably been spending a lot of time on Zoom, and may be feeling a little sick of it, *but let's see what can be done....*)

SUBSTANCE:

This is NOT a seminar! It's not a "class" or a "course." And while I'm going to "host" (at least here at first), my hope is that, in time, we will build out our shared occasions by having various folks from the group present stuff (texts, practices) and lead. But to get us going, I thought I would pass around, as promised, a few short readings. *Feel free to join even if you don't find time to get to these*. Because, as I say, *this is not a seminar*.

I have settled on three very different sources -- in keeping, with the diversity of the group. They are all SHORT. Graze! And focus on what interests you, if anything.

The three (attached) texts are:

- 1) A TINY excerpt from Bernard Stiegler's (slightly cranky) *Taking Care of the Youth, and the Generations* (2008 in the original French; English translation 2010). **3 pages**.
- 2) One of the micro essays, "How to look at nothing," from James Elkins's *How to Use Your Eyes* (2000). **4 pages**.
- 3) E. Colin Cherry's classic 1953 article, "Some Experiments on the Recognition of Speech, with One and with Two Ears" (the origin of the idea of the "Cocktail Party Effect" -- our ability suddenly to hear a familiar name in the middle of a cacophonous conversation). This is a technical piece, read as much as you like -- the first **2 pages** will give you a perfectly good sense of what is going on.

Looking forward to Friday!

Warmly,

Graham

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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Apr 19, 2020 at 11:12 PM

Subject: FRIENDS OF ATTENTION -- Thank you! And... our plan for this week!

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dear All:

First, let me just express what a JOY it was to come together on Friday for that *Inaugural Gathering* of our Quarantine Conference on Attentional Matters! (Or whatever the hell we ultimately call it...)

:)

In a basic way, I think we are *launched*.

And so, a few nuts and bolts:

- 1) We will convene again, **THIS FRIDAY, the 24th of April**.

2) We are going to push back by 2 hours -- so **the new start time is 2 pm EST.** (This is the special "*Matthew-Strother-in-New-Zealand Time Adjustment*"; so he had better set his alarm!). We will go for the same 80 minutes sharp -- ending at 3:20 pm EST.

3) The inimitable **Jeff Dolven** will lead us in a "module" on ATTENTION and ATTENTION SEEKING... (short reading to come by Wednesday night).

4) *PLUS* an experimental "attentional action" led by the current "[B.B. Chamberlin Fellow](#)" at the [Milcom Memorial Reading Room and Attention Library](#), **STEVIE KNAUSS**.

IN ADDITION, a few people wrote proposing "Special Interest Working Groups" -- so let me mention the proposed topics here:

1) We have a proposal for a Working Group to think *specifically about attentional questions as they relate to the current pandemic*.

2) We also have a proposal from somebody in our group who is running for political office, and wants to think *concretely about attention-related policy proposals that could be part of an actual political platform/plan*.

Let me know if you might have any interest in being part of either of those emergent "Special Interest Working Groups" -- just poke me with an email.

A final thought: We want our gathering to be OPEN. But we were not a small cohort. And there was really good energy, I thought -- with everyone, it seemed, knowing at least a handful of the others. Given how the group has shaped up, I propose we sort of stick with our own group here for a little bit -- a few more sessions? And see what happens. We may settle down to a smaller size. Or we may just come to feel that we would be happy growing (and maybe we do a session where anyone who wanted to could invite another person or something). But for now, let's try another session or two as basically...us.

And of course, if you would like off of this list, just let me know!

Attentively yours,

Graham

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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Apr 22, 2020 at 8:50 PM

Subject: FRIENDS OF ATTENTION - Reading for Friday...

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest!

Hoping everyone is holding up, and holding out, and holding on, and holding forth (as appropriate)!

Attached, please find EIGHT PAGES (*only eight* -- this is 100% doable, even if you are super busy) from Phillips's *Attention Seeking* (2019), which Jeff Dolven has provided for us -- and which he will be encouraging us to stir about in our collective...

THIS FRIDAY, 24 April, 2 pm EST
(I will again send the Zoom Codes about 30 mins before).

He plans to have us do some breakout work with the text, and he says he has been thinking a bit about Adam Phillips's aphoristic style, and about the aphorism as a kind of attentional strategy or device. So something to keep in mind, perhaps, as we read the material.

Very much looking forward, *attentively*,

Graham

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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Apr 26, 2020 at 8:50 PM
Subject: FRIENDS OF ATTENTION - Reading for Friday...
To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest Attentionauts:

Many thanks to everyone for another very lively session this past Friday! No lie: one of the post-session breakout rooms ran on for *almost an hour and a half* after we wrapped up the main gig! Wonderful to see people connecting and reconnecting.

AND I WANT YOU HERE TO IMAGINE A GIF IN WHICH A SET OF ANGELS PLACE A CROWN ON JEFF DOLVEN, AND THEN HE GLOWS LIKE A RADIOACTIVE SUPER-HERO (and it just keeps happening, again and again, on loop, like a true GIF).

THANK YOU, JD, for your generosity and for leading our discussion.

Nuts and bolts for this week:

1) We are GO again, on **FRIDAY, 1 MAY, 2 pm EST.**

2) The brilliant [Sonali Chakravarti](#) will lead us for about 35 minutes in a discussion/project thinking about acting and politics (reading to come on Wednesday evening).

3) *PLUS* the hypnotic song-and-dance man [David Richardson](#) may, if we are good, lead us in a *listening exercise*.

In addition, we now have two "Caucus Groups" up and running: one, chaired by [Carlos Montemayor](#), on "Attention in the time of Pandemic"; and the other, chaired by [Quentin Julien-Saavedra](#), on "Policy platforms/plans for a politics of attention." Also, as I mentioned, [John Muse](#) is interested in thinking issues of synchronous vs asynchronous attention, and that could become a third project.

If you would like to be involved with any of this stuff, poke these peoples, or send me an email, and I can link you.

And as ever, let me know if you want off of this list.

Warmly warmly (and *attentively* too),

Graham

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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Apr 29, 2020 at 9:59 PM

Subject: Friends of Attention! Reading for THIS FRIDAY, 2 pm EST!

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest!

Very keen to see you again...

THIS FRIDAY, 2 pm EST
for
FRIENDS OF ATTENTION GATHERING NUMERO 3

(Zoom Codes will again follow on Friday, about 30 minutes before we convene.)

PROGRAM FEATURING:

1) Less Graham!

2) More SONALI CHAKRAVARTI!

3) Plus, a listening exercise with *David Richardson!*

The READING for Sonali's discussion (which will deal with attention, acting, and questions of politics/citizenship) is attached...

Attentively yours,

G

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, May 4, 2020 at 3:47 PM

Subject: Friends of Attention -- NEW SHARED GOOGLE FOLDER, etc.

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest Attentionauts:

First, very warm thanks to Sonali Chakravarti for an *intensely stimulating* session on Friday. And David Richardson's "Zoom-Room-Tone" exercise genuinely convened several moments of actual magic -- for me at least (and I know for others as well...). Really special.

OK, so just a few logistics:

- 1) we are GO again for **this Friday, 8 May, 2 pm EST.**
- 2) The inimitable [Dominic Pettman](#) will lead our discussion session (look for readings on Weds. evening).
- 3) Artist-filmmaker-Feldenkreis guru-ess [Helen Singh-Miller](#) has promised to coordinate some form of attentional exercise (yay!).

ALSO, I have created a [GoogleFolder](#) for our community. I dropped all of the [READINGS](#) into one subfolder, and created another subfolder for the ["working groups."](#)

I also created a [thread of the emails](#) so far, so that if new folks come in they can read-up and get a feel for the launch and trajectory of the gatherings.

FINALLY, I went ahead and [uploaded our full chat from Friday](#) -- which has a treasure-trove of thinking about "attentional exercises" tuned for thinking/practicing *citizenship*. Check it out! This would be a fantastic jumping off point for further work, if anyone wants to take up the task. Experiments?

poke me if you want off this list
poke me if you think there is someone we should add

With attentive regards,

Graham

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, May 6, 2020 at 7:38 PM

Subject: Friends of Attention - Reading for THIS FRIDAY...

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest!

Greetings to you all; here's hoping everyone is holding up...

And onward we go, with our *gatherings*. Session number FOUR will be **this Friday, 2pm EST**. Zoom codes to follow about 30 mins before we start. (If you are joining for the first time, perhaps take a moment to review [this thread](#), to get a sense of what we have been up to).

Attached, as promised, please find a short reading, provided to us by the illustrious DOMINIC PETTMAN, who will be leading us for a think-in on Flusser, Barthes, and more. Our subjects, he says, will be:

- 1) the connections between libidinal economy and attention ecology (and vice versa);
- 2) the notion of rhythm (especially as it relates to Barthes's question of "how to live together").

(If you haven't seen his recent piece on quarantine and the pandemic -- which touches on matters attentional & distractional -- [here it is](#)).

ALSO, as you know, we will be in the good hands of Helen Singh-Miller for a portion of our session on Friday. She has asked us to:

- 1) have **a drawing tool and paper to hand** as we Zoom-convene;
- 2) to read the following prompt text (from "Freeing the Neck," by Paul Rubin, *Torino II Feldenkrais Training*, Segment 1, Year 1, 2010):

"One of the things we will learn together and that for some people is not easy in the beginning is how to observe with a minimum of interference. Now, people who study other people are very aware that if they wish to observe the behaviors of someone else they must themselves be unobserved, so they will set up a camera, and an anthropologist will set up a blind, a place where they cannot be seen but from which they can observe, so that they can observe the behaviors of people and not be interfering in the experiment. Now for us, when we observe ourselves, it becomes a fine line to do something and to observe it but still have it proceed in a normal way. Because we are interested in observing the level of our habit that's very deep. So sometimes in a situation like this, if we make the movements very special, or if we control them or do them correctly in our mind, we are interfering and we reduce our ability to learn."

Till soon, my friends!

Attentively yours,

G

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, May 10, 2020 at 11:36 AM

Subject: Friends of Attention! Find your drawing (or the drawing of you?)

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest Attentional Guerillas, *comrades*:

Hey! Just a big "Happy Mothers Day" to all the moms out there -- and to those who serve in mom-like-roles, whoever you may be...

BUT MORE TO THE POINT: a **MASSIVE thank-you** to Helen and Dominic for their generosity and care leading our session on Friday!

I have assembled the [Chat-Thread of our session](#), where you can refresh your memory about a number of the glowing proposals made for a civic-ecstatic-pataphysical "*Libidinal Stimulus Package*."

And by the way, further reading on the topic is also available here, in the [Manifesto for the Freedom of Attention](#) (drafted by a group of us who were at Mildred's Lane last summer for this session on "[The Politics of Attention: Art, Time, Technology, Action](#)" -- special shout-out to Catherine L. Hansen).

Finally, I also assembled a [GALLERY OF THE KINETIC-ZOOM-PORTRAITS](#) we did during Helen's exercise. I *strongly* recommend perusal!

Finally finally: confirming that we are GO for this Friday, **2 pm EST as usual**, for a session where we will think a little about cinema and "scenes of attention" -- with special guest [LANE STROUD](#), LA-based filmmaker and activist. Reading and videoclips for watching to come on Wednesday...

Onward, attentively! *And with thanks*,

Graham

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, May 13, 2020 at 8:04 PM

Subject: FRIENDS OF ATTENTION - This Friday! Reading (& Watching)...

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest Attentionauts!

We are back at it **THIS FRIDAY, May 15th, at 2pm EST** for the fifth of our *ATTENTIONAL GATHERINGS* (we will go, as we do, 'till 3:20; zoom codes will come 30 minutes before).

For this session, we are going to be thinking/talking/doing on "ATTENTION AND THE CAMERA," with some special concern with *cinematic stagings of the encounter with a work of art*. As I mentioned, this session chimes with stuff that the filmmaker/activist [Lane Stroud](#) presented as part of a project at the [Reina Sofia](#) last autumn (organized by our own [Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro](#)).

Lane has prepared a short (10-minute) compilation of film clips for us all to check out in advance of our Friday session. Check that out [here](#).

In addition, I chose a pair of short readings:

1) [Steven Jacobs](#). "Galleries of the Gaze: The Museum in Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* and Hitchcock's *Vertigo*" (chapter three from his book *Framing Pictures* [2011]) -- if you are pressed for time, just look at 74-84.

2) [A very short excerpt](#) from Hal Foster's (remarkable -- and I am not just saying that because he sometimes reads these emails!) *Return of the Real* (1996).

ONE MORE THING: if you are joining the session for the first time, maybe take a second to [skim the thread](#) of our gatherings.

NO, WAIT, ONE MORE-MORE THING: the indefatigable farmer-poet *Jared Rankin* (he of the focused gaze) has, entirely on his own initiative, thrown up a fetching [WEBSITE for the Friends of Attention!](#)
Thank you, Jared!

And finally, always, of course: just let me know if you want off the list; and poke me if you think of someone you'd like to invite...

Warmly, warmly, and till FRIDAY!

Graham

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, May 18, 2020 at 12:02 AM

Subject: You will not BELIEVE how great our video is...

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Friends!

First, just a HUGE thank you to Lane Stroud -- for her so so special session last Friday.

And not only for Friday! She sat down this weekend and cut together a rough of all of our "Attention with the Camera" shorts -- and I found the result *genuinely mesmerizing*. (The end -- tip of hat to Helen, Julian, and Hal -- is really just too much. I *stopped breathing* for several seconds...)

She just uploaded it for all of us, and [here is the link](#). Definitely check it out.

Such a joy to see all of the works with which you are quarantined, and your quarantined faces, looking on with such live eyes!

WE ARE GO FOR THIS FRIDAY -- 2 pm EST like usual. We will have the uber-mesmeric [Marcos Luytens](#) leading us in an exercise. And the ambi-hemispheric [CATHERINE HANSEN](#) is going to hold us in some rictus of attentional ecstasy (TBD) - reading will come on Wednesday.

All senses on the *qui vive!*

Graham

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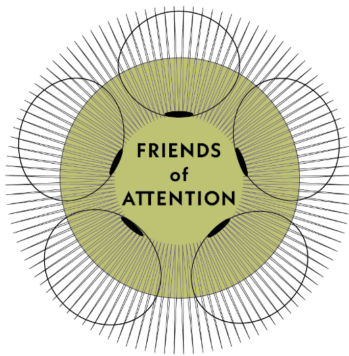
----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, May 21, 2020 at 12:21 AM

Subject: Readings (and listenings) for Friday!

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Dearest!

Here's hoping everyone is holding up -- and perhaps even getting a bit of sun on the face (even if only by leaning out the window or whatever...)

Very much looking forward to seeing everyone **this FRIDAY** at our regular time (**2 pm EST**) for our **"Friends of Attention Gathering # 6"** (Zoom codes to follow about 30 minutes before). If you are new to these occasions, best to take a moment to orient yourself [here](#) and [here](#). The mood is *generous* -- and we aim to create a collaborative sense of inquiry and experiment. Why? We aren't sure yet...

THIS WEEK:

PART I: LA-based [Marcos Luytens](#) will be leading us in an exercise in "Attentional De-Pruning" (exploring cross-modal or "synesthetic" attention). Many of you will remember his super-beautiful "Hypnotic Show" in São Paulo. Here's what he asks of us:

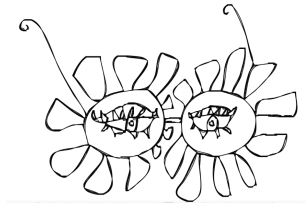
1) Before Friday, take a moment to listen (up to minute 13) to [this interview](#) with the neuroscientist Vilayanur Ramachandran.

2) On Friday, have a drawing tool and a blank sheet of paper.

PART II: Beirut-(and-Tokyo)-based [Catherine Hansen](#) will be leading us in a bit of a seminar discussion, picking up on work some of us did together last summer at ["The Politics of Attention"](#) residency up at [Mildred's Lane](#). Two VERY short readings for that part of things:

- 1) Simone Weil ["On Attention and Will"](#) (from *Gravity and Grace*); and
- 2) ["Manifesto for the Freedom of Attention"](#), a draft/collaborative text-in-progress.

See you Friday at 2!



With *attentive* thanks,

Graham

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, May 25, 2020 at 9:50 AM
Subject: See the Hypnotic Drawings! (Also, event this week...)
To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Attentionauts!

First things first: special thanks again to Catherine and Marcos for this past Friday's GATHERING! I got really anxious when Marcos hypnotically informed us that our tongues were getting super *heavy*. 'Cause it happened. In was like the Novocain injection right before I got my wisdom teeth out -- I was not sure I would ever be able to speak again. Made me *nervous*. Marcos has some [gris-gris](#).

[And the resulting HYPNOTIC DRAWINGS we did are pretty cool. Check them out.](#)

Also, I put the [CHAT THREAD](#) up as well -- worth a review, if you are curious.

A few other little bits of housekeeping:

- 1) **NEW ESSAY**: our own [Chiara Cappelletto](#) has a new and interesting essay about the "Aesthetics of Presence" out in English (on the *Critical Inquiry* website). There is an oblique reference to our GATHERINGS in there -- [take a look](#).

2) **EVENT WEDNESDAY:** A number of you are familiar with the research collective [ESTAR\(SER\)](#), which works on problems of ATTENTION. This Wednesday, May 27th, from 3pm - 4pm EST several associates of ESTAR(SER) -- including [SAL RANDOLPH](#), [STEVIE KNAUSS](#), and [JESSICA PALINSKI](#) -- will be doing an online program on "Collective Work." The study of Attention will be at issue. The event is hosted by Mana Contemporary -- registration suggested. [DETAILS HERE.](#)

And, of course, **THIS FRIDAY (regular time) WE ARE "ON" for GATHERING #7**, with the illustrious [JUSTIN E.H. SMITH](#) (tagline: " NUNC ENIM SERMO DE TOTO EST"). I think we will be thinking about hidden faces...

Readings to come on Wednesday.

Attentively yours,

G

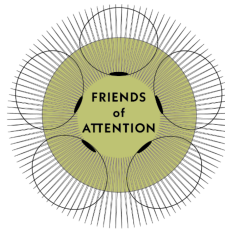
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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, May 27, 2020 at 11:13 AM

Subject: Friends of Attention! Readings for FRIDAY (and...)

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Dear All:

Quick reminder that any of you curious about the research collective [ESTAR\(SER\)](#) -- which works on ATTENTION in a very sustained (if idiosyncratic) way -- should tune in on Zoom at **3 pm EST TODAY**, b/c several of the "Friends of Attention" (Sal Randolph, Justin E.H. Smith, Stevie Knauss, Jessica Palinski)

will be doing a *program discussion on collectives and "collective work."* The gig is part of [Mana Contemporary's](#) "Meeting at a Distance" series, and is hosted by their performance curator, Molly Feingold. [Live link here.](#)

IN ADDITION, the inimitable Marcos Luytens, who led us in last week's [Hypnotic Drawing Exercise](#), wanted me to pass y'all a few words:

It is wonderful to see all the drawings together, side by side. I love seeing the raw figures that were generated through the touch, smell, taste ideation in response to the artwork. Some more nervous and jagged, while others come across as more flowing and playful. It seems that the 'mute prisoner' was given a chance to express itself and begin to assert its own traces beyond (or before) language.

I also love the drawing of the hand nose, touching smell possibilities. I think we should all consider swapping the placement of at least a couple of our senses a day, to see what that gives in terms of new observations. Rene' Daumal's ['paroptic vision'](#) is a good example of a synesthetic practice. The typewriter written drawing is quite enigmatic, as if perhaps we have lost our 'handedness' to the keyboard, which develops new relationships to language and ideas, once handwriting becomes rare. Perhaps the mute prisoner is more engaged on a keyboard than when writing by hand?

AND FINALLY...

THIS FRIDAY, 2 pm as usual (Zoom codes to come 30 mins beforehand), Justin E. H. Smith will take us on a thought-walk down into the *caves* -- the *caverns* of cognition and sensation. Think of it as attentional-SPELUNKING-plus-*philosophy*.

He wanted to make all the reading in German and Russian. But I talked him into primarily English. So you can thank me on that. But he has insisted on some French too. The Bachelard has never been translated, unfortunately. It is OPTIONAL -- and he has graciously given us the key paragraph in his own translation. Thank you, Justin!

Readings attached! See you all on FRIDAY!

In attention (that's a pun),

G

www.dgrahamburnett.net

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, May 29, 2020 at 10:48 PM

Subject: Genius! Madness! Disaster!
To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>

Dearest Friends:

Ok, so seriously -- the Pareidolia Exercise worked, like, almost TOO WELL. It is kinda creepy! As Justin put it when I sent it to him "These are terrifying! We're surrounded!"

So, um, you gotta check them out. Y'all see faces everyplace. And the crazy thing is: a lot of 'em seem to *be there*. (Some of the photos, however, derive their creepy force for me from the lurking sense I have that *someone* sees a face in there...though I do not -- which makes it even worse!)

Here they are:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dRTnjwGtz2xCFht3yzALJ969n6Kw690T/view?usp=sharing>

OK, now for the bad news. I f'd up. Lost the chat thread. Long story. Totally my fault. Unrecoverable.

BUT WE ARE GOING TO CONVERT THE LOSS INTO A GAIN!

Haven't you always wondered what it would be like to document one of these gatherings in a better, richer, more collaborative way? Well, let's go for it!

So I created [this google doc](#), and Jared and Justin and I are all hoping some of you will be willing to take a second and *DROP SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS FROM TODAY INTO IT*, so we don't lose all the questions and churn of the session! (Anonymous ok, or put your name as you like...)

Please! Just a sentence or two from each of you, and we will have an *amazing document*...

Hoping!

And with appreciation (and an apology!),
AND A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO JUSTIN!,

Graham

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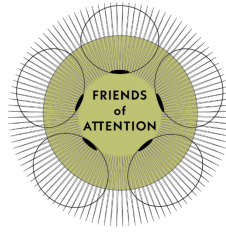
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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Jun 3, 2020 at 10:46 PM

Subject: Friends of Attention; Friday - Yes, we will go forward...(and Readings)

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Dearest Friends:

This has been an overwhelming set of days. All of you, wherever you are, will be aware of how the United States has been rocked by spontaneous uprisings of protest. Those of you who live here in this country will very likely have felt these spasms of righteous indignation intimately. I write you from New York City, under curfew, where police helicopters are overhead, and the streets are legitimately, truly, and respectfully *angry*.

First, I want to express solidarity with those who are suffering. Then, I think we must be clear: only true justice sustains political legitimacy. Finally, speaking for myself, I declare against violence -- the moral high ground will always belong to those who eschew violence. I believe this very deeply. Let us hope, and work, for better: better governance, better leaders, better times, better selves.

Thank you to those of you who talked with me in these last days -- about whether we should gather this Friday. Here is a moment from one of those exchanges:

The arts and the humanities cannot save lives. Cannot, in a sense, lift the knee of an oppressor or sadist. But they CAN give us the reasons and the experiences that inform our longing for fuller and better life -- for all.

So we will go forward, in that spirit. **Friday, 2:00-3:20 pm EST.** (Zoom codes to come 30 minutes before we start).

We are deeply fortunate to have had, already on the calendar, a session to be led by LEONARD NALENCZ, who will be known to many of you. Not only is Len a deeply learned scholar of the Renaissance, he also spent more than a decade as an in-the-trenches union organizer and fighter for economic justice. He teaches in the Bard Prison Initiative, and has been arrested multiple times in actions of civil disobedience. Together with the artist ANNA RILEY, Len had already planned a session in which we will look at questions of power.

Our topic: *Ekphrasis as an Attentional Mode*

Three short readings attached: one from the *Iliad*, one from the *Aeneid*, and one from Linda Nochlin's "Sophie Calle: Word, Image and the End of Ekphrasis."

Onward. In an attentive vigil for...*better*,

Graham

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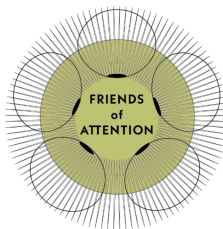
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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Sat, Jun 6, 2020 at 2:56 PM

Subject: Friends of Attention... With thanks...

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Friends:

My thanks to all of you for your time and care and thought yesterday. It meant a lot to me -- and I think many of us felt grateful for the occasion. Deep appreciation to Len and Anna!

I did some round-up work. Our [CHAT THREAD](#) is now available. And so, too, a [Compilation of the Ekphrastic Exercises](#) that folks sent in (some are also in the chat thread).

The chat thread is really rich. Many thanks for the work everyone did (Sal especially!) to keep track of what came up in the breakout rooms. Lots to go back to in there.

We had a few text proposals from different folks, and I just wanted to signal a few of them: Hal recommended the (fascinating -- and I was not aware of it) Silvia Kolbowski project entitled "[an inadequate history of contemporary art.](#)" Definitely worth checking out. Casey suggested the poem

"Odyssey" by Sipho Sepamla, which links questions of race and empire to description/ekphrasis via a critique of tourism (you can find it online). Kyle Berlin mentioned [this very striking essay by John Berger \("Ten Dispatches about Endurance in the Face of Walls"\)](#) -- which put me in mind of the "walking through walls" moment in [The Twelve Theses on Attention](#). Several people recommended checking out Alice Oswald reading her poem *Memorial*. I found [this excerpt](#). And our friend Carla Nappi has [a new co-authored book out](#) that is engaged with a number of the themes that came up in the conversations.

Finally, reaching back, and connecting last week's gathering with yesterday's, [here is a link to Sarah Ordway's supplementary pareidolia image](#) -- a face she spotted (in the facade of a burned building) while walking in one of the protest marches of these last days...

In hope, and with gratitude (and looking forward to next Friday!),

Graham

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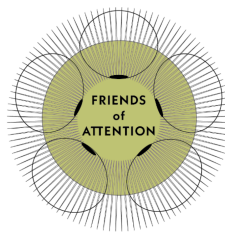
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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Jun 11, 2020 at 2:16 AM

Subject: Friends of Attention -- Reading for Friday!

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Dearest Friends:

First things first. We are all aware that something very close to an actual revolution seems to be happening. Now. For those of us in the United States, it is happening *in our midst*, and, though it has arisen on the occasion of outrage (and atop deep upwellings of fundamental injustice), it must give occasion for hope. Those of you who will not be with us on Friday because you are actively protesting, or organizing, or otherwise engaged directly in the cause -- you are concretizing that hope.

Others of you may simply feel that this is not the moment to talk about some very abstract poetry (for that is our plan for our Friday Gathering -- see below); each of us must make that decision, and I think here reasonable and decent people could simply disagree.

What I hope we can all AGREE on is that this is the time to GIVE whatever one can to the cause. Very simple. If you can, give. Money. [Here is a forceful case for why](#); and [here are some suggestions for where](#). If you have not participated directly in the transfer of resources to this cause, please reconsider.

For my part, I continue to believe that our best hope, in the end, lies in beautiful thinking: more of it, for more people. I think human flourishing is served by this, and by the actions that arise under those conditions. This may be wrong (I confess). But it is my belief. My faith.

SO I WILL BE THERE ON FRIDAY, 2-3:20 pm EST. And with me, I am pleased to announce, will be a pair of beautiful thinkers (and makers): the Paris-based designer and artist [Alex Balgiu](#) and the inimitable [Jeff Dolven](#)! Here is what they have asked me to pass on:

We will consider the three concrete poems attached here as objects of attention. (They are taken from an anthology Alex has been editing with Mónica de la Torre, [Women in Concrete Poetry, 1959-1979](#).) Please print them out if you can, so that you have paper copies to hand when we meet; you will also want a pen or pencil ready, and your phone. You do not need to study the poems carefully beforehand, and perhaps it is better if you do not. We will spend time with them in the session. Also attached is an article by Rosmarie Waldrop, "A Basis of Concrete Poetry," which introduces some conceptual issues. We won't dwell or depend upon it, and some passages are quite difficult, but it will reward any time you give it.

Readings are attached. Zoom Codes will come about 30 minutes before we start...

With attentive hope,

Graham

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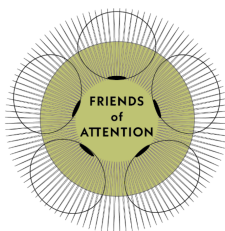
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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jun 15, 2020 at 11:18 PM

Subject: Oh, that was lovely...

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Friends!

For those of you with your shoulders to the wheel of revolutionary change -- hurrah! And *onward!*

And for those of you who were able to join on Friday, please join me in *thanking Alex Balgiu and Jeff Dolven* for leading us through a very special GATHERING #9. Moving from the Waldrop essay, we tested Siegfried Schmidt's notion that there is a transformative potential in concrete poetry (since it forces a radical, perspectival plasticity into the "reality" of "text"). This is 100% not to be confused with *going to the protest*, or *sending money to the cause*. But in the end, nothing can really change if we cannot change language -- so reading *differently* is definitely not nothing.

And, with Alex and Jeff to guide us, we *did just that* -- "read differently" -- to striking effects.

[Here is the chat thread for the session](#), with some great thoughts about what happened in the breakout sessions.

[And HERE is the totally mesmerizing mix](#) (thank you, Alex!) of all of us sounding that strange moiré-effect-like poem (the one in which one could find something that sounded like "Refuse, Re-Fuse, Rufus," etc.).

[And HERE is our derranging final thing](#) -- the giant cacophonous seminar of all 40 of us talking at the same time about the final poem. Get to the end, when Dolven suggests it may all be something like a *street sign*... Indeed. :)

Onward! This Friday, we will dig in for what will be *our last GATHERING for a spell*. We will think on *The Twelve Theses on Attention*, with help from Stevie Knauss and Adam Jasper -- and a set of short films curated by Alyssa Loh and Lane Stroud. More on Wednesday..

With attentive regards, and all good hopes,

Graham

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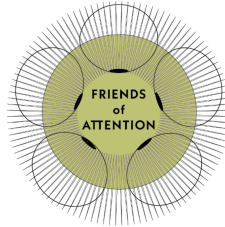
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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Jun 17, 2020 at 9:03 PM

Subject: Friday - Friends of Attention - SWAN SONG! - Reading, Watching, etc.

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Dearest Friends:

So, as promised, we will bring our set of [TEN "QUARANTINE GATHERINGS"](#) to a close **this Friday, the 19th of June**, at our usual time: **2:00 - 3:20 pm EST** (Zoom codes to come 30 minutes before). Do join us if you are able! (But as ever, if you are protesting, you are doing the work we *most need* right now....)

We will close our series in a critical conversation on the text that in many ways "birthed" the Friends of Attention: the so-called [TWELVE THESES](#). These were drafted and workshopped by a group of eighteen participants at the 2019 ["Politics of Attention: Art, Time, Technology, Action"](#) residency. They remain a "draft" text -- a text to think *from*, and think *with*, and perhaps to *keep rethinking*...

Over the last year, a number of us have been involved in presenting and discussing the Theses, collecting feedback and clarifying our ideas (for instance at [this event in London](#) last autumn, and also in connection with [this event](#) at Wesleyan).

One of the most interesting projects to "test" the Theses was a visual "charette" organized by [Alyssa Loh](#) and [Lane Stroud](#). They curated a set of SHORT FILMS by a set of super talented young filmmakers and animators: each was invited to make a cinematic "meditation" on one of the Theses; strung together, they make a compelling watch. This is still a rough cut! But I persuaded Lane and Alyssa to make the "raw" assemblage available for this week.

So there it is! The "reading" for Friday is:

1) [The Twelve Theses](#) themselves; and...

2) A watching of [The Twelve Theses Film](#).

And on Friday, the *inimitable* [Adam Jasper](#) (of Zurich and parts elsewhere) and the *unparalleled* [Stevie Knauss](#) (of the Hudson Valley Volée, & c.) will lead us in a set of conversations (and perhaps an exercise) aimed at extending, deepening, tweaking, and testing our thinking about the Theses.

With deep appreciation, and yours in *pure* attention,

Graham

P.S. Thank you Jared, as ever, for all your amazing work on the website!

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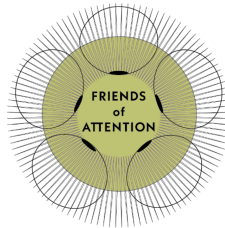
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From: **D. Graham Burnett** <davidgrahamburnett@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 11:16 PM

Subject: Friends of Attention - Quarantine Gatherings - Final "Thank You!"

To: <friendsofattention@gmail.com>



Dear Friends (of Attention!):

First and first -- a thank you to all of you for your generous spirits and good energy across these weeks!

And then, a *special thank you* to Adam Jasper and Stevie Knauss for leading us this past week in our discussion of [The Twelve Theses on Attention](#) -- there was a lot of brisk and stimulating thinking in there. And our [chat thread](#) documents much of it. Definitely worth another look. And then there was our [culminating DOODLE-FEST](#), which I attach. Who did the Bird in the corner? I am into it...

:)

One last bit of Friends of Attention good news: Carlos Montemayor's ["Working Group on Attention in the Time of the Pandemic"](#) just got a *pretty sweet publication*: The *Los Angeles Review of Books* has just posted a ["Roundtable on COVID-19 and the Attention Economy"](#) co-authored by a group of the Friends (and there's a link to *The Twelve Theses* in there too...). Congrats to Carlos, Josefina Massot, and Catherine Hansen for a ton of work on that!

Let me know if you are interested in getting more information on an August thing.

And onward, with all senses on the *qui vive*!

Gratefully,

Graham

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