

What are you currently paying attention to? And what are you (aware of) not paying attention to?

I would like to say that I am paying attention to the things I am working with, the found things. Since it is this kind of attention to the particular thing — that is here in the room with me, sitting in front of me— which seems to be needed in my work. Or at least what I've learned from the texts I've been reading, is that such an attention is generally missing when dealing with things in everyday life, and that through a different form of paying attention, a more balanced (or respectful) relationship can be found for and with things.

So paying attention is a kind of imperative that runs through the thing-theories I include in my working ethos. In practice however, this takes the form of a game of make-believe. I spend my time in the studio staring at the things for minutes, manipulating them and reorganizing their position constantly, balancing them, knocking them over, hearing what sounds they make, i.e. playing games of unconventional sensory investment, from which I conclude that I am paying attention to them.

Though I often feel that I'm actually not, or not sufficiently. You see, I expect to arrive at some phenomenological depth with these games, some kind of ontological shift where, through heightened attention, a lurking subject-object-barrier would be lifted in some way. Which would also mean that the things return the favour, and would pay attention to me — maybe even as a fellow thing. Nothing of that sort has occurred (yet), as I keep stepping from ideological theory into the inescapable one-sidedness of attention.

But maybe it's the things that I'm *not* consciously paying attention to, that have the bigger impact on me. The things that exist in the corner of my eyes as these are focused on something else; the momentarily neglected things that only stand out when I stumble over them. The suddenness of their presence is a confrontation unexpected and unprepared for. Such an encounter could be felt as a 'call to attention', as the sting which opens up or redirects its scope. And here attention seems to be the clearest and crispest, right when it jumps up from its slumber and doesn't fully grasp yet what had stung it.

I think this form of spiky serendipity applies to other objects of attention too. As a pattern, I quite strongly pay attention to a certain thing, believing this thing is important, and while doing so, I trip over other things, which then catch my attention in its fall and claim parts of it. For example, I was knee-deep in U.S. American 20th century classics, plowing through the canon for two years, when I tripped over some post-war German poetry as a birthday gift and spent a summer whispering s-z-sounds, which was lovely. This video could be an illustration of the process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6WQaIIZ248>

My attention is normally directed by the belief of what is important to pay attention to, thus of what is relevant to a current practice or interest. In order to have this attention make sense (and not feel like a bad investment), an image of consistency is needed — as in 'this is my thing / field of interest'. But at the same time I've always hated the idea of exclusion, that every decision *for* something is a decision *against* a thousand

other things, just as I don't like the idea of a consistent personality with robust interests. So as long as I can make the conscious choice of indecisiveness, I will. If at certain points however, I notice that I've been unknowingly following one path while excluding others, that's okay too. The idea of serendipity shouldn't turn into a duty, since that would kill its principle.