

## Distractions

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Does the artist capture our attention, or distract us from what we should really be paying attention to? Perhaps we came here to escape our everyday concerns, but then find that our original situation has actually repeated itself: we try to pay attention to these works, but before we realize it, the mind has drifted elsewhere.

What a strange decision to have ever said *cogito*, "I think"! Wouldn't it be much better to have said, "it's thinking," just as we say, "it's raining"? But some illusions are so fundamental that they ground our reality as much as they obscure it. To say "I think," then, is to enter into a game of revealing-concealing; and to look into the mirror and say "that's me!" is both the first lie and the beginning of truth.

Distraction is often regarded as the opposite of attention. But in fact, it's the "other" attention: its playful doppelganger. You're always trying to pay attention, but maybe it's time you start paying some more distraction to your double.

*It's* singing. *It's* gliding up and down the scale. Many instructions of the *raag* in Indian classical music seem to resonate with the structuralist idea of a "death of the author," where language itself does all the speaking. "Less you, more *raag*!" exclaims the teacher. But as the musicians shut down their ego, intuition takes the wheel. *It's* coming out of its shell: neither personal nor impersonal, but something in between.

As if in a rollercoaster, with a steady path already laid out in advance, and yet it's also curved and ever-changing. Stay seated, and you'll be moved within the bowels of a composed improvisation. "When I'm searching for a motif I cannot recall," the musician murmurs, "I let my fingers roam over the instrument and they find it at once: they have a better memory than I."

For those who are letting their minds wander, I salute you for your multitasking: not just trying to pay attention, but getting distracted too while you're at it. A most admirable feat!

*Mari van Stokkum with Franca Zitta*