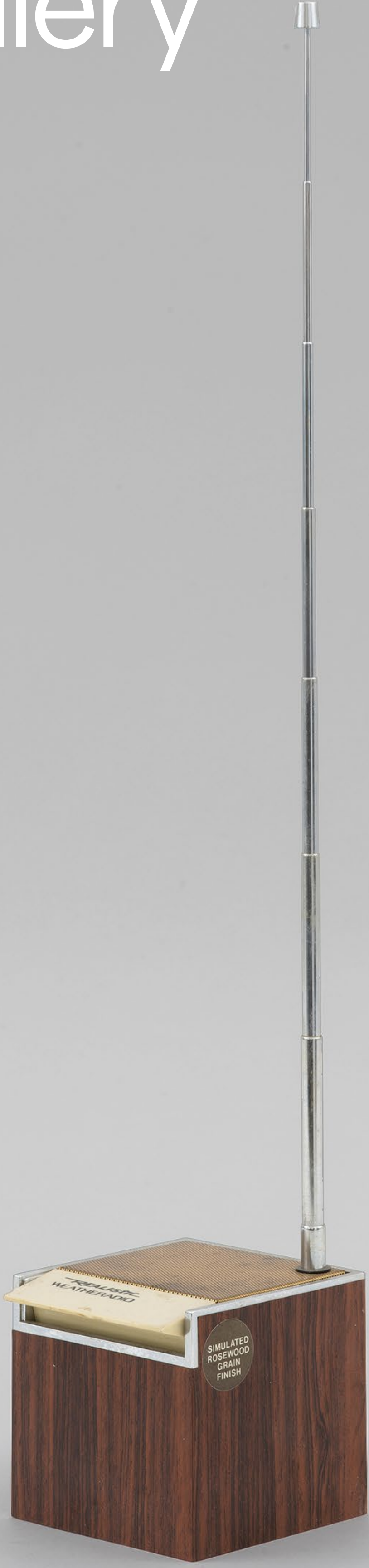


Brant Gallery



Weather Radio

SPLIT THE LARK:
The Order of the
Third Bird and the
Limits of Critique
2/21-3/9

THE ESTAR(SER)
COLLECTIVE

Grace Caiazza
Stevie Knauss
Jared Rankin
Max Taylor-Milner

D. Graham Burnett
Joanna Fiduccia
Catherine Hansen

Brant Gallery
Studio Foundation
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
South Hall 102
621 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115
Hours
Monday-Saturday, 9-5pm

The Brant Gallery

The Brant Gallery provides a forum for interdisciplinary, cross-cultural curriculum development through its exhibition program, lecture series and artist residencies. The gallery expands the boundaries of the Studio Foundation department by introducing students to contemporary art, craft and design from a local and global perspective.

Antidote to the Attention Economy: The Frye Trunk as Artifact and Invitation

Ken D. Allan

A thing that masquerades as freedom of attention is on the rampage. It resembles an infinitely scrolling buffet of choice, where even the most thrilling of confections are made up of the same dye and corn syrup as all the rest. Constant invitations to self-expression are instead solicitations to evacuate the self, in which, in the end stages, one simply arranges a series of attractive objects within the empty, bauble-be-decked frame of a thing that was once a person.

—MANIFESTO FOR THE FREEDOM OF ATTENTION (2019)

This passage from the *Manifesto for the Freedom of Attention* drafted by the Friends of Attention, “a coalition of artists, scholars, and activists concerned with attentional forms (and practices) that are resistant to commodification,” describes one possible outcome of full submission to the attention economy in which we operate today. According to an early study of this phenomenon, data on the internet doubles every two years, and a recent *Forbes* article notes that we are exposed to 6,000 to 10,000 advertisements a day. In turn, corporations have tried even harder to mine the precious and limited resource of consumer attention. But these strategies to increase “time on device” or TOD— coincidentally also the German word for death, as the Friends of Attention note— are pernicious threats to the forms of freedom, desire, and community that sustain a livable life. The “Frye Trunk” presents an antidote to this situation and reveals a history—perhaps invented, but responding to a real need—of individuals creating community around the simple act of attending to things together, rather secretively, in fact, so that no promises of reward (more “likes” or increased status) might intrude.

The centerpiece of a recent exhibition at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, “THE THIRD, MEANING: ESTAR(SER) Installs the Frye Collection,” the “Frye Trunk” is an artifact “discovered” by the research collective ESTAR(SER)—an acronym for The Esthetical Society for Transcendental and Applied Realization (now incorporating the Society of Esthetic Realizers)—when researching and preparing their reinstallation of the museum’s permanent collection. The name of this collective is perhaps the first clue to the parodic and absurd mode in which this group operates, recalling avant-garde plays with language and Dada critiques of the institutionalization of art. The “Frye Trunk,” appears similar to Marcel Duchamp’s *Boîte-en-Valise*, the box within a suitcase works he began in the 1930s which, when unpacked, present a kind of readymade exhibition of his most famous pieces in miniature reproduction, many of which questioned the nature of Western art and the forms of prestige that arose around it in the 20th century. The “Frye Trunk” does not contain works of art, however, but objects and items which, according to ESTAR(SER), were collected over the decades by a Seattle-based offshoot of an obscure and elusive group of individuals who gather to practice forms of radical attention, The Order of the Third Bird. In a recent issue of the “Proceedings” of ESTAR(SER)’s research, we are told that the objects in the trunk are evidence that “persons engaging in ‘sustained, durational practices of attention’ have worked in sporadic and intimate communities in the Seattle area for a very long time.” Furthermore: “Art has played a role in a significant number of these occasions, but so

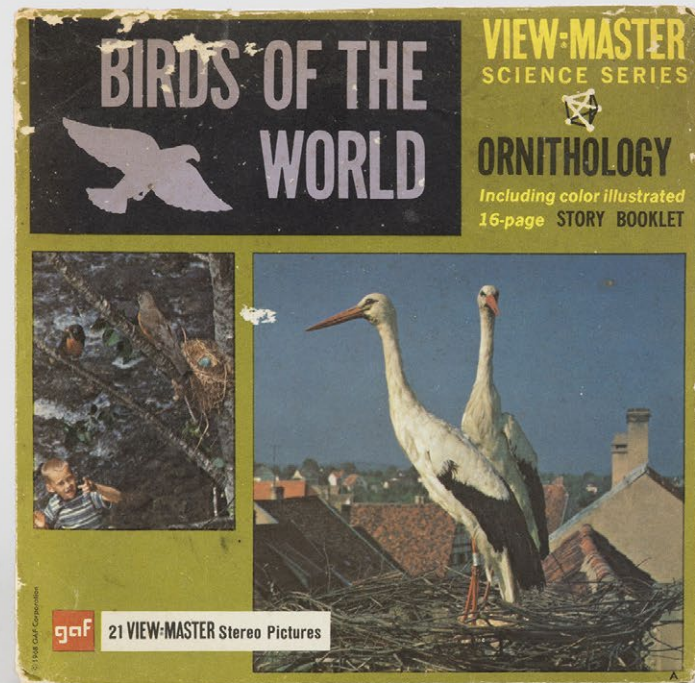
too many other kinds of objects and situations and locations. In immensely diverse ways, then, collaborative attention has convened those who have shared in its choreographic powers.”

This “artifact” and the accompanying research material on its contents present an invitation to explore along with ESTAR(SER) what The Order of the Third Bird might teach us about how to solve our current attentional predicament. Counter to much recent discourse about the decline of the arts in our communities and institutions, ESTAR(SER) suggests that the gallery, the museum, the studio, and the classroom can be crucial sites for the spread of ideas about how we might reclaim our true freedom of attention *together*.

Ken D. Allan, Associate Professor of Art History, Seattle University

Co-curators D. Graham Burnett, Helen Miller
Assistant Curator Mars Ramos
Installation Mia Davila
Studio Manager Reid MacPherson

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Birds of the World View-Master Discs

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Opening
2/23, 5-7:00pm

Gallery Talk
2/23, 4-5:00pm
D. Graham Burnett
with Carrie
Lambert-Beatty

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