# Ambient Commons: Attention in the Age of Embodied Information (MIT Press)

*Malcolm McCullough*
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**Malcolm McCullough : Ambient Commons: Attention in the Age of Embodied Information (MIT Press)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ambient Commons: Attention in the Age of Embodied Information (MIT Press):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fanfare for informationBy REBEKAH KINCAID NIXThis fantastic read shows how everything informative is 'hitched together' throughout time and space with memorable image and meaningful insights.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great bookBy Millie EmpedoclesWonderfully written book on a topic that is important right now to understand what is happening to us a culture. Neither cheerleader

nor cynic, he has interesting insights about this world of social media, et al.Very readable0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Incomprehensible NonsenseBy David PowersI would recommend this book to anyone who wants to waste their time trying to make sense of a bunch of words saying nothing. The author clearly has thought about this issue from perspectives of psychology, architecture, philosophy, and others I can't even describe, but unless you are well-read in these (and other) topics most of it is complete gibberish, with almost no relation to any real situations, technologies, or people that would make the book remotely graspable (by the way, there's a great long section where the author defines "situation" until your eyes bleed). Useless for practitioners, incomprehensible to the lay-person, and probably really interesting to academics who have nothing better to do with their lives.If you already have a copy, instead of reading it go outside and think about the ways technology changes us while lighting the book on fire and watching the flames.

The world is filling with ever more kinds of media, in ever more contexts and formats. Glowing rectangles have become part of the scene; screens, large and small, appear everywhere. Physical locations are increasingly tagged and digitally augmented. Amid this flood, your attention practices matter more than ever. You might not be able to tune this world out. So it is worth remembering that underneath all these augmentations and data flows, fixed forms persist, and that to notice them can improve other sensibilities. In Ambient Commons, Malcolm McCullough explores the workings of attention through a rediscovery of surroundings.McCullough describes what he calls the Ambient: an increasing tendency to perceive information superabundance whole, where individual signals matter less and at least some mediation assumes inhabitable form. He explores how the fixed forms of architecture and the city play a cognitive role in the flow of ambient information. As a persistently inhabited world, can the Ambient be understood as a shared cultural resource, to be socially curated, voluntarily limited, and self-governed as if a commons? Ambient Commons invites you to look past current obsessions with smart phones to rethink attention itself, to care for more situated, often inescapable forms of information.

Malcolm McCullough conducts a deep and broad exploration into a territory that was once imaginary, but is now part of everyday life. The latest news and disinfotainment is available on high-definition, stadium-sized screens on public buildings and on handheld gizmos that know where you are and who you are and that broadcast as well as receive. Ambient Commons is a call to become more mindful about the way our attention encounters the environment and about the way environments influence attention -- and a sourcebook for those who want to take more control of the process. (Howard Rheingold, author of Net Smart, Tools for Thought, The Virtual Community, and Smart Mobs)Malcolm McCullough's book is to information what Central Park is to Manhattan -- a place of reflection and circumspection that reveals helpfully the contours of the world we have constructed and hopefully an outline of the world we should build, the ambient commons. (Albert Borgmann, author of Real American Ethics and Holding On to Reality) Ambient Commons is a timely wake-up call and a hugely valuable guidebook to the new post-'digital' landscape of contemporary urban culture. McCullough demonstrates how important it is that we understand technology as culture, and that it is worthy of philosophical inquiry. He conveys these complex ideas so that they feel accessible, yet are rigorously researched and instantly appealing. It is also, unlike most texts that pivot around technology, beautifully written. (Dan Hill, Fabrica) Ambient Commons is quiet, patient and profound; through 12 pithy chapters, it asks us to ponder information contexts. (Times Higher Education) Ambient Commons sizzles with provocative ideas: attention theft, right to undisrupted attention, peak distraction. It's a call for responsible urbanism.... Given the recent hype about the rise of the 'smart city' -- courtesy of large technology companies pitching solutions to innovaton-hungry mayors -- McCullough's advocacy of technologically mediated but humane urbanism is timely. (Evgeny Morozov The New Yorker)The book is both a delight to read and a call to action in two ways. Civilized human beings need to disengage from their glowing rectangles and appreciate the world around us, and design professionals need to pay attention to the information content of our environment. (User Experience Magazine)About the AuthorMalcolm McCullough is Professor of Architecture at Taubman College, the University of Michigan. He is the author of Abstracting Craft: The Practiced Digital Hand and Digital Ground: Architecture, Pervasive Computing, and Environmental Knowing, both published by the MIT Press.