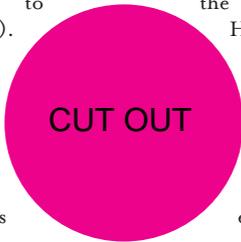


The reconstruction of Inyard Kip Ketchem's use of the "reduction screen" (overleaf) is not without its perils, but manuscript source material in the Ketchem Papers (to be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Proceedings*) permits grounded speculation. It would appear that Ketchem developed a kind of ritualized experiment/demonstration in which participants were asked to regard a painting or sculpture for sustained durations through the aperture of what he called a "Paper Pupil" — which they were directed to manipulate in particular ways (see below). Why? Ketchem seems to have conceived such exercises as a kind of physical allegory of a theory of attention that he thought of as his own, but that modern readers will associate with the writings of William James. James believed, as he wrote in his *Principles*, that "No one can possibly attend continuously to an object that does not change." In this sense, what *appeared* to be sustained, voluntary attention to a given object was *actually* the product of continuous cognitive transmutation/reinvention of that object. Ketchem conceived this process as a dialectical oscillation between centrifugal arabesques of the imagination (the meandering of the mind) and continuous "returns" to the object (forever renewed by these perpetual excursions).

(given here under its of three simple phases) of serial departures from under scrutiny — all this attention amounts to centripetal to attempt the exercise may per phase. The italic text is



CUT OUT

His primary looking exercise original title, and consisting aimed to teach a process and returns to the object in order to show that *true* distraction. Those wishing afford five to ten minutes editorial interpretation/gloss.

## PROTOCOL

FOR CURING DISTRACTION, HESITATION, AND WEAKNESS OF WILL; AND FOR ENABLING INCREDIBLE FEATS OF VISION, AND REVEALING THE SECRET OF GENIUS

### I. THE STATE OF NATURE

*Look freely around you. There is no fore- or background, no figure or form.*

*All is equal before your open gaze. Prepare to pay attention.*

### II. THE DANCE OF ATTENDANCE

*Using the aperture in your card as a frame, singularize your attention upon the given object in the room. Observe it at the center of the oculus. Then begin to lead the gaze, by means of the card, in a series of small, petal-like loops away from the object and back to it. Meander, but always return.*

### III. GENIUS REVEALED

*Put down the card, and redirect your attention toward the given object. Allow your mind to roam freely through its distractions, allusions, memories, and associations, always guiding these digressions back toward the object, and fixing them in its orbit. Allow the object to change before your eyes.*



## THE KETCHEM SCREEN:

### *THE PROSTHETICS OF CENTRIPETAL ATTENTION AT THE PERIPHERY OF DISCIPLINARY PSYCHOLOGY IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY*

*Readers of the PROCEEDINGS OF ESTAR(SER) will already be aware of the considerable efforts made by various scholars, collectors, bibliophiles, and editors to sift the historicity of that peculiar body known as THE ORDER OF THE THIRD BIRD. Despite the labors of the ESTAR(SER) researchers, a great deal of uncertainty (and even some genuine confusion) persists concerning the nature and workings of THE BIRDS — a self-sequestering community that seems to function, at least in its modern incarnation, as a private association of adepts who convene to perform public and private rites of sustained attention to made things (often works of art). New documents bearing on the genesis, evolution, and practices of THE ORDER are continually coming to light, many of them sourced from the vast repository known as the "W Cache." We are pleased here to offer a sample from a new and interesting body of relevant materials. Details follow.*

## TEXT AND CONTEXT

The “Amazing Doctor” Inyard Kip Ketchem (1847–1919) blazed a thin and ephemeral trail across the margins of American respectability in the Gilded Age, perpetually seeking a suitable station for his self-avowedly revolutionary ideas about the human mind and its workings. It was an ill-fated trajectory, and it landed this paradoxical figure squarely at the demimondaine periphery of polite society in the period before the Great War. High-minded huckster? Noble charlatan? Cheap-jack of difficult wisdom? Perhaps. But we would submit that this hawk of humanity’s highest potential should in fact be recovered as a pioneer of the public performance of experimental psychology in carnival settings, and, finally, as something like the first (and perhaps the greatest) *Traveling Attention Artist*—a distinction inseparable from his apparent ties to *The Order of the Third Bird*. He merits our closest attention.

Ketchem’s full biography tests the most diligent denizen of the archives. But it will suffice to specify that his formative encounter with the practices of the “Avis Tertia” appears to have occurred among the Saint Louis Kantians in the late 1860s. A voyage to India followed, ostensibly for missionizing purposes, though the trip would seem to have suspended his (temporary) Lutheran enthusiasms in a miasma of fever and fantasy. His travelling companion, however, was none other than Lemon Leander Uhl, who would go on to pen the significant treatise *Attention: A Historical Summary of the Discussions Concerning the Subject*. Landing back in Boston in March of 1877, Ketchem slipped swiftly into the circles of his Saint Louis comrade George Howison, then professor of Philosophy at MIT. This fateful acquaintance brought an increasingly erratic Ketchem (he seems to have experienced a nervous collapse at this time) to the luminous zones of the Metaphysical Club, whence—having clashed, apparently, with William James—he promptly departed amid scandal and opprobrium.

He never ceased to allege, as he slid from the edges of university life (where he fashioned himself a maverick researcher in the nascent sciences of mind) to the stages of county fairs and vaudeville (where he eked a meager pence as a circus mesmerist and promoter of herbal “attentional elixers”) that James “stole from me everything he ever wrote.”

Only a full airing of the Ketchem Papers will permit a proper evaluation of this claim. The artifact reproduced on the opposite page, however, permits us a peek into the world as Inyard Kip Ketchem saw it.



FIGURE: A “reduction screen” found in the Inyard Kip Ketchem Papers (28.2 x 20.4 cm.; photo courtesy of Zibel Frette). The pierced piece of heavyweight cardboard appears once to have been the back cover of James’ *Principles of Psychology*. It seems Ketchem used blinkering apertures like these to exemplify the dynamics of voluntary, sustained attention. See overleaf for details.