

# Flânerie



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**A** *flâneur* is one who saunters among the streets, mixing with the crowd but not participating, shopping with no intention to buy; an anonymous observer within the fray. A *flâneur* occupies no fixed position, either geographically or intellectually, and feels no compulsion to form any opinions. *Flânerie* is like a sabbatical or a reflective pause during which the *flâneur* is fully open to new impressions, some of which may take root and flourish later on.

As you read this I will be immersed in the Sundance Film Festival, during the course of which I will see 30 films or more. Each will be the crafted reflection of some director's perspective on some aspect of the world. I will see these films in the company of a few friends and 40,000 strangers and I will pay 5 times what it would cost to see the same films at the Violet Crown or the Jean Cocteau. The teeming masses and the festival atmosphere will magnify and color the cognitive density of 30 unpredictable films in so short a time. I cannot understand the effects all of this will have on my future intuition, but the experience *will* change and expand me somehow.

Periods of sensory and intellectual *flânerie*, interspersed with periods of consolidation and integration, are at the heart of both scientific and artistic enterprises. They are also at the heart of personal development. Without *flânerie* there would be no creative leaps and we would be condemned to circular lives within the bounds of what we already know. Proper *flânerie* is indistinguishable from laziness or nihilism, and is therefore suspect. Some people never let go long enough to absorb anything new. You should attend conferences outside of your field. Trust me. Call me.

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