



# Ambient Media: Japanese Atmospheres of Self

*Paul Roquet*

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## **Ambient Media: Japanese Atmospheres of Self** Paul Roquet

*Ambient Media* examines music, video art, film, and literature as tools of atmospheric design in contemporary Japan, and what it means to use media as a resource for personal mood regulation. Paul Roquet traces the emergence of ambient styles from the environmental music and Erik Satie boom of the 1960s and 1970s to the more recent therapeutic emphasis on healing and relaxation.

Focusing on how an atmosphere works to reshape those dwelling within it, Roquet shows how ambient aesthetics can provide affordances for reflective drift, rhythmic attunement, embodied security, and urban coexistence. Musicians, video artists, filmmakers, and novelists in Japan have expanded on Brian Eno's notion of the ambient as a style generating "calm, and a space to think," exploring what it means to cultivate an ambivalent tranquility set against the uncertain horizons of an ever-shifting social landscape. Offering a new way of understanding the emphasis on "reading the air" in Japanese culture, *Ambient Media* documents both the adaptive and the alarming sides of the increasing deployment of mediated moods.

Arguing against critiques of mood regulation that see it primarily as a form of social pacification, Roquet makes a case for understanding ambient media as a neoliberal response to older modes of collective attunement—one that enables the indirect shaping of social behavior while also allowing individuals to feel like they are the ones ultimately in control.

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