Slow Media Art - Seeing Through Speed in Critiques of Modernity

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Abstract

The "Slow Movement," originally associated with conservation efforts in food consumption or city planning, has rapidly spread to many other areas of culture and commerce. This paper anticipates future articulations of "slow art" in general and "slow media art" in particular, as a path to new critiques and perspectives on the modern desire to "slow down." As a term, Slow Media Art offers some unique opportunities for considering contemporary appeals to slowness as based in both sensation and structural understandings of social order. When viewed in light of the history of artists' ambivalence toward modernization, and with an eye to recent scholarship on media abstention, the notion of slowness proves a useful frame for foregrounding the essentially relational nature of speed. Within such a frame, the many paradoxes and contradictions within appeals to slowness appear rather as efforts at positioning by modern subjects in relation to one another; the move to "go slow" is almost always a move to "go slower than" someone or something else. Slow Media Art, through its deep engagement with sensation, duration, and speed, helps bring such relations, and their motivations, into view.

Keywords

Slowness, duration, mobility, critique, locative media, environment.

Introduction

The Slow Food Movement emerged in Italy in the 1980s, when a group of political leftists began to see in gastronomy a potential site for resistance to globalization. Founder Carlo Petrini and others saw in locally-sourced wine and cheese not only a way of staying free of the potentially unhealthy ingredients found in industrially processed foods, but a way of asserting pleasure as political - even against the more instrumental tactics of their peers on the left, who sometimes appeared preoccupied with productivity in their politics. [1] This movement grew into an international and organized phenomenon, with the Slow Cities movement close on its heels, and drawing from some of the same leaders. Others have adopted the approach with increasing speed. Application of the terminology through manifestos and polemic essays have not always seen follow-up in the form of organized movements, but the ready appeal is telling, nonetheless. Slow Reading, Slow Science, Slow Computing, Slow Scholarship, Slow Tourism, Slow Web, Slow Church, and Slow TV have all seen attention in news and social media. A World Institute of Slowness offers "slow branding" and "slow consulting."

Reduced reliance on fossil fuels in response to resource scarcity, unethical labor, and climate change will undoubtedly require new approaches to the movement of people and goods around the planet. Such changes will require transformation not only of infrastructure but of expectations, perception and language – a divestment not only of material dependencies but of what Brett Bloom has referred to as "petro-subjectivity," a sense of self and being infused with "the logic of oil relationships." [2]

Slowness rhetoric captures some of these changes and motives for change, but also brings other complexities and even apparent contradictions that have often accompanied the experience of modernity. The Slow Food Movement itself, for example, in Italy relied on appeals to decentralization and deregulation in face of perceived oligarchy and nationalism, which activists saw as a threat to important regional distinctions in the name of state-determined efficiencies. [3] In this case, the interests of Slow Food advocates overlapped with those of private enterprise; the season of success and growth for the Slow Food movement in Italy also coincided with a privatization of the public sphere and consolidation of markets, birthing media magnates such as Silvio Berlusconi. [4] In Italy, as in many instances, the pursuit of slowness bore structural affinities with reaches for a very different kind of modernity.

Slowness is neither modern nor anti-modern. Appeals to "slow down" have come from those looking to return to social orders deemed lost to technological or societal "progress." But appeals to slowness have also come from those looking to experience a distinctly modern and a-temporal space of perception and action, set free from the more linear narratives of techno-utopian or imperial progress. [5] There can be no easy mapping of appeals to slowness to any one political end, any one understanding of modernity or counter-modernity. Across the spectrum of values held by adherents of slow living, we see only one common trait – that of a desire to connect the human experience of speed to some shared social or political order.

Slowness might well become a key concept within humanities' debates on the future of our planet, allowing as it does

for the interrelation of subjective and objective parameters of societal and ecological change, of philosophical and physical aspects of human actions, and of both biological and technical processuality. Few other contemporary appeals to socially responsible living attempt to connect structural change so directly to affective experience. Sure, the field of "cause-related marketing" may be on the rise, and creators of corporate brand identities have aspired to create associations between sensation and political action at least since the 1960s. [6] But few of these go as far as appeals to slowness. The sensory may serve as the site of identity construction in such cases, but the Slow Food movement and other appeals to slowness go to much deeper lengths to enact a "visceral process of identification" with a cause. [7] Such efforts look to connect broad structural change in such spaces as global food manufacturing or labor to the most local experience imaginable – that of the biological, internal experience of time.

This reach across sensory and structural domains, bridging the affective and economic, the ephemeral and the infrastructural, makes any discussion of slowness very much like a discussion of Media Art. If sensory, temporal departures from dominant approaches to time or speed have marked the work of many a modern artist, Media Art in particular has made such approaches a steady subject of exhibition, scholarship, activism, and meditation. Modern art, and in particular Media Art, offers a rich history of experiences with which to understand and contextualize the growing number of calls to slow down. After an overview of approaches to slowness in media art, we will then look to contextualize this work in light of a longer history of the "aesthetics of refusal," from 19th-century Romanticism to contemporary "media sabbaths." With this overview in hand, we will then conclude by asking how slow media art might help in understanding the slow movement's paradoxes and promise.

Duration / Deceleration

Works that take the experience of duration as a subject are an obvious entrypoint for this study. John Cage's *As slow as possible* (1985), for example, presents a literal implementation of slowness into a work's duration. In this composition, Cage invites the performer to play each note as long as he or she manages to do so. In 2001, a group of people in Halberstadt decided to explicitly build a new organ for the historical Burchardikirche, to play *Organ2/ASLSP*, Cage's 1987 adaption of the work especially for organs. As an organ can play sounds constantly, they decided to extend the piece to a total duration of 639 years (which was the actual age of the historic pipe organ of that church, in 2001), using weights to hold down the respective pedals. Technical means thus allowed for a structural or conceptual extension of time ad infinitum, while at the same time eliminating its dependence on the human factor (the endurance of the performer), and thus the sensorial aspect of the creative process.

While Cage's piece addresses analogue, acoustic media, comparable 'deceleration' projects have been conducted with regards to audiovisual media. One example is Douglas Gordon's *5-Year Drive-by*, a 1995 video installation deconstructing John Ford's Western *The Searchers*. Next to a highway in Utah's Monument Valley – the location of the outdoor scenes of *The Searchers* – Gordon installed a video projection screening of a part of *The Searchers*, stretched to its narrated length. As the story covers a five year period, he reckoned that in this movie one second of cinema time equals six hours of real time. Each frame had thus to be played for approximately 16 minutes. Though technically this is an extreme case of slow motion, the viewer driving by will most likely experience the installation as a projected film still, or metaphorically, a frozen moment in time.

What we have here is thus not only a case of extreme deceleration, but also a conceptualization of different levels of mediated and experiential time. While driving by at motorized speed, the audience witnesses a frozen film frame. This still image is, however, embedded into a processual performance of what Paul Virilio calls "delayed time," a represented event, recorded, stored, and replayed via media technologies. [8] At the same time, this frozen moment of delayed time presents a staged event, which had been sped up for the sake of representability. By slowing down the film, Gordon relates the representation back to the represented. The various processes of mediation involved do however not lead to a recovery of the story's (imagined) real-time existence, but to a highly conceptual deconstruction of represented time, resulting in still-images perceived at high-speed. This dissociation of temporalities – that of the viewer and of the artwork's structural logics – is likely what leads Lutz Kopenick to reject consideration of such works in his study of aesthetic slowness. [9] The artworks in these cases have less than ever to do with the composition of "contemporaneous" moments for viewers, and thus fall outside Koepnick's excellent survey. But we find in such breaks a helpful collection of examples for use in exploring the disconnected temporalities advocates of slowness seek to unite.

Local / Sustainable

For the Slow Food movement, speed is a concern not only in relation to the immediate bodily experience of time and sensation, but in relation to the material processes by which food reaches the table. Appeals to slowness are often structural as well as sensory; for some, to eat food from known origins rather than from convenient but distant sources is to eat more "slowly." At least one art project that addresses this approach to slowness is the *Milk Project* by Esther Polak, Ieva Auzina and the Riga Center for New Media Culture. Starting in 2004, and across a number of different presentations for gallery and online exhibition, the project presented a GPS-generated map that "follows

the milk from the udder of the cow to the plate of the consumer, by means of the people involved." [10] In part anticipating more contemporary interactive documentary projects such as *Bear 71*, which attempt to root journalistic or essayistic prose in location-specific presentation for screens, *Milk Project* created opportunities for informed conversation about the people, places, and paths through which food passes on its way to the consumer. At the same time it engaged in intense conversations with the various local actors involved, combining the use of (then) sophisticated media and visualization technologies with a dialogical approach to audience. As such it both reveals the complex local and global infrastructures on which food consumption depends, and offers a renewed experience of consumption in light of awareness about certain origins of production, and the actors involved.

Similar projects with such an obvious connection to the slow movement are the *Fallen Fruit Project*, which creates dynamic, participatory maps of gleaning opportunities in urban settings, or even aspects of the branch of Human-Computer-Interaction known as "Ecovisualization." [11] Such projects approach slowness not primarily as a matter of sensory experience, but as an approach to consumption that new technologies might even help facilitate.

Disruption / Irritation / Meditation

Teri Rueb's *Drift* (2004) was a locative art project, in which the visitor was lent a handheld computer with integrated GPS locator technology and attached earphones, and sent walking into the Wadden Sea at the coast of Northern Germany. Though equipped with (at that time) "high-tech" devices, walkers unexpectedly experienced long periods of narrative silence, within which natural sounds of the landscape dominated: birds, wind, water, ship-motors, and their own movement audible on the sandy ground. On sudden and intermittent occasions, however, participants would hear footsteps, which they recognized were not their own, and a voice began to talk about walking, scenery, and journeys. Walkers may have heard a complete train of thought, but sometimes the voice broke off suddenly and the sound of footsteps also slowly faded away. The reason is that the geo-locations of these aural texts were not fixed, but rather wandered across the Wadden Sea in correspondence with the North Sea tides. Searching and wandering were thus not only the subject matter of the texts, but also modes of experiencing the work. By using locative technologies to interconnect processes of mediated and non-mediated movement (of data, matter, and humans), Rueb invited visitors to engage with expectations of the ubiquity of dataspace. Where even at that early stage of consumer-grade GPS technology, most applications promised permanent connectedness, *Drift* counteracted geospatial accuracy and foregrounded a state of disconnect, of lost signals.

Other early locative media practices followed suit through "slowing" the persistent processes of orientation offered by locational technologies or GPS. In their work *Rider Spoke*, for example, Blast Theory invites people to cycle aimlessly through a city and to meditate on their life while inconspicuously guided by media technology and a networked dataspace they built up themselves. Encouraged to stop at places, they chose to answer questions played to them via headphones, these answers are located via WiFi fingerprinting, and thus through an emergent mesh of locational data created by the participants themselves. Many a technology-assisted *derive* took place in locative media's early festivals and exhibitions, from Pixelache to New York's *Psy Geo Conflux* events.

Though in part such refusals or disruptions conjure the much longer histories of reflexive interruption in modernism that run from Brecht's Theatre of Alienation to contemporary noise and glitch aesthetics, such interventions in geospatial technologies bear special meaning in light of the Slow Movement's reactionary refusals of ubiquity. Where the Slow Food or Slow Tourism movements pursue a less mediated, more sensorily-rooted relationship to locality, projects like *Drift* or *Rider Spoke* use the promise of mediated ubiquity as a foil, a field against which to experience the seeing, hearing, walking figure anew. Even before the wide availability of GPS technologies, theorists of sound described the ways in which mobile headphone-assisted listening rendered space and place more homogenous, and downplayed differences of locality. [12] Just as the slow movements look to jar consumers into noticing the distinctive differences of their local environment, interruptive projects like Rueb's disturb the usually seamless space of mobile listening.

Rueb and Blast Theory achieve slowness through both refusing a "fast" ubiquitous technology and through turning closer attention to the proximate. A similar path lies in Beatriz de Costa's *PigeonBlog* project, wherein she and collaborators devised a pollution sensor network not determined by a gridded, proscribed ubiquity, but rather by the contingent paths of the birds that bore the sensors on their flying bodies. Slow media art in such cases embraces interruptions in ubiquity, both for what they turn us from and what they turn us toward.

Abstention / Ineffectiveness

Other media artists take a more polemical and even performative approach, refusing not only the promises of temporal, spatial ubiquity offered by contemporary networked technologies, but the very definitions of effectiveness or success by which engineers or even activists design such systems.

For example, iKatun's 2009 project *Not Going to Copenhagen* invited participants into an act of refusal - not only against air travel, a recurrent target of the Slow Movement, but against participation in an act of trans-national political "problem-solving." On the occasion of a global summit to

address climate change, iKatun's project highlighted both the irony of a climate-change summit that required such large expenditures of fuel, and the implied "solutionism" of events organized around "fast" technical and political approaches to deep social problems. The artists invited participants in their project to, rather than attend Copenhagen, post images to the web of what they might be doing instead of such travel, thus conserving at least some amount of fuel and energy. As in some of iKatun's predecessors - the dandies of Baudelaire's Paris or the merry drunken bands of Debord's derives - participants in "Not Going to Copenhagen" appear to revel in sloth and apparent political ineffectuality. Drinking beer, admiring their cats, or generally just sitting around, those who posted images of themselves "not going to Copenhagen" clearly are enjoying the contrast of their efforts with their effects. By not going to a climate summit and instead having a party at home, they have, by some economies, done more for the earth's climate crisis than those who did attend. Where others hope for quick fixes, iKatun created spaces for slow, hard questions about the definition of political and ecological effectiveness itself.

Similar questions about effectiveness arise in Aram Bartholl's *Dead Drops* project, which takes the promise of effectiveness offered by Wikileaks' securely anonymized file sharing service to an absurd level. By embedding the normally hyper-portable flash memory stick in the mortar of an exterior brick wall, *Dead Drops* offers the sort of resistance to mobility present in previously mentioned locative media projects, but also interrogates the "quick fix" offered by the potential of a newly available, unregulated commons. In the case of *Dead Drops*, a file found on the drive may very well be untraceable, but storage and retrieval requires a very public and technically awkward commitment to coupling a computer to an exterior wall. Bartholl's project challenges the very aesthetics of efficient technical achievement and information sharing. Secure and politically effectual file-sharing in a "fast" world seems to require clean aesthetics, and a more seamless, disembodied experience of uploading and downloading. The same practices in Bartholl's slower world requires a walk to the object, and a public, awkward commitment to the uploading process that exposes one to all manner of problems.

Remoteness

But such abstinence and withdrawal from predominant approaches to effectiveness can also be a means to work remotely and profit from solitude as a means of autonomy. In 1992 Slovenian artist Marko Peljhan inaugurated the *MAKROLAB* project. Together with his team, he created an artistic research lab to be installed at remote places. The lab functioned as an autonomous communications and living unit, self-sustained in terms of energy and water supply. The artist invited small groups of people to co-share this very basic environment for a certain amount of time, working on individual research projects which took the

unique working situation and location as a challenge, an advantage or even as an object of research. Research projects ranged from the investigation of weather and bird-migration patterns up to research on mobility and data-traffic in hertzian space. The slogan Peljhan promoted for the project was one of "insulation – isolation." He worked on the premise that "individuals in a restricted, intensive isolation can produce more evolutionary code than large social movements." [13]

Here, we might also call to mind Julian Priest's 2009 and 2011 *Slowflow (Te Ia Kōrero)* project, which invited technologists on a five-day river trip in New Zealand's Whanganui River via traditional indigenous canoe. [14] Such a journey away from technological mediation is both propelled by modern technological rhythms and made possible by them. Both Priest's and Peljhan's projects embrace the potential of globalized mobility as a way - perhaps increasingly the only way - to achieve a slow enough pace to gain new knowledge of oneself, others, or the world. Two of the more prominent preoccupations of media art - research and community - here appear as both under threat by some aspect of everyday ubiquitous technologies, and perhaps only now achievable through traversing the world using global-scale networks and travel infrastructures.

Ambiguities and Contradictions

Many more projects could come into the frame here, from the design experiments of Dunne and Raby, to Martin Howse's *Earthcode* projects, Graham Harwood's coal-fired computer, or even the "local science" brought to light by the decidedly anti-corporate and even domestic genomic work of Critical Art Ensemble or Faith Wilding. The intent of this essay is not to offer a thorough overview of such practices, but rather to bring to light the ways in which art in general, and media art in particular, offers some helpful routes into addressing the challenges of slowness as a critical stance. For across these projects, several themes come into view:

Firstly, we see a theme of the variable interconnectedness of "slow sensation" and "slow operation." To achieve a differently-ordered sensorium may or may not require a change to the ways we operate as a social, economic order. Our brief survey reveals examples of slowing through abstinence from normative technological operation, and slowing through embrace or even amplification of such operations.

Secondly, and closely tied to the first, we see a theme of contradiction, paradox, and even irony. For most all of these gestures contain some degree of freedom - from too-rapid sensory, social, or material flows - made possible by participation in some other current of sensation, information, or resources.

Thus, like many aspects of the Slow Movement, much "slow media art" risks easy dismissal as a "mere symbol" or inauthentic gesture, the equivalent of an industrial "greenwashing" of an otherwise toxic product through different packaging or language. Or, viewed from another angle, such projects take the form of a pointedly and critically ambiguous gesture, the equivalent of yesterday's situationist slogans that critiqued mass culture through embodying it.

A brief discussion of two additional contexts can help us to unravel such contradictions, and possibly find a way through them to meaningful, sensory engagement with the plethora of modern ethical and ecological problems offered by speed. Firstly, historicization will help us identify the aesthetic pursuit of slowness within a longer continuum of modern art and thought. Secondly, a look to contemporary scholarship on media refusals will help us understand the sort of subjectivities that make the pursuit of slowness possible and attractive.

Slow Art in the Rear-View Mirror

Though the motives have been manifold, artists have activated strategies to slow down, back out, or distance themselves from mainstream trends throughout modernity. Looking to American traditions, for example, scholar Leo Marx identified such a stream of "pastoral" aesthetics throughout the literature and art of that country, perhaps quintessentially manifest in Henry David Thoreau's early 19th century experiment at Walden Pond. [15] Certainly the apparent contradictions of a retreat from society just a short walking distance from town, and made possible by relative wealth, share much in common with questions raised by the above mentioned projects.

In the United States and elsewhere, romanticism has been an ever present counterpart to modernization. Sociologist Colin Campbell has argued that the romantic impulse to delay satisfaction and regard modernization as a challenge is in fact a crucial component of capitalism. [16] Certainly throughout the 20th century, artists associated with movements as diverse as Suprematism, Minimal Art, Land Art, and Performance Art have claimed concepts of simplicity, deceleration, remoteness and persistence. And it is important to note that art movements propagating inwardness and those propagating speed could well exist parallel in time - or even in the statements and work from the same artist - as in the parallel cases of Suprematism and Futurism.

Also, during a period often referred to as the Neo-Avantgarde, we can find projects as diverse as the durational performances by Ulay and Abramovic and the political-ecological projects by Joseph Beuys addressing slowness in various ways. Ulay and Abramovic did some formally minimalistic but bodily and psychologically highly demanding durational exercises such as sitting in front of

each other and looking at each other for a period of 7 hours, in *Night Sea Crossing* (1981-1997). Beuys' project of planting 7000 oaks in the city of Kassel, each together with a basalt stone, contrasted very slow geological processes to comparably fast biological ones. Though it took "only" ten years to position 7000 stones with their paired sapling, the project is still a work in progress that constantly evolves - due to biological growth, but also due to urban change.

Looking to media art's close precedent in networked art and Fluxus, quite a few works can be related to what we suggest calling slow art. Shiomi Mieko's *Spatial Poems* (from 1965), for example, like the Art's Birthday events or iKatun's project, invite participants to simple actions for one another around the world, performed locally, but documented as a global event. Anticipating the "media refusals" of contemporary slow media art, Yoko Ono's 1964 event score *Hide and Seek* invited people to virtually disappear: "hide until everybody goes home / hide until everybody forgets about you / hide until everybody dies." [17]

From the pastoral hermits of 19th century painting and poems through the 20th century's avant-garde polemics, the projects themselves were as diverse as their philosophical, political, and societal frames of reference. Their frames of reference ranged from eastern philosophy (see the influence of Daisetz T. Suzuki in disseminating the philosophy of Zen to western countries) via phenomenology (especially in Minimal Art) to deep ecology (see Joseph Beuys engagement in environmental issues and the widespread reception of the Club of Rome's "Limits to Growth" study in 1970s art and culture), amongst others.

This diversity of artistic motives and frames of reference is paralleled by a diversity of discourse traditions, explanatory models and historical narratives within which historians have situated such work. Still today, narratives of modernity and post-modernity often adhere to paradigms of innovation and – in the case of modernity – of progress. While postmodernism is generally considered to be critical of art's foundation on originality and linear development, the postmodern art world still largely follows a logic of speed. In recent decades, processes of globalization and mediatization have further fostered an ever accelerating pace of life and culture, within which the arts often seem to be playing upfront. [18] However, as a reaction to the excessive demands of contemporary society, not only artists, but also scholars and curators have started to engage in questions of sustainability, ecology, and social change. [19,20,21] Parallel to this, projects such as the above mentioned started to be subsumed under a common heading in the last decade. If we just pick some exemplary exhibition projects from the last seven years, they started to carry titles like:

– *Moments in Time. On Narration and Slowness* (Munich, Lenbachhaus, 2000).

- *Timeout. Art and Sustainability*, (Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2007).
- *Weather Report. Art and Climate Change* (Bolder Museum of Contemporary Art, CO, 2007), *Slow Paintings* (Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, 2009).
- *Uncontainable Exhibition* (17th International Symposium on Electronic Art, Istanbul, 2011).
- *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst* (Wolfsburg 2011/2012).
- *Machine Wilderness Exhibition* (18th International Symposium on Electronic Art, Albuquerque, 2012).

While historians and curators might tend, like many of the artists themselves, to contextualize slowness or deceleration as a counter-trend to modernism and globalisation, German curator Markus Brüderlin, for example, argues that one of the reasons for artists' recent interest in slowness is actually an adherence to the "project of modernity," through its associated qualities of clarity and pureness. [22] This view is echoed by US artist and art historian Suzi Gablik, who holds that "any remapping of the modern paradigm has both a deconstructive and a reconstructive dimension," relating attempts of what she calls a "reenchantment of art" to the latter. [23] Also, the celebration of local practices as a catalyst for sustainability is not undisputed. The Croatian sociologist Rudi Supek, for example, was already arguing in the 1970s that a valid approach to ecological problems would necessary have to be "planetary" and thus to operate on a global scale – as opposed to a concentration on local activities [24]. What results from this first, cursory overview of artistic and theoretical approaches to slowness, is that there is an urgent need to do away with too simplistic binaries, to delve deeper into the different motivations for creating "slow art." The same also applies to the evaluation of the concept of slowness within the framework of the information society.

When seen against the background of a multifaceted history of slowness within modern and contemporary art, the above mentioned examples of "slow media art" clearly evidence the urgent need for a more differentiated view on concepts of slowness. We have to ask, for example, if slowness always has to be a critical attitude (in the sense of counteracting paradigms of innovation and speed), or if there are other, individual and aesthetic motives for claiming slowness as an artistic concept. We also have to investigate conflicting aspects of slowness, such as its practicability in the face of the global art market. We need to scrutinize the various claims for slowness at stake in artistic practices throughout the last 200 years, as well as the narratives and theories accompanying these practices by means of comparative analysis. On the other hand, we can clearly see these projects getting heightened attention and being subsumed under a common heading in the last dec-

ade. "Slow Art" appears to be a fast concept, and is only picking up speed.

On Media Refusals

Help in answering some of these questions might come from emerging work on media consumption and identity, especially in cases of "media refusals," "technology sabbaths," or other public instances of withdrawal from such platforms as Facebook or email. Though not always explicitly claimed as part of the various slow movements, such acts fall within the same counter-modern impulse, an attempt to wrest either freedom or control away from the rhythms of consumption associated with networked communication.

Laura Portwood-Stacer has helpfully exposed the role of taste in such public professions, and therefore of class construction. In Stacer's work we see how consumers perform their habits of use, through claiming or refusing the status of participants, and how such performance serves as a prime site for the construction of subjecthood. [25] In an age of proliferating platforms and rhythms of digital media consumption, identity formation stands to form as much in choices about media participation as in the more traditional alliances offered through music or movie fandom.

Scholar Nathan Jurgenson has also helped clarify the role of refusal through arguing for the inseparable nature of our online and offline lives. Even when we're offline, Jurgenson explains, our online selves are still present, shaping perception, action, self-understanding. [26] In his view, there seemingly can never be a full retreat; to argue otherwise requires a "digital dualist" view of the world, a new kind of Manichaeism that ignores other important work done in sociology, critical theory, and race and gender studies on how self-hood emerges across heterogeneous spheres of action.

Such work helps shift the conversation away from hard distinctions between participation and refusal, inside and outside, fast and slow - and more to the movement itself, the relationships between states. If for Stacer refusals are less significant than the contrasts of class or taste they serve, and for Jurgenson the distinction between offline and online less significant than the imagined differences and divisions lived out in action, then perhaps the "slow" might be better examined as the "slower." Speed itself is relative, and nothing can seem slower or faster except in relation to other things. The figure needs a ground. If the "faster" ground against which advocates of "slow science" or "slow tourism" wish to appear different is sometimes hard to find, perhaps slow media art will help make such relations more apparent, through the often inescapably material, sensory nature of the work.

As scholars of mobility remind us, we're only able to perceive ourselves as mobile because of others' relative im-

mobilities. [27] Perhaps the exercise of agency over our "media speed" is itself worth considering as a differential phenomenon, a site of differential power. To use a much older example, both Benjamin and Baudelaire wrote about the Flaneurs of Paris who took turtles for walks on leashes as a way of showing that they could choose to go slowly in the bustling metropolis, where perhaps others could not afford to make such a choice. When it comes to "going slow," we should be careful of mistaking ourselves as prophets when in fact we may just be dandies.

As evidenced by the histories, theories, and artistic precedents acknowledged here, the drive to slow down is likely to only grow as a desire within art, media, scholarship and commerce. Though we would no more discourage such desires than we would seek to quell our own pleasure in the pastoral or even the romantic as a part of life, we hope to see "slow media art" as not first a fast term for instrumentalizing anti-modern critiques, but rather as a provocation to understanding our own contingencies and relational velocities in a world of flows.

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