

I have become uncomfortably acquainted with the movement of time since the start of the coronavirus crisis, and yet I find myself struggling to grasp what its passage feels like. Three hundred and sixty-five days have slunk through my fingers. When the lockdown began, there seemed to be the universal belief that we could achieve anything with the ultimate luxury: time. Books were to be written, languages learned, hobbies adopted. But this new found gift wasn't granted to everyone: not key workers, not those who lost their jobs, or those who sought refuge from unsafe housing. The reality of living through a pandemic with a daily death toll pinging on your phone screen and a government blaming individual action rather than political decision is not one of emancipation. Truly free time must be for everyone.<sup>1</sup>

*Faith is a Cascade* by Sofia Albina Novikoff Unger allows us to think in dream-time and to dream of time. Time is a luxury commodity and all commodities are stolen goods. A pandemic combined with depression is the ultimate thief; I'm stuck in the present as I ruminate over the past, minutes melting away. Every day I meander through a homogenous empty time, one that eats itself.<sup>2</sup> Sofia rescues me from this. In her work, temporalities are collapsed to conjure speculative futures. This queering of time touches across the past, present and future, inviting us to fantasise technology's liberatory force.<sup>3</sup> Author Jack Halberstam unpacks the queer experience of time's non-linearity, when life trajectories do not follow the straight line laid out by heteronormative institutions of reproduction and marriage.<sup>4</sup> He proposes that futures are imagined "according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience".<sup>5</sup>

Sofia operates on this positioning of time in the film *Cascade Experiment: Reenactment at Sayes Court, 1968* as she pulls Peter the Great out of the history book and recasts him in 2021. This Tsar wears a metallic mask; he has been overlaid with a digital treatment, a photographic negative effect and movement delays that shadow the outline of his body. This echoing of form causes a doubling, bridging the two Peters of past and present, as one haunts the other. Tension builds as the ruin of his raucous trip unfolds: barrels tumble down green hills, fires burn, his gestures become increasingly erratic. Anxieties of what is to come begin to bubble up within me.

And then I am catapulted to the near-future in *Mise en scène 2050, smart i-v*. The series of ChromaLuxe prints that welcome me into a dreamlike, digitally rendered smart home, which is decorated with sleek furniture and high-tech devices. I want to metamorphose into a sim, move myself in and forage through the littered treasures and trinkets that tell the histories and mythologies of Eastern and Western Europe. I want to lounge on the silver reclining chair while I read with the cyber cat as it vibrates on my lap; I want to gaze through the apartment window at the high-rise skyline.

The more we shift from the old normal to the new normal, I realise I don't want normal at all. The world is ever-polarising. Exasperated, I sigh down the phone: 'No, Grandma, I don't feel sorry for Boris.' I hang up and doomscroll the internet until I've absorbed enough self-loathing and certainty that the world is unfixable. I log out and reassess what it is I want for this new normal world: I want a world without work, a world without landlords, a world without prisons and without Priti Patel. I want a world without social media platforms that suck me in and gnaw on my soul. I want a world with an abundant amount of time - a time in which everyone luxuriates.

- Alex Hull

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne underline the importance of time within an emancipatory political project, as free time liberates us from work and enables consciousness raising. See 'Luxury Communism: A Conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne,' in Gunkel, H., Hameed, A. and O'Sullivan, S., *Futures and Fictions*, 2017, p.146-160.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin, Walter, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History,' in *Illuminations*, 1968, p.261.

<sup>3</sup> Dinshaw, Carolynin quoted in 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion' 2007, p.178.

<sup>4</sup> Halberstam, Jack, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 2005, p.1-4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.