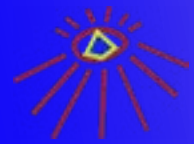




STRANGE METHODS 1: NOTES ON DECELERATION

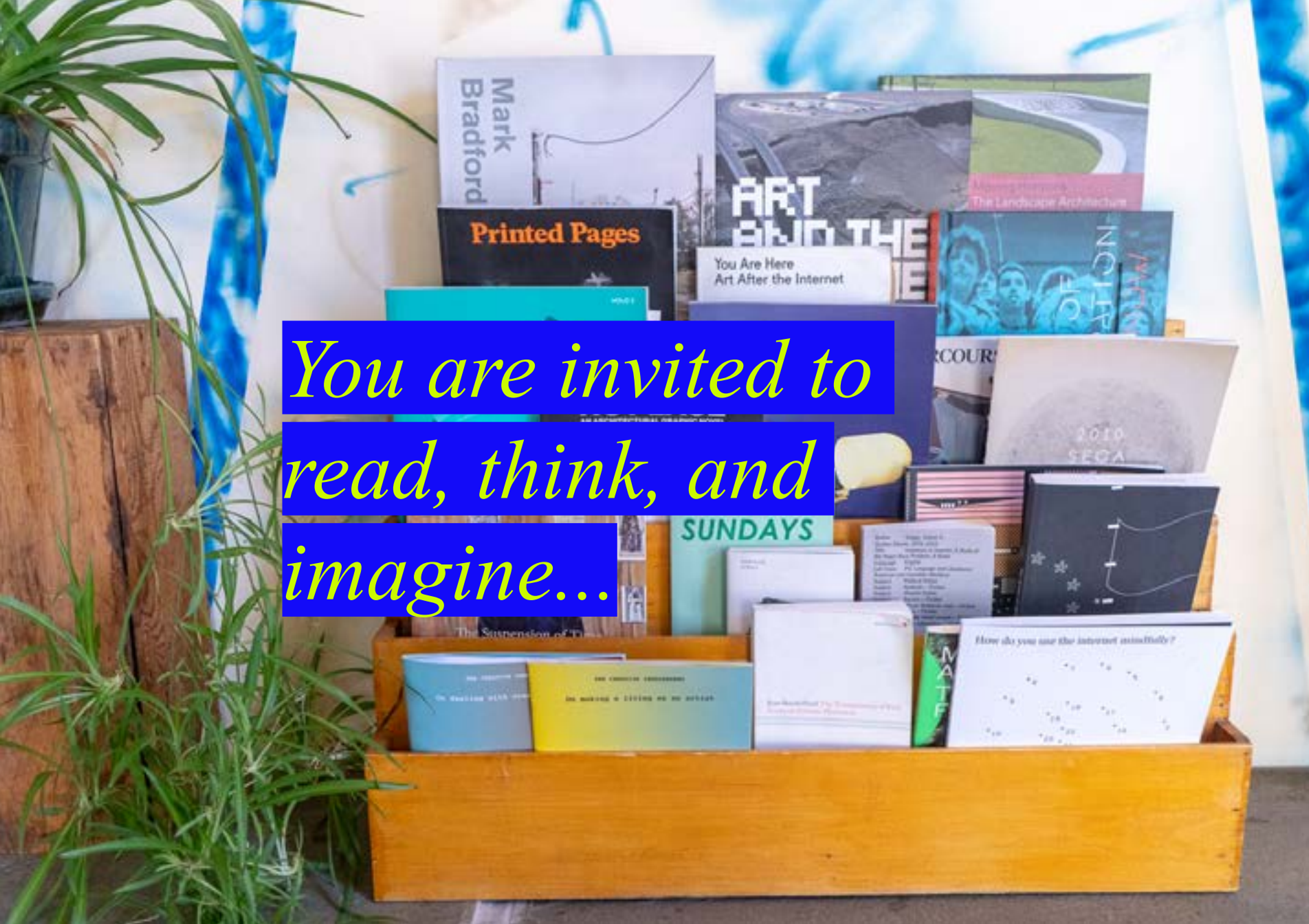


Strange Methods 1: *Notes on Deceleration*

Strange Methods is an occasional, shape-shifting publication produced by The Strange, an internet-infused creative space in New York's Catskill Mountains. This inaugural issue focuses on the idea of “decelerating”—a deliberate process of side-stepping routine and expectations in order to marinate in the abundant expansiveness of one's own mind and creative vision. It contains insights from 16 freshly decelerated individuals, a guide to planning your own DIY Decelerator experience, and a library of recommended reading, among other tidbits. Please enjoy slowly.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

TO DECELERATE?



*You are invited to
read, think, and
imagine...*



*... but you are not
expected to [do
anything].*

In the spring of 2019, sixteen hyper-productive and exceptional creative practitioners spent a week or two on their own at Strange HQ—a mini-compound nestled between a spring-fed pond and river, brooding mountains, and old-growth forests—for the purpose of “decelerating.” The idea was to provide a simple framework for stepping outside of their hectic lives and demanding work, into a slower space wherein

deep contemplation and indulgent reflection could be achieved. There were no requirements to fulfill, besides sitting with the time and space in whatever way(s) felt necessary. What follows are each resident’s reflections on the Decelerator experience. We hope they inspire you to create your own framework for slowing down, and to treat your own mind as an expansive retreat destination that you can visit anytime.

STRANGE



FOUND

At first I felt a strong urge to do something. Anything. Leave the house to get things, see things, buy things, meet people. It took a few days of decelerating for me to detach myself from these feelings—but that process showed me how much I've been conditioned to be a productive human being, and how counterintuitive it felt to slow down. Once I could remain quiet and calm, I felt I could talk to myself and listen to what my physical body really needed—most of which was rest, exercise, nature, and nourishing food. From there I could think clearly, and focus on the important things I tend to push aside every day in order to just get things done.

[While decelerating] I realized that I really don't need to do so many of the things I've conditioned myself to do under the pretenses of surviving in a monstrous city. I don't need to check social media every day. I don't need to surround myself with noise and distraction in order to feel fulfilled. I can spend time in nature if I need to! Really, I realized the importance of well-being over success. I have also come to terms with so many of the problematic ways that my job was affecting my personal life. A desperate need to create boundaries was boiling within me before arriving at Strange HQ, and decelerating allowed me to actually tune into that need and give it my attention and respect.

Yumna Al-Arashi combines photography with extensive research and writing, focusing on human rights, feminism, sexuality, nature, and the Middle East.





*Photographs by Yumna Al-Arashi, taken
during her time at Strange HQ.*

Decelerating offers an opportunity for rest, clarity, and being in one's own body in more significant ways.

[While decelerating,] I realized that I have been trying to crunch too many aims inside of one project. I've had some anxiety about what publishing a book might mean—can I really do it, will people read it, will people think I'm smart, poetic, etc.?—and so, as a result, I have been overcompensating via content. My time spent decelerating revealed to me that I need to simplify, and in doing so, so much more will open up to me as writer.

Jessica Lynne is a writer and founding editor of ARTS.BLACK, an online journal of art criticism.

RESEARCH
HIGHLIGHT

“MAYBE THE BODY IS LIKE THE SKY, NOT A CORPOREAL INDIVIDUAL AFTER ALL, BUT MERELY A LOCUS, A SPACE IN WHICH PHENOMENA OCCUR.”

— Kazim Ali, *Notes from a Spiritual Practice*



Lean into the discomfort that comes with slowing down. Explore things you don't typically explore. Allow for joy in the solitude. Step outside and look for the sun. Put your feet in the grass. Take a bath.

← **ADVICE FOR
DECELERATION**

Do something really nice for yourself, every day. — Carlie



Decelerating helped me realize that reading and research is not only valuable, but necessary for the work Carlie and I are doing as The Cauldron. The insights, inspiration, and direction we received from being allowed to merely sit and read was unbelievably important. It led to us having meaningful and fiery conversations about what we were doing and why. At home, when I have a million things to do, reading often falls by the wayside. This week truly showed me that reading is not a luxury to our practice that I should only allow myself while on vacation; rather, it is a requirement to our project reaching its full potential.

— Kate

Run by Carlie Febo and Kate McBide, The Cauldron is a radical feminist social practice focused on creating transformative experiences through intentional gathering, vulnerability, and community building.

Sarah Kinlaw is a composer, choreographer, and artist focusing on the empathic potential and agency developed by performance.



The most surprising part of decelerating was realizing how long it had been since I'd sat alone with myself without distraction. I do take a lot of solo time in the city, but I'm constantly stimulated by all the people surrounding me. I've always been a New York City-based artist, so I think it was crucial for me to reconnect with the practice of developing ideas and work amongst nature. Over the past years, I've started associating my life as a full-time artist with a specific backdrop and agenda, and taking this dedicated deceleration time has been a beautiful reminder that it is not only important to break any habits that don't serve me, but also to encourage a constant evolution and flexibility in the ways I live and work.

ADVICE FOR
DECELERATION

Allow your thoughts to move as fluidly as water. There is no wrong way as long as they move forward.

ADVICE FOR
DECELERATION →



1. We are our spatial environments. We think and feel through them. Change how you sit, what your desk looks like. Change how you walk, which routes you take, what you look at.

2. Take a walk. Eat a meal, really slowly. Read a book. Celebrate, meander, notice.



As a musical metaphor, slowing down is to notice music as textures, not just melodies or sequences of notes. Rather than events and opportunities, slowing down means to notice the textures of my thinking and of my relationships with others, and to try to appreciate them as they are.

Dan Taeyoung creates intentional architecture and experimental design tools that change the way we think and collaborate with each other. Dan is an educator, architectural designer, technologist, and community organizer.



RESEARCH
HIGHLIGHT ↓

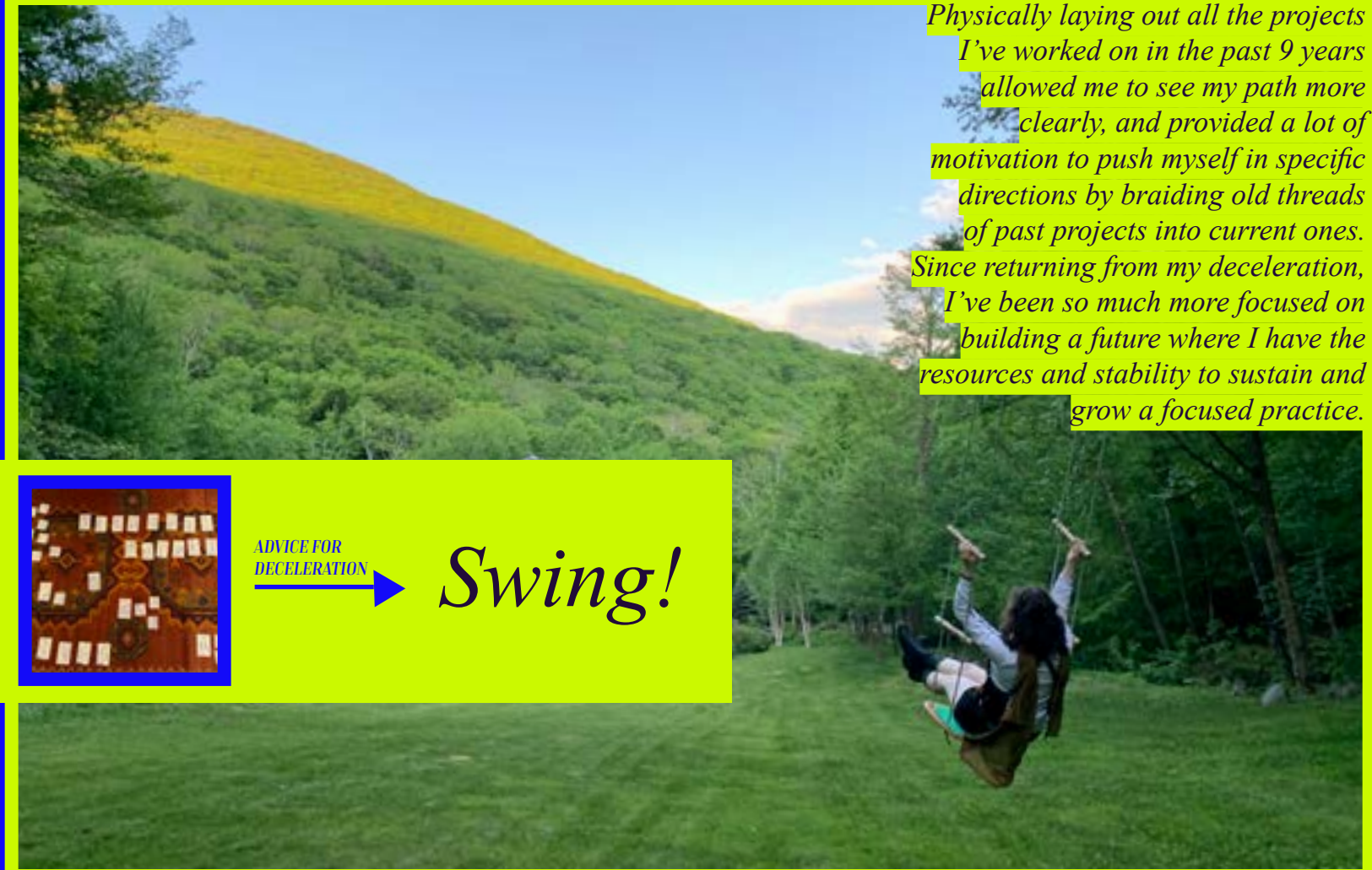
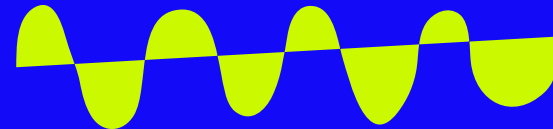
**THERE IS ANOTHER
WORLD, AND IT IS
THIS ONE.**

— Paul Éluard



I know it sounds difficult and maybe a little scary, but try to forget who you are and why you are where you are. Construct a safe space around you with clear boundaries. Put away your devices and remind yourself that you control the physics within your own mind. Softly come into a space of deep acceptance. Acceptance of your thoughts as they pass over you, and even more of the cacophony of sensations while you are still and silent yet raucously alive.

Melanie Hoff is an artist and educator examining the role technology plays in social organization and on the reinforcement of hegemonic structures.



Physically laying out all the projects I've worked on in the past 9 years allowed me to see my path more clearly, and provided a lot of motivation to push myself in specific directions by braiding old threads of past projects into current ones. Since returning from my deceleration, I've been so much more focused on building a future where I have the resources and stability to sustain and grow a focused practice.



ADVICE FOR
DECELERATION



Swing!



Official Strange HQ-endorsed element:

*TULIPS, A BULBOUS
SPRING-FLOWERING
PLANT WITH BOLDLY
COLORED, CUP-SHAPED
BLOSSOMS.*

HOW TO ENJOY: Acquire tulip bulbs in the fall. Plant 6-8” deep, in any type of soil. Over the winter, imagine them beneath the snow, building their strength. Always believe they will grow—never doubt the tulip’s lifecycle. In late March, regard in awe as pointy, supple greep tips emerge triumphantly from the earth.

“IN GENERAL, COMPETITION HAS REPLACED EXCHANGE AS A CENTRAL MARKET PRINCIPLE... WE HAVE BECOME INDIVIDUAL ‘COMPANIES OF ONE,’ COMPETING, RATHER THAN EXCHANGING, WITH EACH OTHER. IN THIS COMPETITIVE INDIVIDUALISM... WE ARE AT ONGOING RISK OF FAILURE, REDUNDANCY AND PRECARIETY.”

RESEARCH
HIGHLIGHT

— Modes of Criticism 3 – Design
and Democracy


Elana Schlenker is an art director and graphic designer. She founded *Gratuitous Type*, a magazine of contemporary graphic design, and Less Than 100, a traveling pop-up shop for gender wage parity.

ADVICE FOR
DECELERATION

1) *Turn off your phone and put it somewhere inconvenient to get to. Not having it in reach also made me more aware of how often I thought about checking it.*

2) *Establish clear boundaries for friends and family (and colleagues if necessary). Mine was that while decelerating, I would not be reachable until after 8pm.*

3) *Set goals for your work, but also for your own self care, and prioritize them equally. Revisit/rework them throughout your deceleration as needed.*

A black and white photograph of Jeremy Couillard, a man with glasses and a dark hoodie, sitting in a chair. The background is a blurred, natural setting with trees.

I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT WHILE
DECELERATING, I WAS THINKING A
LOT ABOUT HOW WHEN WRITING WAS
INVENTED, THE WORLD POPULATION
WAS ABOUT THE SAME SIZE AS THE
POPULATION OF NEW YORK CITY
RIGHT NOW.

*I definitely got less actual work done while
decelerating than I would have if I had just
stayed home and gone to the studio every day.
But it's so important to slow the work down
sometimes, and really think about what I'm
doing. There is value in realizing that, and
remembering to continue intentionally doing
it from time to time. I think a lot of the value
in slowing down this hard for a week will
gradually emerge over the rest of the year.*

Jeremy Couillard is an artist using virtual reality to explore
human consciousness. His VR video work has been presented
by the New Museum and Rhizome, among others.



*When asked to leave us something visual to remember him by, Jeremy
Couillard left us this screenshot from a game he worked on while here.*

RESEARCH
HIGHLIGHT

“WE NEED TO ABANDON
AND ESCHEW A CULTURE
OF NO IN FAVOR OF A
CULTURE OF YES.”

— Kristan Kennedy, *As radical, as mother, as salad, as
shelter: what should art institutions do now?*

*It's not just slowing down,
it's being away from your
daily life and environment.
That distance can be
incredibly fruitful.*

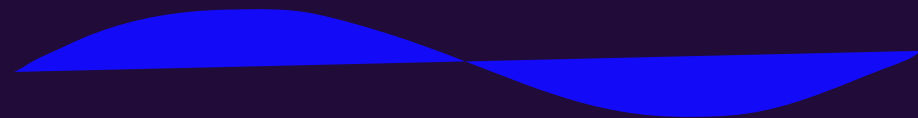
*While decelerating, I've been thinking more
about gratitude, and how to consistently
practice it in my day-to-day life. I used
to joke that I'm basically a professional
cheerleader for art—so I do express
my enthusiasm, support, and joy for the
incredible people along my path—but I'm
wondering how I can channel that natural
disposition more deliberately.*

Ceci Moss is a curator, writer, educator, and founder of
Gas, a mobile, experimental, and networked platform for
contemporary art located in a truck gallery parked around
Los Angeles and online.



Your future is hidden ← **CREATIVE MANTRA** *in your daily practice.*

So much of the time that I spend on my creative projects is used in the process of actually making them. Living and carving out a life for myself in New York City, this translates to any precious spare time that I do have being spent trying to come up with new ideas, working through old ones, and trying to draw inspiration from an often chaotic existence in the city. Slowing down enabled me to focus on the other equally important aspects of my projects, many of which often go overlooked: the narrative being told, the physical form the project takes, and how the logistics of it all come together holistically. While decelerating, I actually got to rearrange the order of operations in certain ways, and that opened me up to having more creative bandwidth.



Malik Abdul-Rahmaan is a Brooklyn-based music producer, DJ, composer, and creator of the narrative-based music series Field Research, which blends his ethnomusicology background with field recordings from emerging global musical movements.

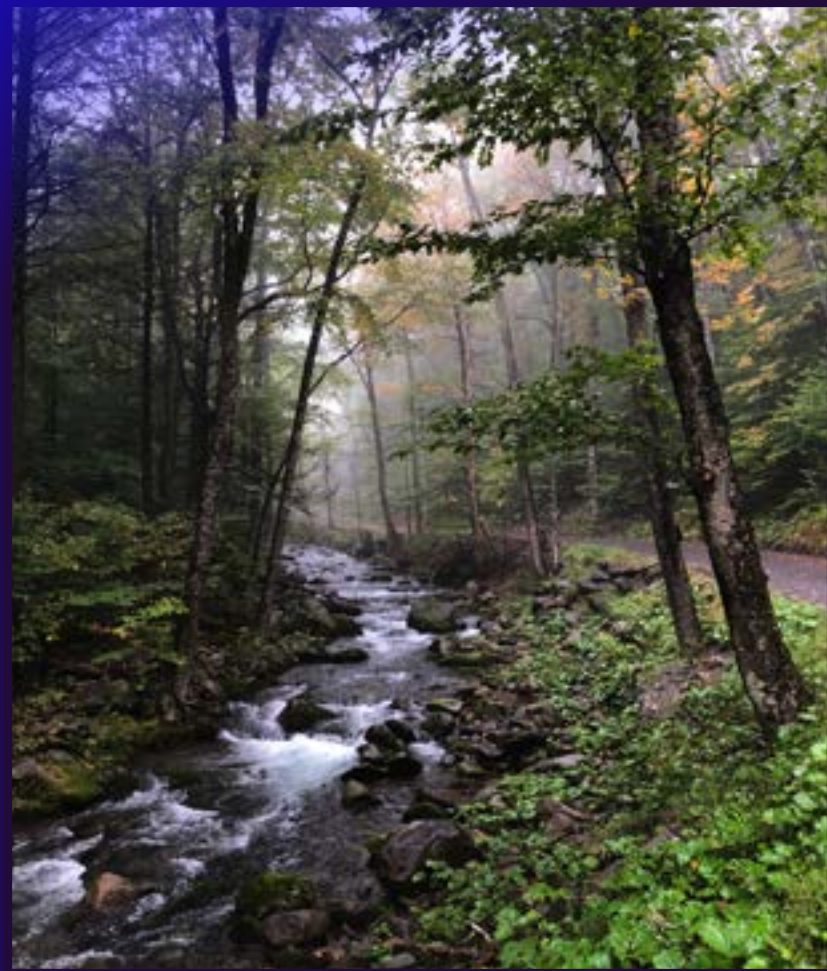
Bring things you like, but never get the chance to do. For me this wasn't only reading for pleasure, reading poetry, or a book I'd been meaning to pick up, but also non-intellectual things. I brought a small postcard-sized water color pack with paper and tiny paints. It was great to just make a little painting of the trees or the view from my window and let my mind wander. This was important for me so I could make space to let my mind go while still "doing" something.

Both the best and most difficult thing about decelerating was being alone. By the end of the first week I was ready for my family to visit, but I really needed the second week to dive deeper into the experience. It took me about 4 days to develop my routine. Then, my body relaxed, my neck stopped aching.

← **ADVICE FOR
DECELERATION**



Laura Raicovich is a writer and art worker dedicated to artistic production that relies on complexity, poetics, and care to create a more thoughtful and equitable civic realm.



Official Strange HQ-endorsed element:

*THE TRANQUIL BABBLE OF
WITTENBERG BROOK, PART
OF THE ASHOKAN RESERVOIR
WATERSHED, WHICH FLOWS
SOUTH TO SUPPLY NYC WITH
CLEAN DRINKING WATER*

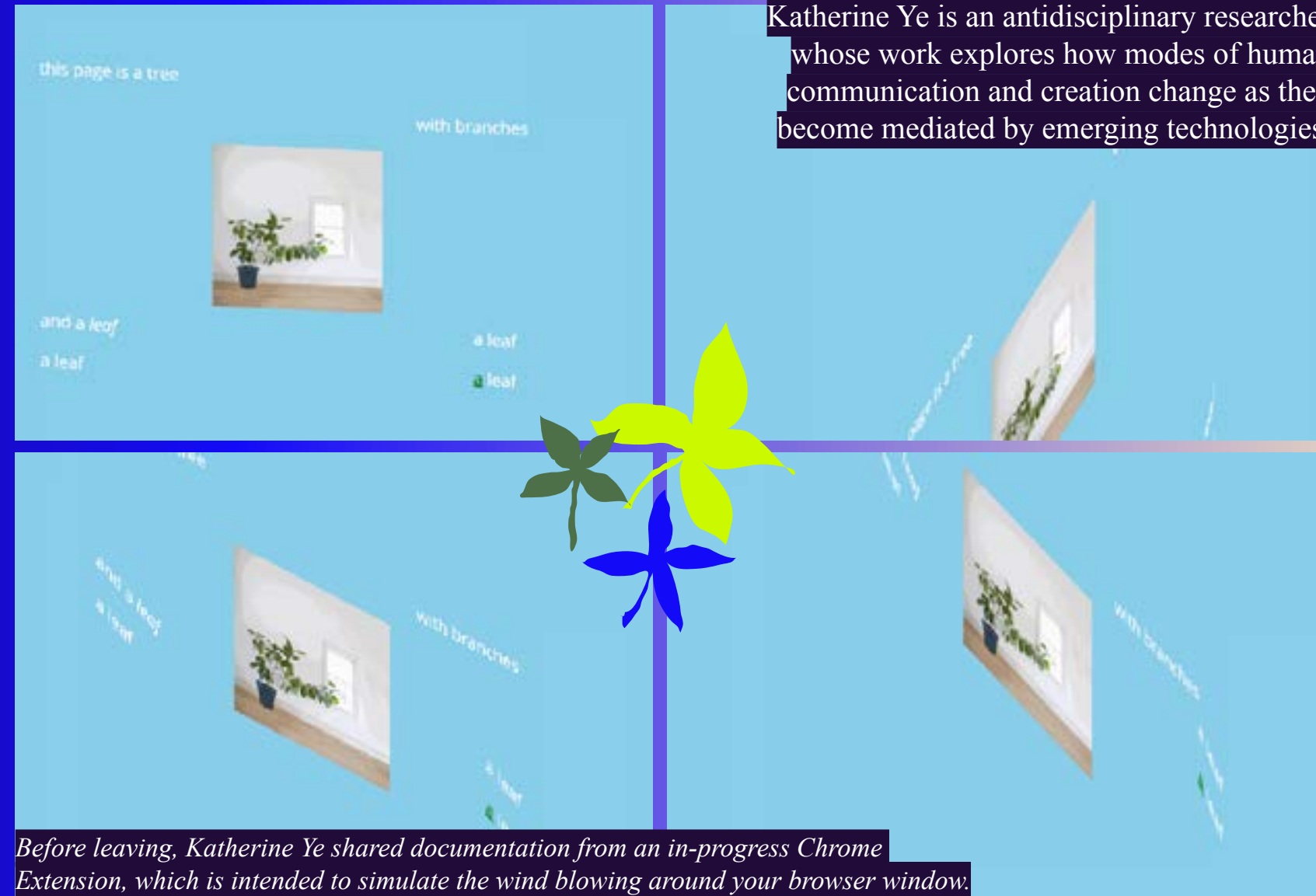
HOW TO ENJOY: Visit Strange HQ, and wear waterproof shoes. Sneak away towards the sound of rushing water. Venture into the forest. Find the edge of land. Sit down on a rock; put your feet into the cold water. Stay quiet and savor the gentle movement.



ADVICE FOR
DECELERATION

→ *Get lost. It
doesn't count
unless you're
scared you
won't find your
way back.*

*I spent an hour sitting on a nearby bridge,
tracing the river's motion. I then took two
more hours to wander and found myself in a
cemetery. But I wish I hadn't counted the hours!*



Katherine Ye is an interdisciplinary researcher
whose work explores how modes of human
communication and creation change as they
become mediated by emerging technologies.

Before leaving, Katherine Ye shared documentation from an in-progress Chrome
Extension, which is intended to simulate the wind blowing around your browser window.

The hardest part of decelerating was truthfully making slowing down a priority, and not just another to-do item on our list of work. Honestly, I was still in the mode of “doing” until about the last two days of my residency, when I finally gave myself permission to give up the regimented time marks and truly do nothing. We had to shake the Brooklyn-millennial-entrepreneur identities out of us, and be something else out in nature.

Boyuan Gao and Jahan Mantin are Co-Founders and Principals of Project Inkblot, a consultancy that helps teams build inclusive and equitable services, products, and content for all people.

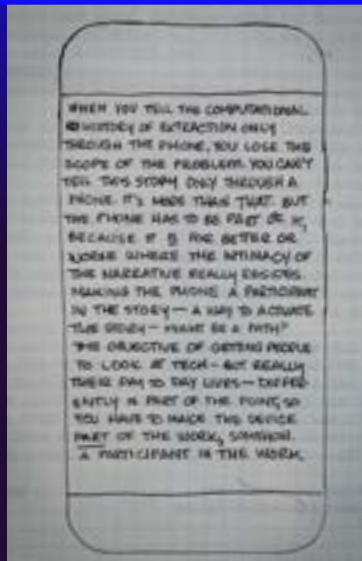
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

“THE IMMENSE DIVERSITY OF IMAGINED REALITIES THAT SAPIENS INVENTED, AND THE RESULTING DIVERSITY OF BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS, ARE THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF WHAT WE CALL ‘CULTURES.’ ONCE CULTURES APPEARED, THEY NEVER CEASED TO CHANGE AND DEVELOP, AND THESE UNSTOPPABLE ALTERATIONS ARE WHAT WE CALL ‘HISTORY.’”

— Excerpt from *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari



Ingrid's jar of sand created by grinding an iPhone down to its most elemental particles.



RESEARCH
HIGHLIGHT



“NOTHING IS BUILT
ON STONE; ALL IS
BUILT ON SAND, BUT
WE MUST BUILD AS IF
SAND WERE STONE.”

– Jorge Luis Borges, *In Praise of Darkness*



Ingrid Burrington writes, makes maps, and tells jokes about places, politics, and the feelings people have about both. She's the author of *Networks of New York: An Illustrated Field Guide to Urban Internet Infrastructure*.

GUIDE FOR D.I.Y. DECELERATION

Instructions for anyone looking to slow down through a deliberate reinhabitation of their body, mind, and creative work.

First of all, why decelerate?

Rather than emphasizing the making of new work, decelerating creates space to refuel, reflect, and get back in touch with your overall creative vision and sense of self. Reasons for decelerating will vary, but the main motivator for many will be an internal voice calling out for a reset, a slackening of the rope, a moment to step aside from—and question your willingness to obey—the demands placed on you.

Busyness breeds busyness, and often the only way to reevaluate your priorities (in your work and life) is to stop feeling busy and let yourself simply be.

There is no right or wrong way to decelerate. You simply must create time and space for it to happen and set some intentions, then follow your instincts and let the experience unfold in its own way. Most of all, try to enjoy being alone with your thoughts and seek out the pleasure in your meandering ideas. Slowing down and being still allows you to tap into your intuition and inhabit your sense of self in more nuanced and expansive ways. In turn, you get more done by doing less. Creativity is a current and to tap into it, all you need is a direct line to the source.



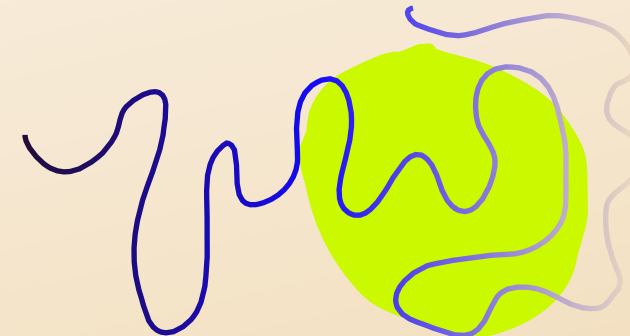
What do you need to decelerate?

1) TIME

How many days or weeks can you make available to yourself for the sole purpose of refocusing on your creative vision and self? Remember, this will be a time to slow down and free yourself from expectations, so you won't want to feel rushed. Try to avoid carrying with you any obligations or responsibilities from your normal life.

Key tips for taking the time you need to decelerate:

- A week or more is ideal
- It's best if you're alone
- Remember: This is *your* time to do what *you* need



2) A SPACE

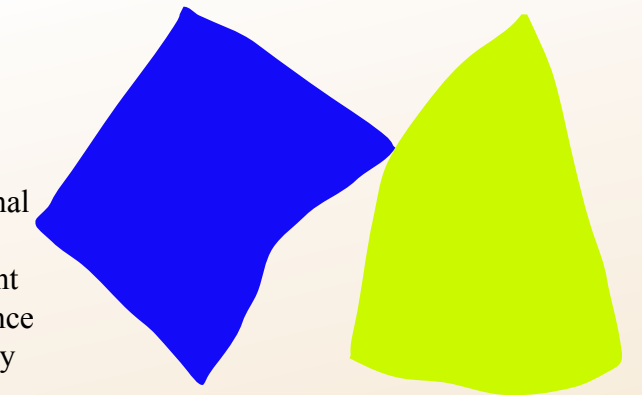
Seek out a peaceful, comfortable, inspiring, and private space with minimal distractions. Try not to spend too much money on such a space—you don't want to feel forced to have a certain experience based on expectations created by a hefty price tag. Borrowing or bartering for a space from friends or family can be a good approach.

Try to find a simple space that has:

- Access to nature
- Good natural light
- Enough room to spread out in
- A comfortable desk or other study area
- High-speed internet can be helpful to some, but not all

3) INTENTIONS

Setting intentions for your decelerator experience is one of the most important steps. Either before you embark or on the first morning of your time away, take at least an hour to contemplate your intentions by writing in a journal.



Consider the following questions:

- What do you feel the most momentum towards working on or thinking about while decelerating?
- What matters most to you about your overall creative vision? How can you bring that meaning to the forefront of what you're focusing on while decelerating?
- At the end of your time decelerating, how do you want to feel? What can you do to ensure you end up feeling that way?
- Part of decelerating is being generous to yourself, and creating space for curiosity and reflection. What non-essential ideas or topics are you open to researching, thinking about,

or otherwise meditating on while decelerating?

- What is the main thing you want to make progress on while decelerating, and how do you define “progress?” Consider what you can reasonably accomplish in the time you have, without rushing things.
- What won’t you do or work on while decelerating? Preemptively list the types of work or activities that you might be tempted to pursue, and make a plan for how you’ll keep yourself from going too far down those paths.

Packing list

Before you head off, plan what you’ll bring to enhance your experience.

The following are recommended as potential decelerator accoutrements:

- Comfortable clothes and house slippers
- Walking shoes and some outdoor-adventure outfits
- A nice stack of books that are somehow relevant to what you’re thinking about or working on
- A dedicated decelerator notebook, plus plenty of paper, pens, pencils, and other analog drawing/writing tools
- Some may enjoy bringing crystals, sage, incense, or other spiritual objects
- Nourishing food and drinks, such as good quality coffee and tea, vegetables to roast, rice to cook, nuts for snacks, and anything else that will fuel your body and mind
- Bringing a small speaker or other way to play music can be nice

- Something creative and unrelated to your practice that may be enjoyable to do while on breaks (knitting, painting, drawing, etc)

Protecting your time away

As a last consideration before you embark, we recommend identifying any obstacles (internal or external) you may encounter while decelerating, and proactively strategizing ways to minimize their effects.

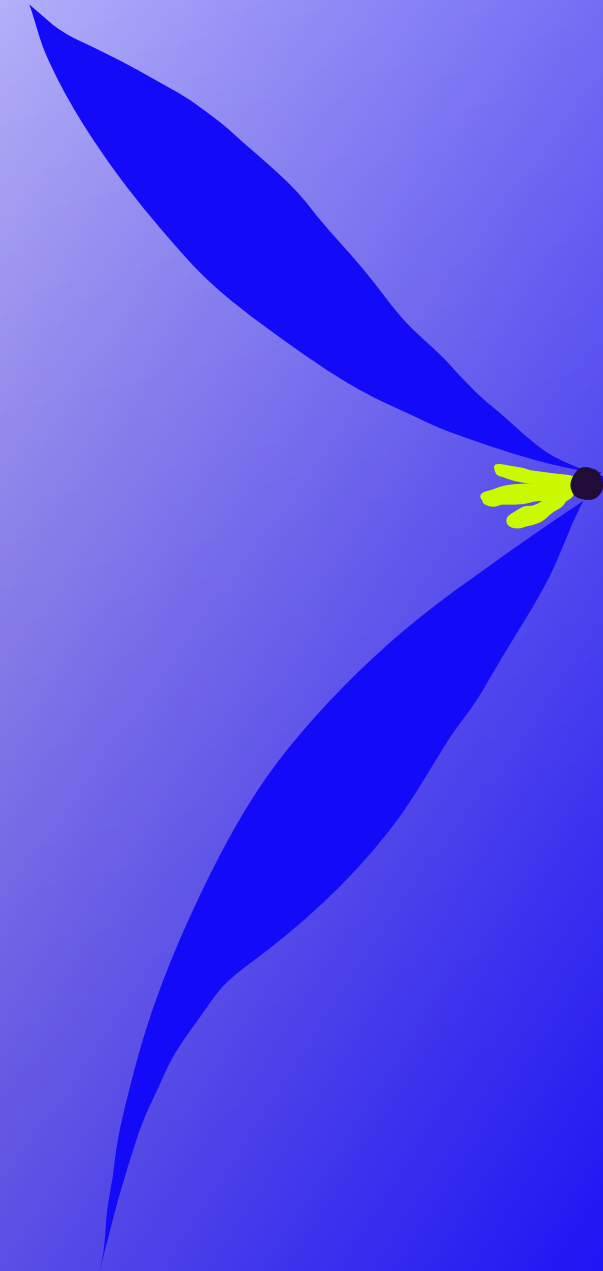
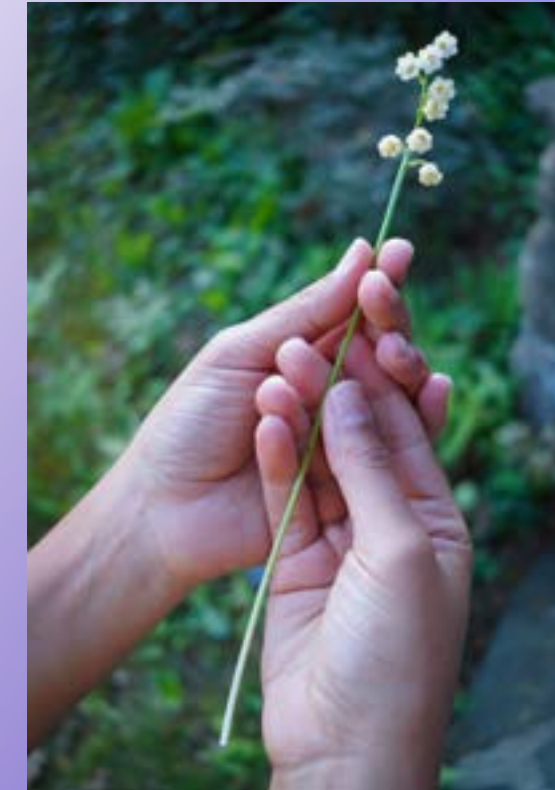
Some tips for safeguarding your time away:

- As much as possible, set the expectation that you will be unreachable. To help with this, create an email auto-responder letting co-workers know you’re decelerating, and preemptively ask your family/friends for their support and patience.

- Limit your use of social media and other websites that may unhelpfully appropriate your time and attention. If necessary, consider deleting social media apps off of your phone, or using a tool like selfcontrolapp.com to block certain websites.
- Make a plan to stay physically active, before you burn yourself out with mind-based work. We recommend taking one or more long, ambling walks each day, and carving out time for yoga and/or meditation.
- Be ready to let go of any preconceived notions of what your experience should be like, in favor of doing what feels necessary or fun. For many, the process of deceleration provides a much-needed detox from what you “should” or “must” do. Listen to your body and mind, and follow your intuition. You know best what you need.
- Embrace the tension that comes from being alone, and figuring out how to spend your time. Sit with the uncomfortable feelings that will emerge from the unstructured nature of the experience. If helpful, create constraints

for yourself—then break them (if you want to).

- As you decelerate, revisit your answers to the intention-setting questions, as you defined them before you began. Adjust as necessary, but try to see them through.



DECELERATOR LIBRARY

After decelerating, we asked each resident to recommend one book they found meaningful to “leave behind” for future residents. We have additionally selected a few relevant books from our own library.

1. *How to Do Nothing* by Jenny Odell; recommended by Willa Köerner

2. *As Radical, As Mother, As Salad, As Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?*; recommended by Ceci Moss

3. *The First Artificial Intelligence Coloring Book* by Harold Cohen, Becky Cohen, Penny Nii; recommended by Elana Schlenker

4. *The Blue Clerk: Ars Poetica in 59 Versos* by Dionne Brand; recommended by Laura Raicovich

5. *Emergent Strategy* by Adrienne Maree Brown; recommended by Dan Taeyoung

6. *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters* by Priya Parker; recommended by Carlie Febo

7. *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* by Stephen Nachmanovitch; recommended Sarah Kinlaw

8. *How To Change Your Mind* by Michael Polan; recommended by Yumna Al-Arashi

9. *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* by Oliver Sacks; recommended by Malik Abdul-Rahmaan

10. *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* by Ottessa Moshfegh; recommended by Kate McBride

11. *Last and First Men: A Story of the Near and Far Future* by Olaf Stapledon; recommended by Jeremy Couillard

12. *Fasting for Ramadan: Notes from a Spiritual Practice* by Kazim Ali; recommended by Jessica Lynne

13. *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari; recommended by Boyuan Gao

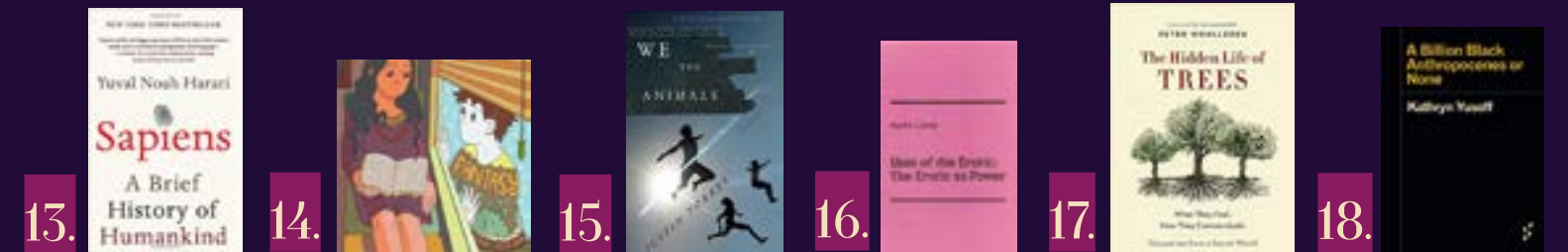
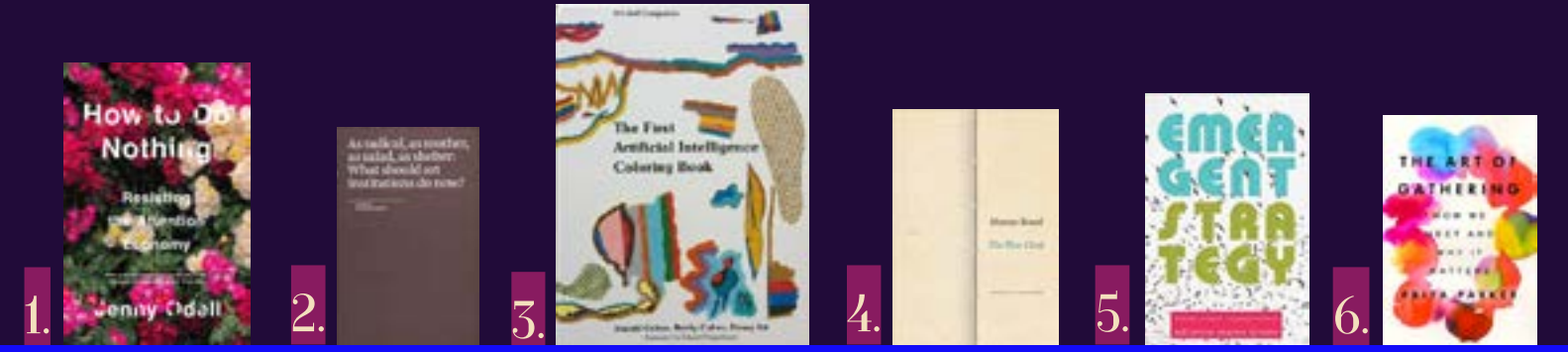
14. *Sex Fantasy* by Sophia Foster-Dimino; recommended by Katherine Ye

15. *We The Animals* by Justin Torres; recommended by Jahan Mantin

16. *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power* by Audre Lorde; recommended by Melanie Hoff

17. *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* by Peter Wohlleben; recommended by Willa Köerner

18. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* by Kathryn Yusoff; recommended by Ingrid Burrington



ABOUT THE STRANGE

The Strange is an internet-infused, riverside mini compound located in New York's mountainous, forever-wild Catskill State Park. Through residencies and retreats, experimental publishing projects, and 1:1 mentorship, we support the focused evolution of forward-thinking ideas and their creative manifestations. The project to build The Strange started in 2018, and it's still—and will always be—evolving. With that in mind, our ultimate goal is to help forge a stranger, more imaginatively regenerative future. We will continue to experiment, iterate, and rethink the ways we can do this, who we can do it with, and how we can do it better.

Through our Decelerator program—which this publication focuses on—we enable creative practitioners working on ambitious, experimental, technically imaginative and possibly speculative projects to come into deeper touch with their creative vision(s) by way of researching, planning, and generally slowing down. The accelerated pace of contemporary life is absurd, and keeps too many of us out of touch with what's natural: cyclically making, feeling, learning, and growing.

Through our work, we hope to offer both temporary respite from the cults of productivity and connectivity, as well as a way to explore a long-term reorientation to the self, to each other, and to the natural world.

The Strange is the project of Willa Köerner and her partner, Daniel Morgan. Willa is a writer, editor, strategist, and mentor. By day she works for The Creative Independent, a growing resource of emotional and practical guidance for artists, and by night she directs all Strange-related pursuits. Daniel works to develop and sustain thoughtful web-adjacent technologies, and volunteers for various non-profits. He is currently the Education Lead for Tumult Inc, a small company making interactive animation software.

We are excited for The Strange to evolve based on the needs of the artists and thinkers who come here, and hope the project inspires people to contemplate what's possible when inventive technologies, nature, and our imaginations come together in deliberate, caring collaboration. <3



Photo of Willa and Daniel (and Frankie) at Strange HQ by Yumna Al-Arashi

Detail of a painting by artist Jenny Sharaf, hanging in the Strange HQ barn.

“STRANGE”

adjective;

1. not before known, heard,

or seen // UNFAMILIAR

2. exciting wonder or awe //

EXTRAORDINARY

Detail of a Hudson Valley River School-era painting by an unknown artist, hanging in the barn workspace.

*This publication was
put together by Willa
Köerner. She'd like to
thank...*

Daniel Morgan, for his collaboration in making all things Strange; Our inaugural cohort of Decelerator residents, for sharing their insights (and their faces!); Our selection committee—Taeyoon Choi, Lindsay Howard, Alfredo Salazar-Caro, and Stephanie Pereira—for helping us to select our first residents; Taeyoon Choi again for thinking of the name “Decelerator”; Arthur Anderson, the previous owner of the Strange HQ property; and finally, our parents, friends, and everyone else who's contributed their support towards getting this space off the ground. <3

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