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Hurry Up and Wait

[The Slow Issue](#) > [Jennifer Leonard](#) on January 5, 2010 at 6:30 am PST



The Slow Issue

Perspectives on a smarter, better, and slower future.

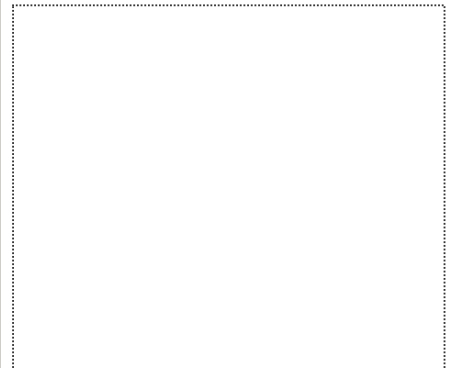
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About the author:



Jennifer Leonard — is a living in



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We asked some of the world's most prominent futurists to explain why slowness might be as important to the future as speed.

Julian Bleecker

Julian Bleecker, a designer, technologist, and co-founder of the Near Future Laboratory, devises "design-to-think experiments" that focus on interactions away from conventional computer settings. "When sitting at a screen and keyboard, everything is tuned to be as fast as possible," he says. "It's about diminishing time to nothing."

So he asks, "Can we make design where time is inescapable and not be brought to zero? Would it be interesting if time were stretched, or had weight?" To test this idea, Bleecker built a Slow Messaging Device, which automatically delayed electronic (as in, e-mail) messages. Especially meaningful messages took an especially long time to arrive.



He says the SMD experiment is a reminder of a time when love letters were handwritten and posted by mail, often having to cross continents and oceans before reaching the recipient. "I wanted to revisit that experience of anticipation and uncertainty."

He also wanted to observe the patterns in flows of people in the urban environment. So he conducted a research experiment with video cameras placed atop "a super long pole, looking down." In postprocessing he obscured the fast-moving people, high-lighting what moved slowly or simply remained still.

"This became a visual reference to how much we normally don't notice. Slowing down affords a different kind of understanding and sense of yourself in the world. Sometimes when I'm in Manhattan I decide that I'm just going to slow down and pay attention to different things."

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