





DEAR FRIEND,

One late evening a few weeks ago,

I was watching another episode of *Mindhunter* on Netflix. I think it was one of the first episodes of the show, probably the second.

Somewhere in the middle of the episode, the two protagonists—FBI agents Holden Ford and Bill Tench—are shown in a somewhat cliché montage of them traveling around the US for work and engaging in the most mundane of everyday activities: eating breakfast, drinking coffee, having a cigarette, driving a car, sleeping on an airplane, etc. This approximately two-minute scene is accompanied by the 1976 classic song *Fly Like An Eagle* by the Steve Miller Band. The intro lyrics have been playing in my head over and over again since that evening:

♪ Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin'
Into the future ♪

As you might have heard, I'm leaving my job at the Graphic Design Department of the Estonian Academy of Arts this summer. By the time you read this letter in July of 2022, I'll have been working here for exactly 15 years. I started in July of 2007 as one of the members of the BA admissions jury. I literally came directly from my own BA studies and even missed my graduation ceremony at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam, as these two events coincided. During these past 15 years, I've worked as a teacher, associate professor, professor, and now for the last 6 years as the head of the department. I thought I was going to write this letter as a sort of goodbye to you. You know, to get all nostalgic and stuff. But to be honest, I haven't had any time to reminisce, not to mention the time to scribble anything down.

While consuming my daily dose of cooking videos on YouTube last week, among others I watched a clip by one of my favourite online cooking instructors: J. Kenji López-Alt. While masterfully sharing his recipe for a "really good beef stew" in his signature filming-with-a-GoPro-attached-to-his-head style, Kenji was contemplating the importance of the past, present and future in cooking. As an example, he suggests that if you want to be considerate to the future you, you might want to tie the bunch of thyme sprigs into a bundle before you throw them into the pot. Then the future you will be thankful that you don't have to fish out the sprigs one by one. At a certain point, he concludes on a philosophical note:

What I have found as I get older,
is that 'future me' becomes
'present me' much quicker than it used to.

On February 24, 2022, I was in Kärdla, Hiiumaa—the place where I spent all the summers of my childhood, up until I was 16 years old. Hiiumaa is the second biggest island of Estonia, North-West of the mainland, in the direction of Sweden. We were visiting the only living sister of my late grandmother Hilda, my grand-aunt Aino, who had her 91st birthday. She was in good spirits and healthy, still not wearing glasses. The same morning Russia had started the war in Ukraine. This

clearly had an impact on everybody's mood in the room. Noticing this, Aino said that she'd seen enough war for one lifetime and started telling stories of our childhood when she and my grandmother were taking care of us kids during the summers. At some point she looked at me and asked:

Do you remember when you climbed
out of the window through the red rose bushes
to stay out late with the older kids?

Last year I designed and published a book for my good friend, the artist Paul Kuimet. He named the publication, his first monograph showing work from the last seven years, *Compositions with Passing Time*. The title comes loosely from one of the essays in the book by the writer Piret Karro. In the text, she analyses various ideas about time in Paul's oeuvre. She writes how Paul's looping 16mm films 'exacerbate the bafflement regarding the sense of time', how they 'depict a kind of fictitious space where time is stuck', and how the 'works rip open a new, personal dimension, one of subjective time flow'. And at a certain point in the essay she realises:

I could float in these space-times forever.

Since August of last year, I've had a copy of Jonas Mekas' *I Seem to Live. The New York Diaries VOL. 1. 1950–1969* on my studio table. Besides being a great book, it is also a lovely object—with its 824 pages, its spine measures more than five centimeters. Since I first got my hands on this publication last summer (in Vilnius, Lithuania, of all places!) I've been opening Mekas' diary now and then in random places and reading a few entries, most of which are noted with a specific date and year. It's a bit like time travel: page 235 takes you to July of 1960, flip a hundred pages forward and you're in February of 1963.

One day in the studio, probably while postponing doing some design work, I opened the book to page 789 which took me to February 3, 1969. February 3 is also my birthday, but not in 1969 as you know—I was born in 1984. On my birthday, 15 years prior to my birth, Jonas Mekas noted down the following:

This morning, walking crosstown, along 23rd Street,
I suddenly was stopped, I was stopped dead, by the
color of a small, red, tiny flower that I saw suddenly
before my eyes, and it was so very real, on a sunny hill,
and it was so red, so red. And I stood there, like an
idiot, remembering, a little red flower of my childhood,
of which even the name I have forgotten—but not its
color, its little leaves imprinted upon my eyes, upon my
memory. Then I recollected myself again, and
I continued walking.

Ok, it's getting late, I see the sun starting to set from my studio window in Tallinn. I'll head home; my dog Watson is probably waiting to go on our evening walk.

♪ Slippin' into the future, ♪

INDREK SIRKEL