

DEAR FRIEND,

Last year I hung out with a friend who I hadn't seen for a long time. We caught up by spending an afternoon taking a walk around Gleisdreieck park. As inevitably happens when two people who work too much in the cultural field meet, the conversation eventually turned to practice. We were expressing how tired we felt from juggling too much too fast, how it hurt the quality of the work we did, and how poor our work/life balance was. I wondered if there was ever going to be a moment when things might become manageable.

She told me that she recently realised she's a slow maker, and how important it's been for her to find ways of supporting it. If someone wants to work with her, they need to understand this before she can agree to collaborate. That means either inviting her earlier into a process, or giving her the time she needs to do the very good and thoughtful work she knows she would do. This resonated so much for me. I'm also a slow maker, and a slow learner, too. It takes a lot of time for me to do things well, and in a way that feels good for me, but rarely do I put myself in a position that acknowledges it, often leading to the very anxieties we discussed.

This morning I was reading from *The Undercurrents* by Kirsty Bell. In it she coincidentally spends a few pages writing about having once lived in front of Gleisdreieck, and the developments which led to it being the park it is now. Sometimes I think I might have too many books, at least for my pace of reading. But I like being able to pull one off the shelf and sit with it, reading only from a few pages or maybe a whole chapter, before putting it back. I might pick it up again later that day, or the next, or even a year from now—choosing instead to spend time with other books, also in a similar manner. It's not the most productive way to finish a book, but I have trouble holding attention, and I'm likely to miss what I'm reading if I go for too long with it.

A few years after finishing school, I started to miss the feeling of checking in with a classmate at their desk, sharing what we were up to in the hours outside of class. These felt like the moments where I learned the most. This led me to organising a series of small and informal talks from the living room of my apartment. At first we had an audience of five (including my two very accommodating roommates), but sometimes welcomed as many as 30 guests, some needing to stand out in the hallway. One of my favourites was a talk by Eliot Gisel and Nina Paim, sharing the first steps of research they were doing for an upcoming essay on school uniforms. It was scheduled on a busy evening, so only around six people came, but we still decided to squeeze together, all on one couch—some leaning over from behind—surrounding Nina's laptop as they showed us the bits and pieces they had gathered.

Now that I work as head of the new MA in graphic design at the Estonian Academy of Arts, we've been trying to find ways of bringing a similar spirit into the program. It hasn't been the easiest—there's so much of the institution that still needs navigating—but I think we've started to find a balance between the formal and informal. Spending an evening cooking

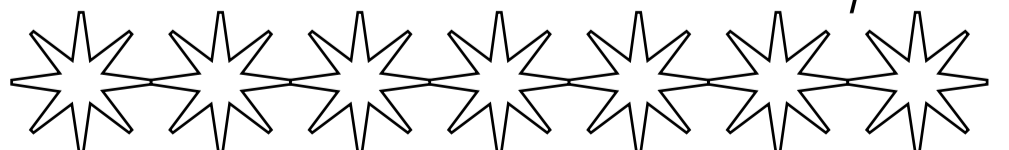
dinner together when a guest teacher visits has been a nice tradition so far. Another has been to organise a week-long residency for graduating students, in support of their thesis process—always hosted by a current student in their home country (Latvia and Iceland, so far). This gives everyone a chance to spend a week together, cooking meals, going for walks, and using the time to more slowly discuss the development of everyone's work away from the school, in a setting arranged by the students.

That reminds me, I just returned from a short trip to see *documenta fifteen* in Kassel. It's the mega-mega of the mega-art events, and one that traditionally takes itself very seriously. I'm normally suspicious of something so big, but also can't help but be curious about what happens when given the time and resources to make something at such a massive scale. This edition felt different though, it was under the direction of ruangrupa, a collective from Jakarta, who came with a decentralised approach—inviting a diverse group of collectives, who themselves were responsible for inviting more collectives, and so on, until over 1,500 artists were included.

There was an energy throughout the city, with many of the artists still present even weeks after the opening. That's because many spaces were less concerned about physical artefacts and more about supporting conditions for gathering, and spending time to share resources, services and knowledge. This included artists organising a communal kitchen and garden as a public meeting space, a full scale printing press to produce books for other artists, and even operating a daycare centre open everyday for the duration of the event. I had the sense that if you were to visit in July and later again in September that you might get a totally different experience from the last. While reading the exhibition guide, I found the curators describing this intention as *nongkrong*, an Indonesian slang term for "hanging out together."

What I like about hanging out is how flexible it is to facilitating different levels of engagement. It doesn't necessarily demand any one thing, but can support many things at once. It might end in a place completely different from where it started. Who and what is guiding might also change, and you can choose to be an active part in that or spend your time listening. It can be deeply intimate, or free for anyone to take part. You can come in for just a moment, spend hours highly involved, or continue to dip in and out as you please. It reminds me that what I like most about being a graphic designer is similar to being a good host: it's a way of inviting people into something, and letting them spend time with it at their own speed.

SO LETS HANG
 OUT SOON,



SEAN YENDRYYS