

I wanted to acknowledge that I am talking to you from what feels like a rare moment, where I'm not in the midst of or recovering from festival work. This means I'm able to speak from a place of reflection rather than the exhaustion so often felt. I am also talking from the position of being a programmer/curator of festivals, and as someone who attends them; both of which roles I will switch between as I speak.

The question that I have asked myself to guide this presentation is:

*What would it look like to implement rest and care within festival structures, from conception to production?*

I want to begin by sharing a little bit of my research into rest and care practices. For roughly the last 6 months, I have been thinking about radical rest practice in response to the almost continuous burnout I have experienced as a result of short term contracts, expectations to always be available (which doesn't account for the other freelance work or allowing a day off), outcome-driven pressures, and being brought into roles with a short turnaround.

I have come to realise that I have a general dislike for doing things that feel too fast, rather than what feels like the better and more obvious alternative: slow, considered and intentional.

Tricia Hersey started *The Nap Ministry* after she herself began experiencing symptoms of burnout whilst at university due to overworking. She started napping everywhere on campus as a result of this exhaustion, which led to better grades and overall wellness. In their own words, TNM says: *"We examine the liberating power of naps. We believe rest is a form of resistance & reparations. We install nap experiences."* Their Twitter and Instagram posts read like daily mantras and for a while, I treated them as such - reading their words every day to remind me to centre rest and to get off my laptop and go nap, or simply just do nothing. TNM centres on slowness as part of this rest practice *"Let slow research be a part of your deprogramming and healing."* they write. Time as care and care as time - specifically giving *more* time (to deadlines, to people, to everything). Could we also embed slow practices at festivals as part of this resting philosophy?

The first time I encountered slow programming was the 2021 edition of the Artists' Moving Image Festival GIVE BIRTH TO ME TOMORROW, programmed by Adam Benmakhlouf and Tako Taal, with screenings popping up at what felt like random times, they had scheduled the programme to follow the lunar calendar across the year. The curators wrote *"We wanted to move slowly. We want the programme to allow for breathing room. We wanted to avoid the fatigue that often comes with the overwhelming*

*sensation that a festival can leave you with. And so that 'gave birth', as it were, to the form and expanding the festival over the course of a year. We are asking you to take responsibility as an audience, to watch these works energetically, to expend your energy and to think of new ways to be with the screen. We recognise that this can be tiring, as these things often are, but we hope that it will be as rewarding an experience as it was for us to programme the festival and bring this thinking to you."* This overwhelming sensation and fatigue they speak of are felt by both curator and festival-goer. Festivals all too often resemble a rush to consume as much in the given time as possible, often only a few days, with audiences facing pressures to experience everything, whilst inevitably having to miss out on something. I attended the Alchemy Film & Arts Festival at the end of April. Across the 4 days, they scheduled one programme screening at a time - something I hadn't seen before. This meant it was actually possible to attend every screening without any clashes as they only had 3-5 screenings a day which included rest breaks after each programme had finished. By curating programmes that centred on slowness, both the Artists' Moving Image Festival and Alchemy created a rest and care practice for their audiences.

And when do we know when to give *more* time to something or to simply choose rest instead? Jess Brough, Founder and Director of Fringe of Colour and Fringe of Colour Films did just that when they announced that Fringe of Colour will have an intermission for 2022. They write: *We will be back when we are rested, when we have had time to consider the direction of the work, when we have given ourselves time to work on and finish other projects, and when we have reacquainted ourselves with a summer uncharacterised by intensive labour. We want to see the sunshine!* Jess' brave decision to prioritise their own practice and the rest of the Fringe of Colour team - including myself - in favour of delivering a festival speaks to the ways that overwork and the demand of festivals will often burn us out, meaning our other passion projects - and sometimes our lives - are put on hold. Jess is generously giving *more* time to herself, to their team, and to Fringe of Colour to evolve through rest.

Finally, I want to consider collaboration as a form of rest and care specifically within my own personal work with festivals. When Tomiwa Folorunso reached out to me to co-produce a programme with her for Glasgow Film Festival 2021 - I was initially hesitant. Working on my own was too familiar, but we both quickly realised that due to our other commitments, if we were going to work with GFF it would only be feasible as a joint endeavour. Collaborating with Tomiwa on several festival projects since early 2021 has shown me that collaboration is a caring practice, that shared labour is a practice of care, not only for the person you're working with but also for yourself. In turn, we have been able to create ambitious programmes and projects that would be unimaginable if working alone.

Choosing rest is certainly not easy - it is a practice that requires its own frequent practicing as an unlearning of capitalistic systems that are constantly asking more of us. But through prioritising rest we can more easily develop a philosophy of care. Rest is essential for creativity and imagination to flourish, and as put by The Nap Ministry *“rest allows space to invent”*. Centring rest and care can surely only lead to the sustainability of festivals for those who work within their structures and those who attend them. This is not just personal - it is a collective effort where decision-makers must also implement and encourage rest practices into their organisational structures. By cultivating a slow practice, overwork can be prevented in all its many forms, with the potential to generate better festivals and experiences for all.