

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

Definition: *the temporary cessation of most vital functions without death, as in a dormant seed or a hibernating animal.*

For a few weeks in August and July of 2020, I'd leave the house at around 8pm, armed with my camera and a mask. For an hour, I'd drive around, occasionally snapping pictures from my car window. Due to the lockdowns and quarantines, I often felt as if I were living in a ghost town.

But in some ways, we've been social distancing for years. Studies have linked social media to an increase in loneliness and social isolation; ironic, since the apparent goal of social media was to bring people together.

"Ghosting" – "the act or practice of abruptly cutting off all contact with someone" – has become a part of our everyday vocabulary. And "automation" was a major theme of the 2020 U.S. presidential primaries. So perhaps our present experiment in social distancing is simply a trial run for the inevitable.

But is this *entirely* a bad thing? Social distancing guidelines, when and where followed, were likely the only thing shielding us from an even greater catastrophe. Isolations and lockdowns can sometimes prove beneficial, especially for those of a more introverted disposition. And having things delivered is certainly convenient, though it's often a luxury reserved for the privileged.

These are surreal times. Some days it feels as if we're in a state of suspended animation. Hopefully these photos are evocative of this, or that they offer my fellow distancers something to look at as we to ride this thing out.

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