



Across Total Running Time: A Dispatch

Josephine Sales

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Through Securus Technologies—the second-largest prison telecommunications company in the United States, whose name derives from the Latin *securus* (“without care”)—a fifteen-minute telephone call is the maximum permitted duration for communication between an incarcerated person and the free world. A pre-recorded telephone operator dominates the call, enforcing its tone and interrupting with constant reminders that the line is surveilled, while steadily counting down the remaining time. In 2015, Securus recorded over 70 million phone calls made within prisons across 37 states over a two-and-a-half-year period (Smith and Lee 2015). In 2021, it entered into a partnership with Amelia, a self-described “advanced” conversational AI and digital workforce company. The collaboration was promoted as a way to better serve incarcerated individuals through digital, real-time service support. This partnership extends the lifecycle of these recordings beyond their immediate function as communication between loved ones, as well as between incarcerated people and their legal counsel—calls that are legally protected as confidential. Framed as a service enhancement, the partnership transformed the collection of recorded conversations into training data for automated systems, adding a new layer of value extraction to a communication system that already profits from charging inflated rates. Each

fifteen-minute call generates revenue through multiple channels at the same time, functioning simultaneously as a conversation, a monitored record, training data, and a commercial commodity (O'Donnell 2025).

I was made to interface with Securus by way of an inside-outside reading group that began within a state penitentiary during the COVID-19 pandemic and the George Floyd uprisings, when the entanglement of illness, confinement, racialized violence, and state power became acutely visible. Through a sustained relationship of mutual care and study with a person serving life without parole¹ who was seeking compassionate release, I came to understand this condition as “death-by-incarceration:” the indefinite postponement of release that turns life into suspended time. Because direct contact was not possible, our exchange unfolded through mediated forms—telephone calls, letters, shared clippings, images, and books—all of which were subject to monitoring. Letters traveled to a third state where they were scanned, printed, and delivered as duplicates, and contact remained exceedingly limited. While we prepared a presentation together for an art and law conference at UCLA, the total running time of the fifteen-minute call made visible how duration itself becomes a site of extraction and value production.

¹ David Dawud Lee was a writer, mentor, organizer, activist, and friend. He died by incarceration in February 2024 after spending thirty-six years under a life without parole (LWOP) sentence. He lived with sarcoidosis. Despite repeated denials of parole, he was scheduled for a clemency review hearing the day after his death. The installation is dedicated to Lee's work to end life without parole sentences—what he described as death by incarceration.



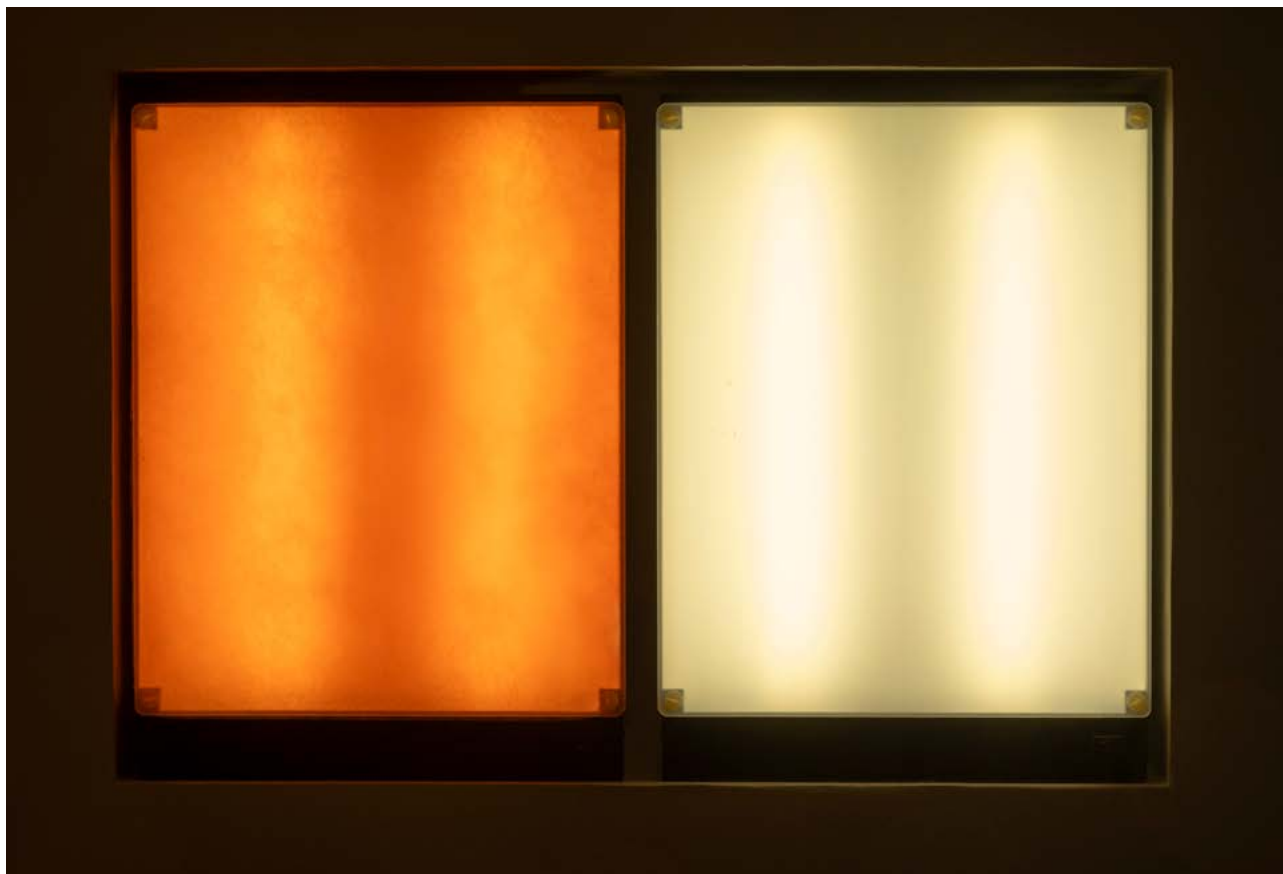


Fig. 1: Josephine Sales, image of *Day for Night*, part of the installation *Total Running Time* (2023/2026).

Total Running Time is an installation that examines time as an infrastructure, exploring how delay and duration shape experiences of disability and debility. Across four works—*Rescue*, *Pulses*, *Day for Night*, and *Total Running Time Site*—the installation experiments with clocks, architectural interventions, projected light, sonic vibrations and distribution.

*Rescue*² presents the word “SECURE” as a life-sized plaster wall relief. In its first two iterations, the same letters were arranged first as “RESCUE” and later as “SECURE.” What does disability reveal about time when security, too, is continually rearranged and crisis is no longer understood as an exceptional event, but as ongoing?

*Pulses*³ is a sonic composition built from recordings of the prison telecommunications operator. Vibrating through transducers em-

bedded within the gallery walls, it permeates a three-walled corner of the gallery, layering surveillance announcements, dial tones, mechanical ventilation, vocal elocution exercises repeating “perfect,” a sine wave, an a cappella rendition of the song *Unchained Melody*, and the Securus’s digital chatbot Amelia, repeatedly failing to define “care.” Periodic reminders that the telephone line is being surveilled punctuate the composition while counting down the remaining call duration.

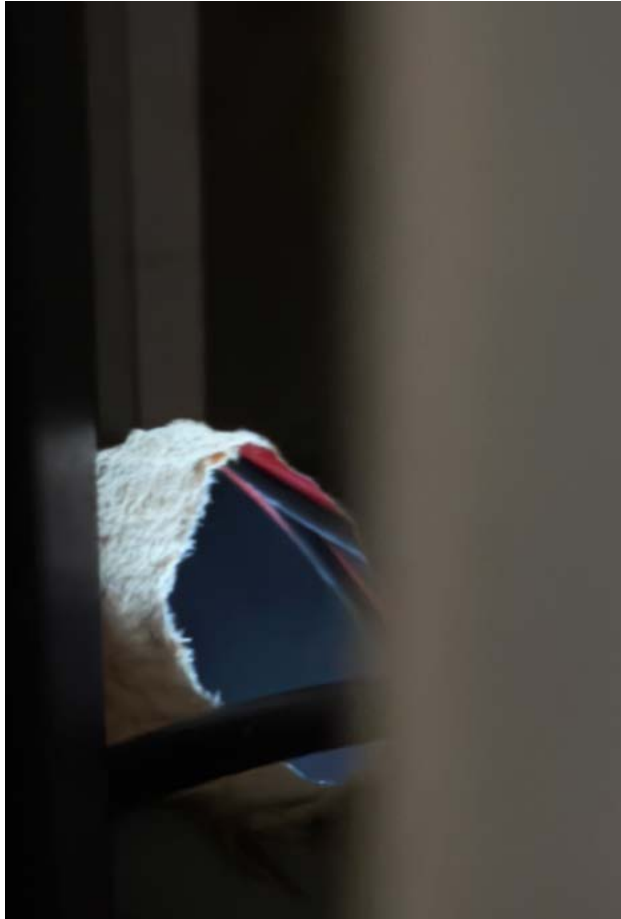
Centered within the vibrations of the sonic wall, *Day for Night*⁴ is a time-based light installation displayed within a recessed niche. Through an artificial window prepared with 5,000 K circadian optic light panels—typically used to simulate daylight—and polyester filters, it produces a perpetual day. Programmed on security timers, one panel

2 *Rescue*, 2023/2026. Plaster wall relief, MDF, paint (variable) 152 cm × variable length.

3 *Pulses*, 2023. Digital audio, surface and tactile transducers. Total running time: 15 minutes.

4 *Day for Night*, 2023. Two 5000 K circadian optic light panels, security timers, polyester film filters; 43 × 66 cm.

runs continuously while the other activates once each hour, creating simultaneous experiences of uninterrupted and intermittent duration. Between these competing temporalities, distinctions between day and night, work and rest, never fully settle. Yet, behind their artificial glow, an aperture remains—a small opening to the outside.



Total Running Time Site,⁵ the fourth work in the installation, is an experiment in distribution. The exhibiting institution temporarily hosts a URL within its own domain, making digital iterations of the works available beyond the exhibition while remaining bound to a fixed duration.

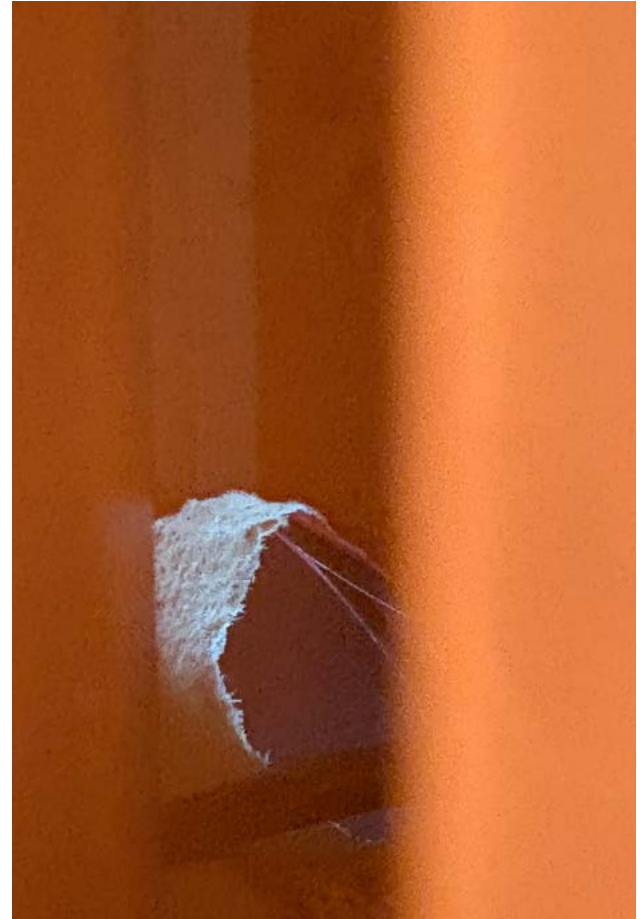


Fig. 2-3: Josephine Sales, detail views of *Day for Night*, showing wiring emerging from a conduit between the light panels and the exterior-facing window. Part of the installation *Total Running Time* (2023/2026).

Infrastructure is often understood in spatial terms, as the systems and institutions that sustain everyday life: roads, bridges, railways, power grids, dams, pipelines, schools, hospitals, prisons, archives, cemeteries, and logistics. They organize movement, distribute resources and connect people, goods and information across space. What begins to surface through the prison telephone call, however, is another dimension of infrastructure: a temporal structure that or-

ganizes access, communication, and duration. It structures the running of time, determining who waits, who moves, whose future is deferred and whose time can be monetized.

Political theorist and historian Timothy Mitchell argues that infrastructure derives its power from its capacity to defer the future. It is an apparatus that captures time, stretching processes so that value, legitimacy, and dependency accumulate through delay. As these arrangements become

5 *Total Running Time Site*, 2023. Time limited digital work <https://trt.beallcenter.uci.edu>.

embedded in the everyday, they come to appear as conditions of life rather than economic strategies (Mitchell 2020; see also Vishmidt 2021). What kinds of endurance do these temporal infrastructures demand? Within disabled communities and disability studies, the concept of “crip time” has challenged the assumption that time unfolds through a single, normative chronology. Alison Kafer describes it as a way of experiencing time that is flexible, relational, and resistant to the demands of productivity and linear progress (Kafer 2013).

Total Running Time as an installation presents temporal experience not as an individual attribute but as a structural condition: a way of living time under systems that distribute access unevenly and often render survival dependent on accommodation, care, or institutional control. In particular, it resonates with Jasbir Puar’s notion of “debility”—which names the slow wearing down of bodies and populations through incarceration, colonial violence, environmental harm, and austerity (Russell 2001; Puar 2017). Puar’s account of “prognosis time” similarly frames time as a horizon organized by uncertainty, shortened futures, and the anticipation of loss—a temporal condition that permeates the installation. Through this lens, crip time refers not just to flexibility or slowness, but to a state of dependency and endurance within systems that profit from delay and allow no space for mourning.

Disabled people take on a form of economic life channeled through institutions that transform dependency, care, treatment, and maintenance into sites of accumulation. Lives that are neither fully abandoned nor fully incorporated into productive labour are sustained through carceral cells and hospital beds, life-without-parole sen-

tences, pharmaceutical dependencies produced through long-term treatment, assistive technologies, MedTech (Ní Fheorais 2026, 17), care institutions, and administrative systems. Because these arrangements organize life through duration, “labour time” becomes legible here as a durational regime. As Marta Russell argues, disabled people excluded from wage labor continue to serve capitalist accumulation through other means; institutionalization becomes a “corporate solution to disablement,” (Russell 2019, 5) made profitable through public financing and the steady circulation of revenue. It follows that duration is not neutral: it is managed, priced, and extracted; yet temporal infrastructures organize more than extraction. What they make perceptible are not only systems of extraction but also the fragile relations that continue to emerge within them.

Writing from within what he calls “parallel time,” Palestinian political prisoner, Walid Daqqa⁶ describes how ordinary objects—a lighter, a packet of cigarettes, a small opening in a wall—become charged with memory and anticipation. They attach the present to a future in which such things may once again become ordinary. Parallel time is a temporal condition produced through captivity in which the future can no longer be inhabited in ordinary ways. He shows how such regimes reorganize not only the future but attention itself. A hole in the cell door becomes a site of study, speculation, and relation. Cracks become apertures for what leaks through them: sound, memory, longing, and the possibility of elsewhere.

Who would understand that dialogue replete with fervor, with emotion, with interruption and description as if it were a conversation on the topic of heaven and its door and not on the cell and

⁶ “Walid Daqqa (July 18, 1961–April 7, 2024) was a Palestinian philosopher, political theorist, author, and armed resistance fighter who was imprisoned for thirty-eight years, the longest serving Palestinian prisoner in Israeli jails. From prison, he wrote a number of books including, *The Tale of the Secrets of Oil*, *Fusion of Consciousness*, and *A Parallel Time*. Daqqa died in prison, succumbing to a rare form of bone cancer which was exacerbated by medical negligence and torture of the Israeli Prison Service. He has not been given a proper burial as his body continues to be retained by the Security Cabinet of Israel at the time of this publication.” (Eldin Hussein in Daqqa 2025).

its holes? [...] We are a part of history, and history—as it is well known—is a condition and an action in the past. Except us: we are a past continuous and neverending. We address you all from it presently, so that it does not become your future (Daqqa 2025, 5).

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PROJECTS
& ABSTRACTS

