

SPLENDOUR IN THE GRASS

By Hana Yoo

“Cows are efficient machines for the transformation of grass into milk [...]. Man may not recognize his own project in the cow, he may forget that the cow is the result of his manipulation of reality according to his own model, and accept the cow as something that is somehow a ‘given’.”
– Vilém Flusser.”

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The project started with inspiration from an experiment conducted on cattle at a dairy farm in Moscow, showing them a virtual image of peaceful grassland on a cow-customized VR headset. The article that describes this experiment implies the VR experiment reduces the anxiety of cows and has shown a possible increase in milk production.

The utilization of technical apparatus in the welfare of both humans and animals have different purposes, e.g., cows for milk and meat production – humans for improving their quality of life. However, the subject-object relationship in the scientific experiment has strong similarities in the dynamic between the political system and the people. The assumption that presenting utopian images will reduce anxiety connects to the sovereign control of mental health and female reproductive labor being the ultimate catalysis for capitalism.

With various purposes, the endeavor to change perspective and overcome the boundary of visual perception has been technologically achieved, for instance in VR. However, it simultaneously reveals numerous limitations that oversimplify the individual's experience and relationship to their environment, along with not taking into account the psychological implications in their entirety. How could one embrace the complexity while detouring from the idea of "self"? Inspired by children's stories and human-animal metamorphosis in mythologies, the

film and installation² take an extremely exaggerated anthropomorphic view of non-humans, which paradoxically reveal the position of humans to widen perceptions, whilst confronting limitations. The diagram shown here is an offspring of the multi-channel installation, ontologically investigating the cow as "apparatus" (Vilém Flusser) in the industrial processes of objectification.

Quote title page: Vilém Flusser, *Natural Mind* (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013), pp. 43ff.

2 "Splendour in the grass", 4K, color, stereo, 17:17 mins. (2020); "Highly comport, oddly anxious", 3D graphic meadow, color, 4 channel sound, 3 mins. (2020); <https://yoohana.net>.

