

# Veal

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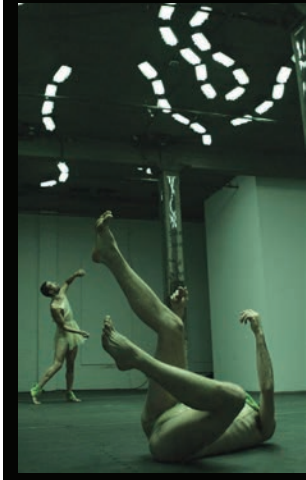
Our 2013 installation—performance work, *Veal*, addresses the life cycle of industrial food animals, mapping the broader ecological implications of industrialized meat production. *Veal* sought to make visible the industrial logics of food-animal production, which extend from concentrated-animal-feeding-operations (CAFOs) to slaughterhouses to supermarkets.

In multiple installations that integrated sound and dance, *Veal* focused on the dramatic constraints imposed on the animal to create the meat product: the young animal is raised in a crate, the dimensions of which prohibit movement—so as to inhibit the development of musculature that would detract from the tenderness of its flesh—while being nourished on a milk diet to maintain the meat’s pale color.

*Veal* derives a counterfactual from these difficult facts: if food animals are inevitably constrained by human technologies, how might animal life be designed so that meat-production becomes more “humane”? The narrative of *Veal* proposed a technological investment in reduced suffering. The work envisioned an environment for a genetically modified livestock, and in doing so proposed a network of installations that also doubled as musical instruments, to engage its audience despite the difficulty of its subject matter.

The overall assemblage of five installations occupied some 5,000 square feet, and created a network in which performers, audience members and designed objects could interact. We conceived of the installations as manifestations of system of control, onto which we mapped the steps in the processing of food animals. For example, the in-vitro fertilization that serves as an origin for these animals guided the way we threaded 3D-printed elements in the form of blastocysts onto taut piano wires strung on eight-foot steel frames; these blastocyst forms served the musicians as frets for the stringed instrument, and, when lit from above, projected shadows that resembled an array of embryos in petri dishes. The second installation centered around the bagpipe, an instrument traditionally made from animal skin or intestines and animated by breath. Twelve veal-white creatures, their legs sunk into translucent resin blocks and set into a stainless steel grid stood two feet above the gallery floor. Appearing uniform, the bagpipe creatures comprised many different elements and fabrication techniques: head and legs were 3D-printed and attached to a milled foam body; a vinyl tube ran from a bagpipe chanter in the mouth, through the body and down one leg, connecting to multiple sets of bellows. The forms of these veal creatures spoke to an internalized constraint, with bodies configured tightly with respect to one another in the installation grid.

During the performances, as the sounds of the lyre and bagpipes intermingled with voices of the singers, the audience became immersed within an aural and visual landscape. We designed a loose network in which animal content and audience could interact, so that the press of bodies in and against things reverberated with the work’s content. The uncanniness of such designed “things” reminds us that the worlds for which we design are bristling with hybrid forms of life, worthy of curiosity, interest and tenderness.



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