How do you feel?

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It's a mistake to think that Jennet Thomas's eye-boggling, comic, sinister, techno-folkloric videos are 'about' something. They are, but it does them an injustice to say that they're about nothing new. Set in motion by some recognisable bit of subject-matter, Thomas's narrative spins kaleidoscopically, ideas tumbling out, other ideas spooling out of those. At Tintype, the first two parts of a projected trilogy are present – 2005's *Animal Condensed: Animal Expanded #1*, and 2008's *Animal Condensed: Animal Expanded #2*, shown on monitor and projection screen respectively.

What these are 'about' is something to do with animal life and technologies. In the arid, black-and-white-striped virtual landscape of #1 (echoed in the decor Thomas has conceived for the gallery), we find a forlorn, oversize humanoid chicken figure in dialogue with a faceless entity dressed in a sort of primitivist wicker cage. Chicken explains its misery to this being – which calls itself Authenticity Fetish – through gesture and halting subtitles. Among signs of hanging chicken carcasses streaming endlessly along industrial conveyors, it communicates that it is suffering from "Animal Expanded", its true 'animal' nature corrupted, "animal enhanced... animal suspended... animal abstracted". Cut versions of Chicken warp, collapse and melt like "animal cake". Anticlimax from thin, it's plausible.

What to make of this? Beyond animal rights or intensive farming, Chicken is the victim of a situation in which materiality, or the distinctness of an object or being, seems to be unravelling, dislocated from its original identity. If animals appear as the ostensible subject, it might be because their industrialisation serves as metaphor for the loss of an original behind the systematics mediation and unmooring of reality that now defines networked digital culture.

It's this opposition, between the virtual and the material, that really drives Thomas's hallucinatory, spiralling narrative. So *Animal Condensed: Animal Expanded #2* takes us into the midcentury modern lifestyle interior of an urbanite male, who explains, in tones at once measured and evangelical, the benefits of his family's ingestion of a course of "Animal Condensed". This neoliberal paterfamilias is the epitome of means-ends rationality. "My family is an indoor harvest," he declares, smugly. "We are self-improving systems." His young daughter, meanwhile, plays iPad games in which pigeons proliferate digitally and Peppa Pig has her teeth extracted.

#2 unpacks the idea that human identity and self-presence are embodied, and that this corporeal and cognitive site is threatened, invaded and expropriated by instrumental, economic power. It's also a return, of sorts, to Hito Steyerl's influential 2012 essay "How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational Film about Felini's "Fellini Satyricon""). And as relentlessly narrow meditation on the politics of visibility in the age of digital surveillance, Thomas robs Steyerl's video of various elements – the catactonic male-female voice-synthesised narrators, the face-recognition disruption patterns and calibration targets – and hands them to a female antagonist, a dystopian freedom-fighter who, dressed in leaf camouflage and hiding in the forest, explains how she evaded those who want to impose "Animal Expanded" on everyone, after the "acceptance vote".

Thomas's critical skill lies in how her fabula – fashioned, stream-of-consciousness-style, out of the detritus of pop-cultural neologism – lies everyday experience, through their use of the bizarre, to far bigger political and philosophical questions. Part of that skill is to do with how half-recognised elements from our current social and psychic landscape wander in and out, triggering connections: taking the Donald Trump rubber mask offered to it by Authenticity Fetish, Chicken pulls from the mask's mouth a strip of paper, on which is scrawled 'complexity is fraud'. But complexity is what is most needed right now. Authenticity is – a hanker after the simple, the back-to-basics and the materially unadulterated – are indeed fetishtic reactions to the obliterating indifference of the networked world, but it's a retreat. Thomas refuses to take sides with. What instead comes through is more simplistic, an insinuation about relinquishing active, collective human agency – in the guerrilla's fractured near-future syntax, "expel fake animal, renew the face."