

*a dog dreams (of god)*

John Sanborn

4 channel video and sound installation



Produced in cooperation with the **ZKM** | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe

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Your needs are simple. You eat, you shit, you bark, you sleep, you crave attention – and you dream. Forget about politics, money, war, racism – all the worries of the modern world.

You are a dog.

Your routine provides freedom, a rhythm of essentials, with the purity of chasing after scents opening your imagination to possibilities. Your heart leaps at the sound of the key in the door, you salivate when the box of treats shakes, and you curl up next to your human in return for your unquestioned love.

As you sleep, do you dream?

Of course, you do. You review the actions of your day, hunt for the things you treasure, and infuse the sensations of your animal world with a weaponized whimsy. You enjoy joy. In your dreams are life's pleasures, refusing to be defined. But dreams contain things you fear, objects that confuse, and a sense that there exists something else beyond your dreams. Something larger than yourself, your nose and tail, and your backyard. This nags at you, but you roll over and continue to dream. Humans speak to you and their repeated sounds trigger responses, but when they dip down to give you a kiss, you are confused. Their affection is clear, but language is untranslatable. For a moment you think in terms of scale, but you roll on your back for a tummy rub.

Your world is constructed from impulses, yet somehow you feel the pull of a larger undertaking, a greater presence. You feel there are forces controlling you, connecting you, but still your immediate needs outweigh these melancholy sensations. In uncertain times, in a toxic world - not of your creation, you live to escape.

Our relationship to animals is complex and fraught with anthropomorphic intensity. We are especially attached to the charisma and dignity of dogs, and we project human traits on their nuanced exhibitions. Do they do the same to us? Do they reverse the anthropomorphic process, by giving us animal voices and traits? If we elevate them to human status, do they meet us at their level? They must. We bred them from wolves to pets – so their unquestionable loyalty and unconditional love transcends the scale and profundity of the human condition.

Is there a lesson for us here? Maybe so.

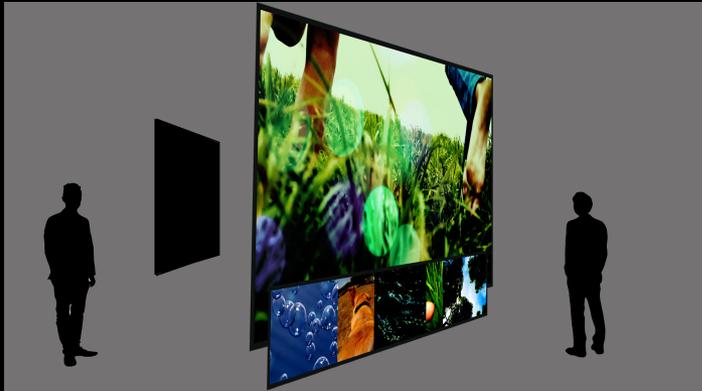
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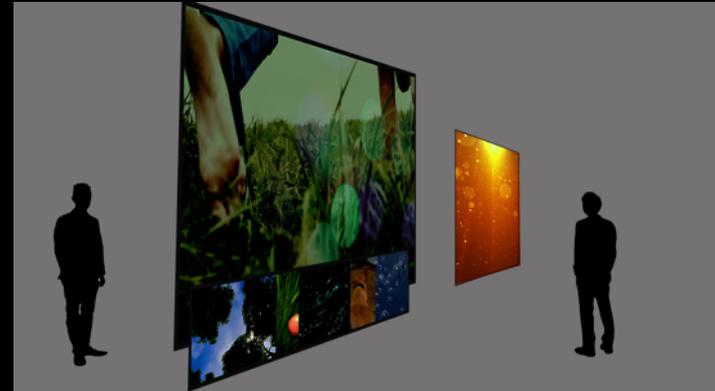
*a dog dreams of god* is an abstract meditation on the nature of animals, and the animal nature of humans. There is liberation in the margins, as the specter of a supreme consciousness hovers over a romp in the park.

The installation consists of two video projectors and one 52" LCD screen. Video is front projected on two shaped screens, across which is stretched semi-opaque projection screen material. On the other side of this arrangement this hangs an LCD monitor, motivating viewers to walk around the work to find the hidden secrets of animal deity.

Frontside



Backside



As dogs feel what we think, their responses to the world are by nature non-verbal and highly physical *a dog dreams (of god)* incorporates an aromatic scent machine to bring the smells of nature into the gallery. The device is triggered by the video playback, injecting four distinct fragrant moods that shift over the course of play. The soundtrack for *a dog dreams (of god)* will be composed by long time Sanborn collaborator, **David Van Tieghem**. There will be no music, instead Van Tieghem will orchestrate a collection of natural sounds, tuned and modified human voices, and a symphony of barks yips and howls.

