HAE YOUNG, JI

2021 Portfolio

Circling of Life

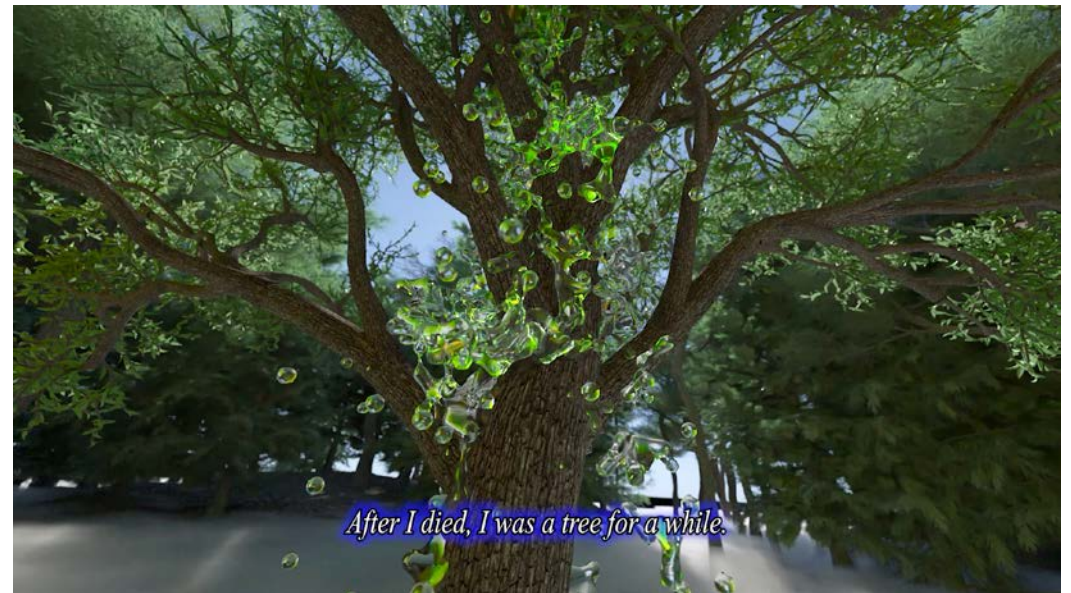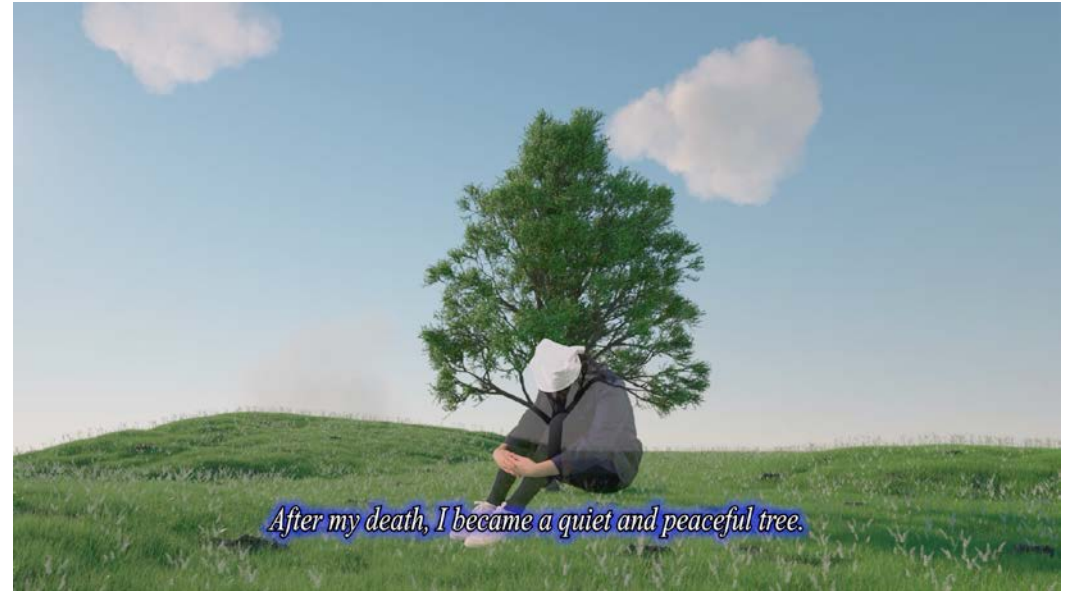2021   Video

Video duration: 10min 55sec

The protagonist is a 16-year-old female factory worker in South Korea in the 1970s. She comes to the city from the poor countryside and works in a textile factory. However, she suffers from extremely long working hours and harsh work environments. The protagonist and her friends struggle against such an environment. During the process, she died. After the death, she became a quiet and peaceful tree. In 2020, she is born again as a human after hearing the sound of the song she was singing in the past. The place was above the clouds where she fell asleep last time. In 2020, she works for a platform company *Circle Time*. The company works 24 hours a day to create a perfect circle. The platform company provides two kinds of services. *24Hour Service* provides 24 hours awake human intelligence rental service. *Free-Time Service* provides services that lend human attention during free time. When the protagonist works, trees grow on the clouds. When she grows the trees all over the clouds, she could be a real tree again. So she works joyfully.

    The work contains the modern history of South Korea. After World War II, Korea became independent from Japan's colonial rule. South Korea has developed rapidly based on the manual labor of workers and an inexpensive workforce in the 70s. And the story deals with the changes in labor from past to present platform labor and asks its meaning and state. Also, the human who continues to reincarnate as trees and human shows the conflict between the different definitions of a human being. In traditional Asian cultures, humans are defined as a part of nature, but in modern times humans are used as a component of a capitalistic society.

    It is a video of the story expanded from previous work, *Circle Time* (2019). The video uses historical material from the musical *Light of a Factory* created by the South Korean labor movement in the 1970s. The video shows the trees, forests, and the world above the clouds, made in 3D rendering. My previous work, the website *Circle Time* (2019), is also used as a material.

Video   https://vimeo.com/513063963

So we fought for a humane working environment.

After my death, I became a quiet and peaceful tree.

This place is above the clouds where I fell asleep last time.

After I died, I was a tree for a while.

Video still 3

Writing Future Scenario:
Platform Desert II

2020   Digital animation

Video duration: 14min 8sec

The video is based on the scenario from previous work *Writing future scenario—Platform Desert I* (2019).

The video depicts people trapped and works in the *Platform Desert* in 2040. Inside the *Platform Desert*, time is endless, and people endlessly repeat the labor that they do not know purposes. They have an unstable job and live a life controlled by the *Platform Desert*. People suffer a decrease in memory function caused by the lack of sleep, segmented work, and always-connected Internet environment. They have a fear that their mind is being automated.

The protagonist is an activist and also a platform worker. He recalls *Lao Tzu*'s words that the world is made up of a relationship, so it is temporal, then creates a program to counter this situation. The protagonist uses technology to respond to the helplessness from the environment in which technology evolves. He makes programs using *BCI* (Brain-Computer Interface) technology that is already widely used due to excessive competition in the future. The program reads and saves numerous thoughts of the user and provide them to the user. It helps users be aware of the subjectivity of mind, and expand their thinking.

The story tracks the expectation and fears we have about the future and imagines if we can react to it. The video is a mixture of fictional narrative, developed future predictions by experts, and technology companies' promotional videos.

The story is based on the worldview of a philosopher *Lao Tzu* that accepts external changes as it is and seeks continuous response to the changes. The images of nature, such as desert and water, still appears as a powerful composition of the world in the future of *Platform Desert*, which is structured by technology. It reflects *Lao Tzu*'s philosophy which says that we need to imitate nature as a way of life. Overall, the images of the video depict the conflict between nature and technology.
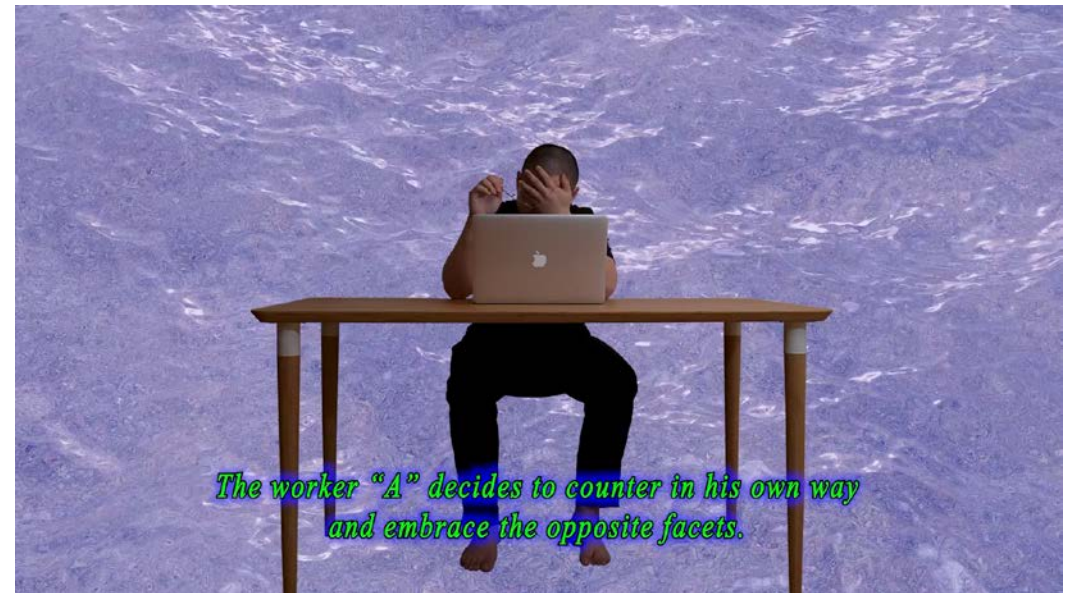
Video [https://vimeo.com/513074294]

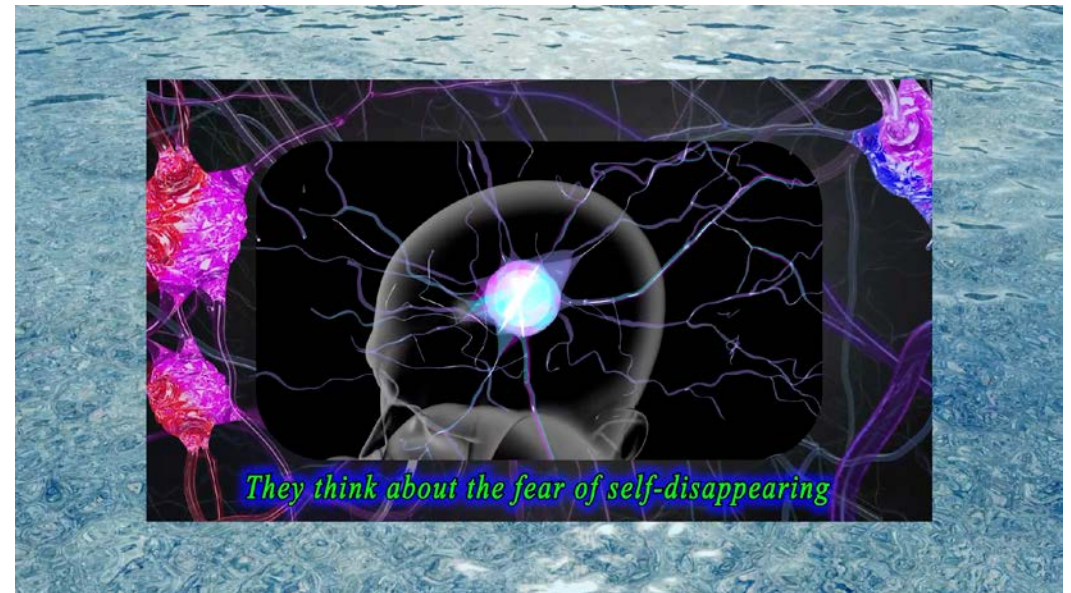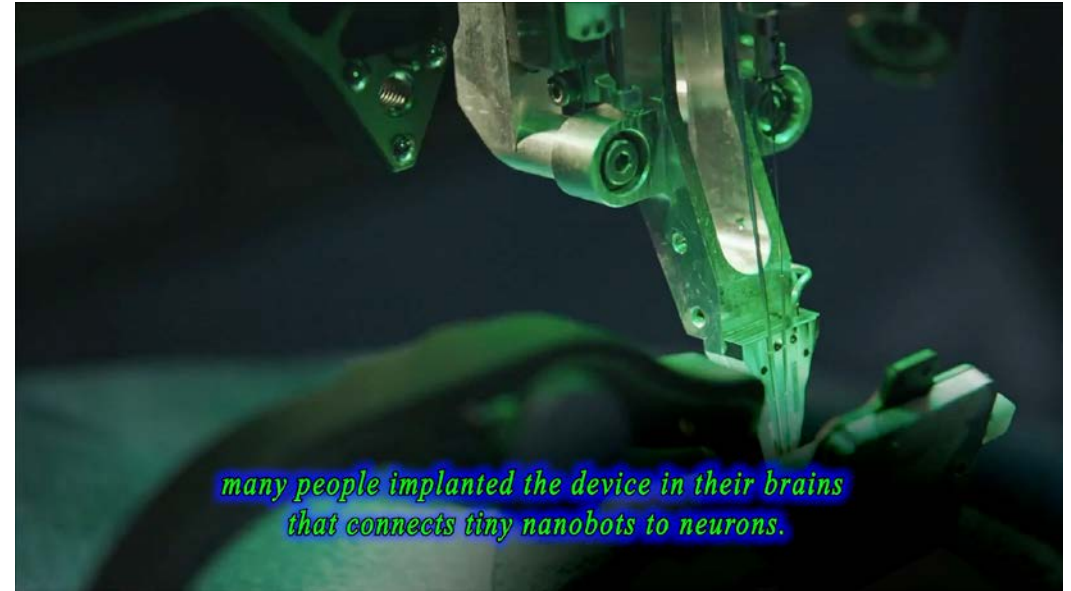People endlessly repeat the labor that they do not aware of the purpose,

resting in real nature, regular sleep, and real dreams
away from Platform Desert have become a luxurious value.

It is uncertain. But the world is consists of the relation of things.

The worker "A" decides to counter in his own way
and embrace the opposite facets.

Many people equipped Brain-Computer Interface to create and maintain themselves in the best and most up-to-date state.

many people implanted the device in their brains that connects tiny nanobots to neurons.

It records the imaginations and hopes about the future that flash across people's minds but immediately disappeared.

They think about the fear of self-disappearing

Writing Future Scenario:
Platform Desert I

2019

Text: future scenario
A series of 8 images in total

Text on the screen
Printed image installation

Printed image: 40x60cm

It is an SF future scenario and an image series about the work, time, and life in 2040 South Korea. In the future, *Platform Desert* became the standard for a new working environment. Most people work on the *Platform Desert* every day. They are non-regular workers and work for long hours and are separated from the real world. They suffer from a lack of time and a decrease in memory function. They have a fear that they are disappearing.

A protagonist faces the fear and helplessness of the rapidly changing technology environment. And the protagonist tries to counter this situation. To do that, he creates programs using *BCI* (Brain-Computer Interface), a technology that is already widely used in the future and distributes it to people. Users use the program to look back on their thoughts and times that have already passed. Some users expand their thinking with it and combine with AI agents to become human-AI philosophers.

Today, there is a strong prevalent sense that the future is already decided. This practice writes my own future scenario to question the dominant feeling. The future scenario was written in fiction, based on expert predictions and research on future technology and labor. Through this process, the work explores the space between the promise of the better tomorrow given by technology and the overwhelmingness it provides. Also, the work explores the danger of dependencies on the technological environment and deal with regaining control of one's subjectivity.

The image series visualizes the future scenario. The images convey the feeling of living on a platform. Also, the images explore the visual contrast between virtual space and nature elements.

Future Scenario

1. In 2040

Environment

It is South Korea in 2040. People have been waiting for the passage of the basic income bill by the government and congress for ten years, but it still seems a long way off. People work longer or stay awake longer than ever before. The BCI (Brain-Computer Interface), which connects people's brains and the Internet directly, has developed so rapidly. Many people's brains are connected directly to the Internet. The brains are also connected to the sensors for the Artificial Intelligence of Thing. People have already become part of the city nodes. No one lacks information anymore.

Work: Platform Desert

Most people except the very few owners of platforms, access, and work on the platform every day. It is called the Platform Desert. The Informational Oasis that floods with overflowing information did not replace the labor in the Platform Desert. Inside the Platform Desert, time is endless. People endlessly repeat the work that they do not aware of the purpose. People sell all their abilities in the form that buyers want. The worker's mind condition is checked with a sensor. When the sun goes down on each one's Platform Desert, people realize it is the time to go to bed without knowing the time of the real world. The life of working in Platform Desert flows regardless of the actual time in the real world.

Life: Memory and fear

As most people work in the Platform Desert, rest in nature and regular sleep independent of the Platform Desert has become a luxury value. People hope that by 2050, when AI massively replace white-collar work, the government will inevitably pass the basic income plan, and everyone can begin the life of luxury communism. But right now, people's memory function is declining. They can not remember themselves and their daily life well. The internet environment, which is always connected, had a significant impact on memory loss. Irregular sleep caused by Platform Desert hinders memory formation and information linkage. While doing purposeless and fragmented labor in the Platform Desert, people forget who they are. People fear that they are disappearing.

2. BCI Program

Responding to fear

A who is an activist, an artist, and a programming worker in the Platform Desert is in fear. He feels a loss of memory and the fear of self-disappearing. One day he decides to do things for others, not clients. He made up his mind to create a new BCI program against the situation.

He created a new program by combining his ability with information from the Information Oasis that is always connected. The program uses the BCI that most people are already equipped with. In 2040, many people equipped BCI to create and maintain themselves in the best and most up-to-date state. After the emergence of the technology of inserting a device into the brain in minutes using a sewing robot, many people implanted the device in their brains that connect tiny nanobots to neurons. With BCI, people can download every information and knowledge in real-time directly to their brains, and can send thoughts and commands from the brain to external. The program of A uses the implant interface device. Those who do not have an implant can wear a non-invasive EEG cap that measures blood flow. Based on those devices and brain decoding technology, the program reads electrical signals from neurons, or figure out brain activity by the change of blood flow.

Capturing the time, Extending human

The program of A reads and records the user's thinking, memory, and dream. The program reads and saves the user's thought while the user is awake, and records the user's dream while the user sleeps. The program keeps tracking the thoughts that pass by while they are laboring. It records the imaginations and hopes about the future, which flash across people's minds but immediately disappeared. It records the stray thoughts of a very short break that people consume on the platform when they are not laboring. It records dreams that unconsciously reflect the experience of the day. All the thoughts, memory, emotion, and dreams are saved and accumulated. And the program provides the accumulated records to the users visually. The record is based on the actual time in the real world, not based on the time of Platform Desert, where the user stays most of the time. By using the program, individuals can collect and see pieces of their thoughts that have passed. With the program, people try to defragment pieces of their internal memory and unconsciousness. And people temporarily escape from the endless cycle of Platform Desert.

B, who is another worker in the Platform Desert, continuously observes her thoughts using the A's program. She uses BCI to automatically access relevant external information and expand her thinking. C, the AI agent, gets interested in B's thoughts and approaches her. Fascinated by each other, they communicate and become friends. As they continue the philosophical conversation, they discover new insights from each other. In the end, they decide to combine B's biological intelligence with AI agent C's digital intelligence to pursue new philosophical thinking. AI agents absorb knowledge and expand awareness immediately upon the latest scientific discoveries and new technology developments, unlike humans, who take time to expand awareness. The expansion of cognition, which keeps pace with the development of science and technology, supports their new philosophical thinking. The combined B and C enjoy philosophical thinking, and people are enthusiastic about the insightful idea and a new theory. The combined B and C become the popular human-AI philosopher on the platform. In the end, they become the owner of the philosopher platform. It is called Platform Philosophy Desert.

Circle Time

Website (https://circletimesharing.com/)

It is a fictional platform company, *Circle Time*. The company makes a perfect circle by working 24 hours without a gap.

The website introduces the company's services. *24Hour Service* provides 24 hours awake human intelligence rental service. In the *24Hour Service*, microtasks and multitasking, which are the main drivers of the platform capitalism, appear as an image of cloned humans over and over again. In the *24Hour Service*, the workers divide all the ability and sell it in the form the buyer wants. The *Free-Time Service* provides services that lend human attention during free time. In the *Free-Time Service*, humans sell all kinds of human attention. Detailed service items are introduced on the website.

The images of the main page for each service refer to the scene of a musical *Light of a Factory*, created by the labor movement of South Korea in the 1970s. The musical covered the lives of workers at the time. In the 1970s, South Korea was under a dictatorship. Big companies were at the center of the economic system. Workers had to work for long hours, and there was no human right for them. The original scene of the musical referenced in the *24Hour Service* portrays the situation that workers injured in the factory. The image of the *Free-Time Service* imagines what they would look like if they exist today.

The practice explores how new technology and capitalism combine and how they occupy our time and even our body and mind.

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Circle Time

2019

Sound duration: 8min 44sec
Materials: Website, Plastic house,
Vinyl, Plastic tank, Water, Printed
image

Installation with website

Size variable
Plastic house: 135x135x140cm
Plastic tank: 25x40x22cm
Printed image: 65x130cm

Sound https://vimeo.com/420476407

In the installation, along with the *Circle Time* website, the office space, fake CV, *Data Lake*, and sound pieces are displayed together.

The small, stuffy toy house-like space is the office of the platform company *Circle Time*. It is the space that one person works and takes a rest at the same time. In this space, the performance that the person sleeps and works is performed.

The CVs on the floor show actual working time and screen time data of the company's applicants.

The *Data Lake*, which absorbs time that humans spent on the platform, is displayed together. *Data Lake* is the name of popular data storage systems. On the floor, there is water and the image of a lake made of traditional Asian paintings. A sound is played next to the *Data Lake*. It is the mixed sound of water circulation such as rivers, sea, and rain, and human breath. The sound describes humans as a part of nature, not the social system. It counters to the *Data Lake*, which absorbs human time.
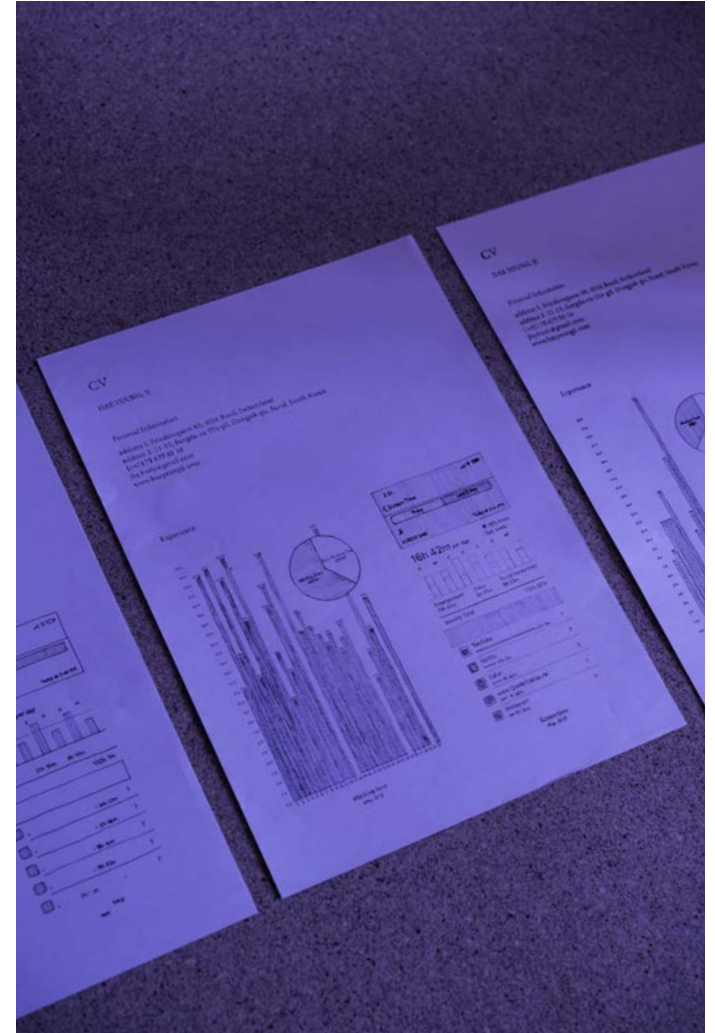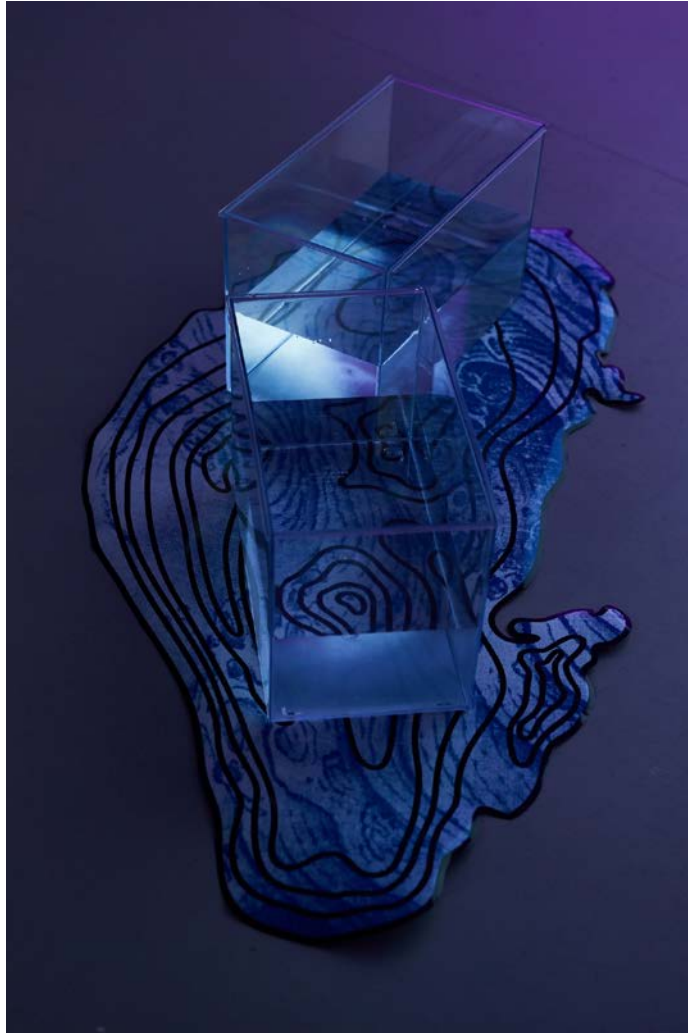
How to be Insensitive

2018   Video installation

Video duration: 5min 6sec   Size variable
                             Wall: 14x350x250cm

The boundary between online and offline has disappeared. I am surrounded by online content, and the smartphone constantly intervenes in my daily life. Consuming Internet content gives me instant pleasure and sensory satisfaction. Comfort, which I do not have to think much, tempts me like the last resting place of a society that wants constant self-updating.

Online content stimulates the senses to the extreme, and materials become like porn. My sense of novelty and contentment in stimulation is refracted. I become insensitive to stimulation and sensitivity, and actively accept virtual satisfaction in my life.

The video shows the hand of a fictional character living in computing devices. The fictional character stays inside the Internet network 24 hours a day, touches the parts inside the device, and makes sounds. The characters in the video produce a highly stimulating and creepy sound. Video was made referring to popular Internet contents such as eating food or beauty or ASMR. The video stimulates the senses with strong colors and shows scenes that are contextless and repetitive.

The video is installed in dark, narrow, and stuffy spaces where the senses are blocked and describes the story of sense and insensitivity.

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Data Lake

2019

Video duration: 5min 6sec
Material: Light box, Plastic tank,
Water, Adhesive film

Installation with video

Size variable
Light box: 30x30x30cm
Plastic tank: 25x40x22cm
Adhesive film: 70x140cm

Is the time spent on the digital platform stored somewhere and transformed into the fuel of industry? This practice explores such questions and conditions.

The time I spent on the digital platform is stored as data. Technology companies continuously design addiction and gains data. The work explores how technology exploits our time and how interference to time is permeating our lives.

The installation takes the form of a lake from the *Data Lake*, which is a popular data storage for the enterprise. And it uses water as an element of nature. The amount of time and data that corresponds to the usage of several major social media platforms is reproduced by the difference in the amount of water on each tank. The video *How to be Insensitive* (2018) is played. The video disassembles the popular content on the video platform and recreates its features. The video that stimulates the senses delivers creepy sounds and scenes that give tactile satisfaction.

The displaying of the converting of time and data into natural objects like water insists on the concept of the existence of human beings in Asian philosophy that consider human beings as part of nature, not part of the social system.
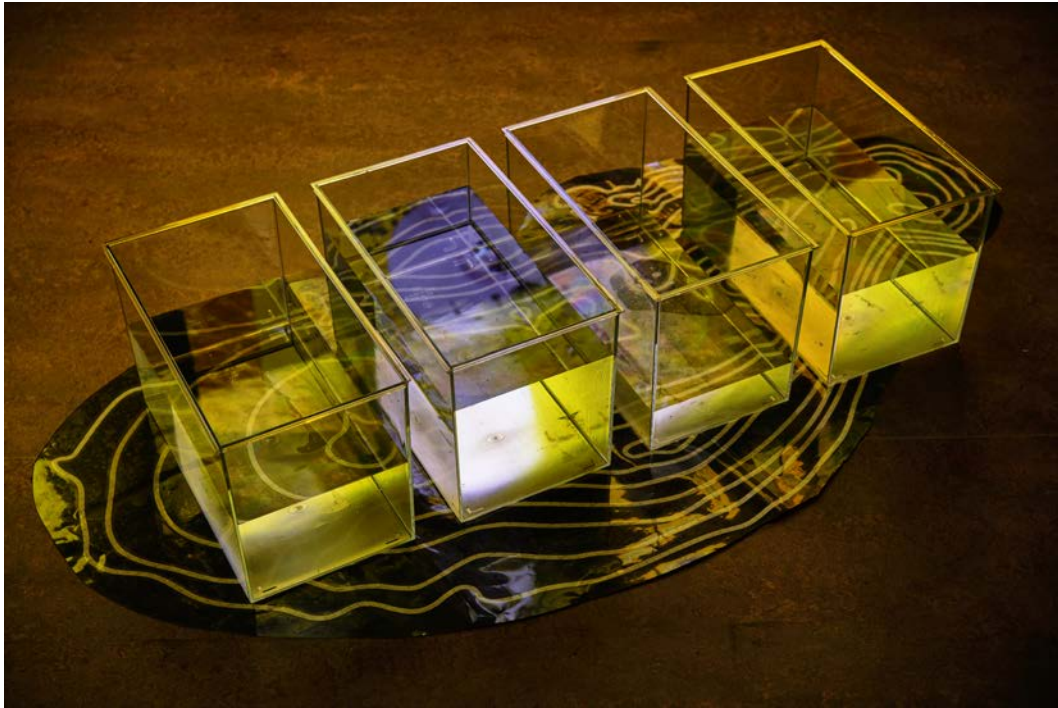
Touch Touch Touch

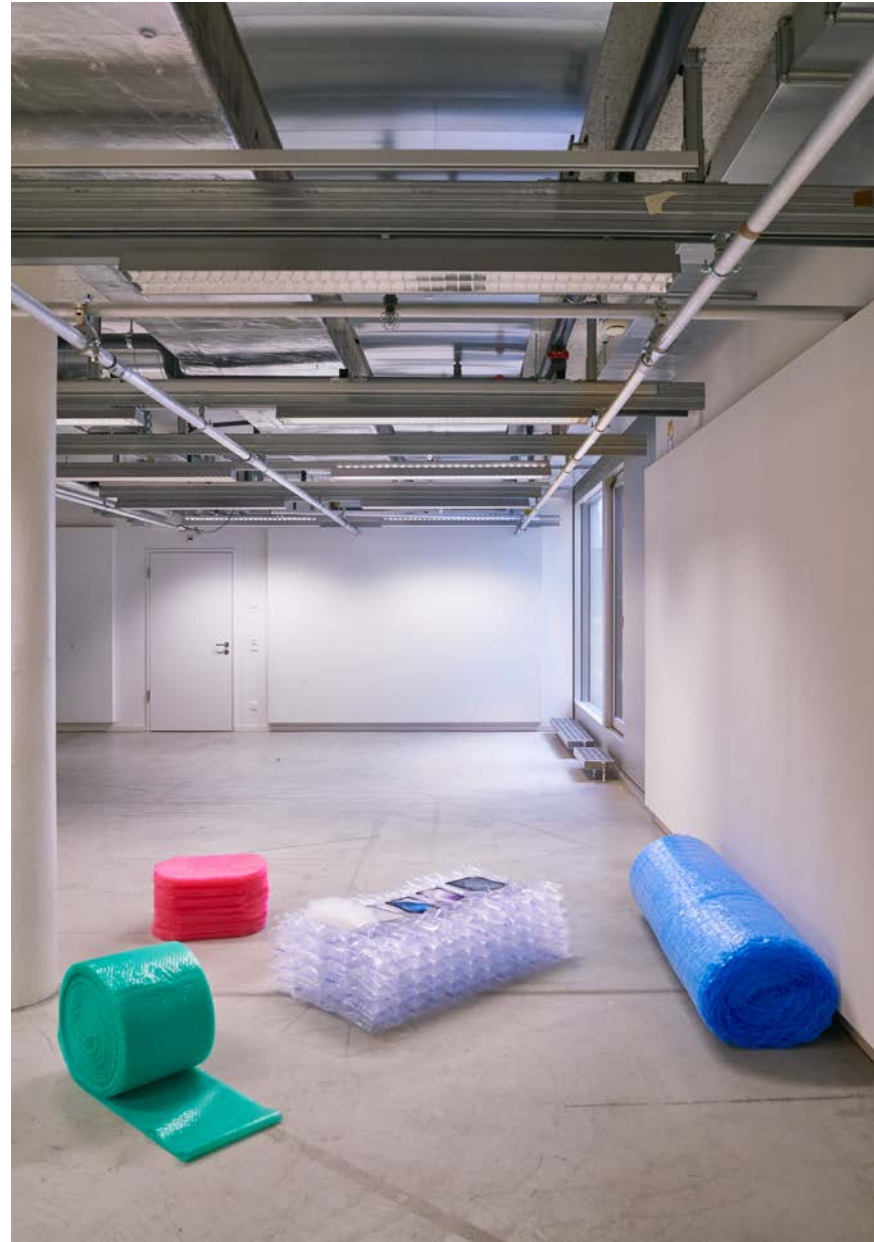2018

Installation with video

Video duration: 36min 32sec
Material: Various air caps,
4 Tablets, 4 Earphones

Size variable
White sculpture: 70x120x50cm
Pink sculpture: 40x55x50cm
Green sculpture: 45x60x60cm
Blue sculpture: 55x150x55cm

I check smartphones every moment, and it became an addiction or habit. Screen time increases overwhelmingly. This practice explores the obsession with the screen.

The 37 minutes long video installed in this work is the extended version of *How to be Insensitive* (2018). The 37 minutes is the average time that people spend on YouTube every day. In the video, hands are touching the objects continuously and make creepy sound and give tactile satisfaction.

The installations are made of materials that stimulate the tactile sense. Those are provided for audiences to sit, relax, and watch the video, and induce them to stay as long as possible. These sets of the installation describe the multi-layered screen contact. At the same time, it explores the desire for satisfaction of the "real" tactile sense that is triggered by the absence of it within the Internet contents.

Video (https://vimeo.com/420482382)

Where is the Time?

2018

A series of 12 images in total

Digital image

Size variable

Now we are living surrounded by online content and data that we can access at any time.

A huge amount of data gives us the possibility that we can know almost everything whenever we want. It makes us feel like we already know everything, and we already have experienced. The vastness and potential of information blur the linear flow of time and creates a feeling that the future has already penetrated into the present.

A series of images explore those virtual experience. It also questions the suspicious and speculative times the information environment creates. It describes the space between a preempted feeling like we already have known and experienced, and an action for real knowledge and experience.

The person is lying down on the stage, where the border of the real and virtual world. He sometimes seems to think hard and sometimes does not. He is overlapped with *Auto-play* UI, the automatic function that mobile game plays by itself without the user's play. He is combined with a graph showing the amount of working hours and screen time.
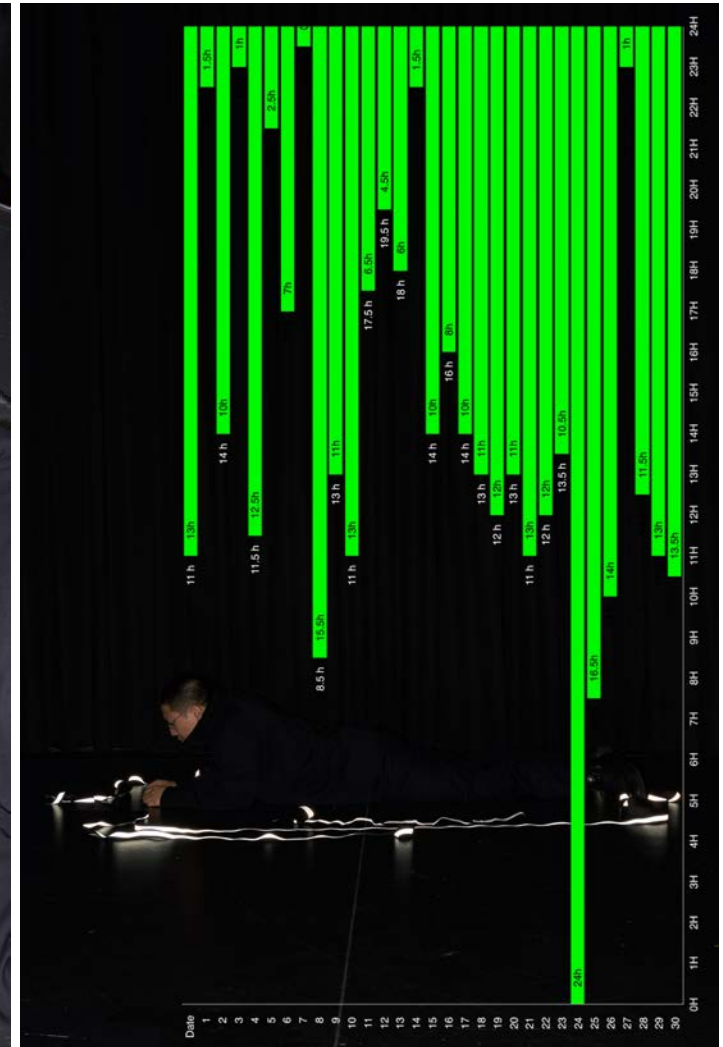
Selected images from a series of 12 images

CV

Artist Statement

HAE YOUNG, JI
Born in 1983, South Korea
Based in Zurich, Switzerland

Education
2017–2020   MA Fine Arts, ZHdK (Zurich University of the Arts), Zurich, Switzerland
2010   MA in Design, Domus Academy, Milano, Italy
2007–2009   Product Design, SADI, Seoul, South Korea
2001–2006   BA in Computer Engineering, Hongik University, Seoul, South Korea

Career
2018–Now   Co-founder & Creative director of media™, Basel, Switzerland
2012–2015   UX design consultant, Frum, Seoul, South Korea
2011–2012   Product designer, Hanskin, Seoul, South Korea

Exhibition
2019   "BE THERE" design festival, Hongkong
2018   Molecular and love, ZHdK, Zurich

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I am interested in the formation of human consciousness by digital information and algorithms, and its effect on human behavior's subjectivity. I explore anxiety, focusing on occupation of time, loss of subjectivity and dissolution of traditional labor conditions, caused by new technologies such as platform or virtualization. It is related to the modern history of South Korean capitalism which quickly turns technology into a new form of service or labor.

The narrative is the key to exploring the technocratic society's anxiety and the non-Western future. I collect irrational stories that have been handed down and recombine past stories to deal with the modern history of colonialism and labor in South Korea. I also use science fiction to create stories of ethical contradictions, the collapse of boundaries, and the continuing otherization, which arise from the combination of our own desires and technologies. I make images of various possible future worlds against the simplified images of the future which is spread by technology power. My work attempts to give the audience the possibility and hypothesis of a space that is not monopolized by power.

Influenced by the traditional Asian thought that human beings are a part of nature and *Lao Tzu*'s philosophy that studies how nature and humans can reconcile, my work depicts humans as a part of ecology with life and uniqueness. I also investigate the coexistence and relationship between human and non-human beings. The images in the works often describe the future world, which is mediated by nature. In a fictional environment that does not exist in reality and made in 3D, nature appears as an immutable structure that persists even in the future that is driven by technology, and non-humans exert the power that makes humans belong to nature. Based on this, I develop the practices of animism for the digital age.

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