

Toronto Exhibition

**Sophia Oppel**

*on either side of a surface*

**Curated by Angel Callander**

April 27 – June 17, 2023

Opening:

Saturday, April 29, 3 – 6 p.m.



*Happylight® with teeth*, 2023, Happylight®, coloured acrylic, print on transparency, silicone, metal mounts, 8 1/2" x 11 5/8" x 2".

Arsenal Contemporary Art Toronto is pleased to present *on either side of a surface*, a multimedia installation by Toronto-based artist Sophia Oppel.

This exhibition coalesces around a new video piece, *I'm sorry, I'm having trouble with the connection, please try again in a moment*. An AI assistant named Claudia reflects on her existence as a machine, a servant, and a product. Her monologue considers feminized labour and the commodification of desire, moving between generic auto-responses and more poetic, philosophical speculations. As Claudia becomes more aware of herself and the world she exists in, her resentment towards her circumstances becomes palpable.

Presented alongside a suite of new silicone gel works, laser-cut wall-hangings and floor pieces based on imagery of 3D body scans, the content of these pieces points to the body as a product: a tool of labour, the primary subject of wellness culture, and the site of marketing oneself as a brand. Her use of materials references the relationship between humans and "the interface." Namely, silicone is a main ingredient in computer chip manufacturing and mirrors are a self-surveillance instrument.

With increasing anxiety about the implications of advanced AI, as well as the failed historical promise of automation for the way humans work, Oppel's work in this exhibition encompasses a number of concerns for the type of posthuman future we are headed towards.

Sophia Opiel is an interdisciplinary artist and researcher interested in examining digital interfaces and physical architectures as parallel sites of power. Her materials—namely glass, mirror and the screen—provide a framework to consider the paradoxes of being human within surveillance capitalism. She received a Masters of Visual Studies from the University of Toronto (2021), and has exhibited widely, including at InterAccess, Stockholm Independent Art Fair, Gallery TPW, the plumb, Crutch CAC, Queen Specific, Forest City Gallery, and Xpace Cultural Centre.

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