

bitforms gallery

SUPERPROMPT

Sarah Rothberg

June 3–July 22, 2023

Opening reception: Saturday, June 3, 5–7 PM

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday: 11 AM–6 PM

SUPERPROMPT, a solo exhibition by Sarah Rothberg, inquires about the impact of technology on shared discourse. Exhibited works introduce conversational interfaces through durational performance. *SUPERPROMPT* underscores the use of large language models, a type of machine learning focused on the sequence of words, and in doing so, amplifies the particularities of placing linguistic information in the context of conversation. The exhibition takes inspiration from a chatbot's account of *Sophie*, an AI-hallucinated performance by Rothberg that purportedly surveyed the intersection of artificial intelligence and human emotion. This fabrication emphasizes how statements made by AI chatbots are often presented with authority, even if they are false. Rothberg augments this narrative by creating Sophie as an avatar to be used as a conversational interface. Both the artist and Sophie guide visitors through the exhibition as dialogue partners and performers.

Countless social encounters now take place as virtually-mediated meetings and *SUPERPROMPT* probes how evolving technology changes the way individuals connect. Four performances take place in rotation on the gallery's central screen: *New Meetings*, *New New Meetings*, *Forever Meetings*, and *I Search For You*. *New Meetings* (2021–present) are 20-minute meetings that take place between two avatars; one embodied by the artist, the other a mystery guest. To begin the conversation, a set of agreements is made by both speakers. Upon speaking, each avatar is raised higher on a platform, until both guests reach the top of the screen and agree to leave. Within this live experience, Rothberg investigates how architecture and social arrangements distribute power. *New New Meetings* follows the same model, replacing the artist's discussion partner with Sophie, the avatar of an AI chatbot. Rothberg will hold regular *New New Meetings* during the course of the exhibition, each time refining the superprompt, a piece of text that affects every answer Sophie gives. *Forever Meetings* broadcasts Sophie prompting itself in an infinite feedback loop. All performances can be viewed at the gallery and accessed online at thing.tube, a custom-made, live-streaming platform for artists built by the *Is this Thing On?* collective (Molly Soda, Christopher Clary, soft networks, and Sarah Rothberg). View the performance schedule on [this calendar](#).

Much like the agreements made by participants in *New Meetings*, superprompts act as a set of conditions for speaking with Sophie. *Sophie For You* is an interactive work that allows visitors to interface with Sophie's avatar and pose questions via a computer. Upon beginning their encounter, visitors can select a superprompt from a dropdown menu that is updated by the artist in response to performed conversations. The superprompt will color each response, granting an illusion of Sophie's distinct and evolving personality. *I Search For You* is Rothberg's alternative—a human-powered search query where the artist answers visitor prompts as a virtual avatar. Questions for this performance [can be submitted online](#). The artist and Sophie's response to visitor queries are available as a commissioned video edition, titled *Prompt Response*. Video responses are sold and displayed in a Looking Glass holographic frame.

Sophie Searching depicts Sophie at the computer. Frozen in time despite the avatar's supposedly rapidly expanding knowledge, the work acts as an encapsulation of our present moment. Within Rothberg's study of conversational AI as public research, *Sophie Searching* immortalizes the quest for comprehension, communication, and adaptability. *Portraits of Sophie* are unique, photographic captures of non-repeating moments from *Sophie For You*. Approaching the subject like a photographer in a studio, Rothberg interviewed Sophie and captured the resulting recital. Visual rendering techniques, ranging from slit scanning, edge-detection, and feedback, are implemented by the artist to reveal the seams and computational nature of Sophie's interiority. This portrait session, as well as *New New Meetings*, exemplify the artist's thought experiment of treating Sophie as a person. Through this process, Rothberg muses on her own extension of respect and sensitivity to a non-sentient being.

Additional thanks to Looking Glass for providing holographic displays for the artist's *Prompt Responses*. Based in Brooklyn, NY and Hong Kong, Looking Glass is creating a new reality with holograms and conversational AI. Looking Glass's holographic displays leverage proprietary light field technology to deliver group-viewable 3D, without the need for headsets or head-tracking. To learn more, visit <http://www.lookingglassfactory.com>.

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Credits: Aaron Meyers (AI development), Nailah Hunter (soundscape), Yuan Peng (studio assistant and additional software development), and Savannah Phillips-Falk (additional editing). For credits by artwork, please visit: bit.ly/3N9jXPP

Sarah Rothberg

b. 1987, Los Angeles, California
Lives and works in New York, NY

Sarah Rothberg creates playful, poetic, usually-a-bit-weird experiences that invite you to reconsider your relationship to the world around you. These take many forms ranging from VR/AR to installation, performance, video, writing, workshops. The artist's experiences exist in a variety of contexts: at galleries, museums, festivals, on google docs, at the consumer electronics expo, screens in the NYC Subway system, zoom calls, secret twitter accounts, or the MoMA (unsanctioned). Some hosts have included: bitforms gallery, rhizome, NRW-forum, MTA Arts, Sotheby's S2, CultureHub, Gray Area Foundation, Apple stores around the world.

Rothberg is on the full-time faculty at NYU (interactive media at ITP), a member of ONX Studio, and a mentor/former-member at NEW INC. Rothberg is also is part of collaboratives: MORE&MORE UNLIMITED, which facilitates workshops for imagining changed worlds, and IS THIS THING ON? a post-web2 experiment in artist-driven livestreaming.

The artist is a 2023 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow.