

Wellbeing Analysis Techniques Limited™

Now you see me

2021

Smart mirror, ceramic tiles, mixed media

Taking the form of a pop-up vanity space, *Now you see me* comments on the developing relationship between technology, the beauty and wellness industry, surveillance, and the continuous waste of optimisation. As stated by the artists, their display aims to ‘mimic the corporate codes, usefulness, self-betterment and time-saving optimisation which affect our everyday existence.’ A smart mirror in the space interrupts the viewer’s reflection through randomised third party modules, displaying live weather updates, wait times for theme park rides, NASA footage of the earth and reminders to drink water and to breathe. The smart mirror embodies the merging of rituals – those of an individual in their domestic space and actualised surveillance technology. Complete with custom-made graphics by the artists, the mirror foregrounds how all screens and spaces are porous and mediated.

Now you see me draws on the concept that beauty has been co-opted as a marker for goodness, as described in Jia Tolentino’s essay collection *Trick Mirror* (2019). Tolentino writes of how beauty has become intertwined with morality, and is subconsciously considered both a marker of one’s goodness and an inherently virtuous pursuit. The rise of the wellness industry alongside this similarly carries a connotation of ‘purity’, and has become another touchstone parallel to beauty.

The rising trend of the ‘smart home’ carries the inevitable expectation that this new, ultra- modern technology will rapidly become defunct. In *Now you see me*, the artists comment on how technology has become a volatile, ever-changing sector due to relentless innovation and consumerism, and draw parallels between the traits of the technology and beauty sectors. Interestingly, the artists note that it is fitting how aromatherapy’s essential oils are also known as volatile oils, their unpredictability and tendency to change also a trait of technology. The beauty and wellness industries’ constant production of new serums, creams and perfumes reflects a need to change, renew and update, a desire replicated in the constant refreshing of one’s social media pages. In highlighting these similarities, *Now you see me* reflects on how wellness has been co-opted by our fast-paced world.

Wellbeing Analysis Techniques Limited™ is an organisation and arts collective that examines the industry of wellness through arts practice, satire and genuine belief in alternative therapies. WATL draws from corporate aesthetics and models, using mimicry and sensory activation as tools for critique.

This project is made possible by the open source modular smart mirror platform MagicMirror2: github.com/MichMich/MagicMirror. Courtesy of the artists.