

Sophia Lapres *Mixed Blessings*

October 10 – November 16, 2024



Towards is pleased to present *Mixed Blessings*, an exhibition of recent paintings by Sophia Lapres.

Sophia Lapres works in-between painting and writing. Drawing from film, popular culture, as well as her own personal experiences, she creates intimate, atmospheric paintings that touch upon themes of longing, desire, and shame.

An exhibition text by greta hamilton appears below.

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The starlink is my favourite constellation

Ursa Major, he says, pointing to the sky, and I feel his breath ripple across the trampoline as it swells and recesses beneath us. The cool mesh against our backs, we watch airplanes and satellites drift through the dark. My boyfriend points out the constellations named by Greek astronomers, *Ursa Minor*, *Andromeda*. An ancient cultural inheritance mapped onto the sky. These stars, with weather systems and moons and their own gravity, share the abyss with our technology. How futile, I think, the mingling of human desire with the unfathomable largeness of the cosmos. My boyfriend runs his hand across my stomach where my t-shirt is bunched. The hair on my arm stiffens. *A shooting star*, I blurt. Our heads turn to follow it. Several white lights drift in an arch across the sky. *It's the starlink satellite*, my boyfriend says. A constellation void of myth or meaning.

If I look to the stars to learn something about my existence—about a culture that existed before me—but instead, I see a satellite that symbolizes the technocratic dreams of a fascist future, what knowledge is gained by my looking? It's a bad omen strung together like pearls.

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Sunburn in hibiscus bathing suit, a Catholic ritual, the act of confession and the feeling of guilt, an architect's leather chair and the smell of Maison Margiela perfume, my dad, waiting for me to come home, a garden in Vatican City, a shackled horse, the polka dot dress Julia Roberts wore to the polo game in *Pretty Woman*, the Wolfgang Tillmans photograph we saw together, a luminescent sky, a rainbow, a smutty novel cover, a glistening chest, abs and a butterfly tattoo, the g-string you wore to the wine bar, a pilates bicep reaching down for a blowjob, perfectly permed hair, the Apollo mission, your sister swimming in your favourite lake, flowers arranged at your grandma's house, the glare of my laptop screen in the dark.

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In her paintings, artist Sophia Lapres considers the dense and complicated politics of fantasy. Interrogating the discrepancy between personal desire, cultural desire, and the desire of images, the artist asks: How do we hold our cultural inheritances alongside a collapse of meaning? How do we go on dreaming about our futures without hope? Lapres paints scenes from her life alongside stills from eighties movies and Pinterest screenshots: horses gallop across fields, rockets combust, women embrace their husbands in domestic scenes. Rendered on aluminium, the surfaces of these paintings glow like a phone screen. They envision a world that isn't so bleak, where the light is always dappled, where the moon landing was a feat of wonder instead of an act of propaganda, where fighter jets fly across hazy pink skies to get a better view of the sunset.

Lapres's paintings are ambivalent, saccharine, and wonky. The artist contends with the dystopic present through romance and optimism. These images exist in a fictional realm where irony isn't endemic and fascism doesn't win. This layering of fiction onto reality complicates the reading of her work: does the artist really believe that goodness and beauty can prevail? Are these paintings a critique of the socio-political landscape or a fetishistic fantasy about a wealthy suburban life? Sophia, I have to ask, are you winking at me or not?