

ARTS

# Spring Silver, Julien Baker, and More Best Bets for July 14–21

*For your not-to-miss list: a play that tackles gentrification and gardening, a record release for Janel Leppin's Ensemble Volcanic Ash, and art from the Cold War to the algorithm.*



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## Wednesday through Saturday: *The Algorithm Will See You Now* at Transformer



From *The Algorithm Will See You Now*

Social media is a cesspool. Going online means being bombarded with a never-ending crush of content of questionable value, and your phone is spying on you. Get off the internet, and if you can't touch grass, touch some different devices instead. *The Algorithm Will See You Now* at Transformer features interactive computerized works and digital sculptures by artist **Chris Combs** that satirize and warp our tech-driven reality. Using everything from AI image-generation programs to a neural network he trained himself, Combs creates works that reflect the possibilities and pitfalls that rapidly advancing technology creates. The results are a funhouse-mirror version of the ways that existing technology monitors, categorizes, and evaluates us. The works raise fascinating questions about the ethics of data mining, algorithmic bias, and the kind of world that computers are creating. In "Illegal in Illinois," faces scanned from the street outside the gallery are projected onto mannequin heads, some of which are 3D printed (the data isn't stored for longer than 15 seconds). In "Morale is Mandatory," a facial recognition scanner checks whether visitors are smiling or not, and a needle on a meter adjusts its readout accordingly, suggesting a surveillance state in which not only thoughts are policed, but emotions too. "Feedback Loop" allows users to choose from lists of headlines that resemble the cross-promotional spam content at the bottom of some web articles. As the user makes choices, the machine spits back an analysis of their preferences. Fittingly for these times, there's even a selection of images generated by DALL-E Mini using corporate titles, creating what looks like an employee page from a nightmarish company website. Some pieces take digital ephemera and make it tactile, like a fluttery wall of paper chains printed with information from the artist's Google profile. And though devices like "Feedback Loop" and "Morale is Mandatory" use modern tech and somewhat complex programming, they're packaged in satisfying analog containers, complete with push-buttons (remember those?) rather than touchscreens. *The Algorithm Will See You Now runs through July 23 at Transformer, 1404 P St. NW. Wednesday through Saturday noon–6 p.m. [transformerdc.org](http://transformerdc.org). Free.*

—**Stephanie Rudig**