

Virgil Tilks Artist Statement:

Can I Touch You is a transformed sculptural object series derived from the installation *Can I Kiss You*, originally presented in the group exhibition *SEX SHOW* at Gallery Very in 2024. The work begins with a digitally modeled form that is cast in silicone, resulting in a soft, flexible, rubber-like object that suggests the material qualities of a sex toy. The triptych functions as a self-portrait, with each sculptural form sitting on a deconstructed concrete base and existing as a unique object.

The colors of the moving arrow elements are inspired by the red, white, and blue of the American flag. Tilks carefully color-matches the blue of the American flag while replacing the red with the deeper carmine found in the Latvian flag and substituting the white with a flesh-pink tone. Through this gesture, the work brings together references to both countries, acknowledging the artist's experience of moving between Latvia and the United States.

By deconstructing familiar national references and placing them into motion, the work explores cultural translation, belonging, and the instability of symbolic meaning. Sculptures engage visually and sensorially, questioning where the boundaries between personal identity, desire, and national narratives rise.