



REVIEWS

The deeply felt art of Lucy Sparrow

The artist has built a full-size fish and chip shop entirely out of felt – and the results look good enough to eat

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Over the past decade, Lucy Sparrow has owned an East London off-licence, a fresh food market in Florida and a sex shop in Soho. She's had a stint as a surgeon, pushed a street-food cart in Bangkok, recreated the work of Old Masters, handed out medicine at her very own chemist and prepared a banquet for Queen Elizabeth II. She's done all of this through the medium of felt – and in her most recent fabric installation, the artist has taken over Lyndsey Ingram gallery in London, where she set about replicating something distinctly British: a fish and chip shop.

'Bourdon Street Chippy' marks the second time Sparrow has set up shop in the Mayfair gallery. In 2021, she created 'Bourdon Street Chemist', where she sold all manner of felt memorabilia, from toothbrushes to condoms. Though the project had been in the works for years, the Covid pandemic added to its appeal and Sparrow's fabric products – some 15,000 of which were for sale – flew off the shelves. For this installation, Sparrow and her studio team have scaled up production, with the chippy comprising some 65,000 objects made over the last eight months. Sparrow has painted every label herself.



Installation view of 'Bourdon Street Chippy' by Lucy Sparrow at Lyndsey Ingram, London, 2025. Photo: Lucinda Emms; © Lucy Sparrow

The gallery's entrance has been bedecked with colourful signage and neon lights ('Food served all day'): no doubt some hungry punters will be disappointed. The floor has been re-laid with chequerboard red-and-white tiles and Sparrow has constructed five cosy booths in the gallery-cum-cafe. The tables are set with the traditional trimmings: plush bottles of Sarson's malt vinegar and Hellmann's mayonnaise sit pert in wooden caddies next to plates of brown battered food. As if replicating them weren't enough, she injects a little more whimsy by anthropomorphising her fried subjects: each chip and slab of cod has been stitched with a pair of beady black eyes and a coy smile. From a small tub of green mushy peas, five little faces stare back at you.

For the walls of the gallery, Sparrow has adopted the diner-esque tradition of hanging 'signed photos' of celebrity patrons. Among the many on display I make out Mick Jagger and Amy Winehouse, but there are culinary giants as well: Rick Stein – famed for his pricey take on the chippy in Cornwall – smiles out from a black frame. Parallel to the entrance, a wall menu spells out what other dishes are on offer, including jacket potatoes and steak-and-kidney pies; cross-contamination notices and drinking water warning signs further demonstrate Sparrow's attention to detail. In a small hallway between the gallery's two rooms, next to a 'wet floor' sign shaped like a banana skin, a noticeboard is crammed with faux local advertisements (call Geraldine for a dog walker, Lauren for singing lessons).

In the second room of the gallery, next to a service counter that stretches the length of the room, hundreds of fabric condiments extend to the ceiling like an altar to the ultra-processed. There's a sort of cheerleader effect at play: all grouped together, the felt imitators are even more convincing. When I visit the show a few days before it opens, this sentiment is echoed by Sparrow herself as she wanders around the gallery fixing final details in place with an embroidery needle. When posting photos of her installations online, she says, it's crucial to explain that they're made of felt, 'or else it just looks like you went and picked up dinner'.



Installation view of 'Bourdon Street Chippy' by Lucy Sparrow at Lyndsey Ingram, London, 2025. Photo: Lucinda Emms; © Lucy Sparrow

Sparrow's chip shop, like her previous installations, could be seen as an unusual, three-dimensional take on *trompe l'œil*. There's an endearing lack of pretension in turning something so rudimentary – the food we pick up when we can't be bothered to cook – into such an extravagant display. The material makes the work all the more charming; many visitors will have played with felt as children, chopping it up and turning the flat, fuzzy planes into disfigured Christmas decorations.

Nor does the illusion shatter. Peering behind the counter, I half expect to see stashed cardboard boxes from the set-up. Instead I'm greeted with the smiling face of a fabric lump of fish lying supine in a fryer, resigned to its fate. Really all that's missing are the familiar sounds and smells: the heady scent of beef dripping and the caw of a cashier yelling your number while the deep fryer spits in the background.



Installation view of 'Bourdon Street Chippy' by Lucy Sparrow at Lyndsey Ingram, London, 2025. Photo: Lucinda Emms; © Lucy Sparrow

Almost everything in Sparrow's chippy is for sale and is wrapped up fresh at the counter. A salt or pepper sachet will set you back £5, a scoop of fried scraps £20, while a small fish and chips – encased in a classic newspaper cone – is slightly pricier than your local at £350. Whatever the souvenir, it's a more than satisfactory consolation for those who leave with a grumbling stomach.

'Bourdon Street Chippy' is at [Lyndsey Ingram](#), London, until 14 September.