

CHEMIST SHOP STOCKED WITH 15,000 ITEMS MADE ENTIRELY FROM FELT

CLAIRE HAYHURST, EVENING STANDARD, APRIL 15, 2021



Artist Lucy Sparrow has created the Bourdon Street Chemist in Mayfair, where shelves are packed with felt products from painkillers to cold remedies.

A fully stocked pharmacy featuring more than 15,000 items made entirely from felt has opened in central London.

Artist Lucy Sparrow has created the Bourdon Street Chemist in Mayfair where shelves are packed with felt products from painkillers and cold remedies to pregnancy tests.

There are Gillette razors, branded perfumes, Olbas oil products, Rimmel make-up from lipstick to blusher, Durex condoms, toothbrushes, cotton buds and plasters.

Customers can also buy felt Covid-19 tests, vaccines, face masks and hand sanitiser.

Sparrow 34, and her team have spent a year hand-making the items, which are available for sale from white-coated staff behind the counter.

The chemist is part of Sparrow's National Felt Service (NFS), which she established in 2017 after buying an old ambulance.

"When you come through the door of the Bourdon Street Chemist, you're immediately hit by the smell of TCP – a real medicinal smell, which is something I was really keen to capture," said Sparrow, originally from Bath, Somerset.

"The stock goes right up to the ceiling, it's quite oppressive when you come in because there's so many more products than probably would be in a real chemist.

"You can look around and if you would like to buy then pop it in your basket and come to the counter where you are given a felt prescription for what you need.

"I write down the medication, sign the prescription and then that is your receipt."

In 2018, Sparrow unveiled the NFS at the annual Miami Art Week alongside her work Triple Art Bypass, and performed live felt surgery.

The following year, she bought a decommissioned ambulance station in Suffolk and converted it into her studio and headquarters.

Sparrow's work, which previously included a New York deli and an east London newsagent, examines the decline of the high street.

She said the Bourdon Street Chemist, at the Lynsey Ingram Gallery, aims to highlight the part independent local chemists have played during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The artist said pharmacy staff had become frontline workers in the fight against the pandemic and a vital service for communities across Britain.

"Chemists are so important," Sparrow said.

"For a while, along with food shops, they were the only shops that were allowed to open and became a real lifeline."

The hundreds of products in the Bourdon Street Chemist were chosen by Sparrow after meticulous research that included visiting dozens of chemists.

There are baby formulas, thermometers, headlice combs, toothbrushes, tissues, health information leaflets and greeting cards.

Behind the counter are a host of prescription medications, from Prozac and Valium to Viagra and Tramadol.

Gallery founder Lynsey Ingram said: "This is normally your standard art gallery – white walls, wood floors, elegantly hung pictures – so this is very, very different.

"It's completely transformative but that's the point of Lucy's art, to give people a slightly disorientating experience.

"The scope of the project is absolutely mind-boggling.

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“You go to the prescription counter, you pay, the whole experience is entirely immersive and comprehensive.

“You’re meant to interact with it in the way you would a normal shop.”

The exhibition is open to the public from Monday and will run for three weeks. To book an appointment, visit <https://lyndseyingram.com/>

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