



GALLERY 5

Chloe Smith

Unbearable Incandescence

Lismore Regional Gallery
 11 Rural Street
Lismore, NSW 2480

Open hours
Wednesday to Sunday, 10am – 4pm
Thursdays until 6pm
Closed on public holidays

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Lismore Regional Gallery is a creative initiative of the Lismore City Council supported by the New South Wales Government through Create NSW and the Friends of the Gallery. The Gallery acknowledges the Widjabul Wia-bal people of the Bundjalung Nation as the traditional owners of the land upon which the gallery stands. We pay respects to elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations cultures and their contributing connection to land, waters, community and the arts.

27 SEPTEMBER –
10 NOVEMBER 2024

Through a series of hyperreal textile works, sculptor Chloe Smith unravels the cruel optimism of certainty and truth that we must ultimately craft for ourselves. *Unbearable Incandescence* presents a series of works interrogating the paradoxical search for reality in a world of simulation and appearance.

A birthday cake awaits its single sumptuous moment. A chair is discreetly composed of asparagus, while a thong becomes chicken katsu, served meal-like on a plate.

Tensions between the animate and inanimate are softly brought into focus in humorous ways in this exhibition that heroes the domestic and the uncanny.



Unbearable Incandescence 2024
 wool, satin, bamboo batting, cardboard, urethane,
 timber, armature wire, found pedestal fans
 80 x 80 x 50 cm



Thong Katsu (Serving Suggestions for Werner Herzog) 2023
 wool, embroidery thread, cardboard, armature wire,
 melamine plate, urethane
 6 x 14 x 34 cm

‘Fortunately, the objects which appear to us have always-already disappeared. Fortunately, nothing appears to us in real time, any more than do the stars in the night sky. If the speed of light were infinite, all the stars would be there simultaneously and the celestial vault would be an unbearable incandescence.’

– Jean Baudrillard

‘The menu is not the meal.’

– Alan Watts

As a child, I was interested in construction and engineering, in particular a style of civil engineering that involved mashed potato dam walls, broccoli stalk forests, and carrot stick suburban developments, all localised to my dinner plate.

I was a master of my domain, a crafter of my reality.

The 1929 René Magritte painting *The Treachery of Images* features a pipe with the text ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’ (This is Not a Pipe) painted below. The painting is not a pipe but rather an image of a pipe. In *The Treachery of Images* Magritte sought to construct a three-way paradox out of the conventional notion that objects correspond to words and images.

Much as Magritte confronted our conflation of the image, the text and the thing itself, the works in *Unbearable Incandescence* seek to dissolve and soften the boundaries between the real, the known and the expected. These works are drawn together by their ‘not-quite’ ness. On the one hand, they are unsettling in their verisimilitude yet completely innocuous, comforting and nostalgic in their materiality. Their softness lends them an out of focus character that warrants further inspection, an assurance that things are what they seem.

The American game show ‘Is It Cake?’ premiered on Netflix in 2022. Based on the viral meme sensation of the same name, contestants painstakingly craft cakes that replicate everyday objects to trick celebrity judges.

The show is dense with layers of simulation. Ironically, categorised as ‘reality TV’ in the Netflix catalogue, the show presents a simulacrum of American life and highly choreographed drama to draw attention away from what might be considered the real illusions of the show. French theorist Jean Baudrillard would refer to the use of illusion in this way as a third order simulation, one where the copy no longer corresponds to any form of reality. Authenticity has been replaced by copy, reality is replaced by a substitute. We confuse the world as it is with the world as it is talked about, figured about, with the world as it is described.

Perhaps now, more than ever, our world is saturated by sophisticated simulations. Simulations that are no longer, and possibly never, connected to an objective truth. How is it that we should respond to the absurdity of modern life? Would we even be able to identify reality if we came face to face with it? There is a cruel optimism in our unceasing and perpetually thwarted search for authenticity.

Unbearable Incandescence pushes into this space, celebrating our wrestle with reality. The works invite us to take a seat on the asparagus chair or waltz through the broccoli stalk forest, where the lines between the real and the surreal blur into infinity, where the serious is suddenly silly, where memories become fiction and fiction becomes a memory.

Chloe Smith, 2024

list of works

Chloe Smith
born 1991 Townsville, Australia
lives/works Lismore, Australia

Asparagus Chair 2024

found chair, wool, armature wire,
cotton thread
110 x 40 x 40 cm

Flood Junk #1 2024

cotton, wool, PVA, wire, timber,
acrylic paint
30 x 40 x 12 cm

***How You'd Always Say "Take-Out"
But Never "Canteloupe" 2023***

wool, armature wire, cotton,
cardboard, urethane, acrylic paint
40 x 50 x 4 cm

***Maybe That Was the Problem
2023***

wool, armature wire, cotton,
cardboard, urethane, acrylic paint
40 x 50 x 4 cm

***One of Your Expressions Made Up
of Scraps in the Sink 2023***

wool, armature wire, cotton,
cardboard, urethane, acrylic paint
40 x 50 x 4 cm

Otto Becomes Woolfie 2023

Merino wool, embroidery thread,
armature wire
35 x 47 x 17 cm

***Sometimes The Missing Of You
Would Show Up In Ways I Wasn't
Expecting 2023***

wool, armature wire, cotton,
cardboard, urethane, acrylic paint
40 x 50 x 4 cm

***Thong Katsu (Serving Suggestions
for Werner Herzog) 2023***

Wool, embroidery thread,
cardboard, armature wire,
melamine plate, urethane
6 x 14 x 34 cm

Unbearable Incandescence 2024

wool, satin, bamboo batting,
cardboard, urethane, timber,
armature wire, found pedestal fans
80 x 80 x 50 cm

***We'd Known Each Other Long
Enough to "Get" Each Other 2023***

Wool, armature wire, cotton,
cardboard, urethane, acrylic paint
40 x 50 x 4 cm

all works courtesy the artist



Maybe That Was the Problem 2023
wool, armature wire, cotton, cardboard, urethane,
acrylic paint
40 x 50 x 4 cm