

At this supermarket pop-up, everything is made of felt. Really

By LISA BOONE

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It's tempting to turn "The Sparrow Mart," British artist Lucy Sparrow's latest exhibition, featuring more than 31,000 felted creations made to look like everyday supermarket items, into a commentary on American consumerism.

But for the 32-year-old Sparrow, the interactive installation, currently on view at the Standard Hotel in downtown L.A., is merely escapist fun. (Expect long lines, as no visit is complete without a few selfies for Instagram.)

"It's not about consumerism," Sparrow says. "It's about providing emotional and psychological well-being. It's about happiness and emotional responses and feeling like a kid again."

Working over 12 months with five assistants, Sparrow cut, stitched, stuffed and painted the items in her "Felt Cave" in Essex, England.

If you're wondering how Sparrow could complete such a colossal project, the artist says she got up at 7 a.m. every day and worked until 4 p.m., averaging around 50 to 60 pieces a day while listening to true crime podcasts and Netflix shows.

In terms of research, she walked through "lots and lots" of supermarkets and photographed shelves. She also asked locals what they liked.

She chose the items based on the look of the label. "It had to be bright and colorful and instantly noticeable," she says. "Or have a funny name."

The results are a delight as Sparrow has transformed mundane everyday items into collection pieces that will put a smile on your face.

And you will definitely smile as you walk the aisles of the Sparrow Mart and encounter a hot dog bar, produce stand and frozen ice cream bin — all made up of her exquisite felt creations. There is even a felt ATM on display along with felt Milk Duds and Lemonheads, Brillo pads and Pop-Tarts, Frosted Flakes and Tapatio hot sauce — all just begging to be picked up and touched.

Unique to the L.A. show, Sparrow says, are felt “avocados, California rolls and lots of Mexican products” as well as an ’80s-inspired VHS movie section featuring “Footloose,” “Dirty Dancing” and “Short Circuit.”

Each one of the 31,000 items is for sale, with prices ranging from \$10 for a pack of chewing gum to \$180 for a steak.

And while the show is up through Aug. 31, you may want to visit soon. Sparrow’s last fully felted bodega, “8 Till Late,” sold out in 16 days.