

The Blithe Realism of Chloe Wise

At turns cheesy and professionally sultry, the figures in Wise's oil paintings seem pleased to pose, recalling the sensibilities of social media.

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Installation view of Chloe Wise: *Thank You For The Nice Fire*, Almine Rech, 2021 (all images courtesy Almine Rech; photo by Dan Bradica)

If Patricia Lockwood and Lauren Oyler are the internet-native novelists of the zeitgeist, Chloe Wise could be considered their painterly counterpart.

The 30-year-old artist first gained recognition in 2014, when actor Bobbi Menuez (of *I Love Dick*) wore her bagel sculpture adorned with faux Chanel accoutrements to the designer's event, provoking guests to question if the cream cheese-laden object was a real Chanel bag. Seven years later, groceries remain a primary motif throughout Wise's work.

Thank You For The Nice Fire, her current solo show of mostly oil paintings, is among her biggest yet in New York City. You might already be familiar with Wise's work, however, from its favored presence on Instagram — which in some ways feels like the most organic place to find it.

The show's portraits feature youthful muses with hip, online sensibilities. In "Some pleasant lies would be nice" (2021), a woman with bleached hair and a butterfly tattoo stares at the viewer with a pouty gaze. She's nude, save for a pair of Apple headphones that twist naturally between her breasts. In front of her, we spy the forehead and eyes of another figure: likely Richie Shazam, model and friend of Wise who features prominently in another one of her paintings. At turns cheesy and professionally sultry, each of Wise's figures seems pleased to pose. Her larger canvases recall headshots of influencers with meticulous skincare routines, while her smaller pieces bear a more casual tone, like zoomed-in selfies you might receive from a friend.

Thank You For The Nice Fire isn't all two-dimensional, however; the show is quite textured. Paintings are punctuated with butter-topped glass pillars and caesar salad light fixtures, including a chandelier that leaks creamy dressing into a puddle beneath it. These sculptures — fabricated mostly from wax, urethane, plexi, and oil paint — are so realistic that you might question their edibility, much like a display sandwich at McDonald's.

Every piece feels characteristic of Wise's trademark style — playful, blithe, and satiric. "Prime Time" (2021), a sound installation conceived of a yellow wall and bathroom glass, which separates visitors from an imaginary room where a television plays to emptiness, is perhaps the exception. The commercial samples and news bites that emanate from this installation are eerie representations of "the fragmented glimpses we are afforded of each other's humanity," Wise tells me over email. A seemingly earnest nod to the worst year in history, the work is situated in a show that tends overwhelmingly positive, and most importantly, never takes itself too seriously.