

LOOKS FISHY

When Kate Jenkins prepares a plate of sardines, she reaches for a crochet hook rather than a can opener. The Brighton-based textile artist has spent nearly 20 years rendering food in yarn, and her most ambitious project is about to open in Soho.

Kate's Knitalian will turn the Air Contemporary gallery into an Italian trattoria and deli in which every scrap of food is made from wool. The room around it, though, is real: Balineum, the British studio whose founder Sarah Watson rescued a Stoke-on-Trent tile factory, made bespoke ceramics for the deli counter, and vintage furniture dealer Merchant & Found supplied tables and chairs. Everything on display is for sale; Jenkins's set designer calls the vibe 'Wes Anderson meets Lina Stores'.

In her Kemptown studio the Welsh-born artist, now 55, shows me an anchovy cicchetto prompted by a recent research

trip to Venice. The bread is hand-crocheted, the fish knitted then sequined by hand, the rocket leaves have embroidered veins. She makes each element separately then assembles them.

The lambswool is from Yorkshire spinner Z Hinchliffe & Sons; the metallic yarns that give her sardines their sheen are from Japan. And her inspiration? 'I love looking through a menu before I go to a restaurant,' she says. 'My heart jumps when I think, brilliant – I know exactly how I can make that.'

Jenkins came to her subject matter late. After 20 years designing knitwear she wanted a change, and something to get herself noticed, so she knitted a fried breakfast. That fry-up grew into *Comfort Food*, an exhibition of classic British dishes knitted and crocheted; solo shows in New York and Hong Kong followed.

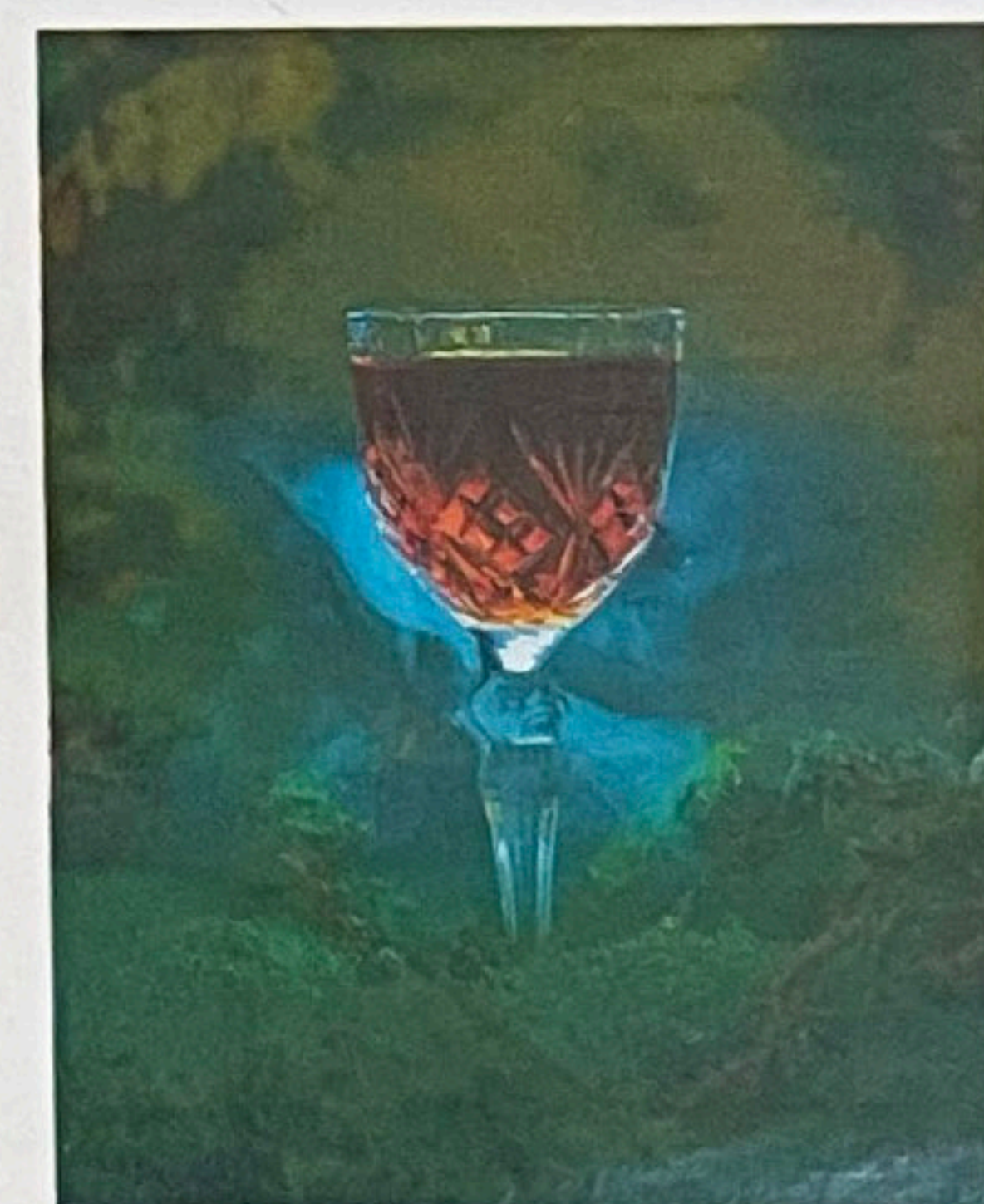
Food has long preoccupied artists, but craft has rarely enjoyed the prestige of painting. 'Because what I do is knitting,' Jenkins says, 'it's labelled as craft, but I've always seen it as an art form on an equal footing. I treat my crochet hook like a paintbrush.'

Prices reflect that – from £95 for a postcard-sized raviolo to £20,000 for *Italian Tins of Fins*, 16 tins of her signature fish that took three weeks to make. Admirers include Hermès, which asked her to dress the windows of its New Bond Street flagship when it launched in June, and Jamie Oliver, who owns two pieces.

Fellow foodies will be able to order their own creations at the exhibition's pizza station, choosing their toppings – mushroom, basil, a black olive – and collecting the knitted slice in a box a couple of days later: proof that art really is a matter of taste.



Hand-stitched and sequined anchovy, prawn and rocket cicchetti, by Kate Jenkins, from £200. *Kate's Knitalian* is at Air Contemporary, London W1, 1 November-5 December (air-contemporary.com)



MIXED MEDIA

Since it opened in Mayfair in 2002, Sketch has reinvented the dining room as an art installation. Martin Creed laid the floor with 96 different marbles; David Shrigley covered its walls with 239 drawings; Yinka Shonibare replaced them with site-specific textiles; and Jonathan Baldock's work is there now, in one of the world's most photographed spaces (the pod-shaped loos especially). Drink has always mattered as much as food, and now founder Mourad Mazouz has produced a book of recipes from The Glade cocktail bar, with the same energy and sense of theatre. 'People remember a feeling before they remember a flavour,' says Mazouz. 'The atmosphere of the room, the beautiful glass – all of that decides how you taste the drink before it even reaches your lips.' *The Glade Cocktail Book* (Jon Craft Editions, £35), out 5 November