

SEANKELLY

Gale, Sammi. "An interview with Kristy M Chan." *Plinth*, October 11, 2022.

Plinth



Flying in the face of fate and her parents both, today Chan makes abstract paintings full of the good kind of chaos. Spanning across The Artist Room and Simon Lee galleries her new exhibition tells you exactly what to do with it - Binge - while the titles of the works themselves sound like further prompts: a caveat (Comes with a health hazard), a description of how they were installed (Fangirling the light technician), ideas if you're feeling awkward (Small talk about the weather) and fortune-cookie-sized wisdom (Everything is louder when you're looking for silence). Thank god all that's out the way, now to get on with the bingeing.

Kristy m chan comes with a health hazard 2022 oil and photochromic pigment on linen 150 x 190 cm 59 x 74 3 4 ins

SEANKELLY

Kristy M Chan, Comes with a health hazard, 2022. Courtesy of the artist, Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room

But how? It sounds counterintuitive. Art calls for slow-looking, surely, not down it, don't stop, shovel it in. Then again, it is Frieze week when I see the exhibition, a time marked by the kind of excess people try and make satirical films about (looking at you, Velvet Buzzsaw). There's not only a rash of exhibitions all across the city, but a concurrent wash of free booze and hangovers, bringing to mind binge's original dialect meaning, 'to be soaked in'. Kristy M Chan's new work is about overindulgence, whether it be daily scrolls, weekend prestige television, once a year oblivion, or a once in a lifetime bacchanalia.



Installation views kristy chan binge at simon lee gallery. courtesy of the artist simon lee gallery and the artist room. photo prudence cumming associates

Small talk about the weather (middle). Installation views, Kristy Chan, Binge at Simon Lee Gallery. Courtesy of the artist, Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room. Photo: Prudence Cumming Associates

Small talk about the weather is about that simplest of pleasantries. As with the other works in this series, it was made during the summer, and it captures 'the intensity of being around your friends and living and going to parks and bitching about how hot it was during the heatwave,' the artist says. 'I felt like I was bingeing on summer, and everything that you can do in summer.' The cleanness of the offer, and the juiciness of the colour palette floating in white gallery space, recalls the ad campaigns for iPhone X. Covetous, FOMO-inducing, Chan's canvases seem to call for excessive descriptions, as blue meets pink Tango Ice Blast-like at the bottom of a canvas whose craggy white streaks recall a keyed sportscar (perhaps that deep rose-tinted McLaren randomly parked outside St. Pancras). Meanwhile, the artist sees 'pockets of windows', or little panels unfolding 'like a fan'.

SEANKELLY

"part of me trying to paint these things, and using these titles that are really dear to me, is because I want to preserve these little fragments in time"

Kristy m chan things left behind can burn so bright 2022

Kristy M Chan, Things left behind can burn so bright, 2022. Courtesy of the artist, Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room

Binge is the artist's most abstract body of work to date. The paintings started life in a list of notes – something funny a friend said, or a line from the binge-worthy, rotoscoped comedy-drama *Undone* in the case of *Things left behind can burn so bright*. Chan picks a title she feels drawn towards, which acts like a candy floss stick, the emotional energy of a new painting gathering around it.

Kristy m chan comedown from wind chimes 2022

Kristy M Chan, Comedown from Wind Chimes, 2022. Courtesy of the artist, Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room

'All of my works come from my lived experiences,' says the artist. 'It's a lot of fun living it, it's a lot of fun painting it. The process can be a bit challenging sometimes, but I think part of me trying to paint these things, and using these titles that are really dear to me, is because I want to preserve these little fragments in time.' *Comedown from wind chimes* is a vignette of a short trip to Austria with friends, drinking wine and eating snacks and watching the neighbours' llamas running around in the fresh mountain air. 'They had these wind chimes outside their house, and it was so beautiful.' She began exploring the blocky shape of the wind chimes – 'it was like the most Bauhaus-looking wind chime I've ever seen' – and followed her gut, so to speak. 'In *Ratatouille*, there's this one bit where he has this cheese and then has this strawberry, and you put it together and you see different colours' – indeed, Remy the rat sees fireworks – 'I think that's a perfect description of how my painting works, and how I work as a human.'

SEANKELLY



Installation views Kristy Chan Binge at Simon Lee Gallery. Courtesy of the artist Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room. Photo: Prudence Cumming Associates

Installation views, Kristy Chan, Binge at Simon Lee Gallery. Courtesy of the artist, Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room. Photo: Prudence Cumming Associates

"what is letting yourself indulge and what is over-indulging?"

It's not the painter's first food analogy. Her exhibition *Strong Cookie* opened at Prior Art Space in Berlin in April, while a painting referencing her favourite snack Konjac Shuang showed in Beijing. 'I binge food a lot as well and struggled with that a little bit in the past,' she says. Yet undeniably food is 'one of things which brings everyone together'. Whether it is food, alcohol, drugs or a relationship, moving from energetic expression to rushed, dizzying blooms of colour, this suite of paintings asks: when is too much too much?

Kristy M Chan *Everything is louder when you're looking for silence* 2022
Kristy M Chan, *Everything is louder when you're looking for silence*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist, Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room

'Yes, what is letting yourself indulge and what is over-indulging?' Chan says. It's a highly relatable question, especially in a year that gave us 'Goblin Mode' and saw us embracing 'the comforts of depravity'. What is a healthy response to 2022 in the UK, a country demanding ever higher standards while kicking away the scaffolding for reaching them? With the pandemic's accelerated emphasis on digital life blurring the lines between work and play, it's increasingly difficult to switch off – so when we do, the temptation is to reach for more intense experiences to break the cycle.

Kristy M Chan *That time of the year where I lose myself* 2022

SEANKELLY

Kristy M Chan, *That time of the year where I lose myself*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist, Simon Lee Gallery and The Artist Room



Silicon Valley will continue to use every trick in their arsenal to induce bingeing, numbing scrolls and dopamine-activating rewards. As such, it seems significant that these paintings started life in a notes app, which Lorde once described as a ‘sort of mythical zone for the modern songwriter’. You could take that with a pinch of salt – and start seeing fireworks à la *Ratatouille* – or you could see the paintings in *Binge* as a kind of mythical zone, made by the hands of a surgeon as divined by a tortoise shell. Between anecdotes and epics, salvaged from the detritus of stupid quotes, copy-pasted song lyrics or a stream of typos you were too drunk to ever be able to recall the meaning of, these snapshots of a life, of love, of friendships and letting go remain compelling. Compulsive, even. ‘Everything in moderation, including moderation,’ said Oscar Wilde. So, come on. Embrace the depravity.