

Kathleen Ryan

Beachcomber

February 18 - March 25, 2023



François Ghebaly is proud to present *Beachcomber* by Kathleen Ryan in the Downtown Los Angeles gallery.

Kathleen Ryan re-envisions the detritus of American life. Spoiled fruits become monuments in glistening stone; industrial parts and domestic ephemera are transformed into plants and animals. Reclaimed automobilia, mottled gemstone façades, and armatures of debris interlink and sprawl. Ryan marries disparate objects in novel formations, equally attuned to the material culture of her sources and to the classical considerations of sculpture. Gravity, formal dynamism, and negative space are as much a part of her vocabulary as marble, crystal, and the hoods of aging muscle cars.

In her new exhibition *Beachcomber*, Ryan turns to the seaside in an arrangement of larger-than-life mollusks and cocktail skewers strewn about the gallery. Works like *Deluxe* and *Screwdriver* are modeled as mammoth fruit garnishes, complete with giant toothpicks, gem-set maraschino cherries, and citrus rinds formed from the tailgates of salvaged vehicles. A sun-bleached patio umbrella stands in for a kitschy paper cocktail parasol, a metonym that evokes multiple images of mid century American life: a suburban backyard

cookout, perhaps, or the tiki craze and its undercurrent of American imperialism. Formally, Ryan sets a contrast of the closely studied, densely detailed rendering of citric mold and desiccation against solid planes of vivid automotive paint. Beyond their immediate juxtaposition of decadence and decay, these works demonstrate the bedrock sensibilities underlying Ryan's practice, particularly the redemptive elevation of the literal and figurative junk of American society.

Elsewhere in the exhibition, Ryan repositions salvaged car hoods and trunks, arranging them in joined pairs like the cleft halves of oysters or clams. She configures hinges like lockets, affixing the shells in gestures of partial openness that highlight the interplay between exterior and interior, exposure and concealment, crude mechanism and soft, organic life. In spite of the heft of the vintage car components, these works are remarkable for their integration of space and airiness into the solid hardware of their parts. With *Soft Palate*, Ryan casts a weathered blue car hood as the shell of an oyster, its rusty exterior giving way to a shock of inner crimson. As an oyster crafts a pearl from the stuff of its shell, *Soft Palate* cups a perfect sphere of red painted steel. In other works, the pearl is displaced by a fine dewy spider web, a matrix of clear quartz crystal beads, each reflecting an inversion of its surroundings.

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Throughout the exhibition, Ryan draws upon the detritus of a consumer society obsessed with the open road and where the lines between class and kitsch often blur. Ryan's monuments to the overlooked are like the oysters they emulate: through silt and sediment, the pearl.

Kathleen Ryan (b. 1984, Santa Monica, CA) is an artist based in New York. Ryan received her BA from Pitzer College and her MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions include The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut; Josh Lilley, London; Karma, New York; François Ghebaly, Los Angeles; and The New Art Gallery, Walsall, UK. Recent group exhibitions include Bortolami, New York; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; Massimo De Carlo, Milan; Josh Lilley, London; and White Chapel Gallery, London. Her work is held in public collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.