

Kathleen Ryan

Bad Fruit

February 15 - March 29, 2020

François Ghebaly is proud to present *Bad Fruit*, Kathleen Ryan's second solo exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition, a suite of new sculptures, opens with a public reception on Saturday, February 15, 2020 from 6-9pm, and remains on view through March 29, 2020.

Kathleen Ryan's practice thrives in pairing sculptural dualities. Heaviness and lightness, handmade and industrial, kitsch and refinement, myth and material—Ryan sets these dyads in active tension throughout her work. In this exhibition, the artist channels these dualisms into a recent series of massive, rotting fruits. Studded top to bottom in pinned glass beads and semiprecious stones, these "bad fruits" capture the creeping mold, decaying skins, and collapsing structures of rotten fruits. Beautiful, intricate and playful, the rotting fruits nevertheless emit "an ugliness and unease," as the artist recently put it. "There's an inherent sense of decline built into them."¹

The exhibition consists of two large scale sculptural installations. In one, a giant bunch of grapes lies strewn darkly on the floor. Its stems form a closed system of copper pipes. The grapes look sunken and wrinkled, as if desiccating their way towards raisinhood. These are not the first grapes in Ryan's output, recalling an earlier series called *Bacchantes* in which she arranged balloon-sized concrete ovoids with chains to evoke a cascade of grapes. But while the *Bacchantes'* idealized, smooth surfaces recall ancient royalty and Grecian myth, this bunch exists in the mortal present—glimmering yes, but unable to hide a slow and inevitable decline.

The exhibition continues with a floorbound scatter of giant watermelon chunks, arrayed as if dropped from a height and composed of glass beads, gems, stones, and other found objects. For the rind of this bad watermelon, Ryan acquired and dismantled a dilapidated 1973 Airstream Safari camper, its surface marred with scratches, rust spots and dents. Despite its cosmetic flaws, the Airstream remains iconic of twentieth century mobility and American middle class leisure. This aluminum rind has its windows and antennae intact, lending the work a sci-fi retrofuturism. Thrifted housefly-shaped ashtrays serve double duty as both picnic pests and engorged black seeds. Cupped in the Airstream rinds are small ridges and valleys of pert watermelon flesh. Distributed across the wide gallery space, these watermelon chunks recall Chinese scholar stones, mountainous terrains in miniature prized for their contemplative possibilities.

While the grapes are defined by an arid darkness, the watermelon keeps hold of its juicy buoyancy. We catch one in the process of downward decay, the other reaching upwards in fleshy peaks, all rendered in scavenged beads, gemstones, and trinkets. In this show, we see a contemporary vanitas. This age of plenty has come to rot.

Kathleen Ryan was born in 1984 in Santa Monica, California. She holds an MFA from the University of California Los Angeles. Ryan's work has been shown in solo exhibitions at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA; New Art Gallery, Walsall; Cc Foundation, Shanghai; Arsenal, New York, NY; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; François Ghebaly, Los Angeles, CA; and Josh Lilley, London. Ryan has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including the Desert X Biennial 2019, Coachella Valley, CA; Simon Lee Gallery, New York, NY; Wentrup Gallery, Berlin; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, NY; and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, NY. In 2020 she will participate in the Liverpool Biennial and will be the subject of a solo exhibition at the Fondazione Antonio Dalle Nogare in Bolzano, Italy. She is represented in the public collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Hammer Museum, Cc Foundation, and Arsenal Contemporary Art. Her practice has been covered in the pages of the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Artforum*, *Frieze Magazine*, and *Mousse Magazine*, among numerous others. She lives and works in New York.

¹ Newell-Hanson, Alice, "The Sculptor Making Massive, Moldy Fruits From Gemstones." *The New York Times Style Magazine*, September 13, 2019.