

Kathleen Ryan Evokes The Seaside In Glittering Series Of Moldy Fruit At François Ghebaly Gallery

By Lea Zeitoun, March 2, 2023



At the François Ghebaly Gallery in Downtown Los Angeles, Kathleen Ryan's iconically grotesque and glistening 'rotting fruits' return for a new exhibition dubbed *Beachcomber*. Dedicated to re-envisioning the detritus of American life, Ryan's work 'marries disparate objects in novel formations, equally attuned to the material culture of her sources and 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,' writes the gallery. In *Beachcomber*, Ryan turns to the seaside, sculpting

larger-than-life mollusks and cocktail skewers strewn about the gallery. Works like *Deluxe* and *Screwdriver* depict mammoth fruit garnishes with giant toothpicks, gem-set maraschino cherries, and citrus rinds formed from the tailgates of salvaged vehicles. A sun-bleached patio umbrella stands for a kitschy paper cocktail parasol, evoking multiple images of mid-century American life.

'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,' continues François Ghebaly.

Elsewhere in the *Beachcomber* exhibition, Kathleen 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. Despite the heft of the vintage car components, these works are remarkable in integrating space and airiness into the solid hardware of their parts.

Meanwhile, with *Soft Palate*, Kathleen 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 delicate dewy spider web, a matrix of clear quartz crystal beads, each reflecting an inversion of its surroundings. 'Throughout *Beachcomber*, she 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,' concludes the gallery.