

CREATIVE BLOOM

OCTOBER 25, 2019

GIANT SCULPTURES OF MOULDY FRUIT MADE FROM GEMSTONES AND FOUND OBJECTS

by Katy Cowan



Kathleen Ryan – Sour Pearls, 2018.

It's the ugly-beautiful quality that stands out the most when observing Kathleen Ryan's work for the first time. Her large-scale sculptures of mouldy fruit are made dazzling by their many gemstones.

Picking out hues of green, blue and white, the enormous lemons, oranges and pears are painstakingly constructed from breaking down "found" objects: old necklaces, bracelets and even gem-clad vases and home accessories. "The sculptures are beautiful and pleasurable, but there's an ugliness and unease that comes with them," Ryan recently told the New York Times.

From her Tribeca studio in New York, Ryan observes real rotting fruit to find all the inspiration she needs to construct her artworks. She first carves foam into the desired shape and then begins to add her semiprecious stones in clusters, mimicking the decaying and shrivelling forms.

Beside their bright and sparkling appeal, there's an underlying message. "They're not just opulent, there's an inherent sense of decline built into them," she told the New York Times, "which is also something that's happening in the world: The economy is inflating, but so is wealth inequality, all at the expense of the environment."