

# THE NEW YORKER

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### GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

by Johanna Fateman

#### **Kathleen Ryan**

The white and blue-green fuzz of *Penicillium* mold has never held as much glittering allure as it does in “Bad Fruit,” this New York artist’s début with the Karma gallery, in which Brobdingnagian cherries and lemons appear to be rotting. Ryan’s sculptures, rendered as voluptuous spangled volumes, are barnacled by glass beads, semiprecious stones, slices of geodes, and freshwater pearls. Their surfaces alternately evoke appliquéd couture garments, bedazzled jeans, and the overflowing contents of fairy-tale treasure chests. In “Bad Lemon (Sea Witch),” from 2020, the circular geometry of a halved citrus is blurred by craggy, moss-hued formations; they look startlingly realistic from a distance, except for their sparkle. Ryan’s enlargement of everyday items may owe some debt to her scaled-up Pop predecessors (Claes Oldenburg’s food, Jeff Koons’s balloon animals, Liza Lou’s kitchen), but her labor-intensive, decorative ostentation and her celebration of the fecund, gross process of decomposition make her sculptures uniquely spectacular. A mammoth crown of daisies (made from irrigation supplies) is the show’s lone unadorned piece; a stagecoach-size rotting jack-o’-lantern, whose interior suggests an enchanted grotto, is its rhapsodic grand finale.