

# PAULA COOPER GALLERY

## VERONICA RYAN

*Along a Spectrum*

521 W 21<sup>st</sup> Street, New York

April 2 – May 28, 2022

Recent work by Veronica Ryan will be on display at Paula Cooper Gallery from April 2<sup>nd</sup> to May 28<sup>th</sup>. This coincides with Ryan's participation in the Whitney Biennial, which opens to the public on April 6<sup>th</sup>. The concurrent exhibitions in New York follow a whirlwind two years for the artist, who has been awarded numerous awards and accolades, including an OBE earlier this year. In 2021, Ryan was the subject of a major exhibition at Spike Island, Bristol, and her sculptures *Custard Apple*, *Breadfruit*, and *Soursop* were installed in London as the first monument to the Windrush Generation.<sup>1</sup>

Ryan's meticulously handmade sculptures allow a paucity of means to inform a rich signification. Combining fruits, seeds, pods, husks, and the manufactured materials used to divide and transport them, Ryan hints at the concerns of global trade, pathological disfunctions, and ecological collapse without forcing the disastrous implications. Through weaving, stitching, casting, and staining Ryan transforms overlooked everyday materials into treasures, presenting fragile sculptural propositions to resolve frustrations with the systems that produced them. Nestled in niches, stacked on shelves, suspended, hanging, or neatly arranged on the floor, the works are positioned in relationship to a support or structure, making themselves at home wherever they may be.

The exhibition's title, *Along a Spectrum*, points to the ability of objects to represent diverse psychological propositions and embody issues of displacement and alienation particular to their context. Ryan has described how people take their culture with them, interweaving past and present, and these threads run through her work. Early pieces on paper are highly personal, sometimes incorporating family photographs and medical care items, and others have a universal significance in their surprising uses of ubiquitous materials, such as the brightly colored netting one might buy fruit or nuts in at the market. But appearances can be misleading, and what might look like a collection of mango seeds, for example, could in fact have been shaped by hand. "I like the sense that you don't quite know what's there," Ryan notes, delighting in the unexpected reactions her work inspires.<sup>2</sup>

**Veronica Ryan** OBE (b. 1956, Plymouth, Montserrat) studied at St. Albans College of Art and Design, Bath Academy of Art in Corsham Court, The Slade School of Art at University College, London, and The School of Oriental and African Studies at London University. Ryan's first one-person exhibition was at Arnolfini, Bristol in 1987. Other important one-person shows have been presented at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (1988); Camden Arts Centre (1995); Aldrich Museum (1996); Salena Gallery, Brooklyn (2005); Tate St Ives (2000, 2005 and 2017); The Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh (2011); The Art House, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England (2017); and Spike Island, Bristol (2021). Ryan has been the recipient of numerous awards and prizes, including most recently the 2019 Pollock Krasner Grant and the 2018 Freelands Award. Ryan lives and works in England and New York.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Windrush Generation* refers to Caribbean nationals who travelled to the UK in the 1950s and 1960s after World War II (and is named after one of the first ships from Jamaica in 1948). The term also acknowledges previous and subsequent generations of immigrants who made their homes in the UK.

<sup>2</sup> Vanessa Boni, Courtney J. Martin, Dorothy Price, and Natalie Rudd, *Along a Spectrum*, exhibition catalogue (Bristol: Spike Island, 2021), p. 73.