

24 May – 22 Sept 2019

Floors 1 & 4



Kathleen Ryan

FREE
gallery guide

Kathleen Ryan

Kathleen Garman (1901-1979), Epstein's widow, had grown up near Walsall, at the time when it was a thriving Black Country town, in the heart of industrial Britain. In 1973 she donated 365 artworks, collected with the couple's close friend, American sculptor Sally Ryan (1916-1968), to the people of Walsall, wishing for culture to exist beyond London.

We show our collections thematically, rather than chronologically, since it was important to her that the collection should be used to make links between art from all periods, reflective of the breadth of her collecting, from world objects, which her husband passionately collected, to work by contemporary artists. The key themes, which reflect strands in Epstein's work, include Figure Studies, Flowers and Still Life and Work and Leisure, therefore Kathleen Ryan's work feels completely at home within the collections spaces on Floor 1.

Bowling balls are for Ryan, what mannequins are for Daniel Silver, obsessively collected from eBay and charity shops. While Silver gives the resulting

sculptures the names of the individual models the mannequins were developed from and therefore named after, the names or 'nicknames' of the bowlers are often engraved on the balls Ryan collects, personification of those who religiously buffed and polished them as if precious stones, and whose throws left the marks that are now part of the material and celebrated in the sculpture. These familiar objects are transformed into beautiful works of sculpture, and the artist breathes new life into the discarded artefacts of our lives.

On Floor 4, our windows look out to the town centre below, and works referencing industrial heritage fit in with the context of the landscape of the heart of the industrial Black Country. Recent works by the artist were cast in a defunct blast furnace in Pennsylvania, and with them the artist alludes to the manufacturing decline which affects both US and UK towns. These works reference the importance of the legacy of the material, the connection with place and the artist's anthropological interests.



Image credits:

Galaxie 300, Mother of Pearl and Cultivator photographs by Peter Harris Studio, images courtesy MIT List Visual Arts Center

Black Lemon photograph by Lance Brewer

All works courtesy the artist and Josh Lilley, London



Black Lemon, 2019 (pictured above)

Obsidian, black onyx, agate, turquoise, pyrite, tiger eye, jasper, smokey quartz, tektite, lapis lazuli, aventurine, amazonite, glass and steel pins on coated polystyrene

Placed on a walnut plinth, in-keeping with the presentation of our Epstein bronzes, this still life alludes to mortality. Beautiful precious stones come together to form a mouldy lemon. Rotting fruit was a classic motif used in Dutch genre painting to represent death, while precious stones are often left to family members as mementoes to pass down the generations, continuing to live on long after the deceased. The precious stones render something generally thought of as unattractive into a thing of beauty.

Galaxie 300, 2019 (pictured left)

Black and white bowling balls, brass

Everyday leisure objects, bowling bowls here entwined with brass wire, represent a pearl and onyx necklace. As well as being an oversized version of 'family jewels' the work imbues everyday objects, with a mysterious quality, the polished surfaces, carefully looked after by the named owners, have a beautiful material quality, like Ancient Greek relics, scarred by time. Just like Epstein and Rodin, the work shows the artist's connection with the history of the materials, and appreciation of imperfections.

Floor 4 works



Mother of Pearl, 2019 (pictured above)

Iron, Abalone shell

Two industrial radiators perch on top of one another, giving the Henry Moore-like contortions of an abstract female form. Contained inside, shimmering abalone shells glisten, invoking the beauty of motherhood, and transforming industrial relics into an object of beauty and purpose.

Embrace, 2018 (pictured right)

Granite, bronze, carved semi-precious stone

Reminiscent of a tombstone, with ivy vines growing around it, *Embrace* acts a kind of memento mori, symbolic of life and death. The traditional granite block is embraced by bronze wire and carved stone leaves. Its title connects with Epstein's *Jacob and the Angel* sculpture currently on display in our Foyer.



Cultivator, 2019 (pictured above)

Onyx, brass, cast iron

An industrial cast-iron caliper resembles a hanging basket, and the fruit of a palm tree, the husk containing polished black onyx spheres as its seeds.



Related Events

Sculpture Symposium

Friday 24 May 11am-4pm

Floor 4, Conference Room

Join us for a day of talks and discussion around sculpture in public institutions and the launch of Kathleen Ryan's exhibition, with an artist-led tour

£8 (including refreshments and a sandwich lunch)



Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), *Jacob and the Angel*, 1940-41, Alabaster sculpture, Image courtesy Tate.



Daniel Silver, *Peter*, 2018, onyx and marble, Image courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery

Sketching Sundays

1st Sunday of every month, 12.30 - 3.30pm

Come and spend a relaxing afternoon drawing in the galleries. Sunday 7 July & 1 Sept will focus on *Kathleen Ryan*.

Feelgood Fridays 2nd Friday of every month

Enjoy a talk or activity inspired by our Collections programme

Friday 12 July

2pm Livestreamed intro to *Sculpture in Focus & Kathleen Ryan* via our Twitter and Periscope platforms

Closing weekend event

Saturday 21 September

2pm Exhibition Tour

For more information, ask at reception or visit: thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk

COMING SOON
in 2020

**Garman Ryan Collection
and Sally Ryan in-focus** Floors 1&2

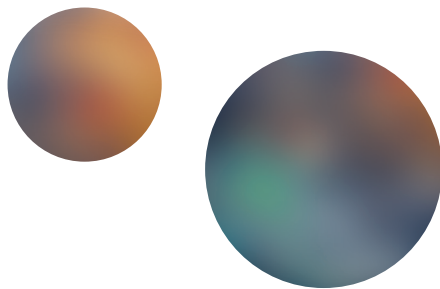
**Arts Council Collection:
Women in Sculpture** Floor 3

CONCURRENT SCULPTURE EXHIBITIONS

Daniel Silver,
Floor 3, with interventions
on Floors 1&2, until 2 June

Jacob Epstein, *Jacob and the Angel*,
Foyer until 29 September

Sculpture in Focus,
Floors 1&2,
until 2 December



The New Art Gallery is delighted to bring the work of acclaimed international sculptor Kathleen Ryan (b. 1984, USA) to a UK public audience for the first time, as part of the Gallery's year-long celebration of sculpture, marking 60 years since Jacob Epstein's death.

Ryan is based in New York, where Epstein was born and brought up, before he emigrated to Europe in the early 20th century. A chance amalgamation of the names of the founders of the Gallery's esteemed Garman Ryan Collection (Epstein's widow Kathleen Garman and the couple's close friend, Sally Ryan) led Collections Curator Julie Brown to discover the contemporary sculptor's work, which she immediately found interesting, fresh and evocative, with many ties to the collection of her near name-sakes.

Referencing the history of sculpture and contemporary culture in her work, Ryan uses both traditional sculptural material, such as bronze, as well as everyday found objects, giving her work a distinct visual language which connects both to the classical European tradition and American pop art. Ryan's current pre-occupations include appropriating heavy, manufacturing materials with natural forms, alluding to themes of industrial decay, production and reproduction. Universal themes are celebrated, from the classical motif of maternity, prevalent in Epstein's work, to re-appraisals of traditional memento mori and still lives.

For further information contact
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www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk
#SculptureinFocus

Josh Lilley



Walsall Council