

Containers and Materials

Veronica Ryan: Unruly Objects

32. *Untitled from the Shack series*, 2018

Plastic bottles and synthetic netting
Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York, and Alison Jacques, London

The plastic bottle—one of the most humble and disposable objects—is one of Ryan’s primary subjects. At its essence, a bottle is a receptacle for water. Ryan’s engagement with the bottle expands her ongoing investigations into containers, from the seedpod to the multistory building. In some of these works (#33–37), Ryan solidifies the bottle’s empty interior by casting it in plaster. Several of these casts recall concrete architecture with arches and curves. Others take on the qualities of the reclining human body—another container for water.

In several sculptures (#32, 39, and 40), bottles are crumpled together inside netting. This open mesh allows light to pass through their transparent plastic. In #32, for instance, blue bottles act almost like stained glass that adorns sacred spaces. In #38, Ryan plays up these notions of value and worth by casting a large soda bottle in porcelain, historically a precious material used for refined drinking vessels like teacups.

Ryan’s rigorous formal experiments highlight the color, material, and

proportions of the bottle, giving sustained care and attention to an item that is usually discarded. In doing so, she expresses concern for the environment and asks us to reconsider how we interact with “single-use” objects.

33. *Garden of Your Mind III*, 2021

Plaster, fishing wire, thread, and twine
Courtesy of Alison Jacques, and Paula
Cooper Gallery, New York

34. *Collective Moments XIV*, 2022

Plaster, hairnet, Sculpey, and twine
Courtesy of Alison Jacques, and Paula
Cooper Gallery, New York

35. *Multiple Conversations X*, 2021

Plaster, plastic net, and string
Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York, and Alison Jacques, London

36. *Collective Moments V*, 2022

Plaster, hairnet, and plastic bags
Courtesy of Alison Jacques, and Paula
Cooper Gallery, New York

37. *Water Bottle Flower*, 2022

Plaster
Courtesy of Alison Jacques, and Paula
Cooper Gallery, New York

38. *In Silent Rest*, 2024

Porcelain
Courtesy of Alison Jacques, and Paula
Cooper Gallery, New York

9. *Pouch*, 2020

Hand-dyed crocheted pouch
Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York, and Alison Jacques, London

39. *Systems & Microbes I*, 2022

Date net, polyester thread, string, and bottles
Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York, and Alison Jacques, London

40. *Systems & Microbes II*, 2022

Date net, polyester thread, string, and bottles
Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York, and Alison Jacques, London

41. *Systems & Microbes III*, 2022

Bottle tops, polyester thread, and hairnet
Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York, and Alison Jacques, London

42. *Residue*, late 1980s

Bronze with patina
Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York, and Alison Jacques, London

Despite its solid material, the surface of this bronze rises and falls like sea waves. Ryan has pointed out the crumpled quality of this sculpture, noting, “this is partly to do with the fact of the work carrying its own history and signature.” Like many of Ryan’s works, it is an abstract form that nevertheless exhibits the marks of its own making and evokes personal and visual associations. Its rough texture reflects the humble material from which it was cast: creased paper covered in wax.