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# FORECAST SVETLANA BAILEY

WRITTEN *by* KATHLEEN LINN

Fruit has symbolised decadence, sexuality and fertility across the centuries but for photographer Svetlana Bailey the fleeting life span of fruit also speaks to the pressures and expectations placed on women, and the larger processes of environmental destruction that we face today. Fruit forms metaphor and signifier in Bailey's work, where illusion and reflection ask us to reconsider our reality through staged photography.

**You were born in Russia, later immigrating to Germany and studying art in Australia and the US, and you currently live in New York. Can you reflect on this global experience?**

I feel like I am never home anywhere. I may have a connection to a place and the language ... stays with me – now that I have a child, I pass all three languages [Russian, German and English] onto

her. New York is the place that I feel most at home, I think that's because so many people come from different parts of the world and can really relate to that experience. I still do a lot of artist residencies and while New York is my main base I spend several months a year in Sydney or other places.

**You primarily work with staged photography – can you talk a little about your process and how you work in the studio?**

Usually I begin with drawings and sketches or borrow from different photographs. I see myself like a painter who keeps adding layers. I might not stage a photograph for a whole year and then something just clicks, I find a specific material that was missing. The piece might sit for a long time in my studio before it is finished.



**Contemporary photography tends to weave illusions rather than record truths – can you tell us about how illusion and a play of surfaces function in your work?**

In the work *Woman with Fruit* (2017) the space within and behind the work is covered with reflective tape, a body is reflected in a paper towel dispenser and a collection of fruit is doused with a painted silver surface. The photograph flattens these layers and its matte surface suppresses reflections. The reflection of the woman in this work is another surface – one that reflects fantasies and expectations.

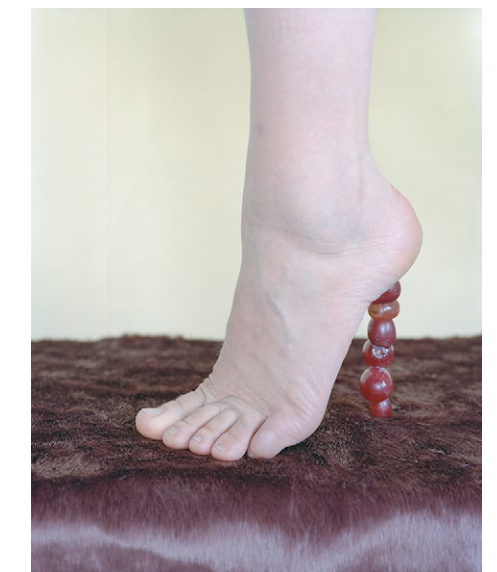
I'm interested in the duality of a moment, of seeing oneself in the other, in the personal illusion, the surface of a surface and being in the process of undressing various layers.

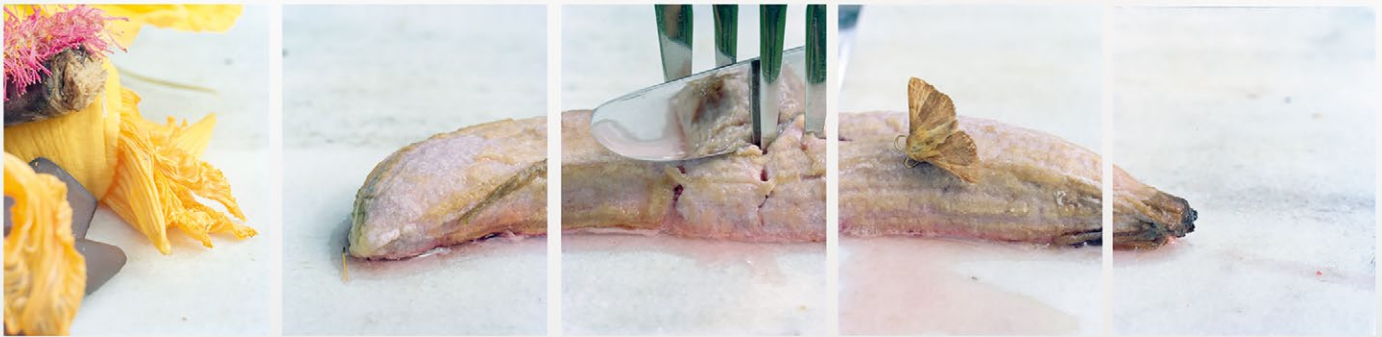
**Fruit is entwined with sex and sexuality – it is often a metaphor for female fertility.**

**How do you use fruit in your work to unpack ideas around sex and femininity?**

Many fruits are associated with female body parts, resemble human organs or carry cultural meanings. Fruits' short life span points to the human life cycle sped up: the mystery of seeding, the beauty of flowering, the patience of ripening, the rapture of a pinnacle and the ever changing.

I'm interested in fruit's sexual nature. There is a collection of poems by D. H. Lawrence titled 'Birds, Beasts, and Flowers' (1923) that references the anonymous life of fruit, swaying between the gentle and tender, the vulgar and humorous. Lawrence details





Top to bottom  
SVETLANA BAILEY  
*In Memory of Big Mike*,  
2020  
self adhesive fabric  
127 x 101.6 cm  
Page 140  
Left to right  
SVETLANA BAILEY  
*passion berry*, 2019  
pigment print  
127 x 101.6 cm  
Installation view  
SVETLANA BAILEY  
*woman with fruit*, 2017

Page 141  
Top to bottom  
SVETLANA BAILEY  
*grape foot*, 2019  
99.6 x 78.7 cm  
SVETLANA BAILEY  
*after birth*, 2019  
pigment print  
99.6 x 78.7 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Arterreal Gallery, Sydney.

how the senses are affected by experiencing fruit – one can become fully immersed or violent and lose oneself in stimulation.

**The fruit in your work is often rotting and decaying, creating repulsion and attraction, much like the human body itself. Can you talk about this and how it relates to ideas around femininity and sexuality?**

Fruit has a very short life cycle but at the same time it is very similar to a human being – it grows and blossoms, reaches its height and then just dies and ends in a maybe very smelly and ugly way. Women are often seen as beautiful and sweet, they are compared to fruit, something that is visually pleasing, smells good and gives pleasure.

**Can you tell us about how you explore the effects of consumption and climate change through fruit?**

Climate change is still a very difficult topic, especially in the US. There is a lot of conflict, people want to keep it at a distance. There are feelings of guilt and responsibility that people try to suppress so I like to approach this topic in an accessible way ... in a humorous and even beautified way.

In the work *In Memory of Big Mike* (2020) I've simulated a banana using edible

non-banana materials. The Big Mike banana was the most commercially produced banana ... until the 1960s when it effectively died out because of fungal infections due to monoculture. It was replaced by the Cavendish banana. The Big Mike banana is an example of the natural catastrophes the world is facing. During the last forty years ... societies have reached new heights of materialism and this has coincided with the world losing half of its vertebrates and Europe losing 80% of its flying insects.

**What is coming up in 2020?**

I am an artist in residence at the International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISPC) in New York. After attending ISPC on a residency grant from the Australia Council for the Arts in 2018 I have returned as part of the New York-based artists program. There are seven artists doing this two-year residency.

I am also in the middle of making more work with bananas! **V**

Svetlana Bailey will have a solo exhibition at Arterreal Gallery, Sydney from August 5 to 29, 2020

Svetlana Bailey is represented by Arterreal Gallery, Sydney.  
arterreal.com.au