

Flash Art



"The Gentle Way (JUDO)" installation view at Clifton Benevento, New York.

The Gentle Way (JUDO) Clifton Benevento / New York

A sculpture is the same sculpture still, regardless of how much its form changes, even when outside intervention or a work's own inertia or decomposition alters its structure. The various constructions in "The Gentle Way (JUDO)," a group exhibition organized by participating artist Zak Kitnick, grow, expand or rot in multiple directions, both away from and toward each other.

Judo, Japanese for *the gentle way*, began in the 19th century as a martial art that relies on a series of light gestures that will gently turn one's opponent's strength against himself. Here, the various sculptures in the group hang in the balance, changing compositionally at a progressive state. Regardless of one's point of entry into the exhibition, the first work to encounter is Roelof Louw's *Soul City (Pyramid of Oranges)* (1967), a bright, free-standing structure that manages to simultaneously deplete and proliferate itself the longer it is on display — visitors are encouraged to help themselves to a piece of fruit, wearing down its peak over the length of its exhibition, while the sweet, biting scent of citrus intensifies, perfuming the space the longer *Soul City* sits in the sunshine. Four weeks into the show, the pyramid had almost entirely changed states, from a cone of orange globes to a heavy cloud of fragrance.

A story above the oranges, Kitnick's *Catfish* (2015) is wedged between the pipes near the ceiling. A soft blue square of Instant Quick® Room Temperature, the instant foam packaging almost immediately turned into a solid lump within its fabric casing when it was activated upon being placed in position. Changing the density of *Catfish* used the particularity required in creating a site-specific work against itself, into one of inevitable self-destruction, since the once-supple form now has to be broken apart to be removed. Completing the triangle, Rochelle Goldberg's *A Basic Instinct* (2015) offers a beige oasis from the neon fruit, industrial packaging, nearby barbed-wire works of Charles Harlan (*Wood, Tree*; both 2014) and floating text messages of self-doubt and grief from Anicka Yi *Can You Teach The Agony To Sing?* (2014). The off-white carpet is a backdrop for a constellation of minimalist steel lines and ominous shapes molded from crude oil, a fitting final stop to all of the stages in organic matter to have rolled out before it.

by Jennifer Piejko