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W Reviews
Critical Eye
By Aaron Gell

ART | If art is an attempt to capture the evanescent beauty of the world around us, the better to package it for resale, it should come as no surprise that ANYA GALLACCIO lives in a council fiat and drives a 13-year-old car. A poet of transience and loss, the British-born artist, whose installations tend to melt or molder before viewers' eyes, has achieved international renown, but getting paid has been another story. As impressed as collectors may have been with, say, Gallaccio's 34-ton block of ice bricks (a ball of rock salt burning away at its center like a malignant tumor), or her decaying carpet of rose heads, they weren't exactly whipping out the platinum cards.

Gallaccio's first solo show in New York (at Lehmann Maupin gallery in SoHo) will represent a considerable evolution, then, in that it includes pieces that are, as she puts it, "have-able." Despite her plans some two months before the opening to set fire to the gallery's Rem Koolhaas-designed plywood walls, her work has lately been moving in a more traditional direction. There is even a proper sculpture: an apple tree cast in bronze with porcelain fruit.

As with much of the artist's work, dating back to the floor of molten lead she created for the legendary "Freeze" show, the tree provokes an onrush of associations. Viewers are invited to ponder its unchanging perfection, the violence of its hacked limbs and the fragility of its inedible apples, which are crowded along the leafless trunk like a disease. One detects a nod to Cézanne, and to New York's nickname as well. And, of course, there's that Garden of Eden business (what could be more transient than Paradise?), in which light the piece hints at the artist's surrender to market realities: Gallaccio, an art-world Eve, may be giving in to temptation at last.