

## Stephen Friedman Gallery

**Sarah Ball:  
Tilted**

**54 Franklin St  
New York  
10013**

Friday February 23 –  
Saturday March 23 2024

Opening:  
Friday February 23, 6–8pm



“[Dandies] have no other calling but to cultivate the idea of beauty in their persons, to satisfy their passions, to feel and to think.” - Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863).

Stephen Friedman Gallery presents *Tilted*, the first solo exhibition by British artist **Sarah Ball** in New York. The show comprises a new body of paintings exploring notions of dandyism in the 21st century.

Portraying individuals who embrace self-expression and challenge conventions of gender, Ball spotlights facial features, hairstyles, clothing, jewellery, and makeup that unveil their unique qualities. The artist draws inspiration from diverse sources such as street casting, archival photographs, and social media. Set against flat expanses of colour and confined within tightly framed compositions, Ball imparts a surreal, timeless quality to her subjects by deliberately withholding any narrative about their identity.

Ball's new work is heavily influenced by the figure of the dandy, a concept popularised by poet and playwright Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). For Wilde, the dandy was a man who diligently attended to his appearance, clothing, and lifestyle. Often cultivating an indifferent air, the classic dandy was as much a character as an aesthetic. This ideal found its roots in Beau Brummell (1778-1840), a pioneering figure who fundamentally altered the trajectory of men's fashion by setting a new standard of elegance – abandoning wigs and adopting well-fitted trousers instead of breeches. In recent history, 'dandy' has been used to refer either to a fastidious or a flamboyant dresser, typified by groups such as Teddy Boys, Judies, Mods and sapeurs.

Discussing dandyism in relation to her new body of work, Ball explains: “I've come to realise that there isn't a description – the idea is a fluid one and it can change in respect to the social, political, and cultural climate of the time. Certain attributes though seem to be a given – theatricality, creativity, style, flamboyance, individuality, and a certain degree of (non-gendered) camp. In her 1964 essay 'Notes on Camp', Susan Sontag refers to camp as “the modern day Dandyism” in the age of mass culture – this particularly resonates with me.”

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

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One of Ball's subjects, Henry, is depicted in several paintings. Each one embodies this "modern day Dandyism" and showcases the sitter's sartorial elegance. In one painting Henry dons a beret, a pair of braces, and a vintage Arrow shirt and collar. In another they are depicted wearing bright red lipstick with rouged cheeks. This playful defiance of conventional gender roles connects each work in the show. Declan wears a billowing Simone Rocha gown while holding a long-haired guinea pig. Wrapped ceremoniously in a lace handkerchief, the sitter's pet is presented to the viewer like a votive offering.

This eccentricity continues in *Pink Elliot* (2023), whose facial hair is offset by the ostentatious pink ruffles cascading down his shirt. Viewed alongside one another, the variety of Ball's sitters in the exhibition reveals the breadth of contemporary dandyism.

## Notes to editors

### Sarah Ball

Sarah Ball was born in Yorkshire, UK in 1965. She currently lives and works in Cornwall, UK. Ball studied at Newport Art College in the early 1980s and completed an MFA at Bath Spa University in 2005.

Ball's works are included in the permanent collections of The British Museum, London, UK; Grace Museum, Abilene, Texas, USA; The Hepworth Wakefield, UK; Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway; Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Pond Society, Shanghai, China; Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, Texas, USA; University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, Wales and Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art, Rizhao City, China.

In 2025, a major solo exhibition by Ball will open at Longlati Foundation, Shanghai.

## Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery is a contemporary art gallery that was founded in 1995 with a focus on representing exceptional artists from around the world. Since its inauguration, the gallery has been based in Mayfair, London. In October 2023, the gallery expanded and relocated to Cork Street. In November 2023, the gallery opened its first location outside the UK at 54 Franklin Street in Tribeca, New York.