

## Stephen Friedman Gallery

House and Garden  
Artists in their studios: Sarah Ball  
Joshua Monaghan  
January 2022

# HOUSE & GARDEN

**Artists in their studios: Sarah Ball**



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PEOPLE *artist*

*Artists in their studio*

### SARAH BALL

She is not alone in being drawn to Cornwall, but instead of seascapes, this artist is making waves with her portraits. EMILY TOBIN meets Sarah – and her mesmeric subjects

PHOTOGRAPH JOSHUA MONAGHAN

When the Great Western Railway extended into Cornwall in 1877, the fishing towns of Newlyn and St Ives began to attract artists. The quality of the light and the drama of the coastline tempted the likes of Stanhope Forbes, Frank Bramley and, later, Barbara Hepworth and Patrick Heron (Peter Lanyon was a native of the county).

Like her predecessors, the Yorkshire-born artist Sarah Ball now finds herself far from home, working from Trewarveneth Studio in Newlyn. Used by the artist John Wells and the sculptor Denis Mitchell throughout the latter decades of the 20th century, the studio is now owned by the Borlase Smart John Wells Trust. Though Sarah's works are not concerned with the landscape, she says that the space is 'rich with the history of the people who have been there before'. Indeed, John Wells was closely associated with Hepworth, Heron and Lanyon.

From her studio, which is only a stone's throw from the port, Sarah creates surreal, immaculately rendered portraits; these large, closely cropped compositions feel cinematic in quality. 'My work is primarily about identity and how it is manifested in a physical way,' she says. While she references photographs, archives and found images, she is 'not trying to slavishly recreate a person's physicality'.

The effect is transfixing. These faces are so nearly photographic in their quality, but there is something deliberately offbeat: the flat planes of colour, the smooth, grey background and the unsettling direct gaze of the subject remind you that this is a two-way relationship, in which both the painting and the viewer are being scrutinised. □ Sarah Ball's first solo show at Stephen Friedman Gallery, W1, opens on January 28: [stephenfriedman.com](http://stephenfriedman.com)

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