

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Sarah Ball

Sarah Ball's meticulously rendered portraits explore themes of gender and identity. Demonstrating an acute sensitivity to the psyche of her subjects, she emphasises physical characteristics that define how we outwardly portray ourselves to the world.

Ball uses source material such as newspaper cuttings, archival photographs and social media to inform her portraits. Often depicting people who celebrate self-expression and contest traditional binary norms, Ball highlights physiognomy, hairstyles, clothes, jewellery and make-up that reveal the idiosyncrasies of her anonymous, often unknowing sitters. Set against flat planes of colour and confined within closely cropped compositions, the artist lends the people within her work a surreal, timeless quality by denying the viewer any form of narrative about their identity.

Ball's solo major exhibition 'Oh! You Pretty Things' will open at Longlati Foundation, Shanghai, China in August 2025. Ball also had a solo presentation of new paintings at Stephen Friedman Gallery, New York, in February 2024. The gallery presented its first major show of Ball's work at Frieze New York in May 2021 and her first solo exhibition in London in January 2022, accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. In this project, the artist realised portraits on an unprecedented scale, resulting in a newly abstracted visual language. A selection of drawings was presented for Art Basel Hong Kong Kabinett's sector in 2023, which amplified this pared-back quality through the fluid, colour-rich medium of chalk pastel.

Recent group exhibitions include 'Being There', No.1 Royal Crescent, Bath, UK (2024); 'X Collection 202: Portrait of a Man', X Museum, Beijing, China (2024); 'Contemporary collecting', British Museum, London, UK (2024); 'A Living Collection', Hepworth Wakefield, West Yorkshire, UK (2023); 'Being In the World', Long Museum, Shanghai, China (2022); 'I'm stepping high, I'm drifting, and there I go leaping', Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art, Rizhao City, Shandong Province, China (2022); 'From Near and Far: Collage and Figuration in the Contemporary Age', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2022); 'Space for Imaginative Actions', Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany (2022); 'Friend Zone', Half Gallery, New York (2021) and 'I See You', Victoria Miro, London, UK (2020).

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. Profiles on the artist have been published by The New York Times, Artsy, House & Garden, and The Art Newspaper.

Ball's works are included in the permanent collections of the British Museum, London, UK; Grace Museum, Abilene, Texas, USA; Hepworth Wakefield, West Yorkshire, 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.