

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Jonathan Baldock: we are flowers of one garden

Friday 20 January - Saturday 25
February 2023

Private view:
Thursday 19 January, 6–8pm

Gallery hours:
Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm
Saturday 11am–5pm



Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to present its second solo exhibition by **Jonathan Baldock**.

Centred on themes of nature and the cycle of life, this highly personal exhibition draws inspiration from Baldock's relationship with his mother and her garden. The artist brings together a new body of work comprising ceramics, sculptures and wall hangings. Baldock examines the spectrum of human emotion, brutally and blissfully reflecting on what it means to be alive and how we find our place on Earth.

Though autobiographical in content, the exhibition contains many elements which are universal. Baldock has a powerful relationship with his mother, who taught him many of the crafts and skills he uses in his practice. From this early dynamic to the development of a friendship and shared understanding as adults, the artist tenderly illustrates their important bond. Finding inspiration in his mother's garden, Baldock has created a series of works based on flowers. Faces appear within them; floral forms and human body parts adorn vases and far-reaching roots crawl along the ground below. A large sculpture, the 'mother flower', reflects Baldock's theatrical and immersive style. He comments, "I'd like my flowers to look like they could perhaps eat you." The works are rooted in humour and possess a camp element, aspects that the artist is continually drawn to.

Choices of material and the artist's interest in anthropology is evident throughout Baldock's practice: ceramics are formed of clay from earth and textiles are derived from plants. Exploring the origins of his perspective as a queer artist, Baldock's narratives include his family history. His relatives were farm workers, and he has been directly inspired by Western folk art, which saw those working the land and close to nature being creatively influenced by it. Baldock is also interested in the concept of nature transcending class, he explains, "working class gardens are often things of pride. They are creative outlets and a means of expression".

Demonstrating his continued interest in the human senses, Baldock has incorporated natural scents into some of the works. The exhibition features an atmospheric soundscape by musician Luke Barton sampling sounds of the artist and his mother talking and singing, and his grandfather, who worked on hop farms, playing the accordion. Having previously only used his own body in his practice, the artist has cast his mother's body in this new series of works. Baldock describes the making process as a way of "engaging head and hand".

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Working in a performative way through his assemblages, Baldock brings the viewer, the object and the space they occupy into question as theatre or a ritualistic act. Full of physicality and wit, the artist's work also occupies a macabre quality, simultaneously considering change, ageing, grief and loss.

Jonathan Baldock

Jonathan Baldock was born in 1980 in Kent, UK. He lives and works in London. The artist works across multiple platforms including sculpture, installation and performance. He graduated from Winchester School of Art with a BA in Painting (2000-2003), followed by the Royal College of Art, London with an MA in Painting (2003-2005).

Baldock will have a solo exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK in September 2023. In 2022, Baldock was included in the group ceramics exhibition, 'Strange Clay', at the Hayward Gallery in London. In 2021, Baldock had solo exhibitions at La Casa Encendida, Madrid, Spain and at Accelerator, Stockholm, Sweden. Stephen Friedman Gallery presented sculptural and textile works by the artist as part of the group exhibition 'Threadbare' in April 2021. Baldock's work was included in the inaugural Towner International biennial at Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, UK in October 2020.

Baldock's first solo exhibition with Stephen Friedman Gallery opened in September 2019. This show coincided with the presentation of a large-scale, interactive sculpture by Baldock at Fitzrovia Chapel. In 2019, Baldock's solo exhibition 'Facecrime' opened at Camden Arts Centre, London following a Freelands Lomax Ceramics Fellowship. The exhibition travelled to Tramway, Glasgow in August 2019 and Bluecoat, Liverpool in March 2020.

Other notable solo and two-person exhibitions include 'Me, Myself and I', Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway (2020) and 'LOVE LIFE: Act 3', De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, UK (2017). Baldock's work recently entered the Arts Council Collection, UK.

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery represents exceptional artists from around the world. Since its inauguration in 1995, the gallery has been based in London on Old Burlington Street, Mayfair. The gallery has three spaces in which it hosts solo and group exhibitions throughout the year. Additional works can be viewed by appointment in private rooms and office spaces. There is also a facility to exhibit outdoor sculpture in a landscaped private garden.

In Autumn 2023, Stephen Friedman Gallery will expand and relocate to Cork Street, Mayfair. The new location will be designed by award-winning London architectural firm David Kohn Architects.