PRESS RELEASE
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exeter phoenix

SARAH RYDER
MULTIFERALS

Exeter Phoenix Gallery
15 NOV 2025 – 31 JAN 2026

Open Mon – Sat, 10.30am – 5.30pm
Entry is FREE.

Preview: Sat 15 November, 3-5pm



Sarah Ryder, Imperceivable (until it isn't), 2024

Exeter Phoenix is pleased to present *MULTIFERALS*, a solo exhibition of protean and convention-defying abstract paintings by artist Sarah Ryder.

Ryder transforms catering-grade cooking foil into colourful, unstretched painting surfaces that are alive with folds, creases, and sculptural form. Simultaneously delicate and bold, they hang and fold, twist and slump, shimmer and reveal themselves as we move around them, functioning somewhere between the more formal definitions of painting and sculpture.

Working directly on the floor of her home-studio, she joins lengths of foil into large, flexible surfaces, on which she applies and takes away paint through a responsive, physical process. Using brushes, sponges, improvised tools, and parts of her body, she strokes, presses, and slides the paint, which records each action as it moves across the foil. Sometimes she paints against the hard floor, her gestures pressing firmly into the surface; other times she works on suspended areas, where the foil gives way and marks soften and diffuse.

Ryder returns to rework multiple paintings over time, which, without need of stretcher bars or mounts to support them, are folded and stored in between, gradually building up a patina of memory through touch and transformation. In the same way, their journey from studio to gallery and back again, from one exhibition space to another, layers new

texture and form to each work, allowing for new and evolving versions to emerge with each presentation.

MULTIFERALS invites visitors into Ryder's unruly terrain of temporal feral forms – abstract manifestations of non-linear time, embodied knowledge, and collective connection, which resist containment materially, conceptually, and politically – yet are settled for now, in their current variants, within the gallery space. The artist offers no prescribed route or 'correct' reading of the work and visitors are invited to move through the 'landscape' of the exhibition, around each piece, taking their own time, and exploring a quiet, tactile experience that invites reflection and curiosity.

Drawing on the textures of working-class life and informed by anarcha-feminist principles that celebrate collective autonomy, intersectionality, and fluid identity, Ryder employs the term feral - not to represent a descent into chaos, but as a mode of joyful defiance against systems that seek to domesticate us: capitalism, patriarchy, institutional expectation. Through her work, she aims to open up space for creative freedom, complexity, and entropic beauty.

"These works respond to the heaviness of living through interconnected crises under capitalism: from climate collapse to genocidal atrocities, and doomscrolling alienation in the palm of your hand. You might wonder what the point of art is in the face of all this. But I keep coming back to the fact that art connects; quietly, weirdly, powerfully. It can recharge us, remind us that we're human, help us feel again. It feels vital to me, a way to stay awake to the world and experience a kind of shared aliveness."
Sarah Ryder, 2025

At once playful and political, MULTIFERALS offers a sense of soft resistance, valuing slowness, mess, adaptation, and embodied thinking.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a new essay by independent writer & curator Jes Fernie and an affordable limited edition Giclée print by the artist.

About the artist

Sarah Ryder* (b. 1978, Wales) lives and works in Colwyn Bay, North Wales. MFA Painting, Slade School of Fine Art, London, 2008; BA in Fine Art Painting at the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside, 2000.
She works within abstraction, responding intuitively to colour, mark-making, and the tactile nature of materials. She describes her practice as transient, materially responsive, and resistant to fixed categorisation. Using aluminium cooking foil as a democratic and adaptable substrate, she explores ideas of movement, fragility, and transformation,

allowing works to visibly evolve over time. Her working-class background and ongoing interest in anarcha-feminism inform a practice rooted in autonomy, fluidity, and resistance to dominant systems – grounded in both contemporary discourse and a deep, embodied connection to the ancient lineage of artmaking.
*Exhibited as Sarah Bowker-Jones until 2020

www.sarahryder.co.uk

Recent solo exhibitions

2024 *Imperceivable (until it isn't)*. Isotop Fellesatelier, Bergen
2022 *Feet. Brain. Back Again*. Galeri, Caernarfon, with second iteration in Cass Art Gallery, Manchester

Recent group exhibitions

2025 *All Kinds of Hands*, The Storey, Lancaster
2024 *Caught In The Act*, Royal Society of Sculptors, London
2023 *PLAY: The Movie!* Ty Pawb, Wrexham
2023 *BLINK Room Share 4*, Safehouse 1, London
2023 *Maquette*, No Show Space, London
2022 *Exeter Contemporary Open*, Exeter Phoenix, Devon, (recipient of Overall Award)
2021 Yellow Archangel Perceiving Anomalies, General Practice, Lincoln

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About Exeter Phoenix:

Exeter Phoenix is a vibrant, world class multi-artform venue, home to several art galleries, music and theatre, cinema, film production resources, a radio station, print workshop and recording studios, all centred around a buzzing café bar.

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