



Image: Sydney Ball, 2015, courtesy Sullivan + Strumpf

Media Release: Vale Sydney Ball (1933 – 2017)

Samstag Museum of Art pays tribute to Adelaide's own master of abstraction, Sydney Ball.

The Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art honours Adelaide-based painter Sydney Ball, who recently passed away at the age of 83. Ball is regarded as one of the true trailblazers of abstract painting in Australia - nationally and internationally renowned for his bold use of colour, form and compositional structure.

The University of South Australia has a longstanding connection to Ball as an esteemed alumnus, lecturer and patron. Ball was born in Adelaide in 1933 and as a young man in the 1950s, studied at what is now the School of Art, Architecture and Design at the University of South Australia alongside artists James Cant, John Dowie and Dora Chapman.

In 1962, Ball moved to New York to study painting at the Art Students League under Theodoros Stamos. It was there that he was exposed to the Abstract Expressionist movement, encountering artists such as Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock.

Ball returned to Adelaide in 1965, bringing hard-edge abstraction to the attention of Australian artists. He became an influential figure and his work was key to *The Field* exhibition of Australian abstract art held at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1968 and a watershed moment in Australian art history.

It was during this prolific period for Ball that he became a lecturer at the University of South Australia. In 2013, Sydney Ball donated a large body of his masterworks to the University of South Australia. This prestigious gift, comprising over thirty important works and worth more than one million dollars, is by far the most valuable gift of Australian art ever made to the University. Samstag Museum of Art extends its sincere gratitude to Sydney Ball for his generosity and foresight, allowing future generations to experience and encounter his wonderful and timeless paintings.

Ball has been the subject of more than 70 solo exhibitions and his work is represented in collections both within Australia and internationally.

Sydney Ball remained true to abstraction throughout his illustrious fifty-year career.

His artistic practice formed a critical link between Australian painting and one of the great art movements of the 20th century – American abstraction. His work is characterised by the vibrancy and primacy of colour; from the hard-edge abstraction of his early *Modular* series (1968-69) through to his recent *Infinex* series (2010-15); to the lyrical, gestural abstraction developed in the 1970s exemplified by *Magellan Blue* (1978) and *Pale Stream* (1976).

At the age of 83, Ball continued to work and exhibit, driven by an enduring fascination with colour abstraction and the possibilities of form.

“The Sydney Ball Gift was a phenomenal legacy and the most valuable gift of Australian art ever made to the University”, says Director of the Samstag Museum of Art Erica Green, who manages the University’s art collection.

Green says that Ball, her lecturer at Alexander Mackie College of Art in Sydney, was an inspirational artist and teacher.

“We pay tribute to Sydney, a passionate artist and a person who never ceased to energetically test the bounds of his practice,” Green says.

“By the end, Syd had become a grand old man of Australian art; at the beginning he had been a progressive force for radical change in art.

“His commitment and vision remained richly alive and we will miss him!”

In 2013, the University of South Australia awarded Ball an honorary doctorate in recognition of his services to education and the arts.

UniSA Vice Chancellor Professor David Lloyd says the University has lost a great friend and patron.

“We are saddened at the passing of one of Australia’s great masters, Syd Ball,” Prof Lloyd says. “He will be sorely missed and always remembered.

“Thanks to Syd Ball’s generosity and foresight, the University is blessed to have a formidable collection of remarkable works by an esteemed artist.

“The University sends its sincere condolences to Sydney’s family and friends.”

The Sydney Ball Gift can be viewed in the Sir Eric Neal Library, Mawson Lake campus, University of South Australia.

In 2018, Samstag Museum of Art will display UniSA’s newest Sydney Ball acquisition *Chromix Lumina #10* (2015) in Pridham Hall, City West campus, University of South Australia. This work forms part of Ball’s *Infinex* series of hard-edge paintings, which began in 2010, that see the artist return to the modular style of work created after his time at the New York School in the 1960s.

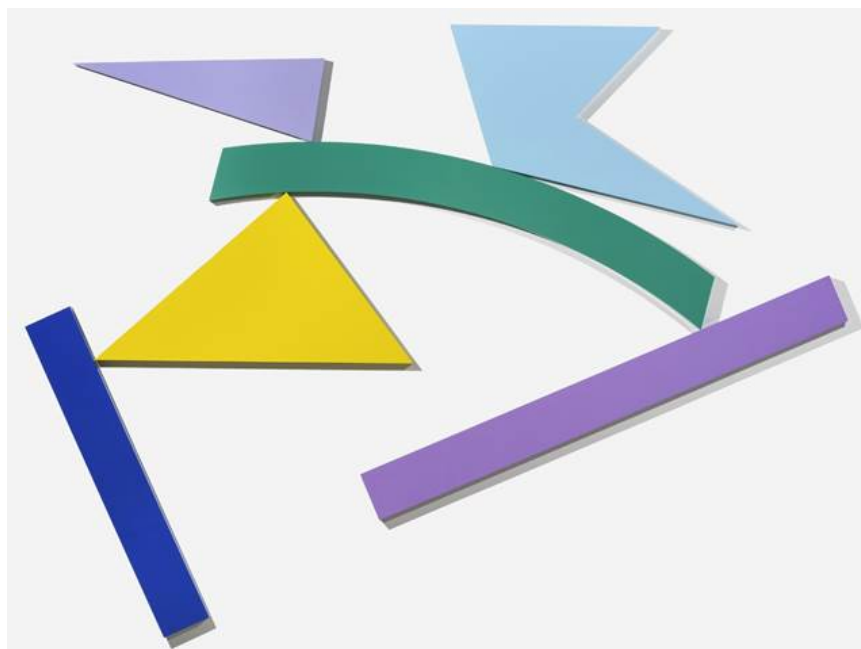


Image: Sydney Ball, 1933 – 2017, *Chromix Lumina #10*, 2015, automotive enamel on aluminium, 183.0 x 483.5 cm. University of South Australia Art Collection.

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