

They call me Redbone but I'd rather be
Strawberry Shortcake



Grays Anatomy

Amy Sherald perceives racial identity as something we construct and perform. She presents her subjects with unusual costumes and props. The resulting characters seem to float, spot-lit against vivid backgrounds—fantastic and playful, yet uncanny.



They call me Redbone but I'd rather be Strawberry Shortcake, 2009

Take a closer look

Amy Sherald (b. 1973) works from color photographs of her models, but renders their skin tones in a range of gray shades. By removing the “color” of her subjects, Sherald challenges our cultural tendency to view color as race.

In her own words

“While attending private schools and being one of two or three black children, I was raised to be conscious of how I acted, spoke, and dressed. This performing aspect of my identity...was the key to my social acceptance and assimilation.”

Who knew?

Former First Lady Michelle Obama selected Sherald to paint her official portrait in 2018, making the artist the first African American woman honored with such a commission.

Amy Sherald, *They call me Redbone but I'd rather be Strawberry Shortcake*, 2009; Oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of the artist and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; © Amy Sherald; Photograph by Lee Stalworth

