



HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN

For Immediate Release

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Our Secret Fire

Sarah Braman, Louisa Chase, Lily Cox-Richard, Angela Fraleigh,
María Elena González, Jenny Morgan, Howardena Pindell,
Zoe Pettijohn Schade, Elizabeth Turk

September 9 – October 8, 2021

One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the one as the fourth.

- Axiom of Maria [Mary the Jewess (fl. 1st, 2nd or 3rd c.)]

Transmutation is central to alchemy. This metamorphosis of matter requires pushing materials from one form into another in a succession until a final realization of purity is achieved. Purity is defined not as a “this” or a “that,” but as something that is a combination of its previous forms and yet something entirely new. Much more than “lead into gold,” alchemy is the pursuit of new understanding and new ideas through the manipulation of what already exists. This pursuit resonates strongly in *Our Secret Fire*, a group exhibition dedicated to nine artists whose work purposefully exists between states of being, caught in the act of metamorphosis. These artists utilize the shiftiness of the liminal state to explore ideas like domesticity, production and commodification, perception, and phenomenology. Their materials, whether physical or conceptual, can be pushed into any number of forms by the viewer or by the artist herself to both inform and surprise. This is the transmutation the alchemists sought. The artists in *Our Secret Fire* bring it forward.

Sarah Braman’s sculptures fuse the quotidian forms of a chair and a cabinet drawer with blocks of pure color, culminating in objects which transcend their domesticity to rapturous levels of sensory experience. This phenomenological investigation overlaps with the paintings of **Louisa Chase**, whose narrative-driven works from the early 1980s seek to explain her own emotional state through nature-based imagery. The resulting canvases are expressionistic metaphors for the human condition. **Jenny Morgan**’s paintings carry the same weight without the overt materiality of Chase’s paint handling. In her richly layered paintings that swing between portrait and landscape, Morgan subtly places the human form within sensual passages of fabric and forest. **Angela Fraleigh**’s paintings lean into their alchemical nature through both imagery and

process. Her deep, brooding abstract atmospheres are interstitial spaces achieved through Fraleigh's process of pouring, dripping and pooling swirls of lush, liquid pigment. Within these undulating mists, depictions of women drawn from art historical sources but removed from their original context materialize before the viewer full of power and magic.

In her process-driven practice, **Howardena Pindell** mines the metaphors surrounding destruction and construction. Her collages, built-up of circular, paper punch-outs from sheets on which she has drawn and painted, point to the necessary destruction and sacrifice within cosmology and universe building. **María Elena González's** exploration of the visual overlap between birch bark and musical notation is modern day alchemy in the strictest sense. By moving through various states of being, from bark to rubbings to notation to player-piano scroll, González reveals the purity of the birch tree is its inherently individual song. **Lily Cox-Richard's** amorphous sculptures, built of oozing materials and plaster casts of baskets and trees, look as though disparate objects are melting together when in truth the artist employs a traceable conceptual progression. Each aesthetic element references a specific, real-world issue between commodification and production, both historically and contemporaneously. The breakdown between beautiful form and saddening content underscores just how underrecognized these issues are. The marble sculptures of **Elizabeth Turk** highlight how nature has shaped organic materials long before any artist's manipulation. Through her carving, she pushes the material to its physical limit and exposes the provocative tension between the marble's intrinsic strength and its inherent fragility. **Zoe Pettijohn Schade's** drawings operate on the edge between subject and object, between abstraction and representation. Her tightly rendered observations of mirrors and subsequent reflections are based on utopian ideals of self-assembly. As the reflections compound to make evermore intricate designs, Schade's imagery moves beyond straightforward representation towards complex abstract patterning. Like a true alchemist, she forces her drawings from one state of being into another to find the purity located within.

Our Secret Fire opens at Hirschl & Adler Modern on Thursday, September 9 and runs through Friday, October 8, 2021. Located on the 9th floor of the Fuller Building, at the corner of 57th Street and Madison Avenue, Hirschl & Adler Modern is open Monday through Friday, from 9:30 am to 5:15 pm.

For additional information or images, contact Shelley Farmer, Director, or Ted Holland, Exhibition Coordinator, at 212-535-8810 (phone) / 212-772-7237 (fax), or by email at shelleyf@HirschlAndAdler.com or tedh@HirschlAndAdler.com. Please visit our website at www.HirschlAndAdler.com for an online preview of the exhibition.