



HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN

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Lily Cox-Richard
Soft Fists Insist

May 11 – June 24, 2022

In her metaphorical poem from 1959, *Mushrooms*, Sylvia Plath extolls the humble origins and unnoticed advances of mushrooms as they overtake the forest floor through the sheer power of their communal will. This politically motivated poem resonates deeply with artist Lily Cox-Richard, whose multifaceted practice explores commodification, material agency, reuse and activism, particularly through the framework of natural elements and processes. For the artist, the vast extension of mushroom colonies acts as a metaphor for the complex networks affecting all aspects of contemporary society and culture. By titling her exhibition at Hirschl & Adler Modern, *Soft Fists Insist*, after a line from Plath's poem, Cox-Richard signals her intent. The artworks seen here reveal and conflate systems found in both nature and society in order to force a reset of those systems which marginalize and impede growth. This exhibition, the artist's second with H&A Modern, is timed to coincide with the artist's current solo show at MASS MoCA, *Weep Holes* (through January, 2023).

Across five sculptures and a dozen works on paper, Cox-Richard gives her materials a renewed sense of agency and meaning as constituent parts of a contemporary work of art. The floor sculpture, *Tinder*, combines a plastic toy "Hercules" club with other woods—driftwood, a pencil and a beaver-gnawed log the artist found while hiking. Arranged in a triangle, these materials, both human-made and natural, overlap as disparate examples of "production." *Wristie*, a small assemblage atop a block of sandstone, is comprised of a sweater sleeve, a fragment of woven basket and a piece of blasted tree bark all cast in concrete or plaster. Representing ideas like domesticity, construction, growth and stasis, each accumulated element of these works is gently balanced on another implying a precariousness despite the sturdiness of the materials.

Seen in contrast to the deliberateness of her sculpture, the haunting, abstract compositions found in the works on black paper were made by placing oyster mushrooms directly on the sheet and waiting for the mushrooms to release their spores across the surface. The resulting patterns of dispersal, seen as white cloud-like markings on the black sheet, were affected by wind currents in the artist's studio as Cox-Richard left the windows open overnight. This invitation of chance into the art-making process is also evidence of a natural system for propagation. Elsewhere, sewn-paper collages maintain the delicacy found in the other work. Combining rubbings of text, spore prints, and found paper used to pack candles with the inherently domestic act of sewing, this suite

of works recalls quilt-making traditions, in particular that art form's long history of embedding political messages during times of oppression.

The layered representations of networks and systems in Cox-Richard's work remind us just how entangled we are within them. While tacitly acknowledging the artist's mistrust of those that are human-made, Cox-Richard's work remains hopeful in its intent. Cox-Richard believes that art can be an agent of change and the work seen in *Soft Fists Insist* can be a starting point. In her own words: "This is in my heart, so it is in my work. Networks that grow in relationships for justice must be more willful than the systems of violence that are imposed on them."

Lily Cox-Richard (b. 1979) has been awarded an Artadia grant, a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, a postdoctoral fellowship in the University of Michigan's Society of Fellows, and residencies at the Core Program, Millay Colony, RAIR Philadelphia, and the MacDowell Colony. Recent solo exhibitions include Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York, NY; Yvonne, Guatemala City, Mexico; Artpace, San Antonio, TX; Diverseworks, Houston, TX; and The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX. Her solo exhibition, *Weep Holes*, is currently on view at MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA. This summer, Cox-Richard will be an artist-in-residence in the Arts/Industry program at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, WI. Cox-Richard studies, forages, and practices in Tsenacomoco territory / Richmond, VA, on land that, for thousands of years, has been inhabited and cared for by Indigenous people, including the Pamunkey, Monacan, Chickahominy, and many other tribes untold and forcibly disappeared. Hirschl & Adler Modern is proud to represent Lily Cox-Richard. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

This exhibition is accompanied by a 16-page catalogue, with full-color illustrations and an interview with the artist. The catalogue is available both digitally and in-print.

Lily Cox-Richard *Soft Fists Insist* opens at Hirschl & Adler Modern on Wednesday, May 11 and runs through Friday, June 24, 2022. 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.