



HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Tom Parker, Director (TomP@HirschlAndAdler.com)
Tel: 212-535-8810

Cornelia Foss | Little Red

October 16 – November 21, 2025

Hirschl & Adler Modern is pleased to announce its first exhibition of works by the renowned painter Cornelia Foss (b. 1931). A denizen of the artistic and intellectual milieus of New York City and Bridgehampton, New York, Foss has long been considered the standard bearer of an expressive figurative style that characterized much of the art in Eastern Long Island during the second half of the 20th century.

Foss is celebrated for her tender portraits, her bright, gestural still lifes, and expansive landscapes with broad, colorful swaths of surf and sky. But the works in this exhibition represent a departure from her typical subjects. The “Little Reds,” as the artist calls them, are a series of paintings executed over the past ten years that she considers intensely personal. Unlike her colorful, joyful seascapes, the “Little Reds” stand out for their moody, agitated aesthetic with a depth of emotion not found elsewhere in her oeuvre. These paintings draw from the fairy tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. The story of a little girl and a “big, bad wolf” is the ultimate cautionary tale of good vs. evil, vulnerability and courage, the loss of innocence and the menace of power. Now in her late career and life, Foss employs the story as a hauntingly effective device for processing the trauma of her youth when, as a 9-year-old girl of Jewish heritage, she and her mother experienced a harrowing escape from Berlin, Germany, in the Fall of 1939.

The dark and foreboding paintings explore deep forests and hidden landscapes across the seasons. Their dense compositions offer no landmarks or easy entry points to the viewer who can become lost or disoriented by the scene. With hints of her red cape, a girl can be seen running from or confronting the shadowy figure of the wolf. At times hard to make out, the wolf is often lurking in the distant underbrush with his white teeth and red tongue. He is evocative of the pervasive fear that gripped Europe in the years leading up

to World War II when the Nazi threat of violence and oppression drew ever closer to the people of Germany and beyond.

This was the atmosphere under which Cornelia and her mother attempted to flee Berlin with their lives at risk. It was a perilous journey that nearly failed multiple times were it not for their extraordinary courage, savvy, and sheer chance. In one instance the artist recounts how she was forcibly separated from her mother to be searched prior to boarding the train to Belgium. She was then released alone into the crowded station as her train began pulling out. Frantic to find her mother, she raced alongside the train when, at the last moment, her mother's arm reached out from a doorway and pulled her onboard.

But she did not get through unscathed. The societal cruelty, indifference, and fear that she experienced in her early childhood left an indelible mark. At 94, Foss is confronting those demons like never before.

Born in Berlin in 1931, Cornelia Foss spent her early years living in Rome with her parents before the family was forced to return to Germany in 1937. Foss and her mother successfully emigrated to the United States in 1939 with the help of her father, an academic who had gone ahead to secure employment. As an adult, she would later study art at the University of Rome and then at the Kann Art Institute in Los Angeles under Rico Lebrun and Howard Warshaw.

Foss has remained a prominent figure in the city's art scene, teaching at New York's Art Students League and National Academy of Design, where she was elected a member in 2009. Across her long and successful career, Foss's work has been featured in over 130 solo and group exhibitions worldwide, including at institutions like the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. Most of her work is characterized by a painterly realism that captures the light and atmosphere of Long Island's East End. In 2015, Skira/Rizzoli published the book *Cornelia Foss: A Retrospective*, offering a comprehensive survey of her work.

Cornelia Foss | Little Red opens at Hirschl & Adler Modern on Thursday, October 16 and runs through Friday, November 21. Located on the 9th floor of the landmarked 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.