



HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN

For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

Tom Parker, Associate Director

(tomp@HirschlAndAdler.com)

Tel: 212-535-8810 / Fax: 212-772-7237

SEEING JAMES CASTLE

October 14 – November 19, 2021

An artist working in a vacuum; the elusive blank slate; an American original. Accurate or not, this is the romance and the promise of James Castle (1899-1977). We are captivated by the fullness of expression attained despite his limitations, even envious of the sort of freedom his disabilities afforded him. Castle's work is an homage to his home and family, a memoir of his experiences, a diary of his secrets and desires.

You don't have to be an expert on James Castle to recognize one obvious truth about this deeply enigmatic artist. His challenges and limitations notwithstanding, he was a supremely visual person. Those of us in the arts call ourselves "visual" people because we were never very good at math. James Castle, deaf since birth, had only his eyes and his fingertips with which to experience the world. As such his powers of observation were second to none. He didn't search far and wide for his subjects. In fact, he had everything he needed literally in the back yard, the parlor, the one-room shed, the lot beyond the fence. Through his art Castle did more than teach us how to look—he showed us how to see. And in his humble corner of the world, he saw multitudes.

Once you train yourself to see how Castle sees, the seemingly indefinable slips into focus: a dark room pierced by the sliver of light through an open door; a bedstead set off against floral wallpaper; a lone figure on the grass seen through an open window. Light and shadow, positive and negative, patterning and repetition are the artist's hallmarks. He had an intuitive spatial awareness and masterful graphic sense. Abstraction came as naturally to Castle as breathing. That's because he was free to appreciate the most ordinary object for its extraordinary form, shape, and volume. Imagine seeing the world around you

Press Release, **Seeing** James Castle
October 14–November 19, 2021

without assigned meanings or predetermined hierarchies. Strange, unintelligible forms and nonsensical groupings are a casual occurrence for an artist unburdened by any order or logic imposed by others.

This exhibition touches on the three bodies of work central to Castle's oeuvre. His drawings document every aspect of his surroundings. They are nuanced, closely observed, atmospheric views of the everyday drawn in his preferred medium—a dense, inky mix of soot and his own spit. The rarer constructions, tender portrayals of figures and barnyard animals, are sculptural powerhouses. These carefully stitched and folded papers now occupy a unique place in the canon of 20th-century sculpture. Their pared-down, geometricized forms still vibrate with energy, whimsy, and a hint of mystery.

Finally, there are the handmade books, harder to access but beautifully enigmatic and revealing of the ways Castle saw things. Full of innovative compositions and strange inscrutable symbols, there are rich, intensely felt stories in these pages. They are like portals into the artist's consciousness that reward careful looking but whose meaning lies just beyond our grasp.

Seeing James Castle opens at Hirschl & Adler Modern on Thursday, October 14 and runs through Friday, November 19, 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 Tom Parker, Associate Director, at 212-535-8810 (phone) / 212-772-7237 (fax), or by email at tomp@HirschlAndAdler.com. Please visit our website at www.HirschlAndAdler.com for an online preview of the exhibition.