

Ada Friedman

Surrender Dorothy

September 12, 2026 – October 25, 2026

Ada Friedman is all over the place. The hill country of West Texas, a few weeks in her Brooklyn apartment, a residency in Iowa City, teaching or performing in Nashville, or was it exhibiting in Knoxville, maybe both, and now installing a new show in Minneapolis. Her artmaking is also always in motion, seemingly dashing from place to place, the result of what she calls her 'dancing mind.' Evanescent rather than elusive, this work is a choreography of boundless idiosyncrasies and logics, Ada makes paintings into plays and performances into drawings, and everything a collaboration, with animate and inanimate objects and beings alike. If it feels random or scattered, think constellation - initially you might not see shape or structure but spend enough time outdoors under the stars and those little twinklings will begin to form drawings floating in the sky. For Ada, artmaking is mapping of her travels inward and outward, of studio movement and markmaking, of community, and of an inner dialogue with oneself and the spectres of artists past. Transparent, vulnerable and generous, Ada's work reveals the processes and stories of her work's making, a multidirectional and nonlinear expression of space as everywhere and time as both everything and meaningless beyond the moment.

A menacing message in the sky, "Surrender Dorothy," is spelled out by the Wicked Witch of the West. Coursing above the Emerald City on her broom, the smoky text is terrifying to Dorothy et al. below. The scene must have delighted cinema audiences in 1939 - the way CGI has wowed viewers today - to watch the gravity defying witch announce her ominous demand in the sky. And yet it was a relatively simple - i.e. ingenious - special effect created with a hypodermic needle squirting black dye in three inches of water. Jack McMaster, an employee of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer who I can only assume was also an artist, conceived of, designed, and then, after two months of practice, executed the illusion for the camera. A durational drawing, painting, performance, and film all wrapped up in a little Hollywood sleight of hand. "Surrender Dorothy" became further famous for its recurring appearances in spray paint on a railroad bridge in suburban Washington, D.C. Dating to the early 80's, this graffiti happens to be just down the road from the Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Kensington, Maryland. And wouldn't you know it, the temple's spires bear an eerie resemblance to the royal castle in the Wizard of Oz.

(continued)

DAVID PETERSEN GALLERY

4116 Cedar Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55407

+1 612-221-9539

www.davidpetersengallery.com

This isn't just about recognizing coincidences, though. Relationships are everything to Ada. The way things connect and interact - by chance or intention - create the conditions to form a living texture, from the particles and atoms and sparkles that make up her "skin bag" (her words) to the stars dotting the night sky, which is all the same stuff, essentially. So the idea of her being anywhere and everywhere at any given moment is immaterial, I probably shouldn't have even brought it up. It is the work that is important, how it is a document of living in time and space, whether her drawings and paint-things are to construct some semblance of sense and self, or to just keep track of everything between the stars and a little graphite dust, piling in a studio. This all sounds like a lot to handle. But it might be another way to think of "surrender." For the witch it was a command to give up, but it may also be an invitation to let go and move onward, building your own yellow brick road, brick by brick by brick.

This is Ada Friedman's first exhibition with David Petersen Gallery. She has participated in institutional exhibitions at Backrooms, Kunsthalle Zürich (Zürich); University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia); Knoxville Museum of Art (Knoxville); The University of Tennessee Downtown Gallery (Knoxville), and a solo exhibition at the Ana Mendieta Gallery at the University of Iowa (Iowa City).

She has had solo exhibitions at Kendra Jayne Patrick (Bern, Switzerland); David Peter Francis (New York City); Tri-Star Arts (Tennessee); Grifter (New York City); 17 Essex, and Eli Ping (New York City). She has been included in group exhibitions at Thomas Erben Gallery (New York City); Shore Gallery (Vienna); Nature of Things (Dallas); Cleopatra's (Brooklyn); Safe Gallery (Brooklyn); Ortega y Gasset (Brooklyn); White Columns (New York City); Night Gallery (Los Angeles); and Accent Sisters (New York City), among others. She exhibited a solo presentation at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2023, an acclaimed two-person presentation at Independent 2025, and was featured in The Living Room, a special curated selection at Art Genève 2023.

Friedman's first monograph, *Star*, was published by Hassla Books, New York, in 2026. Her artist book, *Drawing Hilma Af Klint*, made in collaboration with artists Ariel Dill and Denise Schatz, was published by Miniature Garden (2014; second edition 2019). Her work has been featured in Glasstire, Artnet, Hyperallergic, BOMB magazine, Brooklyn Rail, Family Time, ARTnews, Painter's Bread, BMore Art, Tussle, Ora Art Reviews, and more.

In 2025, she founded Echo Arts, an artist residency in the Texas Hill Country.

DAVID PETERSEN GALLERY

4116 Cedar Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55407

+1 612-221-9539

www.davidpetersengallery.com