

**Lauren Adams** (American, b. 1979) lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland, where she is a full-time faculty member at the Maryland Institute College of Art. She has had recent solo exhibitions at Back Lane West, Cornwall, UK (2012); Conner Contemporary, Washington, DC (2011); Luminary Center for the Arts, St. Louis (2011); and Royal NoneSuch Gallery, Oakland, California (2010). Her work has been featured in group exhibitions including: Nymans House and Gardens, Sussex, UK (2012); Cameron Art Museum, Wilmington, North Carolina (2012), Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina (2011); Purdue University, Indiana (2011); St. Cecelia's, Brooklyn, New York (2010); CUE Foundation, New York (2008); Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA (2008); and the Andy Warhol Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA (2005); among many others. She received her MFA from Carnegie Mellon University (2007) and has attended several artist residencies, including the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2010); Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2009); and the Jentel Artist Residency Program, Banner, Wyoming (2008).

*Lauren Adams: Hoard* is organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and curated by Kelly Shindler, Assistant Curator.

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Cover: Lauren Adams, *Spectacle of Hardwick Hall*, 2012. Digitally printed wallpaper from original gouache painting. Courtesy the artist.



# Lauren Adams: Hoard

September 7 – October 14, 2012

Lauren Adams's work addresses historical issues of colonialism—the system by which the people of one territory establish systems of authority or control over people in another territory—and industrialization to demonstrate how they inform our present-day reality.

Working in a variety of media from painting and drawing to textiles and printmaking, she repurposes centuries-old imagery to explore the relationship between labor and the production of material goods. Adams uses specific images, symbols, and situations from these histories to suggest how they play a significant role in the balance of power between social classes, nations, and ethnicities today.

In the Front Room, Adams presents a multi-part installation that reflects her research into early encounters between the leaders of Elizabethan England and the North American “New World” in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. She presents custom wallpaper titled *Spectacle of Hardwick Hall* (2012), featuring digital reproductions of hand-drawn images that replicate a design found in the large portrait of Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603). In the painting (c. 1592; attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, 1547–1619, and hanging in the 16th century Hardwick Hall estate in Derbyshire, England), the queen wears an unusual, voluminous gown embroidered with illustrations of flora and fauna native to the English colonies as well as imagined creatures, such as serpents and monsters. The queen's costume literally contains a world within it that demonstrates the extent of her power. This combination of the foreign with the fantastical exoticizes the colonies' habitats and natural resources. However, Adams's translation of such imagery into a repetitive wallpaper pattern domesticates it, further distancing it from its original intent as royal propaganda.

Also featured in the installation is a large gouache painting similarly concerned with issues of colonialism titled *The Lost Colony* (2012). Its image of a dancing Algonquin Indian is based on a 16th century print by Theodor de Bry (1528-1598), which was inspired by John White's (c. 1540-1593) watercolors of Algonquin Indians in Adams's home state of North Carolina. The male figure wears a feather headdress and assumes an active pose, brandishing an arrow in hand. His elongated body is adorned with layers of various Elizabethan-era collars of various textures and styles. These have the effect of appearing

to civilize, feminize, and also constrict the figure, strangling him in fashion. In effect, the painting combines elements of both British and Native American cultures to illustrate their unsustainable and problematic coexistence.

The final component of the installation is *Bad Seed* (2012), an arrangement of hollowed-out, painted-black gourds, interspersed with several strands of freshwater pearls on the gallery floor. Indigenous to the New World as sustenance, here the gourds assume an ornamental function in the same way that pumpkins and Indian corn have evolved from crops to autumnal ornaments. As with Queen Elizabeth's gown, Adams's pearls are reduced from luxurious high fashion to interior design. On a deeper level, the stark contrast between the black gourds and the white pearls references the charged racial and ethnic dynamics that originated in the New World and that have persisted throughout American history.

The title of the exhibition, “Hoard,” refers to the accumulation of wealth and resources by the colonizers of the New World as well as the larger notion of representing and perpetuating the idea of empire largely through images. Through Adams's appropriation and transformation of colonial imagery—originally intended to suggest power and grandeur—into decorative, often fabricated designs, *Hoard* demonstrates the deterioration of meaning that can accompany the accumulation of things—or, in the case of pre-colonial America, that of people and places. Adams collages these abstracted elements together, creating charged absurdities that reflect centuries of inequity. Visually alluring and symbolically complex, the works in *Hoard* remind us how the legacies of the New World's founding remain both embedded and contested in everyday life.

*Adams will present related work in a satellite solo exhibition, We the People, at the inaugural EXPO CHICAGO art fair from September 20-23, 2012. Navy Pier, 600 East Grand Avenue, Chicago, IL, 60611.*