

Chris Oh

*Adore*

May 9 — June 19, 2025

A marbled wallpaper, representing a cosmic ocean of creation, sets the stage for Chris Oh's site-specific installation *Adore*. It is both surface and symbol—fluid as song, elemental as water, and suggestive of the boundless threshold from which all forms emerge.

In *Adore*, Oh delves into the richly layered visual language of the **Ghent Altarpiece**—Hubert and Jan van Eyck's 15th-century polyptych, famed for its technical virtuosity and metaphysical intensity. Across the gallery, Oh stages a contemporary reimagining of this canonical work, orchestrating a polyptych of his own: one that spans glasswork, antique frames, natural relics, and the liminal space of the gallery itself.

*"The Ghent Altarpiece is a vision, a portal—its layered worlds flicker between the terrestrial and the celestial,"* Oh notes. *"I wanted to create an environment where that fluctuation could be felt in physical space."*

Visitors enter through a front gallery enveloped in marbled wallpaper—an abstracted allusion to the painted manuscripts and flowing drapery of van Eyck's panels, as well as the ever-present motif of water: from flasks and rivers to the bleeding lamb and fountain. At its center, two antique leaded windows frame the figures of Adam and Eve, delicately rendered as spectral fragments drawn from the altarpiece itself. Painted directly onto the glass, they hover like apparitions—an echo of revelation—offering a glimpse into the sacred narrative that lies ahead. This work, titled *Gate*, functions as both threshold and omen, recalling the outer wings of the Ghent Altarpiece where the story of creation quietly begins. It is a scene charged with metaphysical potential, marking the liminal space between the known and the ineffable, innocence and revelation, creation and ascension.

Through the corridor, subtle echoes of the lower register of van Eyck's inner panels unfold—a visual descent into the procession that culminates in the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb. In the original altarpiece, this central scene is both luminous and unsettling: a symbol of divine sacrifice, where the lamb bleeds into a chalice as an eternal offering. Oh translates this moment into *Drain*, a small wooden panel in a custom frame, depicting the bleeding lamb with quiet intensity. Positioned between the anticipation of the front gallery and the deeper revelations that follow, the work serves as a hinge within the installation. Rather than simply referencing van Eyck, *Drain* isolates and amplifies the emotional core of the altarpiece—the paradox of beauty and violence, sanctity and suffering.

The back gallery opens like a sanctum, housing a constellation of three-dimensional works that function as reliquaries. Rendered with devotional precision on found materials—crystals, eggs, seashells, butterfly wings—these intimate objects bear finely painted fragments from the Ghent Altarpiece: angelic faces, gemstones, chalices, hands, and lambs. Each becomes a vessel for memory and metamorphosis, a talisman of both beauty and decay.

Among them, *Fulcrum* stands as a quiet center of gravity: a pair of eyes delicately painted on a blue morpho butterfly, cradled by an antique metal candle holder and suspended within a glass sphere. Here, the term fulcrum becomes both literal and metaphoric—a point of poise and potential, of turning and transformation. In Oh's hands, it anchors the installation not through weight, but through stillness—inviting reverence not for doctrine, but for the symbolic charge of image, the persistence of ritual, and the cyclical mysteries of life, death, and return.

Flanking the back gallery, *Evanesence* and *Dissolve* are two works painted on marbled paper, mounted on wood panels, and encased in antique window frames. The swirling marbled grounds evoke fluidity and impermanence—water as both surface and symbol—establishing a tone of mutability that resonates throughout the exhibition. Within these shifting backdrops, the figures of Adam and Eve reappear, not as fixed presences but as flickering apparitions, their forms emerging and receding like a mirage. This visual instability suggests states of dissolution—of self, image, and memory—casting the figures as echoes rather than certainties. Filtered through the weathered glass of the window frames, their presence becomes even more elusive, suspended between visibility and disappearance. This tension gestures toward deeper philosophical and psychological dimensions: the fragility of origin myths, the porous boundaries of identity, and the interplay between material and immaterial realities. By revisiting these archetypal figures through layered, unstable surfaces, Oh invites viewers to reflect not only on what is seen, but on how—and how easily—perception fractures and slips away.

Outdoors in the courtyard, the installation culminates with *Horizon*, a resin sculpture of a lamb resting atop the gallery's pond, its belly painted with a delicate skyline drawn from the lower register of the altarpiece. The cityscape—floating just above the waterline—depicts an imagined, ideal city: a symbolic vision of a world beyond the visible.

Suspended between its mirrored reflection and the surrounding garden, the lamb introduces a moment of quiet humor amid the solemnity of ritual. Its calm gaze and improbable setting gently transform a sacred motif into something unexpectedly light. As in much of Oh's work, the devotional and the everyday collapse into a single object—here, a subtly irreverent gesture that nonetheless invites reflection.

The exhibition loops back on itself—like a palindrome—revealing, upon return, the cyclical nature of life, death, and regeneration. It closes where it began, yet altered by the passage through. Themes of celestial clarity and chthonic concealment resurface, embodying the dualities and paradoxes that run throughout the show: whimsy and solemnity, revelation and obscurity, presence and dissolution.

Through this constellation of objects, *Adore* asks not only how history is carried, but how it is made strange again—rendered unfamiliar, intimate, and newly sacred. Chris Oh's practice of meticulous appropriation, combined with a reverence for the found and the forgotten, proposes a contemporary devotional form: one that is less about belief, and more about looking—closely, again and again.

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**Chris Oh** (b. 1982, Portland, USA) received his BFA from School of Visuals Arts, New York (2004). His exhibition history includes *Penumbra*, No 9 Cork St. FRIEZE, Newchild, London (2025); *THE GOLDEN RATIO*, Soho Revue Gallery, London (2024); *When We Become Us*, curated by Manuela Liettio, Capsule Venice, Venice (2024); *Passage*, Capsule Shanghai, Shanghai (2023, solo); *Pictures Girls Make: Portraiture Through the Lens of Progress*, curated by Alison M. Gingeras, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2023); *Snakes In The Grass*, Newchild, Antwerp (2023); *In Search of the Miraculous*, curated by Jonathan Rider, Flag Art Foundation, New York (2022); *Landscapes*, Fortnight Institute, New York (2021, solo); *Esprit*, Independent Art Fair, Fortnight Institute, New York (2020, solo); among others. He lives and works between New York and Portland.

***Adore* is on view from May 9 to June 19, 2025. Opening hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.**