

Ariel International Fund

Quarter Ended September 30, 2025

Performance data quoted represents past performance. Past performance does not guarantee future results. All performance assumes the reinvestment of dividends and capital gains, and represents returns of the Investor Class shares. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be lower or higher than the performance data quoted. Performance data current to the most recent month-end for Ariel International Fund may be obtained by visiting our website, arielinvestments.com. For the period ended September 30, 2025 the average annual total returns of Ariel International Fund (Investor Class) for the 1-, 5, and 10-year periods were +22.01%, +8.33% and +5.98%, respectively.

Global equities advanced in the third quarter, supported by investor enthusiasm for artificial intelligence, resilient corporate earnings, the first U.S. rate cut of the year, and targeted policy easing across key regions. U.S. markets hovered near record highs, supported by robust consumer demand and moderating inflation, though elevated valuations warrant caution. Europe outperformed, driven by a rebound in bank lending, easing energy costs, rising defense investment, and coordinated fiscal and monetary support. China also posted gains, with sentiment improving on progress in U.S.–China trade negotiations and continued focus on anti-involution reforms aimed at enhancing productivity and innovation. Despite lingering macro risks, the quarter reinforced a strategic shift away from U.S.-centric exposure, as international markets offer more attractive valuations and cyclical upside, even as currency and policy risks remain. While near-term volatility may persist, we remain confident in our portfolio companies' ability to navigate uncertainty and capitalize on long-term structural growth opportunities. Against this backdrop, Ariel International Fund increased +2.26% in the quarter, trailing the MSCI EAFE and MSCI ACWI ex-US indices, which returned +4.77% and +6.89%, respectively.

Ariel's non-consensus approach seeks to identify undervalued, out-of-favor, franchises that are misunderstood and therefore mispriced. Ariel International Fund is overweight Consumer Discretionary, Communication Services, Information Technology and Utilities. The portfolio is meaningfully underweight Industrials, Materials, Financials, Energy, Health Care and Consumer Staples. At the sector level, positive stock selection within Information Technology and Consumer Staples were the greatest contributors to returns. By contrast, our Financials and Consumer Discretionary holdings detracted the most from our performance during the quarter.

Global automotive tech and components provider, **Aptiv PLC** outperformed following a strong top- and bottom-line earnings beat. Aptiv continues to execute with precision, maintaining profitability despite macroeconomic volatility and industry

cyclicality. The company also reinstated full-year guidance above Street forecasts, signaling confidence in its operational execution despite conservative production assumptions. The company's growth over market (GoM) performance in North America and Europe continues to validate its alignment with high-growth electrification, active safety, and connectivity trends. While China remains a near-term headwind, Aptiv anticipates normalization by 2026, reinforcing its long-term global growth trajectory. Moreover, investors are increasingly focused on the upcoming spin-off of the Electrical Distribution Systems (EDS) business, which should unlock strategic and financial value. In our view, Aptiv is uniquely positioned at the intersection of transformative automotive trends. The company's exposure to electrification, advanced safety systems, autonomous driving, and connectivity technologies reinforces our constructive long-term outlook and supports continued shareholder value creation.

New position, **SUMCO Corporation**, also advanced following an earnings beat and steadily rising wafer shipments. As a leading supplier of advanced silicon wafers used in both central and graphic processing units (CPUs and GPUs), we believe SUMCO is well-positioned to benefit from Edge AI adoption and a broader semiconductor recovery. The company is completing capacity expansion initiatives and expects stronger free cash flow over the next 18 months. Long-term agreements support stable pricing and volume, while limited supply of advanced wafers underpins future growth. With a double-digit free cash flow yield, we believe SUMCO is undervalued and poised for upside as fundamentals improve.

Additionally, new holding and leading developer of electronic components including coils, filters, semiconductors, power supplies, and modules, **Murata Manufacturing Co., Ltd.** traded higher following solid earnings results. The company is benefitting from rising demand for Edge AI, which significantly increases multilayer ceramic capacitor (MLCC) content per device. As MLCC utilization recovers and supply tightens, margin expansion is likely. The company's



diversification into batteries, radio frequency (RF) modules, and data center power systems provides additional long-term growth potential. With improving fundamentals, a rebound in its devices segment, and upside from AI adoption as well as next-generation iPhones, Murata presents a compelling investment opportunity.

In contrast, **Sega Sammy Holdings Inc.**, a Japanese holding company specializing in the development of video games and the production of pachinko and pachislot machines traded lower over the period. The decline was driven by widening losses and impairments related to past merger and acquisition activity. While the consumer entertainment segment continues to show resilience, these headwinds impacted investor sentiment. Nonetheless, the company remains well-positioned to capitalize on its core intellectual property licensing business. We expect upcoming mobile game launches and new animation content for flagship titles like *Sonic* and *Persona 5: The Phantom X* to drive sustainable revenue growth and margin expansion.

French-based global advertising and communication firm, **Publicis Groupe SA** also declined during the period, despite solid underlying fundamentals. The company continues to gain market share and recently delivered an earnings beat, supported by mid-single-digit organic revenue growth across geographies. Strong new business momentum also prompted management to raise its FY2025 growth outlook. We believe its unified digital platform and differentiated technology offerings will enable Publicis to deliver scalable, data-driven advertising solutions, leveraging advanced identity, demographic, behavioral and transactional insights to enhance client outcomes.

Lastly, **Fresenius Medical Care AG**, the Germany-based global leader in kidney dialysis services and products, experienced share price pressure following mixed quarterly results. While revenue aligned with expectations, EBITDA fell short, impacted by ongoing cost headwinds and continued weakness in the Care Delivery segment. Although, strong cash flow generation and momentum in Value-Based Care provided support, the softer first-half results underscore the urgency of delivering against full-year targets. Encouragingly, recent share price weakness has enhanced valuation, and the company's improving profitability and robust cash generation are contributing to balance sheet deleveraging. At current levels, we view Fresenius as attractively positioned from a risk/reward perspective.

In addition to **SUMCO Corporation** and **Murata Manufacturing Co., Ltd.** discussed above, we initiated six new positions in the quarter.

We purchased **BT Group PLC**, the UK's incumbent telecommunications provider, which operates through three core segments: Openreach, its wholesale fixed-line infrastructure arm; Consumer, which delivers retail mobile

and broadband services; and Business, serving public institutions, private enterprises, and subject matter experts. The company recently announced its international operations will be reported separately from the Business unit, signaling a strategic shift in focus and transparency. Meanwhile, the broader industry is showing signs of stabilization, with improving return on invested capital (ROIC) and free cash flow (FCF) as peak capex cycles begin to taper. Historically slow to invest in fiber, BT's Openreach has ceded market share to a fragmented group of alternative network providers aggressively building out UK fiber infrastructure. However, this trend is expected to reverse as BT accelerates its fiber rollout, while competitors face capital constraints and have paused expansion. In Consumer, market consolidation from five to three mobile players is fostering more rational pricing, supporting monetization of 5G. Looking ahead, we think BT stands to benefit from emerging opportunities tied to AI-driven demand, including sovereign data centers and AI-enabled smartphones, which are fueling a rapid increase in data consumption. We believe these developments, combined with BT's strategic infrastructure investments and improving industry dynamics, position the company for a potential re-rating.

We added **Informa plc**, a global leader in B2B events and academic publishing. The company is accelerating organic growth in its core exhibitions business, supported by smart capital redeployment—selling slower-growth assets at premium valuations and reinvesting in higher-growth opportunities. Looking ahead, we see several catalysts that could unlock further value over the next 12–24 months. These include a sharper focus on organic execution, the potential sale of Taylor & Francis to become a pure-play events company, accelerated balance sheet deleveraging, and improved alignment of executive incentives with shareholder outcomes. The upcoming 2025 Capital Markets Day could also serve as a key moment to enhance transparency and raise long-term targets. With strong free cash flow growth, improving margins, a disciplined capital allocation strategy and an undemanding valuation relative to peers, we believe Informa is well-positioned for a re-rating as it continues to close the earnings growth gap and strengthen its strategic positioning.

We initiated a position in **Minth Group Ltd.**, a leading global supplier of automotive components with growing exposure to the European electric vehicle supply chain through its rapidly expanding battery housing business. Strong relationships with original equipment manufacturers and significant revenue growth potential through 2029 underpin a compelling investment case. Operating leverage is expected to drive margin and earnings expansion. Beyond automotive, Minth's strategic entry into humanoid robotics and electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing aircrafts (eVTOLs) introduces meaningful optionality. A recent dip in share price driven by profit-taking and tariff concerns offers an attractive entry point



ahead of several potential re-rating catalysts over the next year.

We bought **Proximus SADP**, Belgium's incumbent telecom operator with integrated mobile and fixed broadband services, as well as a global enterprise segment. Despite near-term headwinds, including an organizational restructuring and the entry of a fourth competitor (Digi), we believe the market is undervaluing its resilient domestic performance and improving free cash flow. In the global segment, legacy business declines and integration challenges have hindered cross-selling of next-generation solutions, however, we believe renewed executive focus and new leadership are well-positioned to drive improvement.

We purchased **Samsung Electro-Mechanics Company, Ltd. (SEMCO)**, a global leader in electronic components with strong market positions in multilayer ceramic capacitors (MLCCs), semiconductor substrates, camera and communication modules. We believe SEMCO's key profit drivers are set to benefit from rising Edge AI adoption and accelerating demand for AI accelerators, which significantly increase component density and complexity per device. SEMCO's product mix is shifting toward higher-value components, supporting margin expansion. With improving fundamentals across radio frequency, battery, and power segments, and strategic investments in next-generation technologies like silicon capacitors and glass substrates, we believe SEMCO is well-positioned for sustained earnings growth.

And finally, we initiated a position in **Syensqo SA**, a chemical manufacturer that we think is currently trading at trough earnings and depressed valuation multiples. The company struggled with inventory overstocking, but recent trends suggest destocking is largely complete, with customers placing smaller, more frequent orders. As volumes recover, Syensqo is well-positioned to benefit from operating leverage. Several macro and company-specific catalysts such as lower European gas prices, China's industrial reforms, and EU revitalization efforts could support a re-rating. We think Syensqo's aerospace materials segment alone warrants a higher specialty chemicals multiple. Broader improvements in

margins, volumes, and pricing could unlock further upside. With end-market recovery expected by 2026 and early signs of improvement expected in late 2025, we view Syensqo as offering a compelling risk-reward profile relative to peers.

By comparison, we successfully exited German-based automotive manufacturing company, **Daimler Truck Holding AG (DTG)**, Korea-based leading pure-play producer of memory semiconductor products, **SK Hynix Inc.**, Spain-based electricity provider, **Redeia Corp SA**, leading player in power semiconductor and system solutions, **Infineon Technologies AG** and French pharmaceutical company, **Sanofi** on valuation.

We also sold our shares in specialty insurance company, **Beazley plc** and Spain-based engineering, procurement and construction company focused on the oil and gas sector, **Tecnicas Reunidas SA** to pursue more compelling opportunities.

Looking ahead, we believe global growth expectations are diverging. Since the start of the year, consensus forecasts for 2025 U.S. GDP have declined by more than 20%.¹ Historically, such a slowdown would have triggered a broader global deceleration, but this cycle is proving more resilient. Growth projections in the European Union have edged higher, and emerging markets remain resilient, supported by proactive, growth-oriented policy responses that are helping to offset softer U.S. export demand. Capital flows are also shifting. After a decade of U.S. outperformance driven by strong equity markets, private capital strength, and a dominant dollar, global portfolios have become heavily concentrated in U.S. assets. Today, U.S. equities represent nearly 60% of global benchmarks², far exceeding their share of global GDP.³ With the dollar down 10% year-to-date⁴ and private market valuations under pressure amid sluggish exits and \$1 trillion in unsold assets⁵, that concentration increasingly resembles a fire hazard rather than a safe haven. In this environment, we think active management is critical. Our international and global holdings offer compelling valuations relative to their growth prospects, while maintaining the financial strength needed for operational resilience. We continue to prioritize companies with solid balance sheets, durable earnings, and diversified

¹ "First Quarter 2025 Survey of Professional Forecasters," *Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia*, 14 February 2025 and "Third Quarter 2025 Survey of Professional Forecasters," *Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia*, 15 August 2025.

² MSCI ACWI All Cap Index (USD) Factsheet, 30 September 2025.

³ "GDP based on PPP, share of world," *International Monetary Fund*, April 2025.

⁴ "ICE U.S. Dollar Index," *CNBC*, 2025.

⁵ Valle, Sabrina, "Private equity sits on \$1 trillion amid uncertainties, M&A stalls, PwC says," *Reuters*, 18 June 2025.



exposure—qualities we believe will be key to long-term outperformance.

Investments in non-U.S. securities may underperform and may be more volatile than comparable U.S. stocks because of the risks involving non-U.S. economies, markets, political systems, regulatory standards, currencies and taxes. The use of currency derivatives and exchange-traded funds (ETFs) may increase investment losses and expenses, and create more volatility. Investments in emerging markets present additional risks, such as difficulties in selling on a timely basis and at an acceptable price. The intrinsic value of the stocks in which the Fund invests may never be recognized by the broader market. The Fund is often concentrated in fewer sectors than its benchmarks, and its performance may suffer if these sectors underperform the overall stock market. Investing in equity stocks is risky and subject to the volatility of the markets.

Per the Fund's Prospectus as of February 1, 2025, Ariel International Fund Investor Class had an annual net expense ratio of 1.17% and an annual gross expense ratio of 1.40%. Currently, an expense ratio cap of 1.13% is in place for the Investor Class to waive fees and reimburse certain expenses that exceed this cap. Ariel Investments LLC (the Advisor) is contractually obligated to maintain this expense ratio cap through 1/31/26. The net expense ratio for the Investor Class does not correlate to the Expense Cap due to the inclusion of acquired fund fees and certain other expenses which are excluded from the Expense Cap.

The opinions expressed are current as of the date of this commentary but are subject to change. The information provided in this commentary does not provide information reasonably sufficient upon which to base an investment decision and should not be considered a recommendation to purchase or sell any particular security. There is no guarantee that any of the views expressed will come to fruition or any investment will perform as described.

As of 9/30/2025, Aptiv plc constituted 3.9% of Ariel International Fund; SUMCO Corporation 3.1%; Murata Manufacturing Company, Ltd. 3.9%; Sega Sammy Holdings Inc. 3.5%; Publicis Groupe SA 3.2%; Fresenius Medical Care AG 4.9%; BT Group PLC 2.6%; Informa plc 3.7%; Minth Group, Ltd. 1.1%; Proximus SA 1.0%; Samsung Electro-Mechanics Company, Ltd. 1.1%; Syensqo SA 3.3%; Beazley plc 0.0%; Daimler Truck Holding AG 0.0%; Infineon Technologies AG 0.0%; Redeia Corporacion SA 0.0%; SK Hynix Inc. 0.0%; Sanofi SA 0.0% and Tecnicas Reunidas SA 0.0%.

A glossary of financial terms provided herein may be found on our website at www.arielinvestments.com.

Indexes are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. The MSCI EAFE® Index is an equity index of large and mid-cap representation across 21 Developed Markets (DM) countries around the world, excluding the U.S. and Canada. Its inception date is May 31, 1986. The MSCI EAFE Value Index captures large and mid-cap securities exhibiting overall value style characteristics across Developed Markets countries around the world, excluding the US and Canada. Its inception date is December 8, 1997. The MSCI ACWI (All Country World Index) ex-US Index is an index of large and mid-cap representation across 22 Developed Markets (DM) and 24 Emerging Markets (EM) countries. Its inception date is January 1, 2001. The MSCI ACWI ex-US Value Index captures large and mid-cap securities exhibiting overall value style characteristics across 22 Developed and 24 Emerging Markets countries. Its inception date is December 8, 1997. All MSCI Index net returns reflect the reinvestment of income and other earnings, including the dividends net of the maximum withholding tax applicable to non-resident institutional investors that do not benefit from double taxation treaties. MSCI uses the maximum tax rate applicable to institutional investors, as determined by the company's country of incorporation. MSCI makes no express or implied warranties or representations and shall have no liability whatsoever with respect to any MSCI data contained herein. The MSCI data may not be further redistributed or used to create indices or financial products. This report is not approved or produced by MSCI.

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