

Abbas Akhavan

cast for a folly



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The work of Abbas Akhavan takes shape across a range of media and forms. From sculpture and installation to drawing, performance and video, Akhavan's practice is anchored deeply in the specificities of the sites and spaces he engages. Often open-ended, ephemeral or mimetic in nature, Akhavan's works frequently traffic in slippages and transferences – between public and private, presence and absence, structural and symbolic.

At the Contemporary Art Gallery, Akhavan presents *cast for a folly* (2019/2022), an installation that takes as its point of departure a photograph of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad: an image of the museum's lobby taken following its unprecedented looting during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Through

sculpture, custom-fabricated furniture and found objects, amongst other forms, Akhavan recreates this scene in the gallery from the single vantage point of his source image. Adjacent to this installation is a new work composed of flower fridges – *untitled* (2022) – a continuation of Akhavan's ongoing engagement with plant life as both index to and instrument of broader social economies.

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1 *cast for a folly*, 2019/2022
mirrors, sconces, cut
drywall, vitrines,
benches, oscillating fan,
tables, folding chairs,
digitally printed
sharkstooth scrim fabric,
green screen paint, OSB,
lumber, plywood, plastic
bucket, open cell foam
cushions, moving
blanket, basket, plastic
bag, metal bucket, water
lilies, dolly, plastic
storage container,
submersible pond pump,
rubber hose, unfired
clay, mortar, bricks, soil,
straw, sand, dust

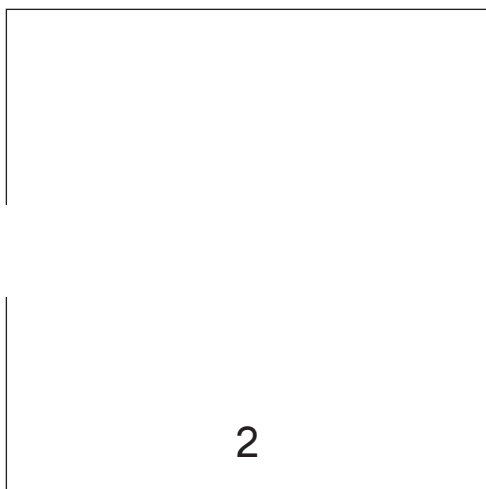
B.C. Binning Gallery

cast for a folly extends from a single image of the lobby of the Iraq Museum, taken by Corine Wegener – director of the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue initiative – after the museum's catastrophic looting during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In an approach Akhavan refers to as "loyal to the source image rather than obedient," he replicates this scene in the space of the gallery, drawing in part on the techniques of stagecraft: museum furniture partially rendered, marble walls now a scrim, an ancient basalt sculpture reshaped in cob, a green screen replacing the door where the museum was once breached.

cast for a folly (2019/2022) was originally curated by Kim Nguyen and commissioned by CCA Wattis Institute.

2 *untitled*, 2022
refrigerators, flowers,
foliage, buckets

Alvin Balkind Gallery



Where in *cast for a folly*, Akhavan turns an image into a space, *untitled* turns a space into an image. Floral coolers installed in the gallery are stocked throughout the course of the exhibition with flowers and greenery chosen for their seasonal availability. While much of Akhavan's work considers the instrumentalization of nature to social and cultural ends, here cut flowers – used almost universally as a vehicle for human emotion – are presented in a state of suspension, prior to being assigned meaning or sentiment.

All works courtesy of the artist and
Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

June 3
→ August 28, 2022

Contemporary
Art Gallery

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Open Tuesday to Sunday
12 pm → 6 pm
Free admission