

# The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

For Immediate Release

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## MILANO CHOW: PRIMA FACIE

January 16 to May 15, 2022

**Chow debuts more than a dozen new works on paper spanning two and three dimensions, marking the artist's first solo museum exhibition**

The Aldrich is pleased to announce *Prima Facie*, Milano Chow's first solo institutional exhibition. Presented in two first floor galleries, Chow will debut more than a dozen new works on paper spanning two and three dimensions. *Milano Chow: Prima Facie* will be on view at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum January 16 to May 15, 2022.



Milano Chow  
*Checked Floor I, 2020*  
Courtesy of the artist and Chapter NY, New York  
and Bel Ami, Los Angeles

Handsome, entrancing, and ghostly, Chow's exquisite monochromatic collages are rendered in graphite, ink, and photo transfer, casting modish women in self-possessed cameos staged in gilded architectural interiors that feel cloistered and deserted. Influenced by Surrealism, fashion photography, shop window design, and Hollywood film noir from Chow's native Los Angeles, her ornamented mise-en-scènes are frozen in time and loaded with disquieting effects.

Chow's process is deliberate and methodical. She begins with a collection of reference images retrieved from architecture and art history books, as well as technical drawings, blueprints, and lifestyle magazines. She selects cornices, canopies, eaves, window treatments, furniture, and decorative objects to build fictionalized edifices where time is suspended. Using drafting tools, Chow chooses patterns and silhouettes from true to life sources and then combines them with embellishments conjured from her imagination. To generate depth and relief, she applies ink to stress shadows and collages hand-drawn cut-outs of windows and doors back into her final compositions. Her female archetypes are lifted from glossy advertisements circulated in popular fashion magazines from the 1970s–1990s. Chosen for their dateless style, the figures are cut to shape and seamlessly inserted via an old analogue technique: the toner transfer. Chow's "paper dolls" are framed as both protagonist and bystander as they strike mysterious postures that intimate confessions, secrets, and adrift dreams.

Pivoting off the wall, the three-dimensional works, which Chow refers to as "corners" and "rooms" toe the line between drawing and sculpture. Sited on pedestals, her diminutive rooms contain walls, patterned floors, and female figures with details inspired by objects Chow finds on online antique auctions. Resembling both dollhouses and pop-up books, each "room" collapses into a flat object scaled to be held.

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At first sight (the exhibition's title translated from Latin), Chow's impeccable handiwork elicits schematic designs for opulent buildings and interiors. But under closer study, odd details materialize, proportions are intentionally off-kilter with rooms haunted by solitary female characters. Her women, secluded behind heavily festooned windows, materialize as spectral presences trapped inside a darker subtext. Probing motifs such as voyeurism, alienation, and isolation, Chow exploits enduring symbols of grandeur and desire to survey gender, power, and social order.

*Milano Chow: Prima Facie* is curated by Amy Smith-Stewart, Senior Curator, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

The exhibition will be accompanied by the artist's first museum publication.

Milano Chow was born in 1987 in Los Angeles, California, where she currently lives and works. She has had solo exhibitions at Bel Ami, Los Angeles; Adams and Ollman, Portland; Chapter NY, New York; Galleria Acappella, Naples; and Mary Mary, Glasgow. She was included in the *Whitney Biennial 2019* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and was a 2018 recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant.

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