

Abbas Akhavan will present a major solo show at the Museum Villa Stuck, combining older works with pieces created especially for this exhibition. This show, comprising of mostly sculptures and installations, explores issues related to destruction, marginalization as well as acts of preservation and regeneration in the shifting and repurposed spaces of the museum.

For the exhibition, Akhavan has chosen to incorporate all the imperfections and drill holes from the previous show. The museum's temperature control system has been turned off. Previously walled-up doors have been cut open, and windows are left ajar, allowing light and fresh air to permeate into the space, thereby raising questions about established boundaries of the museum and the limits of museological tasks: are the current methods of preservation still tenable and appropriate?

In Akhavan's artistic practice, the obscuring of interior and exterior space is a negotiation of hospitality and hostility, a highlighting of boundaries between outside and inside, guest and host (and ghost). This shifting border is rendered palpable by the large hedge in the exhibition space, by the mirrored fountain in the courtyard and the painting on the ceiling depicting trails of smoke that are the residues from an exterior fire. A large mound of soil sits in the middle of the museum floor; closer inspection reveals that it resembles a lion's claws, perhaps those belonging to Lamassu, an Assyrian deity.

Akhavan creates metaphors and symbols in order to reflect on systems that are inscribed by power structures. In doing so, he plays with the viewers' perception and expectations. His works often appear as if they are taken from real life. He manages to imbue his fragile works with multiple layers of meaning which reveal themselves only at second glance. They aim to raise questions about the vulnerability of social values.

About the artist

Akhavan's work encompasses sculpture, installation, drawing, video and performance. The artist has had various scholarship residencies in spaces such as Atelier Calder, Fogo Island Arts, and Flora: arts+natura. As with most of Akhavan's work, it is the occasion of the exhibition itself that becomes the focus of his production. Akhavan (born in Tehran in 1977, based in Toronto) has had solo exhibitions at The Delfina Foundation, London (2012); Mercer Union, Toronto (2015) and David Roberts Art Foundation, London (2017). He is the recipient of Kunstpreis Berlin (2012), The Abraaj Group Art Prize (2014), the Sobey Art Award (2015), and the Fellbach Triennial Award (2016)

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