

# EXHIBITION GUIDE

HADI FALLAHPISHEH

*As Free As Birds*

13 Aug – 16 Oct 2022

First Floor

Hadi Fallahpisheh works across painting, photography, ceramics, sculpture, performance and installation to weave a narrative that is part-allegory, part-fable. Taking place across all four of the CCA's upper galleries, *As Free As Birds* centres on ideas around freedom – its symbolisms, protections and contingencies. Life-size cages interrupt the exhibition experience, separating artwork from viewer. The exhibition's title references the German concept of *Vogelfrei*, literally meaning "as free as a bird", but which has been corrupted over time to mean "rightless, without protection, outlawed", as defined by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. Through literally caging both the viewer and his artworks, Fallahpisheh suggests that freedom is always a contradictory position that relies on the captive or unprotected status of others.

Fallahpisheh also presents the darkroom as prison, referencing the long periods of blacked-out isolation that his photographic paintings require. Drawing across photosensitive paper with colour gels and a torch, the artist leaves a large amount of his work to chance and improvisation, not knowing what colours might emerge until the end. Photography without a camera becomes a performance, emphasising the complete reliance on light in darkness to produce images. In this way, Fallahpisheh's process references how past traumas are brought to light through therapy and exposure.

A recurring cast of a human, a mouse, a cat and a dog form a quasi-family unit that at times feels nostalgic and domestic, but often veers toward entrapment and violence, prompting questions around belonging, conflict and anxiety. These anthropomorphic characters – who often appear trapped in houses – present a kind of post-Disney family, their deliberately naïve style reflecting a childlike reliance on power structures and hierarchies. Transgressive and irrational, these figures raise questions around the framework of the family, and its in-built notions of harmony and containment.

Fallahpisheh plays with the innate power of certain objects to induce memories of childhood. A number of antique American quilts from the 1920s serve as backdrops or frames to the photographic paintings. They bring warmth and a sense of domesticity to the works, conjuring the sense of a body but also quaint interior décor and family heirlooms. The exhibition also features ceramic works that veer between human-like forms and precariously stacked totems. The ceramics' hard fragility sharply contrasts with their pliable appearance, with pots bent, balanced, wedged between each other and stuffed

with soft toys. Stuffed animals – often in various states of distress – and fashion accessories serve as nods to pop culture and the intimacy of nostalgia, and query how nostalgia can warp the boundaries between memory and imagination.

A new, choreographed performance entitled **House Animals** takes place within the exhibition during the opening. Fallahpisheh's cat, mouse, and dog characters are embodied by dancers, with gentle reference to Merce Cunningham. Performance times:

**Friday 12 Aug, 7–7.30pm**

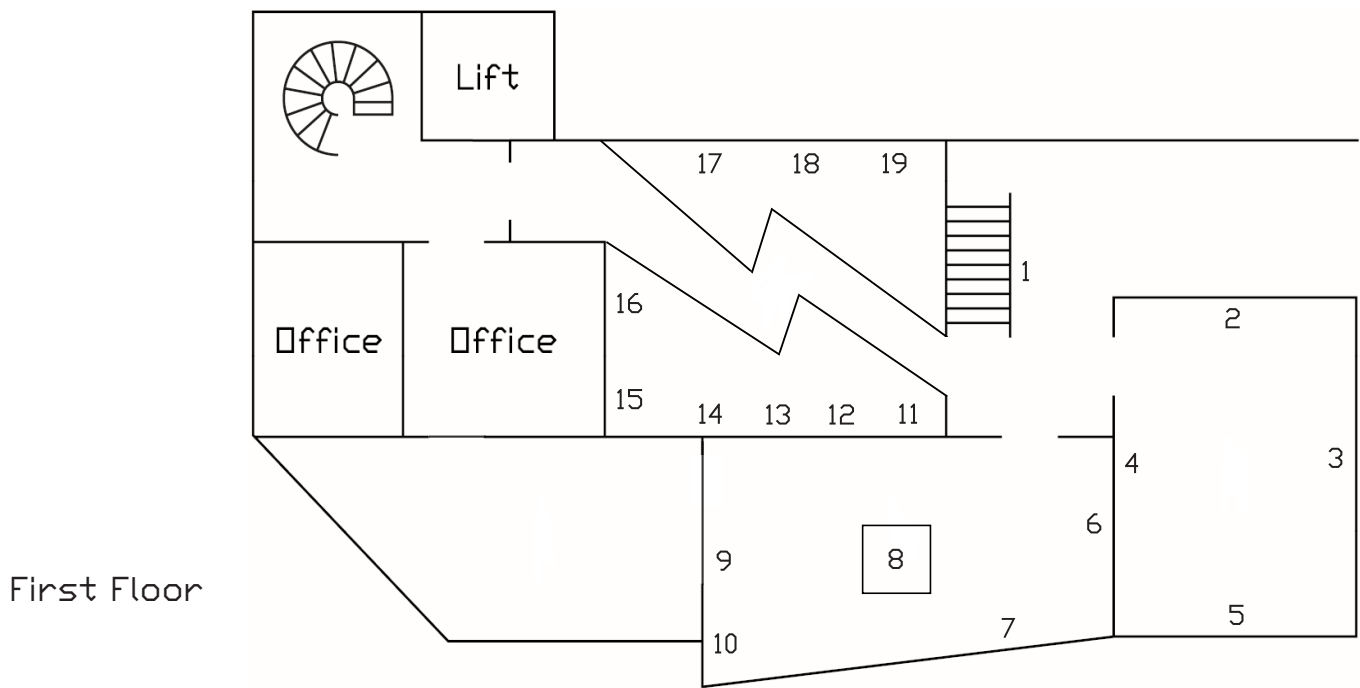
**Saturday 15 Oct, 4–4.30pm**

We are very grateful to the Hadi Fallahpisheh Exhibition Circle for their generous support towards the show: Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, Efremidis, Berlin, and Rodeo, London/Piraeus.

**Hadi Fallahpisheh** (b. 1987, Tehran) lives and works in New York. Fallahpisheh received his MFA in Photography from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York in 2016. Fallahpisheh's work was recently included in the *2022 Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts* at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, *Greater New York 2021*, MoMA PS1, New York, *100 Drawings from Now* at The Drawing Center, New York, 2020, *In Practice: Total Disbelief*, SculptureCenter, Long Island City, 2020, and *Open Call*, The Shed, New York, 2019. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Power Station*, Dallas, 2022, *Champ Lacombe*, Biarritz, 2022, and *Rodeo*, London and Piraeus, 2021.

*"The overriding desire of most children is to get at and see the soul of their toys ... It is on the more or less swift invasion of this desire that depends the length of life of a toy. I do not find it in me to blame this infantile mania; it is a first metaphysical tendency. When this desire has implanted itself in the child's cerebral marrow, it fills his fingers and nails with an extraordinary agility and strength. The child twists and turns his toy, scratches it, shakes it, bumps it against the walls, throws it on the ground. From time to time he makes it restart its mechanical motions, sometimes in the opposite direction. Its marvellous life comes to a stop. The child ... makes a supreme effort; at last he opens it up, he is the stronger. But where is the soul? This is the beginning of melancholy and gloom."*

– Charles Baudelaire, 'A Philosophy of Toys'



1. *Welcome To Hell*, 2021

Satin, embroidery floss, golden fringe and sequins  
Each: 110 x 155 cm (fabric), 200 cm (pole)

2. *Young and Clueless (purple bear, brown dog, pink bunny)*, 2021

Stuffed animals, glazed ceramic pots and quilt  
211 x 176 x 66 cm

3. *Well Known Pleasures*, 2021

Wooden bed, Joy Division bed sheets, pillows and bear in ceramic pot  
204 x 100 cm

4. *Prison of Mind*, 2021

Satin, embroidery floss, golden fringe, sequins and plastic pole  
Each: 110 x 155 cm (fabric), 200 cm (pole)

5. *Home Theater*, 2021

Light drawing, unique C-print and quilt  
203.2 x 162.6 x 5 cm

6. *Good Boy*, 2021

Light drawing, unique C-print and quilt  
236 x 195 x 5 cm

7. *Dreamer*, 2022

Ceramic vases and quilts  
250 x 250 x 42 cm

8. *Memory House*, 2022

Wood, quilt and stuffed animals  
290 x 230 x 220 cm

9. *Young and Clueless (pink bear, red dog, brown bear)*, 2021

Stuffed animals, glazed ceramic pots and quilt  
198 x 171 x 66 cm

10. *Drunken Boat*, 2022

Boat, metal and electric boards  
270 x 350 x 117 cm

11. *Prison of Mind (Blue Corner)*, 2021

Light drawing, unique C-print and quilt  
185 x 228 x 5 cm

[12–14.] *Mirage*, 2022

Oil and clay on canvas  
71 x 61 cm

15. *Sorry Kid 1*, 2022

Foam, fabric and stuffed animal  
110 x 35 x 35 cm

16. *Playtime*, 2021

Light drawing, unique C-print and quilt  
229 x 198 x 5 cm

17. *Couples*, 2022

Ceramic and fabric  
83 x 40 x 30 cm

18. *Mirage*, 2022

Oil and clay on canvas  
71 x 61 cm

19. *Sorry Kid 2*, 2022

Foam, fabric and stuffed animal  
124 x 35 x 35 cm