Contemporary Art Review .la

Milano Chow at Hollyhock House

November 4, 2026
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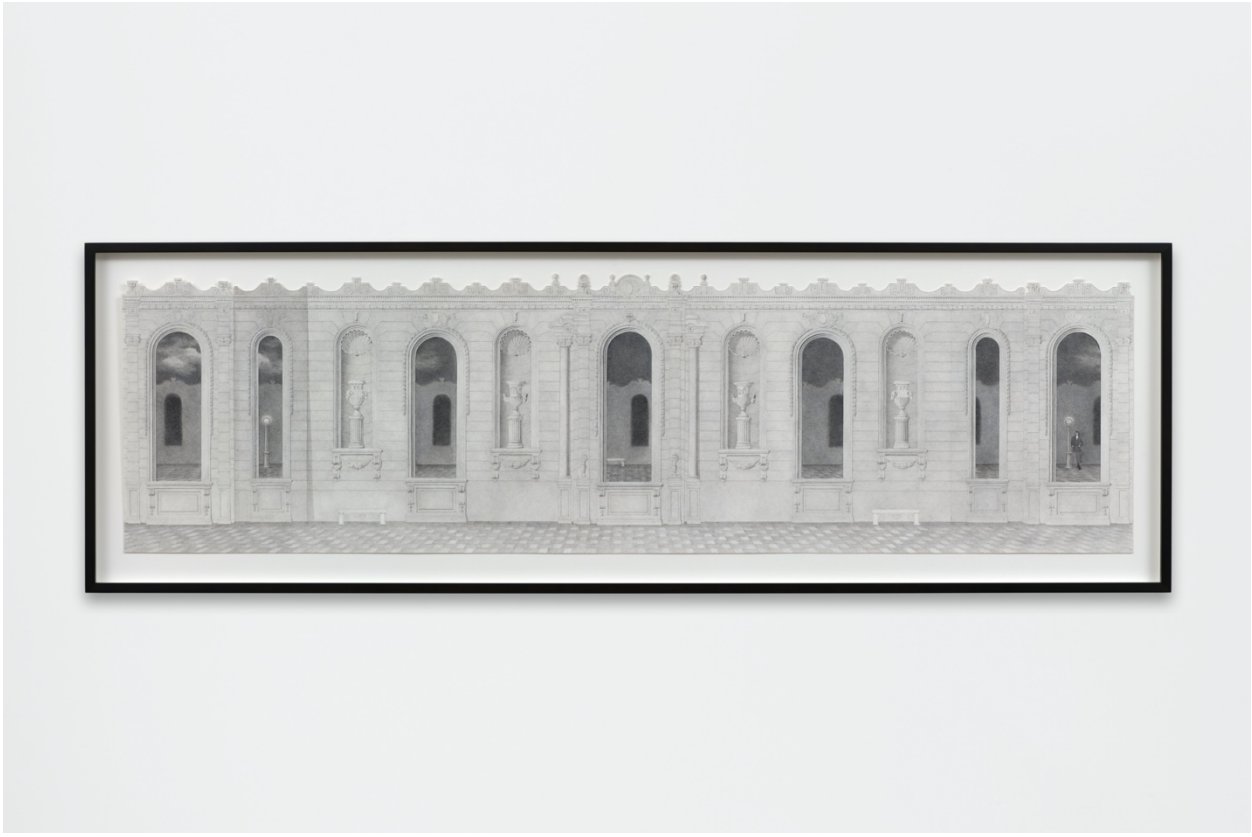


Milano Chow, *Fantasy Street* (installation view) (2026).
Image courtesy of the artist and Hollyhock House. Photo: Joshua White.

Aleina Grace Edwards, *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles (CARLA)*
November 2026

Milano Chow's *Fantasy Street* occupies one room at the back of Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House—a room that originally belonged to the owner's daughter, Betty Barnsdall, who was just four when the house was finished in 1921. Over a century later, the room is unfurnished, occupied only by a selection of Chow's relatively small paper works. They're dispersed throughout, several framed and mounted on floral silk folding screens, one set over the fireplace, others hung sparsely on the pink accent walls. The sole three-dimensional piece sits on one of Wright's iconic wood built-ins.

At a distance, these works appear as finely rendered, grayscale architectural drawings. *Night Colonnade I* (2026) stretches out over the bedroom's fireplace in a surrealist scene, an uncanny row of neoclassical archways revealing more dark openings beyond, and one figure leaning against a street lamp. In the room's large closet, *Department Store* (2026) shows a sparkling three-story facade of doors and windows, with stylish but nondescript women—maybe mannequins—visible through the glass. Women like these, more paper doll than person, populate Chow's scenes, but the effect isn't voyeuristic. *Fantasy Street* focuses instead on the gap between the actual and the imagined, on the slippery nature of reality—especially in Los Angeles.



Milano Chow, *Night Colonnade I* (2026). Graphite, colored pencil, ink, and photo transfer on paper, 10.5 x 28.25 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Bel Ami, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson.

Chow's street views—made with her signature layers of graphite, ink, and phototransfer—are not observational, but sourced from the Los Angeles Public Library's archive of images captured around the time of the Hollyhock House's construction. Chow combines historical windows, columns, and cornices with imagined details to create chimeric edifices, where closer examination reveals missing doorknobs, impossibly small windows, women too tall compared to their surroundings. The scenes suddenly appear more like movie sets, evocative rather than documentarian. This perceptive shift parallels the metamorphosis of urban Los Angeles, a city that has long tended to raze rather than save its architecture.

The only other item in the bedroom is a copy of architectural historian Charles Jencks' *Daydream Houses of Los Angeles*—a brief book cataloguing some of the absurd, grotesque, and delightful vernacular architecture that emerged across

midcentury Los Angeles. Though he rates the rest of Wright's homes highly, Jencks counts Hollyhock among the so-called "daydreams," unbounded by aesthetic conventions and occasionally, common sense.[1]



Milano Chow, *Fantasy Street* (installation view) (2026).
Image courtesy of the artist and Hollyhock House. Photo: Joshua White.

The book offers visitors a useful lens for *Fantasy Street*, which obliquely addresses the culture of appropriation, mutation, and invention in L.A. Hollyhock was Frank Lloyd Wright's first Los Angeles commission, and like Chow's surreal architectures, it is a melange of ideas and elements. It was a "bridge" between Wright's iconic Prairie Style and Mayan Revival, characterized by its textile block build of interlocking modules and indigenous-inspired geometries.[2] Aline Barnsdall told Wright that she wanted the home to be "half house and half garden," and Hollyhock is at once oppressively heavy and wide open—Jencks notes the daydreams are always like this, made of irreconcilable, often contradictory parts.[3] Chow's constructions embody the paradox, deceit, and daring of L.A.'s visual culture, a city that cannibalizes its past to create its future.

[1] Charles Jencks, *Daydream Houses of Los Angeles* (New York: Rizzoli / Academy Editions, 1978).
[2] https://historicalmx.org/items/show/155?ref=hyperallergic.com
[3] https://franklloydwright.org/site/hollyhock-house/