

HANNI KAMALY  
**UNBOUND THE GAG**  
April 5 - May 25, 2019

For her first show at the gallery, Hanni Kamaly (b. 1988 in Hedmark, NO) presents four new sculptures and one video work.

The exhibition is a continuum of themes that have been significant throughout the artist's work: subject/object theories and ontology as it relates to borders of existence and boundaries of subjectivity in general and the process of dehumanization that is indicative of colonial and racist oppression in particular. The show takes its title from Jean-Paul Sartre's "Black Orpheus" (1948): "What then did you expect when you unbound the gag that had muted those black mouths? That they would chant your praises? Did you think that when those heads that our fathers had forcibly bowed down to the ground were raised again, you would find adoration in their eyes?"

Four sculptures, like creatures, inhabit the exhibition space. Stylized torsos, or rather just spines with antennae instead of heads, are holding themselves up on what seem to be legs or arms. Made out of steel or copper pipes and either screwed together or welded, Kamaly's sculptures have limbs and joints that they bent or stretch in order to hold their position. While the materials chosen by Kamaly are cold, hard, durable metals, her construction relies on her figure's contrapposto, giving her sculptures an at once threatening and fragile impression.

With the exception of "AMAD AHMAD" (steel, rubber pipe clamp, 76 x 86 x 66cm) which is half resting on the floor and half clinging to the wall, "ARJEMANDI" (chrome-plated steel, cooper, steel, 228 x 139 x 92 cm), "ACONCHAKOHN" (steel, 148 x 45 x 10cm) and "SARBAZ" (aluminum, brass, steel, 190 x 75 x 64cm) are standing figures.

Each sculpture is named after a person who fell victim to racially motivated violence at the hands of police, military or individuals. Though the artist insists that her works are not intended as portraits, Kamaly's sculptures (and instal-

lations) are underpinned by an uncanny presence. One is easily tempted to speak about her figures in an animistic language, one ascribing them emotions, demeanor and even fate: "The sculptures portray bodies that have transitioned into abstract objects, but still bear the marks of history – for it is history that has caused their transformation. [...] Together, they form a kind of memorial to the violence, while also illustrating the colonial gaze that made that violence possible to begin with. Kamaly's work makes visible the metamorphosis of dehumanization; from person to threatening creature; from subject to object." [1]

"HeadHandEye," a video work from 2017 (17:45 min), takes said vital body parts as allegories to recount man's history of oppression in an écriture automatique manner. Still and moving images from the artist's research follow the narrator's train of thought as she recalls historical instances as well as recent events where the control over and the dehumanization of another where the means that later justified horrifying acts of violence and racist notions.

"HeadHandEye" was just shown in the group exhibition "In & Beyond Sweden" at Moderna Museet in Stockholm. Simultaneously Kamaly was also one of the artist selected for the 2018 Luleå Biennial, titled "Tidal Ground."

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[1] Tidal Ground. Luleå Biennial 2018. Luleå, 2019, p.17.