

## **You could cut it with a knife**

Hanni Kamaly, Melanie Kittl

April 11–May 18, 2025

“You could cut it with a knife” is a common English idiom used to express tension so palpable you can slit it with a blade. As the world grapples with this very sensation, the exhibition takes it as its material, and presents artists who work at the precipice of discomfort. It plays with the raw friction of existence: strain, unease, the pull between worlds, forces working in opposition, the moment just before breaking point. Offering no assertive answers or solace, it instead explores the space in between and its potential.

Melanie Kittl presents fresco paintings depicting figures placed and trapped within frames. Limbs twisted into shapes, soft colours bleeding into each other. Some of the figures are human-ish, some animal-ish. This claustrophobic feeling extends from the artist's refusal to be placed in a square. Kittl is interested in form and formlessness, the meeting point between language and painting, and the aftermath of the clash.

Across the gallery, Kittl's frescos stand firm on white plinths, a humming chorus. The paintings in the exhibition are selected primarily from two bodies of work: *Bumps, bumps, bumps that I store on my shore* and *I boiled my roots in an old pot*. Kittl engages with art historical motifs, creating tension through sharp departures and unexpected deviations. She is interested in disruption, fragmentation, and discontinuity. Her new site-specific work continues on this trajectory, drawing on surrealist vignettes from her debut book, *Halvt urne, halvt gral* (2022).

Frescos have been used since antiquity—from domestic Roman murals to the Sistine Chapel. They are part of art history's deep sediment. The process of making a fresco includes the delicate act of wetting the surface and painting on it immediately. In this show, they exist as heavy, crashing blocks that leave behind residue. They carry the weight of the body, the psychic, and the symbolic, echoing the heaviness of existence.

Hanni Kamaly's practice unearths narratives of subject making through sculpture, film and performance. Kamaly cuts into racial and colonial history to emphasise moments of dehumanisation and the construction of *the Other*. In this context the artist's rigorous research manifests through video, drawing, and their signature steel sculptures suspended in motion, balancing on needle-like legs and anchored on the gallery's floor. The sculptures are as vulnerable, as much as they are formidable. Each one is named to memorialise and to never forget lives lost to state violence: *ABUKAR* (2020–2025), *AMAD AHMAD* (2019–2025), *ACONCHA-KOHN II* (2023–2025), and *BENAM II* (2024–2025).

At the heart of Kamaly's work lies a web of connections—frays of history dripping in red ink, forming a mind map. In 1899, Gadju Daniel Sewak trudges through the snow and is transformed into a spectacle in Swedish discourse. In 1901, the missionary and 'treasure hunter' Mathilda Hamilton opens Indiska utställningen which later transforms into the chain store Indiska and is still in operation to this day. In 1967, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* by Bronisław Malinowski is published posthumously. These fragments, these traces, pose a difficult question: How did dehumanisation begin, and who were the architects of this relentless project? A healing brush erases and blends, repeatedly, offering a quiet restoration that never fully resolves the past.

**You could cut it with a knife** is a meditation on resistance and release, a fragile balance held together by forces that threaten to tear it apart.

**Curator:** Tawanda Appiah

**Hanni Kamaly** (b. 1988, Norway) is an artist whose interdisciplinary works involve sculpture, video and performance, investigating the process of alienation and the devaluation of the subject. Kamaly graduated with an MFA from Malmö Art Academy in 2016, and also studied at Bergen Academy of Arts and the International Art Academy of Palestine. Central to Kamaly's practice is the human body, working as a home of the subject as well as a projection for norms, ideologies and power structures. Using post-colonial theory as a starting point, they explore how the idea of *the Other* is shaped and consolidated through historical writing and visual culture. Kamaly was the 2023 IASPIS Studio Grant Holder at ISCP, New York. Their work has been widely exhibited at institutions and spaces, including: Malmö Konstall (2025), Sharjah Art Biennial 15 (2023), 34th Biennial São Paulo (2022), Accelerator, Stockholm (2022).

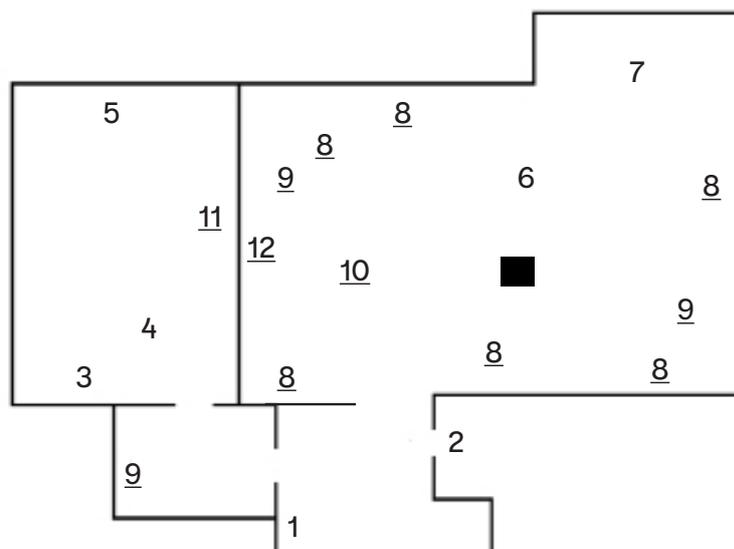
**Melanie Kitti** (b. 1986, Sweden) is an artist, author and community organiser, educated at the Academy of Creative Writing, the Royal Danish Art Academy in Copenhagen and the Academy of Fine Arts in Oslo. She co-founded Destiny's, a gallery in Oslo in 2016, and co-founded Abhivyakti, a non-profit, multidisciplinary magazine in 2021. Her writing is featured in texts mending critical psychiatry with the arts in the critically acclaimed anthology *Hjertet er en fold med heste*, published in 2022. Her authorial debut *Halvt urne, halvt gral*, from 2022 is published by Gyldendal and Ellerströms, and was followed by *borte / borta* in 2023, published by Laboratory of Aesthetics and Ecology. Kitti's works have been shown in solo and group exhibitions in venues including Carl Eldhs Ateljémuseum, Stockholm (2024), O-Overgaden Copenhagen (2023), Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo (2022), ARIEL, Copenhagen (2022).

#### Hanni Kamaly

- 1 *tracking dehumanization*, 2025, drawing
- 2 *GADJU*, 2021, video, 7 min
- 3 *AMAD AHMAD*, 2019–2025, steel, rubber lined-pipe clamp
- 4 *ACONCHA-KOHN II*, 2023–2025, steel
- 5 *BENAM II*, 2024–2025, steel
- 6 *ABUKAR*, 2020–2025, chrome-plated copper, brass, copper, steel
- 7 *erasing malinowski*, 2025, moving image

#### Melanie Kitti

- 8 *I boiled my roots in an old pot*, 2024
  - 9 *Bumps, bumps, bumps that I store on my shore*, 2023
  - 10 *a tear can get stuck in the air on its way to the ground*, 2024
  - 11 *Untitled*, 2024
- all of the works above: plaster, hessian, washed river sand, slaked lime putty paste, pigments
- 12 *Untitled*, 2025, vignettes from *Halvt urne, halvt gral* (2022)



**Technicians:** Jenny Berg, Petter Dahlström Persson

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