

HARD WORDS

Melanie Kitty & Carl Mannov

7.03.2026 – 21.06.2026

In the exhibition *Hard Words* at HFKD, two artistic practices meet around what is difficult to put into words. The title points not only to words, but also to resistance and to the very act of making language and experience physical – to harden them.

Melanie Kitty and Carl Mannov use painting as a place for inner states to be registered rather than explained. The exhibition gathers works that feel like fragmented glimpses into a series of mental landscapes. Sensation, sign, and material become topographical tools that help us navigate.

In Kitty's work, orientation starts from the material. Her paintings – porous, fresco-like layers on remnants and debris – appear deliberately uneven and displaced. The formats are not strictly rectangular but can be crooked, interrupted, or missing corners, as if they were pieces of a larger picture.

On the surface, partial figurations can be detected: a section of a yellow ant, a red shape with fetus-like features, soft fields colliding. The motifs seem to trickle from the material rather than being already determined. The slightly rough approach lends the works a character of something in formation and dissolution at the same time.

Kitty's images can be seen as a form of archeology of memories – imprints from the subconscious – where fragmented animals and bodily traces appear as signs of something not fully accessible. One could think of it as a temporal depth: meaning unfolds bit by bit over time and the images capture a displaced dramatic composition. Comprehension arrives gradually. These are paintings in which experience and memory do not appear as something closed and whole but as something sporadic, mosaic-like.

In Mannov's paintings, the pictorial space is more regular, but the motifs possess a similar sense of displacement. His oil paintings show young figures in interiors and situations, often seen through a fisheye-like optic, where single details are drawn out of proportion and take on an almost geometric character. Figures and spaces blend and create a slightly psychedelic yet controlled imagery.

The portraits emerge from a long-running character study with a recurring observing persona. This figure works as a device to explore the expectations attached to artistic and intellectual identity, pointing to the tension between a private mental space and the staged image, visible to the public.

In the works, Mannov also examines linguistic experience as something fundamentally sensory. Starting from the idea that language itself is synesthetic – that a sound can evoke images, feelings, or abstract notions – the paintings explore how meaning arises when form, color, and perception intersect. The analytical and the bodily experienced become interwoven.

The exhibition and its title, *Hard Words*, are multifaceted. It can point to hurtful or heavy words, take shape as experience or trauma, leaving their marks in Kitty's fragmented pictorial world. It can be read as "difficult words": The linguistic and theoretical processing

of art and identity that Mannov's works both draw upon and resist. In the attempt to embody language and consciousness, something concrete and poetic is created.

As a shared gesture for this exhibition, the two artists have developed a series of sculptural benches to create a fixed anchor in the spaces. The benches connect the works across the show and invite the audience to pause and feel how interpretation changes with the position of the body. They underscore the exhibition's movement between the sensory and the analytical.

Hard Words can be experienced as a walk through inner landscapes. Images, signs, and materials don't present clear-cut statements; meaning emerges gradually and in the friction between the porous and the structured, between the felt and the attempt to put into words.

Melanie Kitti (b. 1986, Sweden) is a visual artist, poet, and community organizer who lives and works in Malmö and Copenhagen. In her practice, she moves between painting, sculpture, and text, often taking the fresco as a point of departure both technically and historically. Kitti works with fragile materials like plaster, lime, and pigment to explore relationships between body, memory, mythology, and social structures. She has exhibited widely in the North and is a cofounder and editor of the art review *Abhivyakti* as well as cofounder of the artist run space *Destiny's* (2016-2022) in Oslo. Kitti is educated at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and the Danish Academy of Creative Writing in Copenhagen.

Carl Mannov (b. 1990, Denmark) is a visual artist who lives and works in Copenhagen and Oslo. He works with painting, sculpture, and installation, combining references from scenography and quotidian culture. Mannov's works explore staging, narrative, and the relationship between the public and private through open and often theatrical structures. He is educated at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts and has exhibited at institutions and galleries in Denmark and internationally.

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