

Tony Romano

*ACT I: The Finale*

May 15 - June 27, 2026

In *ACT I: The Finale*, Tony Romano begins with a structural impossibility: an opening act named as an ending. Romano's second solo exhibition with Franz Kaka, and the first of two separate but related presentations, brings together twelve carved walnut reliefs held in painted metal armatures, each panel suspended between image, object, and fragment. Across the works, inherited forms of narrative and display are taken up, then left unresolved.

The reliefs are spare and physically direct. Hands close around a snaking, hybrid creature; a boy appears in profile with donkey ears; a mule collapses beneath a load of bricks; a man dangles upside down over a well, clutching paintbrushes. Their directness gives the works a comic charge, while their restraint keeps the images from resolving into anecdote. The carved surfaces keep the images visibly worked, holding them between action, symbol, and unresolved thought.

Romano builds this narrative pressure through isolated figures, shallow depth, heightened gesture, and sequential arrangement. The format recalls the Stations of the Cross, a structure in which images are made to carry suffering, transformation, and consequence. Here, the instability of self-portraiture is intensified by the very forms meant to give it shape. Self-portraiture becomes episodic rather than fixed, structured by religious narrative but left without its promise of resolution.

The steel armatures extend this instability into the mechanics of museum display. Clamped in suspension, the carvings resemble fragments from a larger structure, held in the absence of the whole. Like museum mounts, they isolate, support, and elevate partial objects, giving them the authority of evidence. The display holds the carvings in place, but only deepens the uncertainty around what has been recovered, and what is still being constructed. In *ACT I: The Finale*, narrative is assembled through fragments, held in suspension, and left unresolved.

Tony Romano (b. 1978, Toronto; lives and works in Oshawa, Canada) received a BFA in Intermedia from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver (2003). Solo exhibitions have been held at Franz Kaka, Toronto (2026, 2024); Carrefour, Montréal (2026); Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa (2024); Nicolas Robert, Toronto (2022); Toronto Sculpture Garden, Toronto (2018); Clint Roenisch Gallery, Toronto (2017, 2014); Beers Contemporary Art, London (2016); MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie (2010); articule, Montréal (2008); Oakville Galleries, Oakville (2008); and Museum London, London (2008). Selected group exhibitions have been held at Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto (2025); Franz Kaka, Toronto (2025); Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto, Toronto (2021); Griffin Art Projects, Vancouver (2021); Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Kitchener (2012); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012); Neutral Ground, Regina (2012); Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops (2011); Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto (2010); The Power Plant, Toronto (2005,

2004); White Columns, New York (2004); and Kunstbuero Gallery, Vienna (2004). Romano is a recipient of grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, and Toronto Arts Council. His collaborative public sculpture with Nadia Belerique for the Lassonde Art Trail, Toronto, will be unveiled in summer 2026. His work is held in the collections of the Canada Council Art Bank, RBC Corporate Art Collection, and Bank of Montreal Art Collection.