

Kara Hamilton, Wane Awareless & Lifted, Toronto, G Gallery

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Kara Hamilton

← *Wane Awareless & Lifted*,
installation view, 2015–2016.

↑ *Prototypes for Stolen Artifacts*, detail,
2015–2016.

Photos : courtesy of the artist

Kara Hamilton

Wane Awareless & Lifted

Kara Hamilton's work is gorgeous and curious, graceful and ambitious, immersive and singular. In her recent exhibition *Wane Awareless & Lifted* at Toronto's G Gallery, Hamilton treated the long rectangular space as though it were a life-size diorama for her objects to be displayed and performed. Each piece seemed to exist in order to highlight its unique ability to emphasize the space around it. My visit reminded me that a gallery's architecture should be soft, but only as malleable as the objects within it are convincing.

First in line were eighteen small objects installed on a black background, some sitting on custom-made shelves, others mounted directly to the wall. *Prototypes for Stolen Artifacts* was a staunch reminder of the sheer, unapologetic confidence that must be present for art to be considered autonomous. Each piece was delightfully odd and devotedly tactile, constructed out of varying combinations of marble, brass and glass. Much like the show as a whole, these works seemed to exist primarily for their own sake, reading not as statements but as question marks, and whispering clues that nodded towards their status as components in the fabric of time. I found myself holding the mystery of what makes something beautiful at the forefront of my mind.

Acting as a semi-permeable divider between the front and back of the gallery, and feeling much like an adornment made for the body of the space, was *Screen / Organ*—a series of polished copper pipes hanging from the ceiling, each one uniformly bent to form elongated u-shapes of varying lengths and widths. This drooping, dripping display of organic piping had the feel of stalactites in the roof of a cave, or the dangling insides of a mythical beast, or a massive ceremonial neck piece. This was the body extended into architectural space.

Certainly the oddest, but also the most endearing piece in the show was *Tonka*, a baby bear-sized uneven mound of fur

standing on four leg-like stumps with one pinched end facing the wall. The design-like quality of its display matched that of the aesthetically polished but disturbingly dismembered objects in the adjacent work, *Heart, Lung, Butterfly*. I was reminded of things made dead through preservation, rituals and traditions; objects, or even entire species, removed from their context in order to be frozen as spectacle for the present. Notably, several of Hamilton's raw materials were prefaced by the words "stolen" and "pilfered." By rejecting the found object as passive, the relationship between museum and artifact was transformed into that of prison and prisoner.

Wane Awareless & Lifted delivered and encouraged material scrutiny, a critical eye, and stunning juxtapositions between the grotesque and the polished. It allowed for the pure pleasure of pondering how objects behave in space, by eliminating the hierarchy between the raw and the precious.

Alex Bowron

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