



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kamil by Keren Benbenisty

October 17- November 16, 2014

Opening Reception: Friday, October 17, 2014 7-9pm

Pseudo Empire 467 Troutman Street (entrance on Cypress) Brooklyn, NY 11225

Bushwick Beat Night : Friday, October 24, 2104 6-10pm

Gallery Hours 1-6pm Saturday and Sundays and by appointment. Contact pseudoempire.info@gmail.com for more information.

Pseudo Empire is pleased to present *Kamil*, a solo exhibition by New-york based artist Keren Benbenisty. The exhibition questions contemporary interpretations of language and codes; the spoken vs written, the word vs. the image. As a nexus point to these riddles is the figure of the sphinx, who according to legend acted as guardian of the city, only allowing passage to those who could reply correctly to the riddles she posed.

Kamil draws its title from a graffiti tag on the *Fontaine du Palmier in Place de chatelet* in Paris that Benbenisty photographed before moving to New York. A nexus in her current series of work, the Napoleonic-era fountain featuring a head of a Sphinx facing the four cardinal directions is, for Benbenisty, a fountain of water and language. Benbenisty's sphinx, speaking in gurgling water, poses riddles in a silent language that does not have written form. Likewise ambiguous in meaning, (translated to "the perfect one" in Arabic in addition to having roots in early Etruscan, Turkish and Greek) the graffiti is in part an individual's solution to the sphinx's ongoing riddle, an ambiguous response to the fountain's silent speech.

Benbenisty parallels the iconography of the sphinx by posing contemporary linguistic riddles in the user-dialogue system, **CAPTCHA**. Based on its existing technology, the **reCAPTCHA**, originally developed by Luis von Ahn, Ben Maurer, Colin McMillen, David Abraham and Manuel Blum at Carnegie Mellon University, was created in an attempt to capitalize on this brief, conceptual labor. Like the **CAPTCHA** interface, reCAPTCHA asks users to enter words seen in distorted text images onscreen, a type of challenge-response test used in computing to determine whether or not the user is human. By presenting two words it both protects websites attempting to access restricted areas and helps digitize the text of the archives of *The New York Times* and books from Google Books. By correctly translating the images into typed words, the user solves the "riddle" and gains access to the desired webpage. Benbenisty's animation uses pairs of reCAPTCHA words hand copied onto carbon paper, seen through a light from a projector. A pair of two words appear for 10 seconds, the time required for the average user to decipher the reCAPTCHA into text.

Benbenisty's hand-drawn reCAPTCHA pairings and water form the mouth of the sphinx reverse the computer's translation; words morph into images. How these images can reflect the sentiments and intentions behind them, how images can be words and words images are the ideas with which Benbenisty plays. For Benbenisty, language is set of riddles. Our ability to understand context and use critical reasoning allows us to continue to succeed where a computer, for example cannot. By recognizing an image as an aesthetic translation of a concept, we set ourselves apart in our ability to and successfully solve the riddle of the sphinx.

Keren Benbenisty (b. 1977, Israel) moved to Paris in 1998 where she graduated in 2004 from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 2003 she attended The California Institute of the Arts (Cal'Arts) and in Summer 2009 she was a resident at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. In 2011 Benbenisty was a resident at the The International Studio & Curatorial Program ISCP. Her work has been exhibited internationally, in Europe, Middle East and USA in Groups and solo exhibitions. Benbenisty is currently lives and works in New York and Tel-Aviv.