

# Golsa

Too Long at the Fair  
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Fredrik Berberg  
Lena Christakis  
Olivia Drusin  
Nick Farhi  
Abby Robinson

Text by Victoria Horrocks

Golsa is delighted to present “Too Long at the Fair,” a group exhibition featuring Fredrik Berberg, Lena Christakis, Olivia Drusin, Nick Farhi, and Abby Robinson.

Through the work of five artists, “Too Long at the Fair” presents distinct indexes for reality. Each artist showcases a different register of contemporary experience, engaging with modes of digital reality, surrealism, fiction, and abstraction. The show’s title is inspired by Joan Didion’s essay “Goodbye to All That,” in which Didion reflects on the ways she has grown bored with New York City. Feeling that she has exhausted new experiences and opportunities for the vibrant life in New York, she concludes that “it is distinctly possible to stay too long at the Fair,” and sets off West for a life of new possibilities. The artists in this exhibition read Didion’s sentiment as a call to reimagine everyday life and explore the many dimensions of our immediate reality.

The three paintings by Lena Christakis, whose work blends digital and art historical iconography, resemble digital landscapes. In her work, Christakis questions scale and perceptual logic. The monotone but textured backgrounds create voids or vacuums wherein objects, pulled from both material and digital realities, are represented. Emojis and other symbols that are part of a familiar digital lexicon appear alongside depictions of recognizable objects across the art historical canon. Hyperrealist objects like bottles or clouds are juxtaposed with flat emojis and cartoon-like depictions of household items. In *Cloud Painting* (2022), for example, Christakis accumulates different representations of clouds one might find on their Apple Weather app or in the background of a René Magritte painting. Through pastiche and evocations of the surreal, Christakis’s paintings blend the digital, the historical, and the real to create planes in which the viewer may feel welcomed into a simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar space.

Moving away from a digital language to a pre-verbal one, the painting and plaster works by Abby Robinson draw on an abstract mode of expression to create lenses into an intuitive and emotional reality. Creating forms in paint and plaster that the artist herself has been drawing on paper since her childhood, Robinson’s work makes manifest the instinctive, automatic nature of consciousness. Her plaster forms appear physically in the gallery space, expanding upon their flat renderings in the paintings *Briland Bordello* (2022) and *Letter to MW* (2022) to allow two-dimensional forms to go beyond the canvas and exist three-dimensionally in the gallery. Her squiggles, lines, and idiosyncratic gestures create a unique and personal visual idiom that stems from a raw, even childlike, way of communicating experience. Amidst explorations of the digital and the surreal, Robinson’s work reminds us of how the human mind might interpret our contemporary world.

Unlike Christakis and Robinson, who work with canvas and raw materials, Fredrik Berberg’s sculpture practice begins with the computer software SketchUp. Using digital three-dimensional modeling as part of his creative process, Berberg makes sculptures that straddle a digital and material reality. The design of *Latest Technology* (2022) features tubular forms resembling wires, cords, piping, brickwork, and more, applying recognizable materials to an unfamiliar object. On the contrary, *Molting* (2022) takes three iterations of a pair of sweatpants scattered through the gallery to present these commonplace, usable clothing items as surreal objects. The translation from the digital to real life in Berberg’s work allows operations and representations outside the norm to take hold. Berberg enunciates the thin line between digital and material reality by reconstituting the familiar as digital and sculptural objects.

Nick Farhi likewise pulls inspiration from the digital, using standard technology, namely his iPhone camera, to capture New York City’s urban sidewalk. He then turns these photographs into hyper-real paintings that may appear at first glance as photographs of a street or still life scene, only to upend our cognitive recognition and present the viewer with a precise yet skewed representation

of the real world. Within the snapshot composition, Farhi draws on digital photography to complicate the everyday. Toying with a truncated view of urban scenes and objects alike, his paintings, such as *Hit the highway (wrinkles in time)* (2023) and *Tumbling, waiting for Godot* (2023), prompt the viewer to create the rest of the scene in their mind. His sidewalk and puddle paintings, hung low to the ground, play further with the boundary between real life and its representation through artistic mediums. Farhi's works compel the viewer's imagination to activate the real, digital, and even fictional by presenting as screens, portals, or glitches in the material realm.

Where Farhi asks for the viewer's imagination, Olivia Drusin's paintings provide the viewer with a predetermined scene that similarly draws on fiction and fantasy. *Scrivener's Window I* (2020), *Scrivener's Window III* (2021), and *Untitled (Threshold)* (2021) configure typical boundaries, such as windows, gates, and fences, as fantastical thresholds. As representations of imaginative worlds, Drusin's paintings use repeated geometric patterns or industrial designs that resemble architectural materials, such as metal, brick, and glass, to generate passageways to hypothetical realms. Rather than painting from reference, Drusin draws her inspiration from photographs taken on walks around New York City and transforms them into abstract worlds. Drawing on the literal and metaphorical notion of a window or gate that allows access from one space to another—transgressing boundaries—Drusin's paintings prompt the viewer to imagine the worlds in which these simultaneously illusory and realistic window scenes might figure. Drusin's paintings function then as invitations to fictional realities that lie beyond the canvas.

Viewing our current juncture as having stayed “too long at the Fair,” the five artists in conversation respond distinctly to Didion's turn of phrase. Juxtaposing the digital and the human, the real and the surreal, and the quotidian and the fantastical, each artist in *Too Long at the Fair* provides a new and unique visual representation of contemporary reality dictated invariably by technology, human experience, and the imagination. With alternative modes of perception and reality at the core of this exhibition, the works are hung at heights that challenge traditional ways of viewing. Viewers may have to hunch down to see Farhi's gritty street scenes or Berberg's pairs of sweat-pants. Other times, one might have to strain their neck or stand on their toes to view Abby Robinson's hung plaster works. By disrupting the expected experience of viewing artwork, *Too Long at the Fair* allows the realities presented in the show to bleed into the arrangement. Thus, it further develops a curiosity about the variety of worlds depicted in each of the artists' works compelling us to wonder how we might expand our nature of engagement with these alternative modes of reality.

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For more information, contacts us at:  
[info@golsa.no](mailto:info@golsa.no)  
[golsa.no](http://golsa.no)