

Golsa

FRINGES OF REFLECTION
Kristian Touborg

12/10/2023 - 04/11/2023

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Golsa is delighted to present *Fringes of Reflection*, the solo exhibition of the Danish artist Kristian Touborg. This will be the artist's first solo show with the gallery, on view from October 12th through November 4th, 2023. The opening will be held on Thursday, October 12th, from 17.00 to 20.00.

Curious images appear at the fringes of reflection. Through the frayed edges of memory, we might imagine vistas that are both invented and real. The images that rebound from a reflective surface also make us question our understanding of the world, under the mesmeric effects of light.

Kristian Touborg has a particular relationship with light, one that casts a beguiling atmosphere over his paintings which feel at once familiar and otherworldly. From the flash of a smart phone camera to the celestial glow of the sun or moon, Touborg treats each of his sources with the same careful precision, as they illuminate moments of contemporary life.

In the monumental *Scrolling Apart* (2023), we are invited into the private realm of two lovers who have drifted to either side of a bed, leaving a black chasm in their midst. Intimate worlds, known only to the couple, are revealed by the light of their devices. The scene is claustrophobic somehow, as if taking place underwater, and the smart phones are a means of escape—a gasp of air. Dots of red along the border of the painting suggest that recording is in progress and evoke the surveillance cameras of a hotel room. Touborg edges towards a more traditional interpretation of painting, with the uninterrupted picture plane framed by two iridescent bars, whose colours metamorphose under different effects of light.

In contrast, Touborg's earlier, sculptural canvases compartmentalized space in a way that reflected a need for order through the disarray of life with young children. These structural elements, which now appear in various guises, arguably recall Touborg's first job as a scaffolder and the influence of an engineer father. Perhaps the most architectural of the paintings at Golsa is *Selfie Sunset (Hehe)*, 2023, inspired by the view from the window of Touborg's studio in Sydhavn, Copenhagen. Touborg explains that the mesh column to the right is empty space—a kind of shorthand for the void that balances the scene. The reflection of a face materialises through the orange haze—the glare of a phone doubling for the setting sun. Natural and artificial worlds overlap, as though the membrane separating the two is dangerously porous, particularly in those areas of the canvas which are almost transparent.

Touborg is as precise with materials as he is with light, employing a form of recycled polyester that exudes a white luminosity, much like the backlit screen of a phone. Images are dissolved into the fabric of his paintings by way of intense heat, which invites the resulting vapour to seep into the material—at times leaving a visible image behind and at others merely a textural residue. This process and Touborg's method of sewing elements of his canvas together reasserts the physicality of his painting—its warp and weft. The dappled surface of colour adds to this sensation of a loose weave of fabric, as if individual threads of pigment might be plucked out.

In many ways, Touborg's purposeful and considered use of different paints and reflective pigments speaks to the effects of light in nature, where light waves might be absorbed or scattered. The natural world abounds in Touborg's paintings, like a quiet, yet insistent force that recalls the influence of a botanist mother. A thistle lying below resembles a graveside tribute, or a talisman plucked from the soil. Touborg is drawn to the duality of the thistle's thorny beauty.

In *Documenting Time (Through Window)*, 2023, a cascade of orange and blue flowers suggests a veil between the worlds. The flash of a person's camera reveals a ghostly figure by their side, as if to document two distinctive experiences of time and space. Touborg describes himself as waltzing with time, harnessing different moments and momentums.

Another ethereal being appears in *Each Other's Tails (Pursuit of Happiness)*, 2023, in which a dog seems to chase its ghoulish familiar. Nearby, a boy reaches out to touch another hand. Looking down upon the scene, there is a sense of the worn edges between the realms of animals and humans, the earthly and spiritual. This birds-eye perspective returns in *Natpåfugleøjeblik (Sankt Hans) / Smerinthus POV (Midsummer Blink of an Eye)*, 2023, with the viewpoint of a hawk moth, recognizable for the extraordinary peacock eyes on its wings. The hawk moth hovers above the ritualistic circle that surrounds the Sankt Hans bonfire in celebration of Midsummer.

Perhaps the most abstract painting is the enchanting *Backwards Dive* (2023), in which a figure dissolves into water. Explosions of light dance over the impenetrable surface, even as an arm trembles into view. Equally allusive is *Entangled Reflections of Excieties (on Transit)*, 2023. An arm reaches out of a car window as a burst of white light masks their face, as if someone has taken a photo from the outside looking in. The dazzling deposits of colour evoke the blinding effects of the flash. Feelings of anxiety and excitement (which together form the word "excieties") tussle in the aftermath. As our eyes piece the scene together, the blooms of flowers and the silhouette of a frail standing figure come into view. Purple arcs and notations are like the remains of graffiti on a wall that speak to Touborg's own youthful adventures. Reflections and experiences are tangled together, almost threatening to dissolve into oblivion, like disintegrating memories.

And yet, for Touborg, his paintings are insistently part of the here and now. Stitched together, they offer a vision of life that is mediated by the nuances of light, and where nature and technology are woven together without judgement. These paintings exist at the fringes of worlds, which possess all the delicacy of a hawk moth's gossamer wings.

Text by Alice Godwin

Kristian Touborg (b.1987) is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. He holds an MA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and he is the recipient of the Danish Arts Foundation working grant (2017).

Touborg epitomizes a new kind of subjectivity in painting, pairing intimacy and playfulness with art historical references and new technologies. His works are anchored in the dreamy and seductive authenticity that only materials processed by the human hand can hold.

By applying a mixture of painterly gestures led by spontaneous brushstrokes of vivid oil paint in combination with the use of industrially treated materials and digitally printed surfaces, Touborg constructs a range of two and three-dimensional works which defy categorisation within a specific medium. Demonstrating a profound interest in new media and technology, Touborg creates imagined archaeological items from a near-future society. Hovering between subtle, often abstract references to the figure and detailed portrayal, the paintings give voice to a personal narrative where private components and dreamlike sensations coalesce.

Recent solo and group exhibitions include: Art Brussels, Newchild Gallery, Brussels (2023), Dandelion, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp (2023, solo), Art Antwerp, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp (2022), Fluttering The Void, Berlinskej Model, Prague (2022, solo), Trust In Mortals, Brigade Gallery, Copenhagen (2022), Light Blue Noise, Lundgren Gallery, Palma de Mallorca, Spain (2022, solo), KIAF Seoul, Carvalho Park, Seoul (2022), Peripheries, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp (2022), Bright Beneath, Eduardo Secci Novo Projects, Milan (2021, solo), and Soft, Metal, Factory — HEART Collection, Herning Art Museum, Denmark (2021).

Touborg's work is included in the permanent collections of X Museum, HEART Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Randers Kunstmuseum, The Blake Byrne Collection and Statens Kunstfond.

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Alice Godwin is a British arts writer, editor and researcher, based in Copenhagen. Previously an in-house writer for Gagolian in London, Alice continues to work closely with Gagolian as well as a growing number of galleries in the Scandinavian region, and contributes to publications including Artforum, The Brooklyn Rail, Frieze, e-flux and Wallpaper.



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