

Kristian Touborg

*Dandelion*

February 3 — March 16, 2023

*“Dandelions can’t be found in flower shops. Instead, they sprout from cracks in the concrete gutter and as weeds in well-maintained gardens, an outsider flower, unpolished yet particularly delicate and authentic. I find them utterly alluring because of their honest and naked presence —wherever they can grow, they will— natural and tireless, insisting on making us see the fragile beauty in the rough ordinary. Something about them resonates very clearly with what I am trying to do as a painter.”*

This February, Denmark-born artist Kristian Touborg (b. 1987) will present a new group of paintings at Newchild – significantly marking his first solo exhibition in Belgium. Painted from his acute sensitivity to the world around him, his ongoing fascination with images naturally complements his conceptual engagement with the technical processes of painting. The works in the exhibition are characterised by handmade renditions of light and shimmering surfaces that depict poetic images of Touborg’s daily experiences harnessing a computer-generated aesthetic.

Touborg is fascinated by how alchemical processes can be used to overcome shortcomings in life. He sees the acceptance of life’s fragility and vulnerability as what defines us as individuals. The works in *Dandelion* examine our contemporary life and use it as a source of inspiration to dream despite tribulations. The artist explains: *“Difficult days have surrounded the making of these works as we witness a surge in right-wing politics across Europe, the terror of global military conflict and police oppression, and the continuing corruption of our air and water resources as Climate Change begins to spiral out of control. But the reason I made these works is because of the hope I feel when I know that good things close to my heart are also happening”*. Touborg uses failures, ruptures and vulnerability as an impetus to develop new processes. They point to the imperfect nature of our lives and reveal frequently unexamined material aspects of the world we inhabit. In this sense, *Dandelion* refers to the precious moments of life and the value of the simple things, like social and family ties, especially in times of public and political instability. The beauty of the ordinary is condensed into a fragile object that can change with the slightest breeze.

Every morning Touborg travels south across Copenhagen to his studio, eager for the wave of impressions to be encountered along the way. It is in this journey that the title *Dandelion* takes on a different connotation. The plant, considered a weed by many, embodies Touborg’s vision of his process —authentic and delicate, yet honest and without pretence. The journey is a daily reminder of how different life experiences become interwoven via social media. He collects this information in the form of drawings and photographs. These impressions are translated with the aid of different fluid pigments into abstracted motifs in his studio, painted onto recycled fabrics that have been previously dyed using a sublimation technique (image transfer through heat). This process he says, *“is a kind of underpainting, as it injects the canvas with a feeling of a back-light, like the screens we stare at daily”*. The paintings are then cut into fragments and carefully sewn together, with swatches of various technical and reflective fabrics. This multifaceted technique underscores Touborg’s interest in the synthesis of digital and analogue processes. He explains, *“I put great effort into making digital processes appear analogue, and into making the analogue feel digital.”*

The works in *Dandelion* reflect visibly the pulses and changes of Touborg’s technique. Here we encounter renewed figuration recombining existing visual material accumulated through experience, mixed with impressions during the creative moment, responding aesthetically to questions and feelings. The artist presents an abstraction rooted in realism. In the exhibited works, traces of mysterious graffiti, discarded objects and damaged or abandoned vehicles coalesce on the canvas.

In *ROADTRIPPIN'*, the brightness of the canvas seems to emerge from behind the fabric, while shimmering reflections pierce the canvas creating a surreal atmosphere, anchored in a dreamy and seductive authenticity. The oneiric work portrays a moment of intimacy paired with a sense of subconsciousness, hovering and finding a balance in the beauty around us as we engage in mundane tasks.

The paintings in *Dandelion* are covered in different patinas of moisture and light, reminiscent of Impressionist painters such as Monet and Bonnard. Whereas his predecessors aimed to capture the ambience and the fleeting nature of light, Touborg focuses on the digital landscape by capturing the light interfaces and backlit displays that illuminate our domestic environments. Further illustrating his avid interest in light, Touborg's sensibility captures nuanced variations of opacity and translucency found in the digital universe, reaching a form of 'Digital Impressionism'. He explains: "*For many years I have explored the intersections between Impressionist chiaroscuro and the new ways we have come to understand light as it functions in flash memory data systems and backlit digital displays*". Touborg, rather than painting *en plein air*, investigates the formalist notions in digital displays and their light effects. By exploring visual experiences, the artist recreates the experience of image streams and the effects of moving interfaces intuitively and captivantly.

Touborg's work engages with the accumulation and amalgamation of his daily experiences juxtaposed with subjects such as art history, human communication systems and painting processes. The works in *Dandelion* are fueled with a voice of both hope and anguish. And like the plant, it grows where it can grow, where we least expect it, echoing that life's beauty lies in the simple things.

**Kristian Touborg** (b. 1987 in Roskilde, Denmark) holds an MA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and he is the recipient of the Danish Arts Foundation working grant, 2017. His work has recently been exhibited at *Art Antwerp*, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp; *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*, Caravalho Park, Seoul (2022); *Peripheries*, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp (2022); *Bright Beneath*, Eduardo Secci Novo Projects, Milan (2021, solo); and *Soft, Metal, Fabrik* (HEART Samling), Herning Art Museum, Denmark (2021). The artist presented his first institutional solo exhibition in 2022 at Kunsthall Kongegaarden. His work is included in the permanent collections of HEART Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Randers Kunstmuseum; The Blake Byrne Collection and Statens Kunstfond. He lives and works in Copenhagen.

*Dandelion* will run from February 3 to March 16, 2023. Opening hours are Wednesday — Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.