

NEWCHILD

Kristian Touborg

Mine Levende Råd

August 28 — October 8, 2026

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*"Jeg thrives bedst i maleriet der, hvor jeg ikke kan bunde."
I thrive most in painting where I cannot touch the bottom.*

This August, Newchild presents *Mine Levende Råd*, Danish artist Kristian Touborg's second solo exhibition at the gallery. Across a new body of paintings, Touborg moves further into a pictorial language in which images hover at the threshold of recognition: flowers become organs, reflected light takes on the contours of a torso, branches resemble bones, and webs expand like nervous systems. Yet the works also carry a peculiar sense of time. They feel at once immediate and slightly ahead of themselves, as though the conditions of a distant future have already entered the present. Organic and synthetic forms merge; decay becomes generative; nature and residue are no longer easily separated. Things appear to be changing state before our eyes, and what has been left behind does not necessarily disappear; it becomes a remnant capable of taking on new life.

The exhibition takes its title from the Danish expression *at vide sine levende råd*: to know what to do, or how to find a way through a difficult situation. Its negative form, *ikke at vide sine levende råd*, describes being completely at a loss, without a clear sense of what should come next. There is no direct English equivalent, though *Mine Levende Råd* might loosely be understood as "my living counsels." By isolating these words from the larger expression, the title holds both possibilities open: possessing an instinct for how to continue and confronting the moment when that instinct fails. Rather than resolving this uncertainty, the works remain inside it, attentive to forms of knowledge that may be felt bodily or intuitively before they can be fully understood.

This condition is central to Touborg's approach to painting. Rather than resolving this uncertainty, he makes it productive. His paintings do not begin with images whose destinations are known in advance. They develop through prolonged periods of disruption, obscurity and reformation: pigment is pushed, rubbed, stained and covered; forms are allowed to deteriorate, disappear and return in altered configurations. A work may remain unresolved for months, with its most decisive image emerging only after an earlier version has been partially erased or damaged. Time becomes embedded in the painting not simply as duration, but as accumulation: something visible in the layers, abrasions and residues through which the image has had to pass.

"I thrive most in painting where I cannot touch the bottom," he explains. It is an articulation of the uncertainty that sustains the work: enough control to continue, but never enough to determine in advance what the painting will become. For Touborg, this absence of footing is not simply a source of anxiety. It contains curiosity, pleasure and risk; the possibility that a painting might arrive somewhere its maker could not have consciously directed it.

The resulting images operate through a similarly uncertain form of perception. At first they can appear indistinct, as though seen through water, eyelashes or a fogged lens, resisting the quick, categorising gaze. With sustained looking, forms begin to gather: a torso might also appear as a flower, a pupa, a skeleton or a cell; a stem becomes a spine; a bloom takes on the appearance of an organ or luminous internal growth. These possibilities do not cancel one another but remain active within the same figure, allowing several bodies or states to coexist. The ambiguity remains rooted in figuration, but in a figuration freed from a single identity—a world in which familiar forms have been subjected to enough pressure, time, and transformation that they return carrying the possibility of becoming something else.

In *Tide*, water becomes less a depicted element than a condition through which the entire image is perceived. A luminous current moves horizontally across the painting, swelling into pale blue and violet forms that seem to surface and dissolve at once. What might initially register as reflection begins to suggest branches, ribs, roots or submerged anatomy, while darker passages gather around them like sediment. Touborg treats water here as an unstable repository: something capable of distorting an image while simultaneously preserving traces of it. Light appears caught within the surface rather than simply falling upon it, giving the painting the uncanny sensation of remembering something whose original form can no longer be recovered.

A related instability unfolds in *I Put Out My Tongue To Taste The Time*, where perception becomes almost bodily. Against a field of mottled turquoise, a vertical form gathers through flashes of white, violet, red and green, alternately resembling a flowering stem, a figure, an internal organ or a body caught in reflection. The title proposes an impossible gesture—that of encountering time through taste—and points toward Touborg's interest in forms of understanding that precede language. Time here feels strangely displaced: not quite futuristic, yet no longer entirely of the present, as though organic and synthetic forms had already begun to merge into a condition we are only starting to recognise. Seeing, touching, tasting and remembering begin to collapse into one another, and the image reveals itself through this uncertainty, becoming most vivid precisely where its identity remains unsettled.

This bodily form of knowing becomes more explicit in *What The Spine Kept*. Two luminous, lung-like forms open on either side of a central vertical structure, which can be read as a spine, stem, root or exposed nervous system. Flowering and anatomical forms become almost impossible to disentangle. The work recalls the Danish expression *på ryggraden*, used to describe something so deeply internalised that it becomes instinctive, like muscle memory—a form of knowing that no longer needs to pass through conscious thought. Here, the spine becomes a site of embodied memory, a structure through which experience and instinct might be retained. Small bursts of colour puncture the forms like blooms, wounds or points of illumination, suggesting something at once vulnerable and generative.

Across these works, Touborg's image-world begins to resemble what he describes as a “nervous garden,” an environment in which bodies, plants and other living structures seem to borrow from one another without settling into a single form. Roses acquire bones; stems resemble vertebrae; water appears to retain a kind of sensory life. These transformations are inseparable from the physical construction of the paintings themselves. Pigment, dye, canvas, textiles, reflective material, botanical matter, dirt and sand are layered, absorbed, rubbed and disturbed until the image seems to emerge through the behaviour of the materials rather than simply being placed upon them. At moments, the surfaces feel scorched or saturated with light; elsewhere they remain quiet, fragile and almost recessive. The result is a world that feels wounded and generative at once, as though unfamiliar forms of life are taking shape through something strangely familiar.

In *Mine Levende Råd*, painting becomes less a means of arriving at an answer than a way of staying with the moment in which an answer is unavailable. The title carries within it the possibility of its own negation: the point at which one no longer knows what to do. Touborg does not attempt to resolve that condition. Instead, he follows the image beyond the point where certainty gives way, remaining attentive to what can still be sensed, held or recognised there. The paintings offer no clear direction out. What they hold instead is something deeper: a form, sensation or presence still alive enough to follow.

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Mine Levende Råd is on view from August 28 to October 8, 2026. Opening hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.